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**INDIA PLAYED PIVOTAL ROLE: UNION IT** MINISTER ASHWINI VAISHNAW

Oh My Laila! – A Lesson in How Not to Make

QUOTE OF THE DAY the pioneer

This is yet another desperate diversion tactic from the demand for 42% reservations for BCs. Now the Congress wants to debate the PM's caste. Your research failed so badly that you forgot one fact. Modi was listed as an OBC when the Congress was in power in 1994. Now, what is Rahul Gandhi's caste? What's his religion? Does he know, or do you? His grandfather was Feroz Jehangir Gandhi. If anyone wants to debate who is legally converted or not, may be the CM should start from #10, Janpath

- Bandi Sanjay Kumar, MoS for Home

#### Medaram sees surge in pilgrim rush

Over five lakh devotees thronged Medaram for mini-Jatara, with around three lakh visiting various celebration venues. The festival, which began on February 12 and will conclude on February 15, is being held at Medaram, Ilapur, Kondayi, and Malyala villages in Mulugu district. District Collector Diwakar TS praised the district officials for their coordination in making the event a grand success. On Friday, he ..

#### India-B'desh border talks next week

The border forces of India and Bangladesh will hold their biannual talks here next week with issues such as border fence construction and attacks on BSF personnel and civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants figuring among the discussion points, an official statement said on Friday. The 55th Director General-Level Border Co-ordination Conference between BSF and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be organised at the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters

#### Trump's tariffs and India

US President Donald Trump has asserted that Washington will not spare India from reciprocal tariffs. The President has set in motion his plan to impose reciprocal tariffs on imports, which is expected to further deepen the global trade war During 2021-24 the US was the largest trading partner of India, During April-November 2024-25, the bilateral trade in goods between the two countries stood at USD 82.52 billion (USD 52.89 billion .

#### India lose to Japan 0-3 in quarterfinals

HS Prannoy fought valiantly, but India succumbed to a 0-3 defeat against a second-string Japan in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships (BAMTC), ending their campaign on a disappointing note here on Friday. India, the 2023 bronze medalists in Dubai, struggled to find their rhythm, and trailed 0-1 after going down in the mixed doubles. Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, ranked 37th in the world, showed resilience ..

# New era in Indo-US ties

#### Didn't discuss Adani's issue with Trump: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he did not discuss the bribery charges that the US government had levelled against infrastructure tycoon Gautam Adani during his meeting with US President Donald Trump.

At a press briefing at the White House, Modi was asked if he raised the indictment of Adani and his key associates in a New York court over his involvement in an alleged bribery scheme.

"Firstly, India is a democratic country, and our culture and our thought philosophy is, 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

We consider the whole world as one family. I believe every Indian is mine," he said. He then went on to state that

such "individual issues" are not discussed when two world leaders meet. "Two prominent leaders of

two countries never discuss such individual issues," he

Trump made no mention of the case during the presser.

Trump, Modi firm up big-ticket defence partnership US paves way for supply of F-35 combat jets to India

PNS WASHINGTON

India and the United States rekindled their relationship on a high note on Friday with a summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump yielding a range of benefits including US sale of oil, gas and F-35 fighter aircraft to India, a possible mega trade deal and the immediate extradition of Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Rana.

After talks with Modi, Trump said that India will buy more oil, gas and military hardware from America to bring down the trade deficit while asserting that Washington will not spare New Delhi from reciprocal tariffs.

At his Oval Office in the White

House on Thursday (Friday India time), Trump warmly welcomed Modi with a long handshake and a bear hug and described the prime minister as a "great friend" for a long time and a "terrific" man. "We missed you. We missed you a lot," Trump said as he greeted Modi.

The elaborate welcome allayed the trepidation and put to rest the uncertainty that had clouded bilateral relationship after Trump took office last month and unleashed a series of executive orders that have upended the global economic and diplomatic order.



Yet, Modi's visit went off without any hiccups and in fact, produced rich dividends. The only fly in the ointment was Trump's announcement a day before the summit that he would impose reciprocal tariffs on countries that do the same with

The Modi-Trump meeting with an expansive agenda took place hours after the US President actions by his administration. announced a new reciprocal tariff

policy for all trading partners of the US, the latest in a series of such

Modi tough negotiator, great friend:Trump



#### 2<sup>nd</sup> US plane carrying 119 deportees likely to land today

A US plane carrying 119 illegal immigrants is likely to land at Amritsar airport on February 15, the second such batch of Indians deported by the Trump government as part of a crackdown it resolved to carry out when it was sworn in last month. According to official sources, the plane is expected to land at the airport around 10 pm on Saturday.

Among the 119 illegal Indian immigrants, 67 hail from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, three from Uttar Pradesh, two each from Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan and one each from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and

Kashmir, they said.
Another US plane carrying deportees is also expected to land on February 16.

The development came days after a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal İndian immigrants landed at the Amritsar airport last week. Of them, 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat and 30 from Punjab. Continued on Page 2

### Revanth wins as Congreplaces Explore new ideas to boost tourism Munshi with Meenakshi

PNS HYDERABAD

In a significant political change, Meenakshi Natarajan has been appointed as the AIĆC in-charge in replacing Deepa Munshi. This is seen as a major victory for Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who had been facing challenges within the Congress over Munshi's leadership.

A close associate of Rahul Gandhi, Meenakshi had come as an election observer to Telangana during the elections. Deepa Das Munshi's tenure as Telangana Congress incharge had been mired in controversy, with Congress leaders quietly expressing dissatisfaction over her

Unlike past AICC in-charges, she settled in Hyderabad, reportedly renting a residence costing lakhs



Meenakshi Natarajan new TG Cong incharge

per month, a move that did not go well with party cadres. Party circles had even dubbed her as the 'Viceroy of Telangana, reflecting the growing

With Munshi's removal, Revanth has cemented his control over the

Telangana Congress, ensuring a leadership team that aligns with his

The appointment of Meenakshi Natarajan has been widely welomed by Telangana Congres ers, with TPCC Working President Bomma Mahesh Kumar Goud hailing it as a positive development. He described her as an honest and humble leader, whose simple lifestyle sets an example for party workers.

"Meenakshi Natarajan had a remarkable journey inside the Congress, starting from the NSUI and later serving as its President. She now heads the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayati Sanghatan at the national level and has always been an inspiration," Mahesh said.

Recounting her connections with Telangana, Mahesh recalled that she once led

#### CM Revanth directs officials

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy emphasized the need to develop the tourism sector not just as a source of revenue but also as a major

He said that despite Telangana's rich historical and cultural heritage past governments had failed to market it effectively and explore new ideas to boost tourism. He directed officials to modernize the tourism department to connect Telangana's past with the present paving the way for future growth. Reviewing the tourism sector at ICCC on Friday, Revanth stressed the importance of encouraging investments in semiurban and rural tourism projects.

He asked officials to set up a boat house in the Nagarjuna Sagar backwaters and promote Telangana as a prime destination for destination



Harish blasts

Revanth's comments

against KCR

weddings. Special attention should be given to temple tourism and wildlife sanctuaries, he added, directing authorities to take steps regarding this.

The Chief Minister specifically mentioned the need to enhance facilities and publicity at places like Bhadrachalam, Saleshwaram, Ramappa Temple, Mallela Theertham, Bogatha Waterfalls, Buddhist stupas and Jain Temples.

He also inquired about the status of the Bhongir Fort Ropeway Project and asked officials to speed up land acquisition and invite tenders immediately. He also ordered conservation of the historical Continued on Page 2

# 'Modi was listed as OBC when Cong was in power'

Sanjay asks CM to reveal Rahul's caste & religion

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy enacted one more desperate diversion tactic with his 42 per cent reservation demand and his demand to know Prime Minister

Modi's caste, Union Minister of What's his religion? Does he know, the 42% BC reservation demand. State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay said. He said that the CM's research into Modi's past failed badly as he forgot the fact that Modi was listed as an OBC when the Congress was in power in 1994.

or do you? His grandfather name was Feroz Jehangir Gandhi. As per Hindu tradition, caste is derived from the father's lineage," Sanjay said.

Posting about this on Friday on his X account he said, "Yet anoth-"What caste is Rahul Gandhi? er desperate diversion tactic from in 1994.

Now the Congress CM wants to debate the PM's caste. Your research failed so badly that you forgot the fact that PM @narendramodi Ji was listed as an OBC when the Congress was in power in 1994. **Continued on Page 2** 

#### PNS HYDERABAD Former Minister Harish Rao

launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and accused him of lowering the dignity of his post with his irresponsible statements. Addressing the media, Harish

blasted Revanth for saying that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) has no right to live in Telangana and called it an insult to the very spirit of the state's formation.

"Has the Chief Minister's chair changed hands, but not your mindset, Revanth Reddy?" he asked.
"Instead of governing, you are busy making baseless statements. If you have the guts, let's ask the people of Kodangal or your native place Kondareddipalli who truly deserves to live in Telangana," Harish said.

He accused Revanth of trying to deflect attention from his failures by attacking KCR, stating that Telangana had already rejected him. "The more you attack KCR, the more the people will shower their love on him," he declared.

He compared Revanth Reddy's behaviour to the proverb 'No matter how much you wash a rat's skin, it will never turn white,' indicating that the Congress leader's petty "Instead of governing, you are busy making baseless statements. If you have the guts, let's ask the people of Kodangal or your native place Kondareddipalli who truly deserves to live in Telangana"

mind remains unchanged. "A Chief Minister should lead with dignity, but Revanth has turned the CM's office into a platform for petty outbursts," he added.

Harish said that Revanth Reddy's

anger towards Rahul Gandhi is being misdirected at KCR. Are you trying to prove your existence by ranting about KCR every day? You may get a headline for a day, but remember, KCR is forever etched in the hearts of Telangana," he said.

# 'CBI must probe Rs 1,000 cr cotton scam'

PNS HYDERABAD

The BRS has alleged a massive scam in the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) procurement process and has accused the Congress Government of orchestrating a Rs 1,000 crore scam that has severely



affected farmers.

Senior BRS leader Peddi Sudarshan Reddy demanded a CBI probe into the irregularities, stating that cotton farmers were systematically looted by a CCI officials, agriculture department authorities, traders and market yard officials.

Addressing the media, Sudarshan accused the Congress of exploiting farmers, stating that the government deliberately manipulated the procurement process to favour private

"Farmers who were supposed to get Rs 7,521 per quintal as the Minimum Support Price (MSP) were forced to sell their cotton at Rs 5,000 to Rs 6,000 per quintal due to loopholes created by corrupt officials," he said.

# Tummala slams bankers for treating farmers badly

PNS HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao criticised bankers over the way they are treating farmers just because they have not repaid their loans. He lashed out at bankers for taking away the gate of a farmer in Kodakandla mandal.

He asked bankers to respect farmers who come for loans to banks and advised bankers not to think that farmers are beggars and banks are their benefactors. Tummala described farmers as the ones who protect the system.

A NABARD State Credit Seminar was held in Hyderabad on Friday. Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Tummala Nageswara Rao attended the event

and unveiled the NABARD State Focus Paper at the event. Later, Tummala said that he became angry at bankers because

of the way they are treating commoners. He said that he read in



newspapers that bankers have taken away the gate of a farmer's house as he has not repaid his

"However, people are questioning bankers about what they are doing to those who have taken thousands of crores of rupees as loans from banks and have not repaid them. Why are bankers unable to recover the money from such people? The banking sector should focus on agriculture. How much loans have banks given to farmers?" he said.

Tummala asked what percentage of farmers have defaulted on loans. "How much non-agricultural loans did the banks give? How much did they fail to repay," Tummala asked.

# MAGA plus MIGA: a MEGA IndUS Pie

have. To me, it's very sim-

ple: if you're going to be thinking anyway, you might as well think big. Most people think small because most people are afraid of success, afraid of making decisions, afraid of winning." Forgiving anyone who thinks Prime Minister Modi penned these words is easy. But the truth is, they were written by Donald Trump, the current President of the United States of America (USA), in his book "The Art of the Deal". And it is this penchant for thinking big, or bigly, as President Trump would say, which made Prime Minister Modi's current trip to the White House a grand success.

While world leaders were scrambling to respond to President Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) agenda, especially on tariffs, Modi pivoted the negotiation

wherein one country's gain becomes the other country's loss, into a win-win for both countries. Modi translated his vision for a Viksit Bharat by 2047 into Trump's language as MIGA (Make India Great Again) and made a simple pitch: MAGA plus MIGA equals MEGA benefit for both the US and India. Instead of fighting over who gets how much of the existing India-US trade pie, Modi pitched to increase the pie, aiming to more than double India-US trade to 500 billion dollars by 2030, benefitting both nations. No wonder Trump said: "He is a much tougher negotiator than me. He is a much better negotiator than me. There is no contest." in response to a reporter's question.

Even senior Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, the Čhairman the Parliamentary While Trump focused on rebalancing the USA's security and economy vis-a-vis other countries, Modi, being an out-of-the-box thinker, presented him with a bigger, better deal that he could not refuse. It's a deal founded on our shared and complementary strengths and will serve our countries' interests for decades

Committee on External Affairs and formerly an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), praised Modi. Referring to the outcomes of Modi's trip, he said, 'This is good news ... very encouraging ... big concerns we all had have been addressed ... we have got pretty much of all that we could have expected at this time". He expressly referred to the conclusion India and the US reached on tariffs - to negotiate a trade

agreement by September, addressing India's fear of hasty decisions by the US that could have affected our exports. On the defence front, he dubbed the commitment by the US to sell the state-of-the-art F-35 stealth aircraft to the Indian Air Force as another very valuable victory.

It is well known that Modi and Trump enjoy great bonhomie. However, camaraderie alone, however strong, cannot lead to positive results, espe-



KISHORE POREDDY

cially when both leaders live by the motto "Nation First." Only a strong, convincing argument of aligned national interests, backed by facts and honest intent, can do that. And Modi did precisely that. He convinced Trump that MIGA is complementary to MAGA and that India and the USA are common political, social, economic and security interests.

India is the largest, and the US is the oldest democracy. Both are multi-cultural nations. While the US has the largest, India has the fastest developing economy. Both countries are victims of crossborder terrorism driven by fundamentalist, extremist ideologies. Illegal immigration plagues both, causing social, economic, and security problems. Both nations want affordable energy and energy security. Both countries want a tranquil Indo-Pacific.

It is not just countries; Trump and Modi are leaders with similar priorities. While government efficiency is Trump's priority, "minimum government, maximum governance" is Modi's dictum. Both leaders want the Russia-Ukraine war to end and see peace return to the targets of the Deep State propaganda. Similarly, both put their nation first.

While similarities engender empathy, complementaries consummate deals. The USA has advanced technologies, such as fighter jets and nuclear reactors, which India needs and can buy. America needs an alternative to China in manufacturing, and India wants to become a manufacturing hub. America needs talent, especially in science and technology. India wants lesser restrictions on the movement of its talent. America wants to drill and export oil and gas, while India needs cheap oil and gas imports. To achieve MAGA, India can complement the USA in many ways while achieving MIGA.

While Trump focused on rebalancing the USA's security and economy vis-a-vis other of-the-box thinker, presented him with a bigger, better deal that he could not refuse. It's a deal founded on our shared and complementary strengths and will serve our countries' interests for decades.

They say, "luck favours the prepared mind." Having people who share Indic values, like Tulsi Gabbard, Usha Vance, Vivek Ramaswamy, and Kash Patel, in the President's inner circle, along with a vast Indian diaspora that occupies the higher echelons of economic and technical strata, is bound to add to Modi's efforts and cushion the deal. The only ones disappointed by Modi's US visit are those who hoped Trump would do what they could not do politically - deal a blow to Modi, even if it harms India's interests.

> (The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

# Lobbying in Delhi won't work: CM

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that it is impossible to bag posts by lobbying in Delhi and that the only way to attain them is to work on the streets for the poor. "The days of winning elections using money are gone. Victory is possible only by taking up public causes," the CM added.

Attending Youth Congress leaders' oath taking ceremony on Friday at the Gandhi Bhavan, the CM said that posts cannot be gained by saluting the leadership every day. It is better for such people to forget about posts, the CM said making it clear that posts are only for those who work hard for

The CM said that many who worked for the Youth Congress have excelled in national and state politics. Youth Congress is the first step in politics, he said.



"You can excel in politics only if you go to the people and work for the poor. Congress workers carried the flag with their shoulders shaking and brought the Congress to power in the state. We are moving forward by implementing our promises after coming to power. The Youth Congress is responsible for taking the government's welfare programmes to the people. We said that those who took responsibility in the party's affiliated departments would be

given posts in the government. We have provided 37 corporation chairman posts to affiliat-

ed departments," he said. "I am telling KCR, who says he will hit hard, on this platform. If you want to hit hard, hit your son, son-in-law, and child who robbed the people wickedly. Now KCR keeps saying he will come out. What can he do when he comes out? Youth Congress activists will beat and defeat you. What can KCR do when he comes out

He said that Telangana is the only state in the country that has conducted a caste census. Telangana is the state that decided to implement the classification of Madiga sub-castes. Modi hugged Manda Krishna many times. It remained a hug of Dhritarashtra and classification was not done. The BRS is spreading negative info about the government on social media, the CM said.

"When there were TV channels and newspapers, they could not do anything to the Congress. What will they do with social media? If the Youth Congress wants, they will make it win not once but four times. I am also ready with you to fight against Modi who has not given a paisa to Telangana. We are exercising restraint. We will soon formulate an action plan on all issues. You should be at the forefront in the fight against the Centre on public issues," the CM said.

#### 'Modi does not belong to BC caste'

VENKATESHWARLU

venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com HYDERABAD Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not a member of BCs by birth and that he had become legally a BC. Modi included his caste in the list of BCs after becoming the Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001, he added. Revanth said that Modi is a BC only in certificates and that Modi has an upper caste mindset full of anti-BC bias.

Revanth asked Modi to reveal why he did not order a caste census if he is really a BC

Addressing a TPCC function which gave a PowerPoint presentation on the caste survey and SC categorisation at the Prakasham Hall on Friday, the CM said, "I am not talking about Modi's caste issue lightly, I am speaking after learning about Modi's

caste. Modi and KD are trying to deceive BCs." The CM challenged the Centre to conduct a caste census along with the population census if Modi is sincere towards BCs. Then details collected by the Centre and the State can be compared and the reality will emerge, the CM said.

"Our leader Rahul Gandhi asked Modi in Parliament to conduct a caste survey across the nation. However, Modi and KCR are conspiring to ensure that the survey is not conducted," Revanth

The CM said that BJP leaders are criticising the successful caste survey of the TG Congress Government thinking that pressure may be mounted on Modi.

The CM demanded that BRS and BJP leaders should reveal what was wrong with the caste survey and added that BCs would suffer severe losses if they went by the

#### I don't mind even if I am the last Reddy CM of TG: Revanth

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that he would not mind even if he is the last 'Reddy Chief Minister' of Telangana.

Without mentioning Congress MLC Theenmar Mallanna's name, the CM said that someone (Theenmar Mallanna) is say-ing that Revanth Reddy will be the last Reddy CM of Telangana.

"No problem even if I am the last Reddy CM, but I took up the responsibility of upholding the word given by our leader as a disciplined Chief Minister. That is my commitment. We did not launch the caste census for my sake or the sake of my post. The caste census was done after getting myself ready for sacrifice. We conducted the caste census perfectly. I am ready to remain

as an ordinary Congress activist and uphold our leader's ideology," the CM

He said that no mistakes took place while conducting the caste census as alleged by some people. The BCs would suffer a permanent loss if anything wrong is found with the caste survey now. BCs can attain reservations as per law if a caste census is conducted across the nation, the CM

#### CM goes to New Delhi

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy went to New Delhi on Friday night and will meet the high command on Saturday. The CM will discuss about providing 42 per cent reservations to BCs, corporation posts and MLA quota MLC candidates.

#### Modi good negotiator, great friend:Trump

PNS WASHINGTON

The talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Donald Trump in Washington were marked by the US president's generous praise of ation of India's stance on several issues, officials said on Friday.

Trump described Modi as a friend for a long time and said in reply to a question, "He is a much tougher negotiator than me, and he is a much better negotiator than me. There is not even a contest."

The warm chemistry between the two leaders was tangible as Trump said Modi is doing a great job in India.

He added, "Everybody talks about him. He's doing a really fantastic job. He's a great leader.

Welcoming the prime minister at the White House with a warm hug, he said, "We missed you a lot."

President Trump wrote in the book 'Our Journey Together', which he presented to Modi, "Mr Prime Minister, You Are Great", the officials noted.

#### CM's words about Modi expose his ignorance: Kishan

PNS HYDERABAD

Responding to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's comments that Modi is a converted BC, the Union Minister of Coal and Mines, Kishan Reddy, said that Chief expose his ignorance.

I strongly condemn the fact that while criticising political adversaries, the CM forgets that he is a Chief Minister and keeps blurting out nonsense. I challenge the Chief Minister to a debate on the issue of whether the Prime Minister is a BC or not. The Congress is losing its hold on the people in the state and all over the country. So Revanth is speaking due to his impatience,"

He said that unable to bear the humiliation of losing power at the Centre for the third time in a row and the double hat-trick in the recent Delhi elections, the Congress and Revanth Reddy are becoming impatient. If Revanth thinks that if he spits in the sky, he will become a big shot, he should remember that it will fall on him, Kishan said.

The Congress is unable to digest the fact that people are cheering for the Prime Minister, who is a BC himself and a leader who is working sincerely for BCs in the country. The BJP and Modi do not need Revanth's certificates when it comes to social harmony. It is the Modi government that gave constitutional status to the BC Commission, Kishan said.

# Revanth Reddy defends using bad language

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the book 'Vijaya Telangana, hailed senior leader Devender Goud as one of the most admirable politicians and a key figure in the Telangana Movement.

"The earlier dignity found in the Legislatures of Telangana is not there today. Today, there is a competition among those who speak in the Assemblies on how many curses they have uttered, how badly they have cursed, and how rudely they have spoken. This is not good for Telangana. Today, Telangana is in a situation where young children have to change TV channels while politicians are talking. You can ask me why I am talking like that, the game is like that, if I don't play



it, then I will be out. I am not willfully playing this game," the CM said.

He emphasised that Devender Goud had documented the Telangana Movement from the people's perspective, unlike some who distorted history to suit their narratives. The Chief Minister stressed that the sacrifices of students and youth in the agi-

tation should be duly recorded in history.

"An attempt was made to portray Telangana as the achievement of a single person, a single family, and a single party. However, the truth is far from it," Revanth remarked. He stressed Devender Goud's decision to exit his party even though he was the second most influential leader in it.

#### Revanth wins ...

Continued from page 1 a padayatra from Bhoodan

Pochampally, energising Congress workers. He expressed confidence that her appointment would strengthen the party while thanking Deepa Das Munshi for her

The Minister for Transport and BC Welfare, Ponnam Prabhakar, acknowledged Deepa Das Munshi's yearlong efforts in the Telangana Congress and thanked her for her contributions. However, he emphasised that Meenakshi Natarajan's experience as the Telangana Election Observer and her frequent visits to the state make her a strong candidate for the role.

Ponnam, who had worked closely with Meenakshi Natarajan during his NSUI tenure, recalled her long association with Telangana politics. "During her tenure as NSUI President (1999-2000), I had the opportunity to serve as the state NSUI President. I consider it my privilege to have

worked with her back then," he

Welcoming the new AICC in-charge, Minister Konda Surekha issued a statement reinforcing her commitment to strengthening the party under Meenakshi Natarajan's

"With her experience in the NSUI, Youth Congress and the AICC, she will bring a valuable strategic direction to the Telangana Congress. Under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and TPCC Working President Bomma Mahesh Kumar Goud, both the Telangana Government and the Congress party are working tirelessly for the people. With Meenakshi Natarajan's help, this momentum will grow stronger," she said.

Telangana Congress leaders asserted that with this leadership change, the party will be better positioned for electoral battles, ensuring that the Congress Government delivers on its promises while keeping its house in order.

#### TODAY **ALMANAC** Month & Paksham Krishna Paksha Feb 14 09:52 PM to Feb 15 11:52 PM Chaturthi: Feb 15 11:52 PM to Feb 17 02:16 AM Nakshatram: Uttara Phalguni: Hasta: Feb 16 01:39 AM to Feb 17 04:31 AM 9:38 AM to 11:04 AM Rahukalam: 1:56 PM to 3:22 PM 11:03 AM to 12:51 PM Varjyam: 6:46 AM to 8:12 AM Gulika: 05:42 PM to 07:28 PM Amritakalam: Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:07 PM to 12:53 PM HYDERABAD WEATHER Forecast: Sunny

**Temp:** 33°°

Humidity: 37% Sunrise: 6:43 AM

Sunset: 6:18 PM

**Updated:** February 14, 2025 5:00 PM

#### New era in ...

Continued from page 1

In his remarks, Trump said he and PM Modi have reached an agreement that could potentially make the US the "number one supplier" of oil and gas to India, suggesting it was part of measures to bring down the US trade deficit with India that stands at around USD 50 billion.

The US President also said that both sides have decided to expand the overall defence partnership.

"Starting this year, we will be increasing military sales to India by many billions of dollars," Trump said.

"We are also paving the way to ultimately provide India with F-35 stealth fighters," he added. The F35 jets are known as the most lethal, survivable and connected fighter aircraft in the world.

Trump also announced that India and the US will work together like "never before" to confront the threat of radical Islamic terror across the world.

"I am pleased to announce that my

people of the world," he said, referring to the 26/11 Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Rana to India.

itive momentum in India-US cooperation in the civil nuclear energy sec-"In the ground-breaking develop-

The US President also noted pos-

ment for the US nuclear industry, India is also reforming laws to welcome US nuclear technology to the Indian market," he said. In his remarks, Prime Minister Modi said cooperation between India

and the US can shape a better world. A defence cooperation framework will be prepared for the next decade, "One thing that I deeply appreciate, and I learn from President

Trump, is that he keeps the nation-

al interest (of the US) supreme. Like

him, I also keep the national inter-

est of India at the top of everything

else," Modi said. To a question on whether the issue relating to business tycoon Gautam Adani figured in the talks, Modi said, "India is a democracy and our culadministration has approved the ture is 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

extradition of one of the very evil We consider the whole world as one family. I believe every Indian is mine.

> "Two prominent leaders of two countries never discuss such individual issues," he added.

> On ties between India and China following the eastern Ladakh border row, Trump said, "I do see the skirmishes on the border which are quite vicious... If I could be of help.' The US president said he wished

> China, India, Russia and the US -- all could get along well. Prime Minister Modi and

> President Trump also answered questions on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. "I support Donald Trump's efforts

> towards finding a possible solution to end the war. The world somehow feels India has been neutral during the war. But I would like to reiterate that India has not been neutral. In fact, India has been on the side of peace," Modi said.

"When I met President Putin, I had even said that this is not the era for war. I had also said that solutions cannot be found on the battlefield. They can only come when all parties sit at the table for dialogue," he said.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> US plane ...

Continued from page 1

Most of the deportees hailing from Punjab had said they wanted to migrate to the US for a better life for their families.

However, their dreams were shattered

when they were caught at the US border and brought back in shackles. After Donald Trump assumed office as the US President, the country's law enforcement

agencies have launched a crackdown against illegal immigrants. Many people from Punjab and some other states, who entered the US through "donkey routes" -- an illegal and risky pathway used by migrants to enter

America or other illegal means by spend-

ing lakhs of rupees -- are now facing

deportation. Several political leaders in Punjab had questioned the landing of a US aircraft in

"The BJP-led Central government wants to defame Punjab. Why does it not land in Gujarat, Haryana or Delhi?" Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said on Thursday while replying to a question on the likely arrival of another US plane carrying illegal immigrants.

#### Explore new ...

Continued from page 1

structures atop the fort. The CM stressed the need for coordination between departments like Forests, IT, Energy, TSIIC, Medical and Sports to ensure a seamless tourism policy. He warned against inter-departmental conflicts that could hinder tourism and called for prioritizing adventure sports and creating hassle-free medical tourism facilities for international visitors. The CM said that the Tourism Department would receive more

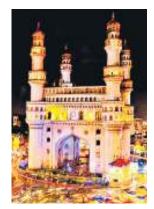
allocations to fund these programmes. Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao, CM's Advisor Vem Narendra Reddy, Tourism Development Corporation Chairman Patel Ramesh Reddy, Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, Infrastructure Advisor Srinivas Raju and others attended the meeting.

#### 'Modi was listed ...

Continued from page 1

Now, what caste is Rahul Gandhi? What's his religion? Does he know, or do you? His grandfather was Feroz Jehangir Gandhi. As per Hindu tradition, caste is derived from the father's lineage. If anyone wants to debate who is legally converted or not may be the CM should start from #10, Janpath. No amount of attention diversion will work. The BJP stands firm on no reservation for Muslims and any attempts regarding that will be foiled."

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**Bharat Utsav '25** 

National Level Competitions

> Bhaskara Auditorium February 15,

(10 am)

**Hyderabad** Marathon 2025

Venue

Necklace Road February 15, (10 am)

Telangana State **Mixed Martial Arts** Telangana Championship 2025

Venue

YMCA Narayanguda (Sports Coaching) February 15, (10:30 am)

**Workshop** 

Coaster Painting

Venue Lamakaan February 15, (11 am)

**Un-romantic Love** Story Telling

Venue

Lamakaan February 15, (4:30 pm)

Live Telugu Musical Orchestra

By Subbu Music Academy

Venue

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha February 15, (1 pm)

#### Apollo marks 25,000 organ transplants

PNS HYDERABAD

Apollo Hospitals has reached a significant milestone of 25,000 successful organ transplants across its network, reinforcing its commitment to saving lives through advanced medical expertise and innova-

To further promote organ donation awareness, Apollo Hospitals launched the Perfect Match Campaign, aimed at educating the public, dispelling myths and encouraging more people to register as donors. Dr Ravichand Siddachari, Senior Consultant in Liver and Pancreas Transplant, conducted an informative session at Rainbow Vistas community in Hyderabad.

# City Pioneer

he pioneer

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 15, 2025

# IIIT Hyd comes out with white paper on smart city solutions

IIIT Hyderabad Smart City Living Lab played a key role in the Telecom Standards Development Society of India's (TSDSI) newly released white paper, Innovations for Sustainable Urban Living: Insights into Smart City Solutions.

The paper highlights practical solutions for smart city development, addressing challenges, regulations and future pathways. The focus areas include Standardised Smart City Solutions, Regulatory Frameworks and Sandboxes, Challenges Recommendations.

IIIT Hyderabad's Smart City Living Lab was featured as a model case study, showcasing deployments based on oneM2M standards and the Indian Urban Data Exchange (IUDX). The lab also presented live demos at the event, including: City IoT Operating Platform (ctOP) - A



lightweight, standardised system for better smart city integration. Digital Twin for Water Networks (DTWN) - A real-

time, digital water management solution.

The demos received high appreciation, with oneM2M TP

Chair, R Hechwartner, praising ctOP's scalable and reliable approach to urban solutions. Anuradha Vattem, Chief

Technology Architect at Smart City Living Lab, led discussions and showcased IIIT-H's academic engagement with oneM2M.



Hyderabad City Police seizing frozen and contaminated

#### **Contaminated** chicken seized amid **Bird Flu concerns**

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force, North Zone Team, along with the Sanitary Officer of Cantonment, Secunderabad conducted raids on two chicken shops in Anna Nagar and

Arjun Nagar, Begumpet.
The officers seized 600 kg of frozen and contaminated chicken waste and bones intended for supply to fast-food centres. The two shop owners, M Bhasker (SSS Chicken Shop, Arjun Nagar) and Botta Raveendar (Ravi Chicken Shop, Anna Nagar), were arrested for illegally storing and selling noxious chicken waste. The investigations revealed that the duo had been stockpiling discarded chicken parts for months, selling them at lower-than-market rates to fast food

centres and wine shops.

Authorities further discovered that these shops mixed the stored chicken with artificial colours and flavour enhancers like Ajinomoto to make it appear fresh and appetizing. However, due to prolonged freezing, the chicken had turned hazardous, posing serious health risks to consumers.



Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan speaking at the Hyderabad Entrepreneurial

### Hyd's start-ups provide spaces to drive innovation

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's startup ecosystem is thriving, with collaborative spaces that drive innovation, said IT Department Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan at the Hyderabad Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Collective, organized by TiE at Anvaya Conventions in Gachibowli.

On this occasion, Jayesh highlighted Hyderabad's growth from 200 startups in 2014 to over 9,000 today, crediting government support, ecosystem partners and shared spaces. Ranjan appreciated TiE's efforts in uniting ecosystem partners, who often work independently, to drive collective benefits.

Over 40 partners, including incubators, investors, govern-ment bodies and corporate leaders along with Jennifer Larson, US Consul General and Vikram Jain, Trade Commissioner of Canada also participated.

TiE Hyderabad honoured Murali Bukkapatnam for being elected Chair of the TiE Global Board of Trustees for 2025. He is the first from TiE Hyderabad and the second

from India to hold this position. Murali shared his journey mitment to inspiring entrepreneurs. He emphasised TiE's contributions, including the creation of the Research and Innovation Circle of Hyderabad (RICH) and T-

TiE aims to expand to 100 cities, create \$100 billion in wealth, and generate 10 million jobs in five years. Hyderabad Angels also felicitated Murali for his contributions, recalling their funding of 76 startups with Rs.100 crore since 2010.

The event featured a Leadership Series talk with Abhay Deshpande, founder of Recykal.

He discussed his entrepreneurial journey, the challenges he faced and his company's efforts in waste management. Recykal is pioneering a Deposit Refund System (DRS) in Goa to promote recycling, with plans to expand nation-

TiE Hyderabad's leadership reaffirmed their focus on supporting startups, driving innovation and driving sustainable growth in 2025.

### SECUNDERABAD RAILWAY STATION RE-DEVELOPMENT

### Bouquets and brickbats from cross-section of people

PNS HYDERABAD

Secunderabad railway station, built in the early 1870s, has been a historical landmark since the first train ran on October 8, 1874. Now, as part of a major redevelopment project, demolition work has begun, sparking mixed reactions from passengers and heritage enthusi-

The Rs 699 crore station upgrade awarded to Girdharilal Constructions Pvt Ltd. in 2022, aims to modernise infrastructure while increasing passenger convenience. The features include new multi-level parking, skywalks, travelators and an upgraded concourse, with a



months. While authorities assure

completion target of 36 that passenger movement remains unaffected. Sibghatullah Khan of be preserved, citing examples

Deccan Archives argues that the historic structures should

like King's Cross Station in the UK

As a Hyderabadi, as a railenthusiast (whose tryst with trains largely started from Secunderabad) and a history, heritage buff, this is an unpleasant moment, NS Aditya wrote on X.

The regular passengers did not find any problem in Secunderabad railway station redevelopment.

A passenger, Kiran , said, "The old buildings must be reconstructed. How many buildings can be left and new ones made in another place. Secunderabad railway station draws thousands of footfalls everyday and if it is left for its heritage then one day it might collapse.

### IT Min discusses key industrial initiatives with Piyush Goyal

Telangana IT Minister D Sridhar Babu personally invited Union Minister of Industry and Supply, Piyush Goyal, to attend BioAsia 2025 on February 26 in Hyderabad. BioAsia is a leading life sciences and healthcare event that brings together global leaders, policymakers and

industry experts.
Piyush Goyal appreciated
Sridhar Babu's efforts to promote the life sciences industry and investments. He confirmed his participation and plans to engage with global leaders at the event.

Meanwhile, Sridhar Babu also requested the Union government's support for setting

up Mega Leather Parks (MLPs) in Telangana, one in Rukmapur Karimnagar district and another in Station Ghanpur village, Jangaon district. He reminded that the Telangana government has sought Central assistance from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) for infrastructure development, including Common Effluent

Treatment Plants (CETPs). Additionally, Sridhar Babu updated the Union Minister on the NICDC Zaheerabad Node's progress and urged speedy approvals and fund

Sridhar Babu also confirmed Telangana's participation in the Osaka Expo 2025.

#### **MIDHANI** donates Truenat machine for TB elimination

PNS HYDERABAD

Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI), under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, has donated a Truenat machine to National Tuberculosis (TB) E l i m i n a t i o n Tuberculosis Programme, Telangana Diagnostics, for the early detection of Tuberculosis (TB) in Hyderabad district.

This advanced diagnostic equipment will significantly strengthen TB screening and aid in timely medical intervention, improving health-care outcomes for the community.

The initiative reflects
MIDHANI's ongoing commitment to public health and community welfare.

by Shadab, along with dance,

music and theatre performances

were held. A digital slogan con-

test and Kiran Dembla's inspir-

ing journey were highlighted.

Anupama Dalmia emphasised

that menstrual awareness

should be normalised in daily

stressed the need to break out-

dated taboos. Aanchal Bansal

reinforced that menstruation is

not a weakness. Glow Flow

encouraged open, stigma-free conversations about periods,

just like any other normal topic. Attendees included students,

activists, influencers and changemakers. Social media

personalities like Hana Rahman

and Abhishek Kirak helped

make period discussions engag-

Meanwhile, Dr Nabat Lakhani



State Health Secretary Christina Chongthu inaugurating a free medical camp a

### Free medical camp held at Secretariat

PNS HYDERABAD

State Health Secretary Christina Chongthu emphasised the importance of prioritising health for individuals across all age groups while inaugurating a free medical camp at Dr BR Ambedkar Secretariat.

The initiative was jointly organised by Aster Prime Hospital and the Dr BR Ambedkar Secretariat Association to provide essential health services to Secretariat

The camp offered comprehensive health screenings, including BMI, blood pressure, random blood sugar, hemoglobin tests and eye examinations.

Additional diagnostic services such as ECG, 2D Echo tests, oral and breast cancer screenings and dental check-ups were also provided based on doctors' recommendations

Christina Chongthu reiterated the State government's commitment to enhancing public healthcare and ensuring better medical services in government hospitals. The camp, which ran from

11am to 5pm, was staffed by specialists from General Surgery, Cardiology, Orthopedics, Gynecology

Gastroenterology, along with 35 medical professionals. Free medicines were also distributed to beneficiaries.

#### **TGMC** uncovers four unqualified practitioners

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana Medical Council (TGMC) conducted surprise inspections in Nizampet and Mallampally areas of Hyderabad, identifying four unqualified practitioners illegally practicing allopathic medicine. A team led by TGMC Vice-Chairman Dr G Srinivas and members Dr Kadali Vishnu and Dr Imran Ali inspected first aid centres and clinics in these

areas, uncovering three RMP practitioners posing as doctors.
The unqualified practitioners identified are Aruna Kumari -Buchi Babu Clinic,

Jitender - Sathvik First Aid Centre, Shekhar - Shweta Clinic, Chandra Obul Reddy - Yash Clinic. These individuals were found practising allopathy with-out an MBBS degree, illegally prescribing antibiotics, steroids, painkillers and even promoting

# Stress on breaking outdated taboos on menstrual health

**PNS** ■ HYDERABAD

A special Menstrual Health Awareness event was held in collaboration with the WICCI Holistic Child Development Council. 'Glow Flow' organised by Marham - Resonating Resilience, aimed to break the silence around periods and menstrual health. The event, led by youth for youth, took place at St Francis College for

Women, Begumpet on Friday.
Congress spokesman
Khaleelur Rahman, Sofia Haseeb, Kiran Dembla and RJ Shadab attended. Shadab turned period stigma into comedy, while Kiran Dembla, an internationally known DJ and fitness coach, shared her inspiring



Bloody Funny, a comedy act Students, activists and influencers participate in a special Menstrual Health Awareness programme in Hyderabad on Friday

# lelangana :-

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 15, 2025

# Medaram sees surge in pilgrim rush

PNS TADWAI

Over five lakh devotees thronged Medaram for mini-Jatara, with around three lakh visiting various celebration venues. The festival, which began on February 12 and will conclude on February 15, is being held at Medaram, Ilapur, Kondayi, and Malyala villages in Mulugu district.

District Collector Diwakar TS praised the district officials for their coordination in making the event a grand success. On Friday, he participated in a special puja at Medaram village in Tadwai mandal, where temple priests conducted traditional rituals at elevated platforms. He later spoke with the media at the ITDA guest house, assuring that similar arrangements would be made for next year's Medaram festival to ensure a smooth experience for the devotees.

Since large numbers of devotees visit Medaram on Saturdays and Sundays, the district administration is making elaborate arrangements for the upcoming Sunday to avoid inconvenience. Between



6 am and 9 am and again from 6 hall in Lashkar Bazaar in Warangal. On the first day, the pm to 9 pm, the temple sees heavy footfall, and all necessary arrangetotal offerings from 134 iron ments have been made to accomhundis amounted to Rs 3.14 modate the pilgrims.

crore. Notably, some devotees had placed fake Rs 100 notes bearing BR Ambedkar's image,

print his image on currency. These fake notes were set aside by the counting officials.

Devotees are also offering jaggery to the deities and fulfilling their vows. Farmers in the area have set up temporary rooms demanding that the government under mango trees in their fields

to accommodate the growing number of visitors, charging Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per day depending on the crowd. The safaikarmacharis (cleaning staff) have been quickly clearing debris to maintain cleanliness during the

**District Collector Diwakar TS** 

praised the district officials for

mandal, where temple priests

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spoke with the media at the ITDA

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made for next year's Medaram

festival to ensure a smooth

experience for the devotees

elevated platforms. He later

guest house, assuring that

their coordination in making the



### A couple from Odisha arrested on charge of smuggling cannabis

PNS WARANGAL

A couple from Odisha, who appeared to be from a good family, were arrested by the Mills Colony Police, the Drugs Control Team, and the Railway Protection Force (RPF) on charge of smuggling cannabis. The police seized 24 kilograms of cannabis worth around Rs 6 lakh, along with two mobile phones from the couple.

Mills Colony Police Station Inspector Venkataratnam stated that the couple, identified as Gogi Shankar Das (39) and Purnima Gogidas (30) from Odisha, are currently residing in Surat in Gujarat. Lured by easy money, the couple started transporting cannabis from Odisha and selling it in

They had made contact with a

cannabis smuggler, named Pradeep in Odisha, from whom they bought cannabis. They secretly stored it in bags and transported it by train via Mumbai to Surat. The couple had repeated the process multiple times in

On the day of the arrest, they were travelling on the Konark Express. Fearing capture by the police, they got off at the Warangal Railway Station and tried to leave via a different route from platform 3 to Mumbai.

However, during a joint patrol by the Mills Colony Police and the Drugs Control Team, Sub-Inspector Suresh, suspecting their movements, stopped them. Upon inspection, the police found the cannabis in their bags and arrested the couple, transferring them to the police station, the police said.

#### **Car-borne criminals posing as** surveyors rob valuable from house

PNS KHAMMAM

Recently, officials conducted surveys in the villages of Telangana. On November 9 last year, caste census survey was conducted in Telangana, and later, in January, field-level surveys were conducted to select eligible people for new ration cards, Indiramma houses, Rythu Bharosa, and Indiramma Atmiya Bharosa schemes.

The government announced that those who could take part in the caste survey can register between Februay 16 and 18.

A caste census survey will be held again from February 16 to 18. This survey is being conducted again for those who did not participate in the previous caste census. Unfortunately, some criminals are taking advantage of the surveys to take the gullible people for a ride.

Criminals, posing as surveyors, are coming to homes, takpeople that an OTP will be sent to their phone, which they should provide. Some are emptying bank accounts, while others are attacking lone individuals and looting their homes.

In this instance, four car-

The counting of hundi offerings

for the mini festival began on

Thursday at the TTD function

borne criminals arrived at the home of Shilam Yugandhar Reddy in Sundarayyanagar Wyra Municipality limits. They knocked on the door, claiming they had come for a survey. The elderly woman, Venkata Ramamma (65), who was alone at home, opened the door, thinking they were indeed there for the survey, and invited them in to sit. The four criminals, who initially appeared to be conducting a survey, began asking details from her. She, unaware of their intentions, answered their questions. Once they confirmed that there was no one else at home and no one was around outside, they signaled to each other. In an instant, they tied her hands and legs and put a gag over her mouth to prevent her from screaming, and fled with bootv. They took away 18 tolas of gold ornaments worth about Rs 15 house, and within minutes, they were back in the car and fled the

Police registered a case and investigation is on.

# Gangula: Caste census report unscientific

PNS KARIMNAGAR

Former Minister and Karimnagar MLA Gangula Kamalakar here on Friday warned that the government will face severe consequences for discriminating against Backward Classes (BC) communities and belittling them.

Speaking at a media conference held at his residence in Karimnagar, Gangula Kamalakar said that when the government promised to conduct a caste census, the BC community appreciated it. He stated that the Congress government, however, had been deceiving the people for the past 75 years, and even recently, they attempted to take them for a ride again. He pointed out that in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, people from BC communities ther Telangana nor Andhra Pradesh has had a BC Chief Minister to date,



Former minister Gangula Kamalakar speaking to the media in Karimnagar on Friday

which he expressed as a matter of concern. He said the BC communities have been severely wronged and humiliated.

He recalled that in November 2021, the then Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao had set up a BC Commission and a caste census ev was launched, but after the was halted. He clarified that the

government had explicitly mentioned the caste census in Government Order No. 9. He also referred to the caste census conducted by the Bihar government, which was rejected by the High Court due to the lack of scientific methodology, and expressed congovernment changed, the process ment would repeat the same mis-

### ACB arrests officials in 4 bribery cases across TG

PNS HYDERABAD

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has intensified its crackdown on corruption, arresting multiple officials across the state for allegedly demanding and accepting bribes in various cases.

In Jogulamba Gadwal, District Panchayat Officer Bogam Shyam Sunder and Panchayat Secretary Ketham Praveen Kumar of Pulluru Grampanchayat were caught accepting a bribe of Rs 2 lakh from a complainant. The officials had allegedly demanded Rs 3 lakh to restore a dug-up road beside the complainant's venture and withdraw a notice issued by the District Panchayat Office. the tainted bribe amount,

results in a chemical test. The two accused were arrested and produced before the Special Judge for ACB cases in Hyderabad. In Nalgonda, ACB offi-

cials apprehended Lavudi Ravi, a Community Surveyor (Outsourcing) in the office of the Tahsildar, Marriguda Mandal. He was caught red-handed while accepting Rs 12,000 as a bribe to conduct a survey of agricultural land in Survey No. 366 of Sarampet Revenue Village. The tainted currency was recovered from his possession, and chemical tests confirmed contact with the bribe amount. He was subsequently arrested and presented before the court. Meanwhile,

convicted GM Sudarshan, which yielded positive Panchayat Secretary of meter installation.

Kotagiri Village, for accepting a bribe of Rs 8,000 in 2014 to facilitate the transfer of a house from the complainant's father to the complainant and his brother. The court sentenced him to rigorous imprisonment for one year and imposed a fine of Rs. 20,000 for violating the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Failure to pay the fine would result in an additional one-month imprisonment.

Hyderabad's Gachibowli, ACB officials arrested Kotte Satish, an Assistant Divisional Engineer in TSGPDCL, Cyber City Circle, for demanding Rs. 75,000 and accepting Rs. 50,000 as a bribe for approving a work to a transformer and CT

# Farmer arrested for dumping dead chicken into reservoir

#### People warned against posting inflammatory online content

PNS KHAMMAM

ACP Raheeman here has warned that strict legal actions will be taken against individuals who make inflammatory comments, share provocative posts, or spread propaganda that hurts the sentiments of others on social media. He issued a statement here on Friday saying that any posts, videos, or photos shared on social media

that could lead to political, caste, religious, or regional disputes, or disrupt public peace and order, will result in severe actions against the individuals involved. He clarified that posting or sharing unnecessary information that would hurt others' sentiments or create divisions in society on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram will be considered a crime.

PNS NALGONDA

The Nalgonda Police arrested poultry farmer Ramavath Rayamallu from Padamati Tanda village for allegedly dumping dead chickens infected with bird flu into the Akkampalli balancing reser-

Special police teams, under the direction of Superintendent of Police Sharat Chandra Pawar, conducted inspections at poultry farms near both the Akkampally and Puttangandi reservoirs. At the same time,

officials from the Animal Husbandry Department investigated the impact of bird flu on local farms and how waste disposal was being managed.

The investigation revealed that a large number of chickens at Rayamallu's farm had died over the past four days due to bird flu. În a panic, he transported the dead birds away from the village and dumped them into the link canal connecting the Puttangandi and Akkampally reservoirs late Thursday night. Rayamallu, who owned nearly 7,000 chick-



ens, chose to dispose of the animals improperly instead of following proper disposal protocols with the guidance of vet-

Both the Puttangandi and Akkampally reservoirs supply drinking water to the residents of Nalgonda and Hyderabad. Despite knowing the potential risk of contamination, Rayamallu opted for the easier disposal method. The police have urged residents of Pedda Adiserla Pally and Gudipalli mandals to avoid dumping any toxic waste into the reservoirs.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR,

LA, HAML, HYDERABAD

# Cong govt committed to welfare of poor: MLA

PNS WANAPARTHY

Wanaparthy MLA Tudi Mega Reddy laid the foundation stones and inaugurated various development programmes in Srirangapur and Pebbair mandals in district.

He distributed Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak cheques. He also participated in several ground-breaking ceremonies in Thomalapally and Shakapuram village under Pebbair mandal. Additionally, he distributed Chief Minister Relief Fund cheques.

He participated in the foundation laying and inauguration of drainage systems, cement concrete roads, women's buildings, and other developmental programmes in villages, such as Shakapuram, Thomalapally, Ramannapet, Rampuram, Gummadama, Tippayapalli, Nagasanipalli. He also distrib-



cheques to beneficiaries in Wanaparthy on Friday

uted Kalyana Lakshmi and Shaadi Mubarak cheques. Speaking on the occasion,

he stated that the Congress party is working for the development of the poor.

Congress party leaders from the mandal participated in the event, including Market Chairman Pramodini, Vice Chairman Jayavardhan Reddy, Block Congress President Srinivasulu Goud, Working President Sagar, Ranjith Kumar, Bhanu Prakash Reddy, Ramachandra Reddy, Surender Goud, Market Director Raman Goud, Vinay, Ramulu Yadav, Venkatan and other Congress party leaders.

#### Police allegedly whisk away BRS leader at midnight

PNS NALGONDA

The police are accused of displaying excessive zeal at midnight on Thursday at Chandur when they conducted a raid to arrest former Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency member, Annaparthi Shekar. He is the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader. The police allegedly broke open the doors of the BRS leader's house at midnight and whisked him away. The police action created panic in the vil-

lage.
The family members expressed fear for the safety of Shekar. The local police, when inquired, denied that Shekar was arrested.

Shekhar's wife told the media that unidentified individuals had whisked away her husband at midnight. They claimed that they were the police, but they did not specify on what charges they had arrested Shekar.



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar visiting under-construction hospital at Lingareddyguda in

### Need to speed up construction of hospital stressed

PNS RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar visited the under- construction 100bed hospital in Lingareddyguda of Farooqnagar mandal and reviewed

the progress of the project.

During his visit, Veerlapalli
Shankar directed the contractors to speed up the construction of the dialysis centre within the hospital. He also interacted with doctors and staff, emphasising the need to complete the hospital within the next four to five months and make it accessible to people.

Several leaders and officials participated in the inspection, including Congress mandal unit leaders Challa Srikanth Reddy, Balaraj Goud, Lingareddy Guda Ashok, Ramesh Goud, Suresh Goud, Mallesh Yadav, Sridhar Goud, Fakir Bhasha, Laxmikant Reddy, Mangali Mallesh, Shabad Shankaraiah, Raikal Srinivas, Mubarak, former MPTC Srisailam, Shekhar, Kittu, and oth-

#### FORM-F Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML (See rule 7 (c) File No.: C6/11/2025-LHS Dated: 14-02-2025 Where as the following notifications were issued and Gazette: were published for the Public purpose for Hyderabad Airpor Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta Corridor-VI, situated at Share-E-Hyderabad Village Bahadurapura Mandal of Hyderabad District. In response to the Said Notifications the following affected person (Property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiations. The details of the willing effected persons are as follows S.NO. NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE GAZETTE NO. & DATE C8/27/2024 - LHS (26 to 50) HAML No. 22, Date 16.11, 2024 Sketch Premises Extent in Smt. Akhtari Begum, Sio. Late Qazi Salahuddin, R/o.22-1-63, Kali Kabhar, Hyderabad.500024

Smt. Kulsoom Fatima, Dío. LHS 56 22-3-634 144.44 Late Syed Khursheed Hussain Razvi, Wo. Syed Ali Moosavi, R/o. 8-2-803/B/7/A, Banjara Hills, Zahamagar, Hyderabad. It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad Districti Special

Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rascolpura, Hyderabad within the Seven days of publication of this Notification

Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad



#### ACROSS THE STATES



#### **Over 50 crore devotees take** holy dip at Sangam: UP

ver 50 crore devotees have taken a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam till Friday evening during the ongoing Maha Kumbh, the Uttar Pradesh government said. The participation marks the largest congregation in human history for any religious, cultural, or social event, the state government, which is hosting the mega fair in Prayagraj, it said. It added that the footfall at the Hindu pilgrimage has surpassed the population count of all countries except India and China. Being held after 12 years, the Maha Kumbh started on January 13 and will continue till February 26 on the banks of the Triveni Sangam -- the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers, considered holy among Hindus. Despite a deadly stampede on January 29, the fair continued to draw millions of pilgrims from India and the world daily. According to the government, over 92 lakh devotees had taken a dip till 6 pm on Friday alone, pushing the overall footfall at Maha Kumbh past 50 crore (till February 14).



#### Woman takes help of lover to kill husband

man was killed allegedly by his wife, her lover and one Amore person in Shajapur district in Madhya Pradesh, a police official said on Friday. The incident took place in Farat Khedi village under Mohan Badodia police station limits on Wednesday, he added. "Accused Mamta left the door of her house open to let in her lover Rahul Malviya and the latter's friend Sunil Malviya with the intention of killing her husband Mukesh Malviya (38). They slit the throat of Mukesh," Superintendent of Police Yashal Singh Rajput told reporters. "While killing him, a finger of Rahul Malviya got chopped off and was lying on the scene of the crime. Based on leads provided by the cyber cell and an informer, Mamta, Rahul and Sunil were arrested later that night. They have confessed to the crime." the SP said.



#### Police busts fake call centre in Delhi, 8 held

olice have busted a fake call centre, run in a rented house Din Delhi's Badarpur area and have arrested eight people, officials said on Friday. The matter came to light on February 4 after a man filed a complaint of being duped of Rs 18,000 under the pretext of providing a loan, police said. The complainant told the police, that a man, who posed as an official from Axis Bank, promised to provide loans and took the amount in the name of filing charges, police said. During the investigation, the police conducted raids and busted a fake call centre in Badarpur on Thursday. Eight people were arrested, including six women, police said. They also recovered 25 mobile phones and wifi dongles from their possession. "During interrogation, the accused revealed that they used to commit fraud by calling people and getting them to transfer money to get loans. In return for this work, the accused got a salary and a commission from the defrauded amount," police said.



### India-B'desh border talks next week

#### FENCING. ATTACKS BY MISCREANTS ON AGENDA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The border forces of India and Bangladesh will hold their biannual talks here next week with issues such as border fence construction and attacks on BSF personnel and civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants figuring among the discussion points, an official statement said on Friday.

The 55th Director General-Level Border Co-ordination Conference between BSF and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be organised at the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters here between February 17-20 February, the first top-level meeting between the two sides post the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August last

The Indian side will be led

by BSF Director General (DG) Daljit Singh Chawdhary while the BGB delegation will be headed by Maj General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui.

Discussions will be held on prevention against attack/assault on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by Bangladesh-based miscreants/nationals, how to prevent trans-border crimes, construction of single row fence, action against Indian Insurgent Groups in Bangladesh, issues related to border infrastructure, joint efforts for effective implementation Coordinated Border Management Plan and Confidence Building Measures

The last edition of these biannual talks was held in Dhaka in March last year.

and other issues.

# Modi invites US universities to open campus in India

PNS WASHINGTON

India and the US have agreed to strengthen collaborations between their higher education institutions, facilitate study abroad and explore opportunities for setting up campuses of premier American colleges in

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump during their wide-ranging talks at the White House on Thursday also recognised that the talent flow and movement of students, researchers and employees, has mutually benefitted both countries.

According to the latest Open Doors Report, the number of Indian students studying in the US in the academic year 2023-24 is at 3,31,602, a rise of 23 per cent from 2022-23 when the number stood at 2,68,923.

"President Trump and Prime Minister Modi noted the importance of advancing the peopleto-people ties between the two countries. In this context, they noted that the more than 300,000-strong Indian student community contributes over USD 8 billion annually to the US

economy and helped create a number of Excellence, and setting up of off-International student enrollment shore campuses of premier educational institutions of the US in

important link in our relationship. To deepen our people-topeople ties, we will soon open new Indian consulates in Los Angeles and Boston." He also said, "We have invit-

India," the statement said.

During the joint press confer-

ence, Modi also said," The Indian

community in America is an

ed American universities and educational institutions to open offshore campuses in India." SEVIS stands for Students

in the United States in 2023 showed a substantial increase from the calendar year 2022.

over USD 8 billion annually to the US

The total number of SEVIS records for active F-1 and M1 students was 1,503,649 in the calendar year 2023, an increase of 10.4 per cent from the calendar year 2022, according to Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVP) 2023 SEVIS by the Numbers Report.

and Exchange Information System.

### Union min cautions people against 'self-styled' health counsellors

PNS AHMEDABAD

Union minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Friday expressed concern over a "new genre" of unqualified and "self-styled counsellors" advising people on health and lifestyle, and rued that there was no regulation for them unlike doctors. He also held such people

responsible for spreading "dis-

Singh, who is also a diabetes specialist, was addressing a gathering of doctors and healthcare experts after inau-gurating the 'World Congress of Diabetes', which will go on till February 16."A huge, huge

caution against a new genre of self-styled counsellors in Delhi.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

on Friday said agreements and

disagreements are the strengths

of democracy, but a "planned

deadlock", be it in Vidhan

Sabhas or parliament, is not

Birla was speaking to

reporters here on the sidelines

of a two-day orientation pro-

gramme for the members of

the Haryana Legislative

Assembly which commenced

PNS CHANDIGARH



You have a variety of diet charts in the market today. More than information, it is disinformation in this country, which plays havoc," he said.

"They will impress you with graphs and you think it's the final truth. Because that's what is driving our culture today. And unfortunately, you don't

the soul of democracy. An

the strength of democracy but

I believe that be it in Vidhan

Sabhas or Parliament, a

planned deadlock is not appro-

priate for democracy," Birla

deadlocks is neither good for

the country nor any state as

they disrupt the House and leg-

islative business is also impact-

ed with precious time getting

Birla said it is a matter of

wasted," he added.

This new trend of planned

'Planned deadlock' not good for democracy: Om Birla

have any regulation for them, and there is no mandatory registration for them like regular doctors," he added. Earlier, uneducated quacks used to do such things, but now English-speaking people are doing it, the minister said.

Singh also called for collective efforts to fight diabetes and obesity in the country.

"In order to overcome this challenge of diabetes and obesity, I think what is important is to have a very synergized approach. Because preventing diabetes is too serious a problem to be left to a diabetologist...It is a national responsibility. All the stakeholders have to be brought together," he

#### **'Airstrikes after** 'Pulwama' befitting reply to terrorists'

economy and helped create a

number of direct and indirect

"Recognising the importance

jobs," the joint statement said.

of international academic collab-

orations in fostering innova-

tion, improving learning out-

comes and development of a

future-ready workforce, both

leaders resolved to strengthen

collaborations between the high-

er education institutions through

efforts such as joint and dual

degree and twinning pro-

"Establishing joint Centres of

PNS HALDWANI

grammes," it added.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday paid homage to the martyrs of the Pulwama terror attack and praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving a befitting reply through airstrikes in Pakistan.

Forty jawans were killed when a Jaish-e-Mohammad suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden car into a CRPF convoy at Lethpora-Pulwama on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on February 14, 2019.

Days later, Indian Air Force fighter jets bombed terror training camps in Balakot, deep inside Pakistan.

On the anniversary of the terror attack, Shah said the martyrdom of the jawans made the country's borders safe.

In parliament, we have

nial-era laws. We have also

framed new laws after inde-

pendence as per requirement

It is the job of a state assem-

bly and Lok Sabha to enact a

law, he said as he stressed the

importance of discussions and

debates on enacting a good law.

he said people elect them with

great hope and aspirations and

the elected representatives

should try to resolve the peo-

Speaking about legislators,

of the time, said Birla.

# PM-chaired panel to name next CEC, says sources



PNS NEW DELHI

A selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet here on Monday to finalise the name of the next chief election commissioner. sources said on Friday.

The panel also comprises the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Home Minister Amit Shah It will meet on Monday at the prime minister's official residence ahead of the retirement of incumbent Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on February 18.

The panel will recommend a name from among the candidates shortlisted by a search committee. The president will then appoint the next CEC based on the recommendation.

After Rajiv Kumar, Goel last year.

"This is a sensitive issue. It

Gyanesh Kumar is the senior-most election commissioner. His tenure is till January 26, 2029. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu is the other election commissioner.

So far, the senior-most election commissioner (EC) was elevated as CEC following the retirement of the incumbent. However, after a new law on appointments of the CEC and ECs came into force last year, a search committee shortlists names of five secretary-level officers for consideration by a prime minister-led panel for appointment to the posts.

Besides the CEC, a new EC could also be appointed to fill the vacancy created by

While provisions of the "Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023" are being applied for the first time to appoint a CEC, it was used to appoint ECs Gyanesh Kumar and Sandhu to fill the vacancies created by the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey and the resignation of Arun

#### BJP govt in Delhi likely to be sworn in by Feb 19-20

"Discussion and dialogue is pride that India is the biggest

PNS NEW DELHI

The swearing-in ceremony of the BJP government in Delhi is likely to take place on February 19 or 20 and the new dispensation will give priority to clean drinking water supply, improved civic infrastructure, among other things, party leaders said.

The prime minister is coming back from his foreign visit and soon the observers for a meeting of the BJP legislature

party will be appointed, newly elected BJP MLA and national secretary of the party

Manjinder Singh Sirsa said.

"The new government will start working around February 19-20," said the Rajouri Garden MLA who is considered a contender for the post of Chief Minister or a ministerial berth.

Sirsa said that he expected that the BJP legislature party meeting would be held around February 18-19 and added.

#### **Manipur Assembly can** be revived in future: BJP

democracy in the world. After

Independence, under the guid-

ance of the constitution, be it

the state assemblies or parlia-

ment, new laws have been

PNS IMPHAL

enacted, he noted.

Reaffirming its commitment to maintaining Manipur's territorial integrity, the BJP on Friday said the state assembly, which was put in a suspended animation following the imposition of President's rule, could be revived on any future date depending on the ground situation.

Sambit Patra, the BIP's northeast region in-charge, said that his party was committed to continuing efforts to maintain peace and normalcy in the state, which has been hit by months-long violence between Meiteis and Kukis and remains polarised along ethnic lines.

# Can't allow bar bodies to be divided on caste, religion: SC

PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to order reservations on caste basis in the lawvers body elections saying it would open a "Pandora's box" without any empirical

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said neither would it permit bar members to be divided on caste lines nor allow it

to be politicised.

will open a Pandora's box. Without any empirical data, it can't be done. Reserving seats for women was a different thing. We will not permit bar members to be divided on caste lines or let the

issues to be politicised," it said The bench was

Kasab. We had got Rana's

online statement due to which

Pakistan's involvement was

proved (in 26/11). He was in

American protection at that

time. Rana was India's criminal

hearing a plea of NGO Advocates for Social Justice seeking reservations in the upcom-

ing Bengaluru Bar Association elections to members belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes.

"There are serious arguable issues from both sides, which can be deliberated in a healthy atmosphere. We don't want different bar bodies to be divided on such grounds. This is not our intention," it added.

The matter was then tagged with a pending issue on the strengthening of bar associations and coming up for hearing on February 17

#### Prez urges women to gather courage, dream big

PNS BENGALURU

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday urged every woman to be courageous, dream big and use full strength and potential to achieve dreams.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the International Women's Conference of the Art of Living here, she said that India's 'Nari Shakti' is rising to aspire, achieve and contribute.

Whether in science, sports, politics, art, or culture, our sisters and daughters are moving ahead with their heads held high. They are making their families, institutions and the country proud,

Murmu said. "It is not possible to break barriers and challenge stereotypes



every woman to gather courage, dream big and utilise all her strength and potential to achieve her dreams. Every little step that each of you takes toward your goal is a step toward a developed India and a developed world," she

Murmu also stressed how in today's world, mental health has become one of the most crucial

issues facing people of all age groups.
"Women, in particular, are at

the crossroads of multiple challenges, including competing professionally, meeting societal expectations, and fulfilling personal aspirations. Sometimes, cultural norms make it difficult for women to speak openly about their emotional wellbeing," she said.

Noting that each of us needs to understand that mental wellness is fundamental to a woman's ability to lead a meaningful life and contribute to her family, society, and the world, she said, "You all can help break the silence surrounding mental health issues by creating safe spaces for dialogue and providing support systems."

#### 'Ready to lodge 26/11 accused Rana in jail once extradited' PNS NEW DELHI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday said the state government is prepared to lodge 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana in jail once he is extradited from the United States.

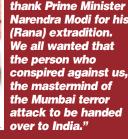
The chief minister's comments came after US President Donald Trump announced that his administration has approved the extradition of 'very evil" Rana, wanted by Indian probe agencies for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, "to face justice in India"."We kept Kasab, what is the big deal here? We will

#### sised Mumbai's security infrakeep him for sure," Fadnavis said here when asked about structure was capable of handling high-profile criminals. Maharashtra's preparedness once Rana is extradited.

the home portfolio, empha-

The CM, who also handles

thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his (Rana) extradition. We all wanted that the person who



The case is in Mumbai so he

(Rana) will be brought to

Mumbai. We handled Ajmal

and should face the law here. We will get final justice in the "I want to profusely 26/11 case," the ĆM asserted. Ajmal Kasab, one of the 10 terrorists involved in the November 26, 2008, Mumbai terror attacks, was arrested from one of the carnage sites in Mumbai. He was lodged in jails in Maharashtra during his trial for four years and hanged in Pune's Yerwada cen-

> tral jail in 2012. Fadnavis said during the investigation, Pakistan's role in the terror attack was exposed

He thanked Prime Minister

Narendra Modi for his efforts to bring Rana to India for trial. "I want to profusely thank

Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his (Rana) extradition. We all wanted that the person who conspired against us, the mastermind of the Mumbai terror attack to be handed over to India," he said. The chief minister said ini-

tially America was reluctant to hand over Rana to India and wanted to protect him but due to the initiative of the Prime Minister, extradition of the key 26/11 accused has been in a way cleared by America and its President Trump.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

### **US U-turn on Ukraine war**

Trump and Putin have agreed to negotiate an end to the Ukraine war, a move that could have far-reaching implications for global peace and trade

he US President Trump has had a good relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and that is now showing in the policy shift of the US. The US stance on the Ukraine war now seems to be taking a U-turn as in all likelihood the US would now go soft on Russia and leave Ukraine in the cold. In a significant geopolitical development, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin have agreed to initiate negotiations aimed at ending the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. This move marks a notable shift in US foreign policy and has elicited varied reactions globally. President Trump held a 90-minute phone conversation with President Putin, discussing a range of topics, with a primary focus on the situation in Ukraine. Following the call, Trump announced that both Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had expressed a willingness to pursue peace, leading to the initiation of negotiations to end the war. Trump indicated that these talks would commence immediately, with a potential meet-



ing with Putin in Saudi Arabia in the near future. Ukrainian and European leaders have expressed concerns about being sidelined in the negotiations and the potential for unfavourable concessions.

The decision by the US to engage directly with Russia has raised questions about a potential shift in its support for Ukraine. By recognising Ukraine's NATO membership as 'impractical' and the return of Russianoccupied territories as 'illusionary,' the US appears to be moving away from its previous stance of isolating Russia. This shift has led to concerns that Ukraine may be left in a precarious position, especially if European allies are unable to fill the void left

by a potential US withdrawal. The announcement of potential peace talks has had immediate effects on global markets. European stock markets have shown optimism, with indices such as Spain's Ibex 35 reaching new highs. Oil prices have also declined, with Brent crude falling below \$75 per barrel, as traders anticipate a relaxation of sanctions on Russian producers. However, uncertainties remain. Analysts caution that while a de-escalation could stabilise energy and food markets, the specifics of any agreement will determine the long-term impacts. The agricultural sector, in particular, is closely monitoring the situation, given that Russia and Ukraine together account for a significant portion of global wheat exports. A resolution to the conflict could ease supply constraints, but logistical challenges and infrastructure damage in Ukraine may continue to pose obstacles. India, as a major importer of commodities like sunflower oil, stands to be affected by these developments. A potential end to the conflict could lead to more predictable trade flows and possibly lower prices for key imports. While Trump- Putin negotiations it offers a glimmer of hope for peace, the potential shifts in alliances and the impacts on global markets warrant careful consideration by all stakeholders involved.



Kumbh Mela: The catalyst for

# Gandhi's freedom struggle



It was at this grand confluence of faith and politics that Gandhi fully grasped his growing influence, reinforcing his resolve for satyagraha

notable episodes in the history of the Kumbh occurred in 1915 when Mahatma Gandhi visited the Haridwar gathering shortly after returning from South Africa after twenty-one years. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Gandhi's political mentor, had advised him to undertake a nationwide tour to understand India's socio-political landscape before formulating his strategies - and plunging himself into the dynamics of the freedom movement. It was during this tour that Gandhi decided to attend the Kumbh, primarily to visit Mahatma Munshiram at his Gurukul in Rishikesh and to oversee the activities of the Servants of India Society.

While Gandhi's views on various issues such as cleanliness and sanitation, including that of communal harmony were critical - which Gandhi distinctly mentions in this autobiography too - his brief political debut at Haridwar Kumbh Mela pointed towards the necessity of bridging the communal divide to achieve a more conscientious goal for freedom. Gandhi was also awestruck, not only by the overwhelming crowds but also by the chaos, superstition, and lack of hygiene. He noted the rampant disregard for cleanliness, which tarnished the sanctity of

'The banks of the Ganga, a symbol of purity, were defiled by human waste and negligence, he lamented in his speeches decades later. In 1947, remembering his Kumbh experience, Gandhi remarked, 'We must ensure that our religious gatherings become sanctuaries of cleanliness and serenity, not breeding grounds for disease and disorder.

It was also here in Haridwar that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi first grasped the profound impact his humble efforts in South Africa had on Bharat's people. Reflecting on this experience, he wrote in The Story of My Experiments with Truth: "My business was mostly to keep sitting in the tent, giving darshan and holding religious and other discussions with numerous pilgrims who called on history - the All India Hindu me. This left me not a minute



which I could call my own. I was followed even to the bathing ghat by these darshanseekers, nor did they leave me alone whilst I was having my meals. Thus, it was in Haridwar that I realised what a deep impression my humble services in South Africa had made throughout the whole of

The Kumbh Mela at Haridwar proved to be a pivotal moment in shaping Mahatma Gandhi's sense of purpose and his eventual entry into the political arena of India's freedom movement. This deepened his realisation that the people of India looked up to him, not just as a spiritual figure, but as a leader capable of addressing the nation's struggles.

This realisation planted the seeds of confidence and responsibility within Gandhi, inspiring him to expand his mission of service and truth to the broader cause of India's liberation - which resulted in his first non-violent satyagraha in 1917 in Champaran, Bihar. The overwhelming response he received at the Kumbh Mela reinforced his belief in the power of collective action and solidified his resolve to dedicate his life to the fight for India's freedom.

It is also fascinating to note that Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Haridwar and his entry into the political arena coincided with a landmark moment in Mahasabha formation during

THE KUMBH MELA AT HARIDWAR **PROVED** 

TO BE A **PIVOTAL** MOMENT IN SHAPING MAHATMA GANDHI'S SENSE OF **PURPOSE** AND HIS EVENTUAL

ENTRY INTO THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

vour of the Haridwar Kumbh, Gandhi joined luminaries such as Swami Shraddhanand, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, and other visionaries at the inaugural conference of the Sarvadeshak (All India) Hindu Sabha, marking a pivotal chapter in India's sociopolitical awakening. Gandhi's participation at the Kumbh was also available to British intelligence, who had made records - now available in the

Regional State Archives. The colonial period introduced a fresh perspective to the Kumbh Mela, with European observers chronicling its magnificence and adding valuable historical context. Fascinated by the immense scale and diversity of the pilgrimage, the British left behind detailed records that provide significant insights into the evolution of the Maha Kumbh Mela which also can be found in the well-documented writings of James Prinsep, a British colonial

administrator. It is worth referring to The Sunday Guardian's article, Beyond Faith: How Kumbh Mela Reshapes the Course of History, which highlights the Kumbh Mela's role in India's independence movement. A 1920 British intelligence document, displayed at the Allahabad Museum, reveals a pivotal 1918 meeting during the Mela. This meeting adopt-

ed a memorial supporting political reforms, demanded Panchayats, permanent settlements, and tenant protections, and founded the UP Peasants Association. Led by Pt Madan Mohan Malviya, the association grew to 450 branches, fostering unity among peasants and opposing zamindar dominance.

The Sunday Guardian further highlights the pivotal role of the Kumbh Mela in shaping India's post-independence democracy, particularly during the Emergency. The JP Movement gained significant momentum at this Kumbh, with the Sadhu Samaj lending strong support. Events such as the 'Dharma Sansad' and 'Sadhu Sammelans (congregation)' cemented widespread support for the Janata Party across the Hindi heartland.

The 'Maha Kumbh Mela' transcends its role as a spiritual gathering, reflecting the profound confluence of the sacred and the secular. While it offers a space for deep

introspection and devotion, it also acts as a mirror to the socio-political currents that shape Indian society. This timeless festival continues to evolve, bridging spiritual and worldly realms. The Kumbh Mela remains a powerful testament to India's enduring cultural legacy.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are

# WazirX hack exposes crypto risks: A call for stringent regulations



Such cyberattacks expose regulatory gaps across jurisdictions and underscore the need for investor protection and the need for stricter crypto regulations

t the 2023 G20 Summit under India's presiden-Cy, world economies pledged to create a global regulatory framework for crypto assets. While each country must establish Its regulations, international collaboration is equally important.

This need for both domestic and global regulatory frameworks is exemplified by the recent WazirX case, which underscores the urgency of addressing vulnerabilities in the crypto ecosystem. WazirX, one of India's leading cryptocurrency exchanges, suffered a cyberattack in July 2024 by the North Korean hacker group Lazarus. This has been confirmed by a joint statement issued by the governments of the United States, Japan and South Korea and the three countries have pledged to collaborate to counter this.

In India, the attack has raised concerns about cybersecurity risks and the reliability of custodial exchanges. Custodial exchanges, where assets are held centrally pose significant risks, as evidenced by this cvber-attack. This episode has exposed broader systemic risks and has revived the con-



crypto ecosystem in the country. Approximately 4.4 million users were affected.

The Anatomy of a Crypto Crisis WazirX's holding company, Zettai Pte Ltd, is based in Singapore, meaning any legal recourse must go through Singapore's regulatory channels, even though over 95 per cent of WazirX's users

were Indian investors. In response to the crisis, WazirX introduced a Restructuring Scheme aimed at user recovery and longterm operational stability. The proposed scheme promises quicker asset recovery, profitsharing mechanisms and operational changes. Last month, WazirX received approval from the Singapore High Court to propose its Scheme of Arrangement to creditors. Additionally,

asset rebalancing exercise, Scheme includes the issuance will receive 85 per cent of their portfolio value as of July 18, 2024. Following the breach, WazirX faced a significant shortfall in ERC-20 tokens, leaving it unable to fully cover user balances. Since matching individual token losses would be complex and impractical, the proposed Scheme aims to distribute available assets equitably among all creditors, based on their claim values at the time of the attack.

This standardised valuation approach ensures fairness and transparency and has been approved by the Singapore court.

The Scheme of Arrangement The Scheme of Arrangement promises to offer a legally binding path to recovery, ensuring equitable treatment of all creditors, regardless of the size of their claims or the type of cryptocurrency they hold. This approach takes an egalitarian stance, providing to better protect investors and all users with a fair opportunity to recover their assets. The restructuring and resolution process will only proceed with the approval of a majority of creditors. To enhance WazirX recently completed its recovery prospects, the

which ensures hack victims of Recovery Tokens (RTs), which would give creditors a stake in future platform profits and assets. If the Scheme is rejected, WazirX may face liquidation, which would likely erode value, force the sale of assets at distressed prices and drag out the recovery process for years with uncertain outcomes.

The Way Forward WazirX's restructuring plan represents a bold approach to crisis management, prioritising immediate user recovery and laying the groundwork for a more resilient crypto ecosystem. However, the broader lesson from this case is the urgent need for a robust regulatory framework for virtual digital assets in India. As the G20 emphasised, global cooperation and regulatory consistency are key to addressing the risks in the crypto ecosystem. India must develop a comprehensive regulatory framework mitigate future risks, ensuring the country's preparedness for a rapidly evolving digital economy.

(The writer is CEO & Cofounder, The Policy Consensus Centre; views are personal)

**SAJJAN KUMAR CONVICTED IN SIKH RIOTS** Madam — Congress leader Sajjan Kumar stands convicted in yet another case related to anti-Sikh violence in Delhi after the death of the then PM Indira Gandhi, gunned down by two Sikh security guards more than 40 years ago. There were no FIRs and the Congress goons roamed across Delhi to burn alive the Sikhs along with damaging their property continuously for 3 days when the Army was called to contain the violence. The moot question is, "Who was respon-

Obviously, the violence had the blessings of Rajiv Gandhi, who took over as PM immediately after the death of her mother and justified the killings on camera, yet no case was made against him or the family, and even the courts remained aloof to the bare fact about the responsibility of Rajiv Gandhi while hearing the petitions pertaining to the violence. Sajjan Kumar or Jagdish Tytler were only carrying out the orders to finish the Sikhs as much as possible within 3 days. The same courts as well as the media tried and tried Gujarat CM Narendra Modi for the violence that erupted after the gruesome burning alive of 59 Hindus. Doesn't it establish that the special family is much bigger than scores of poor Hindus in the eyes of the media and judiciary?

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala Cantt

**US BANS ASSOCIATED PRESS** Madam— The decision by U.S. President Donald Trump to ban the renowned news agency Associated Press (AP) from entering the White House is a severe blow to democracy. This is not merely a restriction on a media institution but an attempt to crush independent journalism. The Trump administration accused AP of misusing the term "of America," but can this truly justify curbing press freedom? The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees the

#### New Income Tax Bill simplifies taxation

E EDITO



he newly tabled Income Tax Bill brings much-needed reforms to India's tax system and deserves commendation. By replacing the outdated Income Tax Act of 1961, the bill aims to simplify tax laws, reduce litigation and remove obsolete provisions, making the tax process more transparent and efficient for both taxpayers and the government. One of the most notable changes is the

to silence the voice of truth.

The role of the media is to provide the public with unbiased information and critically examine government policies. Blocking a media organisation from entering the White House, the epicentre of power, is a direct attack on the press. History bears witness that wherever governments have attempted to suppress the press, dictatorship has followed. An independent media is the fourth pillar of democracy, and any restriction on it is an infringement on public rights. In a true democracy, power does not lie with the ruling authorities but with the people. Freedom of the press is the most powerful tool to amplify the voice of the

Jai Prakash Gupta | Tirunelveli

#### **RAGGING MUST STOP**

Madam — The Kottayam Nursing College ragging incident is a crude press the right to operate fearlessly, reminder that ragging is very much preimpartially, and independently. However, vailing in our colleges without any when those in power seek to evade deterrent and despite ragging being a

increased tax rebate under Section 87A, which will now provide up to Rs 60,000 for individuals with a net taxable income of Rs 12 lakh or below. This is a significant step towards reducing the tax burden on the middle class, offering greater financial relief.

Furthermore, the introduction of two clear deductions under the new tax regime, a Rs 75,000 standard deduction and NPS contributions, enhances tax planning options for individuals, making it simpler to manage finances. Although the income tax slabs remain unchanged for FY 2025-26, the streamlined approach will likely benefit taxpayers in the long run, fostering greater compliance and reducing unnecessary complications. Overall, this bill paves the way for a more modern and efficient tax system that is better suited to today's economic landscape.

Vishal Mayur | Tumakuru

accountability, their first move is often criminal offence. These ragging incidents continued for three months, telling how much ordeal freshers had to face during

that period. Till about the 90s, ragging in the educational institutes used to be a platform to create affinity, closeness, and rapport between first-year students and seniors. Sadly, it has now taken an unfortunate turn and become a tool to torture. Merely getting parents and students to sign the undertaking was never going to help and prevent ragging from taking place. Punishing culpable students is an absolute must, but college administration must be held accountable in such cases too. One out-of-the-box idea could be to set a rule that any student who is found guilty of ragging and torturing juniors would not be allowed to participate in final placement or not be given passing out certificates. We have to hit it where it hurts them most

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

### **FIRST COLUMN**

#### **SHAPING INDIA'S AI FUTURE**

As Al redefines global power dynamics, India is

emerging as a key player in its governance and innovation



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

rime Minister Modi's Paris and Washington visit, meetings with the two most powerful leaders from the developed world, comes at a time of shifting geopolitical sands. The buzzword around both these high-level bilaterals was high-end technology cooperation in a world, increasingly getting fragmented. India was the co-chair of the Al Action Summit in Paris, along with the host country France. This is the third global-level event on Artificial Intelligence, making it a Kumbh of technology leaders, policy makers, experts, corporates and world leaders in France. The theme was how to harness the power of this nearly mind-bending technology, whose evolution has been compared to the invention of the wheel and humans learning to use fire safely.

Almost simultaneously, China released a nimble version of the generative AI tool DeepSeek, which is currently a huge challenger to US billions of dollars infused into US technology companies' almost monopolistic dominance on Al tools and standards. US President Biden in his last week at the Oval Office had passed an executive order called the Interim Final Rule (IFR) on Framework for Artificial Intelligence Diffusion, essentially imposing export controls on high-end software and hardware required for AI development across nations which may be considered inimical to US interests (i.e. China) but also, close allies



While the global technology industry stakeholders have requested the new President to be consistent with the Trump Administration's previously stated, Regulatory Freeze Order, and suspend implementation of the Al Diffusion Rule until the Secretary of Commerce and other relevant officials can review the rule appropriately and pursue robust stakeholder engagement so that the rules reflect the government's objectives and ensure companies can engage with key US trading partners. President Trump is yet to revoke the executive order signed by his predecessor, even though he did sign a fresh one on January 23, which potentially hints at a pause.

Inree days into the Uval Office President Trump signed the executive order on Al development and deployment stating the purpose as "The United States has long been at the forefront of artificial intelligence (AI) innovation, driven by the strength of our free markets, world-class research institutions, and entrepreneurial spirit. To maintain this leadership, we must develop AI systems that are free from ideological bias or engineered social agendas. With the right Government policies, we can solidify our position as the global leader in Al and secure a brighter future for all Americans. This order revokes certain existing Al policies and directives that act as barriers to American Al innovation, clearing a path for the United States to act decisively to retain global leadership in artificial intelligence. It is the policy of the United States to sustain and enhance America's global Al dominance in order to promote human flourishing, economic competitiveness, and national secu-

India is aiming to have an equal say on global high tables of Al governance, innovation and development. It has an ambitious Al mission of its own, which is heavily dependent on high-end chips and Graphic Processing Units (GPUs) currently available from US technology companies. Any restrictions on access to these high-end processors would upset the ambitious goal envisaged under the India Al mission. The conversation in Paris, India's announcement to host the fourth global Al summit in Delhi, and conversations with President Trump and other leaders this week, are steps in the right direction.

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

# Palestine in ruins: The unbearable cost of war



As political instability deepens and global powers debate the future of Gaza, millions of Palestinians face an uncertain and harrowing future

n October 7, 2003, Hamas fighters successfully launched a massive attack on Israel, but the price that Palestinians had to pay for it is heartbreaking. It will take three centuries to recover from the destruction caused by this war, which lasted for more than 15 months. According to a United Nations survey, it may take more than 350 years to rebuild Palestine, which has been reduced to rubble. The estimated loss in the first four months of the war was \$18.5 billion. At present, about 69 per cent of the structures in Gaza are either damaged or destroyed. More than 50 million tons of rubble have accumulated in the Gaza region, which may take more than 15 years to remove. Piles of rubble are visible throughout Palestine due to bombings and ground operations.

A United Nations report states that the accumulated rubble is approximately 12 times the size of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt. According to estimates, even if more than 100 trucks work continuously, it may still take more than 15 years to clear the debris. Three generations born in tents will likely have to make them their permanent homes for a long time. Reconstruction will require billions of dollars, yet no international institution is willing to invest in an ungoverned region that has seen five wars in less than two decades.

Using satellite data, the United Nations estimated last month that 70 per cent of structures in Gaza have been destroyed, including more than 245,000 residential buildings. The World Bank estimated losses of \$18.5 billion in the first four months of the war—an amount nearly equal to the combined economic output of the West Bank and Gaza in 2022. Major roads have been turned into deep trenches, essential water and electricity infrastructure has been destroyed, and most hospitals are no longer functional due to being targeted during the bombings. According to the United Nations, more than 50,000 people have died in Gaza, 44 per cent of whom are children. The children who have survived are suffering from sickness, stress, insomnia, depression, and fear. They are terrified of every stranger. The children of Gaza have lost the will to live. Amidst the devastation, 96 per cent of children express a desire not to live, and 49 per cent say they would have preferred to die. Among those who feel this way, 72 per cent are boys and 46 per cent are girls. A Netherlands-based organisation, War Child Alliance, has collected shocking and heartbreaking data. The alliance gathered this information from 500 parents or caretakers, including families whose children were crippled in the war or separated from their families.

Their findings revealed that 92 per cent of the children surveyed are unable to accept the reality of war. The smell of gunpowder lingers in Gaza's atmosphere. The situation is so dire that 79 per cent of children experience nightmares, and 73 per cent have become so overwhelmed that their behaviour has turned aggressive. Many scream and moan in their sleep. These children have witnessed their homes and schools reduced to rubble. Their young minds are shattered, unable to comprehend why they are being punished and what crime they have commit-

Devastated by this horrific situation, the entire Palestinian government, including



**DESPITE** MULTIPLE **RESOLUTIONS** CALLING FOR A CEASEFIRE IN THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ALL PREVIOUS **EFFORTS HAD** FAILED. ISRAEL WAS EVEN INCLUDED IN THE LIST OF SHAME, A DOCUMENT THAT RECORDS ALLEGED

RIGHTS **VIOLATIONS AGAINST** CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, has resigned. In his resignation letter, he acknowledged that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are starving. Tensions escalated further when an American airman involved in military operations set himself on fire outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, DC, repeatedly shouting, "No more involvement in genocide." The United Nations has passed a ceasefire resolution, endorsed by 158 nations, including India.

Despite multiple resolutions calling for a ceasefire in the UN General Assembly, all previous efforts had failed. İsrael was even included in the List of Shame, a document that records alleged rights violations against children in armed conflict. In this report, Israel is accused of committing severe violations of children's rights. This inclusion has angered Israel and damaged its international reputation. Several key European Union countries, which previously sympathised with Israel, have now condemned its actions. Despite continued American support, Israel's economy has begun to collapse. In recent months, GDP growth has been only 0.7 per cent. The Israeli army has requested \$16 billion, equivalent to 3 per cent of the country's GDP. Even after the ceasefire, the military requires \$8 billion annually to address new security challenges.

The fiscal deficit has now reached 8 per cent of GDP. Israel is also deeply concerned that fighting has spread to its major business hubs, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.In January, Israel's debt stood at 62 per cent of GDP, which is still lower than the average for most wealthy nations in the OECD. However, prominent credit rating agencies such as Fitch and Moody's have already downgraded Israel's credit rating once this

year, with the possibility of further downgrades shortly. Following the Hamas attack last

year, Israel revoked work permits for 80,000 Palestinian workers. No replacements have been hired, leading to a 40 per cent decline in the construction industry. The same trend is observed in the high-tech sector and other industries. Inflation reached an annual rate of 3.6 per cent last month. If the war had continued any longer, the value of the Israeli shekel might have dropped fur-ther, forcing banks to rely on their reserves. Although a ceasefire is in place, this does not mark the end of the war. A recent statement by US President Donald Trump has crushed any hopes of peace efforts. Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is currently visiting the US, where he has been given priority among the to second-class citizenship. foreign guests invited by the Additionally, the decision to shift President. However, Netanyahu the capital from Tel Aviv to faces growing protests in Israel, driven by both economic instability and widespread public dissent. The situation worsened when Israel's Defense Minister, Benny Gantz, resigned from his position along with other members of his party, putting additional pressure on the government. Both leaders have sparked global controversy following a press conference at the White House, where they announced plans for the US to occupy the Gaza Strip and transform it into a resort city.

The proposed project would turn Gaza into a hub for employment and tourism in West Asia. The entire area would be levelled to develop infrastructure, and the 2.3 million people currently living in Gaza would be relocated to countries such as Egypt and Jordan. However, both Egypt and Jordan have firmly rejected this proposal. Experts argue that international laws and treaties will pose a significant obstacle to

any U.S. attempt to occupy Gaza. Meanwhile, major Arab nations are mobilising against Trump's plan, with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and Turkey openly opposing it.

Hamas has strongly condemned the proposal, labelling it ethnic genocide. Several US lawmakers, both Democrats and Republicans, have also voiced their opposition. In the past, Trump had similarly expressed intentions to occu-Greenfield Island, take control of the Panama Canal, and annex Canada as the 51st state of America.The Israeli parliament has enacted several controversial laws that have further inflamed tensions with Palestine and Arab nations. For example, the Jewish State Bill officially declares Israel as a Jewish state, effectively relegating non-Jewish communities the capital from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is widely seen as an act provocation against Palestinians. Israel also occupies the Syrian territory of the Golan Heights, which has been under Israeli control since the 1967

A massive city, known as Trump City, is currently being developed in the region. The month of Ramadan is approaching, which is likely to bring additional hardships. Tensions surrounding the Al-Aqsa Mosque also intensify during this time, as restrictions are often imposed on Muslim worshippers. At present, the likelihood of renewed conflict appears higher than the prospect of lasting peace. The international community is also deeply concerned about the Trump administration's decision to withdraw US representatives from the United Nations.

(The writer is a former Member of Parliament; views are personal)

# India stands on the brink of an AI-driven revolution

By prioritising comprehensive AI education, ethical governance and transparent regulations, India can lead the global AI revolution

ndia is emerging as a dom- gest that AI will contribute its economy, security, and global influence. At the ongoing AI Summit in Paris, India's leadership in AI highlights its commitment to technological advancement and innovation. The Prime Minister's prominent role at the summit underscores the country's strategic focus on AI, positioning it as ment initiatives, collaboraa counterforce to China's deepfake threats. Whether in AI, digital transformation, or healthcare, India is rapidly evolving into a global technology powerhouse, striving for Al self-reliance and econom-

ic growth. AI is no longer a futuristic con-

inant force in Artificial \$500 billion to the Indian economy by 2025, accounting for 10 per cent of the national GDP. The technology is revolutionising industries, from agriculture to healthcare and revitalising cultural and linguistic heritage. India is not merely adopting AI; it is actively leading the revolution through ambitious governtions with tech giants and extensive investment in AI infrastructure. The Indian government has launched several initiatives to position the country as a leader in AI.

The IndiaAI Mission and the establishment of India's first AI University in Maharashtra cept-it is an immediate reali- reflect a strong commitment to ty reshaping India's digital technological leadership. India's corporate sector is also landscape. Projections sug-Partnerships with global tech investing heavily in AI.



VINAY PATHAK

firms like NVIDIA are helping develop AI solutions tailored to India's unique challenges. AI-driven tools in agriculture, such as CropIn and Intello Labs, assist farmers in predicting weather patterns, optimising irrigation, and detecting crop diseases, thereby boosting productivity and sustainability.

Companies like Infosys and TCS are deploying AI-driven solutions to streamline business processes, automate customer service, and optimise supply chains. Infosys' Nia platform enhances efficiency and reduces operational costs, while Zoho's AI-powered CRM tools empower small and medium enterprises to compete globally. Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are increasingly being utilised by job seekers, with 87 per cent leveraging them to refine resumes and prepare for inter-

Despite its rapid progress, India faces significant challenges in AI adoption. A critical skills shortage in AI-related professions remains a pressing issue. To address this, the National Programme on AI, Concerns. Cyber threats are



launched by NITI Aayog, aims to train over a million workers in AI skills. Additionally, states like Karnataka and Telangana are establishing AI hubs to nurture innovation and talent development. However, while India produces over 1.5 million engineers annually, only a small percentage have the specialised expertise required for AI

development.

growing, with increasing vulnerability to sophisticated cyberattacks. In 2023, a major Indian bank suffered a ransomware attack, disrupting services for millions of customers. AI-powered cyber tools, while beneficial, can be exploited by malicious actors. The dangers of misinformation and AI-generated deepfakes are also becoming more apparent. The viral deepfake video of actor Rashmika Mandanna in 2023 highlighted the risks of AI-driven disinformation. Similarly, AIpowered voice cloning scams

AI is also playing a crucial role in preserving India's cultural and linguistic heritage. Institutions like IIT Madras are developing AI models to revive

icant fraud risks.

are on the rise, posing signif-

endangered languages such as Toda and Gondi.

The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute is using AI to digitise ancient manuscripts, ensuring the preservation of India's historical knowledge. AI is further enhancing the entertainment sector through immersive experiences, such as virtual reality tours of historical sites and AI-curated regional literature and music recommendations.

In healthcare, AI-driven tools like Niramai are revolutionising early cancer detection, while telemedicine platforms like Apollo Telehealth are providing medical access to rural communities. The education sector is benefiting from AIpowered platforms. In disaster management, AI is helping predict natural disasters and

coordinate relief efforts. The Indian Meteorological Department employs AI to analyze weather patterns and issue early warnings for cyclones and floods, thereby minimising casualties.

AI is not merely a technological tool; it is a transformative force shaping India's future. However, the country must strike a balance between innovation and regulation to ensure ethical AI deployment. As AI evolves, India must establish a robust framework to address ethical concerns, security risks, and workforce reskilling. Collaborative efforts between the government, industry, and academia will be key in ensuring AI benefits for the society.

> (The writer is an assistant professor at IIIT, Sonepat; views are personal)

#### MONEY MATTERS



#### **RBI imposes Rs 68 lakh** penalty on 2 banks

he Reserve Bank on Friday said it has imposed penalties totalling Rs 68.1 lakh on two banks -- Nainital Bank and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank -- for contravention of regulatory norms. A penalty of Rs 61.40 lakh was imposed on Nainital Bank Ltd for non-compliance with certain directions on 'Interest Rate on Advances' and 'Customer Service in Banks', RBI said in a statement. Further, RBI imposed a penalty of Rs 6.70 lakh on Ujjivan Small Finance Bank for non-compliance with certain directions issued by RBI on 'Loans and Advances - Statutory and Other Restrictions'. RBI also levied a penalty of Rs 5.80 lakh on Shriram Finance, a non-banking entity, for non-compliance with certain provisions, including Know Your Customer (KYC ) guidelines and directions on 'Data Format for Furnishing of Credit Information to Credit Information Companies'. The penalties are based on the deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the lenders with their customers, according to three separate statements issued by RBI.



#### India cuts customs duty on bourbon whiskey to 50 pc

ndia has slashed import duty on bourbon whiskey to 50 per cent as it warmed up to negotiating a mega trade deal with the US. The reduction in customs duty on bourbon whiskey was notified on February 13 just ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's talks with US President Donald Trump. However, there has been no reduction in basic customs duty on import of other liquors. They would continue to attract 100 per cent duty. The US is the primary exporter of bourbon whiskey to India accounting for about one-fourth of all such liquor imported into India. As per the notification issued by the Department of Revenue, bourbon whiskey would now attract 50 per cent customs duty on its import. It was 150 per cent earlier. India has imported bourbon whiskey worth USD 2.5 million in 2023-24. The major exporting countries include the US (USD 0.75 million), UAE (USD 0.54 million), Singapore (USD 0.28 million) and Italy (USD 0.23 million). India and the US have resolved to more than double the twoway trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 and announced plans for a bilateral trade agreement with a view to bring down duties and increase market access



#### **NITI Aayog invites Eol for** preperation of II Index

overnment think tank NITI Aayog has invited expression of interest for preparation of the India Innovation Index 2025, with an aim to encourage states to improve their innovation environment. In a notice, Niti Aayog said innovation has always been a driver of change and progress in an economy, as it disrupts traditional practices. encourages new processes, and generates new business models. Over the last few years, 'innovation' has been made a priority by the government towards realizing the goal of a "New India", it added. According to the notice, the India Innovation Index (III) was envisaged to encourage states to examine and improve their innovation environment and innovation performance, which could further lead to an improvement in India's overall innovation performance. The terms of reference of the index include understanding and analyzing the overall innovation ecosystem of the country.

# India, US to double bilateral trade

#### Announce plan for mega trade deal



**PNS** ■ WASHINGTON

India and the US have resolved to more than double the twoway trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 and announced plans for a bilateral trade agreement with a view to bringing down duties and increase market

According to the joint statement issued after the meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump here, the two leaders have also pledged the bilateral trade relationship to promote growth that ensures fairness, national security and job creation.

"To this end, the leaders set a bold new goal for bilateral trade – Mission 500 – aiming to more than double total bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030. Recognizing that this level of ambition would require new, fair-trade terms, the leaders announced plans to negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025," it said.

The statement further said that both sides committed to designate senior representatives to advance these negotiations and to ensure that the trade relationship fully reflects the aspirations of the COM-

PACT (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology). "To advance this innovative,

wide-ranging BTA, the US and India will take an integrated approach to strengthen and deepen hillstood trade and the strengthen and deepen hillstood trade and the strengthen and the strengthen are strengthen and the strengthen are strengthen and the strengthen are strengthen as the strengthen are deepen bilateral trade across the goods and services sector, and will work towards increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and deepening supply chain integration," it added.

Normally in a free trade agreement, two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they also ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments.

During the first term of President Donald Trump, India and the US had discussed a mini-trade deal, but was shelved by the Joe Biden administration as they were not in favour of a free trade agreement.

The leaders also welcomed

The leaders also welcomed early steps to demonstrate mutual commitment to address bilateral trade barriers. In 2023, the US and India bilateral trade in goods and services stood at USD 190.08 billion (USD 123.89 goods and USD 66.19 services trade) and USD 66.19 services trade). In that year, India's merchandise exports to the US stood at USD 83.77 billion, while imports were USD 40.12 billion, leaving a trade gap of USD 43.65 billion in favour of

#### **PARIS AI SUMMIT**

#### **India played** pivotal role: . Vaishnaw



PNS NEW DELHI

India played a pivotal role in shaping leaders' statement in the AI Action Summit in Paris which was co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has said in a social media post.

Vaishnaw said the Prime Minister, as co-chair and voice of the Global South, articulated India's comprehensive approach to artificial intelligence. "India's strategic advantages - a robust IT ecosystem, vast talent pool, and culture of innovation - position us uniquely in the global AI landscape. Our nation played a pivotal role in shaping the summit's leaders statement," Vaishnaw said in a LinkedIn post on Thursday.

He said the leaders' statement emphasised key themes, including greater access to AI infrastructure to ensure inclusion, responsible use of AI, AI for public interest, making AI more diverse and sustainable and ensuring safe and trusted governance of AI. The minister said that in the process of building infrastructure for AI, India is enabling access to more than 18,000 GPUs at a subsidised cost to Indian startups and academia. PM's vision is centered on "AI for Good", Vaishnaw said adding that he emphasised on critical need for collaborative global governance frameworks while ensuring universal AI access.

#### tries stood at USD 82.52 billion (USD 52.89 billion exports, USD 29.63 imports). The trade gap was USD 23.26 billion which is in the favour of India. The US accounts for about

18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade. Trump has announced a 25

PNS NEW DELHI

reciprocal tariffs.

ner of India.

US President Donald Trump

has asserted that Washington

will not spare India from

The President has set in

motion his plan to impose

reciprocal tariffs on imports,

which is expected to further

deepen the global trade war.

During 2021-24, the US was the largest trading part-

During April-November 2024-25, the bilateral trade in

goods between the two coun-

per cent duty on all steel and aluminium imports. It will come into effect from March

Moody's Ratings have stated that Indian steel producers will face increased challenges in exporting their products following the US decision to impose the 25 per cent tariff.

#### What are tariffs?

In international trade parlance, tariffs or customs duties or taxes are imposed on the import of goods. The importer has to pay this duty to the government. Normally, companies pass on these taxes to end users.

For example, if a company is importing a product 'X', having 10 per cent customs duty, valued at Rs 100 from other country, the cost of the product will go up to Rs 110. These duties, which are

indirect taxes, are a source of revenue for a country.

Anti-dumping duty, countervailing duty or safe-

guard duty are also kinds of

#### What are reciprocal and retaliatory tariffs?

Normally, both can be used synonymously. They are imposed by countries to match hike in duties or high tariffs by trading partners. For example when in 2018, the US imposed higher duties on certain steel and aluminium products, India retaliated by raising tariffs on 29 US products, recovering equivalent

#### Why countries impose tariffs?

Trump's tariffs and

India: An explainer

These tariffs are imposed to make imported goods expensive and in turn, promote domestic manufacturing and job creation.

It also protects domestic players from cheaper imports.

#### What are the negative impacts

Higher import duties are inflationary in nature and make inputs expensive for the domestic industry. For example, if an auto company needs some component, which is not produced in the country, it will have to pay a higher price for its import because of

This will make the product expensive for domestic users.

#### Why Trump is talking about

imposing reciprocal tariffs?

The US is facing huge trade imbalances with countries, especially with China. With India, the US has a trade deficit of USD 35.31 billion in goods in 2023-24. To bridge this gap, the US President is imposing these duties.

#### Is there any substance in Trump's allegations that India is a 'tariff king' or 'tariff

According to the economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), these are unfair and the US itself imposes high duties on several goods to safeguard its domestic markets.

Citing data from the World Trade Örganisation's World Tariff Profiles 2023, GTRI has highlighted the significant tariffs the US places on products such as dairy (188 per cent), fruits and vegetables ner cent) cer food preparations (193 per cent), oilseeds, fats, and oils (164 per cent), and beverages and tobacco (150 per cent).

Other goods, including coffee, tea, cocoa, and spices, face tariffs of 53 per cent, while fish products and chemicals are taxed at 35 per cent and 56 per cent, respec-

India's average duty rate stands at 17 per cent, which is higher than the US's average rate of 3.3 per cent.

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava has noted that some countries, including the US, Japan, and South Korea, impose steep tariffs on certain goods, with rates as high as 350 per cent, 457 per cent, and 887 per cent, respectively.

#### **Forex kitty** jumps to USD 638.261 bn

PNS MUMBAI

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 7.654 billion to USD 638.261 billion in the week ended February 7, the RBI said

This is the third consecutive which had increased by USD 1.05 billion to USD 630.607 billion for the week ended January 31. The reserves had been on a declining trend recently due to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion at end-September 2024.

For the week ended February 7, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 6.422 billion to USD 544.106 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold prices soared by Rs 1,300

to hit an all-time high of Rs

89,400 per 10 grams amid

Sarafa

heavy buying from jew-

ellers and retailers,

according to the All

The precious metal of 99.9 per

cent purity had

closed at Rs 88,100

per 10 grams on Thursday.

Association.

PNS NEW DELHI

#### **BEARS TIGHTEN GRIP ON D-STREET**

### Investors suffer wealth erosion of Rs 25.31 lakh cr in 8 days

PNS NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded sharply by Rs 25.31 lakh crore in eight BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled over 3 per cent amid concerns over unabated foreign fund outflows, lower-than-expected quarterly earnings and uncertainty over global trade war.

In eight trading days, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,644.6 points or 3.36 per cent, and the NSE Nifty slumped 810 points or 3.41 per cent.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE bellwether gauge dropped 199.76 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 75,939.21, registering its eighth day of decline.

Tracking an extremely weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms dropped by Rs 25,31,579.11 crore to Rs 4,00,19,247 crore (USD 4.61 trillion) in eight

days.
"The gloomy mood contin-

Gold of 99.5 per

cent purity climbed

by Rs 1,300 to hit

a fresh peak of Rs

89,000 per 10

grams against the

previous close of

Rs 87,700 per 10

grams. Silver also rallied by



lingering foreign fund outflows," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, US President Donald Trump

has asserted that Washington will not spare India from reciprocal tariffs. The President has set in

motion his plan to impose reciprocal tariffs on imports, which is expected to further deepen the global trade war.

Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP - Research & Advisory, Master Capital Services, said, "Investor sentiment took a hit after Trump reiterated his stance on imposing reciprocal tariffs on trade partners, which includes India too, reigniting fears of a potential trade war.

Gold zooms past record Rs 89k-mark

Rs 2,000 to hit a four-month

high of Rs 1 lakh per kg on

Friday. The metal had fin-

ished at Rs 98,000 per kg on

MCX, gold contracts for April

delivery rose Rs 184 to Rs

85,993 per 10 grams.

In futures trade on the

"Gold prices continued their

Silver rallies Rs 2,000 to 4-month high

Thursday.

#### surrender registration certificates to RBI PNS MUMBAI

20 NBFCs

financial companies, including Reliance Commercial Finance and IDFC Limited, tificate of registration (CoR). Of these, two non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have surrendered their CoR

The Reserve Bank of India on

Friday said 20 non-banking

as they have exited from the non-banking financial institution business. These NBFCs are Manoway Investments Private Limited and Reliance Commercial Finance Limited. IDFC Ltd, IDFC Financial

Holding Company Ltd and other 16 entities surrendered the CoR as it ceased to be a legal entity due to amalgamation or merger. Besides, the RBI cancelled

the CoR of 17 NBFCs, the central banks said in another statement. These NBFCs whose

licences were cancelled had their registered office in West

upward momentum, driven

by a weaker dollar index and

sustained support from US

tariff policies. Gold rose on MCX, while Comex gold

gained to trade at USD 2,935

Research

LKP Securities.

per ounce," Jateen Trivedi, VP

Commodity and Currency at

Analyst

Fenders are invited from eligible vendors for various Civil works and supply of various N Centralized Materials to Suryapet Circle. Schedule dates for Open-Tender Specification No: 01/24/25 to 03/24/25, P-19/24/25 to P-28/24/25 of Tender Notice O-05/2024/25 of SE OP/Suryapet are: 1) Bid download starts from 17.02.2025 at 15:00 Hrs. 2) Last date an time for submission of Bid hard copies along with DD's and BG's: 24.02.2025 upto 15:00 Hrs. 3) Bid opening Date and Time: 24.02.2025 at 16:00 Hrs. Details are available at www.tgsouthempower.com, Ph.No: 9494335480. Sdl- Superintending Engineer Operation Circle, Survape R.O. No.: 10271-PPICL/ADVTH/2024-35, Dt. 14-02-2025

#### Rc. No. 1241/2824/M1 (STC) Summary of Online s-Tender Notice for the Advance Sale of Tends Leaves for Collection Season 202 [1] Online Submission of s-Tender: e-Tender schedule is as mentioned below on websit https://auction.telangana.gov.in Date from which tender notice Starting date of Last date of Online can be downloaded 28.02.2025 1st Sale (MONDAY TO TUESDAY) (THURSDA) 11.03.2029 Ind Sale 17.03.2025 18.03.2025 20.03.2025 21.03.2025 (MONDAY TO TUESDAY) 2) Earnest Money Deposit: Online payment of Rs. 1661-Per SB on notified target should rem through TELANGANA E-AUCTION I E-TENDER PORTAL's e-Payment Gateway by logging with

their user id & password on https://auction.telangana.gov.in. 3) Registration: (i) The lenderer must be registered as the Manufacture / Exporter of the lend leaves in any division of Telangana for the year 2025. [ii] The intending tenderers are required to ge registered for participation in e-tender by visiting the website of **https://auction.telangana.gov.i**n

The tender notice along with tender form, tenderer's agreement, lot list and other Annexuses to offerent rounds of tender may be downloaded from websites https://auction.telangana.gov.in www.forests.telangana.gov.in.only.Amendments | Notices will be available on above websites only 4|TELANGANA FÖREST DEPARTMENT: <u>Contact</u> Sri. R. Prithri Raju, Olo the Dy.CFICF, STC, 3n Floor, "Aranya Shavan", Hyderabad. Contact No. **96662** 36653, e-mail: **cfstchyd@gmail.com** 5) Service Provider / Technical Help Desk for any assistance in e-Tendering: Vupadhi Technic Services Pvt. Ltd., Phone No: +9173374 45545 / 63093 39690 / 73374 45546 / 99127 56216. eMail uctionsupport@vupadhi.com.

R.O.No. 18353-PRICLIADATI 12834-25, Date: 14-02-2925 T.G. Forest Development Corporation Ltd., Hy

# unveils India's first dedicated GCC policy

Madhya Pradesh has become the first state in the country to bring a dedicated Global Capability Centre (GCC) policy that looks to position the state as a leading hub for global innovation and collabora-

The Madhya Pradesh GCC Policy 2025 combines incentives for capital expenditure, payroll, upskilling, and research and development with a desig-

nated nodal agency responsible for its implementation, according to a state government note.

The policy targets sectors such as IT, finance, engineering, human resources, and emerging technologies, with a particular emphasis on artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber-

This groundbreaking policy is India's first dedicated framework for fostering GCC growth in tier-2 cities, signalling a strategic shift towards decentralizing business hubs beyond traditional metro cities.

The policy is aimed at attracting over 50 GCCs and generate more than 37,000 direct jobs, thereby establishing Madhya Pradesh as a centre of excellence for IT/ITeS, advanced analytics, R&D and digital transformation.

By facilitating foreign investments and encouraging infrastructure development, the state aims to create a solid ecosystem that caters to multiple industries, including automotive, pharmaceuticals, logistics, textiles, aerospace and emerging technologies like AI and cybersecurity, the note said. The policy was unveiled ahead of Madhya Pradesh's

binennial Global Investors' Summit in Bhopal on February 24-25 that aims to attract investment and showcase the state's economic potential. The summit aims to highlight Madhya Pradesh's investment climate and industrial infra-



opportunities for potential collaborations. Madhya Pradesh presents a

compelling value proposition for GCCs, offering a combination of strategic incentives, skilled talent, and infrastructure readiness. The rapidly growing IT/ITeS ecosystem shows that the state's IT sector has seen exports triple in the last three years, boasting an annual growth rate of 43 per

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> Saturday February 15, 2025

# Vicky Kaushal shines in *Chhaava*, but the story deserves a deeper dive

**TEJAL SINHA** 

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**Plot** 

hhaava, directed by Laxman Utekar, is a historical action drama that chronicles the tumultuous reign of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of the legendary Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Set between 1680 and 1689, the film follows between 1680 and 1689, the film follows Sambhaji (Vicky Kaushal) as he takes charge of the Maratha empire after his father's passing. His daring raid on Burhanpur, where he loots the Mughal treasury, sets the stage for an intense con-flict with Emperor Aurangzeb (Akshaye Khanna). However, beyond the battle-field. Sambhaji faces internal betrayal field, Sambhaji faces internal betrayal, particularly from his stepmother Soyarabai (Divya Dutta), who schemes to remove him from power. The film navigates his unyielding resistance against Mughal expansion, his bond with his loyal friend and poet Kavi Kalash (Vinee Kumar Singh), and his unwavering defi-ance in the face of brutal captivity and execution.

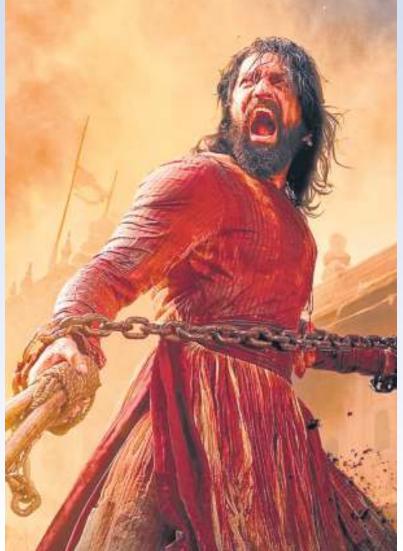
While *Chhaava* delivers thrilling battle sequences and high-stakes drama, it focuses primarily on Sambhaji's military prowess, often sidelining other crucial aspects of his life. The film briefly touches upon his intellect—his fluency in multiple languages and his poetic abilities—but these elements are not explored in depth. Utekar's direction excels in crafting a gripping war narrative, yet it does not delve into the internal conflicts within the Maratha empire or the political chess

game that defined Sambhaji's rule. The father-son dynamic between Shivaji and Sambhaji, which could have added emotional depth, is largely absent. The screenplay prioritises action over character development, making the film an exhilarating but somewhat one-dimensional historical account.

#### **Highlights**

One of the film's standout moments is One of the film's standout moments is the depiction of Sambhaji and Kavi Kalash's friendship. A particularly poignant scene features them engaging in a poetry duel while imprisoned, a reminder of their shared intellectual bond despite their impending fate. The film also does justice to Sambhaji's final stand, showcasing his steadfast refusal to submit to Aurangzeb, which remains one submit to Aurangzeb, which remains one of the most powerful moments in history. The battle choreography is another highlight, with meticulously designed fight sequences that effectively capture the chaos and intensity of war.

Despite its visual grandeur, Chhaava struggles with a few narrative shortcomings. The political intrigue within the Maratha empire, particularly the role of Soyarabai and other internal factions, is not explored in sufficient detail. The screenplay misses an opportunity to showcase the strategic mind of Sambhaji beyond his battlefield heroics. Rashmika Mandanna's character, Yesubai, is given limited space to shine and her dialogue delivery feels disconnected, possibly due to dubbing issues. Akshaye Khanna's portrayal of Aurangzeb, while menacing, occasionally dips into exaggerated villainy, particularly with his repetitive execution of messengers, which borders on cution of messengers, which borders on unintentional comedy. Additionally, the



work with international artisans to

curate exclusive handcrafted pieces.

We also refine traditional motifs, tex-

tures and patterns to suit individual preferences and needs, guaranteeing

a seamless fusion of classic artistry and contemporary luxury."

Finding the ideal balance between

is crucial, even though trends come

and go frequently, lasting only a few

months. So her design strategy is based on an 80-20 approach, with 80% of her collection devoted to timeless, enduring pieces and 20% incorporating current trends through accessories like cushions, throws

and other decor elements. She places

a strong emphasis on timeless silhou-

ettes and neutral colours. This guar-

antees that her areas will always be

effortlessly fashionable while making

interview by saying, "I am thankful that I have increased my global pres-

She added more context to this

room for new, seasonal additions!

gance and modern designs

#### **Performances**

Vicky Kaushal dominates the screen with a powerful performance, embodying the grit and intensity of Sambhaji Maharaj. His physical transformation, Maharaj. His physical transformation, coupled with his commanding presence, makes him a convincing warrior king. However, while his action sequences are riveting, the film does not offer enough moments to explore Sambhaji's more nuanced qualities. Rashmika Mandanna nuanced qualities. Rashmika Mandanna portrays Yesubai with grace, but her role is largely relegated to the sidelines. Vineet Kumar Singh shines as Kavi Kalash, bringing warmth and depth to his portrayal of the poet-warrior. Akshaye Khanna, under heavy prosthetics, delivers a calculated performance as Aurangzeb, though his character's overthe-ton cruelty at times undermines his the-top cruelty at times undermines his menace. Ashutosh Rana, as Hambirao Mohite, delivers a solid performance, while Divya Dutta, as the scheming Soyarabai, is underutilised.

#### **Technical Aspects**

The film's production values are topnotch, with grand set designs and elab-orate battle sequences that effectively recreate the era. Saurabh Goswami's cinematography captures the sweeping landscapes and the gritty battlefield clashes with precision. The editing by Manish Pradhan ensures the second half maintains a gripping pace, though the first half could have been tighter. AR Rahman's background score adds grav-itas to the film, but the inclusion of electric guitar elements in crucial sequences feels jarring and out of place for a historical drama. A more traditional

film's pacing dips in the first half, slowing down the momentum before picking up in the latter portion.

Indian orchestration would have been more fitting. The costume and production design successfully transport the audience to the late 17th century, lending authenticity to the film's visual storytelling.

Chhaava is an engaging historical action film that thrives on its battle sequences and Vicky Kaushal's comsequences and Vicky Kaushal's commanding performance. However, it falls short of being a comprehensive biopic, as it largely focuses on Sambhaji's military campaigns while overlooking the deeper complexities of his reign and personality. While the film is a treat for action lovers and history enthusiasts, those expecting a more layered exploration of Sambhaji's legacy might find it lacking. Nevertheless, as a cinematic tribute to one of India's a cinematic tribute to one of India's bravest warrior kings, *Chhaava* is a compelling watch, even if it leaves some aspects of his story untold.

**DIRECTED BY:** Laxman Utekar

**PRODUCED BY:** Dinesh Vijan

**CAST:** Vicky Kaushal, Rashmika Mandanna, Akshaye Khanna, Ashutosh Rana, Divya Dutta, Vineet Kumar Singh, Diana Penty and more

**MUSIC BY:** A. R. Rahman **RATING:** 3.5/5

# DESIGNING WITH SO



PNS|HYDERABAD

orm and function blend together like delicate vine shoots in Ambereen Gupta's symphony of spaces, creating an incredibly beautiful universe. Her store, CASA AMBER, is a creative canvas where each brushstroke, colour and texture conveys a story of talent, passion and an unshakable commitment to creating environments that speak to the soul and transcend the ordinary. She has spun a tapestry of brilliance throughout the course of her more than 20year career, establishing herself as a visionary interior designer who captures the spirit of her customers' ambitions and transforms them into ageless, exquisite and incredibly personal settings!

"My vision in curating this onestop experience center was rooted in 'exclusivity'—a value that has always been close to my heart when it comes to selecting what surrounds me," Ambereen explains in an exclusive interview with us, describing how she is motivated by an unwavering passion for innovative design! "During my time styling and creating houses, I frequently heard complaints about how difficult it was to find the ideal carpeting, coordinate sofas, or find décor in the appropriate propor-tions. I wanted to eliminate the headache of having to look for these components one at a time, which they found difficult. My goal with this area was to create a place where peo-

ple could acquire everything they needed for their homes in one place, with the added benefit of being able to customise it to their unique preferences."

For her, a home is more than just a physical building; it's a dynamic, living thing that reflects the soul, feeds the spirit and creates important connections. She is renowned for her skillful fusion of aesthetics, utility and emotional intelligence! She puts her entire being into making rooms that are classic, elegant and incredibly intimate with each project. "I am trying to reinvent luxury for the contemporary day, fusing sustainability with style. I accept this progress while maintaining my distinctive elegance as the world shifts toward conscious living! My strategy supports Indian craftsmen and craftsmanship by incorporating locally sourced and environmentally safe materials. To ensure lifetime and save waste, I place a high priority on quality, robustness and classic design. Luxury is not only beautiful but also significant because each item is carefully crafted to reflect the distinct preferences, lifestyles and values."

From conception to completion, she has gained critical praise in the design community thanks to her painstaking attention to detail, unshakable dedication to perfection and sincere passion for design. The founder continues, "It is situated at the nexus of modern elegance and legacy in this dynamic setting. Despite extraordinary talent for creating intricate and varied designs, I have

always thought Indian artists are underappreciated. I like to embrace international aesthetics while honouring this expertise. Because we are rooted in India's rich cultural heritage, we integrate international influences—from Scandinavian minimalism to Mediterranean warmth—and

ence while maintaining a keen awareness of the various cultures and customs that influence my designs! Every project is designed with the local climate, architecture and way of life in mind, guaranteeing a smooth fusion of style and use. Transforming visions into reality requires open communication. In order to add authenticity to each place and create settings that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also deeply entrenched in local culture and con-

text, I work directly with local arti-

sans, suppliers and designers."

Despite being unconventional in comparison to her job in design, her teaching experience has been crucial in forming her design philosophy! She thinks that areas should be memorable, loving and supporting, regardless of how opulent, minimalist, or very practical they are. Beyond aesthetics, her goal is to design spaces that arouse feelings, stimulate the imagination and help people form deep connections with one another. Designing involves more than just form and function; it also involves creating environments that have a deeper emotional impact on people. Her mother's love of nature and her grandmother's passion for bright colours also have a big impact on her design philosophy! She was enthralled as a child by her grandmother's ability to use fabrics and flowers to evoke feelings while transforming her house into a kaleidoscope of hues and textures. She was inspired by them and used natural components, organic textures and vibrant colours to create environments that are not only eye-catching but also profoundly meaningful and personal.

Furthermore, "The foundation of it is the idea that 'home is where the heart is.' Every house has a story to tell and it is my responsibility to help clients make theirs come to life. I adopt a deliberate strategy, striking a balance between their own vision and my creative know-how. I investigate their values, way of life and goals through in-depth discussions to make sure that every design decision captures their spirit. I create houses that are not just aesthetically beautiful but also profoundly personal—homes that have meaning and tell a story that is all their own—by collaborating closely all along the way."

Although there are always high standards in interior design, she doesn't think perfection is the goal! Rather, she concentrates on designing environments that are visually appealing, imaginative and genuinely significant for the people occupying them. She has experienced periods of self-doubt and creativity block like any other designer. She takes a step back during those moments, looks to art, nature and other cultures for inspiration, and reminds herself that great design is about feeling and experiencing rather than just doing it perfectly. She overcame obstacles by remaining receptive to fresh concepts and having faith in the design process. Here she is, years later, demonstrating that every adventure is a teaching moment. She has developed and grown with every step and she is still thankful for the opportunity to create homes across the world.

#### Al & infrastructure; the drive force behind industry growth

Year-on-Year (YoY) increase is a key financial over a 12-month period, measuring the percentage change in revenue, profit, or other financial rentage change in revenue, profit, or other financial indicators against the same period in the previous year. A high YoY growth rate often signifies strong business performance, driven by higher sales, improved operational efficiency, or successful expansion strategies. Unlike quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) comparisons, YoY analysis eliminates seasonal fluctuations, offering a clearer view of long-term growth trends. Companies and investors closely track YoY changes to evaluate financial health, market trends, and future growth potential.

Reflecting this strong performance, Ceinsys Tech Ltd reported a 79% YoY increase in consolidated rev-

enue for Q3 of FY25, reaching Rs1,118 million.
The company's Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization (EBITDA) saw an impressive 102% YoY growth, rising to ?214 million, with an EBITDA margin of 19.14%. Meanwhile, Profit After Tax (PAT) grew 71% YoY, reaching Rs 178 million, highlighting enhanced profitability and sustained business momentum.

For the nine-month period ending December 31, 2024, they reported a total revenue of Rs 2,757 million, reflecting a 58% YoY increase. EBITDA for the period stood at Rs 513 million (+62% YoY), while PAT surged by 77% to Rs 414 million, underscoring the company's ability to scale operations while maintaining profitability.

As of December 31, 2024, their order book stood at an impressive ?13,900 million, reflecting its diverse portfolio across geospatial, engineering services (53%), and technology solutions (47%).

Key contract wins include: River Linking Project,

Maharashtra - Rs 3,811.8 million, IoT-based Water & Sanitation Project, Maharashtra - Rs 3,316 million, GIS Enterprise Implementation for CIDCO - Rs 291.9 million and Digital Transformation for MHADA -Rs 277.6 million. They also enhanced its financial agility, significantly reducing its working capital cycle from 237 days in March 2023 to 124 days in December 2024. In addition, Rs 2,350 million was raised in Q2-FY25 through equity issuance and share warrants, providing a strong foundation for future expansion and innovation.

In a strategic move to align with its evolving business model, Ceinsys Tech Ltd officially rebranded as CS TECH AI on January 1, 2025. This transformation reflects the company's growing emphasis on Aldriven solutions and digital advancements.

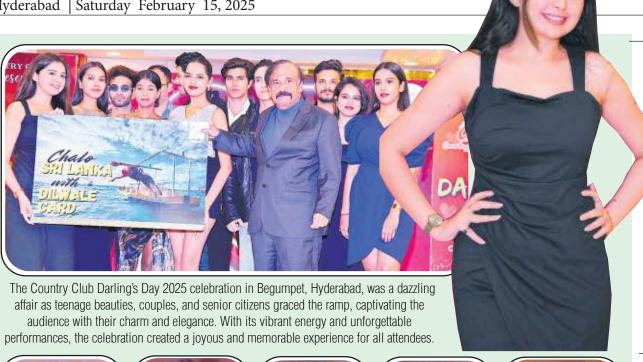
The new brand identity, supported by the tagline 'Enhancing Possibilities,' underscores CS TECH Al's commitment to leveraging cutting-edge technology across industries. With a strong financial trajectory and a robust project pipeline, the company is poised for continued success in AI-led digital transformation and engineering solutions.

As companies adapt to changing market demands,

maintaining financial discipline and delivering on large-scale projects will remain critical challenges. The coming years will test how well businesses can sustain growth amid evolving technological and economic landscapes.



# what's brewing?







Anam Cara, a one-day designer exhibition, was officially inaugurated on Friday at Labels - The Popup Space, located on Road No. 1, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad. The event showcased an eclectic mix of fashion and creativity, drawing the presence of renowned models who added glamour to the occasion.













For the past five decades, Karnataka has established itself as a premier hub for higher education, attracting aspiring engineers from across the country. Highlighting Karnataka's contributions to the education sector, a special event was held at the Hyderabad Marriott Hotel, celebrating its impact on engineering and workforce development.

#### **Standalone**

umane Society International India has officially rebranded as Humane World for Animals, launching a global integrated campaign to reinforce its mission of creating lasting change for animals in India and worldwide. Effective immediately, this transition aligns with the organization's broader global impact, uniting all international entities under a single name and logo that reflects its commitment to protecting all animals.



Regents College celebrated Valentine's Day with its The Valentine Culinary Buffet: When Passion Meets the Celebrations, transforming the campus into a sophisticated retreat adorned in an elegant red and white theme. The highlight of the celebration was its culinary extravaganza, where 60 budding chefs showcased their expertise through an elaborate menu featuring 60 exquisite dishes. The buffet was thoughtfully curated into five major sections—Cold Cuts, Pastry Palate, Continental Cuisine, Indian Cuisine and Desserts—offering a delightful



Photos by- SV Chary

#### **ARCHIE**



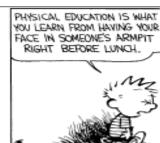




# **CALVIN AND HOBBES**







#### **GARFIELD**



WORRIES OF VALENTINE'S DAY FOR GROWN-UPS

I HATE THIS FIRST VALENTINE'S DAY WITH PHIL! WHAT KIND OF CARD?

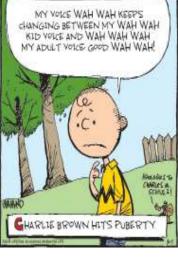




ACTUALLY... IT'S HALF A BOX... I ATE BOME

WORRIES OF VALENTINE'S DAY FOR CHILDREN

#### **REALITY CHECK**







### **GINGER MEGGS**

DINNER? ROSES? CANDY? CARD?

WHAT DO I DO?

BUT- I WANT HER TO



30





#### **SUDOKU**

| 1 |   |   |   |   |   | 3           | 5 |        |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|---|--------|--|
| 5 | 2 |   | 3 |   |   |             |   | 4      |  |
|   |   | 7 |   |   | 5 |             |   |        |  |
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|   |   | 1 |   | 5 |   | 8           |   |        |  |
|   |   |   |   | 9 | 2 | 4           |   |        |  |
|   |   |   | 7 |   |   | 8<br>4<br>5 |   |        |  |
| 8 |   |   |   |   | 9 |             | 7 | 6      |  |
|   | 6 | 2 |   |   |   |             |   | 6<br>9 |  |

DIFFICULTY RATING: \*\*

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

#### 649251738 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.

#### ACROSS 5 Glide over snow 8 Not temporary

- 1 A fight using words
- 6 Rip
- 7 A root vegetable
- 9 Group of eight
- 11 Not ever
- 12 A fruit with pips
- 13 A hot drink
- 16 Extreme fear
- 18 Grow weary

#### 19 A large animal

#### DOWN

- 1 Someone in a spaceship
- 2 A huge person 3 Chews up and swallows
- 4 An underwater missile for attacking a ship

10 Make bigger

17 A large bird

15 Costing nothing

14 A large country in Asia



Hyderabad | Saturday February 15, 2025

# OH MY LAILA! — A LESSON IN HOW NOT TO MAKE A FILM

**SURESH KAVIRAYANI** 

sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

ishwak Sen's latest film, Laila, released on Valentine's Day, marking his first film of the year. Known for his back-toback releases, Vishwak has been taking on diverse roles, and in Laila, he attempts something unconventional by playing a female char-acter. While legendary actors like Kamal Haasan, Rajendra Prasad and VK Naresh have successfully portrayed female roles in Telugu cinema before, *Laila* struggles to make an impact. Directed by Ram Narayan and featuring Akanksha Sharma as the female lead, the film has also been in the news for the controversy surrounding actor Prudhvi's political comments.

Sonu (Vishwak Sen) runs Sita Beauty Parlour in Hyderabad's Old City, treating it as more than just a business—he sees it as a sentimental venture. One day, he helps a customer financially and allows her to use his name as a brand for her homemade oil, hoping to boost her business. Meanwhile, Rustum (Abhimanyu Singh), a butcher searching for a bride, sees a woman (Kamakshi) at Sonu's parlour and decides to marry her. However, after the wedding, he realizes her appearance was entirely due to makeup and blames Sonu for the deception.

During Rustum's wedding, several guests—including a local MLA—fall sick due to food poisoning. Investigations reveal that they had used Sonu's branded oil, leading the police to take action against him. Adding to Sonu's troubles, a police inspector (Prudhvi) with a personal grudge sees this as the perfect opportunity to target him. To escape the situation, Sonu disguises himself as a woman named Laila. How he navigates the chaos and what ultimately unfolds forms the rest of the story.

The concept of a male protagonist donning a female avatar is not new in Telugu cinema. However, success in such roles depends on how well the transformation is woven into the story. Unfortunately, Laila falls flat in this regard. Director Ram Narayan fails to present an engaging nar-rative, resulting in a weak screenplay that struggles to justify the protagonist's female

disguise.

One of the biggest questions is how an actor like Vishwak Sen agreed to be part of this film. In today's industry, producers are often criticised for blindly investing in projects based solely on an actor-director combination, without evaluating the story's potential. Laila serves as a prime example of this flawed approach. The film lacks a compelling story, engaging moments, or even decent humor. What was intended to be an entertaining comedy instead turns into an outdated, adult-themed film with



CAST: Vishwak Sen, Akanksha Sharma, Abhimanyu Singh, Prudhviraj, Prudhvi, Vineeth Kumar, Kamakshi Bhaskarla, Sunisith, and others

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Leon James CINEMATOGRAPHER: Richard Prasad PRODUCER: Sahu Garapati DIRECTOR: Ram Narayan RATING: 0.5/5

mediocre execution. From start to finish, it feels more like an endurance test than an on both fronts. engaging script. Unfortunately, *Laila* fails on both fronts.

engaging cinematic experience.
While cinema allows for creative liberties, there still needs to be some logic, especially when entertainment value is lacking. The film also suffers from poor scene transitions, making it difficult for the audience to stay invested. Rather than feeling like a well-crafted feature film, *Laila* resembles a low-budget YouTube web series.

#### **PERFORMANCES**

None of the actors manage to make a lasting impression. Vishwak Sen, portraying both Sonu and his female alter ego Laila, fails to bring depth to either role. His performance lacks conviction and his portrayal of Laila neither amuses nor engages the audience. What could have been an exciting transformation ends up feeling forced and unconvincing.

Akanksha Sharma, the female lead, serves little purpose beyond adding glam-

our to the film. Abhimanyu Singh, Prudhvi (*Pelli* fame), Prudhvi (*30 Years*), and Kamakshi Bhaskarla contribute little to the story. The film also features YouTube personality Sunisith, but his presence does not enhance the narrative. Additionally, the decision to cast Hindi actors for Telugu character roles, along with their poorly dubbed dialogues, further diminishes the film's impact.

When a male actor takes on a female

#### **TECHNICAL ASPECTS**

Musically, Laila fails to impress, and even the cinematography remains ordinary. The dialogues, particularly the double-meaning ones, add to the film's overall mediocrity

rather than enhancing the humour.
For any actor, there are films that elevate their career and others that become forgettable missteps. Laila is undoubtedly one of the weakest films in Vishwak Sen's career. From its outdated story and unimpressive dialogues to the lackluster screenplay, weak music, and unremarkable cinematography—everything falls short. The writing department also deserves criticism for failing to deliver a strong narrative.
While the director shoulders much of the

blame, the producer and actor also bear responsibility for backing such an uninspired project. A film should either evoke emotions or provide entertainment—Laila does neither. Hopefully, Vishwak Sen makes better choices in his upcoming films.

Laila is a disappointing attempt at comedy, weighed down by an outdated story, weak screenplay, and subpar execution. With no memorable moments or engaging performances, the film stands out as one of Vishwak Sen's least impressive projects. Those looking for entertainment would be role, there needs to be a strong and justifiable reason behind it, coupled with an better off skipping this one, as it offers little beyond a frustrating cinematic experience.

# Brahma Anandam Vennela Kishore shines in this slow narration drama

PNS|HYDERABAD

he real-life father-son duo, Veteran comedian Veteran Brahmanandam and Raja Gowtham play the roles of grandfather and grandson, respectively in this film that was released on Friday. Rahul Yadav Nakka, who has previously produced acclaimed films like Agent Sai Srinivas Atreya, Malli Rava, and Masooda, is the producer for this film. With Chiranjeevi supporting the film and the promotional videos generating interest, expectations were high.

Brahma aka Brahmanandam (Raja Gowtham) is a theatre artiste, living in an apartment with his friend Giri (Vennela Kishore). Having lost his parents, he lives alone and dreams of making it big in the film industry but struggles to get opportunities. One day, he gets an offer to perform in Delhi, but the organizers demand Rs 6 lakhs for his participation. Desperate for funds, he seeks help from his grandfather Ananda Ram Murthy (Brahmanandam), who lives in an old age home.

Murthy offers him a deal—Brahma must accompany him to a village near Kodada and stay with him for a few days, after which he will transfer his 6-acre land to him. Brahma agrees and, along with Giri, travels with Murthy to the village. What follows is a series of events did Brahma get the land, or did Murthy have other plans? What is Murthy's love story with Ivothi (Talluri Rameshwari)? What's the conflict between the sarpanch (Rajiv Kanakala) and his brother (Sampath Raj)? The film unravels these answers as the story progresses.

#### **ANALYSIS**

Many young filmmakers are making their debuts with fresh concepts, and RVS Nikhil attempts to do the same with Brahma Anandam. However, while the film has an interesting premise, the execution falls short due to weak storytelling and inconsistent narration.

Before its release, the film was promoted as a heartfelt story about a grandson and his grandfather. However, the bond between them is not explored deeply enough. Instead, the film introduces another interesting element in the sec-ond half, but the director fails to develop it effectively. If the story had balanced both aspects well, the result could have been much better.

The first half focuses on Brahma's struggles—his life as a theatre artiste, his dream of becoming a film actor, his frustration, his girlfriend and his roommate. The narrative takes too long to establish his journey, making it feel stretched. The film picks up only after Brahma meets Murthy and heads to the village. The second half, set in the village, has some engaging moments but is weighed down by forced subplots.

Certain portions work well, with good dialogues and occasional humor, but other elements feel unnecessary such as Sampath Raj's character and his bizarre goal of passing the 10th grade. This subplot is completely illogical and adds no value to the story. The biggest



CAST: Brahmanandam, Raja Gowtham, Priya Vadlamani, Vennela Kishore, Diviia. Sampath Raj, Prabhakar, Rajiv Kanakala, Talluri Rameshwari and others **CINEMATOGRAPHER:** Mitesh

Parvaneni

**MUSIC DIRECTOR:** Sandilya

Peesapati PRODUCER: Rahul Yadav Nakka WRITER AND DIRECTOR:

**RVS Nikhil** RATING: 2/5

flaw of the film is its lack of emotional

depth. A story revolving around a grandson-grandfather relationship should evoke strong emotions, but the film fails to create that connection.

Some scenes drag on unnecessarily, making the pacing feel sluggish. For instance, the repeated conversations about the land, the prolonged bus journey scene between Raja Gowtham and Brahmanandam, and forced comedic elements slow down the narrative. Additionally, Brahma's sudden transition into a teacher in the village feels random and disconnected from the main plot.

While the last 20 minutes of the film introduce an interesting twist, the director fails to establish it effectively throughout the film. Murthy's love story with Jyothi, which could have added emotional weight, is underdeveloped and does not create the intended impact. The slow narration and stretched sequences make the film feel more like a television serial than a theatrical release. Given its simplistic execution and low-budget production values, it seems more suited for an OTT release than a big-screen experience.

#### **PERFORMANCES**

Vennela Kishore steals the show with his natural comedic timing, providing

much-needed Brahmanandam plays a dual-shaded role, balancing his signature humor with a serious side. While he delivers a decent performance, his character's emotional depth is underutilised. Raja Gowtham puts in an earnest effort, especially in the last half-hour, making it one of his better roles. Rajiv Kanakala performs well in his role, but Sampath Raj's character feels unnecessary and unrelated to the core story. Priya Vadlamani does a fine job but has limited screen time, appearing only in the first half. Divija, Aishwarya, Prabhakar, and others provide adequate support.

#### **TECHNICAL ASPECTS**

The music is average, with no standout tracks that elevate the emotional quotient. The cinematography is functional, capturing the village setting decently but lacking visual flair. While some dialogues work well in certain places, they could have been sharper. The editing could have been tighter, especially in the dragged-out portions, to improve the film's pacing.

#### **FINAL VERDICT**

Brahma Anandam is a film with potential, but weak storytelling and slow narration prevent it from reaching its full impact. While it has a few good moments, inconsistent pacing, lack of emotional depth, and forced subplots drag it down. With a tighter script and better execution, it could have been a heartwarming entertainer. As it stands, it feels like an overextended TV serial rather than a compelling theatrical experience.

It is good on paper, but when translated onto the big screen, the slow narration and lack of emotional connection make it a disappointing watch. Though the film has a solid concept and some engaging moments, it ultimately fails to

Watching this film is like watching a

### *'RAMAM RAGHAVAM* IS AN **EMOTIONAL FATHER-SON DRAMA'**

A ctor Dhanraj, widely known for his work on the *Jabardasth* show, has now ventured into direction with Ramam Raghavam. In addition to directing, he also plays the lead role alongside acclaimed actor Samuthirakani in this emotional father-son drama. The film, produced by Pridhvi Polavarampu, is set to release on February 21. The story revolves around a father who dreams of seeing his son reach great heights and the emotional journey that unfolds between them. Dhanraj, who has previously proved his versatility as both a comedian and a serious actor, is now stepping into the director's chair for the first time with this heartfelt drama.

The trailer of *Ramam Raghavam* was officially launched on Friday by actor Nani. Speaking at the event, Nani shared his admiration for Dhanraj, saying, "Dhanraj has been my acquaintance since the early days of my career and I have always recognised his talent. So, I wasn't surprised when I heard that he was directing a film." He further revealed that he initially expected Dhanraj to make a comedy film, but after watching



the trailer, he was taken on an unexpected team great success. Dhanraj, elated by the emotional journey. Expressing his fondness for Samuthirakani's work. Nani added, "I personally admire Samuthirakani a lot; he different—an emotional father-son drama. is like family to me." He wished the entire I hope the audience appreciates it."



### Kobali season 2 confirmed

the latest web series *Kobali*, streaming on Disney+ Hotstar, has received an overwhelming response from audiences across India, including strong appreciation from the North. Directed by Revanth Levaka, the series is set against a faction backdrop and is packed with intense action sequences. Following its success, the makers have now officially confirmed that Kobali will return for a second season.

Actor Ravi Prakash, known for his character roles in mainstream Telugu cinema, played the lead role in Kobali. Reflecting on the journey, he shared, "I have been in the industry for 20 years and always wanted to create something different. When I first heard this story in a coffee shop, I loved it, but I wasn't sure if it would take off. There were no big stars or major selling points. However, Hotstar trusted us, and the viewers gave us success. This proves that honest work always pays off."

Actor Rocky Singh also played a significant role in the series. Additionally, senior actor Venkat, known for Sri Sita Ramula Kalyanam Chootamu Raarandi, made a brief appearance in the final episode. His character is set to have a much larger role in Season 2, where the real story behind the killings will be revealed. Speaking about the show's success, Venkat said, "This web series proves that good content matters more than big names." The producers expressed their excitement, stating that while they expected the series to do well, the response has far exceeded their expectations.

#### **ARCHANA IYER AS DEVI IN SHAMBHALA**

ctress Archana Iyer, widely recognized for her role in the critically acclaimed Krishnamma, is playing the female lead in the supernatural horror thriller Shambhala: A Mystical World. The makers reveal character posters one by one of Aadi Saikumar and Swasika and now Archana Iyer's look was unleashed.

Archana's tense expression and the somber mood of the surroundings suggest that her character named Devi is caught up in an intense, supernatural event, hinting at the film's chilling plot. Aadi Saikumar plays the role of a geo-scientist in this one, directed by Ugandhar Muni and produced by Rajasekhar Annabhimoju and Mahidhar Reddy.

The movie needs lots of graphics as it is a supernatural subject, so the makers are not taking any risk and putting a lot of money on it. The shoot of the movie is presently progressing in RFC, Hyderabad.



# ICC announces prize money for Champions Trophy Injury rules out Ben Sears

PTI DUBAI

\\ \mathcal{7}^{inners}\_{::} Un p c o m i n g
Champions Trophy
(CT) will walk away with a
whopping \$2.24 Million cash
reward after the International
Cricket Council (ICC) announced a 53 per cent hike in its prize money pool for the eight-team tournament starting February 19.

The winners' purse would be close to 20 crore in Indian currency. The runners-up will receive half the amount, \$1.12 Million (INR 9.72 Crore), while each losing semi-finalist will take home \$ 560,000 (INR 4.86 Crore). The total prize pool has increased to \$6.9 Million

increased to \$6.9 Million (₹60 Crore approx).

"The substantial prize pot underscores the ICC's ongoing commitment to investing in the sport and maintaining the global prestige of our events," ICC chairman Jay Shah said in a statement ahead of the tournament which will be tournament which will be held in Pakistan and the

Each group stage win would



be worth over \$34,000 (INR 30 Lakh) for the victorious

Teams finishing in fifth or sixth place will receive \$350,000 each (INR three Crore), while the seventh and eighth-placed sides will take home \$140,000 (INR 1.2

Crore).

Additionally, all eight teams will receive a guaranteed \$125,000 each (INR 1.08 Crore) for participating in the

This tournament marks the first time Pakistan will host an ICC event since 1996.

Lahore and Rawalpindi. The 2025 edition features The 2025 edition features eight teams split into two groups of four, with the top two from each group advancing to the semi-finals. "The ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 represents a pivotal moment for cricket, requiring a tournement that pivotal moment for cricket, reviving a tournament that highlights the pinnacle of ODI talent, where every match is critical," the ICC chairman emphasised in his statement.

"Beyond the financial incentive, this tournament incentive, this tournament ignites fierce competition, captivates fans worldwide, and plays a vital role in fostering the growth and long-term sustainability of cricket for future generations," Shah added. The men's Champions Trophy was held every four years from 2009 to 2017 before a COVID disruption and deliberations on its

and deliberations on its relevance led to it being postponed. The tournament was first introduced as a biennial event in 1998. The women's Champions Trophy will make its debut in 2027 in the T20 format.

# from Champions Trophy

PTI CHRISTCHURCH

Pacer Ben Sears has been ruled out of the Champions Trophy (CT) due to a hamstring injury, a significant setback for New Zealand ahead of the ICC event which kicks off on February 19. New Zealand Cricket (NZC)

has named Jacob Duffy as Sears' replacement.

"Sears felt some pain in his left hamstring at the team's first training in Karachi on Wednesday and a subsequent scan revealed a minor tear that would require at least two weeks' rehabilitation," NZC said in a statement. 'The rehabilitation timeframe

means that Sears would likely be available for only the team's final Group A match against India in Dubai, and so the decision was made to rule him out." Sears' absence has paved the way for Duffy, who is currently with the squad for the ODI Tri-Series against Pakistan and South Africa.

"We're all really feeling for Ben. It's always tough being ruled



out of a major event at such a late stage, and it's especially tough in Ben's case given it would have been his first major ICC event," said New Zealand head coach Gary Stead.

The timeframes for Ben to be fit to play again meant he would likely miss the majority of the group stage, and given the short nature of the tournament, we felt it was appropriate to bring in a player who is fully fit and ready to go." "Ben is a player with huge potential and given the short rehabilitation timeframe, we're sure he'll be fit and raring to go for the home series against him."

Pakistan back Zealand?

On Duffy's inclusion, Stead said, "Jacob showed with his performances in the recent home series against Sri Lanka that he is more than capable at international level.

"He's been part of the squad for the ODI Tri-Series so he's fully acclimatised and he's got plenty of experience in these conditions and is fit and ready

to go. "He's another player who will be experiencing his first senior ICC event, so it will be an exciting few weeks ahead for



### India lose to Japan 0-3 in quarterfinals of BAMTC

PTI ■ QINGDAO

H<sup>S</sup> Prannoy fought valiantly, but India succumbed to a 0-3 defeat Prannoy against a second-string Japan in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships (BAMTC), ending their campaign on a disappointing note here on

medalists in Dubai, struggled to find their rhythm. trailed 0-1 after going down in the mixed doubles.

Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, ranked 37th in the world, showed resilience before going down 13-21, 21-17, 13-21 to world number 12 Hiroki Midorikawa and Natsu

With PV Sindhu sidelined due to a hamstring injury, India faced an uphill task against Tomoka Miyazaki, who has quickly risen to world number 8 following her triumph at the 2022 World Junior

Championships.
World number 31 Malvika Bansod, stepping in for Sindhu, put up a brave fight, especially in the second game, but struggled to match the control and consistency of her younger opponent and lost 12-21, 19-21, leaving India 0-2 behind.

It all came down to Prannoy to keep India alive, but despite a determined effort, the 32year-old, returning after a long to 17-15.

break and struggling with early-season form, couldn't fought sustain the pressure against India world number 16 Kenta Nishimoto.

The Japanese star sealed the rubber with a 21-14, 15-21, 21-12 victory in 1 hour and 17 minutes.

India will be disappointed with the loss, especially as Japan did not field their full-India, the 2023 bronze strength team, with several top

players absent. man were the edition champions in 2017 and were runners-up in 2019.

Miyazaki vs Malvika Miyazaki, leading the newlook Japanese team, was sharp

and precise, quickly surging to an 11-3 lead after Malvika hit long.

Despite some good net play from the left-handed Indian, Miyazaki's cross-court drops and winners kept Malvika on the back foot. Malvika narrowed the gap to

capitalising on errors from 12-19, unforced Miyazaki.

However, two mistakes from the Indian allowed the Japanese to take the first game. The second game was more competitive as Malvika took a 5-3 lead, engaging in tight rallies. She managed a slim 11-10 advantage after Miyazaki went long. Malvika stayed sharp, not

allowing her opponent to play her usual drops freely, moving

# Playing 10 months a year will lead to more injuries: Kapil Dev

However, India will play all

their matches in Dubai owing

to security concerns related to travelling to Pakistan. Rohit Sharma's men will

begin their campaign on February 20 against Bangladesh. The Pakistan leg will feature games in Karachi,

World Cup-winning Captain Kapil Dev on Friday expressed concern over the rising number of injuries among Indian cricketers, attributing it to the demanding schedule that keeps players in action for keeps players in action for almost 10 months each year. The National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru has turned into a rehabilitation hub, with players spending more time recovering than

training.
The latest casualty being India pace spearhead Jasprit out of the second innings of the final Test in Sydney due to a back injury.

Initially named in the Champions Trophy (CT) squad, Bumrah has now been ruled out.

Mohammed Shami, India's top wicket-taker in the 2023 ODI World Cup (24 wickets), suffered a leg injury post-final and underwent surgery. His 14-month recovery



him out of the BGT series, which India lost for the first time in a decade. Shami's absence left Bumrah without players.

a reliable bowling partner.
"The only thing that worries me is that they play for 10 months a year -- injuries will be much more common," the 1983 World Cup-winning skipper said at the Tata Steel Golf prize distribution ceremony here.

Asked whether Bumrah would be missed in CT, Kapil urged players to focus on

supporting each other rather than dwelling on injured

Why talk about someone who is not in the team? It's a team game, and the team has to win, not individuals. This is not badminton, tennis, or golf; we are playing a team sport in the Champions Trophy. If we play as a team, we will definitely win," said the 66-year-old.

"You never want your main players to get injured, but if it vou can't do

anything about it. Good luck to my Indian team -- go and play well," he added.

India will begin their Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh in Dubai on February 20.
Kapil said he's excited to see

so much rising talents in the Indian cricket team these

"When you see the youngsters, their confidence is unbelievable. We didn't have this much confidence when we were young. Good lluck to them."

A known golf enthusiast and the current PGTI president, Kapil also made a playful

pitch for the sport. pitch for the sport.
"Tell everyone to play golf. If they are not playing cricket, they should come and play golf. If they do, their performance will be better. There is a lot of fun in golf." Emphasising on the importance of infrastructure for young golfers he said: "If for young golfers, he said: "If

young players get the right facilities, they will improve. We are trying our best

#### We trained plenty for India tour: McCullum **PTI** ■ AHMEDABAD Bethell (hamstring) and Jamie Smith (calf).

England's head coach Brendon McCullum has dismissed suggestions that his team did not prepare adequately during their whiteball tour of India, calling such claims "factually incorrect". The New Zealand great was responding to criticism that emerged during TV commentary for the third ODI, where Ravi Shastri and Kevin Pietersen suggested believe in," he asserted. that, apart from Joe Root, England's Test coach

that India swept 3-0. "Firstly, it's factually incorrect, the whole statement that we

don't train," McCullum told 'talkSPORT' after England's third ODI defeat here on Wednesday. "We've trained plenty right

throughout, and guys have come from a lot of cricket as well. I think it's an easy thing to have as a throwaway line that guys don't train enough when the results aren't right. While England had trained before the first match in Nagpur, they opted against formal sessions ahead of the second and third ODIs in Cuttack and Ahmedabad. England suffered a 142-run

defeat to India in their final ODI before the Champions Trophy slated in Pakistan and Dubai next week. The ODI series loss came after

a 1-4 drubbing by India in the T20I rubber. McCullum also pointed out

the injury setbacks to Jacob

"We've got a style and a method that we believe in. We've got guys who are battling injuries and trying to make sure that we've got enough bodies out on the field, knowing that we've got a huge assignment coming up in a week or two.

"Ultimately it's factually incorrect what's been said and we'll stay true to what we believe in," he asserted.

England's players had not trained during the ODI series of the white-ball side before the India series, also stressed the importance of fostering a positive team environment despite recent setbacks.

"Ultimately, you're judged on results... From our point of view, we've got to strip away the fear of failure that results can bring," he said.

"Guys are fiercely determined and competitive... How do you allow an environment to provide the freedom and clarity of thought to go out there and allow your talent to come out?" he asked.

England will be in UAE for a short break before beginning their Champions Trophy campaign against Australia in Lahore on February 22. McCullum said the squadbuilding will continue over the next week as well.

"We'll give the guys a freshen-up in Abu Dhabi, make sure all the bodies are fit and ready to go, and have a full squad to pick from come that first game against Australia," he said.

#### We want to win every FIH Pro League match: Harmanpreet the national side. 'We have seen some good

PTI BHUBANESWAR

**▼**ndian men's hockev team Lcaptain Harmanpreet Singh on Friday said his team's target is to win every FIH Pro League match and finish on top of the league to earn a direct ticket to the 2026 World Cup. India will open their FIH Pro

League campaign against Spain on Saturday in Bhubaneswar.

They will next play Spain again the next day, followed by matches against Germany on February 16 and 19 in the opening leg of the India tour. "Our training is going well from Hockey India League, we have been preparing for months, have learnt a lot from HIL. We have been able to maintain our fitness as well," Harmanpreet said ahead of the



FIH Pro League opener. "We just wan to play good hockey, all players in good shape and the target is to win every game (in Pro League) looking at the World Cup," he added. The 2026 men's hockey World

14 to 30 in Wavre, Belgium and Amstelveen, Netherlands. Harmanpreet, regarded as one of the best dragflickers in the world currently, praised HIL's top-scorer Jugraj Singh for his flicking abilities and said the rise of next generation of domestic players augur well for Cup will be held from August

domestic players in HIL. It was an opportunity for youngsters and they performed well," he

"Jugraj was the top-scorer and he was brilliant. I am happy for him and it is beneficial for the national team as well." Harmanpreet, however, was in

riarmanpreet, nowever, was in no mood to take Spain lightly. "Spain is a good team, we can't take them lightly. Our focus is to give our best and win the match," he said. India's chief coach Craig Fulton said the FIH Pro League is a "building phase" for the side.

"It's a building phase for us. We will look to try out things and see what best suits us. We will like to use our players' HIL experience and integrate their learning into the team," he said.

#### Mourinho's Fenerbahce beats Anderlecht 3-0 in Europa League playoff Shamrock Rovers debut to Mokio scored in the 71st help the Irish team win 1-0 at 10-man Molde. minute. A corner was cleared but only as far as the Belgium Under-21 That made Noonan, at 16 international on the edge of years, 197 days, the the area and he volleyed it youngest-ever goalscorer in a European club in for his first goal for the

350 days, became the youngest player to score in a knockout stage match in the Europa League, UEFA said. Christian Rasmussen had

Mokio, aged 16 years and

senior Ajax team.

netted the opener in 59th. Elsewhere, Real Sociedad won 2-1 at Midtjylland and Ferencvaros beat Viktoria Plzen 1-0.

Romanian team FCSB came from behind to win 2-1 at PAOK and a stoppage-time penalty saw Twente beat Bodo/Glimt by the same

scoreline. Another youngest goalscorer record Sixteen-year-old Michael competition, his team said. Noonan scored from close range in the 57th minute. He also forced a red card for Molde defender Valdemar Lund for a lastman foul, three minutes before halftime. Víkingur Reykjavík became the first-ever Icelandic club to win a

The match was held in Helsinki as no stadium in Iceland met the requirements to host the

European knockout match by upsetting Panathinaikos

game. Armandas Kucys scored twice but also missed a late penalty as Celje drew 2-2 against 10-man APOEL.

PTI ■ LONDON

**T**osé Mourinho's Fenerbahce might have only just squeezed into the Europa League knockout playoff round but it is already on the brink of the round of 16. Fenerbahce dominated to beat Anderlecht 3-0 on Thursday and take a comprehensive lead to Belgium for the second leg next week. Two of Mourinho's former

clubs, Porto and Roma, drew 1-1 in Europe's second-tier competition. Fenerbahce only just reached the playoffs by placing 24th in the new 36standings format — the last qualification place, and on a tiebreaker of goal difference.

Anderlecht had finished 10th, only missing out on automatic progression to the last-16 by goal difference.

Fenerbahce took the lead in the 11th minute Thursday.

Anderlecht failed to clear a corner and the ball was put back to the area where Yusuf Akçiçek nodded it on for Dusan Tadic to head into the net.

Edin Dzeko doubled his team's advantage shortly before halftime following good work from Filip Kostic down the left flank. Dzeko's initial shot was blocked by Anderlecht defender Lucas Hey but the veteran forward fired home the rebound. Youssef En-Nesyri added a

and Fenerbahce missed several chances to extend its advantage. Notably, Yusuf Akçiçek's header was deflected onto the post — it would have been the 19-year-old's first career goal, after recording

third with a powerful header in the 57th minute

his first-ever assist in the first half. Dutch club AZ Alkmaar also has a healthy advantage to take into next week's second leg after it beat 10man Galatasaray 4-1. Dybala injured:

Key Roma forward Paulo Dybala limped off in the first half of the match in Portugal with a knee injury. Dybala had yelled out in agony when his knee felt the full force of Porto midfielder Alan Varela's boot in the 20th minute but the Argentina World Cup winner had played on for another 15 minutes before admitting defeat. Roma took the lead with practically the last kick of the first half, with defender Zeki Celik scoring his first goal for the club.
Porto leveled against the run of play in the 67th minute through Francisco Moura's deflected shot.



Roma midfielder Bryan Cristante was sent off five minutes later following a

second booking. Teenager scores for Ajax Ajax won 2-0 at Union

Saint-Gilloise, with 16-yearold Jorthy Mokio netting his side's second goal.

Noonan netted on his