

Indian Ocean truly a global lifeline: MEA
Jaishankar

PM HOPEFUL
OF ACHIEVING RS 9 LAKH-CR TEXTILE EXPORTS

Krishnaveni's century-long journey in cinema comes to AN END

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer

I saw the words spoken by Congress leaders on TV. Ironically, Congress leaders said that the father's caste applies to the son, and that since Rajiv Gandhi was a Hindu his son Rahul Gandhi is also a Hindu. How did Rajiv Gandhi become a Hindu? Rajiv Gandhi's father Feroz Jehangir Gandhi was a Parsi. Their ancestors from Persia came to India and became Parsis. Feroz Jehangir Gandhi's religion applies to Rajiv Gandhi. So Rajiv Gandhi is not a Hindu. Rajiv is a Parsi with Muslim roots

-Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs

DON'T MISS...

OGH gets 150 to 200 MLCs every day

Osmania General Hospital (OGH) handles nearly 150 to 200 medico-legal cases (MLCs) daily, including emergencies, accidents and abuse-related injuries, said Dr Rakesh Kumar Sahay, Superintendent of OGH. Addressing the media on Sunday evening, Dr Sahay dismissed reports alleging that OGH denies treatment to patients without an Aadhar card. "Registration is important for us, but if one enters Osmania General Hospital, they can see many receiving treatment even without documents," he clarified. He cited ...

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To ban or not to ban?

At least 79 education systems globally have banned smartphones in schools as many countries debate their impact on learning and privacy of children. According to the UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) team, 60 education systems (or 30 per cent of the total registered education systems globally) had banned smartphone in schools by the end of 2023 through special laws or policies. By the end of 2024, 19 more joined the list, bringing the total to 79 (or 40 per cent). India is yet to come up with...

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Reliance, BP lose decade-old gas

In a setback for Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner BP Plc, the Delhi High Court has overturned an international arbitration tribunal's ruling that held the duo not responsible for paying any compensation for the gas they produced and sold, which had allegedly migrated from adjoining fields. Here is an explainer on the entire dispute: FIELDS IN QUESTION: Block or area KG-DWN-98/3, known as KG-D6, was awarded to a consortium of Reliance Industries...

-PAGE: 8

Arshdeep poised to start ahead of Harshit

Harshit Rana has been the flavour of the season as far as India's emerging crop of fast bowlers is concerned but one of head coach Gautam Gambhir's finds is unlikely to start in India's playing eleven in the Champions Trophy with Arshdeep Singh still considered way ahead in terms of talent and quality. The Indian team management gave Harshit all three ODIs against England, and if one is absolutely fair to the burly 6-foot-2-inch tall Delhi speedster, he has not looked out of place. While Arshdeep enjoys a...

-SPORTS

TPCC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SOON
Cong to infuse young blood

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) may get young blood in its executive committee. TPCC chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said that he and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy think that the TPCC executive committee should have young blood. The party is going to announce the TPCC executive committee soon, he added.

Mahesh was speaking at the Youth Congress' training camp at Gattupalli in the Maheshwaram mandal of Rangareddy district. He said that Youth Congress leaders have a special identity in the party and that Rahul Gandhi too has been encouraging youth like Rajiv Gandhi, he said. He said that Rahul is the 'future'



TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud addressing the Youth Congress training camp on Sunday at Gattupalli in Maheshwaram mandal

of the nation and that Rahul will become the Prime Minister when elections are held. Mahesh said that top AICC leaders have a Youth Congress back-

Congress leaders must be in touch with people, he added.

Mahesh said the Youth Congress has the responsibility of taking the government's social welfare and development projects to the people. He also said that Youth Congress activists should focus on social media and should function as a protective cover of the Congress government.

He said that Congress activists have freedom in the party and they have the right to even question the Chief Minister.

Former Telangana Youth Congress president Shiv Sena Reddy, Telangana Youth Congress in-charge Surabhi, and Telangana Youth Congress president Shiva Charan Reddy attended the programme.



STAMPEDE AT NEW DELHI RAILWAY STATION

Death toll climbs to 18

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The death toll in the overnight stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station climbed to 18 on Sunday, with a senior railway official saying the incident occurred after some passengers slipped and fell on others while coming down from a footover bridge. More than a dozen people

were also injured in the stampede at the railway station which witnessed a surge of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj -- where the Maha Kumbh is underway --

What led to Delhi stampede? 5



CM Revanth Reddy releasing the book written by retired IAS officer Gopalakrishna on Sunday along officials

'Will recognise services of committed officials'

Collectors not leaving AC rooms, avoiding people, says CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that in the past, bureaucrats used to explain about the consequences of policy decisions taken by politicians during meetings. These days that healthy system is on the wane due to various reasons. Officials should explain the consequences of all decisions to politicians, he said.

I am not happy with the way the system is going. There is a need for change in thinking and working of Bureaucrats. Officers are getting comfortable in AC rooms like it's some disease. Earlier bureaucrats used to guide politicians, but now if a politician makes one mistake, officers are pushing for 3 mistakes. Trainee officers are doing settlements which are unfortunate. The CM said that earlier IAS officers mingled with people and people also remembered the efficiency of officials more than politicians.

Nowadays, Collectors are not leaving their AC rooms and are avoiding meeting people. There is a need for a change in the thinking and decision-making of officials, he said.

"There was a system of guiding political leaders back then. I don't know why it's not like that now. There are secretariat rules to educate political leaders. Some new IPS officers are walking on the wrong path.

Unfortunately, some new IPS officers are wearing uniforms and intervening in civil disputes. IAS and IPS officers are not willing to come out of their AC rooms. They are not willing to mingle with people. There should be a change in the mindset of officers," the CM said. "The government will recognise the services of committed officials. Officials should be proactive in helping the poor. Efficient officials will make their own mark in the hearts of the people. I am appealing to all officials to focus on connecting with people," the CM said. **Continued on Page 2**

I am not happy with the way the system is going. There is a need for change in thinking and working of Bureaucrats. Officers are getting comfortable in AC rooms like it's some disease

Is Cong brass planning national role for Revanth?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy once said the party is not playing T-20 matches and so it is not achieving the results that it wanted. However, rumours spread that the Congress high command is going to use Revanth's services in coming days.

Government Whip Ramachandru Nayak had recently commented that Revanth can function in national politics too. While criticising the BRS, Ramachandru said that Revanth is a seasoned, dynamic politician. He also said that Revanth can be in national politics as he has the 'age' advantage compared to other Congress leaders.

Revanth also recently said that he is ready to take the initiative to unite South Indian states to protect the rights of Southern states, particularly regarding the delimitation of constituencies after the 2026 census



as the population of South India is less compared to North India.

The Congress is facing defeats one after the other and so the party is revamping its strategies to come out of defeats. As part of it, the Congress high command is going to use the services of Revanth, it is learnt

The Congress is facing defeats one after the other and so the party is revamping its strategies to come out of defeats. As part of it, the Congress high command is going to use the services of Revanth, it is learnt.

However, the Congress high command may use Revanth Reddy's services in coming days to demand that the Centre conduct caste surveys throughout the nation. It is learnt that the party may assign the

job of exerting pressure on the Centre by coordinating with INDIA MPs.

Whether making the demand for a nationwide caste survey along with the population census would yield results or not will be known only later, but the Congress is trying to make it a national demand. The Congress high command is happy with the caste survey in Telangana. Even Rahul Gandhi referred to caste survey results in his speech in the Lok Sabha during the budget session.

It is also learnt that Rahul expressed happiness with Revanth Reddy during their meeting on Saturday in New Delhi for conducting the caste survey successfully. In this background rumours spread that the Congress high command may use the services of Revanth at the national level to tackle the BJP, it is learnt.

'TG BJP to have new head before local polls'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana BJP is going to get a new president before local body elections, Telangana BJP President Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy said. He said the delay in announcing the new president is due to his busy schedule.

Addressing the media during his Warangal tour on Sunday during his MLC election campaign, Kishan said that there is no need for the BJP to join hands with the BRS. He said that both the BRS and the Congress are afraid of fielding candidates in MLC elections. Both the Congress and the BRS have secret ties with each other, he said.

He said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy criticised the KCR family which looted the state in the name of irrigation projects when he was in the opposition. However, the Revanth is now walking on KCR's path. The Congress Government is now borrowing heavily and is like-



ly to go bankrupt. The Revanth Government is trying to make money by selling government lands, he added.

Kishan said the Revanth Reddy government has no plan to raise resources and no roadmap on how to implement assurances given to the people. The Congress and the BRS are two pieces made of the same cloth, he added.

Harish: Stop AP from diverting Krishna waters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"What is Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy doing when Andhra Pradesh is diverting Krishna waters freely," senior BRS leader T. Harish Rao posted on his X account on Sunday.

"It is shocking that the Telangana government is silently watching when Andhra Pradesh is infringing on Telangana's water rights. What are Chief Minister @revanth_anumula and Irrigation Minister @UttamINC doing when AP is diverting Krishna waters? Why is the TG government silent when AP has been diverting 10,000 cusecs per day from the Nagarjunasagar Right

Canal for the past three months? Why is it silent when 646 TMCs were diverted in this water year alone? Doesn't Congress care about Telangana's water interests? The Sagar Dam is under the control of Central forces. Although water should be released only under their supervision, AP is diverting water at will. AP is taking away the quota that should be stored in Srisailem and Sagar reservoirs for Telangana's drinking water needs, but the TG government is not even bothered. Even though there is no surplus storage in Srisailem and Sagar reservoirs, AP is already behaving aggressively by transferring water through the Pothireddypadu and Sagar Right canals. **Continued on Page 2**



2ND AND 3RD US AIRCRAFTS LAND AT AMRITSAR

Many deportees complain of being shackled

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A US military aircraft carrying 116 illegal Indian immigrants landed at Amritsar airport late on Saturday night, with the men among the deportees claiming they were in shackles during the journey and Sikh youths were allegedly without turbans.

The C-17 aircraft, which landed at the airport around 11.35 pm on Saturday, was the second batch of Indians to be deported by the Donald Trump administration as part of its crackdown on illegal immigrants.

Of these 115 deportees, 65 are from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, two each from Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, and one each from



Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. They were provided food upon reaching Amritsar,

deportees in the second batch were aged between 18 and 30.

A third plane carrying 112 deportees, that include people from Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat, is expected to land at Amritsar airport late on Sunday night, official sources said.

A US military aircraft carrying 112 Indians landed at the Amritsar airport late on Sunday night, the third such flight bringing deportees as part of a crackdown by the Donald Trump administration against illegal immigrants.

The plane landed at the airport at 10:03 pm, said sources.

Of the 112 deportees, 44 are from Haryana, 33 from Gujarat, 31 from Punjab, two from Uttar Pradesh and one each from Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, said sources.

Conspiracy against Gurukuls to destroy KCR's legacy: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KTR lashed out at the Congress government stating that Gurukuls which flourished during KCR's rule have now collapsed after a year of Congress rule.

He accused Chief Minister Revanth Reddy of deliberately dismantling the Gurukuls, which were established with the noble objective of helping underprivileged children. KTR said the Congress is targeting these institutions out of its narrow-minded objective to erase KCR's legacy.



Highlighting the stark contrast, KTR pointed out that during the BRS government, 1.68 lakh applications were received for 41,000 seats in SC, ST, BC, and minority Gurukuls. However, under the Congress government, only 80,000 applications have been submitted for 51,000 seats. This means over 80,000 parents have lost confidence in the system and are unwilling to apply for their children's admission.

KTR said that while there was once fierce competition for Gurukul admissions, today parents are reluctant to send their children there. He attributed this shift to the tragic deaths of over 50 students due to hunger, snake bites, suicides and food poisoning in Gurukuls during Congress rule. "Parents now fear for their children's lives more than their education," KTR said, expressing deep concern over the declining trust in Gurukuls due to government negligence. He also slammed the Congress leadership for failing to even console the families of the dead students. Instead, ministers and MLAs ignored their tragic deaths, and the government tried to threaten BRS leaders who wanted to visit the grieving families.

Monday Mirchi

RAMAKRISHNA RAO SET TO BE NEXT CS — A PROMISE FINALLY FULFILLED

The guessing game is over—Special CS K Ramakrishna Rao is all set to take over as the next Chief Secretary. Not only the preferred choice of bureaucrats, he also has the Telangana Chief Minister's backing. Yours truly had already written in this column about how RKR was the frontrunner, and now it's happening. Interestingly, this isn't the first time his name was in contention. Back in the KCR era, RKR was promised the CS post, but political and caste equations derailed that plan. Now, the Revanth Reddy government is finally delivering on that old commitment. In bureaucratic circles, there wasn't much of a debate—when asked, a majority confidently picked RKR as the obvious choice, with some refusing to even consider alternatives. His tenure will be a short one, lasting a maximum of four months, but that hasn't stopped the excitement. Looks like the bureaucrats got their way this time!

SECOND-IN-COMMAND UNDER FIRE, BUT BUREAUCRATS STAY UNSCATHED

The government's second-in-command has been making headlines for all the wrong reasons, with the Opposition relentlessly targeting him over commissions and even dragging his wife into the controversy. But here's the interesting part—while he remains under scrutiny, the bureaucrats working with him are walking away spotless. A little bird tells us that there's a simple reason for this: they are never made part of these "discussions." Unlike some officers who were closely aligned with the previous regime and are now feeling the heat, these bureaucrats are relieved to be left out of the loop. If—big if—a probe ever happens, they'll have nothing to worry about.

Given how things are playing out for others, that's probably the safest place to be!

POLICE SHUFFLE: KEY POSTS STILL VACANT, TG DGP OFFICE HOARDING DSPS?

Looks like there's a game of musical chairs happening at the Telangana police headquarters! Despite all the big talk about efficiency, key positions are still lying vacant. Gandhi Nagar and Cyberabad Crimes ACPs are also missing in action. No ACP for HYDRABA yet—guess disaster management isn't a priority? Meanwhile, the DGP office seems to be hoarding DSPs like a collector's edition set. And what's the deal with Nizamabad? Still, no full-time Commissioner, as if the city is running on autopilot. Over at Rachakonda and Cyberabad, the Joint CP (L&O) post is empty, making one wonder if law and order is being handled via remote control. Maybe someone should remind Telangana's top leaders that these aren't just placeholders on a list.

COLLECTORS ON THE MOVE—A STARK CONTRAST FROM BRS ERA

From teaching classes to sitting on the floor with students, composing school songs, screening movies, and even sharing meals—collectors are making their presence felt in the field like never before. Their visits are not just frequent but also proudly documented on social media and sent out to the press. While the public sees this as a refreshing change, the real celebrations are happening among officers who aren't collectors. A bureaucrat vividly recalls the unspoken rule during the BRS era—stepping out of the office was a risk and those who dared faced consequences. Now, the very thing that was once frowned upon is being encouraged. It's not about just inspections anymore; it's about the sheer joy of finally having the freedom to move without fear.

--Yours truly

Rajiv Gandhi was not Hindu as his father Feroz Jehangir Gandhi was Parsi: Sanjay

'Only 32 per cent reservations for BCs if quota for Muslims is reduced'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rajiv Gandhi was not a Hindu as his father Feroz Jehangir Gandhi was a Parsi, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said.

Sanjay was addressing the closing ceremony of the 'Swadeshi Mela' organised by the Swadeshi Jagarana Manch at the Ambedkar Stadium in Karimnagar on Sunday as the chief guest.

Sanjay said that Feroz's ancestors were of Muslim descent and Rajiv Gandhi's wife Sonia is an Italian Catholic Christian. "How can Rahul Gandhi be a Hindu then," he asked.

Sanjay said that if 42 per cent reservations are given to BCs 10 per cent of that will go to Muslims. This shows that BCs have been dealt a serious injustice. He said the Congress is conspiring to reduce the quota for BCs and cheat them in the name of the caste census.

"I heard the words spoken by Congress leaders on TV. It is



ironic that Congress leaders said that the father's caste applies to the son and that since Rajiv Gandhi was a Hindu his son Rahul Gandhi is also a Hindu. How did Rajiv Gandhi become a Hindu? Rajiv Gandhi's father Feroz Jehangir Gandhi was a Parsi. Their ancestors came to India from Persia and became Parsis. Feroz Jehangir Gandhi's religion applies to Rajiv Gandhi. So Rajiv Gandhi is not a Hindu. Rajiv is a Parsi with Muslim roots. Rahul Gandhi's family in #10, Jan Path has no caste, religion, race, or country. But

Modi is a pure Indian. Foreigners today bow down to Modi. Nowadays, every Indian abroad is proudly calling himself an Indian," he said.

Sanjay said that Hindus are being severely wronged in the name of the BC caste census. "Congress leaders are conspiring to reduce the population percentage of BCs. They have included 10 per cent quota for Muslims in BCs. The Congress government said that they would give 42 per cent reservation to BCs. Out of this 10 per cent goes to Muslims. So BCs get only 32 per cent reserva-

tions. And how will reservations be given to 42 per cent BCs? The Congress government is doing more injustice than justice to BCs," he said.

Sanjay said the government has decided to bring a law against religious conversions and love jihad like in Maharashtra. A similar law should be passed in Telangana too.

"If Muslims are included in the BCs list and if the Bill is sent to the Centre there is no question of the Centre approving that. There is no pretence in this. We will work for Hindu Dharma. If Muslims are removed from the BCs list and sent to the Centre we will definitely ensure that the list is approved," he said.

Congress has no right to contest in teachers & graduates elections: Sanjay

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said the Congress is not qualified to contest the elections for teachers and graduates.

"Have you ever fought for teachers and graduates? Have you ever fought against GO No. 317? Have you ever gone to jail for the unemployed, including Group-I? Then why should we vote for Congress candidates? The BJP has a history of constantly fighting for the problems of teachers and the unemployed, going to jail, and being beaten up..." Sanjay said.

Sanjay, along with BJP MLA Katapalli Venkataramana Reddy, former MLC NVS Prabhakar, former Mayor Sunil Rao, District BJP President

Gangadi Krishna Reddy, BJP state spokesperson J. Sangappa and others attended a meeting of social media activists of Karimnagar Nizamabad Adilabad Medak MLC constituency.

Addressing the social media activists, Sanjay said the BRS government, as well as the current Congress government, filed several cases against many BJP activists for posting facts on social media while fighting for public causes. However, hats off to the activists working with the aim of BJP coming to power in Telangana without hesitation. Many leaders and activists have even sacrificed their lives for the BJP's ideology. They lost their lives to Naxalites. The BJP has its own activists who work for its cause, he said.

BJP not against providing quota for BCs: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP is not against providing reservations for BCs, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said.

He said that they will convince the Centre if the state government completes the caste survey and BC unions accept it.

Participating in the MLC election campaign at Warangal on Sunday, Kishan said, "There is no need for a caste survey to find Rahul Gandhi's caste. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should reveal Rahul's caste. I don't know why the Congress, which is constantly speaking about the rights of BCs, is reluctant to reveal their leader's caste. Not even a single organisation of BCs has supported the government's caste survey till now."

He said that intellectuals, teachers and graduates are looking at the BJP and added that he is confident that the



Telangana BJP president G Kishan Reddy addressing the MLC elections campaign meeting in Warangal on Sunday

BJP will win the two teachers' MLCs and one graduate MLC elections.

Pointing out that people voted the Congress to power due to their opposition to the BRS, Kishan slammed the Congress government saying that they had failed to implement even a single assurance.

Kishan said the Congress government is thinking of selling government-owned land to raise funds. The Congress

Government is not even in a position to paint the walls of schools, he said.

He said the BJP will intensify its fight in the coming days for the sake of the people as the Congress and BRS governments have failed to protect public interests.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is going to New Delhi every week to register his attendance with the Congress high command, he said.

Govt trying to resolve land issues with Bhubharathi: Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress Government is trying to resolve land issues with the Bhubharathi Portal, TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said.

The public faced indescribable problems due to the Dharani Portal. However, the Congress government introduced Bhubharathi after coming to power and scrapped the Dharani Portal. "I am saying this from experience," Mahesh said.

Addressing the gathering after releasing the Telangana Revenue Field Technical Staff Association calendar and diary



TPCC Chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud releasing the Diary and Calendar of Telangana Revenue Technical Field Employees on Sunday

on Sunday, Mahesh said the Revenue Department is the heart of Telangana.

He said that he respects

KCR as a Telangana activist. However, Telangana became debt-ridden during KCR's rule, he added.



Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar addressing the BJP social media activists of Karimnagar-Nizamabad-Medak-Karimnagar MLC constituency on Sunday

What did the Centre do with the Rs 125 L cr it borrowed in 10 years: KTR

Sends open letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said that even after 10 years of BRS rule, Telangana has a surplus budget.

He said the BRS had solved decades of hardships of Telangana with the loans the BRS admin took and that they changed the direction of Telangana's development and created inexhaustible assets for the state.

KTR sent an open letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying that the Centre has contracted the highest debt in the history of the country and is still blaming the BRS. "Your debts were incurred for waiving the loans running into billions taken by private companies," he said.

"The people will not forgive the BJP which is doing unforgivable injustice to Telangana. Nirmala

Sitharaman should tell what the NDA government did with the Rs 125 lakh crore of debt it ran up in the last 10 years," KTR said in his letter. KTR was angry that the BJP government which borrowed Rs 125 lakh crore in just 10 years from 2014 to 2024 talking about the debts of others.

He clarified that Telangana was a surplus budget state when it was forcibly merged with Andhra. When Telangana was created in 2014, the state had a debt of nearly Rs 70,000 crore. KTR concluded that after 10 years of BRS rule, Telangana was handed over to the Congress as a surplus budget state. He said it is not right to link actual debts with the surplus budget.

He reminded that the country has seen that in the last 10 years, the BRS government had invested every paisa borrowed and brought about a revolutionary change in Telangana.

He clarified that it is not right to try to portray a state as backward just because of debts and that the crucial thing is what the loans were spent on.

He said that there is no way to find out what the NDA government at the Centre has done with the Rs 125 lakh crore loans it took in the last 10 years, but with the debt incurred by the Telangana government, they built projects that will permanently eradicate the drinking and irrigation problems that had plagued TG for decades.

He said that when the BRS government made Telangana a state that provides 100 per cent treated drinking water to households through Mission Bhagiratha which was undertaken at its own expense, it is strange that the Centre is considering it as providing 38 lakh tap connections under the Jal Jeevan Mission.



TPCC working president T Jagga Reddy addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Sunday

Rahul's family is Hindu Brahmin, says Jagga Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Leader of the Opposition (LOP) in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi's family belongs to the Hindu Brahmin community, TPCC Working President T. Jagga Reddy said.

He said that Rahul's family, which "won freedom for the nation," has been functioning irrespective of caste and religion. Rahul's family never used caste for politics, he added.

However, as per Indian tradition, the wife's caste will become the husband's caste only after marriage. After marrying Rajiv Gandhi, Sonia became Sonia Gandhi, he said and added that it is in accordance with Indian tradition.

Addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Sunday, Jagga Reddy said that Indira Gandhi's husband Feroz Jehangir Gandhi used to work with Mahatma Gandhi during the freedom movement. Feroz Jehangir Gandhi's name got shortened to Feroz Gandhi later, he said. Indira became Indira Gandhi after marrying Feroz Jehangir Gandhi, Jagga Reddy said.

Jagga Reddy said that Rajiv Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi used to wear 'jandiyam' (thread). Rahul would also wear the thread after getting married, he said.

Criticising BJP leaders, particularly Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Sanjay Kumar, for asking the caste of Rahul Gandhi, Jagga Reddy said that Lal Krishna Advani was expected to become the Prime Minister after Atal Behari Vajpayee. But Narendra Modi became the PM displacing Advani. Did the BJP try to make Advani the PM, Jagga Reddy asked and added that there is 'no future' for the BJP if there is no Advani. There would have been 'no existence' for the BJP if Advani had not conducted his Rathayatra. Modi was behind Advani then. Modi became the CM of Gujarat only because of Advani, he said.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	Panchami: Feb 17 02:16 AM to Feb 18 04:53 AM
	Shashthi: Feb 18 04:53 AM to Feb 19 07:32 AM
Nakshatram:	Chitra: Feb 17 04:31 AM to Feb 18 07:35 AM
	Rahukalam: 8:11 AM to 9:37 AM
	Yamagandam: 11:04 AM to 12:30 PM
	Variyam: 01:32 PM to 03:20 PM
	Gulika: 1:56 PM to 3:22 PM
	Amritakalam: 12:22 AM to 02:10 AM
	Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:07 PM to 12:53 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 33°
Humidity: 47%
Sunrise: 6:42 AM
Sunset: 6:19 PM
Updated: February 16, 2025 5:00 PM

'Will recognise ...'

Continued from page 1

The CM was unveiling the book titled 'Life of a Karma Yogi', written by retired IAS officer M. Gopala Krishna on Sunday in Hyderabad. Speaking on the occasion, the CM said that the book contained retired IAS officer M. Gopala Krishna's experiences and that he was delighted to release the book. The task before the retired official is to put together his six decades of experience in the book, the CM said. "We can buy anything in the world but not experience. Hope this book helps as a guide to all serving civil servants. Gopala Krishna is a witness to the rapid changes that the country witnessed till date," he said.

The CM said that we should remember the three prominent persons, Sankaran, TN Seshan and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Sankaran was a distinguished officer who worked with commitment. Seshan was also an efficient administrator who brought a revolutionary change in conducting elections transparently.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh led the country on the path of economic development. Civil servants should learn from their experiences, he said.

Death toll ...

Continued from page 1

On platform number 14 and 15 of the station. Hospital and police sources said the death toll has climbed to 18.

Northern Railway's Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Himanshu Upadhyay said that at the time of incident the Patna-bound Magadh Express was standing at platform number 14 and the New Delhi-Jammu Uttar Sampark Kranti Express was stationed at platform number 15.

"Some people who were coming down from the footover bridge towards platform numbers 14 and 15 using stairs slipped and fell on others," he said, citing the cause of the stampede.

Sources said delays in train departures and the sale of 1,500 general tickets every hour may have created a chaotic situation at the New Delhi Railway station.

According to official sources, wrong announcement about change of platforms may also have created a confusion that led to the stampede.

Railways have announced a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each for the next of kin of those killed in the stampede.

Those seriously injured will get Rs 2.5 lakh and those with minor injuries 1 lakh, the railway said.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh condoled the loss of lives in the stampede.

"Deeply anguished to know about the loss of lives in a stampede at New Delhi railway station. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and pray for speedy recovery of those injured," Murmu said in a post on X.

The Prime Minister said, "Distressed by the stampede at New Delhi Railway Station. My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured have a speedy recovery. The authorities are assisting all those who have been affected by this stampede".

Delhi Police have launched an investigation into the stampede.

"Our main target is to investigate the main cause which caused the stampede. We will collect all data of CCTV footage and announcements done during that time," a police source said.

Acting Delhi Chief Minister Atishi earlier told reporters that 15 people had been brought dead at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Hospital of central Delhi

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | MONDAY | FEBRUARY 17, 2025

03



BFSI-Skilling eligibility test gets good response

• Training for candidates at Young India Skill University

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's 'BFSI-Skilling' programme, launched for B.Tech graduates, is receiving a good response. An eligibility test was held on Sunday and selected candidates will undergo training at Young India Skill University (yisu.in) until July. The programme covers banking operations, financial markets, insurance, investment banking, software, programming, cybersecurity, cloud computing and soft skills.

IT Minister Sridhar Babu played a key role in introducing industry-aligned courses. After training, candidates will have job opportunities in Global Capability Centres (GCCs) within Hyderabad's Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance (BFSI) sector. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy aims to link education with industry needs, making Telangana a hub for skilled workers.

Hyderabad's business-friendly environment is attracting BFSI GCCs. Sridhar Babu, in collaboration with industry experts from India, the USA and Singapore, has designed this programme to help Telangana's youth secure jobs. The IT Minister said that the programme has a one-time fee of Rs 5,000 for certification and administration. Selection is based on an entrance test, and 1,320 graduates have registered for this batch. Each year, the programme will train 10,000 graduates, 5,000 from engineering and 5,000 from other fields. Over three years, 30,000 students will benefit. Two batches have completed training. Job seekers should visit yisu.in for updates.

Survey in full swing for Medchal, Shamirpet Metro corridors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

• Traffic study and soil testing to finish by month-end

Metro Rail MD NVS Reddy announced that surveys and traffic studies for the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) of the JBS-Medchal (24 km) and JBS-Shamirpet (21 km) Metro corridors are moving fast.

He explained that three major studies are essential for DPR preparation: Traffic Surveys, Soil Testing (Geotechnical Investigation) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

He said that traffic surveys analyse daily travel, future demand, junction movements, pedestrian footfall, travel time and expected Metro commuters. The EIA study checks air and noise pollution, water resources, biodiversity and local livelihood impact.

Regarding soil testing, Reddy said it examines soil strength, groundwater levels and seismic risks. This data will help design



Metro Rail MD NVS Reddy conducting a survey for the new Metro corridors

strong Metro pillars and stations. Boreholes are drilled every 500 meters, going 50 to 100 feet deep.

He also mentioned that Metro teams are conducting tests at 25 locations on the JBS-Medchal route and 19 on the JBS-Shamirpet route. So far, 14 tests on the Medchal route and 11 on the Shamirpet route are complete, with all tests finishing this month.

Following Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's instructions, all studies will be completed and DPRs for these corridors, along with the Shamshabad Airport-Future City route, will be submitted to the State government by March. After approval, they will be sent to the Central government for clearance.

NVS Reddy assured that all necessary precautions are being taken to ensure a smooth and hassle-free Metro experience for the public.

OGH gets 150 to 200 MLCs every day: Superintendent

• No denial over lack of Aadhaar card

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Osmania General Hospital (OGH) handles nearly 150 to 200 medico-legal cases (MLCs) daily, including emergencies, accidents and abuse-related injuries, said Dr Rakesh Kumar Sahay, Superintendent of OGH.

Addressing the media on Sunday evening, Dr Sahay dismissed reports alleging that OGH denies treatment to patients without an Aadhaar card.

"Registration is important for us, but if one enters Osmania General Hospital, they can see many receiving treatment even without documents," he clarified.

He cited the case of Pramila, who arrived at OGH's casualty department on February 8 at around 1am, accompanied by her neighbor Ganesh. Pramila claimed she was physically assaulted by her husband with a stick at her home in Yaradpally, Nagarkurnool district. Her case was regis-



Pramila with her daughter in Osmania General Hospital

tered as an MLC at OGH.

"The patient was evaluated by the on-duty Chief Medical Officer and General Surgeon. Tests, including EFAST and X-rays of the abdomen, pelvis and chest, showed no fractures or internal injuries. She was given necessary treatment and since there was no indication for admission, was discharged with medication and advised to return for follow-up. However, she did not come back in the intervening period," Dr Sahay explained.

"No patient is denied treatment or admission. Every day, three to four unidentified, destitute, homeless, or abandoned patients who are attended to in the casualty and admitted if required, with due police intimation. All necessary investigations, including blood tests, CT scans and MRIs, are conducted as per medical need. This patient came with an attacker, received full treatment, and was discharged."

Speaking to The Pioneer, Pramila explained, "My daughter is my life, and she takes care of me. My husband is a devil - he thrashes me. I left my home a week ago because I was sick and wanted to come to Hyderabad to build a better life for my daughter. In my village, I worked as a labourer to feed my child. I told the media I was denied treatment."

The child is sent to nearby Sakhi Shelter Home and the mother, who also is sent to it after the treatment.

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Food quality issues in Secretariat to be probed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Food Safety department is set to look into concerns regarding food quality served to Peshi and VIPs in the Secretariat after reports surfaced in the media. Officials are expected to look into the matter on Monday.

A source from the department told The Pioneer, "So far, we have only received reports from the media regarding food quality concerns related to an agent supplying meals to Peshi and VIPs in the Secretariat. However, after verifying with all departments, we have found no official complaints."

The official further stated that while food inspections are typically conducted swiftly, this case involves a private supplier rather than the Secretariat's canteens. "We are currently gathering information about the agent providing the food. Once we have clarity, we will carry out our duties accordingly on Monday," the source added.

AHLL launches Health Hub in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Apollo Health and Lifestyle Limited (AHLL) launched its first integrated clinic and diagnostics division, Health Hub, in Narsingi on Sunday.

This marks the opening of Apollo's 6,500th pharmacy in one of Hyderabad's fastest-growing suburbs. The new pharmacy is unique because it includes an Apollo Clinic and diagnostic services, creating a full-service healthcare hub.

This 3,200-sq-ft centre is a major step in Apollo's goal of bringing healthcare closer to communities. It supports the 'One Apollo' model by offering medicines, diagnostics and doctor consultations in one location. This complements Apollo's 24/7 online platform, which has already helped over 35 million users with easy healthcare access.

Executive Chairperson of Apollo Health Co. Ltd Shobana Kamineni said that

this approach makes high-quality healthcare easy and immediate. "We can expand quickly by repurposing large pharmacies."

Meanwhile, Dr Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals, added that Apollo is leading healthcare innovation with this clinic-in-pharmacy model. It ensures customers get quick consultations, health checks and tests all in one place.



Executive Chairperson of Apollo Health Co. Ltd, Shobana Kamineni inaugurating the first integrated clinic and diagnostics division, Health Hub, in Narsingi on Sunday

EOW arrests two in Rs 850 cr ponzi scheme

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Cyberabad Police has arrested two individuals in connection with an Rs 850 crore ponzi scheme linked to the Falcon Invoice Discounting Platform. The accused allegedly deceived thousands of depositors by promising high returns on short-term investments.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Pavan Kumar Odela - vice-president of Capital Protection Force and business head of Falcon Invoice Discounting Platform and Kavya Nalluri - director of Capital Protection Force and Falcon Capital Ventures.

The primary accused, Amardeep Kumar (managing director, Falcon Capital Ventures Pvt Ltd), Aryan Singh (chief operating officer) and Yogender Singh (chief executive officer), orchestrated the scam through Capital Protection Force Pvt Ltd and its associated entities.

The total deposits collected is Rs 1,700 crore. The amount repaid is Rs 850 crore. The outstanding fraudulent amount is Rs 850 crore and number of depositors affected is 6,979.

The accused launched a mobile application and website, falsely presenting Falcon Invoice Discounting Platform as a legitimate peer-to-peer lending service. They claimed

to connect investors with reputed companies like Britannia, Amazon and Godrej, while in reality, they fabricated vendor profiles and fake deals to create an illusion of authenticity.

The promised returns are 11 per cent - 22 per cent per annum. The deposit range is Rs 25,000 to Rs 9,00,000 and maturity period is 45 to 180 days.

Operating since 2021, the accused ran a classic ponzi scheme, using funds from new investors to pay off earlier ones. The scheme collapsed by January 15, 2025, leaving depositors in distress and prompting police complaints.

GHMC Commissioner inspects H-CITI project sites

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Commissioner K Ilambarthi conducted a site inspection on Sunday to review various development works under the

Hyderabad City Innovative and Transformative Initiative (H-CITI).

As part of the inter-departmental convergence tour, officials from HMDA, Water Works, TSIIC, Police and the Electricity department accompanied the Commissioner to assess the proposed projects. Along with zonal commissioners, town planning officials, and project maintenance engineers, Commissioner Ilambarthi reviewed the sites for flyovers, road expansion and junction improvement projects proposed under the H-CITI initiative.



Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Commissioner Ilambarthi inspecting various locations

During the inspection, he instructed officials to expedite land acquisition and utility removal processes at key junctions. Traveling by bus with officials from var-

ious departments, he urged immediate removal of utilities such as electric poles, water pipelines and telephone wires to facilitate the progress of the projects. With the tendering process for H-CITI projects in the final stages, the Commissioner emphasised the urgency of clearing utilities to ensure smooth execution. He highlighted the government's commitment to implementing the H-CITI works as a prestigious initiative, stressing the need for seamless coordination among departments.

The key project sites inspected included Khajaguda Junction, CP Office-Gachibowli Junction, IIIT Junction, Wipro Junction, Contingent Junction, DLF Road-Majeed Banda (Botanical Garden), Chandanagar Railway Station, Lingampally Flyover, Srivevi Talkies-Gangaram Road, and Alwyn X Road.

Weekend special trains between Charlapalli - Srikakulam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) has announced special trains between Charlapalli and Srikakulam Road to manage the extra weekend rush.

Train No. 07025 (Charlapalli to Srikakulam Road) will depart at 9:15 pm on Friday and reach its destination at 12:15 pm the next day, February 21, 2025.

Train No. 07026 (Srikakulam Road to Charlapalli) will depart at 2:15 pm on Saturday and arrive at 6:00 am the next day, February 22, 2025.

These trains will stop at major stations including Nalgonda, Guntur, Vijayawada, Rajahmundry, Vizianagaram and more. The coaches available are 2AC, 3AC, Sleeper, and General Second Class.

CITY'S HEAT SPELL TO LAST UNTIL FEB 20

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad will experience a heat spell until February 20, with a gradual decrease in night chills, according to Telangana Weatherman. Weatherman T Balaji stated that with day temperatures already scorching, nights will also turn warm in the coming days as we move closer to summer. Temperatures in Hyderabad have risen above 35 degrees Celsius in many

areas. Night temperatures have also risen above 20 degrees in some parts of the city. It remains to be seen whether the maximum temperature in Hyderabad will reach 40 degrees Celsius in the last week of February.

According to the Telangana Development Planning Society (TGDPs), the highest maximum temperature recorded in the city last February was 35.2 degrees Celsius.

Raahat assists survivors of domestic violence

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

Fernandez Foundation's Raahat Crisis Centre, launched in August 2024 at Bogulkunta, has provided support to 150 individuals, including three to four men, seeking help for domestic violence and abuse. With counselling, some survivors have filed complaints, while others have been guided to Sakhi Shelter Homes. Many

have opted for ongoing counselling. Women seeking employment are referred to jobs through the Invisible Scars Foundation, which partners with Raahat Crisis Centre. Several survivors have submitted resumes and enrolled in skill training programmes.

The centre has successfully assisted women in reclaiming financial independence from controlling spouses. "The salary account may be in the woman's name, but in many cases, the

husband dictates its usage. Women are now becoming aware of their financial rights and legal protection," said a Raahat team member.

Men facing abuse from their wives have also sought counselling. The centre operates 24/7, with a counsellor available for both online and in-person sessions. Dr Maimoona Ahmed, Senior Obstetrician, shared an instance where a couple on the verge of divorce reconsidered their decision after receiving counselling.

Raahat Centre Coordinator Dharani Shankarapally highlighted that the helpline receives four to five calls daily. "Mostly women call when they are outside their homes, so they can speak freely," she added.

A majority of survivors are aged 30 to 40, report issues such as harassment, dowry demands and financial abuse. The Raahat team revealed that 30 per cent of abuse cases stem from addiction and unemployment. Some men have been directed to de-addic-

tion centres after receiving counselling. "Domestic violence is not limited by education or employment. Both working women and men experience abuse," the team emphasised. Around 70% of complainants reach out via phone, including individuals from northern states, who are guided toward support options in their respective regions.

Among the 150 survivors assisted, 50 received legal awareness on domestic violence, and five to six have formally filed

police complaints. Doctors at Fernandez Hospital are also trained to identify signs of domestic violence when treating patients.

Looking ahead, Raahat Crisis team said, "Our field officer has started visiting localities like Chirag Gully and Netaji Nagar to educate communities about domestic violence."

If you are experiencing domestic violence or abuse, seek help by calling +91 9121444333 or emailing raahat@myfernandez.in.

Farmers fleeced by transporters

● Ryots are forced to hire vehicles and transport produce to rice mills

PNS ■ WARANGAL

In the Warangal district, farmers who work tirelessly to cultivate paddy are exploited by contractors at every stage, from purchasing seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides to transporting their harvested crops. A glaring example of this is the transportation of paddy from procurement centres to mills, where contractors are failing to pay farmers the rightful transport fees they are owed.

The government assigns to contractors the task of providing trucks for transporting the paddy from procurement centres to mills through a tender process. The government pays Rs 32 per quintal for distances up to 6 km, and Rs 37 for longer distances. However, contractors often fail to provide trucks on time, and many farmers are forced to hire their lorries or tractors to transport the produce to mills.

Once they bring the paddy to the mills, the contractors are supposed to pay them the transport fee, but they have been evading responsibility.

Some farmers are unaware of the government's payment scheme, while others are unable



Farmers staging a protest at Gudur in Warangal district to highlight the 'exploitation' by transport contractors

to locate contractors who would pay them. As a result, they sometimes leave their transport receipts without receiving pay-

ment. In some districts, transporters are Rs 25 per quintal, and in Hanamkonda district, the fee is as low as Rs 15 per quintal.

Farmers have expressed anger over this, stating that they are unwilling to accept anything less than Rs 25 per quintal. When

questioned, contractors have been rude and uncooperative.

In Kamalapur mandal of Hanamkonda district, it was found that 2,35,000 quintals of paddy were transported from various centres to mills. Due to the delay in arranging trucks, farmers paid for tractor rentals to transport over 1,64,500 quintals of produce themselves. When they approached the contractors for payment, they were offered only Rs 15 per quintal, far below the Rs 32 to Rs 37 the government provides.

In Hanamkonda district, the government paid the Civil Supplies Department a sum of Rs 82,25,000 for transporting paddy, but only Rs 35 lakh has been paid to the farmers. Over the last five years, farmers have accused contractors of misappropriating transport funds. Farmers like Sampath from Hanamkonda district reported that when they asked for the payment due to them, contractors offered only Rs 15 per quintal. When they protested, the contractors treated them rudely. When the issue was raised with the Civil Supplies Department, officials insisted that farmers accept whatever the contractors offered.



Hemant with his friends

STANDING TALL IN SPOTLIGHT

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Meet the 14-year-old boy who is already 6 feet 8 inches tall. He is Hemant, the son of Vannela Vinod and Sujata, from the Bokkhalaguda area in Adilabad town. Standing at a height of 6 feet 8 inches, Hemant attracts everyone's attention. He is currently studying in class 10 at the local Government High School-2. Typically, boys at the age of 14-15 are about 5.57 feet tall, but Hemant has grown unusually tall.

Hemant shares, "At school, whenever there's something on top of the shelves, I'm the one they call. The school uniform doesn't well fit me, so I have to wear civil clothes, and I sit on the back bench in the classroom. Because of my long legs, riding a bicycle is difficult. On the bus, I have to bend down carefully. When sitting in a

car, the top of my head touches the ceiling. Whenever I visit someone's house, the doorframe hits my head and causes injuries. My teachers encourage me, saying that if I study well, I could get a job in the police force."

However, Hemant says that he wants to act in movies and that Amitabh Bachchan is his inspiration.

Hemant's mother expresses happiness, saying that they are very proud of their son's height. School teachers and fellow students also treat Hemant as someone special. Despite being an average student academically, they say he excels in everything he does. His classmates say they like Hemant and that, despite his height, he behaves like everyone else. They never tease him about being tall and always see him as just a friend.

Man strangles wife to death in Nizamabad dist

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

In a tragic incident at Dharpallei, a man strangled his wife to death in front of children. The children were left terrified. The family members of the deceased, along with children, staged a protest at the Gandhi statue, demanding justice. According to the family, Anusha was married off to Vinod from the Jankampet village 12 years ago. However, Vinod had been previously married. Anusha and Vinod had two sons. Recently, Vinod had been living with his wife, Anusha, in the Dharpallei. Over the past few days, Vinod, who was addicted to alcohol, reportedly demanded money from his wife. It is said that she had borrowed around Rs 5 lakh and given it to him, but tensions arose between the couple, leading to a dispute that night. The family members said in the midst of the quarrel, Vinod strangled Anusha to death in front of their children. The police initially treated the death as a suicide, but the family members raised accusations and staged a protest. Vinod is currently on the run, and the police are searching for him.

Husband kills woman by smashing her head

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

In a shocking incident in Luxettipet Municipality limits, a man killed his wife by smashing her head with a boulder near the local police station in the New Plots area. According to the details provided by the deceased's relatives, Lakhavath Rajkumari (42) got married to Ganesh 15 years ago. They were residing in the New Plots area in the Luxettipet Municipality. Ganesh, suspected the fidelity of his wife Rajkumari and frequently accused her of having an illicit relationship. He used to threaten her every day, saying he would kill her. On Sunday morning, as Rajkumari went to the bathroom, Ganesh struck her on the head with a stone from behind, causing her immediate death.

Carcasses poultry layers abandoned near Outer Ring Road

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The discovery of dead chickens dumped in bags near the Outer Ring Road in Adibatla Municipality limits has triggered panic among locals, raising concerns over the possible spread of bird flu. With reports of bird flu cases in the State, residents fear that the discarded chickens may have died due to the virus or other diseases, posing a risk of infecting the people.

Eyewitnesses reported that unidentified individuals brought the chicken carcasses in bags and



Chicken carcasses

abandoned them in the area, leading to widespread alarm. Locals urged authorities to ensure that such carcasses are buried properly instead of being dumped in the open, as this could prevent the spread of diseases.

Officials also expressed concern over the issue, stressing the need for strict monitoring along the Outer Ring Road to prevent similar incidents. Municipal authorities stated that immediate action will be taken against those responsible for illegally dumping dead poultry, and efforts are underway to identify the culprits.

IUWJ condemns attack on scribe

PNS ■ SIDDIPIET

The Telangana Union of Working Journalists (IUWJ) has demanded strict action against those who attacked journalists, stating that such incidents would not be tolerated. In a statement, district president Rangachari condemned the attack on senior journalist Parameshwar on Sunday at Pulluru village under Siddipet mandal. The union filed a complaint with the police, demanding action against the perpetrators. The union also warned that they would not stand by if such attacks were carried out intentionally.



People at Mondri Sadak giving a sound thrashing to a youth who allegedly attempted to kidnap a girl from Gurukul School on Sunday in Kamareddy district

Attempt to kidnap girl from Gurukul School thwarted

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

An alleged attempt to kidnap a girl from Borlam Gurukul Girls' School in the Banswada mandal of Kamareddy district caused agitation.

A student of Class 8, Sushitha, was taken away from the school by Sanjay Bhargav, the son of her paternal grandfather, by telling her that her father fell ill.

He got her to sit on his bike and drove towards Hyderabad. When the bike tyre got punctured at Mondri Sadak, he stopped to fix it.

During this time, local people became suspicious and called the girl's brother. He

told them that everything was fine and that he was coming soon. The local people suspected that it was a case of kidnapping and caught hold of Sanjay Bhargav, gave him a sound thrashing and handed him over to the police.

The main reason behind the incident is the negligence of the hostel staff, complained the parents of the student. Even though similar incidents occurred in the past, the school staff did not learn any lesson. Parents are now urging the authorities to pay more attention to the safety of their children and to prevent such incidents in the future.

Aruna extends support to agitating farmers in Jadcherla dist

PNS ■ JADCHERLA

Lok Sabha member DK Aruna visited the protest camp organised by farmers at Udandapur in Jadcherla. The farmers are staging a protest demanding compensation for the land acquired by the government for developmental projects. She extended her full support to the farmers' agitation. The landless farmers of Udandapur shared their grievances with Aruna, expressing that they are being threatened and harassed when they asked for compensation.

The demands of the Udandapur farmers are just and lawful. After providing compensation for the displaced people, the project work should begin. Aruna has given an ultimatum to the state government on behalf of the farmers. She assured the farmers that she would stand by them until they got compensation. If this government has any sincerity, compensation should be paid immediately. The compensation for Udandapur farmers should be settled as a one-time payment. Offering compensation based on ten-year-old estimates is unacceptable. Every youth who has turned 18 should be considered a beneficiary.

How can there be threats when farmers demand compensation for the land they gave for the project? If compensation is provided based on party affiliations, where is the justice in that?



Lok Sabha member DK Aruna addressing a meeting in Udandapur in Jadcherla district on Sunday

Can there be no unrest among farmers if the project work continues without providing compensation? Farmers are protesting out of fear that they may be cheated by not being given compensation. Why should the MLA be upset if the government provides compensation?

She warned the police against interfering with protests. She made it clear that she would not allow the officials to disrupt the protests. The farmers are not obstructing any work; they are protesting for their rightful demands. The MLA should take the initiative and provide compensation as promised to the farmers of Udandapur. The promise of a Rs 26 lakh package per person must be fulfilled.

Death of student in Ashram School triggers protests

PNS ■ MULUGU

The death of a student at the Peruru Ashram School under the Wajedu mandal in the district triggered a protest.

According to the details provided by relatives, Soyam Vineeth (14), a student studying in the 8 class at Peruru Ashram School, got a fever on Tuesday. The health worker there administered a fever tablet, which reduced the temperature for that day. After taking two days off, the student was sent home.

After returning home, the fever recurred, and his maternal uncle, Srikanth, took him to a local RMP for treatment. However, despite the treatment, his condition did not improve, and he began experiencing stomach pain. While being transferred to the Yeturu Nagaram hospital, the student passed, according to the relatives.



Students and members of tribal organisations staging a protest in front of Peruru Ashram School in Mulugu district on Sunday

The deceased student's mother, Shailaja, works in a private company in Hyderabad. The boy's father had left the family when the student was young. Relatives accused the warden and teachers of negligence, claiming that the body was taken to hospital for treatment.

Tribal student organisations are accusing authorities of

treating tribal students with indifference. Relatives, along with tribal community leaders, are protesting in front of the ashram school, demanding accountability for the student's death.

They are expressing anger, stating that if proper medical care had been provided earlier, the student would not have died.

Komatireddy promises comprehensive development of Nalgonda district

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on Sunday reiterated that he was committed to a comprehensive development of Nalgonda district.

In a recent Prajavani session, he personally addressed citizens' concerns and resolved various issues, ranging from financial difficulties to medical treatment requests, providing immediate relief and making a direct impact on people's lives. With key infrastructure projects like the Regional Ring Road (RRR) and the Srisailem Tunnel underway, he envisions a transformed Telangana and promised to

fulfil all his commitments to the people of Nalgonda, ensuring that the constituency becomes a model of development and prosperity.

Minister Venkat Reddy pointed out that there is no greater satisfaction than solving public issues. Due to the Election Code, he did not invite officials for the Prajavani programme, but assured the people that his office would always be open to the people of Nalgonda. He also shared his ongoing efforts to transform the state's infrastructure, particularly through projects like the Regional Ring Road, which will change Hyderabad's connectivity and traffic flow. The

Minister outlined that the work on the Srisailem Tunnel would be completed within two years, marking a significant step in addressing Nalgonda's irrigation and drinking water challenges.

The Minister further stressed that the previous government's neglect of important projects, such as the Srisailem Tunnel and Brahman Velama, caused great suffering. The Congress government allocated the necessary funds for the projects. Additionally,

He reiterated that he would continue to work towards Nalgonda's comprehensive development, turning it into an ideal constituency.



Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy offering prayers at a temple in Nalgonda on Sunday

ACROSS THE STATES



Teacher jumps to death from Atal Setu

A 50-year-old school teacher, who was allegedly being troubled over a loan, jumped to his death from the Atal Setu, the country's longest sea bridge between south Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, an official said on Sunday. The man, a resident of Alibag in Maharashtra's Raigad district, died by suicide near Ulwe, close to the Nhava Sheva end of the sea bridge, on Friday morning, the official said. His family told the police that he had borrowed money through an instant loan app last month to clear some debt and was struggling to pay an outstanding of Rs 12,000. As he was unable to pay, recovery agents of the loan app company had been calling him over the past week and allegedly threatening to shame him, the official said. The recovery agents subsequently allegedly circulated the primary school teacher's morphed images among his contacts and in WhatsApp groups, his family told the police. According to the police, the man reached the Atal Setu in a car, alighted and plunged into the waters on Friday.



Union Minister Pradhan takes holy dip at Sangam

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan took a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam on Sunday during the ongoing Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, calling it "the grandest celebration of faith and devotion." After 144 years, this great confluence of the Maha Kumbh is happening, where an ocean of saints, sages, and devotees gather. It is the grandest celebration of faith and devotion," he said. "Maha Kumbh is not just a festival, but a living flame of India's thousands-of-years-old spiritual and cultural consciousness. It is a divine occasion when the entire world is witnessing the magnificence of Sanatan culture and the unique power of devotion," he added. On Saturday, Pradhan was in Varanasi for the inauguration of the third edition of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam, an education and cultural exchange organized by the Ministry of Education. aha Kumbh, the mega-religious event held every 12 years, is being celebrated in Prayagraj from January 13 and will continue for 45 days.



4 killed in road accident on Purvanchal Expressway

Four people, including a woman, were killed, and six others were injured after the tempo-traveller they were travelling in collided with a bus from behind on the Purvanchal Expressway in Barabanki district on Sunday, police said. The bus, coming from Chhattisgarh and the tempo-traveller, coming from Maharashtra, were both headed to Ayodhya. The deceased have been identified as Deepak, Sunil, Anusuiya and Jaishree, all aged between 35 and 55, and residents of Maharashtra, police said. Superintendent of Police (SP) Dinesh Kumar Singh said the police had to use a cutter to free those trapped in the tempo-traveller. Two of the injured individuals have been admitted to a trauma centre in Lucknow, while four others are undergoing treatment at the district hospital. The SP added that the bodies of the deceased have been sent for autopsy. The police suspect the accident occurred after the driver of the tempo-traveller dozed off, the officer said. The SP mentioned that an FIR has been registered in connection with the incident against the tempo-traveller driver, Viddhat Sihnede, who fled the scene after the accident.

HANDCUFFING DEPORTEES

PM Modi didn't tell his good friend about country's outrage: Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress Sunday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was on a visit to the US recently, of not conveying to his "good friend" Donald Trump about the outrage over the shackling of Indians being deported from America. Two US military planes have landed in Amritsar this month so far, deporting Indians as part of the Trump administration's promised crackdown on illegal migration. Another deportation

flight from the US is scheduled to arrive in Amritsar on Sunday night. Many deportees have claimed they were in shackles during the flight. Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh referred to reports of shackling Indians deported from the United States and said, "It is abundantly clear that the PM did NOT convey to his good friend our country's outrage at the manner in which Indian citizens are being deported from the USA. Only



Ajit Pawar claims contractors submitting bills without work, warns of action

PNS ■ JALNA

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has alleged that many contractors are submitting bills and receiving money for development works without carrying them out, warning that such practices won't be tolerated. He was speaking on Saturday at a programme in Partur in Jalna district where ex-MLA and Congress leader Suresh Jethliya joined his Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). The deputy CM rued that the quality of development work remains "substandard" despite substantial government expenditure, and vowed to not let contractors join his party. "Bills are being submitted and money is withdrawn without doing work. Don't come to my party (NCP)," said Pawar, who is also the state's finance minister. He also urged government officials to do their job sincerely.

What led to Delhi stampede?

Passengers got confused between 'Prayagraj Express, Prayagraj Special': Officials



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The deadly stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station last evening happened as passengers got confused between 'Prayagraj Express' and 'Prayagraj Special', and rushed to change their platform after an announcement, officials said on Sunday. Sources in the police department said that according to their preliminary investigation, the confusion happened because of the announcement of the trains having same initial name 'Prayagraj'. The Railway Ministry said the announcement for the

arrival of the 'Prayagraj Special' at platform number 12 made passengers waiting for 'Prayagraj Express' at platform number 14 jittery and they rushed to platform number 12, leading to the stampede and the tragic death of 18 people. Railway officials said these two were different trains but had somewhat similar names, and people couldn't make out the difference. Worried that they might miss the train, a huge influx of people invaded the stairs causing the stampede. "There is an unprecedented rush due to the Maha Kumbh. Many special trains have been

operating for the past several days. Prayagraj Express was about to arrive at platform number 14 and passengers were waiting to board the train," Railway Board Executive Director (Information and Publicity) Dilip Kumar said. "There was some time left for the Prayagraj Express to come to the platform (14). Meanwhile, an announcement was made for another train -- Prayagraj Special -- to arrive at platform number 12. Before this one, one more special train had already left that platform," Kumar added. The passengers waiting on platform number 14 thinking

that their train would come at 12, started moving towards the escalators and stairs which led to the stampede. The ministry also released the list of disbursement of compensation amount according to which besides 18 dead, three were grievously injured and 27 received minor injuries. Out of the 27, 11 were given treatment and released from the hospital. "The officials of the Northern Railway are taking all efforts to manage this unprecedented crowd of passengers," Kumar said, expressing grief for those who lost their lives in the incident.

5 victims died due to traumatic asphyxia: Hospital

NEW DELHI: Five of the 18 victims of the stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station died due to traumatic asphyxia, the RML Hospital said on Sunday. The LNJP handed over the bodies to the RML Hospital which conducted a post-mortem examination on them, it said. "No injured were brought to RML Hospital. We received five dead bodies from LNJP for postmortem. Four of them were females and one a male," a senior doctor said. At least 18 people were killed in the overnight stampede at the packed railway station. A senior railway official said on Sunday that the incident occurred after some passengers slipped and fell on others while coming down from a footover bridge. More than a dozen people were also injured in the stampede on Saturday night at the railway station which witnessed a surge of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj -- where the Maha Kumbh is underway -- on platform number 14 and 15.

Indian Ocean truly a global lifeline: MEA Jaishankar

Calls for efforts to fulfil development aspirations

PNS ■ MUSCAT

The Indian Ocean is veritably a global lifeline, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Sunday, as he asked the countries in the region to look out for each other, supplement their strengths and coordinate their policies to fulfil its development, connectivity, maritime and security aspirations. Jaishankar addressed the inaugural session of the 8th Indian Ocean Conference in Muscat on "Voyage to New Horizons of Maritime Partnership." "The Indian Ocean is veritably a global lifeline. Its production, consumption, contribution and connectivity are central to the manner in which the world runs today," he said. "Our voyage to new horizons is best done as a



coordinated flotilla of the Indian Ocean. We are understandably a diverse group in terms of history, geography, development, politics or culture. But what unites us is a common devotion to the well-being of the Indian Ocean region," he said. "In a volatile and uncertain era, we seek stability and security as the baseline. But beyond that, there are ambitions and aspirations that we strive to achieve. They will be

easier reached when we look out for each other, supplement our strengths and coordinate our policies," he added. Jaishankar said that currently there is considerable churn in world affairs. "At the two ends of the ocean, this churn is at its sharpest today. In the Middle East/West Asia, there is a serious conflict underway with the potential for further escalation and complication," Jaishankar said.

DSP killed in road accident in Odisha

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Two persons including a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) were killed when their car was hit by a speeding truck in Odisha's Jajpur district on Sunday, police said. The accident took place on National Highway 215 under Panikoili police limits on Sunday afternoon. The deceased police officer has been identified as Balam Nayak who was working as DSP in the Jajpur district police headquarters at Panikoili while the other deceased is his relative, identified as Purna Chandra Nayak. According to reports, the DSP along with his relative was returning to Panikoili from his native place at Ghatagan in Keonjhar district when a speeding truck hit their car near Kripalu Rice Mill.

'Rana visited North, South India before 26/11'

Extradition will help join the dots: Officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Tahawwur Hussain Rana's possible extradition from the US in connection with the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks could provide important leads into his travels in parts of north and south India days before the carnage in 2008, officials have said. The 64-year-old Rana, a Pakistan-born Canadian national and a close associate of Pakistani-American terrorist and one of the main conspirators David Coleman Headley, is serving supervised detention at a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles after completing a 14-year sentence in 2023. US President Donald Trump announced on Thursday that his administration has approved Rana's extradition to India, referring to him as "one of the plotters and very evil people of the world."

Once extradited, Rana would be the third person to be sent on trial in India in the case after Ajmal Kasab and Zabiuddin Ansari alias Abu Jundil. In November 2012, Kasab, the lone surviving Pakistan terrorist, was hanged to death in Pune's Yerawada Jail. Arrested by the FBI on October 27, 2009, Rana was chargesheeted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2011 under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Section 6(2) of the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism.

'Mizoram to introduce fresh Bill to protect jobseekers in India, abroad'

PNS ■ AIZAWL

To facilitate legal employment in the country and abroad, a fresh Bill will be introduced in the upcoming budget session of the Mizoram assembly commencing February 19, an official said on Sunday. The Mizoram Private Placement Agencies (Regulation) Bill, 2025, if passed, will empower private placement agencies to recruit and send youths, particularly domestic workers, outside the state and foreign countries legally, he said. Under this bill, the government will provide licenses to private agencies to execute such tasks, he said. The bill was conceived following legal issues faced by domestic workers from Mizoram in foreign countries last year, particularly in Syria,

UAE and other Gulf countries, the official said. Last year, the state government and generous individuals, in collaboration with the Centre rescued several Mizo women, engaged as housemaids, from Syria and other Arab countries after they faced legal problems. Although the Mizoram Private Placement Agencies (Regulation) Bill was previously enacted in 2015, the act empowered private placement agencies to provide jobs to any women as domestic workers beyond the state's boundaries within the country (India), the official said. The assembly secretariat, till Friday, received at least 740 starred questions and 88 unstarred questions to be answered by the ministers concerned during the upcoming budget session, the assembly official said.

Development initiatives benefited tribal communities: Murmu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu said on Sunday that the ongoing development initiatives have positively impacted tribal communities across the country. Speaking at the inauguration of Aadi Mahotsav 2025, she noted that multi-dimensional efforts are being made to ensure their progress. "The true development of our nation will be realized only when our tribal communities progress," Murmu said. President Murmu said the ongoing developmental initiatives have positively impacted tribal communities from Arunachal Pradesh to Gujarat and from Jammu and Kashmir to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Bhagwat emphasises unity of Hindu society, calls it responsible community

PNS ■ BARDHAMAN



RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday emphasised the importance of uniting Hindu society, calling it the country's "responsible" community and stating that it views unity as an embodiment of diversity. Addressing an RSS programme at SAI Ground in Bardhaman, he said, "People often ask why we focus only on Hindu society, and my answer is that the country's responsible society is Hindu society." "Today is not a special event. Those unaware of the Sangh often wonder what it wants. If I had to answer, I would say the Sangh seeks to organise Hindu society because it is the responsible

society of the country," Bhagwat said. He also stressed the importance of accepting the world's diversity. "Bharatvarsha is not just a geographical entity; its size may expand or shrink over time. It is called Bharatvarsha when it embodies a unique nature. Bharat has its intrinsic character. Those who felt they could not live in harmony with this nature created

their own separate countries," he said. "Naturally, those who remained wanted Bharat's essence to endure. And what is this essence? It is much older than August 15, 1947. It is Hindu society, which flourishes by embracing the world's diversity. This nature accepts and moves forward with the world's diversities. There is one eternal truth that never changes," he added. He underscored that the foundation of Hindu society rests on its ability to embrace diversity, a principle encapsulated in the Sanskrit phrase 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family). "We say 'unity in diversity,' but Hindu society understands that diversity itself is unity," the RSS chief added.

To ban or not to ban?

COUNTRIES DEBATE CURBS ON SMARTPHONE USAGE IN SCHOOLS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least 79 education systems globally have banned smartphones in schools as many countries debate their impact on learning and privacy of children. According to the UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) team, 60 education systems (or 30 per cent of the total registered education systems globally) had banned smartphone in schools by the end of 2023 through special laws or policies. By the end of 2024, 19 more joined the list, bringing the total to 79 (or 40 per cent). India is yet to come up with any specific law or policy on smartphone usage in educational institutions. Some bans have become

more stringent in the last year. For example, the Zhengzhou city of China further restricted the use of phones in primary and secondary schools, demanding that parents provide written consent that a phone was really needed for pedagogical reasons. In France, a "digital break" was suggested in lower secondary schools as an add-on to the already existing phone ban at other education levels. At the opposite end, Saudi Arabia reversed its ban due to the opposition by disability



groups for medical purposes. "This mapping (of educational systems) did not include

all sub-national jurisdictions in federal countries, although four were assessed in detail. For

example, in Australia, two of the nine territories (New South Wales and South Australia) have introduced bans, while in Spain, all but three of the 17 autonomous communities (Basque Country, La Rioja, Navarre) have introduced bans," a senior official of the GEM team told PTI. "In the United States, 20 out of its 50 states have regulations now in place, from the Phone-Free School Act in California to the phone ban for K-12 classrooms in Florida, the ban on students using portable

wireless device in Indiana and another ban in Ohio," the official added. In some of these new regulations in the United States, however, one approach is to issue guidelines, but leave it to schools to define the precise policies on usage in class. In Indiana, for example, school boards have to draft and publicly post specific policies for their schools saying whether students can access their phones during lunch and what consequences the students may face for using prohibited devices. In addition, sometimes there are exceptions, such as for learners who require learning accommodations in the Louisiana ban, and for anyone with a health condition that requires monitoring in Ohio.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Charting new course

Prime Minister Modi's recent US visit was an ice breaker and promising despite Trump's insistence on raising tariff walls

Since Donald Trump assumed the presidency of the United States, he has made a significant global impact. Through his "Make America Great Again" initiative, he has repositioned the US on the world stage, aiming to reshape the existing global order. By imposing tariff barriers and taking direct action when necessary, his policies have put several economies, including India's—which heavily depends on exports to the US—at risk. However, some relief appears to be on the horizon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the United States has been lauded as a significant milestone in strengthening Indo-US relations. Meeting with President Donald Trump at the White House, both leaders engaged in comprehensive discussions that culminated in agreements spanning trade, defence, energy and technology. Despite previous tensions over tariffs, with President Trump labeling India as a "tariff king," the summit showcased a collaborative spirit. Both nations committed to more than doubling bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030. This ambitious goal is set to be achieved through a forthcoming bilateral trade agreement aimed at reducing duties and enhancing market access. Additionally, the US expressed interest in increasing investments in India's nuclear energy sector, signalling a deepening of economic ties.



A cornerstone of the discussions was defence cooperation. The US offered India the advanced F-35 stealth fighter jets, marking a significant step in military collaboration. This proposal aligns with the ten-year defence cooperation plan, emphasising the US's intent to bolster India's defence capabilities. Such initiatives

are indicative of a strategic partnership aimed at ensuring regional stability and countering emerging threats. Technological and Innovation Partnerships Prime Minister Modi's engagement extended beyond political leaders to influential figures in the technology sector. His meeting with SpaceX CEO Elon Musk underscored a mutual interest in space exploration and technological innovation. Discussions encompassed potential collaborations in space technology, mobility solutions and the introduction of services like Starlink satellite internet in India. These dialogues reflect a shared vision of leveraging technology for economic growth and societal benefit. The visit also highlighted India's nuanced position on global issues. While strengthening ties with the US, India maintains its strategic autonomy, especially concerning relations with Russia and its stance on conflicts like the Ukraine war. This balanced approach allows India to navigate complex international landscapes, ensuring its national interests are prioritised. Prime Minister Modi's visit to the United States has set a positive trajectory for Indo-US relations. The agreements and discussions held promise a future of enhanced cooperation across various sectors, reflecting a robust partnership poised to address both nations' strategic and economic objectives.

PICTALK



A pair of Asiatic lions inside their enclosure at Van Vihar National Park in Bhopal

A reluctant pilgrim's awakening: Discovering faith at the Kumbh

What began as a journey of reluctant exploration turned into an experience that reshaped my understanding of faith, devotion and purpose

Triveni is where the three sacred rivers, Ganga, Yamuna, and the now-extinct mythical Sarasvati, merge. It is believed that bathing in the holy waters of Sangam, particularly during certain auspicious days, brings blessings. I am not too fond of visiting religious places. I am used to a certain level of comfort. I have, probably mistakenly, come to associate spirituality and religion with a minimalistic way of living. Standing in serpentine queues for a microsecond glimpse does not appeal to me.



I remember a visit to Tirupati during my railway probation with two other friends. A look at the painfully slow-moving long queue was enough for us to wait outside as the third friend went in to also pray on our behalf. I believe that my God resides within me. Thus, the idea of visiting the Kumbh was not even remotely in my thoughts. An article on the biggest religious and spiritual fair in the world made me realise that this was the Mahakumbh, an event that would repeat 144 years later. It was this novelty that I could not resist. My wife

decreed that we should also visit Varanasi. A premium tent was reserved in one of the luxury camps. We booked waitlisted train tickets without any hopes of confirmation. My younger brother working in the railways assured us to try to get us the seats. I was hoping he might not be able to help, till we boarded the train early in the morning, much apprehensive about the next three days. We had read and heard enough about the stampede and the long walks due to the barricades. The experience in Prayagraj was nothing like my apprehensions. The camp by the banks of the river Ganges, away from the crowded centre, was more of a luxury resort. The roads were crowded,

which resulted in traffic jams. But we managed to take a dip at the confluence and then visit the Akharas, the religious order of Sadhus, the monks. We did not have to walk long distances. The next day was slightly more chaotic. The cab for Varanasi arrived late and we had to take an e-rickshaw to reach the parking lot. The evening saw us jostling with the massive crowd, all walking towards the riverbank for the customary Ganga Aarti, a daily ritual performed at dusk to honour the sacred river. We even managed to brave the humongous crowd the next day to pray at the Kashi Vishwanath temple. I realised that the two cities are more than a confluence of the rivers or a visit to the temple.

It is a Sangam of diverse people, united through a single objective. The majority are poor people, who are content in their devotion and belief in a supreme power. They have not seen Him, but have an unshakable belief that their God will not forsake them, come what may. It is this faith that sees them bear the drudgery of living and eking out a livelihood. Many from the upper strata of society do not have to struggle each day, but they also have this absolute faith. A few like me are curious and visit for the novelty. It was more than a different experience. There I was, moving in the vast sea of humanity, looking around me with awe. It dawned upon me that like the multitude, I too needed this visit. I learned that I must perform actions with the same single-minded devotion. This is the reason that I was born a human in the vast universe. I was transformed. I had found my goal.

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

Anyone who has attempted to perpetuate his memory in any institution or community has believed himself to be an institution builder. To be an institution builder, as the words themselves will show, one has to build a purpose, establish a process, gather resources, and pull them together in pursuit of an objective. This pursuit cannot be the pursuit of self-glorification. Usually, a successor tries to outdo his predecessor; this can be by upscaling, ignoring, or finding flaws in the predecessor's efforts. Sooner or later, this destroys everyone involved because everyone must necessarily end up with a successor. That successor, sooner or later, becomes a competitor to the predecessor. This may be an obvious truth, but not many people seem to have recognised it. Hence, if one is seeking glorification, perhaps the most important pursuit should be the search for a successive successor who is not only in sympathy with one's approach but will carry the mission forward. The great leaders of the world have recognised this instinctively, and the epithet 'Great' has come their way. Martin Luther was a good example, as was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Nelson Mandela could also be a good

illustration. The examples are many. In each case, the conclusion is the same. Each so-called great leader needed a succession of people generously following them who proclaimed their greatness from the treetops. This may be easy to propound but difficult to action. One reason for this is that it needs a succession of people after one's own life who would concur with the approach, and indeed have been beneficiaries of that person's influence. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi has been widely celebrated for his theories of agitation against foreign rule. There is evidence of his having worked together in tandem, where the situation so demanded, with the rulers. This has since been noted and at times overlooked. There is a hypothesis which has done the rounds in certain quarters that the title of "Mahatma" was conferred upon him because of his request by the foreign rulers. Such observations are difficult to critically appraise decades or centuries later. However, one approach remains. Recognition of one's leadership and contributions is a complex process that has yet to be fully understood. One's greatness is therefore a matter of consen-

USUALLY, A SUCCESSOR TRIES TO OUTDO HIS PREDECESSOR; THIS CAN BE BY UPSCALING, IGNORING, OR FINDING FLAWS IN THE PREDECESSOR'S EFFORTS. SOONER OR LATER, THIS DESTROYS EVERYONE INVOLVED BECAUSE EVERYONE MUST NECESSARILY END UP WITH A SUCCESSOR

The legacy of leadership: What truly endures



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Greatness in leadership is not merely about personal glory—it is about creating a legacy that endures across time, geographies and generations



Building which is always difficult in its fullness. The bottom line is there must be something enduring in the actions of an individual to receive kudos across communities generations and geographies. That something must include what is noble in human existence. The succeeding leaders may be helpful but they cannot determine the full range of perceptions. The long and short of it is that petty pursuits of petty objectives for limited periods rarely have given enduring recognition for one's greatness. Sooner or later, for most aspiring leaders, some process of a counterpoint emerges as other contenders for the spot of greatness arise. Very often, these people, as alternate leaders, are from a different vantage point of perception, and debate is generated. Few have claimed eminence for greatness without having survived the crucial test of times and acceptance across generations. History is a telltale testament as to how the pre-eminence of one's contribution or the significance of one's contribution can change with the changing cultures of the times. One may not be so well recognised in one's lifetime, but subse-

quent generations awoken to that greatness as per their vision and their own needs. The case of Birsa Munda is an interesting example. Not so long ago, he was one of the freedom fighters who was remembered in certain parts of India only by certain people. But times changed, and now he is being celebrated with the glory of a true visionary leader who fought for the independence. Times change, and so does the vision. However, if one thing remains constant, it is that few have attained leadership across generations and geographies without having a sound streak of spiritual vision. One may be celebrated for martial glories or administrative contributions, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, for loftiness beyond the constraints of time and space, some elevated spiritual insights valid across people and generations seem a common need. It is obvious that the subject matter of the greatness of leaders and what constitutes the same needs continuing depths of research, iteration and honest conviction.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

EXTRADITION OF TAHAWWUR RANA

Madam — The agony of the horrific 26/11 terrorist attack still lingers in India's heart. Hundreds of innocent civilians lost their lives in this massacre. This dreadful chapter of terrorism saw the involvement of Tahawwur Rana, a Pakistani-origin US citizen and an aide of Lashkar-e-Taiba. Now, with the US administration approving Rana's extradition to India, a significant path toward justice has been paved. Rana's extradition is not just about punishing a criminal; it symbolises India's unwavering stance against terrorism and the growing global support for this cause. This decision will not only expedite the judicial process but also bring a ray of hope to the victims' families, who have been waiting for justice for years. Although legal hurdles may arise in the extradition process, if it succeeds, it will send a strong message to terrorists that no matter where they hide, they cannot escape the clutches of justice. This diplomatic victory underscores India's firm resolve and international backing. Now is the time to bring Rana before the Indian judicial system and deliver justice to the innocent martyrs of 26/11.

R K Jain | Barwani

RANVEER SPARKS CONTROVERSY

Madam — The controversy around the "India's Got Latent" episode with YouTube content creator Ranveer Allahabadi making mockery of his parents too in the name of dark comedy depicts his actual senses and mindset on camera. Despite Ranveer being honoured with the National Digital Creators Award by the Prime Minister himself just last year, he didn't give a thought before speaking on camera, which will be telecasted on public platforms. It is sheerly surprising that his comedy flow can be so senseless that he could not even think about how he could be so vulgar while commenting on his parents. Now that he is deleting all the episodes already seen by the audience or presenting his public apology, it does-

President's rule in Manipur



The Centre has imposed President's Rule in ethnic strife-torn Manipur after the ruling BJP's failure to have a consensus on the name of the successor to N Biren Singh. Primarily, the governance failure of the N Biren Singh government may be held responsible for the current situation of the state. But many geo-social factors have also played a big role in an increase in ethnic discord among various communities of the state. Demographic changes and shrinking of

their traditional areas due to the unchecked influx of Kukis from Myanmar over the decades have led to discontent in Meiteis.

Intelligence reports suggest that these illegal settlers are indulging in smuggling of drugs and weapons. N Biren Singh's government's tough action against the drug menace and illegal occupation of forest land in hilly districts, particularly Churachandpur, irked Kukis. On the other hand, his government's failure to implement the Manipur High Court's April 2023 direction to consider the request of Meiteis to include them in the ST list led to the loss of trust of his own Meitei community. Fierce opposition of tribal groups to the High Court's direction kept his govt on the back foot.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

n't make any sense. Every action taken by Mumbai police to probe him and the action by the National Commission of Women were the worthy punishments that Ranveer, aka Beer Biceps, must face. The action will message every such public figure to stop believing that not every one of their public comments is always right.

These public personalities hold a greater responsibility of representing the social values and aspirations in good sense. Millions of people follow them to learn something good and inspirational from them, not such a shit mentality. The dwindling following of Ranveer on social media platforms is welcoming. We all must not follow such a person who holds such shit senses about the people in his surroundings, especially the vulgarity about the parental relationship. Society shapes from the morals of a few leaders. If public figures fail to do their job in a manner they should, it is better to boycott such personalities holistically with adequate punishment to them. This will act as a lesson for other social media fig-

ures to be wary of well before speaking in public.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

BUMRAH'S ABSENCE HURTS INDIA

Madam — The absence of Jasprit Bumrah from the Champions Trophy matches is a shock and not in favour of the Indian team. He was a key bowler in Australia, and his absence will be felt very much. Bumrah is a crisis man, making fast bowling look effortless. He rises to the occasion and delivers exceptional spells across formats. He was overburdened in Australia and as a result found unfit now. The selectors, instead of using him in tandem with number one spinner Ashwin, neglect the latter and now pay a heavy price. Bumrah's importance to the team is undeniable, whenever in trouble. With both the star bowlers unavailable, the chances of reaching the Champions Trophy final appear rather bleak.

C K Subramaniam | Sanpada

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

RESTRAINT IS A DIVINE QUALITY

Many of us give in to fleeting desires, leading to personal degradation



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

S wami Vivekananda was approached by a young Western woman wanting to marry him. He asked her reason. Then, he gave a very witty answer and excused himself. Similarly, a young and pretty woman approached a famous scientist. She wanted a child with his intelligence and her looks. He excused himself by stating that there is a possibility that the child may be born with his looks and her intelligence. We remember them because showing such restraint is very uncommon. Rather, it is common that people seek opportunities to cheat on their spouses; they make many efforts, never mind being offered on a platter. The result is punishment beginning with the degradation of the person. We have ten senses. There are five knowledge-gathering senses, which are eyes, ears, nose, skin and tongue. Then, there are five working senses, which are speech, hands, legs, genital and anus. I will detail how and why restraint should be practiced. Beginning with the eyes, what do our eyes wish to see most? Something very beautiful. This is fine as long as it is something like a beautiful flower, lake or mountain. When it degrades like seeing nudity, it must be avoided. Unfortunately, the mind is very unhelpful in this regard; it pulls us down. Tongue is another offending sense; it leans towards tastier foods, which may harm. How do you explain eating too much salt or sugar, which benefits little and harms plenty? What is the explanation for eating harmful meat preparations, except for their taste when plenty of choices are available in vegetarian dishes? Here again, the mind is the culprit. Additionally, material intelligence justifies. Restraint is considered foolish. What we do wish to listen to most is? Sorry, dirty jokes.



Then, people love to have friendships with those who will appreciate the moon for some pecuniary benefit. Even in songs, some people strangely prefer to hear sad songs, or which titillate. People do realise that habituated thus we condemn ourselves to the next life also.

Long Krishna warns, "The ear, the eye, the touch sense, the tongue and the nose go to the next body with the mind." (15.7) We are more restrained in the matter of the nose: foul smell repels. But some people eat stale foods; they are under the mode of darkness. (18.10) Skin is generally a friend of all; we like cool comforts in the summer and warm surroundings in the winter. Turning to the working senses, speech is the worst offender of all. What do you think causes the maximum harm? It is very easy to guess; it is something spoken inappropriately or in anger. What is the explanation for abusing when the reaction is bound to be severe? But people do not control themselves. Even the best of men have weak moments when they slip up. Lord Krishna has counselled, "One who is not agitated by others and who doesn't get agitated by others, he is dear to Me." (12.15) Genitals give the maximum trouble unless controlled from an early age. It is so easy to abuse oneself, but it is so harmful. Restraint is required, which is why 'brahmacharya' (celibacy) is highly recommended. God has allowed sex enjoyment, which is not against 'dharma' (within moral principles). (7.11) Why not be restrained and enjoy a superior feeling!

(The writer is a spiritual leader; views expressed are personal)

Addressing the crisis in Sikh leadership and religious identity



IQBAL SINGH LALPURA

The revival of Sikhism requires a collective effort from the Sikh community and its leaders to adapt, evolve and work together towards this holy mission

I t is humanly impossible to accept the threat of extinction to Sikhism. Without delving into the glorious history and angelic principles of the Sikh religion, the present position is that after leaving Nankana Sahib, Punjab Sahib, and most religious places, including the capital of Khalsa Raj Lahore, Sikh leaders decided to join India without a written agreement from the then Congress leadership. This decision was made despite being part of the Congress leadership, which suffered millions of deaths and loss of property. The Sikhs believed Congress leaders only to be betrayed even after the amalgamation of Shiromani Akali Dal twice in 1948 and 1956 respectively. The majority of Sikh leadership was power-hungry and remained with Congress.

The remaining Sikh leaders started political agitations, from language to statehood, seeking more power for states under the Anandpur Sahib resolution and even advocating for an independent state of Khalistan, using Gurdwara funds and premises under various leaders. To gain within the Sikh community, they did not hesitate to blame and marginalise others. These agitations resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent people and the loss of property and kept Punjab in a state of turmoil.

The Sikh leadership, known as Akali, eventually gained political power in Punjab from 1967 onwards many times and also became partners in the central government on multiple occasions. However, the loser in these agitations was peace and prosperity in Punjab, coupled with the loss of the image of Sikhs as angels of Guru Nanak, who were perceived as extremists, anti-national, or atankwadi or terrorist or extremist not only in India but abroad also. Every Sikh living in India suffers from this stigma without any fault of their own. Sikh Guru Sahiban organized preaching and propagation through Manjis, Masands, Nirmale, and Udisis. This took Sikhism to every part of the country and abroad. However, after the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Britishers took over the control of Gurdwaras.

What to talk of propagation, they started converting Sikhs to Christianity beginning with Maharaja Duleep Singh. The 1920 to 1925 Gurdwara Sudhar lehar after sacrificing several Sikhs and loss of property gave chance to Sikh to manage their religious places and use donations for community causes. The research, education, and propagation of Sikhism should have been the agenda, but leaders decided differently and joined Congress for politics and freedom struggle. The preaching of the Sikh tenets to even Sikhs was ignored. Gurdwaras, the concept of a community meeting, service, and preaching centres were converted into mere places of ritual (banned by Guru Sahib) or platforms for leadership within the community or politics.

Instead of being places of learning, equality, meditation, and service. In the absence of any guidance or unity, the Gurdwaras at the village level also failed to promote the values of making villagers one family as preached by the Guru. The Gurdwara Parbandhak committees lacked plans to take the Sikh religion to every part of their respective states, other parts of the country, and the universe. They even divided Sikhs on political lines instead of uniting them as being Sikh brotherhoods.

While comparing one religion to another is impossible, one can learn from others. It is possible to criticise other religions, but one should also acknowledge the dedication of



SIKH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ARE NOT AMONG THE BEST AND ARE NOT WIDESPREAD IN PUNJAB AND OTHER PLACES. WITHOUT STANDARD EDUCATION, SIKHS ARE EXCLUDED FROM BUREAUCRACY AND THE JUDICIARY, THE TWO ESSENTIAL PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY, EVEN IN PUNJAB, BUT TO TALK OF OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

their preachers, their lifestyle, knowledge, discipline, and humility. In Sikhism, every religious service, from Pathi to Akhand Path, kirtan, Ardas, Dhadi, Katha, and even marriage and cremation ceremonies, has become a means of earning money. Having lost the golden principles of the Nirmal Path, Sikhs are now respected only for their free kitchen and service to society, which is ingrained in their blood and DNA by Gurus.

Sikh educational institutions are not among the best and are not widespread in Punjab and other places. Without standard education, Sikhs are excluded from bureaucracy and the judiciary, the two essential pillars of democracy, even in Punjab, but to talk of other parts of the country. Due to mismanagement and loss of reputation, even the Sikh community has lost interest in these educational institutions. A review of voting patterns from 1951-52 to 1972, and even 1977, reveals that the Sikh Akali party was unable to form a government in Punjab state or establish itself as a recognized power in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. However, after Operation Blue Star, Wood Rose, Black Thunder, and the killing of thousands of Sikhs, as well as the insult and discrimination they faced, Sikhs joined hands to defeat the Congress in Punjab decisively and bring the Akalis to power. Nevertheless, after giving them a chance under different leaders, the majority of Sikhs have distanced themselves from the Akalis, as they failed to heal the wounds inflicted by being part of politically motivated agitations or simply being Sikh. Due to their failure to resolve community issues and allegedly joining anti-Sikh forces in 2017, the Akalis are no longer the leading opposition party in Punjab.

The latest Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak committee elections

have made it clear that in a state with over 15 lakh Sikhs, only about 3.50 lakh voters registered, and about 2.46 lakh voted. The leadership, who were in charge under various governments, were wiped out due to disenchantment. Cases of misuse of Gurdwara funds for personal gain have been reported in social media and papers. In Punjab, the situation is no better, with a state having a 1.60 crore Sikh population, but only less than 30 lakh voters registered. The leadership of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak committee must explain what happened to the remaining 1.30 crore plus Sikhs. Have they converted to other religions, or are they not interested in Gurdwaras?

They have been in control of Gurdwara funds for over 100 years and now owe an explanation to the new generation. The state of affairs in Delhi, with regards to the Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, is concerning. A significant majority of Sikhs show little interest in becoming voters, which is alarming. These committees, which oversee historical Gurdwaras numbering around 500 in India, don't represent the thousands of other Gurdwaras across the country. Interestingly, the proposal for an All India Gurdwara Act, which was first introduced in 1956, was put on hold in 1998-99 by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government.

The reason behind this decision was the potential influence of Sikhs from outside Punjab on Gurdwara management, which could have threatened the control of Punjab's Sikh leadership. Moreover, those who left Punjab between 1982 onwards for greener pastures abroad, using political asylum as a pretext, have not contributed to spreading the Sikh religion. Instead, their primary objective has been to blame the Indian government and promote hatred. No person would be attracted to this kind of projection of a reli-

gion of Angels.

Their contribution to Punjab's development is also not visible. The failure of Sikh religious and political leadership after 1839 AD, when Shere Punjab breathed his last, is responsible for the present situation. The intelligentsia and capable Sikhs have lost interest and are not even contacted or consulted. The situation demands that Sikh achievers come forward to save the religion from further damage. In this situation, the first effort should be to save the Sikh religion. This can be achieved by promoting education, distancing oneself from avoidable agitations, and improving relations with the government of India and the majority community to seek their help in reviving the Sikh religion before it is too late.

Furthermore, to achieve this, it is essential to establish a unified platform for Sikh organisations and institutions to collaborate and work towards a common goal. This platform should have Sikh brotherhood much away from politics. It can facilitate dialogue, coordination, and collective action among Sikh groups, enabling them to pool their resources, expertise, and influence to promote the Sikh religion and address the challenges facing the community.

Additionally, there is a need to revitalise Sikh educational institutions, promote standard education, and encourage Sikhs to participate in bureaucracy and the judiciary. This can help restore the community's reputation and rebuild trust in its institutions. Ultimately, the revival of Sikhism requires a collective effort from the Sikh community, its leaders, and organisations. It demands a willingness to adapt, evolve and work together towards this holy mission.

(The writer is Chairman - National Commission for Minorities Government of India; views are personal)

Cooperative commodity zones: A farmer-led revolution for economic empowerment

These zones present a groundbreaking solution, empowering farmers through cooperative-led trade, storage infrastructure and digital platforms

I ndian farmers have long struggled with price instability, distress sales and financial insecurity. While the Minimum Support Price (MSP) provides some relief, its limitations and inefficiencies leave many farmers vulnerable. A transformative approach, the Cooperative Commodity Zone (CCZ) model, offers a more sustainable solution by enhancing price security, market access, and financial resilience. As global agriculture shifts toward sustainability and resilient supply chains, India must adopt a farmer-centric model that ensures fair earnings and economic empowerment.



BINOD ANAND

Cooperation), promoting cooperative strength, local enterprise, and self-sufficiency. This model enables farmers to become key stakeholders in commodity trade rather than remaining dependent on middlemen and speculative traders. India's commodity market structure currently favours traders and speculators, lim-

iting farmer participation. Mandis (APMC markets) are often controlled by cartels that suppress prices, preventing farmers from receiving fair compensation.

While platforms like NCDEX and MCX exist for commodity trading, they remain inaccessible to small farmers due to a lack of financial literacy and a proper warehouse receipt system. This forces many into distress sales at low prices, exacerbating their vulnerability.

International institutions such as the World Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) have criticised India's MSP system as an economic distortion. Their market-driven recommendations benefit large

agribusiness corporations while ignoring India's agrarian realities, such as fragmented landholdings, inadequate storage, and climate uncertainties. The MSP debate, shaped by these institutions, serves multinational trading firms rather than Indian farmers. The CCZ model offers a paradigm shift toward farmer-led economic hubs.

These zones integrate cooperatives, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), storage units, processing centres, and digital platforms to ensure stable prices, fair trade, and better incomes. Instead of relying solely on MSP, CCZs provide an "MSP Plus" model where farmers receive either MSP or a higher market-driven price. CCZs establish



cooperative-led procurement and storage facilities, allowing farmers to sell at optimal prices. By participating in commodity trading through cooperatives, farmers can hedge risks and benefit from price appreciation. Digital platforms and cooperative aggregation enable direct trading on national and global markets, reducing

reliance on intermediaries. Storage infrastructure within CCZs stabilises prices and minimises post-harvest losses. Farmers can avoid immediate distress sales through cooperative warehouses and cold storage facilities. Integrating value addition and processing centres ensures that raw produce is transformed into higher-value products, increasing farmer profitability.

Through e-commerce and direct sales channels, CCZs create a transparent, farmer-centric market where farmers dictate prices. Technology plays a crucial role, with AI-based price forecasting, blockchain-enabled transparency and mobile trading platforms providing real-time pricing and secure transac-

tions. Financial literacy programs will equip farmers with knowledge of credit, crop insurance and hedging mechanisms. Successful global models highlight the potential of cooperative-driven commodity management.

The Netherlands, Canada, and India's Amul Dairy Model exemplify how cooperatives can drive agricultural prosperity. Extending this approach to grains, pulses and horticultural products can create a national network of farmer-owned enterprises. CCZs will enhance farmer earnings, reduce post-harvest losses and generate employment in storage, processing and marketing. This system reduces reliance on government procurement,

empowering farmers to control their economic destinies. With the right policies and cooperative leadership, CCZs can make Indian agriculture self-sufficient, prosperous, and globally competitive. The time has come for farmers to transition from survival to prosperity. CCZs provide the roadmap for this transformation, countering misleading narratives from international financial institutions. The CCZ model is more than an idea—it is a movement poised to redefine India's agricultural landscape and place farmers at the center of economic progress.

(The writer was a member of the high-level MSP committee, Ministry of Agriculture; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS



BoM gets RBI nod to open GIFT City branch

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Sunday said it has received approval from the Reserve Bank of India to set up an International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) Banking Unit at GIFT City. The branch will function as Bank of Maharashtra's first international branch carrying out offshore banking operations from India. Speaking on the development, BoM MD & CEO Nidhu Saxena said, "This is a significant opportunity for our bank as we continue to expand our operations across geographies. The opening of IBU in GIFT City will be yet another milestone in the bank's growth story." This development will help expand international banking business and also enable the bank to provide specialised banking services to its customers, he added. Aligned with the government's vision of making India an international financial hub, the GIFT City, located in Gandhinagar, Gujarat is India's first IFSC, aimed at revolutionizing India's financial ecosystem by providing world-class banking services locally and reducing reliance on offshore financial hubs, BoM said in a statement.



Over 100 designer companies take part in ADW exhibition

More than 100 designer companies, Indian craft artists and students are displaying their creations at the Ahmedabad Design Week being held here, organisers said on Sunday. The three-day design exhibition that started on Friday provides a platform for collaboration, a display of multidisciplinary designs and technologies, and ideas for sustainable solutions, according to a statement. More than 50 industry leaders are participating in the event to share their ideas on evolving designs, creativity and sustainability, the statement said. Over 20 artisans from across India are also displaying traditional crafts such as Jamdani, Ajrakh, Bandhani and Brass Antique, bringing artistry and storytelling to life, it added. Around 5,000 people including students, industry professionals and academicians have attended the event so far. The event is being held at Karnavati University campus in Gandhinagar and the Hutheesing Visual Arts Centre in Ahmedabad, the statement said.



India-US TRUST to drive economic cooperation

India-US TRUST (Transforming Relationship Utilizing Strategic Technology) will pave the way for economic and technological cooperation between the two countries, while focus on the IMEC framework will deepen collaboration in infrastructure and economic corridors, according to industry experts. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump have agreed on the TRUST initiative, to emphasise on creating strong supply chains of critical minerals, advanced materials, and pharmaceuticals. As per a joint statement issued after the Trump-Modi meeting in Washington, both countries have decided to launch a recovery and processing initiative for strategic minerals such as lithium and rare earth. The two sides will also work together on economic corridors and connectivity infrastructure under the IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor) and I2U2 frameworks. "TRUST initiative on critical minerals and advanced materials marks a significant step toward economic and technological cooperation. PM's focus on the IMEC and the I2U2 Group reflects a strategic push for global connectivity, fostering economic integration across regions," said Naveen Jindal, the President of apex body Indian of Indian Steel Association (ISA) and Chairman Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL).



India-US trade agreement has boosted biz confidence: Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The announcement to negotiate a bilateral trade agreement between India and the US has boosted business confidence in both countries, as it can help further strengthen economic ties by leveraging their competitive strengths, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday. During the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, India and the US announced to more than double the two-way commerce to USD 500 billion by 2030 and negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025. "The Prime Minister has brought back with him an agreement or an understanding to enter into a trade deal by fall of this year. I think, it gives a lot of confidence and a lot of relief to every business person in the US and in India who

believe that together, we can truly transform world trade, together with our competitive strengths in different areas, we can truly work as two friends, as two partners for progress and prosperity," Goyal said. Normally in a free trade agreement, two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on the 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 US President Donald Trump, the two countries had discussed a mini-trade deal, but it was shelved by the Joe Biden administration as they were not in favour of such pacts. The commerce minister also said that India is expanding and forging new partnerships across the world with new trade agreements with the developed world including with Australia, the UAE, and EFTA bloc.

PM hopeful of achieving Rs 9 lakh-cr textile exports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said he is optimistic that the textile sector will achieve the Rs 9 lakh crore annual exports target ahead of the 2030 deadline. This assumes significance in view of the General Budget 2025 announcement of a five-year Cotton Mission to increase cotton productivity especially of extra-long staple varieties. It allocated Rs 500 crore for the National Cotton Technology Mission. Speaking at the Bharat Tex 2025, Modi said, "We are currently ranked as the 6th largest exporter of textiles and apparel in the world, with textile exports valued at approximately Rs 3 lakh crore. Our goal moving forward is to triple this figure and achieve exports worth Rs 9 lakh crore. "This success is attributed to the hard work and consistent policies implemented over the past decade, which have led to doubling of foreign investment in the textile sector during this period. He said, "The way work is being done, I think we will achieve this target ahead of the 2030 deadline."



This success is attributed to the hard work and consistent policies implemented over the past decade, which have led to doubling of foreign investment in the textile sector during this period, he said. The sector is a major employment generator and contributes 11 per cent to the manufacturing sector. The Union Budget provided for an outlay of Rs 5,272 crore (in Budget Estimates) for the Ministry of Textiles for 2025-26. This is an increase of 19 per cent

over Budget Estimates of Rs 4,417.03 crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year. Bharat Tex, being held in New Delhi from February 14-17, is the textile industry's largest event comprising a mega expo spread across two venues and showcasing the entire textile ecosystem. The Bharat Tex is becoming a big global event, with more than 120 nations participating in it, Modi said. India is moving ahead in the direction of manufacturing high-

grade carbon fibre, he said. The prime minister also urged the banking sector to provide assistance to textile sector as one unit needs investment of just Rs 75 crore, and gives employment to 2,000 people. He noted that India's textiles and apparel exports registered 7 per cent growth last year. The country is working on creating a skilled talent pool for the textile sector, he noted. "Our focus is on technical textile sector; India making its presence felt in this space," he said.

FPIs withdraw Rs 21,272 cr from equities

Total outflow nears Rs 1 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The exodus of FPIs from the Indian equity markets continues as they pulled out Rs 21,272 crore in the first two weeks of this month, driven by global tensions after the US imposed tariffs on imports. This came following a net outflow of Rs 78,027 crore in January. With these, the total outflow by FPIs has reached Rs 99,299 crore -- near Rs 1 lakh crore -- in 2025 so far, data with the depositories showed. Going forward, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, believes that reversal of FPI strategy will happen when the dollar index moves down.

Global trends, FIIs trading activity to drive mkt trends

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stock markets are expected to be driven by global trends and FPI trading activity this week after the conclusion of the earnings season, analysts said. Unabated foreign fund outflows, lower-than-expected quarterly earnings and global trade war fears hit market sentiments last week, where the benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty extended their downward trend to the eighth day in a row on Friday. "With the conclusion of the Q3 earnings season, now focus will be on global developments amid a turbulent market environment on account of Donald Trump's trade policies," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management,



Further cues. Additionally, speculation regarding US tariffs and their impact on global trade will remain a key factor to watch," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. The US FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting minutes will also be in focus this week. Osho Krishan, Senior Analyst - Technical & Derivatives, Angel One Ltd, said, "In the absence of key domestic triggers, global developments are more likely to provide impetus in setting up our market tone." In the last 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.

Reliance, BP lose decade-old gas migration dispute



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a setback for Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner BP Plc, the Delhi High Court has overturned an international arbitration tribunal's ruling that held the duo not responsible for paying any compensation for the gas they produced and sold, which had allegedly migrated from adjoining fields. Here is an explainer on the entire dispute: **FIELDS IN QUESTION:** Block or area KG-DWN-98/3, known as KG-D6, was awarded to a consortium of Reliance Industries Ltd and Niko Resources of Canada in the first bid round under New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) in 2000 by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. (BP bought a 30 per cent stake in the block more than a decade later). In the same round, block KG-DWN-98/2 (KG-D5) was awarded to Cairn Energy India Ltd, which was subsequently acquired by state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) in two phases. An adjacent Godavari block was awarded to ONGC on nomination basis in 1997. Reliance started output from KG-D6 in 2009 while ONGC started output in January 2024. **DISPUTE:** The dispute began in July 2013 when, suspecting reservoir connectivity of its KG-D5 and G-4 blocks with that of Reliance's KG-D6, ONGC on July 22, 2023 wrote to the DGH stating a detailed geological & geophysical (G&G) interpretation of the available data on the Godavari and KG-DWN-98/2 blocks shows "evidence of lateral continuity of gas pools" into KG-D6. Simply put, it meant that subsurface gas pools of the Reliance block and the ONGC blocks appeared to be connected with possible migration of gas between the two. And since Reliance started producing first, it might have drained out ONGC's resources as well. ONGC requested the Directorate General of

Hydrocarbons (DGH), an upstream regulatory arm of the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, to provide it with G&G data, along with the production and well data of the contiguous area of block KG-DWN-98/3. **MEDIA LEAK:** The issue got leaked to the media and a small news item appeared in one of the dailies. As was the practice of any material event, this was presented to the board of ONGC in April 2014. The board asked the management to review the matter and report back. **ELECTION DAY PETITION:** As directed by the board, the company management reverted with a detailed report. The board asked the management to take legal steps to protect its interest. The options before ONGC was to either file an FIR for "theft" of its gas by Reliance or file a civil suit claiming damages. While a criminal case (FIR) was ruled out, the board felt a civil case could drag on for decades. A way out was to file a writ petition, which are promptly taken note of by the high courts. But a writ can be filed only against the state. Since DGH as a custodian of resources and supposed to have known of the connectivity issue when it approved detailed development plans of Reliance, ONGC decided to file the writ against the DGH and the ministry. Reliance was the third respondent. The petition was filed before the Delhi High Court a day before counting of the general elections on May 15, 2014. On September 10, 2014, the Delhi High Court disposed of ONGC's petition and directed the government to take a decision, after it received a report from an independent panel set up by ONGC and RIL. **EYEBROWS RAISED:** ONGC's petition did raise a few eyebrows then. The petroleum ministry ordered an enquiry into whether ONGC had consulted the ministry before filing the writ petition against its largest stakeholder the Union of India and upstream regulator DGH.

Japanese firms eye India as part of 'China Plus One' strategy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Post the Covid-19 pandemic, Japanese companies are eyeing India as a base as they adopt the 'China Plus One' strategy to diversify their manufacturing and supply chains to reduce dependence on China, experts from Deloitte said. The strategy involves establishing production facilities in alternative countries, with India emerging as a

significant beneficiary. "Post-Covid, Japanese companies have been actively exploring China-plus supply chain strategies, with India emerging as a key destination. While some companies returned to Japan, others are looking at India not just as a manufacturing hub, but as a gateway to high-growth markets like the Middle East and Africa," Deloitte Japan CEO Kenichi Kimura said. While the sheer scale of India's domestic market is a major draw, what makes India even more compelling is its well-established business and talent networks across these regions. "While Japanese businesses have yet to fully tap into this potential, we see India as not just a market, but a critical supply chain hub that can drive regional and global success," Kimura said.

HFCL eyes growth from overseas sales

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic telecom gear maker HFCL is betting big on growth from overseas sales and uptake of defence supplies as the company looks to become a Rs 10,000-crore revenue enterprise, a top company official said. Mahendra Nahata Managing Director HFCL during the company's recent investor call said the firm had an order book of Rs 10,000 crore as on December 31, 2024. "We are increasing our presence by appointing our own employees, distributors, and dealers in key global markets. Our goal is to achieve a substantial rise in export revenue from our optic fibre segment,

Sets Rs 10,000-cr revenue target



with a significant portion of revenue coming from international markets in the coming years. Additionally, we aim for a considerable share of our telecom segment revenue to be export-driven," Nahata said. He said the company's board has granted approval for a strategic expansion into Europe by way of setting up an optical fibre cable manufacturing facility in Poland.

"The European Commission on December 16, 2024 announced the imposition of definitive anti-dumping duty on all other Indian OFC manufacturers, reaffirming HFCL's exemption," he said. The company has posted revenue of around Rs 1,012 crore in the December 2024 quarter. Nahata said HFCL is likely to add a revenue of Rs 350-400 crore in the current quarter but may not achieve the target of Rs 2,000 crore set for the fiscal year due to shortfall in supply of some equipment on account of delay in customer readiness, trials, etc.

Over 29,500 registered drones in India: Official

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 29,500 drones are registered in India, with the national capital having the maximum number at 4,882, according to official data. After the national capital, the highest numbers of registered drones are in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra at 4,588 and 4,132, respectively. The data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) updated till January 29

showed that there were 29,501 registered drones. Other states that have a high number of registered drones include Haryana (3,689), Karnataka (2,516), Telangana (1,928), Gujarat (1,338) and Kerala (1,318), as per the data shared by the civil aviation ministry with the Rajya Sabha this week. So far, the regulator has issued 96 Type Certificates to different Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) models or drones, and out of them, 65 models are for agri-



culture purpose. Each registered drone is issued a Unique Identification Number (UIN) from the Digital Sky Platform, which is operated by the DGCA. DGCA-authorized Remote Pilot Training Organisations (RPTOs) have issued 22,466 Remote Pilot Certificates (RPCs). Sharing the data as part of a written reply, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol also said the central government has taken various steps to

increase the usage of drone technology across various sectors. Among other measures, the ministry amended norms in August last year whereby the requirement of passport for the registration and de-registration/transfer of a drone was scrapped. Since then, voter ID, ration card or driving licence can be used for registration and de-registration or transfer of drones. There is a drone airspace map, which is divided into three zones -- green, yellow and red.

How Thyagarajan sisters are spearheading saree revolution for all of India!



PNS|HYDERABAD

In a world where technology and tradition frequently appear to be at odds, Shobitam is bravely bridging the divide. This innovative approach, which was founded by the creative sister duo of Aparna and Ambika Thyagarajan, is transforming how Indian weaves are viewed, accessed and appreciated around the world. By using technology to democratise the handloom weave industry and make it more accessible, inexpensive and appealing to a new generation of lovers and connoisseurs, Indian textiles are preserving their rich cultural legacy. Their creative, digital-first strategy is not only empowering weavers and artisans but also changing the perception of Indian textiles, turning them from commodities into treasured works of art that cut beyond national lines!

The remarkable diversity of India is reflected in the symphony of colours, textures and patterns seen in Indian weaving. Every fabric, from the delicate sheen of silk to the earthy allure of cotton, conveys a story about the region, its inhabitants and their customs. Together, the elaborate patterns, the deft weaving and the meticulous attention to detail produce a genuinely one-of-a-kind and exquisite work of art. This may be seen from the exclusive interview! "As the founder, I saw early on that getting over the deeply rooted desire for touch-and-feel purchasing was the largest obstacle to selling sarees online. Shopping for sarees has been an engaging activity for years; patrons enjoy touching the cloth and chatting

with store owners. It took a calculated fusion of transparency, technology and trust to bring that experience online. Through our live trunk presentations, we've made investments in top-notch photography, thorough product descriptions and video demos that highlight each saree's texture, drape and exquisite weaves. Furthermore, we tell the weaver's story so that buyers can relate to the artistry of each work," says Aparna Thyagarajan, co-founder & CPO, Shobitam.

Their aim is to keep Indian traditional clothing firmly anchored in our culture while bringing it to the attention of the world. The sisters accomplish this by collaborating closely with weavers, making sure that each piece is real and coming up with creative designs that appeal to a wide range of cultural backgrounds. "People love our assortment of sarees. We export sarees throughout the world from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Indian textiles are becoming popular all around the world, but with distinctive regional variations that capture local fashion tastes," shares the founder.

They co-create sarees with their weavers rather than sourcing them. Each saree sets out on a journey that connects a worldwide audience with centuries-old workmanship. It all starts in India's weaving clusters, where 600+ artists work together to co-create designs and preserve and revive old skills. The sisters' eyes have been opened by working so closely with craftspeople; each weave carries generations of expertise, passion and talent.

Aparna goes on, "By incorporating sarees and

handwoven fabrics into regular clothing rather than only being worn on special occasions, we're redefining ethnic design. The saree is evolving; it is no longer only a celebratory garment but rather a deliberate decision that prioritises sustainability, quality and workmanship over rapid fashion. However, there are also practical difficulties—draping a saree can seem intimidating. With inventions like pre-stitched sarees and personalised blouse stitching, it is spearheading the saree revolution and making tradition simple. We are making sure that Indian weaves are not just remembered but also reinterpreted for the contemporary world as the global diaspora embraces conscious fashion!"

The sisters' goal is to make India's rich weaving legacy affordable and available around the world. They work together with craftspeople to revive traditional methods and introduce them to a worldwide audience, whether it's a Tanchoi, Patteda Anchu, Gomi Teni, or any other weave. They view the problem of striking a balance between preservation and business viability as an opportunity. Through education and storytelling, they generate demand for heritage textiles throughout the nation. By doing this, they not only help craftspeople but also spread India's heritage globally, one saree at a time!

For a long time, Vidya Balan has championed the saree as a symbol of strength and individuality. Let's have a little discussion about it! More than just a celebrity endorsement, Vidya Balan's connection to Shobitam celebrates the saree as a representation of self-expression, self-assurance and classic style. As someone who has continuously promoted handwoven sarees, Vidya personifies our ideals of sincerity and a profound respect for India's rich textile history. "If it's a Saree, it's a Shobitam," as Vidya states, reaffirms our dedication to democratising ethnic fashion on a worldwide scale. Her impact goes beyond fashion; she breaks prejudices, redefines traditional attire for contemporary women and starts discussions about adopting sarees in daily life. Through her voice, we can raise awareness of sustainable design, showcase the artistry of weavers and encourage more people worldwide to view sarees as a comfortable, empowering option rather than a piece of clothing for special occasions," notifies co-founder.

The co-founder, speaking with much greater fervour, firmly feels that the saree is a classic garment that adapts while maintaining its core qualities. The saree is more important than ever because of the growing awareness for sustainable, heritage-rich apparel, even if Gen Z and millennials tend toward minimalism and fast fashion. By providing pre-draped sarees, the sisters are preserving the future of sarees by making them more accessible to younger generations—basically, reducing the time required to drape a saree to only one minute! They have taken advantage of this opportunity by purchasing Isadora.com, the market leader in

ready-to-wear sarees, which offers pre-stitched sarees in a variety of regional draperies, including Bengali, Coorgi, Mekhla Chador and Nauvari.

"The saree is more than just six yards of fabric; it is a weaving of history, grace and strength. As a representation of "Shakti," it symbolises heritage, identity and empowerment. The saree is seeing a comeback as a result of India's incredible growth in the past ten years. Women all throughout the world are taking it back as a sign of their cultural pride, self-assurance and grace. Just take a look at the thousands of people who proudly don sarees to greet Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he travels abroad—it's a revolution—a saree revolution! The saree is not only still in style today; it is unstoppable. Ultimately, power dressing is more than just wearing suits!"

They think they are spearheading the saree revolution for all of India because they are integrating innovation with tradition, making the saree not just relevant but unstoppable. Because tradition has no boundaries, only admirers, Shobitam is ultimately fiercely local at heart while having a global reach.



VIDYA'S IMPACT GOES BEYOND FASHION; SHE BREAKS PREJUDICES, REDEFINES TRADITIONAL ATTIRE FOR CONTEMPORARY WOMEN AND STARTS DISCUSSIONS ABOUT ADOPTING SAREES IN DAILY LIFE.

ASTRO TOURISM TAKES CENTRE STAGE IN SAUDI

The universe is magnanimous. It is an all-encompassing symphony of chaotic, incomprehensible forces—most of which remain unseen and unknown to humankind.

Starting January 25, four major planets—Venus, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars—were visible together in the evening sky, creating a spectacular for stargazers. As the celestial journey continues, the night sky will now showcase the increasingly rare phenomena, culminating in an exceptional event on February 28. On this night, six planets—Saturn, Mercury, Neptune, Venus, Uranus, Jupiter, and Mars—will align in a row, offering an unmissable opportunity for astronomy enthusiasts to witness this magnificent planetary line-up.

As fascinating as this thought is, for those living in the hustle and bustle of the city, the night sky often feels empty. Stars are few and far between and spotting a comet seems like a far-off dream. But if you're someone with a deep passion for the cosmos, yet find yourself staring up at a starless sky, do not be disheartened.

THERE IS A SIMPLE SOLUTION: ASTRO TOURISM

Simply put, astro tourism is the act of travelling to a destination solely to experience cosmic magic at its best; travellers can reconnect with nature and appreciate the beauty of the universe, all while cultivating a sense of calm and mindfulness. A destination that allows the chance for luxe stargazing experiences and more is Saudi. Here, you can choose from a selection of glamping experiences in the winter desert breeze, camp overnight in almond-shaped peaks, or even dine by the shore and under the stars this winter season.

Stargazing against the backdrop of Hegra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in AIUla!

Did you know that AIUla has recently been named the Middle East's first-ever International Dark Sky Park? DarkSky International, a global organization dedicated to combating light pollution in urban and rural regions, has granted Dark Sky Park accreditation to two locations in AIUla County—AIUla Manara and AIGHameel Nature Reserve. AIUla's untouched and serene environment makes it one of the best places in the world to observe the night skies, with a multitude of stars visible to the naked eye and more viewable through telescopes.

The Hegra Night Tours offer an unparalleled opportunity to discover AIUla's UNESCO World Heritage Site, Hegra, under the night sky. Think scenic bicycle rides to explore AIUla's hidden gems, all while hearing stories of an erstwhile Nabataean civilization by Rawis (professional guides) under a starlit sky, miles away from any city.

To take a deeper dive into the AIUla night sky, you can also choose to stargaze at Gharameel, a tranquil and remote area in AIUla, where you will be guided by expert astronomers on a cosmic adventure. Enjoy Saudi hospital-

ity at its finest by the fireside with a traditional dinner under the sky. Part of the AIUla Skies Festival, this humbling stargazing adventure will surely shift your way of looking at the world. For those looking to unwind and indulge in luxury, the Celestial Villas at Habitas AIUla, one of the area's most luxe sustainable wellness resorts, are designed with telescopes and spacious areas for lounging, entertaining and enjoying the stunning views of vibrant sunsets against the backdrop of sandstone cliffs.

THE MILKY WAY IN SAUDI? ABSOLUTELY!

The historic Mount Majdah, located south of the Tabuk province in Saudi Arabia, offers pristine, clear views of the Milky Way Galaxy. Known for its unique rock formations adorned with ancient engravings, it is the perfect spot to take in the majestic galaxy that Earth calls home. To get there, you'll need a four-wheel-drive vehicle ideal for the adventurous ride.

To make the most out of your experience, you can choose

from a wide selection of other seasonal activities, including hiking, camping and sledding. While there is a list of multiple mountain experiences in the region, snow seekers should lace up their boots and venture to Jabal Al Lawz, which means "Almond Mountain" in Arabic. Measuring 2,549 meters, it's the tallest mountain in the Tabuk Province and the only place in Saudi where it snows almost every year—making it perfect for a winter hike. To get there, you can either drive down via one of the two routes from Tabuk or book a tour that will pick you up from your hotel in Tabuk and take you to the mountain. If hiking sounds like too much adventure for you, then you can enjoy the same views of the galaxy at AIUla's Gharameel.

ASTRONOMY TOURS AND MORE AT SAUDI'S RED SEA

The Saudi Red Sea is an unexplored luxury tourism destination on the west coast of Saudi. It houses the world's fourth-largest barrier reef system, pristine beaches, canyons, mountains and mangroves waiting to be explored. What's more is that the destination is one of the least light-polluted regions in the country, making it an ideal location for observing the night sky.

The Saudi Red Sea will soon become the largest Dark Skies Reservation in the world to protect the nocturnal environment. Luxury hospitality chains like The St. Regis and Nujuma, a Ritz Carlton Reserve, are already implementing innovative lighting strategies and offering unique starlit experiences by the shore while also making conscious efforts to preserve the dark sky with minimal light pollution.

If you're looking to make the best of the Saudi Red Sea's dark sky, then book yourself a starlit full moon hike. During this tour, a local astronomer will guide you through the night sky while narrating stories of Bedouins and pilgrims who relied on the night sky to light their path through the desert. This soulful journey has a lot in store for history enthusiasts.

WINTER EXTRAVAGANZA UNDER RIYADH'S NIGHT SKY

Did you know that in the area around Riyadh, you can see the Little Bear constellation all year long? A lot is in store around this capital, especially if you are a Gemini, Pisces, or Sagittarian. Since the area falls under the Northern Hemisphere, the constellations appear slightly different, with the views also changing every season. In areas far from Riyadh, about 300 kilometers, where there is no light pollution, the stars can be seen even with the naked eye.

For those also looking for immersive cultural night experiences in the city, the winter season is the best time to visit!

So, if you're someone seeking something beyond the ordinary, Saudi opens the door to adventures that leave you wanting to discover every single secret that Saudi has to offer.



'Revitalising beauty: Traditional remedies meet contemporary innovation'

Ever felt like the skincare aisle is an overwhelming mix of science lab experiments and ancient beauty secrets? One side promises quick fixes with fancy ingredients you can't pronounce, while the other swears by age-old remedies that take forever to show results. But what if you didn't have to choose?

For centuries, Ayurveda has been a go-to for natural skincare—relying on herbs, oils, and plant extracts to heal and nourish the skin. And let's be honest, there's something comforting about using ingredients that have stood the test of time. But for the modern generation, waiting weeks (or months) for results isn't always practical. That's where modern skincare steps in, using active ingredients that speed up the process without stripping away nature's goodness.

Traditional skincare is like a well-balanced, home-cooked meal—nourishing, wholesome, and rich in benefits. Modern skincare, on the other hand, acts as the advanced technique that enhances

efficiency and delivers faster results. When combined, they create the ideal formula for achieving healthy, radiant skin.

More and more people are moving toward skincare that's effective yet safe—products that work with the skin, not against it. Harsh chemicals, unnecessary fillers and temporary fixes are losing their appeal. Instead, the focus is shifting toward natural ingredients, backed by research, that actually get the job done.

For instance, The Natural Wash, which values transparency, sustainability and authenticity, strives to bridge the gap between traditional skincare wisdom and modern-day convenience. The next time you select a skincare product, consider whether it offers the perfect balance of tradition and innovation. After all, in skincare—just like in life—harmony is key to lasting results.

(The author, Akshit Goel & Shivangi Goel, are the Co-Founders of The Natural Wash (TNW).)



what's brewing?



● Vedvika



Millets National Media Portal has launched its new initiative combining health and entrepreneurship as 100 MBF millet stores opened by Srinivas Sarakadam at Minerva Banquet Hall, Madhapur, with 100 aspiring entrepreneurs from lower-income backgrounds. The occasion was also marked the presence of actress Vedvika and Vaanya Aggarwal,



● Srinivas



● Vaanya Aggarwal

PARTY



● Malu Bhatti Vikramarka Seen



● Suma

The wedding ceremony of Ragam Anirudh Yadav, son of Ragam Nagender Yadav (Corporator, GHMC), and Jagruthi Sai, daughter of Mettu Kumar Yadav (Corporator, GHMC), was held in an opulent ceremony at HITEK, Madhapur. With distinguished guests, stunning décor and an atmosphere filled with warmth and happiness, the wedding was truly a spectacular and unforgettable affair.



● Jagruthi and Anirudh



● KT.RamaRao Seen



● Prasad Kumar



● V. Hanumantha Rao



● Vishweshwar Reddy



● Harish Rao



● Raghunandan Rao

Photos by- SV Chary

Varma Steel has officially launched its hospitality venture, Arrival Hotels, redefining luxury and comfort in the industry. The grand inauguration, held in Madhapur, Hyderabad, was graced by acclaimed actor Rana Daggubati and renowned filmmaker Koratala Siva, along with A.V.P. Varma, Chairman & MD of Varma Steel. Actors Srinivas Reddy, Shivaji, and Rajitha also joined the celebration.



Health Science University of Oxford International Group, in collaboration with Savaria Educational Consultant, officially launched new courses at a special event held at Taj Deccan Hotel, Hyderabad. Charlie Wynne, Director of New Product Launch, Health Sciences University, attended the event as the chief guest.

FUN

ARCHIE



GARFIELD



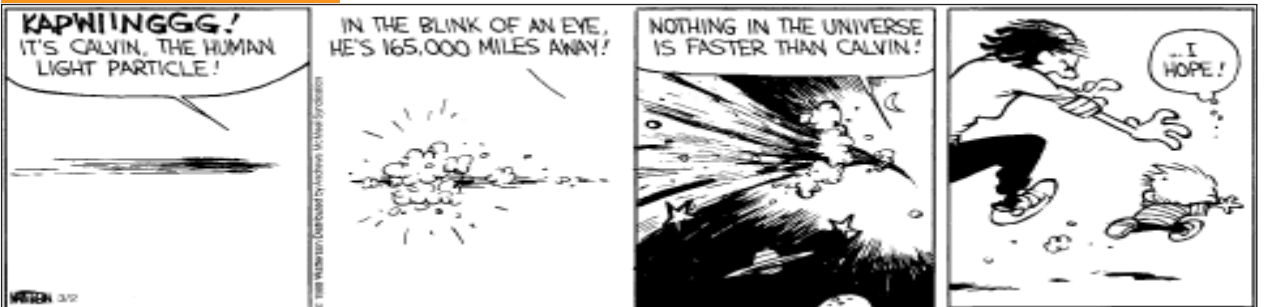
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



CALVIN AND HOBBS



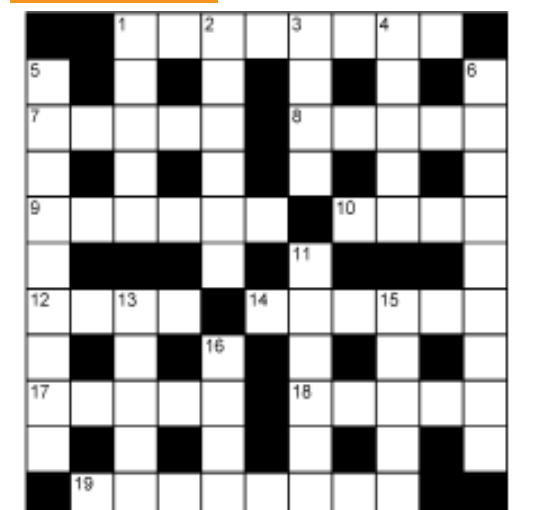
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

- 1 A water sport
- 7 After eighth
- 8 Worship
- 9 Hurt someone's feelings by being rude to them
- 10 Fewer
- 12 This metal goes rusty
- 14 A fruit
- 17 A large serving spoon
- 18 Book name
- 19 Someone in jail
- 4 Rope loop
- 5 Not able to be seen
- 6 Read this daily
- 11 Cardboard box
- 13 Command
- 15 Change
- 16 Untidy shambles

DOWN

- 1 Musical pieces for the voice
- 2 Breathe in
- 3 A ditch around a castle



Krishnaveni's century-long journey in cinema comes to an end



SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Chittajallu Krishnaveni, popularly known as Krishnaveni, passed away on Sunday morning at her residence in Film Nagar. She was 101 years old and is survived by her daughter, Anuradha Devi.

Born on December 24, 1924, in Pangidigudem village, Krishna district, Andhra Pradesh, Krishnaveni was the daughter of Dr. Yerramsetti Lakshmana Rao and Nagarajamma. She developed an early interest in acting, performing mythological roles like Prahlada and Dhruva in school plays. Her talent was recognized by renowned director C. Pullaiah, who cast her in *Sati Anasuya* (1936), a film made entirely with child artists. Notably, comedian Relangi, who was then a production manager, introduced her to Pullaiah. At just 10 years old, Krishnaveni began her cinematic journey.

Following *Sati Anasuya*, she returned to Rajahmundry and pursued theatre. She later acted in *Tukaram* (1937), but the film did not fare well. However, her role in *Kacha Devayani* (1938) brought her recognition. After appearing in *Mahananda*, she relocated to Madras, continuing her acting career. During this time, she married Mirzapuram Raja, who later produced Bhoja Kalidasu, in which she starred. Following her marriage, Krishnaveni was restricted to acting only in her home productions. She played lead roles in films such as *Jeevana Jyothi* (1940), which marked the debut of C. Narayana Rao, followed by *Daksha Yagnam* (1941) and *Bheeshma* (1944). Her performances in *Gollabhama* (1947) and *Lakshamma* (1950) earned her widespread acclaim.

Krishnaveni eventually took charge of Sobhanachala Studios, her husband's production house, while also raising her daughter. She bid farewell to acting and launched her own production house, MRA (Meka Rajyalakshmi Anuradha), named after her daughter. She's named as the first woman producer.

In a time when mythological and folklore films dominated, Krishnaveni took a bold step by producing *Manadesam*, the first Telugu film adapted from a Bengali novel (*Vipradas*). This film introduced legendary actor Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR) to the silver screen. Director L.V. Prasad, recommended by K.S. Prakash Rao, suggested NTR for the role of a police inspector. Krishnaveni offered NTR an advance of Rs 250, paving the way for his illustrious career as an actor and later as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh.

Manadesam also marked the debut of playback singer P. Leela and became a significant milestone in Telugu cinema. It provided a breakthrough for actors like S.V. Ranga Rao and playback singer Jikki,



establishing them in the industry.

Her next major production, *Lakshamma*, stirred controversy. Based on Tripuraneni Gopichand's story, the film starred Krishnaveni and C. Narayana Rao. Simultaneously, filmmaker Ghantasala Balaramayya produced *Sri Lakshamma Katha* with Akkineni Nageswara Rao and Anjali Devi. While Balaramayya's film flopped, Krishnaveni's version became a massive hit, leading to much debate within the industry. Her last film as an actress was *Sahasam* (1952), in which noted Congress politician and former Maharashtra Governor Kona Prabhakar Rao played the lead. She produced her final film, *Dampatyam* (1957), which introduced music director Ramesh Naidu.

Krishnaveni attempted several ambitious projects that were shelved mid-production, including *Kummari Molla* with Chittoor Nagaiah, *Lady Doctor* directed by B. Sridhar, and *Good Evening* directed by

Kamal Ghosh. She also initiated two Kannada films, *Rajasimha* and *Paleru*, which were discontinued after partial shooting. Despite her immense contributions as an actress, producer, and mentor to some of the greatest talents in Telugu cinema, Krishnaveni's contributions were largely unrecognised by the industry. For years, she was overlooked at major film industry events and was not honored by the government. Following widespread criticism of this oversight, she was finally awarded the Raghupathi Venkaiah Award in 2004.

Her daughter, Anuradha Devi, later followed in her footsteps, producing several successful films featuring Kannada legend Rajkumar, Akkineni Nageswara Rao, and other leading stars. Krishnaveni's passing marks the end of an era. Her impact on Telugu cinema, particularly her role in introducing NTR and nurturing countless artists, remains unparalleled.

CONDOLENCES POUR IN

AP CM

Chandrababu Naidu pays tribute to Krishnaveni

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed his condolences, stating that Krishnaveni played a crucial role in elevating Telugu cinema as an actress, producer, and studio owner. He also highlighted her recognition as a Raghupathi Venkaiah Award winner. "It is deeply saddening that she has passed away. May her soul rest in peace," said Naidu. He extended his sympathies to Krishnaveni's family members.

SHE INTRODUCED MANY TO THE INDUSTRY: PAWAN KALYAN

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and actor Pawan Kalyan paid tribute to Krishnaveni, who passed away on Sunday. In his message, he recognized her as the first woman producer in the Telugu film industry and expressed his sorrow over her passing. "Krishnaveni was a versatile talent who showcased her abilities as an actress, playback singer, producer, and studio owner in the early days of Telugu cinema. She also made her mark by introducing NTR and playback singer Ghantasala to the industry," he said, extending his condolences to her family.

SHE MADE HER MARK IN TELUGU CINEMA: NARA LOKESH

AP IT and Education Minister Nara

Lokesh also paid tribute to Krishnaveni, acknowledging her contributions as a first-generation actress and producer in the Telugu film industry. In his message, he praised her for serving Telugu cinema as the owner of Sobhanachala Studios and for producing a variety of impactful films. He also highlighted her prestigious Raghupathi Venkaiah Award and other honors. He extended his condolences to her family members.

KRISHNAVENI WAS A VERSATILE TALENT: BALAKRISHNA

Actor and politician Nandamuri Balakrishna also mourned Krishnaveni's passing, calling her a versatile personality who left a lasting impact on Telugu cinema. "As an actress, producer and studio owner, she carved her own chapter in the industry. At a time when mythological and folklore films dominated, she produced *Manadesam*, a film that delivered a strong social message. She was honored with many awards, and we recently felicitated her at NTR's centenary celebrations," said Balakrishna. He also emphasized that she played a crucial role in introducing Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR) to Telugu cinema. Expressing his deep sorrow, he conveyed his heartfelt condolences to her family.

Amid dating rumours, Samantha shares Selena Gomez' lyrics—A hidden message?

The Pioneer had earlier reported that actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu is dating Raj Nidimoru, one-half of the renowned filmmaker duo Raj & DK. Over time, several reports have surfaced regarding their alleged relationship, keeping fans and media buzzing with speculation.

Samantha, an avid social media user, often shares glimpses of her personal and professional life. The *Citadel: Honey Bunny* actress dropped a series of breathtaking pictures from a photoshoot. Dressed in a white ensemble paired with a tasseled long skirt and a striking green belt, she looked effortlessly glamorous. However, it was her cryptic caption that truly stole the spotlight.

Amid the ongoing dating rumours, Samantha shared lyrics from Selena Gomez's latest song, *Scared of Loving You*, writing:

"If I lose my shit, promise not to laugh / If I throw a fit and get photographed / Would you take my side? Would you hold my hand? / If they sell a lie, don't let 'em send me back."

Accompanying the lyrics, she added hashtags #LyricsForLife and #SelenaGomez, hinting at a deep personal connection to the song's meaning.

While Samantha has not directly addressed the dating speculations, her post has left fans wondering if the lyrics reflect her current emotions. Neither she nor Raj Nidimoru have commented on the rumours, keeping the mystery alive.

For now, Samantha continues to focus on her professional commitments while engaging with fans through her candid and thought-provoking social media updates.

Chandoo Mondeti in talks for Suriya's next

Director Chandoo Mondeti is on cloud nine, with the success of his latest film *Thandel*, starring Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi. The director said that there were a few sensor problems when they sent the certificate. "They didn't accept some dialogues, so we had to mute it, they also asked for some visual cuts and because of the censor cuts, there's 30 percent of the emotion less in the film," said Chandoo.

The director announced one more film *Tenali Ramakrishna* with Naga Chaitanya. Basically, Chaitanya's grandfather ANR played Tenali Ramakrishna role in that old classic. "Naga Chaitanya put his efforts sincerely, so he can transform into the character of Tenali Ramakrishna. As a friend and director, I wanted him to do this kind of role," said Chandoo. Talking about his upcoming projects, he said that he is ready for *Karthikeya 3*. "I am also in talks with Suriya and I hope it is going to work out. In between there are talks for another film," said Chandoo.



Nag Ashwin to Direct Alia Bhatt Before *Kalki 2898 AD* Sequel

Director Nag Ashwin, who rose to prominence with just three films, is gearing up for the sequel to his 2024 sci-fi blockbuster *Kalki 2898 AD*. The film ended on a note that set up the next chapter, but production for the sequel has been delayed due to lead actor Prabhas' packed schedule. Prabhas, who played the titular role in *Kalki 2898 AD*, is set to begin filming *Spirit* in May. Additionally, he will be occupied with Hanu Raghavapudi's *Fuaji* until mid-2026. As a result, the sequel's production has been pushed back. While waiting for Prabhas' availability, Nag Ashwin has reportedly pitched a new script to Bollywood star Alia Bhatt, who has given her nod to the project. Sources suggest that the filmmaker has nearly completed the final draft and may start production soon. If all goes as planned, this project will be completed before *Kalki 2898 AD*'s sequel goes on floors.



Vishwak Sen's market down

Actor Vishwak Sen, known as much for controversies as for his films, is currently facing a rough phase in his career. His latest film, *Laila*, has turned out to be a massive failure at the box office, further denting his market value. According to industry insiders, Vishwak's attitude has also been a topic of discussion, but this latest setback has reportedly come as a wake-up call for him.

Reports suggest that Vishwak has been charging around Rs 6 to Rs 8 crore per film. However, with *Laila* underperforming, his remuneration is expected to take a hit. Well, not just this, his previous two films, *Gangs of Godavari* and *Mechanic Rocky*, also failed to impress audiences. The actor himself admitted that he had high hopes for *Mechanic Rocky* but acknowledged certain mistakes, vowing not to repeat them. However, with *Laila*, it appears he has fallen into the same trap once again.

The director of *Laila*, in pre-release interviews, mentioned that several actors had rejected the script because they were unwilling to play a female character. "Vishwak should have thought twice before accepting this role and questioned why others rejected it. He jumped in without a second thought and now it has backfired," said an industry source. With this string of failures, Vishwak Sen's market has significantly declined. Producers who invest in his films may now face challenges in marketing and selling them. "At this stage, Vishwak should focus more on choosing strong scripts and improving his performances rather than being caught up in controversies," added the source.



Yashasvi Jaiswal set to miss Ranji semis

PTI ■ NAGPUR

It is unlikely that Mumbai will have an injured Yashasvi Jaiswal in their ranks, but the resilient defending champions are firm favourites against Vidarbha in the Ranji Trophy semifinal, beginning here on Monday.

It is understood that Jaiswal might travel to the BCCI Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru for further assessment of his unspecified injury soon, as he has been named as a "non-travelling reserve" in India's Champions Trophy squad. But the possible absence of Jaiswal in no way reduces the firepower of Mumbai in a match that is the repeat of last year's final.

Mumbai have a host of stars in their line-up such as skipper Ajinkya Rahane, Suryakumar Yadav, Shivam Dube and Shardul Thakur who can alter the course of the game on their own. But more than the presence of some acclaimed and accomplished players, their determination makes the 42-time champions a team cut from different cloth. On several occasions this season, Mumbai's top-order



malfunctioned but their lower-order batters like Thakur and Tanush Kotian have bailed them out with gritty efforts. Even in the quarterfinal against Haryana, they were tottering at 113 for seven before Shams Mulani and Kotian milked 183 runs for the eighth wicket to rescue Mumbai. Mumbai would hope that the big guns will return to run-making ways on the Nagpur pitch that often sides with

batters. While the stories of such late-order resistance are heart-warming, Mumbai would like a more polished effort from their top-order against Vidarbha, who are in red-hot form this season. They don't have big names in their bowling line-up, but Harsh Dubey, Yash Thakur, Aditya Thakare and Nachiket Bhut have consistently struck for Vidarbha.

In fact, left-arm spinner Dubey is the highest wicket-taker this Ranji season with 59 victims in his bag. Hence, Vidarbha will be eager to exploit that slightly wobbly nature of Mumbai top-order and put them under pressure early. None of the Mumbai batters figure among the top 20 of the highest run-makers this season. Siddesh Lad (565 runs) is their top run-aggregator and he is

22nd on the run-maker's list. In contrast, Vidarbha's frontline has been in much better shape this season as Yash Rathod (728 runs) is the fourth-highest run-getter in the chart.

Karun Nair (591) and skipper Akshay Wadkar (588) too have chipped in with important runs. However, they would like some better outings from openers Atharva Taide and Dhruv Shorey. Teams (from): Mumbai: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Amogh Bhatkal, Suryakumar Yadav, Yashasvi Jaiswal (injured), Siddesh Lad, Shivam Dube, Akash Anand (wk), Hardik Tamore (wk), Suryansh Shedde, Shardul Thakur, Shams Mulani, Tanush Kotian, Mohit Avasthi, Sylvester D'Souza, Royston Dias, Atharva Ankolekar, Harsh Tanna.

Vidarbha: Akshay Wadkar (c & wk), Atharva Taide, Aman Mokhadde, Yash Rathod, Harsh Dubey, Akshay Karnewar, Yash Kadam, Akshay Wakhare, Aditya Thakare, Darshan Nalkande, Nachiket Bhute, Siddesh Wath (wk), Yash Thakur, Danish Malewar, Parth Rekhade, Karun Nair, Dhruv Shorey.

10-man Real Madrid draws at Osasuna after red card

PTI ■ BARCELONA

Jude Bellingham's use of an English expletive to curse at the referee left Real Madrid a man down and unable to defend a lead as the La Liga leaders drew at Osasuna 1-1 on Saturday. Kylian Mbappé put Madrid ahead in the 15th minute with his 11th goal in as many league games. But Madrid was outnumbered after Bellingham's red card for using an expletive while protesting the refereeing five minutes before halftime.

Osasuna pulled level after the referee awarded a penalty after a video review and booked Eduardo Camavinga for stomping the foot of Ante Budimir in the box. Budimir slotted the 58th-minute equalizer past Thibaut Courtois to unleash celebrations at El Sadar Stadium.

The draw in Pamplona put Madrid's league lead in jeopardy. While Atletico Madrid failed to take advantage of the slip and stayed one point behind the frontrunners, Barcelona can pull level with its top rival if it beats Rayo Vallecano on Monday.

Next up for Madrid is a home game against Manchester City on Wednesday when it will try to make good on its 3-2 win in their first meeting of the Champions League knockout rounds playoff. 'English translation error' In what seemed to be a stretch of linguistic analysis, coach Carlo Ancelotti tried to defend his player by claiming that referee José Luis Munuera made a translation error of Bellingham's use of an English expletive.

"Bellingham didn't do anything that deserved a sending off," Ancelotti said. "He said (expletive) off, not (expletive) you. I don't think that was meant to be offensive." Munuera wrote in his refereeing report that Bellingham told him "from just a few meters away, (expletive) you."

Bellingham said "I don't want to go into details of what was said" but insisted he was unfairly treated, saying the referee made a translation



error and that there was indeed a degree of difference between the expletive when combined with "off" or "you."

"It is clear that he made a mistake and there was a miscommunication," said the England midfielder, who got a two-game ban last season after receiving a red card for using an expletive in English protesting a ref's call.

More fuel for the fire Ancelotti was also shown a yellow card early after he complained excessively for what he thought was a handball by an Osasuna player in the host's area. Following its loss at Espanyol, the powerhouse sent a scathing letter to Spain's soccer federation to decry what it considered "adulterated" refereeing that favored other teams. The league president responded by saying that the 36-time champion had "lost its mind."

The decisions by Munuera aggravated Madrid's sense of grievance regarding the refereeing in La Liga. "Things have happened in the last three games that everyone has seen," Ancelotti said. "The VAR has reviewed plays in our area and not in the opponent's area. ... We just have to keep fighting. We played a good game today and we will try to do so again on Wednesday and in the next La Liga game."

Mbappé remains hot Mbappé had an up and down first few months while adapting to Madrid, but he has been

scoring at ease in recent weeks and has 17 league goals, second only to the 19 by Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski. Mbappé had an opportunity to bag an injury-time winner but Osasuna goalkeeper Sergio Herrera blocked his shot from an angle.

Osasuna, which beat Barcelona 4-2 in September when the Catalan club was leading the league, moved into seventh place. Budimir's goal let the Croatia striker equal an Osasuna club record of 57 career goals in La Liga, a mark set by Sabino Andonegui.

"It is always very special to enter the history of a club that is over 100 years old. I am very proud," Budimir said.

Atletico gladiators' fail to retake lead Atletico Madrid remained a point behind Madrid after it was also reduced to 10 men and needed a late goal from substitute Alexander Sorloth to draw at home with Celta Vigo 1-1. Pablo Barrios hurt Atletico's chances when he saw a direct red card for a studs-first slide into the lower leg of Pablo Durán just seven minutes into the match. Borja Iglesias earned a penalty when fouled by Robin Le Normand in the area, sending substitute Lago Aspas to the spot to put Celta ahead in the 68th.

Sorloth salvaged a point for the hosts when the Norway striker won a long ball and rifled it home in the 81st.

LIV Tour commits to Adelaide tournament until 2031

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

LIV Golf has secured its foothold in Australia, with Adelaide retaining hosting rights for its tournament until 2031, despite increasing speculation of a reunification of the PGA and LIV tours and what that could mean for the sport's landscape.

Sunday's announcement signals LIV's ambitions to remain a prominent player in world golf despite increasing efforts to reunify the PGA and LIV Golf tours, which included PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan meeting with President Donald Trump last week.

"There's no place we'd rather be than right here in Adelaide," new LIV Golf CEO Scott O'Neil said ahead of Sunday's final round at The Grange Golf Club - the most successful stop in the fledgling golf league's short

history. Adelaide's hosting contract with LIV Golf had been due to end after its fourth event in 2026, but with around 100,000 fans attending in each of the past two years it prompted the South Australian state government to bid for an extension. Government officials also unveiled plans Sunday to shift the event from The Grange to a newly redeveloped city course designed by former LIV Golf chief Greg Norman.

Norman a central figure in establishing the breakaway tour will oversee the redesign of the North Adelaide Golf Course, located in the city's central business district. "As a golf course designer, you very seldom get the opportunity to be involved with a project downtown," he said. "North Adelaide Golf Club is basically a diamond in the rough and we're going to unpick it."

Jannik Sinner's three-month ban slammed by tennis pros

PTI ■ LONDON

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner accepting a three-month doping ban deal was slammed by his fellow tennis professionals on Saturday.

Sinner and the World Anti-Doping Agency settled on the suspension that means he can play again from May 5, will not lose his number one ranking, will not miss any Grand Slams, and will not lose titles or prize money he earned after testing positive for a banned anabolic steroid last March. Three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka wrote on X, "I don't believe in a clean sport anymore."

"Fairness in tennis does not exist," Wimbledon runner-up Nick Kyrgios said on X. "Obviously Sinner's team have done everything in their power to just go ahead and take a three

month ban, no titles lost, no prize money lost. Guilty or not? Sad day for tennis."

Medvedev, speaking after losing in the Open 13 semifinals in Marseille, said, "I hope everyone can discuss with WADA and defend themselves like Jannik Sinner from now on."

Former British number one Tim Henman told Sky Sport, "When I read the statement this morning it just seems a little bit too convenient. Obviously having just won the Australian Open, to miss three months of the tour and therefore to be eligible to play at Roland Garros, the timing couldn't have been any better for Sinner, but I still think it leaves a pretty sour taste for the sport."

The Professional Tennis Players Association, founded by Novak

Djokovic and Vasek Pospisil, also weighed in on X, posting a statement criticising the parties involved in the decision-making process: The ATP, WTA, Grand Slams, WADA and International Tennis Integrity Agency.

"The system is not a system. It's a club. Supposed case-by-case discretion is, in fact, merely cover for tailored deals, unfair treatment, and inconsistent rulings. It's not just the different results for different players. It's the lack of transparency. The lack of process. The lack of consistency. The lack of credibility in the alphabet soup of agencies charged with regulating our sports and athletes," the PTPA wrote.

It accused the agencies of unacceptable bias "for all athletes and shows a deep disrespect for every sport and its fans."

Champions Trophy: Arshdeep poised to start ahead of Harshit



PTI ■ DUBAI

Harshit Rana has been the flavour of the season as far as India's emerging crop of fast bowlers is concerned but one of head coach Gautam Gambhir's finds is unlikely to start in India's playing eleven in the Champions Trophy with Arshdeep Singh still considered way ahead in terms of talent and quality.

The Indian team management gave Harshit all three ODIs against England, and if one is absolutely fair to the burly 6-foot-2-inch tall Delhi speedster, he has not looked out of place. While Arshdeep enjoys a better economy rate of 5.17 compared to Harshit's 6.95 per over, it is the former's ability to bring the ball back into the right-handers during the Powerplay overs that will tilt the scales in his favour in the tournament starting February 19.

Arshdeep, who also has only nine ODIs since he made his debut in a short ODI series in New Zealand in 2022, will be ahead on most counts when one looks at the parameters that would be taken into account based on the conditions available at the Dubai International Stadium. "Harshit has improved by leaps and bounds in terms of reducing his weight and has

become sharper in terms of speed. But if I had to choose one among the two as Mohammed Shami's partner, it has to be Arshdeep as he can swing the ball both ways and is a left-arm.

"I would be a trifle surprised if Harshit starts ahead of Arshdeep," former national selector Devang Gandhi, who has also seen Rana from close quarters as Delhi Ranji coach said.

India will start with a clash against Bangladesh on February 20 here. It is understood that Harshit started in all three games against England because the team management, currently helmed by Gautam Gambhir, wanted to check out if his protegee could be considered as Jasprit Bumrah's replacement, and also this was the only series where Shami's fitness could also have been tested in real terms.

Hence, Arshdeep was rested in the first two games and only got a chance when the think-tank decided to rest Shami, who had played back to back ODIs. Former India opener WV Raman, one of the most respected coaches in the country, feels experience will be a key factor which should go in favour of the Punjab pacer. "Arshdeep, due to his relative experience and the left arm

being a different dimension, has an advantage. The Dubai track will be decent for the pacers," Raman observed.

He also raised a key point about playing multi-nation event compared to bilateral series. "A bit more experience always helps in ICC events, which is a different ball game from bilaterals. In ICC event, you will play different opposition every day and accordingly an experienced bowler changes his plans," said Raman, who has also been India U-19 batting coach and head coach of the national women's team.

Gandhi, on his part, also pointed out the options Arshdeep brings to the table in various phases of the match. "Harshit hits deck and gets it to move a bit both ways after pitching along with those effective occasional heavy balls in the range of mid 140s. But when you have Arshdeep, he can swing the new ball and also use angles of the crease effectively when he comes round the wicket during death overs," he explained.

An NCA level two coach, who had watched the India U-19 team play in Dubai during the Asia Cup, had observed that there is at least five to six inches more bounce on offer at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium.

Aditi Ashok slips to tied 53 in Saudi Ladies International

PTI ■ RIYADH

Aditi Ashok played a disappointing round of three-over 75 and slipped to tied-53rd at the Saudi Ladies International here on Sunday. Aditi with rounds of 69-72-75 totalled even par 216 for three days. This was her first event of 2025 on the Ladies European Tour.

It was a tough day with two birdies, three bogeys and a double bogey in the 75 at the Par-72 Riyadh Golf Club. The other three Indians, Pranavi Urs, Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik had missed the cut earlier on.

Thailand's Jeeno Thitikul secured her fifth Ladies European Tour (LET) title after storming to a four-stroke victory.

The Thai star, who is number four in the Women's World Golf Rankings, began the day with a three-shot lead. A round of 69 (-3) on the final day to end the week with a score of 16-under-par was more than enough to ensure Thitikul began her 2025 season in the best way.



Korea's Somi Lee finished the week in second place in the Individual competition with a score of 12-under-par after she captained her Team to victory on Saturday.

England's Annabell Fuller recorded her best-ever finish on the LET with solo third place on 11-under-par. Four players finished in a share of fourth place with Japan's Chisato Iwai, Korea's

Ina Yoon, Denmark's Nanna Koerstz Madsen, and Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn all on 10-under-par.

One shot back, five players rounded out the top 10 with England's Charley Hull, Australia's Hira Naveed, China's Muni He, Austria's Emma Spitz, and Switzerland's Chiara Tamburlini on nine-under-par. In the LET Order of Merit,

England's Cara Gainer continued to lead the standings with 505.18 points to her name, Thailand's Thitikul is now in second place with 500 points.

The LET season has a two-week break before a trip to Australia with the first of three events - the Australian WPGA Championship - taking place from March 6-9 at Sanctuary Cove Golf and Country Club.

Batting depth gives Royal Challengers slight edge over Delhi Capitals

PTI ■ VADODARA

After starting from the blocks with contrasting wins, Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and Delhi Capitals (DC) will look to consolidate their position when they meet in WPL 2025 here on Monday.

Defending champions Royal Challengers brushed aside Gujarat Giants (GG) by six wickets in the opening game, while the Capitals had to go through a last-ball thriller before notching a win over Mumbai Indians (MI). But the overall balance, especially in batting, and bowling gives RCB a slight edge over Delhi.

Their batting strength was on full display when the Smriti Mandhana-led side chased down a 200-plus target without much ado.

They have been bolstered by the addition of young talents like Raghavi Bist, Kanika Ahuja, who have seamlessly blended with seniors Mandhana, Ellyse Perry, Richa Ghosh and Danny Wyatt.

Both Kanika and Bist had played excellent roles too in the team's win over GG. However, they might just hope for a tidier effort from their bowlers, and Perry abstaining from bowling has reduced their efficiency a bit in that department.

The Aussie star is recovering from a hip injury that she sustained during the recent Women's Ashes, and will not be bowling at least in the initial stages of the WPL. So, RCB will need a heftier contribution from experienced Kim Garth and Georgia Wareham, as both

leaked plenty of runs against Gujarat. They would also like to see youngsters VJ Joshiha and Prema Rawat too step up and support seasoned Renuka Singh.

It is imperative because Delhi has a fiery batting unit consisting of skipper Meg Lanning, Annabel Sutherland, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Nandini Kashyap, Sneha Deepthi, Jess Jonassen, Niki Prasad, Taniyaa Bhatia, Marchizanne Kapp, Radha Yadav, Titas Sadhu.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Smriti Mandhana (Captain), Nuzhat Parveen, Joshiha Vj, Richa Ghosh, Danni Wyatt, Kanika Ahuja, Sabbineni Meghana, Ekta Bisht, Kim Garth, Shreyanka Patil, Ellyse Perry, Prema Rawat, Georgia Wareham, Raghvi Bist, Heather Graham, Jagravi Pawar, Renuka Singh, Charlie Dean.

However, the RCB batting line-up could offer them a vastly different challenge.

Squads Delhi Capitals: Meg Lanning (Captain), Alice Capsey, Sarah Bryce, Annabel Sutherland, Minnu Mani, Shafali Verma, Arundhati Reddy, N Charan, Shikha Pandey, Jemimah Rodrigues, Nandini Kashyap, Sneha Deepthi, Jess Jonassen, Niki Prasad, Taniyaa Bhatia, Marchizanne Kapp, Radha Yadav, Titas Sadhu. Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Smriti Mandhana (Captain), Nuzhat Parveen, Joshiha Vj, Richa Ghosh, Danni Wyatt, Kanika Ahuja, Sabbineni Meghana, Ekta Bisht, Kim Garth, Shreyanka Patil, Ellyse Perry, Prema Rawat, Georgia Wareham, Raghvi Bist, Heather Graham, Jagravi Pawar, Renuka Singh, Charlie Dean.



Rauf recovers from injury, set for CT opener

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan fast bowler Haris Rauf has recovered from his injury and will be available for his side's ICC Champions Trophy (CT) opening match against New Zealand on Wednesday, according to sources.

A source close to the Pakistan team confirmed on Sunday that Haris, who sustained a muscular strain in his lower chest wall during the recent tri-series tournament, has recovered and will play in the Champions Trophy opener in Karachi.

"Haris is okay now and the rest given to him after the first match of the Tri-Series has helped him recover well," the source said, adding that Pakistan has no fitness issues with any other player.

Haris, one of Pakistan's key bowlers with his express pace and ability to take wickets in the middle overs, has remained with the squad despite the selectors calling up uncapped Akif Javed as a backup for him. Haris has a haul of 83 wickets in 46 one-day internationals and another 110 wickets in 79 T20 internationals as he has built a reputation as a specialist white-ball bowler. Former Pakistan left-arm pacer Muhammad Amir had on Saturday expressed his concerns on a TV channel about Haris' fitness for the Champions Trophy. Amir claimed that if the pacer had suffered a side strain it would take five to six weeks to heal completely.