

Revanth is saying he is playing 20-20 match inside but he is playing Tondi (shady) matches, collecting money while breaking promises. KCR, on the other hand, has played Test, One-Day, and T20 - excelling in all formats of governance. No matter where you go in Telangana, people want KCR back. Farmers, daily wage workers, students and employees everyone is fed up with the Congress's failures

- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

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Railway minister lists steps to prevent incidents

PROFIT BOOKING LEADING FIIS TO SELL INDIAN EQUITIES: FM

Producer's veiled criticism of Telugu actresses: Is Baby actress the TARGET?

DON'T MISS...

Illegal farm plot sales to be curbed in Hyd

The Hyderabad Disaster Response and Management Authority (HYDRAA) has cautioned citizens against purchasing plots in unauthorised layouts being sold under the guise of 'farm plots' on the city outskirts. Despite a ban on farm plot registrations, complaints indicate that sales continue in certain areas, potentially leading to legal and financial troubles for unsuspecting buyers. A series of complaints received through the Prajavani grievance platform on Monday highlighted unauthorised sales in Rajendranagar mandal's Lakshmguda...

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SC reinstates Solan's mayor

The Supreme Court on Monday reinstated Solan Mayor Usha Sharma in her post for the remainder of her tenure while terming her disqualification a case of "political goondaism". A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh made its August 20, 2024 order absolute by which it had stayed her disqualification while terming her removal "a case of male bias". The interim order of August 20, 2024 is made absolute. Any interference with the order will invite consequences," the bench said, as it adjourned...

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Adani pledges Rs 2K cr for setting up schools

Adani group on Monday announced Rs 2,000 crore donation for building at least 20 schools across the country as it continued to reveal details of the Rs 10,000 crore charity committed at the wedding of founder Gautam Adani's younger son. The conglomerate had previously announced Rs 6,000 crore for constructing hospitals and another Rs 2,000 crore for skill development. The Adani Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Gautam Adani-led group, "has collaborated with..."

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India look to continue winning momentum

Their campaign back on track after a jittery start, India will look to continue the winning momentum when they take on Paris Olympics silver medalist Germany in their next men's FIH Pro League match on Tuesday. India had a woeful start to their home leg matches of the Pro League, losing 1-3 to Spain in their opener. But the hosts bounced back strongly to tame Spain 2-0 in the return match on Sunday. With three points from two games, India are currently sitting in eighth place in the standings and will...

-SPORTS

CM Revanth seeks Central intervention on water usage

TG to fund telemetry system to stop AP from drawing excess water

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy expressed concern over the excess use of Krishna waters by Andhra Pradesh and directed irrigation officials to be more vigilant in monitoring the withdrawals from Srisailem and Nagarjuna Sagar.

He asserted that installing a telemetry system is the only way to prevent Andhra Pradesh from taking more than its allocated share.

Officials informed the CM that the AP government had not contributed its share of funds for the system. In response, Revanth ordered Principal Secretary (Irrigation) Rahul Bojja to write to the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB), confirming that Telangana would pay the entire amount upfront to ensure the



immediate installation of the telemetry system. Reiterating that the allocation and monitoring of water usage

KCR played in all formats while Revanth is still playing matches: Harish

The birthday celebrations of BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) turned into a political storm, with senior leaders Harish Rao and KTR launching scathing attacks on the Congress Government while rallying support for the former CM's comeback.

The event, held at the Telangana Bhavan, saw an overwhelming turnout of BRS cadres,

with leaders proclaiming KCR as the unquestionable architect of Telangana and slamming the current administration under Revanth Reddy.

Addressing the gathering, Harish hailed KCR as more than just a leader, calling him the soul of four crore Telangana people. He traced KCR's journey from the 1969 Telangana

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Is Congress getting ready for Backward Class CM?

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

It seems that the Congress is getting ready for a Backward Classes CM and is moving in the direction of its MLC Theenmar Mallanna's statement that "Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is the last Reddy CM of the state."

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Nagarkurnool MP Mallu Ravi and TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud have started discussions regarding a BC CM. However, Congress leaders are

discussing whether the party's top leaders kickstarted the BC CM idea as per the directions of the high command or just to test the waters in the context of the caste survey and reservations for BCs.

A few days ago, without mentioning the name of Theenmar Mallanna, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy himself said that he doesn't mind if he is the last Reddy Chief Minister of Telangana so that Rahul Gandhi's ideology can be implemented.

On Sunday, Nagarkurnool MP Mallu Ravi said the Congress would make

Continued on Page 2

Despite snubbing Cong, GHMC tops guarantee beneficiary list

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government's Mahalakshmi Free Bus Travel, LPG Cylinder for Rs 500, and Gruha Jyothi schemes have witnessed an overwhelming response across the state, with Hyderabad leading in beneficiary numbers.

Official data from the Telangana State Statistical Abstract 2024 released by Dy CM Bhatti Vikramarka and Special CS Ramakrishna Rao on Monday high-



lighted stark differences in the distribution of benefits, with urban centres seeing maximum utilization while smaller districts lag behind.

The Mahalakshmi LPG Cylinder Scheme, which provides cooking gas at Rs 500, has seen similar trends.

Continued on Page 2

Major bureaucratic reshuffle likely

CMO may be overhauled

NAVEENA GHANATE naveena.ghanate@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

A massive bureaucratic reshuffle is on the cards in Telangana, with Chief Minister Revanth Reddy all set to reorganise the state's IAS cadre after March. The reshuffle is likely to happen after MLC elections and the post-budget assembly session.

Sources indicate that the reshuffle will not only impact key administrative departments but will also bring about changes in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), as the government seeks to inject greater efficiency and accountability.

This move comes amid growing dissatisfaction within the government over "bureaucratic complacency." The Chief Minister on Sunday did not mince words in expressing his displeasure about some officers

who, he believes, have failed to rise to the occasion or correct their course when needed.

He has publicly voiced his concerns, suggesting that officials are operating only in their comfort zone, avoiding reality checks and contributing to the negative perception about the government.

The reshuffle is expected to be extensive, touching critical sectors like revenue, mining and agriculture. Despite waiving farm loans valued at nearly Rs 20,000 crore and increasing Rythu Bharosa by Rs 12,000, the CM is learnt to have pointed to lapses and how the schemes have created a negative environment.

The administration has identified bottlenecks in these departments, with reports suggesting that certain officials have been slow to act or unwilling to

Continued on Page 2

State unstable, govt's survival in doubt: Sanjay



Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar addressing the MLC election campaign meeting at Karimnagar on Monday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, criticised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's rule, stating that the situation in the state is unstable and that it is not clear whether the government will survive or collapse.

Sanjay condemned Revanth's statement that if the Chief Minister makes one mistake, IAS officers will make three mistakes, calling it shameful.

He asked how a Chief Minister could talk about making mistakes instead of preventing corruption and irregularities, implying that

the CM himself acknowledges corruption in his government.

He claimed that the gulf between Ministers and Congress MLAs is widening and that some Ministers have opened their own 'shops', collecting 15% kickbacks on all projects.

He criticised the Congress Government for failing to fulfil promises like providing Rs 56,000 as unemployment allowance to all jobless individuals, scooters and gold for women, PRC and DA for employees, and the waiving of farmers' loans.

He called the Congress Government a "debt-ridden administration" and

Continued on Page 2

Shallow earthquake jolts NCR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Strong tremors were felt in the national capital and adjoining regions as an earthquake of 4.0 magnitude struck the region early on Monday.

There were no immediate reports of any damage or injuries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people in the region to stay calm and follow safety precautions while keeping alert for possible aftershocks.

Modi said in a post on X, "Tremors were felt in Delhi and nearby areas. Urging everyone to stay calm and follow safety precautions, staying alert for possible aftershocks. Authorities are keeping a close watch on the situation."

The epicentre of the quake was in the Jheel Park area of Dhaura Kuan and there were some reports of people hearing a loud sound as the ground shook.

The National Center for Seismology said the earthquake struck at a focal depth of five kilometres at 5:36 am.

Shallow earthquakes, originating five or 10 kilometres below the surface, tend to cause more damage than those originating deep below the surface.

The Jheel Park region has been experiencing smaller, low-magnitude quakes once every two to three years.



Does Sanjay have guts to include BC quota Bill in 9th Schedule?

Mahesh says Cong govt will pass 42% BC quota Bill

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud asked the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, to reveal whether he has the guts to include the 42 per cent BC Reservations Bill in the 9th Schedule of the constitution. He said the Congress Government will pass the 42 per cent BC Reservations Bill in the Assembly and will send it to the Centre.

Addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Monday, Mahesh asked Sanjay to reveal whether he has the guts to convince Prime Minister Modi about the 42 per cent BC Reservations Bill.



TPCC Chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Monday

Does Sanjay have the strength to ask Modi to conduct a caste census across the nation? The future is BCs in the state and nation. Will the BJP and the

Continued on Page 2

BJP tops income list with Rs 4,340.47 cr: ADR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP reported the highest income among national parties in the financial year 2023-24, declaring total earnings of Rs 4,340.47 crore, according to poll rights body ADR.

The amount accounted for 74.57 per cent of the total income of six national parties during the period under review, the report by Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) said.

"The BJP declared a total income of Rs 4,340.47 crore during FY 2023-24 but spent only 50.96 per cent of it, amounting to Rs 2,211.69 crore. The total income of Congress was Rs 1,225.12 crore, while its expenditure for the year was Rs 1,025.25 crore or 83.69 per cent of its total income," the report said.

A large portion of the income for national parties came from donations through electoral bonds.



While the BJP received the highest amount, securing Rs 1,685.63 crore, the Congress received Rs 828.36 crore, and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rs 10.15 crore.

Collectively, these three parties raised Rs 2,524.1361 crore -- 43.36 per cent of their total income -- through the electoral bond scheme, which the Supreme Court struck down as "unconstitutional and manifestly arbitrary" in May last year.

As per the data shared by the State Bank of India in response to an RTI application filed by the ADR, Rs 4,507.56 crore worth of electoral bonds were redeemed by various political parties in the 2023-24 fiscal. The national parties accounted for 55.99 per cent -- Rs 2,524.1361 crore -- of this amount.

The report said the maximum expenditure by the Congress was made towards election-related expenses,

Continued on Page 2

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 18, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Annual Day Celebrations

By Global Edge School

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
February 18, (1:30 pm)

Musical Event

By Sruthilaya FoundationBy Sruthilaya Foundation

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
February 18, (6 pm)

Live Musical Orchestra

By Vamsi Arts Theatres

Venue

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
February 18, (4:30 pm)

Global University Education Fair

Venue

Taj Krishna
February 18, (11 am)

Live Performance

By Goonj (Band)

Venue

Stone Waters - Kitchen & Lounge
February 18, (8 pm)

Workshop On Pottery

Venue

Studio Myraa
February 18, (5:15 pm)

Workshop On Crafting Terracotta Jewellery

Venue

FTCCI
February 17 to 19, (10:30 am)

Samatha Kumbh 2025

The Third Brahmotsavam Of The 108 Divya Countries

Venue

Statue Of Equality
February 9 to 19 (8 am)

Silk Expo

Exhibition Cum Sale

Venue

Sri Satya Sai Nigamagam
February 15 to 21, (10 am)

HYDRAA warns against unauthorised farm plot sales on city outskirts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Disaster Response and Management Authority (HYDRAA) has cautioned citizens against purchasing plots in unauthorised layouts being sold under the guise of 'farm plots' on the city outskirts. Despite a ban on farm plot registrations, complaints indicate that sales continue in certain areas, potentially leading to legal and financial troubles for unsuspecting buyers.

A series of complaints received through the Prajavani grievance platform on Monday highlighted unauthorised sales in Rajendranagar mandal's Lakshmiguda village, specifically in survey number 50, where 1.02 acres have allegedly been converted into a layout and sold as farm plots. HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath has urged the public to remain vigilant and avoid purchasing plots in such unapproved layouts. He cited the Telangana Municipal Act 2019 and the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act 2018, both of which do not recognise the sale of farm plots. The government has already defined farm land as a minimum of 2,000 square meters or 20 guntas, and it has directed the stamps and registration department not to permit farm plot registrations.

Ranganath also pointed out that, as per GO No. 131, the government has prohibited approvals for house construction in unauthorised layouts developed after August 31, 2020. He urged citizens to be aware of this regulation before making property investments.

Complainants informed HYDRAA that many such layouts fail to adhere to the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) guidelines, which mandate that 10% of land be allocated for parks and 30% for roads. The authority has warned that such violations not only affect urban planning but could also lead to legal consequences for buyers.

64 complaints on encroachments

The Hyderabad Disaster Response and Management Authority (HYDRAA) received 64 complaints during its Prajavani grievance redressal programme on Monday, with a majority of grievances related to encroachments, illegal compound walls and road obstructions affecting public movement.

HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath directed officials to take immediate action against illegal constructions that block access to residential colonies and obstruct drainage channels, preventing floodwater from flowing properly. He emphasised that no unauthorised structure should disrupt public roads, and if necessary, they should be removed without delay.

The Commissioner instructed officials to verify if approvals exist for compound walls and demolish unauthorised ones. Ensure roads remain accessible to all and prevent encroachments.

Use Google maps and interact with complainants online to assess violations. Assign officials for direct follow-ups with complainants to ensure action is taken.

Complaints received: Residents of Kachavani Singaram village (Survey No. 54) in Medchal-Malkajgiri district alleged that a park area in their layout had been illegally occupied. Originally



developed as a 340-plot layout in 1977, it was revised in 2007 to 110 plots by the gram panchayat. However, in 2010, unauthorised persons applied for HMDA approval, despite lacking official sanction. Residents claimed that the Divya Nagar Plot Owners' Welfare Society had sold plots, including park land.

Road blockage in Devarayamjal, Shameerpet : Residents of Devarayamjal village (Survey Nos. 452, 453) reported that a 3.39-acre layout was illegally fenced, blocking their access to main roads.

Film Nagar Club misuse in Jubilee Hills: A complaint was filed regarding the Film Nagar Cultural Club, which was allegedly operating commercially on land originally designated as a residential layout under the Rock Gardens project.

Illegal sale of park land in Kapra, Kusaiguda: Residents of Kusaiguda (Survey No. 177) in Kapra Municipality alleged that park land had been converted into plots and sold illegally. They also claimed that a liquor shop compound was set up on the encroached land.

Magellanic Cloud leads AI-driven transformation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based Magellanic Cloud, a leading technology innovator, is driving AI-powered transformation in e-surveillance, video analytics, IT/ITES, and drone technology. It secured \$10 billion for its GenAI products and was listed on the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

At a press conference on Monday, Managing Director and Global CEO Joseph Sudheer Thumma shared the company's journey since 2007, including the 2020 acquisition of Motivity Labs with 450 employees.

Magellanic Cloud now operates three divisions: IT/ITES, e-surveillance, and drone manufacturing, with the product Scanalitix. It employs over 1,600 people,



Magellanic Cloud Limited Managing Director and Global CEO Joseph Sudheer Thumma addressing AI-transformation on Monday

750 in e-surveillance, 800 in IT and 100 in Scandron Technologies. The company

aims to expand to 5,000 employees by 2027 and currently occupies 2.5 floors at Dallas Centre, Hyderabad, with 3,500 employees based there.

Sudheer highlighted iVIS, which developed an AI-powered edge device for e-surveillance. It analyzes suspicious activities using Scanalitix video analytics, alerting organisations like ATMs, jewellery stores and companies about potential threats. He said iVIS is adding 5,000 new sites in the coming months, making it the largest e-surveillance company in India.

He also introduced Scandron, a drone technology startup tackling logistics challenges in the defence sector, making it the only company licenced for commercial drone flights in India.

Fake job racket busted in Hyd; One arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force, Central Zone, has busted a fake IT job racket and arrested the prime accused, Kaluva Bharghav, who had allegedly established a bogus software company named Neogen Soft Tech Solutions in Madhapur.

The accused lured job aspirants with false promises of employment as Junior Developers and Software Engineers, collected large sums of money, and issued fake appointment letters before shutting down the company and disappearing.

Bharghav, a 34-year-old resident of Chintal, had previously worked as an HR manager in various IT companies, gaining knowledge about hiring processes and corporate operations. Using this expertise, he set up a corporate-style office in Madhapur and created an online presence for his company, making it appear legitimate. He sourced job seekers' resumes from

coaching consultancies, conducted online interviews posing as an HR manager, and demanded amounts ranging from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh from victims. After issuing fake offer letters and company ID cards, he abruptly shut down the office and switched off his mobile numbers.

Authorities revealed that Bharghav is wanted in four cases registered at Lallaguda, Jeedimetla, Madhapur, and Kalwakurthy police stations under various sections. Based on credible information, the Task Force Central Zone team apprehended the accused on February 16 and recovered Rs 1 lakh in cash, five fake appointment letters, two fake ID cards, and two mobile phones.

The arrest was carried out by the Task Force Central Zone Inspector, Sub-Inspector, and staff, in coordination with Lallaguda Police. Bharghav and the seized material were handed over to the Lallaguda Police Station for further investigation.

GHIAL upgrades its runway for improved operational efficiency

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL) announced the successful installation and commissioning of advanced navigational infrastructure at the airport, improving its operational capabilities and safety protocols.

The airport has completed the installation of a Category II Instrument Landing System (ILS) and associated runway lighting system on its primary runway. This system helps aircraft land safely in low visibility conditions, such as fog, with a minimum visibility of 300 meters (RVR). The Category II ILS offers more precise guidance than the Category I system, using

accurate radio signals and advanced lighting. This is particularly important during adverse weather, ensuring safer landings when visual references are limited.

GHIAL has also received approval from the DGCA to upgrade the secondary runway to Category I status, allowing operations with a minimum visibility of 550 meters during emergencies on the main runway.

The CEO of GHIAL, Pradeep Panicker said that these upgrades mark a significant milestone in our technological development, improving operations and safety standards. The new systems reduce disruptions during low visibility, enhancing passenger experience and operational safety.



Patricia Scotland, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Nations, at the Heartfulness International School in Kanha Shanti Vanam on Monday

Commonwealth chief: Students should learn about environment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Students should learn about environmental awareness early, said Patricia Scotland, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Nations. She visited Heartfulness International School at Kanha Shanti Vanam during the two-day 'Sustainability in Classroom' programme by Heartfulness Institute.

The Principal of Heartfulness International School, Anna Rajkumar accompanied Patricia on a guided tour of the sustainability-focused campus. The

Secretary-General appreciated the school's approach to teaching students about environmental responsibility alongside academics. She interacted with students, who welcomed her with Sanskrit shlokas. Younger students also performed Gujarati and Kenyan dances, showcasing cultural diversity.

Patricia emphasised the importance of teaching sustainability from a young age, saying it helps shape future leaders who can protect the planet. She also appreciated the school's hands-on approach to sustainability education. Meanwhile, Rajkumar high-

lighted the role of Sanskrit in modern education, saying it helps students develop clarity of thought. The school integrates sustainability in its curriculum through AgriTecture, Hydroponics, Nature Farming and Microgreen Labs, encouraging students to observe and report on environmental experiments.

The school aims to create future environmental leaders while keeping them connected to their roots. It collaborates with partners like the Ministry of Education (India), the United Nations, ICRISAT, AICTE, and ICAR.

Strengthen security measures, women's hostel owners told

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a bid to enhance the safety and security of women residing in hostels, a high-level meeting was conducted under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), West Zone, SM Vijay Kumar. The meeting, held in the presence of ACP SR Nagar Division P Venkatraman, SHO SR Nagar T Srinath Reddy, DI SR Nagar Gopal, and DSI SR Nagar Suraj, saw the participation of 127 women's hostel owners.

During the meeting, hostel managements were instructed to implement strict security protocols, including CCTV Surveillance i.e. Installation of cameras across the premises and surrounding areas with a

mandatory three-month back-up. Adequate lighting throughout the hostel premises to deter criminal activities.

Deployment of a watchman or security guard round the clock. Maintenance of a detailed log of visitors, including parents, friends, and others. Background checks for all hostel staff, including maids, security personnel, cooks, and sweepers. Immediate reporting of any suspicious movements or individuals to the authorities.

Hostel owners were warned that failure to adhere to these measures would result in legal action under the Negligent Act. Officials reiterated that these guidelines were crucial in ensuring the well-being and protection of hostel residents.



Cyient DLM bags Avionics Manufacturing Award

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's Cyient DLM, a design-led manufacturing partner, has won a key avionics manufacturing contract from Thales, a global technology leader.

As part of this collaboration, Cyient DLM will produce high-reliability Printed Circuit Board Assemblies (PCBAs) for Thales's next-generation flight avionics systems. These critical components will be used in leading commercial aircraft, reinforcing Cyient DLM's expertise in aerospace electronics.

Vice-President of Group Procurement - Engineering, India, Middle East, and Africa at Thales, Deepak Talwar said, "At Thales, we support the 'Make in India' vision and value our local partners. Cyient DLM has consistently shown strong technical capabilities and competitiveness in Thales's solutions."

Meanwhile, CEO of Cyient DLM, Anthony Montalbano added, "This collaboration highlights our expertise in aerospace electronics, and we look forward to delivering world-class manufacturing solutions."



Strict action against illegal constructions: GHMC chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner K Ilambarthi has issued stern warning to officials, directing them to take immediate action against unauthorised constructions. Addressing grievances during the Prajavani programme at the GHMC headquarters on Monday, he instructed officials to act swiftly on complaints and ensure strict adherence to urban planning regulations.

Expressing displeasure over delays in resolving complaints related to illegal structures, the Commissioner emphasised that officials must take responsibility and execute their duties diligently. "There should be no hesitation in enforcing rules and clearing illegal structures," he asserted.

During the Prajavani programme, a total of 57 grievances were received at the GHMC headquarters, including 25 related to the town planning department, 12 concerning tax issues, three each for engineering maintenance and finance, two each for land acquisition under UBD, and one complaint each in sanitation, UCD, electrical, and administration departments. Additionally, six complaints were received via phone calls.

Across GHMC's six zones, a total of 82 grievances were registered. Kukatpally zone accounted for 29 complaints, LB Nagar and Secunderabad zones received 19 each, Serilingampally recorded 10, Charminar had four and Khairatabad received a single complaint.

The meeting was attended by Additional Commissioners Shiva Kumar Naidu, CPP Srinivas, Geetha Radhika, Pankaj, Subhadra Devi, Venugopal Reddy, Chandrakant Reddy, Yadagiri Rao, CM & HO Dr Padmaja, UBD Director Venkateshwar Rao, Additional CCP Gangadhar, Estate Officer Uma Prakash, Deputy CE Panasa Reddy, Housing EEs PV Ramana and Rajeshwar Rao, and Water Works official Sai Ramana.

82nd All India Railway Hockey Men's Championship begins

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 82nd All India Railway Hockey Men's Championship (League Phase) 2024-25 was inaugurated by Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager of South Central Railway (SCR) and Chief Patron of SCR Sports Association (SCRSA), at the Railway Sports Complex on Monday.

On this occasion, Arun Kumar Jain highlighted that the tournament, organised by the Railway Sports Promotion Board and hosted by SCRSA, reflects Indian Railways' strong sports culture and dedication to hockey.

He encouraged players to showcase sportsmanship and talent, emphasising that sincerity and hard work lead to success.

The tournament runs from February 17 to 22, at the Railway Sports Complex, Secunderabad, with 10 teams competing.

Another league phase is happening in Hatia, Ranchi. This event is crucial for selecting players for the Indian Railways team for the Senior National Hockey Championship.

In the opening matches, Banaras Locomotive Works defeated North Eastern Railway (6-0); Western Railway beat South Central Railway (3-2); Southern Railway vs.

West Central Railway ended in a 1-1 tie, while South Western Railway vs. South Central Railway ended 2-2.

Senior SCR officials, including C Madhusudhana Rao, PBS Rathore and Abhilash Yedla attended the event.

Officials urged to open first aid centre

PNS ■ VEMULAWADA

Devotees visiting the famous pilgrimage site, Rajarajeswara Swamy Temple in Vemulawada, are facing difficulties in receiving first aid treatment in case of accidents.

Despite orders from Government Whip Aadi Srinivas and District Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha during a recent Maha Shivaratri coordination review meeting to establish a health centre on the temple premises, the Medical and Health Department officials are yet to take action.

Just four days ago, an elderly woman was injured in a bullock cart accident and was rushed to the Vemulawada Area Hospital. On Monday, a devotee fainted on the temple premises. With no medical staff or health centre available to provide first aid, the devotee was hurriedly shifted to the Vemulawada Area Hospital.

The District Collector has directed the officials to allot two rooms next to the VRVO office for the health centre—one for the medical officer and another for the staff, with appropriate furniture for storing medicines. Due to the absence of the primary health centre, devotees who suffer accidents on the temple premises are not receiving timely medical services.

BOLD INITIATIVE Child protection officers appointed to address sexual harassment

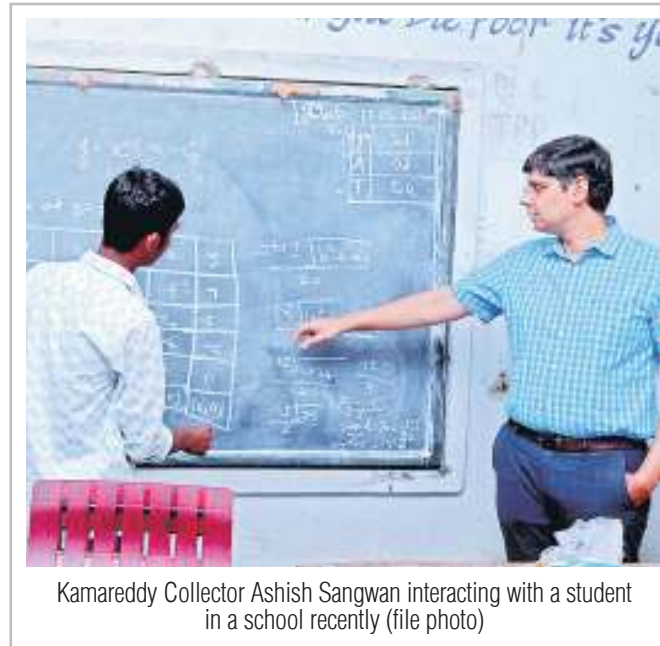
PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

In a move aimed at preventing sexual harassment and assault of girl students, the district administration has appointed child protection officers at both government and private schools across the district.

As part of this initiative, the administration has been organising training sessions for headmasters, teachers, and in-charges of residential schools. At a recent event, District Collector Ashish Sangwan distributed badges to the newly appointed child protection officers. Parents appreciated the initiative taken by the Collector.

This decision follows the reported cases of at least 15 incidents of sexual harassment in schools this year. The Collector expressed hope that these measures would help prevent such occurrences in the future. Students who experience any form of harassment are encouraged to report it to the child protection officer, who will then escalate the matter to the Collector.

The district is home to 1,196 schools, including 129 residential schools, 637 primary schools, 123 upper primary schools, 182 high



Kamareddy Collector Ashish Sangwan interacting with a student in a school recently (file photo)

schools, and 175 private schools. Several cases have been filed under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act against school teachers accused of inappropriate behaviour, including touching students inappropriately and making lewd comments. This has sparked concern, as teachers, who are supposed to instil good values in students, have been accused of inappropriate behaviour.

These POCSO cases raised concerns, especially since teachers, who are expected to instil good manners in students, were accused of such behaviour. Some

of these harassment cases came to light through the girls' parents, while others were uncovered when SHE teams educated students about the difference between good and bad touch, as well as other relevant topics.

In collaboration with ICDS, the girls' protection wing, and district administration, an important initiative is underway. A female teacher, or any teacher, has been appointed as the child protection officer in schools. These designated teachers have undergone training to understand their roles and responsibilities, with a focus on the POCSO Act. They have been sensitised to identify what constitutes good touch and bad touch, sexual harassment, girls' rights, and other legal matters.

Initially, UNICEF officials are conducting the training sessions. In the subsequent phases, representatives from the police, legal departments, and women's associations will continue the training. The appointed child protection officers will engage regularly with the schoolgirls, building trust and helping them understand how to navigate challenging situations. These officers also keep a vigilant eye on potential miscreants in areas like computer labs and classrooms.



Gautam and Kavya

Man set afire by parents-in-law in Bhadradi Kothgudem dist

PNS ■ BHADRADI KOTHAGUDEM

A married man, Ballem Gautham (24), who was allegedly set on fire by his parents-in-law after being doused with petrol in Ramachandrunipeta, Tekulapally mandal, tragically passed away after battling for life for nearly two weeks.

Gautham, from Dantalaboru village under Paloncha mandal, married Eju Kavya from Ramachandrunipeta three years ago after they fell in love. The couple lived in Sujatha Nagar, where Gautham worked as an electrician.

According to family members, Kavya stayed at her maternal home for the past five months following a dispute with her husband.

On the night of February 2, around midnight, Gautham visited his in-laws' house to see his wife and children.

Family members said that a confrontation broke out between Gautham and his parents-in-law, during which they, in a fit of rage, doused him with petrol and set him on fire outside the house, then locked the doors. In excruciating pain, Gautham screamed for help.

His cries alerted the neighbours, who quickly informed his family members. They rushed to the village and shifted him to a hospital in Khammam.

As his condition worsened, he was transferred to MGM Hospital in Warangal, where he succumbed to his injuries late Sunday night while still undergoing treatment.

It is yet to be ascertained whether the police registered a case and arrested those who allegedly set the youth on fire.

NON-PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION FOR LANDS

Farmers block Nagapur-Amaravati highway works

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Farmers in Khajipuram village under Madhira mandal, local farmers blocked the construction work of the Nagpur-Amaravati National Highway. As many as 70 farmers from the Maturu revenue division accused the authorities of failing to pay compensation though their lands were acquired for the highway.

According to the farmers, the highway construction companies have been continuing their work without providing any compensation and it violated their rightful entitlements. They lamented that their families are entirely dependent on farming, and they were deprived of their livelihood.

Farmers demanded that highway works should continue only after compensation is paid to them. They stated that it is the government's and the concerned NHAI (National Highways



Farmers staging a protest at Khajipuram village under Madhira mandal in Khammam district on Monday

Authority of India) officials' responsibility to provide fair compensation to landowners before starting the highway construction. They urged the authorities to take immediate action and ensure the compensation is provided.

The lack of clarity from the authorities concerned regarding compensation led to farmers protesting. They warned that they would intensify agitation if the authorities did not respond.

Farmers appealed to the government to consider their demands sympathetically and take immediate action. They also urged the government to make necessary arrangements for compensating the farmers who lost their lands. There is also a need for the government to discuss alternatives for land or provide employment opportunities.

INDIRAMMA HOUSES

Beneficiaries to get first instalment of financial assistance by March-end

PNS ■ WANAPARTHY

Beneficiaries who have been allotted Indiramma houses are asked to immediately begin construction work. The financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh will be transferred directly to their accounts in instalments. They have been advised not to approach middlemen, said VP Gautam, Managing Director of the State Housing Corporation. Beneficiaries, who have received approval for Indiramma houses through Gram Sabhas, should start construction work in accordance with the guidelines.

Gautam, accompanied by District Collector Adarsh Surabhi and Additional Collector Sanchit Gangwar, visited the villages of Ramnathapuram in Kothakota Mandal and Appayapalli village in Wanaparthy mandal and interacted with beneficiaries. They visited the houses of beneficiaries Suvarna and Varalakshmi in Appayapalli village to understand their financial status.

They also inspected the double-bedroom houses built by the government in Appayapalli and Rajapet villages. The beneficiaries appealed to the official to ensure that basic facilities are provided in the area where doubled bedroom houses were



Housing Corporation Managing Director VP Gautam, along with Wanaparthy Collector Adarsh Surabhi, visiting Indiramma Housing colonies in Wanaparthy on Monday

built. Subsequently, they visited a model house of the Indiramma scheme under construction on the premises of the Zilla Parishad in Wanaparthy. Later, a meeting was held with Housing Corporation officials and MPDOs at the conference hall of the Wanaparthy District IDOS office.

During the meeting, MD Gautam emphasised the need for MPDOs to ensure the speedy commencement of construction for beneficiaries selected under the Indiramma housing scheme.

He stated that the government had decided to release the first instalment of financial assistance by March 31 if the beneficiaries started construction.

District collector Adarsh Surabhi mentioned that a meeting with beneficiaries would be arranged soon to ensure that house construction begins and the first phase is completed by March 31.

Indiramma house beneficiaries need not worry about sand for construction, as it can be obtained for free from nearby reaches, officials said.

The meeting was attended by Additional Collector for Revenue, G. Venkateshwarlu, ZP CEO Yadayya, RDO Subrahmanyam, Housing officials Vithoba, Parvathalu, Panchayat Raj EE Mallayya, MRVOs Ramesh Reddy, Kishan, MPDOs, and other officials.

Maha Kumbha Samprokshana fest at Yadadri from Feb 19 to 23

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

Commissioner of Endowments Sridhar has directed the officials concerned to make elaborate Maha Kumbha Samprokshana from February 19 to 23 of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Yadagirigutta, scheduled to be held from February 19 to 23.

On Monday, a coordination meeting was held at the Yadagirigutta Devasthanam office under the leadership of Endowments Commissioner Sridhar, District Collector M Hanumantha Rao, Additional Collector Veerareddy, and Temple Executive Officer Bhaskar Rao, along with other officials concerned.

During the meeting, the Commissioner emphasised that the Maha Kumbhabhishekam should be conducted in a grand manner, and the assigned works must be completed promptly. He directed the officials to make special arrangements for VIPs and that the devotees visiting the temple daily. He instructed officials to ensure security, essential facilities for

devotees, and protocol management without any lapses. He stressed the importance of maintaining cleanliness on the temple premises, properly managing queue lines, ensuring sanitation, drinking water facilities, and restrooms.

The police department was advised to make strict security arrangements, continuously monitor the situation, prevent untoward incidents, manage traffic flow, and provide proper parking facilities. The Health Department was directed to keep emergency medical services available, set up medical camps, and stock essential medicines.

To avoid inconvenience to devotees travelling from distant places, TGSRTC officials were instructed to run additional buses and prevent unauthorised roadside parking. Barricading should be arranged for devotees. The meeting was attended by ZP Chairperson Sobharani, Bhongir and Choutuppal RDOs Krishna Reddy and Shekar Reddy, ACP Ramesh, Mandal Tahsildars, MPDOs, municipal commissioners, and other district officials.

Burglars run amok in Bhadradi Kothagudem dist

PNS ■ BHADRADI KOTHAGUDEM

In the Cherla mandal of Bhadradi Kothagudem district, burglars ran amok, breaking into shops and houses here.

The thieves had gone burglary spree despite presence of CCTV cameras and police patrolling. Recently in the Bhadradi Ram Jewelry shop in Cherla Mandal, thieves broke in and stole more than Rs 6 lakh worth of gold ornaments. They also attempted to steal gold ornaments from one more shops too. However, the shop owner was vigilant and the thieves fled.

The police have been making all efforts to nab the burglars.

Cong govt lends support to cultural, religious events: Uttam

PNS ■ SURYAPET

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy participated in the Peddagattu Jatara in Durajpally in Suryapet district on Monday, offering prayers at the Lingamantula Swamy temple and taking part in the religious rituals. Later, he reviewed the extensive arrangements made for the smooth conduct of the grand festival and assured devotees that all necessary facilities were in place.

The Peddagattu Jatara, also known as Gollagattu Jatara, is Telangana's second-largest religious congregation after the Medaram Sannammas-Saralamma Jatara. Held once every two years, this five-day festival is of great spiritual significance, particularly for the Yadava community, which worships Lingamantula Swamy



Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy at Peddagattu Jatara at Durajpally in Suryapet district on Monday

as their deity. This year, the Jatara began on February 16 and will conclude on February 20.

During his visit, Uttam Kumar Reddy was welcomed by the temple committee members, who honored him with

traditional offerings. As part of the rituals, the Minister participated in the Bhairi (Bhery) drumming ceremony along with devotees in the temple premises. He later performed special prayers. He thanked Chief Minister A Revanth

Reddy for sanctioning Rs 5 crore for the successful conduct of the Peddagattu Lingamantula Swamy Jatara. He instructed officials to take special measures to ensure devotees do not face any inconvenience.

Speaking to media persons, Uttam Kumar Reddy said, "This Jatara, being celebrated since the 16th century, reflects our deep-rooted traditions and unites people in devotion. The Telangana government is ensuring that such grand religious festivals are celebrated with all necessary facilities," he stated. He directed officials to closely monitor the influx of devotees and ensure the smooth functioning of amenities such as temporary shelters, medical camps, and queue management systems.

Traffic management was a key focus during his review. With an estimated 20 lakh devotees expected, authorities have implemented traffic diversions on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada National Highway to prevent congestion. Additional police personnel and surveillance cameras have

been deployed for crowd control.

The Peddagattu Jatara witnessed an overwhelming response from devotees, with thousands offering prayers at the temple. One of the key events, the arrival of the 'Devara Petta', took place amid religious fervor. The 'Devara Petta' procession, carrying the idols of Lingamantula Swamy, Choudamma, and other deities, was accompanied by chanting, drum beats, and traditional dances, adding to the festival's spiritual grandeur.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said, "This Jatara is not just a festival; it is an emotion for the people of Telangana." He reiterated the government's unwavering support for Telangana's cultural and religious events. "Festivals like Peddagattu Jatara are an integral part of our identity.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TENDER NOTICE
Date: 17.02.2025
Name of the work: Sealed Quotations for (i) Supplying, fitting and fixing in position true to line and level elastomeric bearing, (ii) Manufacture and supply of Structural Decking Panel Galvanized steel (as per IS: 277) for metal decking for 1.2/1.25mm thick Galvanized sheet, (iii) Labour charges for erection & fixing of metal decking sheets, (iv) Providing and laying of compression seal expanding joints as per IRC SP-69. Start Date & Time for Receipts of Bids: 18.02.2025, 11.00 AM. Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bids: 25.02.2025, 05.00 PM. Name & Address of the Officer Call No.: EE, PD-NZ, GHMC, Cell No. 98959442013. Note: Detailed specifications and Conditions for Submission of Quotations can be downloaded from the website www.ghmc.gov.in. For further information contact AEE 7331189758. Sd/- Executive Engineer, PD-NZ, GHMC. P.O.No. 1002/PP/CL/INT/10024-24, Dt. 17-02-2025

NEW NALLAKUNTA BRANCH SHIVAM ROAD NEW NALLAKUNTA NALLAKUNTA, HYDERABAD
APPENDIX IV
[Rule-81(D) POSSESSION NOTICE (for immovable property)]
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Indian Bank, New Nallakunta under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (1)(c) read with Rule 8 and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 06.11.2024 calling upon the borrower **Mr. Gundu Balaramu** S/o G. Nooka Raju (Borrower: Mortgage/PLM 2-2-1330/195A, Shivam Road, New Nallakunta, Hyderabad-500044) With our **New Nallakunta Branch** to pay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 16,26,163.00 (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Twenty Six Thousand One Hundred Ninety Three Only) together with interest, cost & charges from 07.11.2024 till date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 and 9 of the said rules on this 19th day of February of the year 2025. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank for an amount of Rs. 16,26,163.00 (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Seventy Two Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Three Only) on 14.02.2025 and interest thereon from 15.02.2025 onwards. "We draw attention to the provisions of Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act and the Rules framed there under which deals with your rights of redemption over the securities".
DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
All that the north-west side flat No. M-2, in Mezzanine floor in the building known as "SRI RANGA COMPLEX" having plinth area measuring 1000 Sq. Ft., Excluding common area of 20% together with undivided share of land measuring 247.60 Sq. Yards, equivalent to 200.59 sq. mtrs and Premises bearing No 1-6-320 measuring 192.60 sq. yards equivalent to 160.53 sq. mtrs. Thus total land measuring 439 sq. yards situated at land/old bazar/Park land, Secunderabad, which is bounded by: Boundary: North: Open to sky, South: Baracade and Common area, East: Neighbour's flat No. M11, West: Open to Sky & Uma Millirium Complex.
Date: 15/02/2025 Place: Hyderabad Sd/- AUTHORIZED OFFICER Indian Bank

ACROSS THE STATES



Ex-CJI Lalit to appear before ONOE committee

Former chief justice of India U U Lalit will appear before the parliamentary committee, which is scrutinising two bills advocating simultaneous elections, on February 25 as the panel begins consulting experts and various stakeholders as part of its mandate, sources said on Monday. They said former Law Commission of India chairperson Ritu Raj Awasthi, a judicial member of Lokpal, E M Sudarsana Natchiappan, a senior advocate and former Congress MP who had headed in 2015 a parliamentary committee that favoured simultaneous polls, and IAS officer Niten Chandra, the secretary of the high-level Kovind committee, are also likely to share their views with the panel. The parliamentary committee's agenda for the February 25 meeting is briefly listed as "interaction with legal experts". The high-level committee headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind was constituted by the Modi government on "one nation one election" (ONOE) and it had in its voluminous report strongly battled for the concept.



Family of four found dead in apartment in Mysuru

A family of four members were found dead at an apartment here on Monday, police said. The incident took place in Vishweshwaraiah Nagar in the city. The deceased have been identified as Chetan (45), his wife Rupali (43), and their son Kushal (15) and Chetan's mother Priyamvada (62) they said. According to the police, in a death note recovered from the spot, it was stated that no one should be held responsible for the deaths and requested authorities to not trouble any of their family members for it. Chetan claimed that he was under financial distress since they had recently purchased two flats at Sankalp apartment and had taken loan for it. He further mentioned that he did not have the money to repay the loan which police suspect could be the reason for taking such an extreme step. Citing preliminary investigation, a senior police officer said that Chetan may have fed his family members with poison and killed them before hanging himself. "We suspect that he might have fed them poison and then smothered them. But this is only our suspicion and there is not clarity yet on the exact cause of death. We are awaiting autopsy and Forensic Science Laboratory reports to ascertain the exact cause of death," he said.



Sapkal to take charge as Maha Congress chief today

Harshvardhan Sapkal will take charge as Maharashtra Congress president on Tuesday in the presence of senior leaders, a party functionary said. He will take charge at an event organised at Birla Matoshri Auditorium, a party statement issued here on Monday said. Sapkal, who hails from Buldhana district, was appointed chief of the party's state unit last week after Nana Patole completed his four-year tenure. Sapkal takes over at a time when the Congress is on a low following its disastrous performance in the November assembly polls, in which it would win just 16 seats in the 288-member assembly. It had contested 101 seats in alliance with the Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP). His immediate focus would be the civic polls, which are due in several cities of Maharashtra since early 2022. Local body polls are likely to be held this year.

'NOT PARTY'S VIEWS'

Cong distances itself from Pitroda's remarks on China

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday distanced itself from its leader Sam Pitroda's remarks on China, saying they are not the views of the party and that China remains India's foremost external security and economic challenge.



initially NOT the views of the Indian National Congress," AICC general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

"China remains our foremost foreign policy, external security, as well as economic challenge. The INC has repeatedly raised questions on the Modi Govt's approach to China, including the PM's public clean chit to it on June 19, 2020. Our most recent statement on China was on 28th January, 2025," he said. "It is also extremely regrettable that Parliament is being denied an opportunity to discuss the situation and express a collective resolve to meet these challenges effectively," Ramesh said.

STATION HOLDING AREA, CROWD CONTROL MANUAL

Railway minister lists steps to prevent incidents

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Creating holding area at 60 stations experiencing high footfalls, a separate crowd management manual and raising awareness among passengers to not sit at stairs are among the measures being taken to prevent untoward incidents, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday.

These initiatives are being taken in the wake of a stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station Saturday evening which killed 18 passengers, according to official figures, and left several injured.

Interacting with mediapersons at the Rail Bhawan here, Vaishnaw said the Railways has identified 60 stations which normally receive a high footfall and decided to make permanent or temporary holding areas outside the platforms to regulate the flow of passengers to the stations. "Sixty stations such as New Delhi, Patna, Surat, Bengaluru, Coimbatore have been identified for creating a holding area to manage the



"Sixty stations such as New Delhi, Patna, Surat, Bengaluru, Coimbatore have been identified for creating a holding area to manage the flow of passengers inside the station. They will be allowed to enter the platform according to departure of their trains so that the station areas don't get overcrowded."

flow of passengers inside the station. They will be allowed to enter the platform according to departure of their trains so that the station areas don't get overcrowded," Vaishnaw said.

He cited the example of stations in Prayagraj -- where the Maha Kumbh is taking place -- where such holding areas have been created and flow of passengers regulated successfully so far.

Vaishnaw also said a separate crowd management manual will be created by merging all

existing provisions, and a Standard Operating Procedure will be developed to handle passenger rush during festivals and special occasions.

"We will have to make a comprehensive manual for crowd management," the railway minister said. Officials say the current crowd management norms are robust and efficient, but they are scattered in various circulars and communications of the Railways, bringing them at one place in a form of manual will help a lot.

According to the minister, raising awareness among passengers not to sit at stairs or at any place that can block the free movement of other travellers can also help in a big way to prevent incidents like the one which occurred at the New Delhi Railway Station.

"We cannot fine the passengers for sitting on the stairs. The only way is to create awareness is through the media that it can congest the necessary movement of other travellers," Vaishnaw said.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday reinstated Solan Mayor Usha Sharma in her post for the remainder of her tenure while terming her disqualification a case of "political goondaism".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh made its August 20, 2024 order absolute by which it had stayed her disqualification while terming her removal "a case of male bias".

"The interim order of August 20, 2024 is made absolute. Any interference with the order will invite consequences," the

bench said, as it adjourned the matter after a year. When senior advocate Devdatt Kamat, appearing for the respondents, tried to interject, the bench said it does not want to pass any strictures in the order at present, as it is a case of "political goondaism". Sharma's counsel submitted that her tenure will get completed next year and urged the court to make its interim order of last year absolute.

On August 20, last year, the top court while issuing notice

SC reinstates Solan's mayor

Terms her disqualification 'political goondaism'

on the plea of Sharma and former mayor Poonam Grover against the June, 2024 order of the high court upholding their disqualification kept in abeyance the fresh election for the post of Solan in Himachal Pradesh, till further orders.

"Meanwhile, the operation of the order dated June 10, 2024 disqualifying the petitioners as councillors of ward no.12 and ward no.8 of the Municipal Corporation, Solan, Himachal Pradesh as well as operation of the impugned judgment of the high court dated June 25, 2024 shall

remain stayed. Resultantly, the first petitioner shall be allowed to continue and perform her duties as mayor of municipal corporation, Solan, Himachal Pradesh till further orders," it had said.

The top court was also critical of the reasoning given by the high court while upholding the notification of June 10, 2024 disqualifying Sharma and Grover, who were councillors of ward nos. 12 and 8 of the civic body, respectively.

Both Sharma and Grover

were disqualified by the government under the provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1994 for defying party directions during the election of mayor and deputy mayor held on December 7, 2023.

Elections to the Solan Municipal Corporation established in 2020 are held on party lines.

The civic body has 17 wards and the first election for these wards was held in April 2021. After the election, the mayor and deputy mayor were elected for a period of two and half years as per the provisions of the Act.

36,420 women, 8,403 children went missing in Odisha in 5 years: Majhi

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A total of 36,420 women and 8,403 children went missing in Odisha over the past five years, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi informed the assembly on Monday.

Majhi said 421 women were trafficked to other states through middlemen, leading to the arrest of 453 people.

The police have been immediately registering cases on the basis of complaints and it has taken action to trace the trafficked women, he said in a written reply to the House.

During 2020-2024, a total of 1,417 women and 1,857 children who had gone missing were traced, the CM said.



Besides, the state government has also rescued 784 child labourers.

Elaborating on the steps taken to prevent women and child trafficking in Odisha, Majhi said 36 Integrated Anti Human Trafficking Units (IAHTUs) have been created.

IAHTUs have been made contact points to deal with such cases in Bolangir, Nuapada, Bargarh, Kalahandi,

Sambalpur and Jharsuguda, he said. Awareness campaigns to prevent trafficking cases are being organised at the police-station level. Police patrolling has also been strengthened in vulnerable areas like bus stands and railway stations, Majhi said.

Special training is also being provided to police personnel to identify, conduct investigation and avoid the recurrence of such incidents.

In another written reply, the chief minister informed that 6,437 cases of kidnapping/abduction of women were registered in different police stations of Odisha during 2024, and 413 people have been arrested in connection with these cases.

Chidambaram dubs Pradhan's NEP pitch as arrogance

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Monday termed as "peak of arrogance," Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's insistence on Tamil Nadu implementing the three-language policy for release of education funds to the state.

Chidambaram said Pradhan's arrogant comment that unless the state government adopts the three-language policy and teaches Hindi, it would not be released funds, showed that he neither knew Tamil Nadu's history nor understood its people's sentiments. Also, the union minister was not aware of the nation's Constitutional history and Tamil Nadu people, by showing unity, should oppose this arrogance, he said.

'Not a flighty idea at all'



PNS ■ PUNE

A 20-year-old student's ingenuity to reach his college in time for an exam by paragliding over a ghat in Maharashtra's Satara district came to the fore after a video of his feat went viral on social media on Monday.

First Year B.Com student Samarth Mahangde said the incident took place on December 15 and was necessitated after he realised late that he had his first-semester exam on Natural Disaster Management in a few minutes time. It helped that he knew paragliding operators in the area, said Mahangde, a resident of Pasarani village.

A video showed Mahangde taking a pilot-operated paragliding ride from Harrison's Folly, a flat plateau located about 5 kilometres before Panchgani on Wai-Panchgani road in Satara, to Kisan Veer College.

"I work at a sugarcane juice centre near Harrison's Folly. That day, at 2pm I realised I had a paper at 2:15pm. I forgot about it since the exam timings and date had been rescheduled a few times earlier. I knew road was not an option due to Sunday traffic and ongoing work in the ghat section and my college is 12 kilometres away," he said. "I knew paragliding operators in the area. One of them, Govind Yevale, asked a pilot to fly me to the college," the collegian said. "After wearing all the mandatory safety equipment, he and our pilot managed to land at an open ground near the college in exactly five minutes," Yevale said. Mahangde said he could answer his exam in time also because his friends had got his hall ticket, identity card and uniform. Kisan Veer College authorities confirmed about the exam and that Mahangde did appear for it. "But, we cannot confirm if he paraglided here," a college official said.

High-time NRIs empowered to vote from their locations: CEC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Outgoing Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Monday stressed the need to have a totaliser system to ensure confidentiality in polling station-wise voting patterns and said it is high time that NRIs are empowered to vote from their locations.

In his farewell address ahead of his retirement on attaining the age of 65 years, he also said consensus for remote voting mechanisms is must to facilitate

crores of migrant voters. Biometric authentication at polling booths should be tried to efficiently tackle impersonation of voters, Kumar, who demits office on February 18, said.

He said online reporting of political party expenditures has begun and must be made mandatory for better financial transparency and analytics.

On political promises, he said these must be backed by financial disclosures and courts need to facilitate early decision.



Unregulated social media algorithms pose a serious risk to elections worldwide and must be addressed urgently, Kumar

underlined and asserted that election management bodies need to develop capacity to counter mischievous, baseless and strategically timed criticism.

Casting doubt on outcomes after active and full participation in the process is undesirable, the outgoing head of the poll authority lamented.

"Technology has been a powerful enabler in our electoral processes, helping refine voter rolls, streamline operations, and engage citizens more effectively," he said.

1984 BHOPAL GAS TRAGEDY

Disposal of waste comes under SC scanner

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The disposal of hazardous waste of 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, which claimed 5,479 lives, near Indore came under the Supreme Court's scanner on Monday which sought responses from the Centre, Madhya Pradesh and its pollution control board.

The hazardous waste of around 377 tonnes of the now defunct Union Carbide factory was shifted to Pithampur industrial area in Dhar district, 250 km away from Bhopal and around 30 km from Indore. The top court took note of a plea raising the

seminal issue of right to health and the risk to the inhabitants of nearby areas, including the city of Indore. Highly toxic gas methyl isocyanate (MIC) leaked from the Union Carbide factory during the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, eventually killing 5,479 people and maiming more than five lakh others. It is considered to be among the worst industrial disasters in the world.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih agreed to hear a plea challenging the December 3, 2024 and January 6 this year orders of the



Madhya Pradesh High Court. The high court in its December last year order rebuked the authorities for not clearing the Union Carbide site

in Bhopal despite directions from even the Supreme Court and set a four-week deadline to shift the waste, observing that even 40 years after the gas

tragedy, authorities were in a "state of inertia".

It had warned the government of contempt proceedings if its directive was not followed.

On the night of January 1, the shifting of toxic waste began in 12 sealed container trucks for its disposal, an official had said.

Initially, some of the waste will be burnt at the waste disposal unit in Pithampur and the residue (ash) will be examined to find whether any harmful elements were left, Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department Director Swatantra Kumar Singh had said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Heart-wrenching

The New Delhi Railway Station stampede exposes administrative lapses and highlights the need for better crowd control

It is as heart-wrenching as it is unfortunate. The stampede at New Delhi Railway station has shocked the capital. At least 18 people, including five children, lost their lives, and over a dozen sustained injuries in a horrific stampede at the Station on Saturday night. The tragedy unfolded on the foot-overbridges connecting platforms 14 and 15, as a sudden surge of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj resulted in a deadly crush. The incident raises critical questions about mismanagement, infrastructural inadequacies and lapses in crowd control that led to the catastrophe. The primary trigger of the incident appears to be a confluence of factors, including excessive passenger load, misleading announcements and poor crowd management. The surge of pilgrims traveling to Prayagraj for the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela significantly increased the footfall at the station. Reports indicate that around 1,500 general tickets were being sold every hour. Sources suggest that a wrong announcement regarding a change of platforms may have led to confusion among passengers.



In the ensuing rush, some individuals slipped while descending the foot-overbridge stairs, triggering widespread panic. Besides, extended waiting periods for departing trains may have resulted in a bottleneck effect. While overcrowding was an expected challenge, poor planning and mismanagement turned it into a disaster. Given the predictable surge of passengers, railway authorities failed to deploy adequate personnel to regulate the movement of people. Despite previous incidents highlighting the risks of overcrowding, no significant upgrades had been made to ensure smoother pedestrian movement. Moreover, the response from railway officials and security personnel was reportedly delayed. A more robust system to alert and manage surging crowds could have prevented the incident from escalating into a full-fledged disaster. Could this have been prevented? Surely. Deployment of additional railway police and personnel during peak travel periods could have averted the disaster. Besides, real-time monitoring of passenger density using surveillance cameras and AI-based crowd control systems could have definitely helped in such situations. This stampede must jolt the authorities from their deep slumber as this is not for the first time such a tragedy has happened. Expansion and widening of foot-overbridges to accommodate high passenger traffic must be done on priority. Clear and accurate digital signage to minimise confusion is also very important. Besides, there must be a system to cap the number of the general tickets issued per hour, especially during mega events. While accountability is being fixed, the focus must remain on implementing long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies in the future. The railway authorities must ensure that infrastructure, security and operational protocols are robust enough to handle high footfall scenarios safely.

Moreover, the response from railway officials and security personnel was reportedly delayed. A more robust system to alert and manage surging crowds could have prevented the incident from escalating into a full-fledged disaster. Could this have been prevented? Surely. Deployment of additional railway police and personnel during peak travel periods could have averted the disaster. Besides, real-time monitoring of passenger density using surveillance cameras and AI-based crowd control systems could have definitely helped in such situations. This stampede must jolt the authorities from their deep slumber as this is not for the first time such a tragedy has happened. Expansion and widening of foot-overbridges to accommodate high passenger traffic must be done on priority. Clear and accurate digital signage to minimise confusion is also very important. Besides, there must be a system to cap the number of the general tickets issued per hour, especially during mega events. While accountability is being fixed, the focus must remain on implementing long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies in the future. The railway authorities must ensure that infrastructure, security and operational protocols are robust enough to handle high footfall scenarios safely.

PICTALK



A flock of ibis flying over a paddy field, in Nagaon

Delhi High Court reinstates fraud claims against Reliance

The Delhi High Court quashes an international arbitration award that had dismissed government claims of 'insidious fraud' and 'unjust enrichment' against Reliance Industries



PRASHANT TEWARI

The resounding victory of the Central Government's legal team, led by the Attorney General of India A.R. Venkatramani reinforced by the active participation of the eminent jurist and the former Attorney General of India K.K. Venugopal, under the astute administrative guidance of Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, in the Delhi High Court verdict against Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), has decisively dismantled allegations of favouritism levelled against the Modi government.

This landmark ruling categorically refutes opposition claims that the government promotes select business houses, reaffirming its commitment to transparency, fairness, and the rule of law in corporate governance and policy-making. In a landmark judgment dated February 14, 2025, the Delhi High Court delivered a decisive verdict in the case of Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), addressing long-standing allegations of crony capitalism and favouritism towards major industrialists by the current government.

This 79-page judgment not only exonerates the government from accusations of bias but also underscores the integrity of India's judicial system and the competence of its political and legal leadership. Background of the Case: The dispute centres around the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) executed between the Union of India and Reliance Industries Ltd. in 2000, about the exploration and extraction of natural gas in the Krishna-Godavari basin.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas alleged that RIL had engaged in "unjust enrichment" by extracting and selling gas that had purportedly migrated from fields operated by the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to RIL's adjacent block. The government sought compensation, contending that RIL's actions resulted in significant financial losses to the state exchequer. Details of Judgement: The Delhi High Court's single judge judgment in Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. examined the allegations of unjust enrichment, contractual breaches, and fraud against RIL, ultimately dismissing them due to a lack of concrete evidence.



The court upheld the findings of the international arbitration tribunal, reaffirming that RIL operated within the bounds of the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) and could not be held liable for natural gas migration beyond its control. However, the Division Bench of the Delhi High Court has quashed an arbitral award that had dismissed the Central government's claims against Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and its foreign partners. The government had accused the conglomerate of "insidious fraud" and "unjust enrichment" amounting to over \$1.729 billion by allegedly extracting natural gas from deposits beyond its entitlement.

The Bench, comprising Justices Rekha Palli and Saurabh Banerjee, overturned the ruling of a single judge, who had, in May 2022, set aside the Petroleum Ministry's allegations. The court determined that the international arbitration award dated July 24, 2018, which had favoured the RIL-led consortium, was "contrary to public policy" in India. This decision marks a significant legal setback for RIL, as it reinstates the govern-



THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS ALLEGED THAT RIL HAD ENGAGED IN 'UNJUST ENRICHMENT' BY EXTRACTING AND SELLING GAS THAT HAD PURPORTEDLY MIGRATED FROM FIELDS OPERATED BY THE STATE-OWNED OIL AND NATURAL GAS CORPORATION (ONGC) TO RIL'S ADJACENT BLOCK

ment's claims concerning unauthorized gas extraction. The ruling also strengthens the government's position in regulatory disputes within the oil and gas sector. With the arbitral award nullified, the matter may now proceed further in Indian courts, potentially leading to fresh legal battles over financial liabilities and resource allocation in the country's hydrocarbon sector. Beyond the legal nuances, the judgment serves as a crucial precedent for future contracts, emphasizing the importance of precision in drafting and adherence to arbitration mechanisms for dispute resolution. It underscores the independence of the judiciary in adjudicating disputes involving powerful corporate entities and government bodies, dispelling claims of crony capitalism.

The case also highlights the competence of the central government's legal representation, particularly the diligence of Attorney General A.R. Venkatramani and Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in defending the government's stance. It further reflects the abysmally woeful performance of the RIL legal team in defending the case. Furthermore, the ruling reassures investors about India's

commitment to the rule of law, ensuring that legal processes remain transparent and evidence-driven. By challenging the political narrative of undue favouritism towards industrialists, the judgment reinforces the integrity of India's governance, corporate regulations, and media responsibility in shaping public discourse.

Conclusion
The Delhi High Court's latest judgment in Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. is a testament to the robustness of India's legal system and its capacity to adjudicate high-stakes disputes impartially. It dispels allegations of governmental bias towards prominent industrialists, affirming that decisions are grounded in evidence and legal merit. The ruling also underscores the importance of adhering to contractual obligations and the role of arbitration in resolving intricate commercial conflicts. As India continues to navigate its path towards economic growth, this judgment reinforces the principles of fairness, transparency, and the rule of law as cornerstones of its democratic ethos.

(The writer is a prominent columnist and Public Policy Expert; the views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

US CRITICISES EUROPEAN LEADERS

Madam — At the 61st Munich Security Conference, American Vice President JD Vance left no stone unturned in reprimanding and threatening the European leaders. He has launched a monstrous attack on Europe, in which he has accused its leaders of failing to give free speech, restricting illegal migration, and living in fear of religious ideology. He has put the biggest threat to Europe's security on the European countries themselves. Along with this, he also said that the European countries do not pay the full price for their security. America will no longer provide security to Europe with closed eyes. This simply means that Donald Trump has indicated that if the NATO organisation has to be run, then it will have to be run on Trump's terms, or else America will leave that organisation. America has also indicated that it wants to see Russia back in the G-7 countries' organisation. The White House has already announced that it will impose additional tariffs on goods imported from countries around the world. Now the rest of the world, especially the European Union, will have to decide without any delay how they will learn to live without America. Before America leaves NATO, the campaign to expel it will have to be intensified. Also, every possible help will have to be given to Ukraine to save it from the clutches of Russian terrorism. Because Trump is completely determined to hand over the reins of Ukraine to the Kremlin.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

HOPES HIGH FOR TROPHY

Madam — This refers to your caption in Sunday Pioneer, "Rohit, Kohli lead Team India for Champions Trophy". Indeed, it was a brilliant century from skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli against Bangladesh in the ICC Champions Trophy opener while I occupied the studio box as a special guest from which I was witnessing the

Stampede at New Delhi Railway Station



The stampede incident at New Delhi Railway Station claimed 15 innocent lives, but it also serves as a warning that the time for change has arrived. Chaos, lack of crowd control and failure of security measures led to this tragedy. It is now essential that we learn from this incident and take steps to prevent such occurrences in the future. This disaster has made it clear that the railway must adopt modern strategies for

crowd management and passenger safety. The railway administration should anticipate potential crowds during major events and pilgrimages and make appropriate arrangements in advance. By utilising new technologies, entry and exit points should be better organised to ensure smooth passenger movement. The government has expressed condolences over the incident, and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav has ordered a high-level inquiry. However, beyond this, we must take proactive steps with a positive mindset to prioritise passenger safety. By improving traffic management, deploying adequate police forces and making the information system more effective, we can prevent such incidents.

R K Jain | Barwani

match. The entire box was surrounded by the players' family, and I can see all the cheers in Anushka Sharma and Rohit's wife.

The recent rule of restrictions has not permitted the player's family to join them for this tour. When my opinion about Rohit and Virat has been changing while watching them play, there came a strong pat behind my back, which brought me to reality. Oh, it all happened in my dreams that I woke up to my wife's call and went for a quick shower and to get ready to start at my office. Hitman and Kohli thus became the dream object in fans lives, and I am also one among those impacted much by their failures. One hopes that both will come good in the upcoming Champions Trophy.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

MSMES MUST REINVENT TO SHINE

Madam — The US's push for reciprocal tariffs, framed as a 'fair trade' corrective, has sent shockwaves through global markets-but for India's MSMEs

industry, this moment could be less about survival and more about reinvention. Critics argue that this move will spark a trade war, hobbling economic growth and benefiting no one. However, for India's MSME sector, this moment could be a catalyst for transformation. By upgrading to world-class standards at affordable costs, Indian MSMEs can tap into vast export markets and become more competitive, resilient and export-ready. This would require a multi-pronged approach, involving government incentives, technology transfers, and skill development programmes. By doing so, India can turn a potential trade threat into a transformative opportunity, ultimately boosting its economic growth and global trade prospects and proving that even in the midst of tariff wars, MSMEs can shine as stars of innovation and growth.

Shruti Sagar | Pune

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

India advances carbon market reforms following COP 29

India, already a leader in renewable energy, reinforced its commitment to climate action by proposing a unified carbon market

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan, on November 24, 2024. While key expectations regarding climate finance remained unmet, significant progress was achieved in carbon market regulations. A landmark agreement on carbon trading rules was reached, aiming to accelerate climate action by enabling countries to meet their emission reduction goals efficiently and cost-effectively. Under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the country initially aimed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emission intensity by 33-35% from 2005 levels by 2030, later revising this target to 45% in 2022. India has launched multiple initiatives to combat climate change. On the supply side, renewable energy generation helps mitigate carbon footprints, while demand-side initiatives like Perform-Achieve-Trade (PAT), star labeling, energy conservation building codes, and improved lighting solu-



tions further reinforce India's climate commitments. Existing frameworks, including Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) and Energy Saving Certificates (ESCs), serve as a foundation. These were introduced under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008 and have been successfully traded on Indian power exchanges. RECs drive renewable energy adoption by allowing obligated entities to purchase either renewable energy or its certificates. One REC equates to 1 MWh of renewable energy generated from sources like solar, wind, hydro, and biogas. This system benefits both electricity generators and buyers, ensuring environmental compliance. Similarly, ESCerts promote energy efficiency by enabling designated energy-intensive

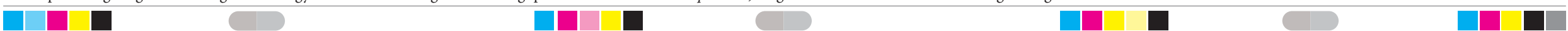
industries to either enhance energy savings or buy corresponding certificates. One ESCert represents a reduction of 1 million tonnes of oil equivalent energy. Currently, 13 key industrial sectors, including aluminum, cement, power distribution, and railways, participate in this program, covering nearly 50% of India's primary energy consumption. Since their inception, RECs and ESCerts have driven significant emissions reductions, saving over 73 million tonnes of CO2 through REC trading and preventing 106 million tonnes of CO2 emissions via ESCerts. Recognizing the need for a unified carbon market, India proposed a comprehensive system merging RECs and ESCerts into a single, internationally aligned framework. The regulatory foundation was set with the amendment of the Energy Conservation Act in January 2023, followed by the notification of the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme, 2023. The scheme designates the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission as the market regulator and power exchanges as trading plat-

forms, while the Bureau of Energy Efficiency oversees compliance mechanisms. India's carbon market will consist of two segments: a compliance market and an offset market. The compliance market will impose emission caps on obligated entities, allowing overachievers to sell surplus carbon credits to underachievers. The offset market will enable voluntary participation by non-obligated entities aiming to reduce their carbon footprints. Carbon credit certificates will be traded through a regulated bidding process. The transition from existing REC and ESCert markets to a unified carbon trading system is expected to be seamless, given India's well-established power exchanges and transaction mechanisms. With this development, India moves closer to integrating its climate action efforts into global carbon markets, reinforcing its commitment to reducing emissions and achieving long-term sustainability goals.

(The writer works with Indian Institute of Management, Sirmaur; views are personal)



ATUL AGRAWAL





FIRST COLUMN

RAISING GEN ALPHA AND GEN BETA

To ensure their well-being, parents must strike a balance between traditional values and modern approaches



SHAINY SHARMA

The 21st century has introduced new challenges and opportunities in parenting. As we raise Generation Alpha (born 2012-2024) and Generation Beta (born 2025-2039), it is crucial to adapt parenting strategies to their digital upbringing, rapid technological advancements and changing societal norms. Ensuring these children grow up healthy, happy, and disciplined requires a balance of traditional values and modern approaches. There is no denying that, unlike previous generations, Generation Alpha and Generation Beta are growing up with easy access to technology, which affects their lifestyle habits.

It is of utmost importance that parents/guardians take proactive steps to ensure their children's well-being such as providing balanced nutrition such as a diet rich in proteins, vitamins, and fibres while limiting processed foods and sugary snacks; reducing screen time and promoting physical activities such as cycling, swimming, and team sports to improve fitness and social skills; setting screen-free bedtime routines to ensure quality sleep, which is crucial for the cognitive and emotional development and encouraging children to spend time offline by engaging in hands-on activities like painting, gardening and DIY projects.

Not only these, but in an era of social media influence and fast-paced lifestyles, parents/guardians need to support their children by creating a strong emotional connection; encouraging resilience and a growth mindset; guiding them in reducing digital overload, and engaging them in mindful activities such as yoga, meditation, journaling, or simple relaxation exercises to help them cope with stress. Above all, what matters the most is the art of discipline. With instant gratification becoming a norm in the digital age,



parents/guardians must realise that these generations will grow up in an AI-driven world, requiring skills beyond academics. Parents/Guardians can help prepare them by encouraging critical thinking and creativity and providing problem-solving challenges, STEM activities, and artistic outlets along with proper guidance on responsible internet usage, cybersecurity, and online ethics followed by developing social skills in a hybrid world. Raising healthy, happy, and disciplined Gen Alpha and Gen Beta children requires a thoughtful blend of love, guidance, and adaptability.

Parents/Guardians must embrace new-age parenting by integrating digital awareness with traditional values while fostering emotional resilience and self-discipline. By prioritising wellbeing, education and strong moral foundations, one can ensure these generations grow into responsible, fulfilled, and future-ready individuals.

Also, by providing proper nutrition, encouraging physical and mental well-being, fostering social skills, and setting positive examples, parents/guardians can create an environment where children thrive for it is aptly said that a happy and healthy child is not just the result of luck but of consistent efforts, care, and understanding from those who nurture them. By promoting healthy habits, setting strong moral foundations, and nurturing adaptability, parents can equip their children for a fast-evolving world. Ultimately, a happy and well-rounded child is shaped not by chance, but by consistent love, guidance, and understanding.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Unlocking nature's secrets: A journey through India's forests

Nature is an open book, rich with stories waiting to be uncovered. There are intricate connections between land, life, and time, write BKP Sinha & Arvind Jha

Nature, in its boundless complexity, holds countless wonders and mysteries. A walk through the forest offers a unique opportunity to engage deeply with the natural world, observing its intricate details and uncovering its hidden stories. Every tree, rock, and animal track contributes to the landscape's rich history, revealing the dynamic processes that have shaped it over time. The towering trees, with their rings cataloguing centuries of climatic shifts and environmental changes, stand as silent witnesses to the passage of time. A noticeable absence of middle-aged trees, for example, often points to a past forest fire. These fires, while natural and sometimes devastating, selectively eliminate younger trees while leaving behind older, more resilient ones. India, with its diverse ecosystems ranging from coastal regions to mountain valleys, offers a unique opportunity to observe the intricate relationships between flora, fauna, and their environment. Even the soil beneath our feet, a mosaic of organic matter, testifies to the endless cycle of life and decay that sustains the ecosystem. The contours of the land, the steepness of slopes, the presence of valleys and ridges – these are not mere accidents of geography. They are the fingerprints of geological forces, millennia in the making. The Himalayas, Western Ghats, and Vindhya ranges are iconic examples of such geological artistry, showcasing the dynamic processes that have shaped the nation's landscape and influenced its biodiversity. The forest is a timeless classroom, where nature's lessons unfold with every step. But to truly unlock these secrets, requires more than a casual glance; it demands a mindful approach and willingness to slow down and truly engage with our surroundings. As you walk through the forest, you'll notice the forest floor is covered with a thick layer of leaves, twigs, and decomposing organic matter.

This layer, known as the leaf litter, plays a crucial role in nutrient cycling and provides a habitat for many small creatures. The type and distribution of vegetation provide insights into the region's climate, soil conditions, and water availability. Lush rainforests, like those in the Western Ghats and Northeast India, thrive in areas with abundant rainfall. These verdant ecosystems boast a rich variety of plant species, from towering trees to intricate understory plants, each adapted to thrive in the humid, water-rich environment. This dense vegetation supports a wide range of wildlife, contributing to the region's biodiversity and ecological stability.

In contrast, the arid deserts of Rajasthan present a landscape where life has remarkably adapted to survive with minimal water. Vegetation here is sparse, but highly specialized, with species like cacti, acacias, and thorny bushes dominating the terrain. These species are equipped with unique adaptations, such as water-storing tissues and deep root systems, allowing them to conserve and access water efficiently and ensuring their survival in such harsh conditions.

The intimate relationship between plants and their environment becomes even more evident when observing specific species in particular areas. For instance, in floodplains, trees such as sycamore, Gular, and ash Gurjan thrive in fertile, wet conditions where water and nutrients



accumulate. On the other hand, the hardy Casuarina is well-suited to coastal environments, where the salty conditions pose a challenge for many other species, including Karanj (Pongamia). Similarly, along riverbanks, trees like Jamun and Arjun flourish in the constantly wet conditions, highlighting how plant life reflects the local ecosystem. Just as plant life reflects environmental conditions, rock formations provide a window into the geological history and processes that have shaped the land. Sedimentary rocks, often rich in marine fossils such as shells, corals, and fish, indicate that the region was once submerged underwater.

These rocks may also display ripple marks or mud cracks, further supporting the presence of ancient water bodies. For example, the fossil-rich Shivalik Hills provide a glimpse into prehistoric times, showcasing the variety of life forms that once thrived in the area. The types of sediment and their layering can also offer insights into past climate conditions, such as periods of drought or heavy rainfall. For instance, fine-grained sediments suggest calm, shallow waters, while coarser sediments point to more turbulent conditions.

Igneous rocks, formed from cooled magma, reveal the area's volcanic history, while metamorphic rocks provide evidence of the intense transformations that occur deep within the Earth. Understanding the geology beneath the surface, which shapes the land, is equally important, and soil reveals much about this. For example, limestone regions, where rock weathering creates caves and stone pillars, typically have alkaline soils high in calcium. Conversely, granite-dominated areas, where rock breakdown leads to acidic soils, often develop wetlands due to poor drainage.

Soil colour offers further clues: Dark brown soil, rich in organic matter, supports diverse ecosystems; grey soil suggests wetter conditions; yellowish soil may indicate nutrient depletion. Dramatic shifts in soil colour often point to human influence. For example, in Karnataka and

Odisha, vibrant red and ochre hues reflect historical iron ore mining. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, white caps on the soil signal high salt levels from over-irrigation. Physical signs in the landscape—such as fissures or cracks in the soil—can indicate instability, caused by factors like erosion, seismic activity, or human intervention.

In hilly regions like the Western Ghats or Himalayas, slipping or bending tree bark may signal shifting ground, a clear indicator of potential soil movement. Recognizing these signs is crucial for the safety of campers and hikers. Water bodies, including rivers, lakes, and wetlands, are vital components of India's ecosystems and are deeply intertwined with the land's geology. Major rivers such as Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Godavari are true lifelines for the nation.

The Ganges River, revered as sacred, flows over 2,500 kilometres across northern India, supporting numerous aquatic and terrestrial species. Its waters irrigate fields that feed millions, and it is a critical source of drinking water for countless communities. Similarly, the Brahmaputra River, originating from the Tibetan Himalayas, meanders through Northeast India, sustaining rich floodplain ecosystems and supplying water for agriculture and hydropower.

The Godavari, often called the "Dakshin Ganga," flows through central India, nourishing one of the largest river basins in the country and supporting diverse habitats. India's wetlands, such as the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, span the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta and are a haven for Bengal tigers, crocodiles, birds, and other wildlife, while its mangroves protect the coastline from storms and floods. As we explore these natural habitats, subtle signs like paw prints, droppings, and other traces offer glimpses into animals' presence and activities.

Each animal leaves a distinct signature reflecting its unique anatomy and behaviour. For example, cats,

with their stealthy grace, leave tracks showcasing the soft pads of their paws, devoid of sharp imprints of their retractable claws, hinting at their elusive nature.

Rabbits, in contrast, leave bounding tracks with hind legs landing ahead of their forelegs, showcasing their hurried movements and vulnerability. Understanding these signs provides deeper insights into wildlife behaviour and habitat preferences. Like us, animals are drawn to places that offer the essentials of life: food, water, and shelter. A patch of trees followed by an open field and a water source, such as a lake or pond, indicates a popular spot for wildlife. However, animals in these areas are often cautious and aware of their surroundings.

They possess an innate ability to detect and avoid human presence long before we notice them, typically only breaking cover to make a quick escape. Birds, in particular, use vocalizations to mark territory and alert others to predators.

For instance, the sudden flight of pigeons on a quiet woodland path can trigger a group warning system, notifying nearby animals—deer, rabbits, and foxes—of a potential threat. Similarly, a chorus of noisy bird calls may indicate a coordinated defence against a predator, such as a crow mobbing an owl. Birds also emit sharp alarm calls, like the high-pitched "seet," specifically designed to warn others of a bird of prey overhead. It is in paying close attention to these subtle cues that we begin to truly understand the richness of the natural world. The next time we find ourselves amidst the whispers of the woods, let us listen closely.

The forest invites us to unlock its wisdom, learn from its resilience, and contribute to its legacy. By embracing the profound lessons found within the diverse elements of the forest, we not only enrich our own lives but also ensure that this invaluable library remains open for generations to come.

(The writers are former principal chief conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views are their own)



THE GANGES RIVER, REVERED AS SACRED, FLOWS OVER 2,500 KILOMETRES ACROSS NORTHERN INDIA, SUPPORTING NUMEROUS AQUATIC AND TERRESTRIAL SPECIES. ITS WATERS IRRIGATE FIELDS THAT FEED MILLIONS,

The rise of religious realty: How India's infrastructure push is transforming spiritual tourism

This emerging sector is transforming pilgrimage sites with upscale hospitality and commercial developments, meeting the needs of faith-driven travelers

The Indian economy has witnessed a significant push towards infrastructure, real estate and tourism, especially spiritual tourism especially in the 2025-26 Union Budget. The government's focus on urban redevelopment, affordable housing, and tourism-friendly policies has positioned India as a global hotspot for real estate and hospitality investments. Among the most prominent emerging trends is the rise of religious realty—an intersection of real estate, hospitality, and spiritual tourism, where projects are developed to cater to the growing number of pilgrims and faith-driven travellers.

With disposable incomes on the rise due to tax relief measures—such as no income tax



MAYANK JAISWAL

up to Rs 12 lakh under the new tax regime—India's middle class is set to invest more in homeownership and travel. Additionally, the introduction of the Rs 15,000 crore SWAMIH Fund 2 for affordable and mid-income housing will fast-track stalled projects, ensuring homebuyers see the fruition of their investments. Simultaneously, India's hospitality sector is poised for an

exponential rise, with 50 top-tier tourist destinations being developed with state partnerships, reinforcing the nation's status as a must-visit destination for both spiritual and leisure travellers.

The Rise of Religious Realty: A New Era in Development India's spiritual destinations have long been major attractions for domestic and international tourists. However, what was once a fragmented market with limited infrastructure is now being transformed into a sophisticated segment within the hospitality and real estate industries. The religious tourism boom has led to a surge in demand for premium hotels, commercial complexes, and mixed-use developments that cater to both pilgrims and high-end

travellers. The Solitaire Group has been at the forefront of this evolution. Recognising the immense potential in religious realty, it has strategically invested in prime pilgrimage destinations such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj, and Haridwar.

Its flagship development in Ayodhya—a luxury Taj hotel in partnership with the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL)—exemplifies its commitment to redefining spiritual tourism. The 300-key Taj Ayodhya, spanning 7.2 acres, will feature high-end villas, luxury accommodations, wellness facilities, and state-of-the-art banqueting spaces to cater to both pilgrims and travellers seeking opulent experiences.

Unlocking the Potential of Tier II and III Cities



The narrative of real estate growth in India is no longer limited to metro cities. Government-backed infrastructure projects, improved regional connectivity under the modified UDAN scheme, and growing investor interest are propelling the development of Tier II and III cities. Cities with religious and cultural significance are seeing an influx of premium residential and commercial projects, as

demand for quality real estate soars. The Solitaire Group has been a pioneer in this domain. Its developments in Prayagraj, including the city's first and largest township, are a testament to its vision of creating world-class urban spaces beyond metro hubs.

Through strategic land acquisitions and partnerships, the Group aims to bridge the infrastructure gap in smaller cities and deliver projects that enhance both living standards and economic prosperity. **Hospitality Meets Spiritual Tourism**

India's push for religious and spiritual tourism has been backed by key government initiatives, including hotels in pilgrimage hubs being added to the Infrastructure Harmonised Master List (HML), ensuring

easier access to low-cost financing, streamlined e-visa services and visa fee waivers for select international tourists to encourage global arrivals, and MUDRA loans for homestays to support budget travel and rural tourism.

This structured approach to hospitality growth has enabled developers like the Solitaire Group to envision and execute projects that cater to a diverse range of travellers. The focus remains on integrating world-class amenities into heritage-rich locations while maintaining the cultural and spiritual essence of these sites.

Building a Legacy of Excellence

Since its inception in 2005, the Solitaire Group has established itself as a leading player in real estate and hospitali-

ty. From residential developments in emerging urban centres to luxury hotels in religious destinations, its portfolio reflects its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and excellence.

With the Indian government's ambitious push for infrastructure, tourism, and real estate reforms, the opportunities in religious realty are boundless. Indian leading players would continue this transformative journey, crafting spaces that offer both spiritual fulfilment and contemporary luxury. The focus is on delivering exceptional living experiences and fostering economic growth in the communities that are being served.

(The author is the founder and CEO of Solitaire Group. Views expressed are personal)

'THERE'S A LOT TO COME': CHUM DARANG HINTS 'BIG' ON HER NEW CHAPTER

TEJAL SINHA
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Chum Darang's journey from the quiet corners of the entertainment industry to the bright lights of *Bigg Boss 18* has been nothing short of a revelation. Known for her quiet strength and raw authenticity, Chum Darang made an unforgettable mark on the show, captivating audiences with her fierce authenticity and undeniable presence. Born in Arunachal Pradesh, she wasn't just another contestant—Chum's journey was one of transformation, where vulnerability met strength and where every moment in the house revealed a side of her fans couldn't get enough of. From forming lasting bonds to standing up against criticism, she quickly became a fan favourite, leaving a legacy that extended far beyond the *Bigg Boss* house and into the hearts of viewers everywhere.

While we can just not adore her posts and reels of 'ChumVeer', we had an equally fun chat *The Pioneer* with her. So, let's take you through our exclusive chat with her.

Reflecting on her *Bigg Boss* Journey, she

With gratitude and confidence, actress and former *Bigg Boss* contestant Chum Darang opened up about her transformative journey on *Bigg Boss 18*, her evolving bond with Karanveer Mehra, her emotional struggles in the house and more

describes it as nothing short of fantastic. "It was more than I could ever imagine," she says, her voice filled with gratitude. For someone who describes herself as an introvert, this journey was not just about being a part of a reality show, but also about personal growth. "I'm someone who takes time to open up. But during the course of the show, I've tried to come out

of my shell and become more outspoken. That's been a great change for me."

Before she could make a mark of herself in the entertainment industry, She was crowned Miss AAPSU in 2010 and later represented India at Miss Earth India 2016 and Miss Asia World 2017. Later, she made a remarkable performance with her roles, in films like *Badhaai Do* and *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, though relatively brief, has also helped her gain recognition. But it was after her *Bigg Boss* appearance that the love and recognition from fans reached new heights. "Doing *Bigg Boss* was one of the best decisions I ever made," she reflects. "It gave me visibility and recognition that I never imagined. I'm really grateful for the love that has come my way."

Despite her initial reluctance to join the show, fearing judgment from the public, she is now thankful for taking that leap. "I was nervous at first, but everything turned out fine and I've gained so much from this experience," she adds.

Throughout her time in the house, she formed strong bonds, particularly with fellow contestant Karan. There was a lot of talk among fans about the chemistry between the two, with several speculating about a deeper connection. In fact, even post the show, their videos can make us go 'awwww'. Chum also shared a video in which Karan Veer Mehra could be heard confessing his love to her. He said, "Roses are red, violets are blue, I don't care about anybody but I love you." Chum was seen blushing and showing a thumbs-up sign after Karan's confession. In fact, Chum had also captioned her post stating, "Valentine's Day it was. Thank you, you." Chum, however, sets the record straight: "The bond I share with Karan is real. It's not just for the show. What we share is true and it will last beyond *Bigg Boss*. People will talk, but we know the truth," she says confidently.

Chum also shared a candid moment when she opened up about the emotion-



ality challenging moments in the house. The task with Vivian, which led to an emotional breakdown, was particularly tough for her. "It was one of the worst moments for me in the house. Both Shrutika and I went through panic attacks, and we cried a lot. It was very tough emotionally," she recalls, her voice growing somber. She appreciates the support she had from close friends like Karan and Shilpa, which helped her cope with the difficult time.

Going ahead, she also spoke out about

the recent incident where Elvish Yadav made derogatory and racist remarks about her during a podcast. She stated that disrespecting someone's identity and name is no fun. In a post that she had shared, she went on to emphasise that there is a line between humour and hate, and such behavior must not be tolerated. She also extended her support to the Northeastern community, standing firm against racism. "I stand with everyone who has faced racism. We all deserve respect, dignity and

equality," she shared with strength. Her response was met with an outpouring of support from her fans, who appreciated her courage in standing up for herself and for others who face discrimination.

Another controversy that Chum faced during her time on the show involved accusations that she played the "woman card" during some of the tasks. She is quick to dismiss these claims with a laugh. "I find it funny when people say that," Chum says, shaking her head. "I'm not the type of person to play any card. I was just being myself, and I think everyone knows that. People can say what they want, but I've lived those moments, and I know the truth."

Her emotional vulnerability was evident during her conversations with Vivian, who expressed regret after a task involving the two of them. In the aftermath of the task, Vivian organised a surprise party for *Bigg Boss* contestants, yet Chum was not invited. Some fans speculated about the reasons for her absence, but Chum clarifies, "It was a surprise party for Vivian and it was organized at the last minute. I spoke to Nouran after that, and we cleared things up. Everything is good now."

As for what the future holds, Chum has a lot to look forward to. She shares that she was working on a project before entering the *Bigg Boss* house and is now eager to resume filming. She hints at more exciting things ahead, although she's keeping some details under wraps for now. "There's a lot to come," she teases. "I'm excited about what's next."

Her journey from the *Bigg Boss* house to her growing fanbase has been a testament to her resilience, strength, and unwavering authenticity. Despite facing personal challenges, online criticism and even racism, she has proven time and time again that she will not be defined by negativity. For her, it's about embracing who she is, celebrating the relationships that matter, and, most importantly, standing up for what's right. "We all deserve respect and equality," she concludes with a smile, "and that's what I'll always fight for."



WHAT KARAN AND I SHARE IS REAL AND SOMETHING THAT WILL LAST AND WAS NOT JUST FOR THE SHOW. BOTH OF US KNOW ABOUT IT.

'A sharp and fearless cop'—now that's the role Tinaa looks to explore!

PNS| EXCLUSIVE

Tinaa Dattaa has always been a force to reckon with in the entertainment industry. From captivating audiences as Ichcha in *Uttaran* to reinventing herself with bold and unconventional roles, she has consistently defied expectations. Known for her versatility, she has seamlessly transitioned between television, reality shows and now, the ever-evolving digital space. With every project, she proves that she is not just here to play safe but to challenge the status quo and explore characters that push her boundaries.

Now, with *Personal Trainer*, the actress takes on one of the most intriguing roles of her career. Premiered on January 28, 2025, on Hungama OTT, this crime thriller plunges into the dark side of Mumbai's elite gym culture, unraveling

a gripping tale of love, betrayal, and secrets. Dattaa plays Neha Dharamrajan, a married woman whose life takes unexpected turns, pulling her into a world of suspense and emotional turmoil.

Talking about her character and the series, the *Bigg Boss* fame describes *Personal Trainer* as an intense and unpredictable thriller. "It's a gripping crime drama filled with suspense, passion and unexpected twists. My character is complex—she is a married woman caught in a web of emotions and secrets. The show keeps you guessing till the very end, and every episode unfolds a new layer of the story. It's intense, intriguing and something I've never done before, which makes it even more special for me."

For her, this project is more than just another role—it's a reinvention. Over the years, she has proven her ability to mold herself into vastly different characters, from innocent and vulnerable to fierce and rebellious. With *Personal Trainer*, she steps into a grey-shaded role that defies the conventional boundaries of a protagonist. "This is a character I haven't done before. There's love, betrayal and a lot of suspense surrounding her. She's married, but there's so much more to her than what meets the eye. The story keeps you guessing about why she does what she does and what ultimately happens."

This role also marks a significant shift in her on-screen persona. Sporting a new bob cut and a bold saree look, the *Fear Factor* star embraces a striking transformation that fans have loved. "Everyone has been telling me that this bold new

look suits me well! It's a very different avatar for me—especially with the bob cut and saree combination, something I've never done before," she says. But it wasn't just the look that challenged her; *Personal Trainer* also featured her first-ever intimate scene on screen. "I honestly thought I wouldn't be able to do it—I kept blushing and laughing and funnily enough, Gulshan was even shyer than me!" she reveals, adding that the director handled it with utmost professionalism, making her feel comfortable.

Her dedication to stepping out of her comfort zone is evident, not just in her choice of roles but also in her approach to fitness. As someone who strongly believes in discipline, she ensures that fitness remains a core part of her lifestyle. "I actually tell my fitness trainer to be strict with me—I might be the first client ever to say that!" she laughs. "I don't like to over-exhaust myself, but I've noticed that if you start skipping workouts, it becomes a habit. That's why I prefer a trainer who keeps me consistent. Thankfully, my kickboxing trainer does exactly that, and it helps me stay on track."

While her journey has been marked by diverse roles, she sees *Personal Trainer* as a stepping stone to even more unconventional projects. She admires performances that showcase strength and depth, particularly roles like Kangana Ranaut's in *Fashion*. "I'd love to play a strong, feisty, independent woman. Maybe even a sharp and fearless cop—someone who knows exactly what she's doing. That kind of role would be very exciting for me."

Her journey so far has been a testament to her relentless pursuit of artistic growth and with the digital space offering newer, bolder opportunities, she is ready to take them head-on. "OTT platforms give actors the opportunity to explore without being typecast or judged for a role. As an actor, this is my bread and butter—I am always hungry for good characters, whether it's in a series, OTT, or any other format."

On a personal note, Tinaa also reflects on what she values most in life, including relationships. "Respect and good communication are the biggest green flags for me. A guy should be well-spoken—bad tonality is a huge turn-off. Honesty and loyalty matter a lot, too. I believe in going the extra mile to keep my partner happy, but at the same time, it's important to understand each other's perspectives and be vocal. When you discuss things openly, a relationship only grows stronger." With *Personal Trainer*, Tinaa Dattaa has once again proven that she is an actress who refuses to be boxed into a single image. Whether it's on television, OTT, or any other platform, her willingness to experiment and evolve makes her one of the most exciting performers to watch.

Known for her versatility, Tinaa Dattaa has effortlessly transitioned from television to OTT, taking on roles that push the boundaries of her craft. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, actress Tinaa Dattaa opened up about her passion for portraying strong, unconventional characters that challenge her as an artist



My character in *Personal Trainer* is something I haven't done before. There's love, betrayal and a lot of suspense surrounding her. She's married, but there's so much more to her than what meets the eye. The story keeps you guessing about why she does what she does and what ultimately happens

Nurturing kids & empowering teachers to revolutionise education

Education is a word we hear every day. It's a topic we discuss endlessly, yet how often do we truly pause to reflect on its deeper meaning? Education is much more than imparting facts and figures; it is the foundation upon which societies are built, the key to unlocking our potential, and the roadmap to a brighter future. On this journey, we must rethink the purpose of education, particularly when it comes to nurturing the holistic development of children and empowering our educators.

True education transcends academic success. It's about preparing children to thrive in all aspects of life. Emotional intelligence, critical thinking, physical well-being and social skills are just as essential as math and science. While academic performance certainly matters, it is not the only indicator of future success. What truly matters is helping children become well-rounded individuals—capable of navigating life's challenges with resilience, creativity, and curiosity.

In today's fast-paced interconnected world, we can no longer rely on traditional rote learning methods. These outdated systems, which emphasize memorisation over comprehension, are ill-equipped to prepare children for the complexities of modern life. Today's learner needs more than just facts; they need to be given the freedom to question, explore and create. Inquiry-based learning, where curiosity leads the way, is a vital approach. Schools must foster an environment where students can take risks, learn from failure, and discover their true potential. For this to happen, however, educators must be given the right tools and the freedom to nurture this type of learning.

Teachers are the architects of the learning experience. They shape the way children think, feel, and interact with the world. But for teachers to have the maximum impact, they, too, must be empowered. Teaching extends far beyond curriculum delivery; it's about emotional intelligence,

adaptability, and the ability to integrate technology meaningfully into the classroom. Teacher training, therefore, must evolve—focusing not only on pedagogy but also on equipping educators with the skills that help them inspire and connect with their students.

At Birla Open Minds Education Pvt Ltd, we believe in holistic education that nurtures both students and educators. Our 'Soul Science' program builds emotional resilience, while LearnLeap empowers teachers with evolving strategies. Through Birla Brainiacs' unique hybrid model, we blend online and offline learning, ensuring real-world experiences that foster academic, emotional and practical growth.

Looking ahead, India's education system is at the cusp of transformation. As the country prepares to emerge as a global leader, our education system must evolve to meet the demands of the future. It's time for a paradigm shift—one that prioritises flexibility, personalised learning, and skill-based education. The future of education lies in unlocking the full potential of both students and teachers. It's about creating an education system that is dynamic, personalised and inclusive. In the classroom of the future, technology will empower learning, creativity will be nurtured, and emotional and social development will be prioritised just as much as academic success. But to achieve this, we must invest in both students and educators, providing them with the tools, training, and freedom to innovate and lead.

As we look toward this future, we must remember the timeless words of Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

(The author, Nirvaan Birla, is the founder and managing director of Birla Open Minds and Birla Brainiacs.)



what's brewing?

Dr Sri Prakash

Amitha Rani

Dr.Sripuja

Keerthi

Dr. Sonali Chaturvedi

Anitha

Bharati Jain

Dr Ashwini Amarender

The Maurya Foundation is organizing the Run for Hearing event to raise awareness about hearing health and support individuals with hearing impairments. Scheduled for March 2, 2025, at Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad, the event will feature a 2K Fun Walk, 5K Run, 10K Challenge, and a Virtual Run. The mission of Run for Hearing is to promote early detection of hearing issues, provide accessible hearing care, and inspire action toward creating a sound-aware community. Dr. Sri Prakash, an ENT Surgeon and Chairman of the Maurya Foundation, along with Dr. Ashwini Amarender, the Foundation's Organizing Secretary, were present at the poster launch event.

Villa Marie Degree College for Women has made waves in both basketball and swimming, securing outstanding positions in multiple prestigious tournaments this month. Organised by Gowtham Reddy, Villa Marie Degree College's basketball team clinched 1st place in this highly competitive event.

KANHAIALAL SHANTADEVI LOHIYA ROUND TABLE INDIA FTE SCHOOL BLOCK
MEDCHAL ZPHS GIRLS MEDCHAL MALKA GIRSI DIST, TELANGANA

The Kanhaiyalal Shantadevi Lohiya Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Lohiya Group, has unveiled a new school block dedicated to advancing girls' education. The newly constructed block at Medchal ZPHS Girls School, a beacon of hope for the community, features eight modern classrooms equipped with digital learning tools. Over 600 girls from underprivileged backgrounds will gain access to better educational facilities, a significant step towards removing obstacles that often hinder their academic growth.

The Second edition of the Hybiz.TV Realty Awards was held with grandeur. The event took place at HICC Novotel in Hyderabad. As part of the event, awards were presented to organisations and individuals who have made significant contributions to the real estate sector. More than 40 awards were distributed, and 12 individuals received the prestigious Legend Award.

Goozee Group presents Telangana Fitness Festival by Shafi Sami Classic with the support of Telangana Sports Chairman Shivasena Reddy. His presence on the show was to encourage the youth and promote the education of health. The top three finalists, Om Singh, Bodybuilding Winner From Telangana, Classic physique Haider Malik from Delhi, Men's Physique Shohaib from Telangana, are seen. Presence of Mittu Sai Fisher, Committee Chairman and Osman Alhajri, contested MLA Karwan are seen.

Vishal Mishra -IAS, MD, Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Ltd (a unit of Uttarakhand Govt.), Virender Singh Rana, Public Relations Officer, Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Ltd, Ramesh Iyengar, Regional Manager, Tour Times, have announced the First Bharat Gaurav Train to Char Dham in collaboration with Indian Railways. Tour Times is India's top-rated tourist train operator. This special Tourist Train covers Haridwar, Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath. The 16-day all-inclusive Indian Railways special train package tour begins on May 8th, 2025, and bookings are open.

FUN

ARCHIE

REMEMBER THIS NOTE? LOOKS VAGUELY FAMILIAR!

YOU'VE NEVER SETTLED UP! I DON'T YOUR WORD ANY GOOD?

SURE! HERE'S WHERE YOU'RE CONFUSED...

HENRY CROPELLI COMICS BOZEMAN

"I OWE YOU!" "NOT AN 'I PAY YOU!'!"

CALVIN AND HOBBS

MUCH AS I LOVE MY CHOCOLATE FROSTED CRUNCHY SUGAR BOMBS, THE BEST PART IS AFTER THE CEREAL IS GONE.

THAT'S WHEN YOU EAT THE LEFTOVER MILK THAT'S ALL SLUDGY FROM THE EXTRA SUGAR YOU ADDED.

SOMETIMES I EAT TWO OR THREE BOWLS OF THIS.

I CAN HEAR YOUR HEART RACING FROM HERE.

THEY MAKE THIS CEREAL WITH MARSHMALLOW BITS, TOO, BUT MOM WON'T BUY IT FOR ME.

GARFIELD

"A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP!"

OW!

TOE CRAMP! TOE CRAMP!

HE'S SUCH AN INSPIRATION

REALITY CHECK

yelp review ★★

Only gave it two stars as the food is tired and dry... always the same every day... The owners have a bit of an attitude... Also, I found a hair in my food

NO, I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THE HUCK YOU JUST SPOOKED IN YOUR MOUTH - I'M GIVING AWAY TOOTHPICKS.

I THINK IT'S HIS OWN HAIR - BUT STILL!

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6			7	8
9		10		
12	13		14	15
17			18	
19				

NANCY

PILATES STUDIO

SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

Rules

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

ACROSS

- Little by little
- Court case
- Country of the Spanish
- Second-hand
- A citrus fruit
- A health professional
- Grow plants in this
- A horse rider's straps
- Unlocks
- Joy

DOWN

- Lift up
- A toy person for playing with
- Soak up
- Memorise

SOLUTION

1	O	N	O	N				
N	I	N	H	A	D	O	R	
V	E	A	T	E	R			
I	N	S	I	T	E	R		
R	E	C						
I	R	O	N	B	A	N	A	
B	A	M	R	E	P			
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E	E	S	O	E	R			
P	R	I	S	O	N	E	R	

Producer's veiled criticism of Telugu actresses: Is Baby actress the target?

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

On Sunday night, the team of the Tamil film *Dragon* visited Hyderabad for the release of the Telugu version, titled *Return of the Dragon*. Pradeep Ranganathan stars as the lead actor, with Anupama Parameswaran and Kayadu Lohar playing the female leads. Ashwath Marimuthu directs the film. Telugu producer SKN attended the promotional event as one of the chief guests and his controversial comments about Telugu actresses have since gone viral. It seems that the producer's remarks were directed at *Baby* actress Vaishnavi Chaitanya, who worked with SKN in that film. While the producer did not name anyone specifically, Vaishnavi Chaitanya is the latest Telugu actress to have worked with him.

Anupama Parameswaran was absent from the event, while another female actress, Kayadu Lohar, was present. During his speech, SKN said that after the release of *Baby*, they received compliments from Pradeep Ranganathan and Ashwath Marimuthu. "We love non-Telugu-speaking girls so much more than Telugu girls. We realised what happens when we encourage Telugu girls in our films, so my director Sai Rajesh and I decided to encourage non-Telugu girls only," said SKN. He further added that Sai Rajesh had delivered a cult film and helped him become a cult producer.



to the fact that after the success of *Baby*, Sai Rajesh and SKN had announced another project with the same pair—Anand Deverakonda and Vaishnavi Chaitanya. However, that film never materialised and the same pair is now working with another production house, Sithara Entertainment, on a new project. It's possible that this situation led to SKN's comments, as Vaishnavi may not have provided the necessary dates for his film.

The exact reasons remain unknown, but SKN's controversial statements about Telugu actresses have sparked a wide debate. Interestingly, SKN's other film *Taxiwala*, featuring Vijay Deverakonda, also starred a Telugu actress, Priyanka Jawalkar. *Return of the Dragon* is set to release on February 21.

It appears that the producer's remarks were indirectly aimed at Vaishnavi Chaitanya, especially since he referred to a "cult film," which likely refers to *Baby*. The reasons behind SKN's comments remain unclear, but some speculate it may relate

“ WE LOVE NON-TELOGU-SPEAKING GIRLS SO MUCH MORE THAN TELUGU GIRLS. WE REALIZED WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ENCOURAGE TELUGU GIRLS IN OUR FILMS, SO MY DIRECTOR SAI RAJESH AND I DECIDED TO ENCOURAGE NON-TELOGU GIRLS ONLY ”



Thandel earns ₹100 crore: True or hype? Industry weighs in

The Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi starrer *Thandel* was released on February 7. Directed by Chandoo Mondeti, the film is produced by Bunny Vas of Geetha Arts and presented by top producer Allu Aravind. The makers released a poster claiming that *Thandel* grossed Rs 100 crore, marking the first time an actor from the Akkineni family has entered the Rs 100 crore club. "We promised, we did it," said Bunny Vas on his social media, sharing the poster celebrating the film's Rs 100 crore milestone. However, this has sparked a heated debate within the industry and trade circles. While *Thandel* is considered a decent hit with good collections in the first three days, its earnings took a significant dip from the fourth day onward, although it is still holding well at the box office. Before the film's release, Bunny Vas promised to deliver Naga Chaitanya's first Rs 100 crore film. As promised, he announced that the film had grossed this amount on Sunday, but some trade analysts argue that the collections being reported

are inflated. The film has been a major disappointment overseas, yet the makers have claimed it has collected worldwide. "By reporting these inflated figures, the producers are inviting unnecessary risk. These statements posted from the official handles of the producer could attract the attention of IT officials," said another producer, who wished to remain anonymous. The film didn't receive rave reviews, with the general consensus being that the talk was average. Some critics felt that the second half of the film dragged on, particularly in the emotional scenes set in the Pakistan jail, where the director failed to deliver the expected emotional depth. The director himself admitted in a latest interview that due to censor issues, he had to remove several scenes, which resulted in less emotional impact. It has become a common practice for filmmakers to add extra crores to the reported collections to create hype around the film and impress the lead actors, said one producer. The announcement of Rs 100 crore collections on the tenth day is seen by trade analysts as premature, further fueling the debate. Sai Pallavi, who is a huge star with a massive fan base in the Telugu states, also contributed to the film's audience, as many fans watched *Thandel* for her.

Ram Charan undergoes look test for Sukumar's next



Ram Charan is currently shooting for his film with director Buchi Babu Sana, having already completed two schedules. Janhvi Kapoor is the female lead in this film. After completing this project, Ram Charan will once again collaborate with top director Sukumar. The film was officially launched some time ago. According to a source, Ram Charan is now undergoing a look test for Sukumar's film.

"Though there is still some time before the new film with Sukumar begins, the director wanted some sketches of Ram Charan with a beard, so they are currently conducting the look test," said a source. Mythri Movie Makers is producing the film, which is tentatively titled *RC17*. Sukumar is planning to make this film on a large scale. "The makers are planning to release the film directly in Hollywood, so they are looking to tie up with a production house there," added the source.

Sukumar is riding high after the success of his recent blockbuster *Pushpa 2* and is now aiming for something even bigger with this Ram Charan film, according to the source. The look test is currently underway and another one will be conducted once Charan removes his beard, the source further revealed.



Chiranjeevi's *Vishwambhara* introduction song features Mega Family cameos

Chiranjeevi is currently shooting for the introduction song of his film *Vishwambhara*, directed by Mallidi Vassishtha. The film's shoot is almost complete, with the exception of this introduction song, which is now being filmed in Hyderabad on a specially erected set. In an exciting development, two actors from the Mega family, Sai Dharam Tej and Niharika Konidela, will make cameo appearances in this song.

According to a source, both actors will be seen dancing alongside Chiranjeevi in the song. The lyrics of the song are reportedly centered around Rama, Lakshmana and Bharath, highlighting their bonding. At a particular moment, Sai Dharam Tej and Niharika will make their entry into the frame, as per the source.

Niharika, in a recent social media post, subtly mentioned this shooting. *Vishwambhara* is a fantasy-based film, with Mega Star Chiranjeevi playing the lead role. Bollywood actor Kunal Kapoor will appear as the antagonist.

After many years, MM Keeravani is providing the music for a Chiranjeevi film. Trisha plays the female lead and several other actresses will play key roles in the film. Rao Ramesh, the versatile and talented actor, also has an important role. The teaser of the film was released a few months ago but received a lot of criticism for its use of subpar computer graphics.



Ravi Teja teams up with director Kishore Tirumala for new film

Ravi Teja is currently busy shooting for the film *Mass Jathara*, which is directed by debutant Bhanu Bhogavarapu. The film is set to hit the screens this coming May. Following this, reports suggest that Ravi Teja has joined hands with director Kalyan Shankar of *MAD* fame. Now, according to a source, Ravi Teja is also working with director Kishore Tirumala, known for Nenu Sailaja. Kishore's last film was *Aadavallu Meeku Joharlu*, which was released in 2022. After a long break, Kishore is now collaborating with Ravi Teja for a new project.

The source also revealed that Ravi

Teja initially wanted to work on both films simultaneously, but the Kishore Tirumala film will release first. The producer for this film has not yet been finalised, but the details are expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, Ravi Teja is pinning his hopes on *Mass Jathara*, as he is in need of a successful break. His last four films were failures at the box office and the actor is looking for a solid hit.

He hopes that debut director Bhanu will provide him with that opportunity. Regardless of the outcome of *Mass Jathara*, Ravi Teja will continue working with directors Kishore Tirumala and Kalyan Shankar for his upcoming projects.

Bhagyashri Borse continues to shine with major film projects in her kitty



Typically, when a female actress makes her debut in a film that flops, filmmakers tend to overlook her for future projects. However, this is not the case for Bhagyashri Borse, who made her debut in *Mr Bachchan* opposite senior actor Ravi Teja. Directed by Harish Shankar, the film was a huge disaster at the box office, but Bhagyashri's performance garnered significant attention and success.

Following the film's release, Bhagyashri quickly signed several projects. She is currently starring opposite Vijay Deverakonda in a film directed by Gowtham Tinnanuri. Additionally, she has been paired with Malayalam superstar Dulquer Salmaan in the film *Kantha*, directed by Selvamani Selvaraj, with Rana Daggubati producing.

With these exciting projects already in her portfolio, Bhagyashri has now landed another prestigious role. According to sources, she has been signed on to star opposite Tamil superstar Suriya in a film directed by Venky Atluri. Sithara Entertainment is producing the film, which will be released in multiple languages. This marks another significant project for Bhagyashri in her growing career.

The actress is also working on another Telugu film with Ram Pothineni, directed by P Mahesh Babu, known for *Miss Shetty Mr Polishetty*. The shooting is currently underway near Rajahmundry. Despite her debut film's failure, Bhagyashri is on a roll with a series of exciting and high-profile projects. It seems she has quickly become one of the most in-demand actresses in the South and it won't be long before she is considered among the top actresses in the industry.

