

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
 While Andhra Pradesh is openly diverting Krishna waters, the Telangana Government is merely watching silently. Revanth Reddy, Chandrababu Naidu, the Congress and the BJP are working against Telangana's interests. Uttam Kumar Reddy was merely reading from a script given to him, without understanding the gravity of the situation. Modi and Chandrababu intimidated Uttam. So Congress leaders were afraid to question the BJP's role in the water crisis
 - Jagadish Reddy, BRS MLA

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 Published From: HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA

EAM stresses the need to maintain G20 integrity 5

INDIA-US TRADE PACT WILL BE MOTHER OF ALL DEALS: GOYAL 8

Return of the Dragon finds its strength in the second HALF P11

DON'T MISS...
GHMC seals iconic Banjara Hotel
 The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) on Friday sealed the iconic Banjara Hotel (formerly Taj Banjara) due to non-payment of property tax amounting to Rs 1.43 crore, pending for the last two years. While the hotel management has yet to issue a statement, a GHMC official confirmed that the hotel owner paid Rs 55 lakh on Friday morning and assured that the remaining amount would be cleared before March 10. Last ...

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Vintage cars turn heads, bring smiles
 It was nothing short of a history lesson on wheels as classic, pristine cars took over the streets of Delhi on Friday during the 11th edition of the '21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance', showcasing a regal collection of rare cars that left even the finest, modern, high performance cars behind by a margin. The annual heritage show, flagged off by Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat at India Gate, featured over 100 vintage cars and 50 motorcycles - from iconic models such as the exquisite...

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Barytes, mica, quartz are 'major' minerals
 The government on Friday said that it has changed the classification of barytes, feldspar, mica and quartz into the category of major minerals. This move would pave the way for an increased exploration and scientific mining of such resources that are primary source of many critical minerals. Earlier, these were classified as minor minerals. "The Ministry of Mines wide gazette notification dated 20th February, 2025 has shifted minerals Barytes, Feldspar, Mica and Quartz from the list of minor minerals..."

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Gill gives India confidence
 Shubman Gill has an invincibility cloak hung around his shoulder in ODIs these days. Conditions and oppositions do not feature in his set-list. After taking a dominant avatar against England recently at home, Gill faced a different challenge against Bangladesh in India's Champions Trophy (CT) opener in Dubai on Thursday night. The pitch was sluggish and the bowlers consistently probed for weakness. But Gill beat both to notch up his eighth ODI hundred that led India to a six-wicket victory....

-SPORTS



KCR helped YSR divert water to Rayalaseema: CM

Dares BRS, BJP to debate on governance • Addresses public meeting at Narayanpet

PNS ■ NARAYANPET

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy launched a scathing attack on the BRS and the BJP while addressing the Praja Palana-Pragati Baata public meeting in Narayanpet on Friday. He accused KCR of neglecting Palamuru for a decade and blocking critical irrigation projects like the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme. Revanth asked why the Palamuru region had remained dry under BRS rule and blamed KCR for abandoning projects that could have

"Who stopped KCR from completing the Palamuru project in the last 10 years? Why was the Makthal-Narayanpet-Kodangal project scrapped? Just because I fought for it?" he asked, accusing BRS of deliberately stalling the region's development

transformed the district's agricultural landscape. "Who stopped KCR from completing the Palamuru project in the last 10 years? Why was the Makthal-Narayanpet-Kodangal project scrapped? Just because I fought for it?" he asked, accusing BRS of deliberately stalling the region's development. The Chief Minister said that KCR helped YS Rajasekhara Reddy to divert Krishna waters to Rayalaseema and later remained silent when Jagan Mohan Reddy continued the practice.

"KCR and Harish were irrigation ministers for 10 years. If Telangana lost Krishna waters, who else is responsible?" he asked, accusing the KCR family of receiving kickbacks for allowing the diversions. Throwing an open challenge, Revanth dared the BJP and the BRS for a debate on governance records. "I am ready to debate 12 years of Modi's rule, 10 years of BRS and 12 months of Congress governance. Will Kishan Reddy and Sanjay represent the BJP? Will KCR come or send his son and nephew?" he challenged.

IPS officers Anjani Kumar, Bisht, Mohanthy transferred to AP

Union Home Ministry issues orders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has issued orders relieving senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officers Anjani Kumar, Abhilasha Bisht and Abhishek Mohanty from their current posts in Telangana. The officers have been directed to report to their home cadre Andhra Pradesh. Anjani Kumar, a 1990-batch officer, had served as the Director General of Police in Telangana and is currently the Chairman of the Telangana State Road Safety

Authority. Abhilasha Bisht, a 1994-batch officer, has been serving as the Director of the Telangana State Police Academy. Abhishek Mohanty, a 2011-batch officer, has been the Commissioner of Police in Karimnagar.

The directive from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs follows a review of cadre allocations by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). The DoPT had earlier rejected the requests of these officers to remain in Telangana and had directed them to join the Andhra Pradesh government service. The officers are expected to report for their new posts in Andhra Pradesh on Saturday.



Govt faces Rs 26,050 crore deficit, BRS cries admin failure

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS accused the Congress government of fiscal mismanagement after Telangana recorded a staggering revenue deficit of Rs 26,050 crore by the end of January 2025. This is in sharp contrast to the projected revenue surplus of Rs 297.42 crore put the Congress in the spotlight, with BRS leaders terming it a "disastrous governance failure." Blaming the Congress for pushing Telangana into a financial crisis, the BRS said that the government was now resorting to spreading lies against their party to divert public attention. "Instead of admitting incompetence, the Congress government is

busy engaging in gossip and baseless allegations against the BRS," the party stated. According to the monthly key indicators for January 2025, the state's fiscal deficit has ballooned to Rs 58,586 crore, far exceeding the budgeted target of Rs 49,255 crore. The revenue deficit stands at a shocking 8,758.83%, raising serious concerns about the state's financial health. BRS leaders criticised the Congress for failing to manage revenue receipts, pointing out that the state's total revenue stood at Rs 1,23,815.60 crore, which is only 55.96% of the budgeted target of Rs 2,21,242.23 crore.

Lawyer of KCR & Harish raises Rajalingamurthy's death in HC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court held a hearing on Friday on petitions filed by former Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu and former Minister T. Harish Rao in the Medigadda Barrage sinking case. The lawyer of K. Chandrababu Naidu and Harish Rao brought the death of social activist Rajalingamurthy's death to the notice of the High Court in connection with the case regarding

'Cong leaders planning to loot Rs 50,000 cr through LRS'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said that Congress leaders have devised a scheme to loot Rs 50,000 crore in the name of the Layout Regularisation Scheme (LRS). He urged people not to pay any money for LRS, reminding them that during the last elections, Congress leaders had promised to regularise lands free once they came to power. He asked why the Congress is



now trying to collect money despite their promise not to do so. Sanjay released video clips of statements made by the current Chief Minister and then-PCC president Revanth Reddy, Bhatti Vikramarka, Uttam Kumar Reddy and Seethakka during the 2023 Assembly elections. He demanded that the Congress should fulfil its promise to implement LRS free of cost. Otherwise, he warned that the government would be forced to comply due to public pressure.

Koneru Konappa bids goodbye to Cong, backs BSP candidate

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A shock to the ruling party on Friday before the MLC elections as former Sirpur Kagaznagar MLA Koneru Konappa announced his resignation from the Congress. Konappa made it clear that he will not join any party and would remain independent. Addressing the media, Konappa said that he had quit the BRS due to BRS leader RS Praveen Kumar's comments. He said that he had

never criticised the BRS and its chief KCR. He announced that he would support BSP candidate Prasanna in the MLC elections. It may be recalled that Konappa joined the Congress on March 6, 2024, in the presence of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. It may also be recalled that Konappa won from the BSP in the 2014 elections and later joined the BRS. Konappa won the 2018 elections from the BRS. However, he lost the elections in 2023 to BJP candidate Palvai Harish Babu.

Senate confirms Kash Patel as FBI director

PNS ■ NEW YORK

New FBI director Kash Patel has vowed to "rebuild" trust in the bureau as he becomes the first Indian-American to lead the country's premier law enforcement agency after being confirmed by the US Senate. The Republican-led Senate narrowly voted to confirm 44-year-old Patel on Thursday. The Senate voted 51 to 49 to confirm Patel. Two Republicans, Susan Collins and Lisa Murkowski, voted against his confirmation.



tribution against Trump's perceived political enemies. In his confirmation hearings, Patel also denied keeping a ed Trump as "criminal gangsters". After his confirmation, Patel posted on X, "I am honoured to be confirmed as the ninth Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Thank you to President Trump and Attorney General Bondi for your unwavering confidence and support." "The FBI has a storied legacy—from the "G-Men" to safeguarding our nation in the wake of 9/11. The American people deserve an FBI that is transparent, accountable, and committed to justice. The politicisation of our justice system has eroded public trust—but that ends today. My mission as Director is clear: let good cops be cops—and rebuild trust in the FBI," he said.

Wife exposes GHMC official's secret affair

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Joint Commissioner Janakiram was allegedly caught red-handed by his wife in an extra-marital affair. This incident took place in Warasiguda where he had reportedly been staying with the woman for the past few days. Janakiram's wife, Kalyani, became suspicious after he stopped coming home regularly. She decided to keep an eye on his movements and eventually caught him in the act. Enraged, she, along with a group of members allegedly assaulted both of them. Kalyani also claimed that wherever Janakiram was posted, he would engage in illicit affairs with women in his office. Following the incident, Warasiguda Police arrived at the location and took both individuals into custody. The case is being investigated.

Rs 3,000 cr for SC, ST job schemes in budget: Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu reaffirmed the TG government's commitment to social welfare, emphasising that funds would not be a constraint for implementing welfare schemes. He directed officials to ensure the effective execution of important programmes, particularly self-employment schemes for SC and ST youth, within the next two months. Chairing a pre-budget review meeting with officials from SC, ST, BC, and Minority Welfare departments at the secretariat on Friday, Bhatti criticised the BRS government for neglecting self-employment programmes for a decade. He asked officials to implement these schemes with the budget allocation of Rs 3,000 crore and to prepare detailed plans for their execution. Highlighting problems in welfare hostels and residential schools, Bhatti stressed the need for timely payment of rent and diet charges. He sought details of pending bills and directed offi-



cial to coordinate with the Finance Department for their immediate clearance. He also insisted on regular visits by ministers, MLAs, and senior officials to welfare hostels and residential schools, and asked departments to create schedules in advance and ensure the visits are effectively followed up. Discussing the Sub-Plan Act, Bhatti directed officials to track funds due to SC and ST departments from other government departments and ensure their proper allocation. He also called for the timely submission of utilisation certificates for Central schemes to facilitate faster fund disbursement from the Centre.

Maha Kumbh & police - a revelation of transformation

I will be honest. I am an optimist. I believed this transformation was possible. Yet, I was sceptical. If not about the change itself, at least about the timeline. I always thought it would happen in some distant future. Not right now. And that the change itself would be very gradual. The challenges are numerous. The impediments are wide-ranging, spanning social, political, economic, and historical circumstances. What I experienced, read in the media, and heard from others only reinforced my scepticism. I would have lost hope long ago if not for my optimistic nature and tenacious faith in our nation. A 24-hour visit to the Maha Kumbh was all it took to shatter and dissolve my scepticism. I am talking about the police, who stood out in the crush of humanity in Prayag.

In a flash, gone was the image of the police as a force out to lord over civilians. A force created in its present form by our past colonial masters predominantly to control Indians, which ethos it so stubbornly hangs on to. A force to be feared and avoided if possible. Amidst the sea of humanity flowing towards the confluence of holy rivers to take a dip were the Uttar Pradesh police working tirelessly and patiently against humongous odds to make every pilgrim's visit as comfortable, hassle-free and memorable as possible. And that transformation of the UP Police - from a force that controls to one that serves with compassion - was a sight to behold. While the attitudinal change itself was a shocker, its significance grows manifold when we realise the unprece-

The drastic improvement in Law and Order in a few years alone sets the Uttar Pradesh Police apart and deserves our kudos. The UP Police has outdone itself with Kumbh. It has shown that the same force can excel at driving fear among criminals while serving citizens with a humane, responsive, and considerate attitude.

ented odds under which the police served. This year's Kumbh, being a 144-year event, has already seen tens of crores of Hindus take a dip over the past five weeks at the Triveni Sangam in Prayag. Most days, the pilgrim count crossed ten million (one crore), many times more than Prayagraj's population, which is estimated to be less than 15 lakhs (1.5 million). Put another way, devotees arriving daily at Prayag outnumber the

entire population of countries like Sweden, Portugal, and Greece. A floating population like this, unprecedented anywhere in the world, obviously puts unimaginable stress on every civic amenity, from transportation, shelter, water, sanitation, and health to security, resulting in unparalleled stress to the personnel handling those services. What compounds the police's challenge is that, apart from security and orderly



KISHORE POREDDY

crowd management, every area of Kumbh operations adds to their burden. Be it traffic jams that extend hundreds of kilometers or overwhelmed sanitation or water services, every one of them has the potential to turn into a security issue, which the

police need to address. Compounding the stress is the unbroke, relentless flow of devotees 24x7 for an extended period. Even cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Paris or New York are unused to this kind of continuous activity through day and night. There is no denying that departments like health, sanitation, transport, and others perform under similar constraints as the police. But their personnel are accustomed to delivering services. It is not just the performance, which by itself is praiseworthy, but the concurrent transformation in the police's ethos that is significant. No visitor to Kumbh had complaints about Police behaviour. None of the usual highhandedness one has grown to expect from the police, especially under stress, is to be seen, much less

experienced. No complaints of corruption or harassment were reported, even in the media. The Uttar Pradesh Police is already well known throughout India for transforming the Law and Order situation in the state under the Bharatiya Janata Party's rule headed by Chief Minister Yogi. Gone are the days of Jungle Raj, when Bahubalis ruled. Gone are the days when communal and casteist considerations dominated regular police work. Gone are the days when women felt insecure leaving their homes after sunset. Gone are the days when criminals with multiple arrest warrants against them roamed freely without an iota of fear. Now, the criminals fear the Uttar Pradesh Police and not vice versa. The drastic improvement in Law and Order in a few years

alone sets the Uttar Pradesh Police apart and deserves our kudos. The UP Police has outdone itself with Kumbh. It has shown that the same force can drive fear among criminals while serving citizens with a humane, responsive and considerate attitude. While many commissions and committees have presented voluminous reports on Police reforms, Kumbh and the UP Police have proved that under purpose-driven leaders like Yogi, backed by strong political will and the necessary technical, financial and logistic support, the police in India can make giant strides in Law and Order while treating citizens not as subjects but like the true masters they are in a democracy. Hats off to Chief Minister Yogi and the UP Police. (The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

'Bringing BJP to power in TG at least once is our goal'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said that all surveys conducted for MLC elections predict a clear victory for BJP-supported candidates. He called on BJP workers to demonstrate their strength in these elections. He also declared that if the BJP's MLC candidates are elected in this election, the party will take responsibility for ensuring their victory as public representatives in the local body elections. In the context of MLC elections, a BJP 'Pachhis Prabhari' (one in-charge for every 25 voters) meeting was held on Friday at the Nandan Gardens in Peddapalli district headquarters. The meeting, presided over by District President Sanjeev Reddy, was attended by Union Minister Bandi Sanjay, BJP MLA Venkata Ramana Reddy, former MLAs Chintala



Ramachandra Reddy, Kashipet Lingayya, Gujjula Ramakrishna Reddy, BJP teacher and graduate candidates Malka Komrayya, Chinnamail Anjireddy and local leaders. During the meeting, Sanjay said, "Millions of our party workers are dreaming of bringing the BJP to power in Telangana at least once. Many people passed away without seeing this dream come true. This time, my goal is to bring

the BJP to power in Telangana. Only BJP leaders have a history of fighting against Naxalites facing their bullets." "In Peddapalli district Naxalites put up big posters threatening to kill leaders like Gujjula Ramakrishna Reddy, Dugyala Pradeep Rao, Kashipet Lingayya and Komala Anjaneyulu. Yet, they fearlessly confronted the Naxalites and continued to wave the saffron flag," he added.

TG will face water shortage if AP is not stopped: BRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former minister G. Jagadish Reddy came down heavily on the Congress and BJP governments, accusing them of failing to protect Telangana's legitimate share of Krishna waters. Speaking at a press meeting at the Telangana Bhavan, he said that while Andhra Pradesh was openly diverting Krishna water, the Telangana government was merely watching without taking any action. He warned that if the situation continued, the state would soon face severe water shortages for drinking and irrigation. Jagadish recalled that former minister Harish Rao had already sounded the alarm regarding the crisis, highlighting how AP's water theft was putting Telangana's farmers at risk. However, instead of addressing these concerns, Congress Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy responded with irrelevant statements. He ridiculed Uttam's remarks,

calling them "empty words" that failed to acknowledge the real issue.

Harish grills CM on waiver of farm loans

BRS MLA Harish Rao launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accusing him of misleading farmers with false claims of complete loan waiver. Taking to social media, Harish questioned how the CM would respond to Tota Yadagiri, a farmer from Thungathurthi, who walked all the way to Gandhi Bhavan demanding an explanation after being denied loan waiver benefits. He ridiculed the Congress government's six guarantees, calling them an electoral gimmick and branding their implementation as a "420 promise."

Disease strikes poultry farms in Wanaparthy; 2,500 chickens dead

PNS ■ WANAPARTHY

A mysterious disease has hit poultry farms in Konnur village, Madanapuram mandal, Wanaparthy district, leading to the death of approximately 2,500 chickens in just three days. Authorities have launched an investigation into the cause, with samples sent for laboratory testing. District Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Officer K Venkateshwar confirmed the outbreak, stating, "Around

2,500 chickens have died, and we have inspected the farm. Samples were collected and sent for testing to determine the cause." The mass deaths occurred at Premium Farm, an integrated poultry unit with a capacity of 5,500 birds, owned by Shivakehavulu. The timeline of deaths, as reported by officials, shows 117 chickens perishing on February 16, followed by 300 on February 17, and the rest on February 18. Authorities

were informed on February 19, prompting an immediate collection of samples for further analysis. Veterinary experts are monitoring the situation closely, urging nearby poultry farms to implement biosecurity measures. While officials await lab results, concerns are growing among poultry farmers about the potential spread of the disease. The administration has assured that necessary precautions will be taken to prevent further loss.

Farmer stages dharna on Gandhi Bhavan steps demanding waiver of his loan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A farmer named Thota Yadagiri from the Ambaripet village in the Shaligouram mandal of Thungathurthi constituency staged a dharna on the steps of the Gandhi Bhavan on Friday appealing to R&B Minister

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and Congress MLA Mandula Samuel to waive his farm loan. Thota Yadagiri said that he is a poor farmer and had taken a crop loan. However, it became Rs 3 lakh with interest. The government did not waive his loan when it implemented its loan

waiver scheme. Yadagiri appealed to Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and Mandula Samuel to ask his district's Collector to waive his loan. He also said that he is not getting any pension, financial assistance and bonus for his paddy.

South TG lost 100 TMC ft water storage capacity due to BRS: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy blamed the BRS government for the injustice faced by Telangana in securing Krishna waters and accused it of neglecting irrigation projects for a decade. He said that BRS leaders who served as irrigation ministers have no moral right to speak about Krishna basin projects, as they had failed to complete or even allocate adequate funds for them during their tenure. He pointed out that despite borrowing Rs 1.81 lakh crore, the BRS government failed to safeguard Telangana's share of Krishna waters. He accused the BRS administration of negligence, which resulted in South Telangana losing the capacity to store 100 TMC feet of water annually. Highlighting pending projects, Uttam listed major reservoirs that were ignored by the BRS regime SLBC Tunnel & Reservoirs (Nalgonda) - 10 TMC capac-

ity, Dindi Lift Irrigation Scheme Reservoirs - 25 TMC capacity and Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme Reservoirs - 65 TMC capacity. He said that the BRS government's apathy led to severe drought in South Telangana, as they neither allocated funds nor initiated land acquisition for irrigation projects. "For 10 years, the BRS government completely neglected the construction of distributaries and canals leaving many Krishna basin projects incomplete," he said. Taking a dig at KCR and ex-Irrigation Minister Harish Rao, Uttam questioned their role in blocking these projects. "Isn't it true that the failure of Krishna basin irrigation projects is due to KCR and Harish Rao? As a district minister then, didn't you have any responsibility?" he asked. He assured that under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the Congress government would complete all pending Krishna basin projects in the next three years.

CEO reviews preparedness for MLC elections

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) C. Sudharshan Reddy held a video conference on Friday with Collectors to assess preparedness for holding the MLC elections scheduled for February 27. The meeting focused on ensuring a smooth electoral process across constituencies. During the conference, Collectors briefed the CEO on key election arrangements, including assured facilities at polling stations, webcasting, the appointment of micro observers, training of polling personnel and the overhauling of ballot boxes. They also detailed security measures, highlighting 24-hour security and CCTV surveillance at polling stations and strong rooms where polled ballot boxes will be stored. The CEO stressed the importance of providing all necessary facilities at polling booths, proper distribution of voter slips, and effective coordination among election officials. He also instructed officials to prioritise the training and deployment of

micro observers to ensure transparency in the polling process. The biennial MLC elections will be held in the following constituencies: Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar Graduates' Constituency Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar & Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda Teachers' Constituencies. Medak-Nizamabad-Adilabad-Karimnagar Teachers' Constituency The Collectors of Sangareddy, Medak, Siddipet, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Adilabad, Kumuram Bheem Asifabad, Mancherial, Nirmal, Karimnagar, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri, Khammam, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Hanumakonda, Mahabubabad, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Jangaon, Mulugu, Peddapalli, Rajanna Sircilla, Jagtial, and Warangal participated in the video conference. Senior officials, including Additional CEO Lokesh Kumar, Deputy CEO Satya Vani and EVM in-charge Prasad also attended the meeting.

'A kickback scheme'

PNS ■ NEW YORK

US President Donald Trump has claimed that the USD 21 million funding to India for 'voter turnout' was a 'kickback' scheme, as he continued to attack the previous Biden administration over the now cancelled financial aid. Trump made these remarks while speaking at the Republican Governors Association meeting in Washington DC on Thursday. "USD 21 million for voter turnout in India. Why are we caring about India's turnout? We have got enough problems.

We want our own turnout," said Trump. "I would say in many cases, many of these cases, anytime you have no idea what we're talking about, that means there's a kickback because nobody has any idea what's going on there," he said. This is the third time within a week that Trump has questioned the funding. Earlier addressing the FII PRIORITY Summit in Miami on Thursday, he had raised similar concerns over funding to India and suggested that they were trying to "get somebody else elected".

CM to attend Yadagirigutta gopuram inaugural fete

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy will participate in the grand consecration ceremony (Maha Kumbhabhishekam Samprokshana Mahotsavam) of the Golden Vimana Gopuram at Yadagirigutta Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple on February 23. For the same event, the priests of Yadagirigutta temple have extended a formal invitation to Telangana's first chief minister and BRS leader K Chandrashekar Rao (KCR), to attend the prestigious Maha Kumbhabhishekam ceremony at the newly renovated Swarna Vimana Gopuram. The ceremony will take place on the 23rd of this month.

TODAY ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Navami, Feb 21 11:58 AM to Feb 22 01:19 PM
Dashami: Feb 22 01:19 PM to Feb 23 01:56 PM
Nakshatram: Jyeshtha, Feb 21 03:53 PM to Feb 22 05:40 PM
Moola: Feb 22 05:40 PM to Feb 23 06:42 PM
Rahukalam: 9:36 AM to 11:02 AM
Yamagandam: 1:56 PM to 3:23 PM
Varjyam: 05:02 PM to 06:42 PM
Gulika: 6:42 AM to 8:09 AM
Amritakalam: 08:13 AM to 09:56 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 PM to 12:52 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 34°C
Humidity: 51%
Sunrise: 6:39 AM
Sunset: 6:20 PM
Updated: February 21, 2025 5:00 PM

TG presses its ...

Continued from page 1 Since November 2024, Telangana's Irrigation Department has been submitting monthly complaints to KRMB regarding the unlawful use of water by Andhra Pradesh. Despite these complaints, the issue has not been addressed, leaving the water-sharing dispute in a precarious position. Rahul Bojja directly questioned the unilateral transfer of water by Andhra Pradesh from the shared reservoirs, emphasising that such actions were not in accordance with the agreed-upon water-sharing ratios. He also detailed the immediate water needs of Telangana, including both irrigation and drinking water requirements, which are critical for the state's agricultural and urban areas. Bojja pointed out the vast discrepancy in water usage between the two states. He said that while Andhra Pradesh had already used 650 TMC (Thousand Million Cubic Feet) of water, Telangana had utilized only 225 TMCs of water. The water-sharing agreement, which was finalised after the bifurcation of the states in 2014-15, sets the ratio at 66:34 in favour of Telangana.

KCR helped YSR ...

Continued from page 1 The Chief Minister slammed Modi for failing to fulfil promises, reminding people of the unfulfilled commitments of depositing black money into citizens' accounts, doubling farmers' income, and providing housing for all by 2022. "The only jobs Modi gave were to Kishan Reddy and Sanjay," he said. Listing his government's achievements, Revanth said the Congress provided 55,000 jobs, allocated five lakh Indramma houses per year, and empowered women through Amma Adarsh Schools and RTC bus management. "We conducted the BC caste census and addressed the SC categorisation issue pending for 30 years. KCR pretends he can't see all this," he said. The CM also dared BRS to contest elections in villages where Indramma houses are being built, promising that Congress would fight in areas where the BRS constructed 2BHK homes. Asserting his commitment to Palamuru's development, Revanth assured compensation for all displaced families and the completion of the Uddandapur project. "Some people are conspiring against us, but the people should teach them a lesson," he said, urging public support to safeguard his government's work.

Govt faces ...

Continued from page 1 They questioned how the Congress, which claimed to implement welfare schemes without financial hurdles, had driven Telangana into a severe revenue crisis within a year.

Lawyer of KCR ...

Continued from page 1 the sinking of the Medigadda Pillars. However, the High Court Judge said that he came to know about the death of Rajalingamurthy through the media. The Judge asked how the court could hear the case if the complainant died. However, the public prosecutor appealed to the court to continue the hearing. The Public Prosecutor referred to Supreme Court and Karnataka High Court verdicts regarding this and requested the court to

grant time to submit arguments. The court posted the case to Monday. It may be recalled that the Bhupalpally District Court had issued notices to KCR and Harish Rao after a petition was filed by Rajalingamurthy. However, KCR and Harish approached the HC appealing for an order dismissing the Bhupalpally District Court's directions. Meanwhile, Rajalingamurthy was killed by unidentified persons on Wednesday. His wife and daughter said that KCR, Harish Rao and Gandra Venkatramana Reddy were behind the murder of her husband.

PUBLIC NOTICE ON MISSING OF ORIGINAL DOCUMENT
This is hereby informing to the general public that Ratnavath Panushuram S/o. Ratnavath Lingayya Naik, is owner and possessor of under mentioned property and he has purchased the same through registered sale deed No. 12710/2024 dated 10-10-2024 (SRO Mahabubnagar), he lost its two original link document Nos. 2270/2007 and 2234/1967, now he approached to the bank for obtaining the loan, so if anybody possesses the said document they may return the same to below mentioned address and if anybody got any right or claim or objection over the below mentioned property, they may approach to the below mentioned addresses within 7 days with relevant proof, thereafter no objections will be entertained. Schedule of property: Plot No. 15, extent 200 sq yds, in sy. No. 105/29R, situated at Ward No. 14, Block No. 9, Christiansipally, Mahabubnagar. Boundaries: East: Plot No. 11, West: Plot No. 18, North: 20 feet road, South: Others plot. Sd/- Abdul Khateer, B.Com., LL.B., Advocate H.No. 43-16/6/2/5, Ravajalibowli, Mahabubnagar, Cell: 9849042322

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 22, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Annual Day Celebrations

at Global Edge School

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
February 22, (1:30 pm)

Lakshya's Kuchipudi Rangapravesam

By Trishna Kuchipudi Dance Academy

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
February 22, (6 pm)

Vision X: College Fest

(Flaunt, Freshen, Forlic etc)

Venue

St Paul's Degree College
February 22 (10 am)

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

The World is Family: Hindi Play

Venue

Lamakaan
February 22, (7 pm)

Live Hindi & Telugu Musical Orchestra

By Pinnamaraju International Events

Venue

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
February 22, (4:30 pm)

TASK offers training to become data engineer in 90 days

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK), in partnership with the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, is offering graduates a free 90-day training programme to become a data engineer.

In today's digital world, data engineering is a fast-growing field. Companies need skilled professionals to manage and analyse data. To help Telangana's youth build careers in this field, the State government launched this free training programme under the aegis of IT & Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu.

The programme covers programming, data analysis, cloud technologies, data visualisation, soft skills and career counselling. It includes 120 hours of classroom learning and 360 hours of hands-on training. Experienced faculty with 25+ years of expertise will conduct the training.

Graduates (B.Sc., M.Sc., B.Tech., M.Tech., MCA) from 2021-2024 can apply. Selection is through an entrance exam at TASK headquarters in Hyderabad. Training will be held at Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation near Khairatabad Metro Station. It is advised to register before March 1, 2025, at <https://task.telangana.gov.in/>.

Distress calls from students surge as exam pressure mounts

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

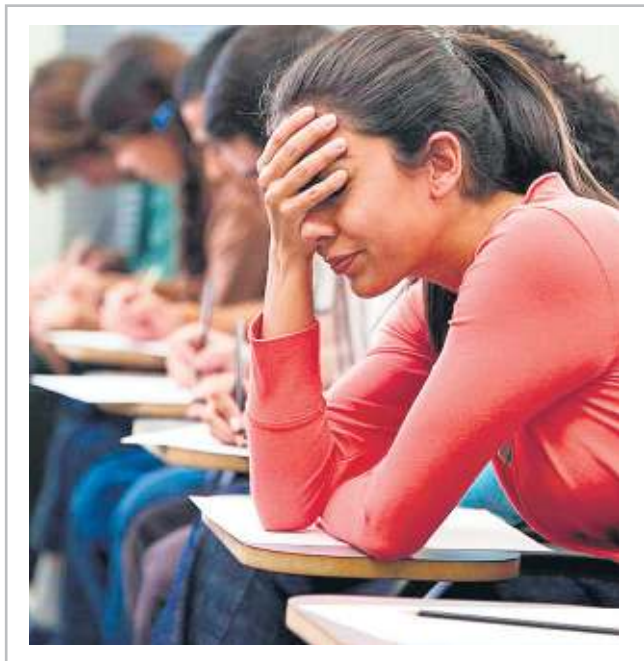
With the Intermediate Board Public Examinations approaching, distress calls to the Tele Manas helpline have surged, recording 401 calls between December 2024 and February 20, 2025. The data highlights increasing academic stress among students, prompting mental health experts to advocate for enhanced psychological support.

Among the districts, the highest number of calls came from Hyderabad - 68 calls, Rangareddy - 53 calls, Medchal - 40 calls, Yadadri - 22 calls.

Concerns related to hall tickets, marks inquiries and family issues topped the list, accounting for 144 calls. Sleep disturbances (106 calls) emerged as a significant issue, reflecting heightened stress levels. Anxiety-related calls rose to 49, indicating widespread mental health struggles. Additionally, 106 calls were categorised as general stress-related concerns.

Meanwhile, some districts reported zero calls, including Asifabad, Bhadradi Kothagudem, and Medak, while Jagtial recorded just one call and other districts reported single-digit figures.

Dr Pruthvi Raj, State Programme Officer of the Mental Health Programme told The Pioneer: "Tele Manas is available for students 24/7, and Telangana is the only State to offer this con-



tinuous service. Students are not required to reveal any personal details. As Intermediate exams approach, we see an increase in student calls, categorised as either medical or psychological. If a student reports headaches or physical pain, a psychiatrist takes the call. If the issue is exam-related stress, a psychologist handles it."

Jawaharlal Nehru P, Senior Psychologist, explained: "Most of the Intermediate students worry

about their future. We help them accept their current situation - if they haven't studied enough, we encourage them to acknowledge it and focus on improvement.

We calm their stress through exercises and guide them in developing presentation skills, such as rewriting answers multiple times and reading them aloud to enhance memory retention. We also seek their consent for follow-up calls to provide continued support."

Hyd gears up for Inter public, TGSWREIs entrance exams

Hyderabad District is gearing up for Intermediate public examinations to be held from March 5 to 25 across 244 centres with 1,79,218 students and Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions entrance exams. Hyderabad District Revenue Officer E Venkatachari has directed officials to coordinate efficiently to ensure seamless execution. During a coordination meeting at the Collector's Conference Hall, he emphasised that students must reach their exam centres by 8 am due to city traffic, as the exams will run from 9 am to 12 pm.

Hyderabad City Police have been tasked with ensuring the safe transport of question papers. Section 144 will be imposed around exam centres, and all Xerox centres in the vicinity will remain closed. RTC buses will be arranged to operate via exam centres. Uninterrupted electricity, drinking water, sanitation and medical facilities will be provided at all centres, said Venkatachari.

CCTV cameras will monitor question paper handling and answer sheet sealing. Except for the Chief Superintendent, no other staff member will be allowed to carry mobile phones inside the exam centre. Students must download



Hyderabad District Administration officials addressing the arrangements for Intermediate and TGSWREIs

hall tickets in advance and use the QR code on them to locate their exam centers. Meanwhile, preparations for the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions have been completed. District Coordinator V Jayanti, Principal of Telangana Social Welfare Gurukulam Schools/Colleges, confirmed that the exam will be held on February 23 from 11am to 1pm.

A total of five exam centres have been set up in Hyderabad and they are TGSWRS/JC Girls School and College, Falaknuma, TGSWRS Boys School and College, Shaikpet, TGSWRS Co-Ed School and College, Mahindra Hills, TSRJC Boys College, Borabanda and TSRJC Girls College.

Crime Scene



Two held in raid on hookah parlor in Chandrayangutta

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force, South-East Zone, in coordination with Chandrayangutta Police, raided an illegally operating hookah parlor in Chandrayangutta late on the night of February 20-21. The authorities apprehended two persons, including the organiser, and seized hookah pots and flavoured tobacco products. The raid targeted the Prestigious Hookah Parlor, which was running without a valid licence and profiting illegally. The arrested individuals were identified as Khaled Bahamed, the owner of the parlor, and Imran Pasha, both residents of Chandrayangutta.

During the operation, authorities seized seven hookah pots, seven pipes, 15 small boxes of guava-flavoured tobacco, and half a kilogram of double apple-flavoured tobacco. The total worth of the seized material is estimated at Rs 30,000.

The operation was conducted under the supervision of Inspector S Saidababu of the South-East Zone Task Force, assisted by Sub-Inspectors Sk Kaviuddin, P Sairam and M Madhu, along with constable K Durga Prasad and personnel from the Commissioner's Task Force and Chandrayangutta police station.

18 arrested in Task Force raid on gaming den

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force, South-East Zone, in coordination with Santosh Nagar Police, raided a gaming den in Santosh Nagar on the night of February 20-21, apprehending 18 individuals, including the organiser, and seizing cash and other gambling-related materials.

According to the police, the raid led to the arrest of organizer Akbar Hussain, a resident of Phisalband, Hyderabad. Seventeen others, identified as punters from various areas including Riyasath Nagar, Eidi Bazar, Rein Bazar and Phool Bagh, were also taken into custody.

During the operation, authorities seized Rs 29,490 in cash, 108 playing cards along with a sealed deck, and 16 mobile phones. The total worth of the seized material is estimated at Rs 1,10,000. All the arrested individuals, along with the confiscated materials, were handed over to Santosh Nagar police station for further legal proceedings.

The operation was carried out under the supervision of Inspector S Saidababu of the South-East Zone Task Force, with assistance from Sub-Inspectors Sk Kaviuddin, P Sairam, and M. Madhu, along with constable Gulam Chand Pasha and personnel from the Commissioner's Task Force and Santosh Nagar police station.

Crypto scam impersonating Morgan Stanley busted

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Police have busted a crypto currency scam on Telegram and WhatsApp, where criminals impersonated Morgan Stanley. According to the Police, a 47-year-old software engineer filed a complaint in August 2024, after losing Rs 52.3 lakh. The case was registered under BNS and ITA laws.

Upon investigation, Police arrested 22-year-old Pathi Manikanta from Andhra Pradesh, a crypto trader linked to Chinese nationals. His associates from Haryana are on the run. The criminals used UK-based WhatsApp numbers to lure victims, promising 20% daily returns. The scam involved laundering money across platforms like Binance and KuCoin.

Investigators found links to China, Hong Kong, and the UK. Manikanta was in contact with Chinese criminals to obtain mule accounts. Binance has seized the stolen assets under court orders.

Authorities advise citizens to be cautious, verify investment schemes, and report fraud at 1930 or www.cybercrime.gov.in.

PRAJAVANI

Officials neglect missing land records at revenue office

SAMUEL JOSHUA
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■ HYDERABAD

Officials at the Peddapalli Revenue Office are neglecting the missing land records, and the grievance submitted at Prajavani was also put aside. A total of 1,244 grievance applications were submitted during Prajavani on Friday at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan

When asked, Kupender Reddy from Peddapalli said that land records from 1950 to 2006 were missing and claimed that they were torn. He explained that a compound wall was built by Muhdi Kistaiah of Peddapalli district and Uppu Rajkumar using false documents. He noted that the MRO office was neglecting action against those without records.

Kupender Reddy said that when he called to ask for documents related to an illegally built compound wall, officials told him to return in 10 days. When he checked the documents again, he found that the document numbers from 12-08-2011 were also linked to two other women. When he asked the local writer about it, he was told that records of his



land, 1-B, EC, and CC, would be provided. However, at the MRO office, Uppu Rajkumar and others destroyed the survey No. 38 documents.

From the EC and CC copies, Kupender discovered that on 27-03-2002, two women purchased land from Ponaganti Raju Narsu under different document numbers for the year 2002. In 1988, 484 square yards of his mother's 2-acre land in survey No. 38 were sold.

Later, Muhdi Kistaiah, knowing it was illegal, bought 235 yards in 2013, then took more land and built a wall around the field. At the Peddapalli MRO office, Kupender applied for records from 1950-2025, but officials said only 2006-2013 records

were available.

He said that on 31-01-2025, at the district collectorate, his complaint was ignored. His 70-year-old mother, Annapoornamma, asked why, but he had no answer. Frustrated, Kupender submitted a grievance at Prajavani, saying it was unfair that people seeking justice were insulted at the collectorate.

Kupender said his grievance application at Prajavani kept getting delayed, with officials telling him he would receive an update. He urged better record-keeping and proper tracking of all grievances.

He was disappointed that his grievance had been postponed three times, causing him to lose trust in the program.

HYDRAA's DRF rescues 6-year-old stuck in lift shaft

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A rescue operation unfolded on Friday when a six-year-old boy, Arnab, got trapped between the lift and the floor slab at Muffar Comfortech Apartments in Santinagar, Masab Tank. The Hyderabad Disaster Response Force (DRF) of HYDRAA swiftly responded to the emergency and successfully rescued the child.

According to residents, the incident occurred at 2:29 pm when Arnab, who was playing with other children on the third floor, attempted to exit the lift.

As soon as the grill-type lift door opened, he accidentally slipped into the gap between the floor slab and the lift, falling

down and getting stuck near the first floor.

On receiving the distress call, the first DRF team arrived within 10 minutes, followed by two additional teams. To ensure safety, power to the lift was cut off before the operation began.

The DRF teams, under the supervision of District Fire Officer A Yagnanarayana and Station Fire Officer P Dattu used gas cutters and fire department tools to carefully cut through the lift frame and slab.

After an intense rescue effort, the child was freed at 4:35 pm and immediately handed over to his relieved parents before being shifted to a hospital for a medical check-up.



GHMC seals iconic Banjara Hotel over property tax dues

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) on Friday sealed the iconic Banjara Hotel (formerly Taj Banjara) due to non-payment of property tax amounting to Rs 1.43 crore, pending for the last two years.

While the hotel management has yet to issue a statement, a GHMC official confirmed that the hotel owner paid Rs 55 lakh on Friday morning and assured that the remaining amount would be cleared before March 10.

Last month, GHMC's Circle 18 Jubilee Hills tax team had issued demand notices to all property tax

defaulters as the financial year neared its end. While many complied, those with arrears exceeding three years were issued warrants.

"A warrant was also issued to Banjara Hotel on Road No 13, Banjara Hills. The owner responded positively, paid half the dues through RTGS, and committed to paying the remaining balance within a week," a GHMC official said.

The seal will be lifted once the full amount is cleared by March 10.

Meanwhile, TajGVK clarified that the property is no longer part of its portfolio, stating that the lease agreement for Banjara Hotel ended in February 2023.

New Indigo flights to Madina

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) has launched new IndiGo Airlines flight services from Hyderabad to Madina. The first flight took off with much excitement, attended by senior GHIAL officials on Friday. The new service will operate three times a week on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday, enhancing international connectivity. The flight takes about 5 hours and 47 minutes.

Flight details: Hyderabad to Madina (Flight 6E 57): Departs at 19:35 IST, arrives at 23:45 AST. Madina to Hyderabad (Flight 6E 57): Departs at 00:45 AST, arrives at 08:10 IST.

IIT-H, Marvell launch world's first data acceleration facility

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IITH) and Marvell Technology launched the world's first Data Acceleration and Offload Research Facility on Friday. This centre focuses on advancing network, storage and security technologies to improve data infrastructure performance.

The facility provides students, researchers and industry professionals with access to Marvell's advanced technologies, including Data Processing Units (DPUs), Switches, Compute Express Link (CXL) Processors, and Network Interface Controllers (NICs). These technologies accelerate data security, move-

ment, management and processing across AI clusters, cloud environments and networks.

Industry research shows that AI/ML processing often faces delays due to network access.

This facility aims to address these inefficiencies using Marvell's software frameworks optimised for packet processing, cryptography and AI/ML acceleration.

Following the MLNetSec Workshop at ICDCN 2024, IITH and Marvell continue their collaboration through joint courses, hands-on training and research initiatives. They plan workshops and conferences to foster innovation and train future tech leaders.

SBI ATM burglary case cracked; Accused arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Moghalpura police apprehended a suspect involved in an attempted ATM burglary at an SBI branch in Shalibanda, Hyderabad. The case, registered on February 15 under Crime No. 27/2025, was cracked after extensive investigation and surveillance efforts.

According to the police, the accused, identified as Honmane Kashinath alias Kashi, a 24-year-old panipuri vendor from Aliyabad, Hyderabad, attempted to steal cash from an ATM but failed in his efforts. Driven by an addiction to online

gambling games like Rummy and Roulette, Kashinath had accumulated debts amounting to nearly Rs 30 lakh through loans and financial apps. In a desperate bid to repay his debts, he decided to break into the ATM.

The burglary attempt took place in the early hours of February 15. CCTV footage revealed that Kashinath entered the ATM room at around 3:50 am, shut the shutter, and remained inside until 5:05 am. He used a stone to break the ATM's lock and attempted to open the machine with his hands. After struggling to access the cash cassettes, he man-

aged to remove the cash retract box, which contained rejected and counterfeit notes. Finding no usable money, he discarded the box in a nearby garbage container. An ATM technician later confirmed that all cash cassettes, containing Rs 7,70,100, remained intact, though the ATM itself was severely damaged. Kashinath was produced before the court on the same day.

The investigation was led by DSI K. Yadaiah, assisted by constables T Pavan Raj, SS Sai Kiran, Mohd Ayaz, and home guard Imran, under the supervision of Addl. Inspector C Srinu.

UNDIVIDED KHAMMAM DISTRICT

Per capita income crosses Rs 2 lakh mark

PNS ■ KHAMMAM / BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

The per capita income of Bhadradi-Kothagudem and Khammam districts has surpassed Rs 2 lakh annually, as per a report released by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Telangana.

Bhadradi-Kothagudem ranked 9th, and Khammam ranked 10th among districts with a per capita income exceeding Rs 2 lakh. For context, Rangareddy district topped the list with a per capita income of Rs 9.54 lakh. The per capita income in Bhadradi-Kothagudem stood at Rs 2.58 lakh, while Khammam's per capita income was Rs 2.43 lakh. Telangana's overall average per capita income was reported to be Rs 3.56 lakh.

The report highlighted that in both districts, 7,04,729 people depend on agriculture for their livelihood, with 50 per cent of them being farmworkers.

Khammam district leads the



Per Capita Income

[pər-ka-pə-tə 'in-kəm]

A measure of the amount of money earned per person in a nation or geographic region in

state in chilli cultivation, with 92,404 acres dedicated to the crop, while Bhadradi-Kothagudem ranks 4th with 29,778 acres. Both districts also rank 7th and 8th, respectively, in cotton cultivation.

Regarding employment under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), Khammam registered 6,42,495 workers, with 2,30,576 persons employed.

This ranks the district 2nd in the state for NREGS worker

registration. In Bhadradi-Kothagudem, 4,58,842 persons registered, with 1,59,637 deployed in NREGS works, earning it the 7th spot.

Industrially, there are 10,368 units in Telangana. Khammam ranks 4th with 758 industrial units, while Bhadradi-Kothagudem ranks 19th with 120 units.

In road connectivity, Khammam is 3rd in the state with a total of 5,308.47 km of roads, including 210.73 km of national highways.

Bhadradi-Kothagudem ranks 6th with a road network of 4,280.20 km, including 163.30 km of national highways.

The report also noted that Telangana's literacy rate is 66.5 per cent. Bhadradi-Kothagudem and Khammam ranked 4th and 5th, respectively, for literacy.

In Bhadradi, 66.41 per cent of children below six years are literate, while in Khammam, 65.96% of children in this age group are literate.

Leopard kills two calves in Nizambad district



Forest officials inspecting the spot where a leopard killed two calves at Nawipet in Nizambad district on Friday

PNS ■ NIZAMBAD

In the Nizambad district, in the Nawipet mandal, Abapur (M) village, a leopard attacked and killed two calves, sparking fear among the villagers. The villagers have appealed to the Forest officials to set up traps.

In Abapur (M) village of Nawipet mandal, Appayya, a

resident of the Scheduled Castes colony, had kept tied two calves next to his house.

After midnight on Thursday, the leopard attacked and killed the two calves in the cattle pen.

When the owner went to the cattle pen in the morning, he found leopard's pugmarks and carcasses of the calves.

Forest official Sanjay Goud

inspected the site.

He confirmed that the leopard had attacked and killed the two calves.

After a post-mortem, a report would be sent to the higher authorities, and efforts would be made to provide compensation.

The villagers requested the Range Officer to set up traps to capture the leopard.

Tigress kills buffalo in Mancherial dist

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

A tigress, which is evading capture in the forests of Mancherial district for the past two months, killed a buffalo at Dampur village under Bheemaram mandal on Thursday.

Officials reported that the tigress, which had been wandering near Nennal, ventured into Dampur's forests on Wednesday in search of a territory to mark. It killed buffalo. In response, authorities set up five CCTV cameras and deployed a team of seven officials to monitor its movements.

Previously, the tigress had been spotted in Bellampalli, Nennal, and Kasipet mandals, where it killed two wild boars. It also appeared at a nursery in Bopparam village and moved through Chittapur and Potyal forests, areas known for poaching, without any threat to its life. Now, it is seen roaming the forests of Bheemaram.

Reduce maternal and infant mortality rate: Collector to officials

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Collector Ila Tripathi emphasised the importance of reducing maternal and infant mortality rate. She was conducting a review meeting with the officials conference here on Friday.

The Collector said that all stakeholders must take responsibility for maternal and infant deaths in the district. She highlighted the crucial role of Anganwadi workers and ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) in preventing such fatalities. She noted that malnutrition and apathy are primary factors leading to avoidable maternal and infant deaths.

She stressed the importance of focusing on Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) to hold monthly meetings with ASHA workers and Anganwadi workers to counsel pregnant women. These sessions should provide clear guidance on medical check-ups, nutrition, and necessary precautions from conception to childbirth and post-natal care, including breastfeeding.

The Collector warned that strict action would be taken if



Nalgonda Collector Ila Tripathi holding a review meeting in Nalgonda on Friday

negligence was found on the part of any official and doctors. She directed officials to analyse the causes of such deaths and ensure that ASHA workers visit pregnant women daily from the time of conception.

She also pointed out that some deaths occur due to superstitions, and malnutrition. Therefore, it is the responsibility of ASHA and Anganwadi workers to provide full-fledged counseling to parents and pregnant women. By identifying the causes behind maternal and infant deaths, timely medical intervention

and counseling could significantly reduce fatalities. The Collector emphasised that counseling alone could prevent up to 80% of deaths and stressed the need to raise awareness about proper nutrition. Additionally, she recommended ensuring that women take multivitamin tablets even before pregnancy to prevent nutritional deficiencies.

During the meeting, the District Collector reviewed maternal and infant deaths recorded from January last year to the present in primary health centers under Kattangur,

Line Vada, Ketepalli, Chityal, Kanagal, Ramulabanda, Manyam Cheluka, and other areas. She urged all officials to work in coordination to reduce maternal and infant deaths in the district.

The meeting was attended by District Medical and Health Officer Dr. Putla Srinivas, District Welfare Officer Krishnaveni, Deputy DMHO Venugopal Reddy, Dr. Vandana, Dr. Swaroopa Rani, Dr. Kalyan Chakravarthy, medical officers, CDPOs, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, and other officials.

Two held for sexually assaulting girl

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

In a shocking incident at Sangareddy (M) Fasalwadi Double Bedroom Colony, two youths sexually assaulted an eight-year-old girl, according to local people.

While the girl was playing outside her house, the youth lured her by promising to buy her chocolates.

The police arrested the assailants.

The police invoked Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) against the two youngsters.



Gurukul School principal metes out 'corporal punishment' to student

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a shocking incident at Kondurg Social Welfare Gurukul School in Rangareddy district, a Class 9 student, Sandeep, was allegedly beaten by the school principal for refusing to eat vada served for breakfast.

According to reports, Sandeep complained of a stomach ache and declined to eat the snack, which angered the principal.

The principal severely beat the student, leaving him injured. The incident

sparked outrage among students and parents.

In another troubling act, the principal allegedly forced students to consume discarded vegetable peels after they threw them away during the mid-day meal.

As the news spread, enraged parents rushed to the school and confronted the principal, leading to a heated argument. The incident has raised serious concerns about student safety, and authorities are expected to take action as investigations continue.

Maoist Party Central Committee member surrenders to police

Banned CPI-Maoist Vanjem Kesha turned herself to the police as she was motivated by the attractive rehabilitation scheme for surrendered ultras

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Vanjem Kesha, alias Jinni, a member of the banned Communist Party of India-Maoist party and Protection Group Commander of the Gothikoya Area Committee, surrendered before Warangal Police Commissioner Amber Kishor Jha on Friday. According to the Police Commissioner, Kesha's father, Hidma, who is currently imprisoned, was also involved in the Maoist movement. Hidma came from Rasapalli village under Pamed mandal in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh.

Kesha's involvement with the Maoist group began in 2017 after she joined the party. She was attracted to the Left ideology through the Chaitanya Natya Mandali. For two years, she worked in the



Warangal Police Commissioner Amber Kishor Jha announcing the surrender of Maoist leader in Warangal on Friday

mandali under the leadership of Punnem Joga.

Later, she was sent to the Abujmad area, where she became a member of the Protection Group for Central Committee member Kadari Satyanarayana Reddy.

In 2021, Kesha was appointed a member of the Area Committee. She continued her role in the Protection Group until December 2022, after which she briefly worked in the North Bastar Division. She married a fellow Maoist Area

Committee member named Ramesh, who is now in a Maharashtra jail. In April 2024, Kesha was promoted to woman commander in the Protection Group for Kadari Satyanarayana Reddy.

While active in the Maoist party, Kesha was involved in violent incidents, including the killing of a police officer and injuring another during a shootout at Kohilabeda police station, as well as the killing of another police officer in the Abujmad area. Kesha is accused in both incidents.

Kesha's surrender was motivated by the rehabilitation schemes offered by the Telangana government to surrendered Maoists.

The government had also placed a reward of Rs 4 lakh on her head, and she voluntarily turned herself in to the police, the Police Commissioner said.

Nizamabad district lags behind health rank

PNS ■ NIZAMBAD

Undivided Nizamabad district is trailing behind in key sectors like education, healthcare, industry, and employment generation when compared to the state's overall performance, as per the Telangana State Statistical Abstract for 2024.

On a positive note, the district has seen improvements in its Gross District Domestic Product (GDDP) and per capita income.

The per capita income for Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts stands at Rs 1,96,185 and Rs 1,89,588 respectively, compared to the state's per capita income of Rs 3,56,564. Nizamabad ranks 26th in terms of per capita income, while Kamareddy is 30th.

Regarding GDDP, Nizamabad ranks 7th, while Kamareddy holds the 18th position. GDDP is a critical metric used for future planning and development.

However, both districts face concerning sex ratio disparities. In Kamareddy, for every 1000 boys, there are only 941 girls, and in Nizamabad, the ratio is 963 girls for every 1000 boys. This imbalance is largely attributed to the insufficient enforcement of regulations on illegal sex-determination tests.

The literacy rates in these districts are also below the state average, with Nizamabad at 64.3% and

Kamareddy at 56.5%, compared to the state's average of 66.5%.

Nizamabad has 335 industries, employing a total of 18,718 people, with 16,402 workers actively engaged. Industrial investments in the district amount to Rs 1980.89 crore. Kamareddy, on the other hand, houses 121 industries with 6,992 employees and 7,495 workers, while industrial investments are reported at Rs 1071.83 crore.

Collector inspects Karshak Seva Co-op society

PNS ■ WARANGAL

District Collector Satya Sharada conducted a surprise inspection at Karshak Seva Cooperative Societies at Nallabelli village under Wardhannapet mandal and Chautupalli under Parvatgiri.

The records of the cooperative society were inspected and the stock registers were checked.

The Collector directed the officials to sell fertilisers at MRP prices to farmers. On the occasion, the Collector interacted with farmers who came to buy fertilisers. She asked the farmers whether they were facing any problem.

Later, the Collector made a surprise visit to the government school in Nallabelli village and interacted with the students and enquired whether the meal was served according to the menu. She exhorted the student to develop reading habit.

She distributed examination pads and notebooks to the students. The Collector was accompanied by the District Agriculture Officer Anuradha, school teachers and others.

Sri Chaitanya College student dies by suicide

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Parents and student unions are raising concerns over a series of suicides by students in private schools. The death of a student by suicide at Sri Chaitanya College here on Friday sparked protests by student unions.

According to police, Yogi Nandini (16), a student at Sri Chaitanya College in Khammam district, died by suicide. Nandini took her life inside the classroom.

The college management



Yogi Nandini

informed her parents immediately, and the body was later moved to the hospital's morgue. What led to the student taking drastic step is yet

to be ascertained.

Meanwhile, in light of the student's death, tension arose at the Khammam Government Hospital. Student organisations staged protests at the hospital, claiming that the college management had given false information regarding the incident. They are demanding action against school management. Nandini was a first-year Intermediate student at the private college.

According to the police, Nandini attended morning study hours on Friday.

Doctor waylaid, injured in Warangal

PNS ■ WARANGAL

A doctor was brutally attacked by unidentified assailants on Bhattupalli main road in Warangal city on Thursday night.

According to police, Dr Gade Sumanth Reddy, who works at a private clinic in Kazipet, was on his way to Ursu via Bhattupalli road. When he reached Ammavari Peta crossroad, a gang of unidentified assailants on a two-wheeler intercepted his car and assaulted him. One of the attackers struck him on



the head with an iron rod, causing severe head injuries. The local police alerted Madikonda and Mills Colony police. The police reached the spot and the doctor was rushed to MGM hospital for

medical care. Later, he was shifted to a private hospital in Hyderabad for better treatment.

The police are investigating the case from all angles. Warangal Assistant Commissioner of Police Nandiram Nayak, Kazipet Assistant Commissioner of Police Tirumal, Mills Colony Circle Inspector Venkataratnam, and Madikonda Circle Inspector Kishan visited the crime scene and launched an investigation into the motive behind the attack.

ACROSS THE STATES



ED attaches assets of ex-CBI DSP

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Friday that it has attached residential properties worth about Rs 1 crore as part of a disproportionate assets case-linked money-laundering investigation against a former CBI DSP. Rajeev Kumar Rishi, the former deputy superintendent of police of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), was first booked by his own organisation under sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the ED said in a statement. According to the statement, it was alleged that Rishi had acquired "disproportionate" assets of Rs 1.44 crore in his name and in the name of his family members during the check period between November 9, 2012 and January 14, 2021. This was 113.36 per cent more than his legitimate income during the said period, the ED said. The officer could not be contacted immediately for a response on the allegations levelled against him by the ED.



Bihar: Class-10 student shot dead by classmate

A minor boy was shot dead, while another suffered injuries following a clash between two groups of students in Bihar's Rohtas district on Friday, police said. The Class-10 student, Amit Kumar, succumbed to injuries during treatment, and his classmate has been detained for the crime, Superintendent of Police Raushan Kumar said. "Preliminary investigation revealed that an altercation took place between two groups of students inside an examination centre in Sasaram on Thursday... When Amit and another student, Sanjit Kumar, were returning home in an autorickshaw, they were stopped by one of their classmates who shot at them and fled," he said. A police team reached the spot and took them to the nearest government hospital. "While Amit died during treatment, the condition of Sanjit is reported to be stable."



Mizoram to introduce new health scheme

Mizoram chief minister Lalduhoma on Friday said his government will soon launch a new health insurance scheme providing coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh to beneficiaries. The scheme is likely to be implemented in the new fiscal, he added. During a discussion on the governor's address in the budget session, Lalduhoma said his government initially pursued the previous Mizo National Front (MNF) administration's plan to roll out a healthcare scheme with Rs 1,000 crore loan support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). "However, despite efforts, the loan could not be secured, prompting the government to develop an alternative plan," he added. The chief minister said discussions have been held with pensioners, government employees, and private hospitals to ensure support for the scheme. "We are confident that we can implement the healthcare scheme with Rs 5 lakh coverage per year from our own funds, without borrowing from ADB," he said. The proposed scheme will offer cashless treatment, and the government hopes to finalise agreements with private hospitals soon.

FLAG MEETING WITH PAK

India raises issues of firing, terror activities

PNS ■ JAMMU

India and Pakistan held a flag meeting along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district on Friday, in an effort to de-escalate tension after several recent incidents of cross-border firing and an IED attack, official sources said.



The brigade commander-level flag meeting took place in the Chakkan-Da-Bagh crossing point area, with both sides highlighting the need to maintain peace along the border, the sources said.

However, no official statement was issued by the Indian Army on the 75-minute-long meeting that started at around 11 am.

The sources said the Indian military delegation lodged a strong protest over the recent unprovoked cross-border firing incidents, infiltration attempts by terrorists and smuggling of narcotics and weapons.

The meeting took place in a congenial atmosphere and both sides agreed to honour the ceasefire agreement in the larg-

er interest of peace on the border, the sources said.

Ceasefire violations along the border of Jammu and Kashmir have been rare since the two neighbouring countries renewed an agreement on February 25, 2021.

Two Indian Army personnel, including a captain, were killed and another was injured in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack carried out by suspected terrorists in the Akhnour sector of the Jammu region on February 11.

Two Army personnel were injured in separate incidents of small-arms firing from across the LoC in Rajouri and Poonch

districts on February 10 and February 14, while two more Army personnel were injured in separate land-mine explosions in Poonch over the last week.

The extent of damage on the Pakistani side in the retaliatory action was not known immediately but officials had said the enemy forces also suffered "heavy casualties".

Meanwhile, the sources said an explosion took place on the zero line in the Nakerkote area of the Digwar sector in Poonch at 9:20 am but there was no casualty.

The cause of the blast was not known immediately, they added.

EAM stresses the need to maintain G20 integrity

PNS ■ JOHANNESBURG

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday emphasised the joint efforts of India and China in maintaining the integrity of the G20 amid a "polarised" global situation.

Jaishankar is in Johannesburg on a two-day visit to South Africa to participate in the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

"We should recognise that in a polarised global situation, our two countries have worked hard to preserve and protect the G20 as an institution. This in itself testifies to the importance of international cooperation," he said in his opening remarks at a bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting here.

South Africa is hosting the G20 for 2025, with this meeting marking the beginning of a series of engagements scheduled throughout the year. As the premier forum for international economic cooperation, the G20 plays a critical role in steering the global economy through the significant challenges it faces.

The members of the G20 are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy,

Calls for cooperation between India-China



Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Union and the European Union.

Jaishankar noted that forums like the G20 have provided opportunities for India and China to engage in dialogue, even during challenging periods in their bilateral relationship.

"Such gatherings have provided an opportunity for our interaction, even when our ties were going through a difficult phase," he said.

Reflecting on developments

since his last meeting with Wang in Rio de Janeiro during the G20 Summit in November 2024, Jaishankar acknowledged ongoing diplomatic exchanges.

"Our NSA and Foreign Secretary have visited China and there have been discussions about various aspects of our relationship. These have included management of peace and tranquillity in the border areas as well as other dimensions of our ties. I am glad today to have a further exchange of views," Jaishankar said as he recalled that India and China are members of the G20, SCO and BRICS.

'SOMETHING DISGUSTING'

SC on Delhi HC passing 30-40 pages pre-arrest bail orders

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court on Friday expressed reservations over the Delhi High Court passing 30 to 40 pages anticipatory bail orders and said it was "something disgusting".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh which was hearing an appeal against a high court order said, "What is happening in the Delhi High Court is something disgusting. The high court writing 30-40 pages while disposing of an anticipatory bail plea is like hinting the trial court that here is a reason for you to convict. Essentially, it's a conviction order."

The top court was hearing the bail plea of medical practitioner Aadhar Khera in a cheating case.

Khera moved the top court against the order of the Delhi High Court, which in its 34-page order on February 6, denied him the reprieve.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for Khera, submitted it was the petitioner's father who was running the firm in question through the petitioner and his mother.

He said the high court equated his role with his father and denied the petitioner anticipatory bail ignoring the fact that he had joined the investigation in the case.

Luthra argued that the chargesheet was filed in the case.

Following the submissions, the bench sought the response of Delhi Police and granted Khera protection from arrest in the case.

AI should be used for improving rural lives: Dhankhar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday said disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) should be used for improving the agriculture sector, and asserted that the rural population represents both opportunities and responsibilities.

Speaking at the inaugural session of 21st General Session of African Asian Rural Development (AARDO) Conference, the vice president also stressed using technology to alleviate suffering.

Speaking at the event, Dhankhar said the rural regions



nurture 3.6 billion lives, including 894 million rural Indians, "representing both our opportunity and responsibility."

"A challenge to our intellect is in form of emergence of disruptive technology. Artificial intel-

ligence, machine learning...No less than industrial revolution," he said.

"They offer daunting challenges but also bring a basket of opportunities, only if we learn to unleash them," he said.

Dhankhar said these technologies should be used for improving the farm sector and rural areas.

"If we can unleash these disruptive technologies for greater good of rural India and farm sector, and of the entire world, humanity will be a safer place," the vice president said.

"India has taken some flagship initiatives and one initiative is digital India," he added.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate has levied a penalty of more than Rs 3.44 crore on BBC World Service India for alleged contravention of foreign direct investment (FDI) regulations, agency officials said on Friday.

The federal probe agency also fined three of its directors with more than Rs 1.14 crore each as it issued an adjudication order against the British broadcaster under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

The adjudication proceed-

ED slaps Rs 3.44 cr penalty on BBC WS India; fines 3 directors

ings were initiated after a show-cause notice was issued on August 4, 2023, to BBC WS India, its three directors, and the finance head for various "contraventions" under the said law.

BBC WS India, which is a 100 per cent FDI company, engaged in uploading/streaming news and current affairs through digital media but "did not" reduce their FDI to 26 per

cent, and kept it at 100 per cent in "gross violation" of the regulations issued by the government of India, sources said.

The press note 4 issued by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) on September 18, 2019, stipulates a 26 per cent FDI cap for digital media under the government approval route, they said.

Ministers facing allegations must quit, says Hazare

PNS ■ PUNE

Veteran social activist Anna Hazare on Friday said ministers facing allegations should immediately resign.

The opposition has been seeking the resignations of NCP ministers Dhananjay Munde and Manikrao Kokate.

Munde, MLA from Parli in Beed, is under fire from the opposition and some Mahayuti colleagues after close aide Walmik Karad was held in an extortion case linked to the abduction and brutal murder of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh in Massajog in Beed on December 9.

Kokate was on Thursday sentenced to two years imprisonment by a Nashik court in a 1995 case where he was charged with submitting fake documents to get flats under a government quota.

Without taking names, Hazare said, "If a minister faces allegations, it would be inappropriate on his part to remain in the cabinet even for a minute. He must immediately tender his resignation. If you have made a mistake, then there is no need to remain in power."

BJP's 'double-engine' govt in UP a failure

PNS ■ RAE BARELI (UP)

Rae Bareli Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Friday launched a scathing attack on the BJP, calling its "double-engine government" in Uttar Pradesh a complete failure and one with "no engine" at all.

Gandhi accused the UP government of failing to address unemployment and inflation and also alleged that the Centre was resorting to privatisation. He emphasised that if the Congress was voted to power in the state, its government would bring in job opportunities as it had in states such as

No engine at all: Rahul in Rae Bareli

Karnataka and Telangana.

"This is not a 'double-engine' government; rather, it is a government with no engine at all," Gandhi said while interacting with youth in the Lalganj area on the second day of his visit to his parliamentary constituency.

"The public is struggling with serious issues like inflation and unemployment, yet the government has no concrete solutions," he said.

The leader of opposition in Lok Sabha alleged that unem-



ployment was rising and blamed the BJP government for it. He alleged that demonetisation destroyed small businesses and GST reforms failed

to support them.

"The youth studied but they are still unemployed because (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi implemented demonetisation, which killed small businesses. Corruption, Adani, Ambani -- you need to understand the connection."

"If you want jobs, the first step is to revive and protect small businesses. GST needs to be changed. Until banks open their doors to you, employment will not be possible," he said.

Bhutan PM calls Modi his 'mentor', seeks guidance



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay on Friday described his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi as his "elder brother" and "mentor" and sought his guidance to help him contribute to transformation of public service in the neighbouring country.

In his keynote address at the School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL) conclave here, Tobgay made liberal use of Hindi that drew multiple applause from the audience.

"Without a doubt, I see an image of an elder brother in you, who always guides me and helps me (Nisandeh, aap mei ek bade bhai ki chhavi dekhta hun, jo sadaiv mera margdarshan karte hain, aur mujhe sahayta

detehain"), he said.

Tshering termed the SOUL initiative a "brainchild of Modi", adding, it is yet another testament to his unwavering commitment to nurturing authentic leaders and empowering them to serve the great republic of India. In his address, the Bhutanese prime minister humbly submitted that he had come to attend the event to not offer any leadership lessons but to "learn as a student".

"Leadership is not about titles, it is not about positions, it is about vision, it is about courage, it is about the ability to inspire change. Leadership is about transformation, it is about taking society where it stands today, and guiding it towards a future that is more prosperous, more peaceful and happier for all," he asserted.

YESTERDAY ONCE MORE

Vintage cars turn heads, bring smiles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It was nothing short of a history lesson on wheels as classic, pristine cars took over the streets of Delhi on Friday during the 11th edition of the "21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance," showcasing a regal collection of rare cars that left even the finest, modern, high performance cars behind by a margin.

The annual heritage show, flagged off by Union Culture and Tourism Minister

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat at India Gate, featured over 100 vintage cars and 50 motorcycles -- from iconic models such as the exquisite 1939 Delahaye (Figoni et Falaschi, 1903 De Dion Bouton, the oldest in the concours to 1917 Ford Model T Roadster, 1935 Buick 90 L Ex Ayodhya and 1935 Cadillac Fleetwood.

A pilgrimage of sorts for many car enthusiasts, the event has participants from across the country, including the likes of industrialists Yohan

Poonawalla, late Tata Sons chairman Rattan Tata's younger brother Jimmy Tata, and renowned car collector and restorer Viveck Goenka, flaunting their well-preserved beauties.

Gujarati businessman Daman Thakore, who has lost the count of rallies and shows he has attended with his bright red, vintage convertible -- the 1950 MG YT, affectionately christened 'Lal Pari' or the Red Angel -- was revved up for the special event.

"I've had this small, one-and-a-quarter engine car with us since I was three, and it brings so much joy to people's faces wherever it goes. That's why we keep it running. The car was manufactured in England in 1950, and only 900 of these were made by MG."

"To showcase these cars in rallies or shows, we work for at least three to six months beforehand, ensuring everything in the car is in the perfect working order. Even the clock on the dashboard is



original and accurate," said the 50-year-old, who drove the tiny 56-horsepower car on a 13,500 km journey to London through 14 countries with his family in 2023.

A flurry of selfies and head-turning were evident as the

rare marques paraded through the streets, painting the town in bygone royal hues from the India Gate to the expansive Ambience Golf Greens in Gurugram, where these timeless beauties would be on display for the next two days.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Trump's peace offensive

Though US President Trump is attempting to resolve the prolonged war in Ukraine, the effectiveness of his methods remains uncertain

As the war in Ukraine enters its third year, US President Donald Trump is trying to broker peace. However, his approach has sparked controversy, as it appears to sideline Ukraine in key negotiations. With Russia still holding a significant portion of Ukrainian territory, the implications of this initiative could reshape the geopolitical landscape of Europe and beyond. The critical questions remain: What would a Trump-led peace deal entail? How would it affect Ukraine's sovereignty? And what choices do Ukraine and Europe have in response? If Ukraine is sidelined in these negotiations, it could be pressured into accepting a deal that legitimises Russia's territorial gains, effectively rewarding aggression. For Russia, such an outcome would be a strategic victory, allowing it to retain control over nearly a fifth of Ukraine's land, including areas it currently does not fully control. A peace deal without Ukraine's full participation and interests at its core would have profound consequences. The Ukrainian government has consistently maintained that any agreement must include the restoration of its 1991 borders and accountability for war crimes committed during the invasion. However, a Trump-negotiated settlement could pressure Kyiv into compromising its sovereignty in exchange for an end to hostilities.



For Europe, such a scenario would be equally troubling. If Russia emerges from the conflict with territorial gains, it could embolden further aggression against NATO's eastern flank. The Kremlin's broader objective has always been to reverse the strategic impact of the Soviet Union's collapse and limit the sovereignty of Eastern European nations. A weakened Ukraine would shift the burden of deterrence squarely onto NATO's shoulders, requiring significant military investments and commitments to prevent further Russian expansion. The effectiveness of Trump's initiative is highly uncertain. While a ceasefire might reduce immediate bloodshed, it would not necessarily lead to lasting stability. If Ukraine is forced into a compromised peace, resistance movements could emerge, leading to prolonged low-intensity conflict. Additionally, the global implications of a weakened Ukraine extend beyond Europe. A victorious Russia could inspire China to take a more aggressive stance on Taiwan, believing that the West lacks the resolve to uphold international law. Trump's initiative to end the Ukraine war could mark a turning point in the conflict, but the manner in which it is pursued will determine its impact. If Ukraine is sidelined and forced into territorial concessions, the consequences could be dire—not just for Kyiv but for the entire European security framework. While a peace deal might bring temporary relief, a settlement that fails to address Ukraine's sovereignty could embolden Russia and reshape the global balance of power in ways that will be felt for decades to come. The choices made in the coming months will define the future of Ukraine, Europe, and world security.

When this stress is released, it results in earthquakes—ranging from minor to devastating. History has shown us the potential destruction of earthquakes. The 2001 Bhuj earthquake in Gujarat, which registered 7.7 on the Richter scale, resulted in over 20,000 fatalities and left entire towns in rubble. If a similar earthquake event were to strike Delhi-NCR, the aftermath could be even more disastrous. Simulations from global seismic studies, including the USGS PAGER system and the GEM Global Seismic Risk Map, indicate that a 7.7-magnitude earthquake in Delhi could result in between 150,000 to 250,000 deaths. The combination of a dense population, ageing infrastructure, and unplanned urbanisation makes the capital particularly vulnerable to widespread devastation. One major concern facing the city is the quality of construction.

PICTALK



A black-naped oriole perches on a bloomed cotton tree, in Nadia

The road to change: A story of hope in Uttarakhand's remote Villages

As government initiatives push forward rural road development, the hope remains that these villages will soon find themselves linked to a future of greater possibilities

In the mountains, roads are more than just paths from one place to another—they are lifelines. They connect people to schools, hospitals, and markets, making daily life easier and opportunities more accessible. For many remote villages in Uttarakhand, however, the wait for a proper road continues, shaping everyday realities in ways that outsiders rarely see. In Surag and Bhagdhanu villages of Garud Block, Bageshwar District, the absence of a proper road is a challenge that residents navigate every day. The people here have adapted—carrying essentials on foot, finding their ways to reach schools and markets, and supporting each other through difficult times. Yet, the dream of a well-built road remains. Kedar Singh, 70, has spent a lifetime in Surag. He describes how unpaved, uneven roads make even the simplest tasks difficult, especially during the monsoon. "When it rains, the paths become slippery, making it hard for both people and animals to move. We take our cattle to graze on the



mountains, but during the rains, they often slip on the muddy paths and fall down the slopes. It's heartbreaking to see, and it makes our work much harder." For many, the challenge is not just about movement but about access to essential services. Nandi Devi, 45, explains how women and elderly residents face particular difficulties: "When someone falls ill, finding transport is nearly impossible. Vehicles don't come here because of the poor road conditions. We have to rely on each other and make do with what we have."

A Journey to Education
For students, an incomplete road is more than an inconvenience—it shapes their future. Bhavana Rawal, a 10th-grade student, walks 5 km every day on an unpaved

road to reach her school in Sailani, 9 km away. "Most of the time, we manage, but during the rains, we arrive at school covered in mud. On some days, we can't go at all," she says. Kavita, 18, has similar concerns. "During the monsoon and winter, getting to school is incredibly difficult. The steep paths become dangerous, and there is always the fear of slipping. Sometimes, we miss school for days, which affects our studies."

The Road Ahead
Efforts have been made over the years to bring road connectivity to Surag and Bhagdhanu. A survey for the road's construction was conducted, and discussions continued resolving land-related concerns. Local leaders, like village head Champa Devi,

have been advocating for progress, and there is optimism that change will come. In Uttarakhand, over 33,500 km of roads have already been built, with 171 km of new roads planned for 2024-25 under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Across the state, better road connectivity has opened doors to education, healthcare, and employment. There is hope that the Rs 70,000 crore allocated in the Union Budget for rural roads will also reach villages like Surag and Bhagdhanu, ensuring that they, too, become part of this expanding network. For now, the people of these villages continue their journeys—on foot, through difficult terrain, with patience and resilience. But with consistent efforts from local communities, government agencies, and policymakers, the day is not far when these paths will finally be paved, bringing with them new possibilities for those who have waited the longest.

(The Author writes on development and a resident of Bageshwar district, Uttarakhand. Views are personal. Charkha features)



HEMA RAWAL

A reminder of Delhi's seismic vulnerability

The 4.0 magnitude earthquake that shook Delhi-NCR recently underscores Delhi's alarming seismic risks, given its location on active fault lines



SATENDRA SINGH

In the early morning of February 17, 2025, the residents of Delhi-NCR awakened by a sudden unexpected jolt awakening due to a tremor. A 4.0-magnitude earthquake struck the region, with its epicentre located near Dhaula Kuan, Delhi, sending shockwaves throughout the city along with neighbouring NCR. Although the quake was relatively minor, its impact felt stronger because it originated from a shallow depth and was intensified by widespread fear of bigger earthquakes. People hurriedly evacuated their homes, buildings swayed and social media was abuzz with concern.

This event served as yet another reminder that Delhi remains dangerously vulnerable to seismic shock vulnerability to seismic activity. Delhi hazily sits on several active fault lines, including the Delhi-Haridwar Ridge and the Mahendragarh-Dehradun fault. The city falls in Seismic Zone IV and is recognised as being at high risk for earthquakes. Its closeness to the Himalayas, one of the most seismically active areas globally, further increases its risk. According to geoscientists, the Indian plate is continually pushing beneath the Eurasian plate at a rate of about 47 mm per year, generating significant underground stress.

When this stress is released, it results in earthquakes—ranging from minor to devastating. History has shown us the potential destruction of earthquakes. The 2001 Bhuj earthquake in Gujarat, which registered 7.7 on the Richter scale, resulted in over 20,000 fatalities and left entire towns in rubble. If a similar earthquake event were to strike Delhi-NCR, the aftermath could be even more disastrous. Simulations from global seismic studies, including the USGS PAGER system and the GEM Global Seismic Risk Map, indicate that a 7.7-magnitude earthquake in Delhi could result in between 150,000 to 250,000 deaths. The combination of a dense population, ageing infrastructure, and unplanned urbanisation makes the capital particularly vulnerable to widespread devastation. One major concern facing the city is the quality of construction.

First and foremost, raising awareness and ensuring preparedness should be a top priority. Every household needs to have a well-defined earthquake survival plan. Schools and workplaces should regularly conduct earthquake drills to prepare individuals for how to react during tremors. Simple actions, like securing heavy furniture, identifying



Many buildings, especially in older areas and unauthorised settlements, are not designed to endure strong earthquakes. Although there are strict regulations set by the National Building Code and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), enforcement often remains weak. High-rise buildings and even some government facilities in the region frequently lack the necessary retrofitting to enhance their earthquake resistance. With over 30 million people living in Delhi-NCR, the scale of destruction from a significant earthquake could be unimaginable. So, what steps can be taken? Demolishing all unsafe buildings and reconstructing them with seismic-resistant technology is neither practical nor economically viable. However, sincere efforts can be made to raise awareness about the earthquake risk and ensure people are prepared for a potential major earthquake in Delhi.

Safe areas in homes, and having emergency kits ready, can greatly improve safety. The government also needs to take necessary actions in this regard. A comprehensive structural audit of buildings, particularly those constructed before modern seismic standards were established, is urgently required. Buildings that fail to meet safety criteria should be reinforced and retrofitted. It is essential to enforce the use of earthquake-resistant construction methods in new projects. Retrofitting at-risk buildings may be expensive, but it is a crucial investment for protecting lives. Additionally, public infrastructure needs to be reassessed. Bridges, flyovers, and metro stations need to be evaluated for their ability to withstand seismic activity. Several cities like Tokyo and San Francisco have successfully implemented advanced technology to make buildings more earthquake-proof. Delhi should look to these global examples to reduce the risk of widespread casualties. A city that is well-prepared for disasters always invests in the education and awareness of its residents. Creating an Earthquake Awareness Museum in Delhi, akin to the one in Bhuj, Gujarat, could make a significant impact on

SEVERAL CITIES LIKE TOKYO AND SAN FRANCISCO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE BUILDINGS MORE EARTHQUAKE-PROOF. DELHI SHOULD LOOK TO THESE GLOBAL EXAMPLES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF WIDESPREAD CASUALTIES

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PEACE TALK WITHOUT UKRAINE

Madam — It is indeed a strange move that Ukraine is not involved in the peace talks being held to bring the Ukraine war to an end. America is holding talks with Russia, the country that pounds Ukraine. Any meaningful negotiation should be between the countries on the war and others may facilitate reaching a settlement to end the war. In the process, any other country may help but not keep the victim behind the screen. Ukraine has unnecessarily taken up war with Russia. The demand of Russia was that Ukraine should not take membership in NATO as it disturbs its security concerns. For NATO also Ukraine joining the group will add to its strategic security concerns. That is why it extended all possible help, like weapons and funds, except for its soldiers to Ukraine. The sanction against buying Russian fuel also proved to be a failure, as all the EU members were buying the same Russian fuel through India. Ultimately Ukraine is at a loss but gives a sound lesson to others not to depend on others' strength to wage a war, but instead to sort the issues out through diplomatic strength. It is also time to remember the moral story that when two parties decide to fight each other, there are always other parties to reap rich harvests. The giants in the field of weapons production found Ukraine a flourishing market to pump in weapons. It is also time to rethink before deciding to enter the war field, over-assuming one's strength.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

WHO RECEIVED \$21 MILLION FROM US?

Madam — US President Donald Trump has once again questioned the United States' decision to allocate \$21 million for voter turnout efforts in India. Speaking at the FII PRIORITY Summit in Miami, he said, "\$21 million for voter turnout, why do we need to spend \$21 million for voter turnout in India?" Trump expressed his respect for India and its Prime Minister Narendra Modi but wondered why the US needs to spend millions on voter turnout in a foreign country. He further argued that

Tharoor praises PM Modi's achievements



Senior Congress leader and MP Shashi Tharoor's praise for PM Modi's achievements during his recent visit to the US, followed by his article in a national daily praising Kerala's startup economy under the

ruling LDF alliance, has not gone down well with his party leaders. In a stifling political atmosphere where political parties are baying for each other's blood, his praise does not help his party's attempts to target the NDA and the LDF governments on these issues.

But Tharoor, a former diplomat and well-known for his intellect, is a rare class of politician who has the spine to speak their mind. He has proven time and again that he is a true statesman who deeply believes in democratic values. On his criticism, he has further clarified that we cannot always speak only in terms of party interests. Thus, his principled political behaviour is a lesson for all political leaders.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

India, with its strong economy and high tariffs on US goods, doesn't need such financial support.

"They got a lot of money. They're one of the highest taxing countries in the world in terms of us. We can hardly get in there because their tariffs are so high. Hence, the \$21 million allocation was part of a larger list of international aid programmes cancelled by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), headed by Elon Musk. There is no doubt a lot of money, white and Black, is used. Then who knows that foreign funding is also not another source? Hope the NDA government should come out clearly on who revived this 21-million-dollar (about 176 crore rupees) and how this money was distributed. As reported earlier, the money can't be received by the Election Commission legally.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

MULTILINGUALISM FOSTER UNITY

Madam — A recent incident highlights the importance of embracing multilingualism in India's diverse political landscape. During the INDIA bloc meeting in Patna,

DMK leader TR Baalu requested a translation of Bihar CM Nitish Kumar's Hindi speech into English, as DMK chief MK Stalin was unable to follow Hindi. The request was met with a sharp reaction from Kumar, who emphasised that leaders should understand Hindi, leading to an uncomfortable moment for the DMK delegation. The DMK's resistance to the three-language formula stems from its commitment to preserving Tamil. While this is admirable, instances like these underline how knowing a third language, including Hindi, can be a practical asset. Whether for employment, travel, or national collaboration, multilingual ability fosters inclusivity and avoids such avoidable embarrassments. Balancing linguistic pride with pragmatic multilingualism is key. Leaders and citizens alike must view additional language skills as tools for growth rather than threats to cultural identity.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES IN LIFE

Those who exhibit positive behaviour and make righteous choices excel and live a meaningful life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Yes, there are five choices; by making them we can excel in life. These are to become good people. We know whom we call good. They are good in their behaviour, choices, etc. The next level is of those, who are not only good but they mostly follow dharma also, which pleases God. The next level is that of welfare workers, who dedicate their lives to the service of humanity without any selfish motive. Out of the followers of dharma, God appoints some as His (nimitta) instrument to carry out activities for God to uphold dharma. The top-most level of course is of bhaktas (devotees) of God. I will now give details regarding how one can become these five and what benefits one will derive by doing so.

To be good in spiritual parlance means to have the highest percentage of the mode of goodness. There are three modes, which are: goodness, passion and darkness. They are always competing with us. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 14.10) The mode of goodness is illuminating and free from diseases on account of purity. (14.6) The mode of passion suffers from the fault of attachment. (14.7) One is too attached to certain acts and their results. Unfortunately, the results are not in our hands. (2.47) One, therefore, suffers from anxiety, fear, depression, etc.



The mode of darkness deludes, which gives rise to many faults like carelessness. (14.8) Lord Krishna has set out in great detail about activities in goodness in the Bhagavad-Geeta. If we imbibe them, the percentage of the mode of goodness will gradually increase in us. There are many benefits in doing so and the best is goodness being the stepping stone to devotional life—the highest, and good karmaphalas of course. The next level is of persons, who strictly follow dharma besides being good.

This sets them apart from the masses. One is aligned with the plan of God for us, who is for upholding dharma. God even incarnates to do so. (6.7) We know what dharma is; it is the highest moral and religious principle. Benefits are many including accumulating pious karmas. The third higher level is that of welfare workers. God promises no 'durgati' (bad end) for such persons. (6.40) This is a big achievement because old age and bad ends are very scary prospects for human beings. Lord Krishna has singled out King Janaka as the role model in the Bhagavad-Geeta (3.20) in this connection.

The next higher level is that of 'nimittas' (instruments) of God; He chooses them from those who are habitually followers of dharma and are inclined to serve God as Arjuna did. God does everything as a karta for them and they get credit for the acts done. (11.33) The topmost category is those of devotees of God. Their rise is from being good people to strict followers of dharma. Then, they do spiritual practices like praying, darshan of God's Deities, offering obeisance to God, chanting of God's names and mantras, dhyan of God, thanking God for favours done, etc.

They become very dear to God, who is everything. (7.19) The top-most benefit of being a devotee of God is liberation in a few lives. (6.45) I am going to describe the benefits in greater detail because these are the highest. God guides, and He, being omniscient, knows what will work every time. I have made a habit of praying for guidance anytime I have some doubts about something. I have been surprised by God's response. They are no longer intuitions because they work. The same happens in the case of help. God helps His devotees like one cannot even dream of.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher, views are personal)

Beyond the boundary: The passion, intelligence and legacy of cricket



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Cricket, the game of glorious uncertainties, is almost a religion in our country. It often gets more attention than other sports but then you have to play it to experience its magic



There are people who frown upon what they view as the obsessive interest that many Indians have in cricket and, to a lesser extent, soccer. One wonders how many of them are familiar with Rudyard Kipling's reference to the "flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddled oafs at the goal" in his poem, *The Islander*, first published in *The Times*, London, on January 4, 1902. One also wonders whether even those who are familiar are aware that any attempt to cite the quote in vindication of their position, can run into a squall.

He wrote the poem in anger, as he felt that the English cricket team that was on an ashes tour of Australia in 1901-02, was getting more attention from the public than the British soldiers who were dying in the Boer War in South Africa, which was then limping towards an end. People paid lip service to their valour and "Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contented your souls/ With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddled oafs at the goals."

It is clear from the lines that follow that Kipling's rebuke was addressed not primarily at Britishers who played cricket and soccer but his countrymen in general for not doing enough to cope with the challenges that were going to confront the British empire—of which he was an unabashed apologist. These read, "Given to strong delusion, wholly believing a lie, / Ye saw that the land lay fenceless, and ye let the months go by/Waiting some easy wonder, hoping some saving sign/Idle—openly idle—in the lee of the forespent Line. / Idle—except for your boasting—and what is your boasting worth/If ye grudge a year of service to the lordliest life on earth?"

The reference in the last line was to conscription for military service that many in Britain abhorred. Let us, however, not digress, especially when it not even caused by "perfume from a dress"—as TS Eliot puts it in *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. Our original concerns were cricket and soc-



INTELLIGENCE WAS NEEDED TO TAILOR ONE'S BATTING AND/OR BOWLING TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF THE PITCH AND THE NATURE OF THE OUTFIELD, THE MIND HAD TO BE SET TO WORK TO FIND OUT THE VULNERABILITIES OF THE PLAYERS OF THE OPPOSING SIDE, AND DEVISE THE STRATEGY TO WIN A MATCH

cer, to which we must now revert. I have never played much soccer. I played cricket for my College (Presidency) and clubs (Union Sporting and Dakshin Kolikata Sangsad), in Kolkata in the 1950s. Even at those levels—by no means lofty—I realised that playing required a lot of intelligence and application of mind, intense concentration, reflection, enormous will power and determination, courage, considerable physical fitness and huge reserves of stamina.

Intelligence was needed to tailor one's batting and/or bowling to meet the demands of the pitch and the nature of the outfield. The mind had to be set to work to find out the vulnerabilities of the players of the opposing side, and devise the strategy to win a match. Determination was needed to continue fighting even when the odds were heavily loaded against one, will power to calm the butterflies that began in fluttering in one's stomach as one walked out to bat and took guard, and courage not to run away from fast bowling on a wicket with uneven bounce where one could get hurt any moment.

The matches we played were mostly for a day. As an opening batsman, I could be at the wicket for a maximum period of three hours. As a first-change medium pacer, I bowled a maximum of eight overs in two spells. As the skipper of my college team, I fielded mostly at first slip or short square leg, which meant I did not have to do much running around. Yet I was pretty much drained out at the end of it all. Cricket matches are war by other means among well-established rivals, and particularly so when it comes to India and Pakistan, or

England and Australia for the ashes. It, however, also has other dimensions. If history, to quote TS Eliot again—this time from *Gerontion*—"has many cunning passages, contrived corridors," cricket has its tantalising moments and amusing anecdotes.

Several of the latter relate to Dr WG Grace, a legend of English cricket who had an MRCS and LRCP against his name. In one of these, he had gone to a village to play in a charity match, and a massive crowd had turned out to watch. A huge cheer rent the sky as he walked to the wicket and took guard. Then the unthinkable happened. A village lad who was bowling shattered his stumps with the devil of a delivery. The umpire signalled "out." A deadly hush fell on the ground. Grace did not move. He looked at the bowler and said, "All of these people have come to see WG Grace bat and not your monkey tricks. So go back and start bowling."

There are stories relating to India as well. One of these is about Ganesh Bose who, along with his brother, Kartik Bose—both my maternal grand-uncles—constituted the bedrock of Bengal's batting from the late 1920s to late 1940s. A dashing batsman, he was once out to a rank bad shot in a critical match. One of his maternal uncles, who was among the spectators, rushed to him as he returned to the pavilion, and unleashed a mouthful of colourful abuses. Ganesh Bose glared at him for a moment and then said between his teeth, "I would have buried you here had you not been my maternal uncle (mama na hole tomake eikhane punte pheltam in Bengali). There are many stories about Kartik Bose too.

There was a good spinner who played college and club cricket and kept long hair, which fell on his eyes every time he bowled. Watching him at the Cricket Association of Bengal's nets at the Eden Gardens, which he conducted, Bose had asked him several times to cut his hair. As the spinner showed no sign of complying, he summoned one of Kolkata's many roadside barbers who sat in the Kolkata Maidan, and, as the nets concluded, had a crew-cut administered to him.

I had to give up cricket shortly after 21. Those days, cricket offered neither money nor the kind of career I wanted. The crunch came when I saw some of those who played with me join the railways at subordinate levels, while my friends at college joined the Indian Railways Traffic Service and the Indian Railways Accounts Service, both central services of the Government of India, as officers.

It was a deeply painful step. My family's link with cricket goes back to the time of Saradaranjan Ray (1858-1925), principal Metropolitan College and elder brother to my maternal great-grandfather, Upendrakishore Ray (1863-1915). A brilliant player himself and dubbed WG Grace of Bengal, he is known as the father of Bengal cricket. His grand nephew, Shivaji Ray, played for Bengal in the Ranji Trophy tournament. A person who was deeply saddened by my decision was another of my maternal grand-uncles, Prabhataranjan Ray. Very fond of me and a great supporter of my cricket, he watched every match I played.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

US exits Paris Agreement again: A setback for global climate action?

As the climate crisis escalates, the US exit threatens to disrupt climate diplomacy, financial commitments and emission reduction efforts worldwide

The newly elected president, Donald J. Trump has ordered the withdrawal of the United States from Paris Agreement on global warming for the second time, the first official exit being on November 4, 2020. The question is—Will the global momentum to cut emissions get stalled once again, as has happened in the past? Will other countries fill up the void or will we witness reduced contributions?

Though the withdrawal announcement of the world's biggest economy aligns with America first in international environmental agreements, can it disrupt the international climate diplomacy, at a critical moment of the climate crisis? With 200

countries committing towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and keeping the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2015 showcased the collective accountability and shared responsibility of nations in addressing climate issues.

In his tenure, the former president, Joseph R Biden Jr has often communicated the vital role of the US in leading the world in curbing fossil fuel pollution. The support to developing countries for transitioning to renewable energy, building resilient infrastructure and adapting to climate change is essential to mitigate the adverse consequences of the



TAVISHI TEWARY

phenomenon and pace up the global progress on emission reduction.

This is in sharp contrast to the recent, yet not surprising announcement. Mr. Trump has often referred to it as an unfair and one-sided agreement that permits the South, particularly China and India to free-ride the economic burden of the North. With less than a year for it to be

effective, the U.S. will soon find itself with the other three countries— Iran, Libya and Yemen— of not being a party to the Paris agreement. This further raises the question of whether must all the countries contribute equally in terms of efforts and resources.

Though the principle of "Common but Differentiated Responsibility" has been undermined at all successive CoPs, does it imply that the developed countries can default on their financial commitments and jeopardise the global climate commitment?

With the announcement of US retrenchment from the agreement in 2017 and the beginning of the formal



withdrawal process, the International Energy Agency reported that global energy-related CO2 emissions increased by 1.7 per cent in 2018, after a steady decline over the last three years. In recent times, as is already known that the NDCs of

individual countries are not in pace with the Paris pact goal. With the withdrawal of the US, will it imply that countries will have to make greater reductions in emissions? Will it be possible? However, the key lessons learned from

this episode underscore the importance of political stability for long-term climate commitments. As an outcome, countries like China will take advantage of this situation by leveraging themselves as reliable and committed partners in global climate leadership. It will also halt the mitigation and adaptation efforts of developing countries due to the disrupted support from developed countries. Ceased contribution of the U.S. to the Green Climate Fund will hinder the availability of critical resources for developing countries. This tops up the already low pledges announced in COP29 at Baku this year compared to the demand by developing countries.

All of this can disrupt critical alliances, deviate nations to scale down their climate commitments and impact the world's ability to fight climate change.

The U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement raises urgent concerns about global climate action. As nations strive to meet climate goals, America's absence could weaken commitments, disrupt funding, and shift leadership dynamics. The world must now adapt, ensuring collective progress continues despite political instability and shifting priorities in international climate diplomacy.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, FORE School of Management, New Delhi; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Rupee falls 7 paise to close at 86.71 against US dollar

The rupee pared initial gains and settled 7 paise lower at 86.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by sustained foreign fund outflows and a recovery in the American currency index. Forex traders said the Indian rupee declined on Friday on weak domestic markets and a recovery in the US dollar index. However, weak crude oil prices cushioned the downside. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a positive note at 86.50 against the greenback. During the session it pared the gains and fell to an intra-day low of 86.77 before ending the session at 86.71 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a loss of 7 paise from its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee appreciated 34 paise to close at 86.64 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.22 per cent higher at 106.61. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.42 per cent to USD 76.16 per barrel in futures trade. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 424.90 points, or 0.56 per cent, to settle at 75,311.06, while the Nifty fell 117.25 points, or 0.51 per cent, to 22,795.90 points.



India's forex reserves drop to \$635.721 billion

Snapping the three-week rising streak, India's forex reserves dropped by USD 2.54 billion to USD 635.721 billion in the week ended February 14, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the reserves had increased by USD 7.654 billion to USD 638.261 billion. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in September 2024. The forex kitty however declined thereafter due to forex market interventions by RBI to reduce volatility in the rupee. For the week ended February 14, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 4.515 billion to USD 539.591 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves, however, increased by USD 1.942 billion to USD 74.15 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 19 million to USD 17.897 billion. India's reserve position with the IMF was up by USD 14 million at USD 4.083 billion in the reporting week, the data showed.



AEPC to expand apparel exports into newer markets

Apparel exporters body AEPC on Friday said it is planning to expand the global reach of Indian apparel in 2025-26 by diversifying into newer and non-traditional markets to boost shipments. The sector's exports rose by 11.6 per cent to about USD 13 billion during April-January 2024-25 despite global headwinds, geopolitical challenges and supply chain disruptions, Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said. "The council has planned to promote the global reach of Indian apparel exports by diversification of markets to newer and non-traditional markets through its export promotion activities in 2025-26," he said.

India needs to cut tariffs for its own good: Niti Aayog

Tariff does not protect any country and India needs to cut tariffs for its own good, irrespective of who tells India to do so, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said on Friday. Addressing the 69th Foundation Day of All India Management Association (AIMA), Subrahmanyam further said that being open to the world has to be among the top five priorities of India if it wants to become a developed country. To cut tariffs, India must complete trade agreements with the European Union, the United Kingdom and other major economies, he added. The Niti Aayog CEO stressed that deregulation at both centre and the state levels are critical for making India a part of the global supply chains. There is interest in India but people visit, see and fly to other countries, he said. Subrahmanyam pointed that Indonesia, Vietnam, Turkey and others have been beneficiaries of 'China plus one' strategy of global companies. He argued that global value

MPC MINUTES Rate cut appropriate monetary policy response: RBI Guv

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra opined that rate reduction was an appropriate monetary policy response at this juncture citing movement of inflation towards the central bank's 4 per cent target, said the MPC meeting minutes released on Friday. Malhotra, along with five other members of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) had voted for a 25 basis points reduction in the short-term lending rate (repo) to 6.25 per cent. The RBI at its meeting held from February 5 to 7 effected the rate cut after a gap of five years. "Given the macroeconomic outlook when inflation is expected to align with the target, and recognising that monetary policy is forward-looking, I view a lower policy rate to be more appropriate at the current juncture," Malhotra said, according to the minutes.

Chairing his first MPC meeting, he had also pointed out that rising uncertainties on global financial markets and trade policy front, coupled with continuing risk of adverse weather events pose risks to



the inflation and growth outlook. While the central bank had reduced the rate, it continued with the neutral stance of monetary policy. "This will provide the flexibility to respond to the evolving macroeconomic environment. By taking this logical course, monetary policy will be able to fulfil its mandate and play its part in the sustainable development of the Indian economy," Malhotra said.

India-US trade pact will be mother of all deals: Goyal

PNS ■ KOCHI

The proposed bilateral trade pact between India and the US will be the "mother of all deals" that will provide huge opportunities for Indians and Americans to work together, Union minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday. Addressing the Invest Kerala Global Summit (IKGS) here, the commerce and industry minister said he has come here to express the central government's solidarity and full support to the event.

His comments also came against the backdrop of differences between the BJP-led Centre and the Kerala government, which is headed by the Left Democratic Front (LDF), on various issues. The minister mentioned about India's Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE and said it was the world's fastest ever negotiated free trade agreement. "We hope to start the process soon for CEPA with Bahrain," he said in the presence of ministers from Bahrain and the UAE. According to Goyal, India is



already in dialogues with the European Union, the UK and Oman for the trade deals. "... we will soon start discussing with the Trump administration of the US a strong, powerful economic engagement and a bilateral trade deal which will be the mother of all deals providing huge opportunities for Indians and Americans to work together and complement each other's strengths in this very turbulent world," the minister said. Highlighting the growth opportunities in Kerala and the country, Goyal told investors not to miss the bus and with respect to the state, not to miss the boat. "... those who miss the boat

to Washington, India and the US announced their commitment to more than double the two-way commerce to USD 500 billion by 2030 and negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025. Normally in a free trade agreement, two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments. During the first term of US President Donald Trump, the two countries had discussed a mini trade deal, but it was shelved by the Joe Biden administration as they were not in favour of such pacts. In 2023, the US-India bilateral trade in goods and services stood at \$190.08 billion (\$123.89 billion in goods and \$66.19 billion in services trade). That year, India's merchandise exports to the US stood at \$83.77 billion, while imports were \$40.12 billion, leaving a trade gap of \$43.65 billion in favour of India.

'NCS portal registered 4 million employers'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Career Service (NCS) portal has mobilized over 440 million vacancies and registered 4 million employers, a top official said. NCS is a mission mode project under Ministry of Labour and Employment that provides a host of career-related services. The information was given by Labour Secretary Sumita Dawra during the first G20 Employment Working Group (EWG) meeting in South Africa that concluded on Friday. Case studies were presented on both eShram and NCS, which drew much interest of delegates of G20 members on India's strides in harnessing technology for the labour market, the ministry said in a statement. As per the case study on NCS portal, Dawra pointed that the portal had mobilized over 440 million vacancies and registered 4 million employers, bridging the gap between job seekers and employers. NCS is also integrated with the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH). Upskilling initiatives in green jobs, AI, and the platform economy were prioritized to meet future workforce demands.

Stock markets fall on FII outflows

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Falling for the fourth straight day, benchmark Sensex declined by nearly 425 points on Friday due to selling in auto, pharma and banking shares and relentless foreign fund outflows. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex dropped 424.90 points or 0.56 per cent to settle at 75,311.06. During the day, it tanked 623.55 points or 0.82 per cent to 75,112.41. The NSE Nifty declined 117.25 points or 0.51 per cent to 22,795.90. In four trading days, the BSE barometer tumbled 685.8 points or 0.90 per cent while the Nifty declined 163.6 points or 0.71 per cent. From the Sensex pack, Mahindra & Mahindra tanked



over 6 per cent. Adani Ports, Tata Motors, Sun Pharma, Power Grid, Zomato, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and UltraTech Cement were also among the laggards. Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro, HCL Tech, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank and NTPC were among the gainers. "A combination of negative factors such as relentless FII selling, falling rupee, expensive valuations and the US threat of reciprocating tariff levies continue to drive investors away from Indian equities. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,311.55 crore on Thursday, according to

exchange data. The BSE midcap gauge declined 1.18 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.43 per cent. Among BSE sectoral indices, auto dropped 2.60 per cent, consumer discretionary (1.49 per cent), oil & gas (1.42 per cent), realty (1.33 per cent), telecommunication (1.19 per cent) and consumer durables (0.87 per cent). Metal emerged as the only gainer and jumped 1.23 per cent. As many as 2,246 stocks declined, while 1,701 advanced and 113 remained unchanged on the BSE. On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark declined 628.15 points or 0.82 per cent and the Nifty went lower by 133.35 points or 0.58 per cent.

ESIC adds 17.01 lakh new members in December

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) added 17.01 lakh new members in December 2024, payroll data released on Friday showed. As many as 20,360 new establishments were brought under the social security ambit of the ESI scheme in December last year, thus ensuring social security to more workers, a labour ministry statement said. As per the data, out of the total 17.01 lakh employees added during the month, 8.22 lakh employees amounting to around 48.35 per cent of the total registrations belong to the age group of up to 25 years. Also, the net enrolment of female members was 3.46 lakh. Besides, a total of 73 transgender employees were registered under the ESI scheme during the month, affirming the commitment of ESIC to deliver its benefits to every section of the society. The payroll data is provisional since the data generation is a continuous exercise, it stated.



'India to harvest bumper wheat crop during rabi'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is likely to harvest bumper wheat crop during the current rabi (winter-sown) season on the back of higher acreage and conducive weather conditions so far, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Friday. India produced a record 1,132.92 lakh tonnes of wheat in 2023-24. "We will have bumper wheat production this year. Crop health is good," Chouhan told reporters here. The area under coverage of wheat stood at 320 lakh

hectare in the rabi season of 2024-25 crop year (July-June) as against 315.63 lakh hectare in the preceding year. Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi, too, expected bumper wheat production in 2024-25 on the back of higher sowing areas. He said the crop condition is good so far with normal day-night temperature. On Thursday, the Department of Food and

Public Distribution tightened the stock limit on wheat for wholesalers, retailers and processors to keep prices under check and asserted that there is ample stock of food grain in the country. The department said it is maintaining a close watch over the stock position of wheat to control prices and ensure easy availability in the country. It takes suitable appropriate interventions to ensure price stability

for the consumers in the country. As per the revised stock limit to be applicable till March 31, the government said traders/wholesalers can keep only 250 tonnes of wheat as against the earlier norm of 1,000 tonnes. For retailers, the stock limit has been revised to 4 tonnes for each retail outlet. The limit was 5 tonnes earlier. "As part of continuous efforts to moderate prices of wheat, the central government has decided to revise the wheat stock limit applicable until 31st March 2025," an official statement said.

India ready to meet 270 GW of peak power demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is ready to meet up to 270 GW of peak power demand during summer season this year and the government will make it mandatory for thermal plants, especially those using imported coal, to run at full capacity, Union Power Secretary Pankaj Agarwal said on Friday. In 2024, the country was able to meet the peak power demand of 250 GW during summer against the projected

demand of 260 GW. Addressing a press conference here, Agarwal informed that thermal power plants in the country have sufficient coal stocks of 51 million tonnes, which is enough for generating electricity for 21 days. "If we require we will invoke Section 11 (of Electricity Act) for meeting the demand," Agarwal assured. The Section 11 allows the government to mandate power producers to operate plants in a specified manner in extraor-

inary circumstances. Earlier last year, the power ministry had invoked Section 11 and mandated plants using imported coal to run at full capacity to avoid any shortage of power in the country in view of demand projections. Union Power Minister Manohar Lal who was also present on the occasion said that there is sufficient domestic coal at present and the country's peak power demand is expected to touch 335 GW in 2030. Power secretary Agarwal

informed that India had met peak power demand of 250 GW during summer season in 2024 against the projected demand of 260 GW. He also assured that India is ready to meet the 270 GW of power demand during summers this year. About the supply of fuel for coal-based thermal plants, the minister said that the proportion of blending of biomass pellet will be increased to 7 per cent from existing five per cent from April 1, 2025.

Barytes, felspar, mica, quartz are 'major' minerals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday said that it has changed the classification of barytes, felspar, mica and quartz into the category of major minerals. This move would pave the way for an increased exploration and scientific mining of such resources that are primary source of many critical minerals. Earlier, these were classified as minor minerals. The Ministry of Mines vide gazette notification dated 20th February, 2025 has shifted minerals Barytes, Felspar, Mica and Quartz from the list of minor minerals to the category of major minerals," an official statement said. The development came on the heels of the government's National Critical Mineral Mission which seeks exploration and mining of critical minerals within the country including recovery of these minerals from various mines, overburden and tailings. Quartz, felspar and mica are found in pegmatite rocks, which are an important source of many critical minerals such as beryl, lithium, niobium, tantalum, molybdenum, tin, titanium and tungsten among others. These minerals have important role in various new technologies, in energy transition, spacecraft industries, and healthcare sector, among others.



chain needs more than PFI (production linked incentive) -- it needs deregulation and skilling too. The Niti Aayog CEO termed the paperwork involved in business horrendous, which is killing the MSMEs. According to him, the Niti Aayog is trying to push India into global supply chains in different sectors. Along with manufacturing,

he opined that education and agriculture have to be the top three priorities of the country to become a developed country. He said that India has a conundrum of a large population with vacant jobs because of a paucity of relevant skills. Agriculture has to be transformed by shifting it away from rice and wheat to horticulture, floriculture, dairy and such activities, Subrahmanyam added. Referring to the disparity between states, he said that the states that offer the best education and the best business experience are richer and growing richer.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
PROCUREMENT NOTICE
 NIT No. 2024-30/SDD/GHMC/2024-25, Dt: 21-02-2025 published on 'e-procurement platform'.
 The details can be seen by logging @ <https://tender.e-procurement.gov.in>. The date of events is detailed below: Name of the Work: 1. Desilting of Nallas and Storm Water Drains by Manual and Mechanical means for period from January 2025 to October 2025 in 147-ward Bansalpet, 148-Rangasapet, 150-Monda market Corporation Dn. Under Cir 30, Begumpet, Sec-3ad Zone, GHMC, Sec-3ad for the year 2025-26. Estimate Amount: Rs. 31.25 lakhs, Bid Document Download Start Date & Time: 24-02-2025 @ 02:00 PM, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: 05-03-2025 @ 02:00 PM, Name & Address of Officer Call No.: EE, Circle-30, GHMC, Sec-3ad, Call No.: 7331181426 / 7995468056. Address of the officer concerned: Sr. Subramanya SVNRD, Executive Engineer, Circle-30, Begumpet, Sec-3ad Zone, GHMC. Further details can be seen at e-Procurement @ <https://tender.wangara.gov.in> Sd/- Executive Engineer, Circle-30, Begumpet. R.O.No: 10511-PP/LAD/147/2024-25, Dt: 21-02-2025

Pace issues can't diminish the emotional power of *Kaushaljis Vs Kaushal*

TEJAL SINHA
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Plot:

Kaushaljis Vs Kaushal follows the story of Kaushalji (Ashutosh Rana), an accountant in the small town of Kannauj and his wife (Sheeba Chaddha), a homemaker with a passion for perfume making. Despite their individual interests, both are caught up in the daily grind of life and unable to pursue their dreams. Their son, Yug (Pavai Gulati), works in an agency in Noida, often criticising his parents for their outdated ways. However, Yug's life takes a turn when he meets Kiara (Isha Talwar), a free-spirited woman who challenges his rigid views on life. Their relationship becomes the catalyst for change, inspiring Kaushalji and his wife to embrace modernity, even to the extent of considering mutual separation to pursue their personal dreams. The film explores the emotional rollercoaster that follows as the family learns to navigate their relationships, values and self-identity.

Analysis:

Seemaa Desai's direction brings a refreshing yet relatable perspective on generational gaps and evolving family dynamics. The film shines a light on how modernity often clashes with traditional values, and the emotional journey of Kaushalji and his wife emphasises the importance of rediscovering one's passions. Desai balances the humor and emotional depth well, making the film accessible to a wide audience. At its core, *Kaushaljis Vs Kaushal* is a reflection on how the fast-paced, career-driven life of the younger generation sometimes overlooks the dreams and desires of the older generation. While the pace feels slow in the first half, it picks up in the latter part



DIRECTED BY:
 Seemaa Desai

PRODUCED BY: Jyoti

CAST: Ashutosh Rana, Sheeba Chaddha, Pavai Gulati, Isha Talwar, Brijendra Kala, Grusha Kapoor

Streaming on:
 JioHotstar

RATING: 3.5/5

as the emotional stakes grow, leaving the audience invested in the characters' growth and eventual realisation.

Highlights:

The strength of the film lies in its relatability, as it speaks to anyone who has struggled to balance family expectations with personal desires. The key moment of the

story—when Kaushalji and his wife decide to pursue their own dreams—becomes a turning point not just for the characters but for the viewers as well. The film encourages the audience to reflect on their own relationships with family, especially the aspirations of parents who often sacrifice their dreams for the sake of their children. The humour is well-timed and

the dialogues thoughtfully explore modern relationships. While the first half could have been tighter, the second half comes together beautifully with a satisfying and heartwarming climax that ties up the emotional arc of the characters.

Drawbacks:

The film's pacing is somewhat uneven,

especially in the first half. Some scenes feel drawn out and could have been trimmed down to maintain the narrative's momentum. There are moments where the storyline lingers too long on certain aspects, such as the initial family dynamics and the setup for the shift in Kaushalji and his wife's thinking. Though these moments are integral to building the emotional foundation of the film, they slow down the plot. Despite these pacing issues, the latter part of the film, particularly the climax, more than makes up for the slow start with its emotional payoff and satisfying resolution.

Performances:

The ensemble cast of *Kaushaljis Vs Kaushal* brings immense depth to the film, with each actor giving an outstanding performance. Ashutosh Rana, in the role of Kaushalji, delivers a nuanced performance that beautifully captures the inner conflict of a man caught between tradition and change. His body language, expressions, and attention to detail make his portrayal both realistic and endearing. Sheeba Chaddha complements Rana's performance perfectly. As Kaushalji's wife, her portrayal of a homemaker whose life revolves around family expectations resonates with authenticity. Her eyes alone speak volumes, reflecting the silent sacrifices of countless women in similar situations.

Pavai Gulati as Yug brings a refreshing energy to the film. He plays the character with conviction, capturing the youthful idealism and frustration of a son who feels disconnected from his parents' lifestyle. Isha Talwar's Kiara is equally captivating, portraying a modern woman who challenges Yug's worldview. Talwar's charm and charisma elevate the film, and her on-screen chemistry with Gulati feels natural and convincing. The supporting cast, including Grusha Kapoor, Diksha Joshi and Brijendra Kala, also add value to the film, contributing to its overall warmth and depth.

Technical Aspects:

On the technical front, *Kaushaljis Vs Kaushal* excels in creating a visual atmosphere that enhances the emotional tone of the story. The cinematography beautifully captures the contrast between the traditional setting of Kannauj and the modern, fast-paced world of Noida. The film uses this setting to mirror the generational divide, with the town representing the older generation's traditional values and Noida symbolising the younger generation's modern outlook. The music, which includes Qawwali and light-hearted tunes, complements the narrative perfectly, providing a subtle yet effective backdrop to the unfolding story.

Seemaa Desai's direction is commendable, especially in handling the film's emotional arc. While the pacing issues in the first half may detract from the overall flow, the film eventually picks up momentum and delivers a satisfying conclusion. The writing is another strength of the film, with dialogues that are both sharp and heartfelt, making the characters' emotional journeys feel real and relatable.

Verdict:

Kaushaljis Vs Kaushal is an endearing and insightful film that explores the intersection of family values, personal growth, and modernity. The film is a celebration of self-discovery, reminding viewers of the importance of pursuing one's dreams, even in the face of familial obligations. Despite its pacing issues in the first half, the film's emotional depth and the powerful performances from the cast, especially Ashutosh Rana and Sheeba Chaddha, make it a worthwhile watch. It is a perfect film to watch with family, offering not only entertainment but also a valuable lesson on family bonds, dreams, and the balance between tradition and modernity. Streaming on Jio Hotstar, *Kaushaljis Vs Kaushal* is a heartfelt movie that deserves to be seen, especially over a weekend with loved ones.

'Drawing inspiration from real-life experiences gave me the emotional depth for *Mrs.*'

PNSI HYDERABAD

In ZEE5's latest movie *Mrs.*, Sanya Malhotra delivers a remarkable portrayal of Richa, a woman caught between traditional expectations, family responsibilities and her own dreams. The film explores the struggles of women who are burdened with managing a household while their personal aspirations are often sidelined. In an insightful conversation, Sanya shared her thoughts on the role and how it allowed her to reflect on stereotypes deeply ingrained in society. Sanya acknowledged that portraying Richa was both challenging and deeply moving, as her character mirrors the experiences of millions of women. "Portraying Richa made me reflect on the deeply ingrained stereotypes, especially the idea that managing a home is solely a woman's responsibility," Sanya shared. She emphasised the importance of equal sharing of responsibilities, noting that the film reinforced the need to break outdated norms. "In reality, it's essential for everyone to understand that it's important to share the workload equally. The film highlights how crucial it is to recognize the effort that goes into these everyday tasks and to challenge the traditional notions of gender roles."

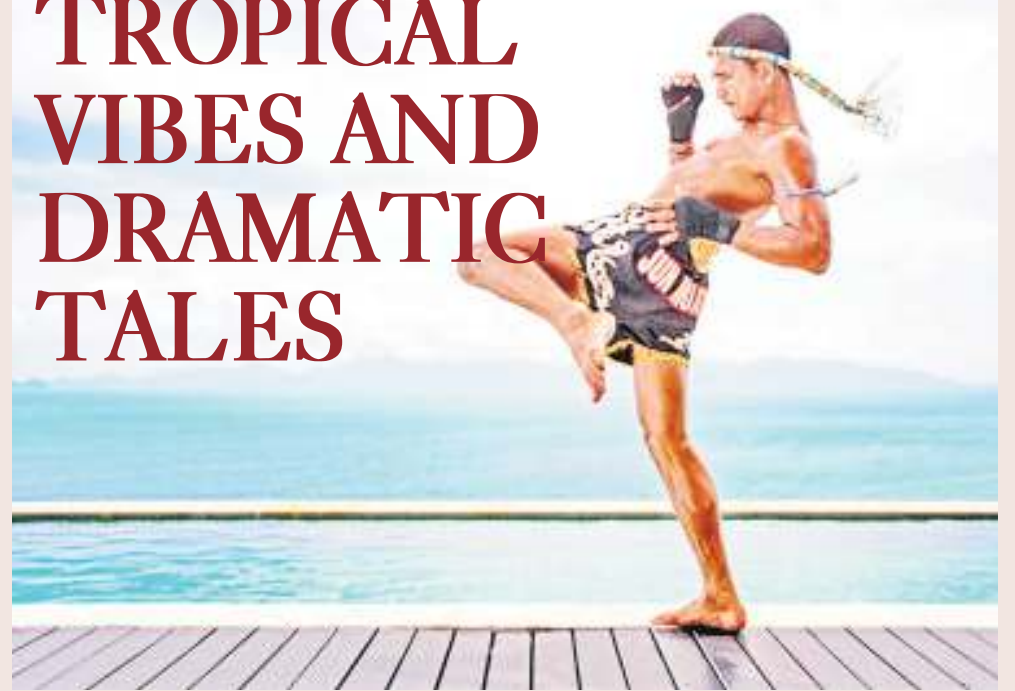
Richa's emotional journey, particularly her aspiration to

become a dancer while being forced into domestic chores, offered Sanya a unique opportunity to dive into the internal struggle of women who are often expected to give up their dreams for the sake of family. "Richa's emotional journey was both challenging and moving because her story mirrors the reality of millions of homemakers," Sanya explained. "Drawing inspiration from real-life experiences gave me the emotional depth and authenticity needed to bring Richa's internal struggles to life." For Sanya, it was important to develop a backstory for the character to better understand her motivations and balance the emotional complexities. "For every character I work on, I love developing a backstory. This helps me navigate and balance the journey of the character," she added.

Sanya also spoke highly of her co-star, Nishant Dahiya, who played her husband Diwakar in the film. "He played Diwakar's character with so much empathy," Sanya praised. She recalled a memorable moment during the script reading. "I remember the first time we were reading the scripts over a Zoom call, I texted Arati (Director Arati Kadav) on the side saying, 'Oh my god, he is so much into Diwakar's character!' I was like, 'What's going on?' But then I realised, he was just so deeply connected to the character, and I feel that's the only way you can truly play such roles."

In *Mrs.*, Richa's journey to reclaim her dreams amidst mounting expectations and a husband who is oblivious to her struggles paints a poignant picture of many women's lives. Sanya's portrayal of Richa not only highlights the sacrifices women make but also urges a broader conversation about shared responsibility in relationships and the importance of supporting women in their dreams.

TROPICAL VIBES AND DRAMATIC TALES



Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui partnered with Max to host a viewing party of the HBO Original Series *The White Lotus Season three*. The pool and beachside of the resort played host to the much-anticipated first episode on February 17, 2025 as guests of the resort and friends of Four Seasons gathered to celebrate the Emmy-winning original series. Featured in the latest season, the resort's facilities and services are geared up to welcome guests to a place where the tropical beauty of Thailand and a world of drama collide. "It is a privilege and honour to have our property featured on the HBO Original Series *The White Lotus Season three*," says Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui General Manager Jasjit Assi. "We look forward to welcoming our jet-setting guests to showcase the very best of Four Seasons experiences and true Thai hospitality."

From Reel to Real Capturing the essence of Thailand's quintessential island life, guests can relive the show with an immersive experience at various venues across the resort. While the stretch of white sand Main Beach serves as a stunning backdrop to enjoy sunbathing or swimming in the crystal-clear waters, CoCoRum Bar is where all the action is at with lively beverages and bites coming together for a memorable experience. At the resort's hilltop Koh Thai Kitchen, authentic southern Thai cuisine and breathtaking views capturing the rich culture and flavours of Thailand lead the way to the resort's sacred Spirit House - a serene and culturally significant location that embodies

Thai spirituality.

A Delectable Experience by the Sea In addition to the premiere viewing, the beachside experience at the resort is transformed into The White Lotus Bar at CoCoRum, with cabanas, small bites and beverages inspired by the series. The resort's chic poolside lounge with decadent cocktails, CoCoRum emphasizes artisanal spirits and is home to Asia's only rum vault.

With The White Lotus Bar takeover at this iconic venue from February 17 to May 16, 2025, guests can enjoy a special menu of cocktails including one from each of the Four Seasons properties featured in the show:

"It is a privilege and honour to have our property featured on the HBO Original Series *The White Lotus Season three*"

● **PINEAPPLE SUITE:** The tropical flavours of Hawaii are infused into a decadent cocktail inspired by Maui in Season one.

● **THE LOTUS:** Deep within Sicily's romantic charm, the cocktail from Taormina, a location featured in Season two, takes its place on this special menu.

● **COCONUT PARADISE:** Bringing the magic back to the tropics, the cocktail from Koh Samui's iconic filming location for Season three combines the sweet aroma of coconut with the gentle scent of Thai pandan leaves.

Complementing the beverage selection, the resort has also curated a menu of light bites that reflect the signature flavours from the three destinations including Pomelo and Shrimps on rice crackers (Yam Som-O), Guacamole, Wagyu Beef Tostada and Grilled Tiger Prawn Tacos.

what's brewing?

Nitisha

Ajai Sachchar

Sridhar Raju

Priyanka

Pathsetter AI, a leader in AI-driven business analytics, is transforming how organizations harness data to drive smarter, faster, and more confident decision-making. By leveraging cutting-edge artificial intelligence, Pathsetter AI is enabling enterprises to move beyond traditional reporting and unlock real-time, predictive, and prescriptive insights that fuel growth, efficiency, and profitability.

Prasanna Jyothi

Nizam IX of the Asaf Jahi Dynasty, Ronaq Yar Khan, presented the award to the winning artist, Prasanna Jyothi, at the 84th All India Annual Art Exhibition. This year, the exhibition received 250 artworks from various parts of India, out of which 200 were selected for display. A total of 50 awards were distributed, recognizing talent from across the country at the Exhibition Ground in Hyderabad.

Minister of Health, Telangana, Damodara Rajanarasimha, praised the efforts of JMG Groups for their exceptional work in the fields of education, healthcare, business, and women's empowerment by awarding the Rising Telangana CSR Awards to those who have contributed significantly in these sectors. He lauded the group for already presenting the "Medical Ratna Awards" four times and acknowledged their commendable contributions. event was attended by JMG Group Directors Pawan, Srinivas Goud, K. Shiva Kumar, Katta Sunil, Bhagi Reddy, Gangadhar Reddy, Sudhakar Yadav, Vishva and others.

The Telangana American Football Association (Tafa), affiliated with the American Football Federation of India (AFFI), has appointed Chaganla Balvinder Nath as its President for the 2025-2028 term. This appointment marks a significant step in Tafa's mission to promote and develop American football and flag football in Telangana. By focusing on grassroots-level initiatives, Tafa aims to create a strong sporting culture in the state. Tafa President Chaganla Balvinder Nath, General Secretary Sudhakar Rao, India Team Captain G. V. Manikanta Reddy, and AFFI (Mumbai) CEO Sandeep Chaudhary

Srikara Mutual Aided Co-operative Credit Society Limited has successfully completed its remarkable 10-year journey and inaugurated a new branch in Nallagandla, Serilingampally, Hyderabad, Jakkampudi Rajendra Kumar, Jakkampudi Ravindra, Marripudi Chandrasekhar, Jayotsna Alamanda, Narasimha Reddy, Kurapati Sambasiva Raju attended the event.

Fly Chicken, the cult-favorite fried chicken brand, has been launched in Hyderabad, bringing its bold, flavour-packed twist on classic comfort food. Fly Chicken's signature dishes include Crispy Fried Chicken Wings, juicy Tenders, the indulgent Superly Sandwich, and loaded Hot Chicken Fries—each crafted to deliver the perfect balance of heat, crunch, and irresistible flavor.

Barbeque Nation, India's leading casual dining restaurant chain renowned for its unique live grill experience, proudly announces the relocation of its latest outlet at Hyderabad Gachibowli, in Centarus by Phoenix. Strategically situated at prime location in Hyderabad, this newest addition promises to ignite the culinary scene with its signature blend of flavours, ambience, and impeccable hospitality.

FUN

ARCHIE

ARCHIE IS A GOOD GUY, BUT HE'S SO UNCOORDINATED!

I HAVE A DATE WITH YOU FRIDAY? I THOUGHT I HAD A DATE WITH BETTY FRIDAY!

EVEN HIS SCHEDULE IS UNCOORDINATED!

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GEE, I'M GETTING MORE LIKE A TIGER EVERY MINUTE.

HOLD STILL WHILE I DRAW STRIPES.

HOW DO I LOOK?

IT'S SOME IMPROVEMENT.

ROWRR RRRGH RAWRR

I DUNNO, YOU'RE STILL LACKING SOMETHING TIGER-ISH.

PANACHE. THAT'S IT.

HAIT, I'VE GOT SOME PLASTIC VAMPIRE FANGS I CAN PUT IN!

GARFIELD

I MAKE THE WORLD A COOLER PLACE

BUT EVEN I CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH

REALITY CHECK

GARY REGRETTED GIVING BARBA A SECOND CHANCE AFTER SHE RAN AWAY WITH THE DISH WHEN THEY WERE DATING.

I NOTICED YOU ASKED FOR SOME PLACE SETTINGS FOR OUR WEDDINGS WHICH I THOUGHT WAS ODD.

SPEED BUMP

HE SAYS HE ONLY MAKES CRAFT HONEY NOW.

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	
5				6
7			8	
9			10	
			11	
12	13	14	15	
17			18	
19				

NANCY

I'D LIKE TO START WORKING OUT, BUT I CAN'T AFFORD THAT STUFF

FREE WEIGHTS

HEY... NOW YOU'RE TALKIN'

SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Keep live fish in this
- An archer fires this
- Very mean and unkind
- Sad because you are on your own
- Scheme
- A red gemstone
- Defeated
- Wearing nothing
- Stage dramas
- These are pushed around a supermarket

DOWN

- Wear this over clothes to keep them clean
- Sick
- Eat this grain cooked

4 Normal

5 A graceful dancer

6 Loss of eyesight

11 Humans

13 A maker of bread

15 Shed these when crying

16 A worshipped statue

SOLUTION

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

RETURN OF THE DRAGON FINDS ITS STRENGTH IN THE SECOND HALF

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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Pradeep Ranganathan became an overnight star with the success of *Love Today*, which was a massive hit even in Telugu. He not only directed the film but also played the lead role. Now, he returns as the lead actor in *Return of the Dragon*, directed by Ashwath Marimuthu. Anupama Parameswaran and Kayadu Lohar play the female leads, while well-known directors like KS Ravikumar, Gautam Menon and Mysskin appear in acting roles. Here's a look at the story and how the film fares.

STORY

Ragavan (Pradeep Ranganathan), nicknamed "Dragon" in college, is a carefree and mischievous student who never attends classes, takes exams lightly, and spends most of his time with friends. Due to his poor academic record, he is required to write 48 supplementary exams to complete his degree. However, his reckless behavior leads the college principal (Mysskin) to expel him.

Determined to hide the truth from his parents, Ragavan lies that he has secured a job with a salary of Rs 18,000, when in reality, he spends his days idling at a friend's place. His college girlfriend, Keerthi (Anupama Parameswaran), initially supports him but later becomes frustrated with his failures. She eventually leaves him to marry a professor, telling Ragavan that he has failed in every aspect of life—academically, professionally, and personally.

Angered by Keerthi's rejection, Ragavan decides to prove himself. He acquires a fake engineering degree and secures a job at a prestigious software company. His salary soars, and he moves from a slum to a gated community, getting engaged to a wealthy woman, Pallavi (Kayadu Lohar).

Just as life seems to be going smoothly, Ragavan's past catches up with him. The college principal unexpectedly appears at his office, threatening to expose his forged



REVIEW

degree. However, instead of revealing the truth immediately, the principal presents him with a proposal. What does the principal want? How does Ragavan react? What happens to his engagement with Pallavi? The answers unfold in *Return of the Dragon*.

ANALYSIS

Unlike his previous films, where Pradeep Ranganathan served as both director and lead actor, in *Return of the Dragon*, he focuses solely on acting, with Ashwath Marimuthu (*Ori Devuda*) at the helm. The title stems from Ragavan's college nickname, "Dragon," but the significance of the "return" is something the audience must discover while watching.

The film subtly conveys an important message: when someone achieves success through dishonest means, another deserving individual suffers. It also explores the psychological burden of guilt—when given a second chance to correct a mistake, choosing the wrong path can lead to lasting regret. The director effectively delivers this message, though it takes until the second half for the story to delve into its core theme.

The first half of the film is lighthearted, filled with college antics, playful rivalries and humorous moments. While some scenes pro-

vide laughs, the narrative shifts gears when the principal confronts Ragavan just before the interval. The second half takes on a more serious tone, building up to an intense and emotionally charged final act.

The film's climax is particularly gripping, filled with unexpected twists that showcase Ashwath Marimuthu's storytelling skills. The emotional depth peaks in the final moments, with all actors delivering strong performances. The film begins with the principal addressing his students, sharing Ragavan's story as a cautionary tale and this framing device effectively sets up the narrative. While the humor and energy of the first half make for an entertaining watch, it's the second half that elevates the film with its dramatic intensity. One of the standout moments is when Ragavan, after serving time in jail, returns home, and his father assures him that he will always be there for him—a scene that resonates deeply.

PERFORMANCES

Pradeep Ranganathan delivers another compelling performance, particularly excelling in the emotionally charged climax. His natural acting style keeps the character relatable. Mysskin adds depth to his role as

the strict yet layered principal, making his character memorable.

Anupama Parameswaran shines in a brief yet impactful role, leaving a strong impression despite limited screen time. Kayadu Lohar brings glamour to the film and plays her part well. KS Ravikumar, Gautam Menon, and the rest of the cast contribute effectively. Indumathy and George Maryan, playing Ragavan's parents, are perfectly cast, delivering some of the most touching moments in the film.

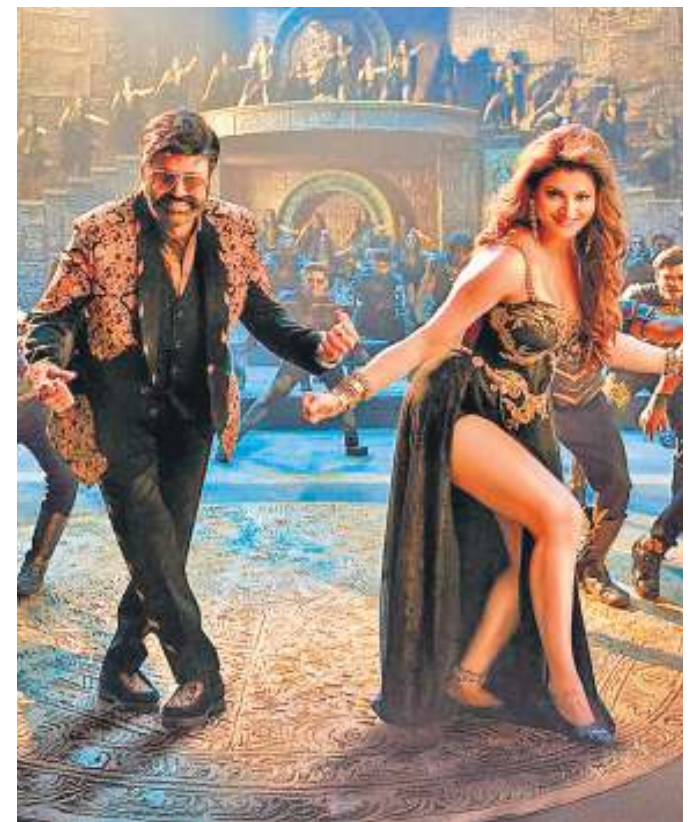
TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The dialogues, especially in the second half, are thought-provoking and enhance the film's impact. Leon James' music and background score are decent but not particularly memorable. Cinematography by Niketh Bommireddy is visually appealing and captures the film's shifts in mood effectively.

VERDICT

Return of the Dragon starts off slowly but picks up after the interval, leading to a gripping second half with an engaging narrative and a strong message. While there are a few cinematic liberties and loopholes, the performances—especially in the latter half—make it a worthwhile watch. If you enjoy a mix of humor, drama, and unexpected twists, this film is worth checking out at least once.

Cast: Pradeep Ranganathan, Anupama Parameswaran, Kayadu Lohar, Mysskin, Gautam Vasudev Menon, KS Ravikumar, and others
Cinematographer: Niketh Bommireddy
Music: Leon James
Producers: Kalpathi S Aghoram, Kalpathi S Ganesh, Kalpathi S Suresh
Writer and Director: Ashwath Marimuthu
Rating: 3/5



Balakrishna's *Daaku Maharaaj* streams uncut on Netflix

Rumors have been circulating about possible edits in the OTT release of *Daaku Maharaaj*, starring Balakrishna. Reports suggested that Netflix had removed scenes featuring Urvashi Rautela, particularly in response to controversy surrounding the song *Dabidi Dabidi*, which was criticized for certain choreography elements.

However, the film, which started streaming on Netflix from Thursday night, remains uncut. Every scene that was shown in the-

aters, including Urvashi Rautela's sequences and the *Dabidi Dabidi* song, is intact on the streaming platform.

Directed by Bobby Kolli, *Daaku Maharaaj* was released on January 12, aiming to capitalise on the Sankranti festival. The film performed well in its first week but saw a drop in collections later due to competition from *Sankranthiki Vasthunnam*. Despite this, trade analysts consider it a successful venture.



REVIEW

Brahmajji shines in this dark comedy set in a Telangana village

Following the success of *Balagam*, several films have explored Telangana's rural backdrop. Baapu, starring Brahmajji, Amani and Sudhakar Reddy, follows a similar path but leans into dark comedy instead of emotional drama. In Telangana, the term "Baapu" is often used to refer to one's father or an elderly figure, which sets the tone for this film's theme.

STORY

Set in a Telangana village, the film revolves around Mallanna (Brahmajji), a debt-ridden cotton farmer struggling to support his father Rajayya (Sudhakar Reddy), wife Saroja (Amani), daughter (Dhanya Balakrishna), and son (Mani Aegurla). Hoping to clear his debts, Mallanna plans to sell his cotton, but his son's mistake ruins the entire crop in the rain. Desperate, he contemplates suicide, believing his family would receive Rs 5 lakh in government compensation. However, his wife opposes this idea, suggesting an alternative—killing the elderly father instead.

Meanwhile, Chanti (Racha Ravi) discovers a gold idol but mysteriously loses it. What happens when Rajayya learns about his family's deadly plan? Where did the gold idol go? The answers unfold in Baapu.

ANALYSIS

While *Balagam* was an emotional drama rooted in Telangana's culture, Baapu attempts a different approach by mixing dark comedy with a social issue. The film highlights the struggles of farmers but lacks the emotional depth needed to leave a lasting impact.

The premise has potential, especially when the family debates killing their father before the interval, which builds curiosity for the second half. However, the screenplay loses grip on the narrative post-interval. The climax feels rushed, and the humor in the latter half works only in parts. Compared to *Balagam*, Baapu falls short in execution and emotional engagement.

The film's biggest strength is its realistic portrayal of rural life, as it was shot in an

actual village. However, weak storytelling and limited production values hinder its impact. Director Dayakar Reddy, in his debut, shows promise but needs stronger writing and execution to fully bring his ideas to life.

PERFORMANCES

Brahmajji delivers a stellar performance, proving once again why he is a versatile actor. His portrayal of Mallanna is both natural and engaging, making this one of his most memorable roles in recent times.

Sudhakar Reddy plays his part well, offering a few laughs, but his character lacks the emotional weight needed to connect deeply with the audience. Amani delivers another strong performance, while Dhanya Balakrishna does her job well despite her role being underwhelming. Young actor Mani Aegurla stands out with an impressive act. Avasarala, Racha Ravi and others provide solid support. RR Dhruvan's music is a highlight, with a few good songs that complement the film's setting.

VERDICT

Baapu has an interesting concept and strong performances, especially from Brahmajji. However, the film struggles with emotional depth, inconsistent narration, and rushed storytelling. While the dark comedy works in places, it lacks the grip needed to make a lasting impact. This one may find appreciation in parts but is unlikely to achieve commercial success.

Cast: Brahmajji, Amani, Balagam Sudhakar Reddy, Dhanya Balakrishna, Avasarala, Racha Ravi, Mani Aegurla, and others

Music: RR Dhruvan

Cinematographer: Vasu Pendem

Producers: Raju, Ch Bhanuprasad Reddy

Writer & Director: Dayakar Reddy

Rating: 2.5/5

Dhanraj's direction adds depth to familiar father-son story in *Ramam Raghavam*

The comedy show *Jabardasth* has been a breeding ground for many talented actors who have made their mark in the film industry. While several actors from the show have ventured into cinema, with Venu Yeldandi making his directorial debut with *Balagam*, Dhanraj is the latest to join the ranks of actors-turned-directors with his film *Ramam Raghavam*. The film, starring Samuthirakani and Dhanraj in the lead roles, was released with little fanfare and here's a closer look at what it offers.

STORY

Dasaradha Ramam (Samuthirakani) is a sincere and honest worker at a registrar office in a small town. He is well-respected for his integrity and frankness. Despite his good qualities, his son, Raghava (Dhanraj), is involved in questionable activities and dreams of quick wealth. Raghava refuses to hold down a steady job and instead befriends a lorry driver (Harish Uttaman), leading him further down a path of shortcuts to success. In an attempt to help his son, Ramam gets him a job at a petrol pump.

However, Raghava's impulsive decisions soon land him in trouble, resulting in a Rs. 10 lakh debt. To cover this, he forges his father's signature and implicates Ramam in the process. Upon learning the truth, Ramam files a police complaint against his own son, leading to Raghava's arrest. Angered and seeking revenge, Raghava hatches a plan with the lorry driver to kill his father and claim the insurance money. The story unfolds with twists and turns, revealing how Raghava's plan plays out and whether Ramam can make his son successful despite the conflicts.

REVIEW

Cast: Samuthirakani, Dhanraj, Pramodini, Harish Uttaman, Satya, Moksha, Prudhvi, Srinivas Reddy, and others

Music: Arun Chilliveru

Cinematography: Durga Prasad

Producer: Prudhvi Polavarapu

Director: Dhanraj

Release Date: February 21, 2025

Rating: 3/5

ANALYSIS

At its core, *Ramam Raghavam* follows a familiar narrative—the classic story of a good father and a wayward son, a trope we've seen in Telugu cinema multiple times. However, Director Dhanraj brings a refreshing touch to the storyline, particularly in the second half. While the first half plays out like a standard tale of a father's love and the son's bad habits, it is in the latter half that the story truly picks up. Raghava's decision to turn against his father and his subsequent plan to kill him for financial gain adds suspense and emotional depth to the narrative. The unexpected twists in the second half turn what could have been a predictable drama into a gripping and emotional experience, leaving the audience invested in the fate of the characters.



Though Dhanraj is primarily known for his acting, his directorial skills are evident, especially in how he handles the latter part of the film. The transitions from father-son drama to an emotional thriller are well-executed, making it clear that Dhanraj has found a new avenue for his talent.

PERFORMANCES

Samuthirakani, a seasoned actor known for his strong performances, brings depth to the character of the father. Although his Telugu is not flawless, he effectively conveys the emotion and sincerity of the role. Dhanraj, in the role of the son, offers a decent performance, though it is hard for the audience to buy into the father-son dynamic between him and Samuthirakani due to their age gap. Casting

a younger actor might have made this relationship feel more believable and potentially helped the film's commercial appeal.

Pramodini shines in her role as the mother, particularly in the film's emotional climax, where her performance is impactful. Harish Uttaman plays an essential supporting role as the lorry driver and does so convincingly. Other supporting actors, including Satya, Sunil, Srinivas Reddy and Prudhvi, add value to the narrative with their performances.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Despite being a low-budget film, *Ramam Raghavam* manages to maintain a solid technical quality. The music, composed by Arun Chilliveru, complements the emotional tone of the film. The cinematography by Durga Prasad captures the essence of the characters' struggles and the dramatic shifts in the story. Though the budget may be limited, the film does not compromise on its technical execution.

VERDICT

Ramam Raghavam marks a promising directorial debut for Dhanraj. While the first half might feel like a familiar tale of familial conflict, the second half adds intrigue, making the narrative more engaging and emotionally charged. The father-son relationship and the emotional twists offer a different take on a well-worn storyline. However, the film may not achieve commercial success, primarily due to the lack of buzz around its release and the casting choices. Nonetheless, it is a commendable effort from Dhanraj as a director and his growth in this new role is evident. If you're looking for a heartfelt family drama with a few surprises, *Ramam Raghavam* is worth a watch.

Harish Shankar joins *Oh Bhama Ayyo Rama* in a special role

Character actor Suhas, who successfully transitioned into lead roles, continues to choose diverse and compelling scripts. One of his upcoming projects is the romantic drama *Oh Bhama Ayyo Rama*. The film features Malayalam actress Malavika Manoj, known for Joe, making her Telugu debut as the female lead. Directed by debutant Ram Godhala and produced by Harish Nalla, the film's distribution will be handled by Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media.

In an exciting addition, renowned director Harish Shankar will make a special guest appearance in the film. The makers felt that

only Harish Shankar could do justice to this particular role and successfully convinced him to take it up. His portion of the shoot has already been completed.

"This movie will be a milestone in Suhas' career. We are ensuring top-notch quality without any compromises. It will be a perfect blend of tender romance and humour," said producer Harish Nalla. He also expressed his gratitude to Harish Shankar for accepting the role. Adding to the film's appeal, former actress Anita Hassanandani is making her comeback with this project, while popular comedian Ali will also play a key role.



STANDALONE



Popular director Anil Ravipudi received the Vijayakrishna Silver Crown Award on the occasion of late Vijaya Nirmala's birthday at an event held at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad. The award was instituted by Vijaya Nirmala's son, VK Nares, in memory of his mother. Telangana Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar presented the award to Anil Ravipudi. Actors Manchu Vishnu, Sivabalaaji and Pavitra were also present at the event.

Gill gives India confidence against Pakistan

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Shubman Gill has an invincibility cloak hung around his shoulder in ODIs these days. Conditions and oppositions do not feature in his set-list. After taking a dominant avatar against England recently at home, Gill faced a different challenge against Bangladesh in India's Champions Trophy (CT) opener in Dubai on Thursday night. The pitch was sluggish and the bowlers consistently probed for weakness. But Gill beat both to notch up his eighth ODI hundred that led India to a six-wicket victory. The 125-ball century was the slowest he has made so far, but was perhaps the most important in his career. That uncharacteristically sedate outing carried a deeper meaning as it validated Gill's growing stature as India's all-weather batter in white-ball formats.

His form is a good omen when legends like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, who have been performing that role for several years, are in the twilight zone of their careers. And with important matches against Pakistan and New Zealand lined-up, India would need him to continue in the same vein. There were a couple of signature shots last night — a cracking short-arm pull off pacer Tanzim Hasan and a spearing, lofted cover drive off the same bowler for a four. Those hits in the ninth over were breathtaking, showcasing Gill's otherworldly timing, but even more mesmerising was his transformation to a batter full of self-restraint after that. When Rohit Sharma (41) got out in the 10th over, Gill was batting on 26 off 23 balls, and a lift-off looked imminent. But it wasn't there. His next boundary came in the 33rd over when pacer Taskin Ahmed returned to attack.



Till then, Gill was milking the spinners and pacer Mustafizur Rahman, a lethal slower ball, for singles and twos, ensuring that the quick start given by Rohit would not go in vain. In that phase, the 25-year-old scored just 30 runs off 52 balls, showing admirable situational awareness.

It was of little surprise when Gill termed it as a "satisfying" effort. "Definitely one of my most satisfying innings that I have played. The message was sent from outside that I have to try to bat till the end and that's what I tried to do," Gill would say later to the host broadcaster. Rohit was also chuffed to see the Punjab cricketer adhering to the team order. "He's been batting brilliantly of late and what he showed us (against Bangladesh), it shouldn't surprise anyone. What was good to see was he was there till the end," said Rohit. Along with carrying his bat through, Gill also tweaked his tactics as per the game's evolving needs. A feature of Gill's batting was him coming down the track even against pacers, something he does not usually do. Generally, he stays at the crease to drive, flick or pull the quicker bowlers, a minimalistic approach

that reduces the risk quotient. Gill explained that change in his approach. "Cutting the ball wasn't easy because the balls which were outside the off-stump weren't coming onto the bat that nicely. So, I thought of using my feet to even the fast bowlers and tried to go over the circle," he added. The strategic fluidity apart, Gill's willingness to look beyond easy-on-the-eye but fleeting knocks will stand India in good stead in this tournament. If the early signs are anything to go by, then the pitches in Dubai could remain slow-burners. While Pakistan have only one spinner in Abrar Ahmed, New Zealand will be a more formidable rival as they have two excellent white-ball spinners in Mitchell Santner and Michael Bracewell. They were exceptional in stifling Pakistan in the middle overs in Karachi on a flatbed and the Kiwis can pose a bigger threat on the slack Dubai deck.



Kohli is putting lot more pressure on himself: Kumble

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India captain and coach Anil Kumble feels Virat Kohli is putting a "lot more pressure on himself" in his effort to get out of the lean patch, and advised the batting icon to remain mentally relaxed. Since the 2023 ODI World Cup, Kohli has hit just one fifty while scoring 137 runs in six ODI innings. "I think he's trying a bit too hard. You can see that in the way he is going about his innings. He just needs to not worry about it," Kumble said on "ESPNcricinfo". "Rohit comes in there, has the freedom because there is plenty of batting and all of them are in great form. Similarly for Virat, he just needs to come in and not worry about anything else," he added. "All players go through tough moments in their career, but I get a feeling watching him bat, I think he is putting a lot more pressure on himself," Kumble added. Kumble reckoned a relaxed approach would help Kohli in getting out of the rut. "When you have that kind of pressure and you have that kind of expectation, you suddenly start putting undue importance to all of that and then try hard to do well. "When you do that, you're not really relaxed. The best innings that I am sure he's played, he's not even thinking about all of that." In India's Champions Trophy

opener against Bangladesh, Kohli struggled to score, and was eventually dismissed on 22 by leg-spinner Rishad Hossain, making it the Indian's sixth consecutive dismissal against spin. "To start off against spin, on surfaces like that, you need a lot of confidence. He's certainly trying too hard to manoeuvre that. He's a good player of spin when he's in form, when he wants to just knock singles off and keep rotating the strike. "Now he's trying too hard to score runs rather than just manoeuvre, and that's been his game plan. He just needs to relax a little bit and not worry too much about the outcome of what happens on the field rather than just go out there and have the freedom to play naturally, what he does really well." Kohli doesn't have big-hitting game anymore: Manjrekar Former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar said Kohli's lean run in Australia has left him in a "tight corner," affecting his confidence. "He still wants to show that he's up there for a fight, and I am starting to see maybe there's a little bit of bravado as well, and why not? You can't be revealing what's inside you." He suggested that Kohli might no longer possess the big-hitting ability to dominate bowlers at will. "Virat doesn't have the big game anymore. We've seen on occasion him playing the big shot, but he can't hit at will like a Shubman Gill does."

Kerala enter Ranji Trophy final

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Resilient Kerala on Friday sealed their maiden Ranji Trophy final by taking a dramatic two-run first-innings lead over Gujarat, 68 years after making their debut in Indian cricket's premier domestic competition. Going into the final day at 429/7, the home side, who won the Ranji title in 2016-17, needed just 29 runs to take a first innings lead. However, left-arm spinner Aditya Sarwate delivered under pressure, taking all three wickets to bowl Gujarat out for 455 in 174.4 overs to leave them two runs short of the mark. Making only their second semifinal appearance, the visitors had been left frustrated by a dogged 72-run eighth-wicket stand between Jaymeet Patel (74 overnight) and Siddharth Desai (24 overnight). They started the day needing three wickets with just 28 runs to defend. Kerala, who last made the semifinals in 2018-19 after making their Ranji debut back in 1957, will face Vidarbha in the summit clash after the latter defeat heavyweights



Mumbai by 80 runs in the other semifinal. Sarwate's breakthroughs came amid high drama, including a dropped catch, a tight stumping decision, and a successful DRS review that overturned a caught-out call to an LBW dismissal. First it was Kerala skipper Sachin Baby, who dropped the well-set Jaymeet with Gujarat 23 runs shy of a lead. But Jaymeet could not make it count and perished for 79 (177 balls; 2x4) in the same over when he dragged his foot outside the crease while the ball passed his outside edge for Mohammed Azharuddeen to complete an excellent stumping. After multiple replays, umpire finally ruled him out as his

to LBW. Nagwaswalla and last man Priyajitsinh Jadeja brought Gujarat within eight runs when Kerala missed a half-chance, with the ball slipping from Salman Nizar's grasp. Jalaj Saxena nearly claimed his fifth wicket as Nagwaswalla's inside edge brushed past leg stump, leaving Gujarat just two runs short. Then came the decisive moment. Sarwate tossed one up, Nagwaswalla swung hard, and the ball ricocheted off Nizar's helmet at short leg before lobbing to Baby at slip. The Amay Khurasiya-coached side erupted in celebration, securing a historic Ranji final berth as a dejected Nagwaswalla walked back in disbelief. For Kerala, Sarwate, who had started the day with 1/101, ended with figures of 45.4-7-111-4. Jalaj, who toiled hard for 71 overs, returned with 4/149 including 14 maidens. With their maiden Ranji final berth secured, Kerala batted with ease in the second innings, scoring 114 for four in 46 overs in their second innings in the drawn affair.



India interested in hosting 2030 CWG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is "interested" in hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games (CWG) and also conduct all those disciplines that were axed from the 2026 edition to ensure that the country's medal tally is not affected when the event is held in Glasgow, a source in the sports ministry revealed on Friday. The last date to submit an 'Expression of Interest' to host the 2030 CWG is March 31 and the ministry source said the process will get underway soon. "We are interested in hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games and a formal interaction has taken place with the Commonwealth Games Federation on this. We have also proposed that all the disciplines that have been removed from the 2026 CWG be held in India," the source said. India last hosted the CWG in 2010. The ministry's push to have the axed events of the 2026 edition in India is a way to ensure that the CWG remains a high medal-yielding competition for the country. Last year, in a huge blow to India's medal prospects, key sports such as hockey, badminton, wrestling, cricket and shooting were dropped from the programme by host city Glasgow, which announced a pruned roster of 10 disciplines to keep the event budget-friendly. "We are merely looking to ensure that our medal tally does not suffer. An informal proposal (to have axed disciplines in India) has been

put across, we will see how the host city responds to it," the source said. India had given a similar proposal for the archery and shooting competitions of the 2022 CWG in Birmingham and the CGF, along with the host city, had even approved it by agreeing to add the medals won to the finally tally. However, the idea could not be executed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Table tennis, squash and triathlon were also axed by Glasgow in a bid to limit the cost and streamline logistics given that only four venues will host the entire showpiece there. The total number of events at the Games is nine less than the 2022 Birmingham edition. The 23rd edition of Games is scheduled to take place from July 23 to August 2, marking Glasgow's return as host after 12 years. Athletics and Para Athletics (Track & Field), Swimming and Para Swimming, Artistic Gymnastics, Track Cycling and Para Track Cycling, Netball, Weightlifting and Para Powerlifting, Boxing, Judo, Bowls and Para Bowls, and 3x3 Basketball and 3x3 Wheelchair Basketball will form the sports programme in the 2026 CWG. Olympic bid on track. India is also eyeing the hosting rights of the 2036 Olympic Games for which a letter of intent was sent to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) last year. "We are now waiting for the IOC elections to wind up next month for things to move ahead. The final decision on this is not coming before

Jiri Lehecka beats Carlos Alcaraz in Qatar Open quarterfinals

PTI ■ DOHA

Top-seeded Carlos Alcaraz lost for just the second time this year on Thursday when 25th-ranked Jiri Lehecka beat him 6-3, 3-6, 6-4 in the quarterfinals of the Qatar Open. Alcaraz's only other defeat in 2025 was to Novak Djokovic in the Australian Open quarterfinals. The 21-year-old Spaniard, ranked No. 3, won the Rotterdam Open earlier this month. "I've talked with my team, with my coach, and honestly I don't know what I could have done better," Alcaraz said in a press conference. "Honestly, I don't know. It was kind of a difficult feelings, I guess. I have to give credit to him as well, because when he was down, especially in the third set, he didn't give up."



Alcaraz led 4-2 in the third set and had a break point on Lehecka's serve, but couldn't finish off the Czech, who won the next three games to advance to the semifinals. The 23-year-old Lehecka will next play eighth-seeded Jack Draper, who knocked out Matteo Berrettini 4-6, 6-4, 6-3. "The match was up and down since the beginning," Lehecka

Rublev saved one match point and needed eight of his own to subdue second-seeded Alex de Minaur 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (8). Rublev reached his fourth semifinals in Doha, where he won the title in 2020. He'll next face Canada's Félix Auger-Aliassime, who beat Daniil Medvedev when the Russian retired after losing the first set 6-3. "Unfortunately, I had food poisoning. Very disappointed to end my run here in Doha like this as I feel like I was playing well," Medvedev said in a statement. Auger-Aliassime said on court he thought Medvedev was "playing normal" until he retired. "And then I broke, I held my serve. And he just told (the umpire) that he didn't want to shake our hands because he was sick."

Attention to detail, loyalty towards craft make Shami lethal

PTI ■ DUBAI

A difficult and painful injury layoff firmly behind him, seasoned India pacer Mohammed Shami says attention to detail and loyalty towards his craft make him lethal in ICC events where he only cares about breakthroughs and not his economy rate. Shami grabbed an brilliant five-wicket haul in India's Champions Trophy opener against Bangladesh to play a pivotal role in the team's six-wicket triumph. In the process, he also became the fastest Indian and the second quickest overall to reach 200 ODI wickets here on Thursday night. "In ICC events, if my ball gets hit a little, that's okay, but I should get a wicket, then that will be better for my team. I always think about this," Shami said at the post-match press conference. The 34-year-old quick battled

a career-threatening 14-month layoff due to an ankle injury during the 2023 ODI World Cup. He returned to international action last month in the limited-overs series against England and is now leading India's attack here in the absence of an injured Jasprit Bumrah. "I just try to complete my skill with utmost loyalty. Like I have completed my 14 months - How loyal are you to that skill? How hungry are you to achieve your goal...How you will get that rhythm again. You should be hungry," Shami said when asked about his love affair with ICC events. While wrecking Bangladesh here, Shami became India's leading wicket-taker in 50-over ICC events. His tally now stands at 60, overtaking former India pacer spearhead Zaheer Khan. The retired left-arm seamer had taken 59 wickets in 32 innings while Shami crossed

the mark in just his 19th innings. He has 55 wickets in ODI World Cups across three editions, with 24 coming in the 2023 tournament hosted at home. Shami said he has always focussed on minor details like rhythm, and level of discomfort while bowling to understand where he stood in terms of his form. "Is your rhythm good? Do you have any discomfort? I pay attention to those things. I do not pay attention to the result. I pay attention to the present. And I always try to meet the situation that is in demand. Am I good at that or not?" he said giving a peek into his mind. Shami, who claimed his sixth ODI fiver here, also has the most five-wicket hauls for India in the format. He recalled the frustration he felt while watching India's woes in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy last month when Bumrah shouldered the



enormous burden of leading the attack without him at the other end. "It was very difficult...When you see that your team is very close to the edge, or it's a very close match, at that time you miss your bowlers who you used to bowl along with, or your unit. I wish I was there," he said. "I could have contributed something. Could have helped," he added.

Shami has been candid enough to admit that the injury left him devastated to the extent that he feared he wouldn't be able to play again. But the pacer said once he made a domestic comeback towards the end of 2024, his confidence rose up again. "...I got to play domestic matches to gain confidence and to see my rhythm. To see what changes have come in the last 14 months or after the surgery...I got four international matches to play and I played 8-9-10 domestic matches. That gave me a lot of confidence," he said. All set for Pakistan clash Sunday would be the proverbial show-stopper of ICC events when India take on Pakistan, hoping to add another exciting chapter to the rivalry that is almost always the marquee match of an ICC event. Shami said nothing changes for his team in terms of mindset. "After winning, there is no

point in having a mindset. You should stay in the same frame when you win a match and when you perform well. I don't think you need to think too much about the ICC tournament or any international match," he said, down-playing the giddy excitement that media drums up before India-Pakistan matches. "You should believe in your skills and back yourself. I always work on these two things that I believe in myself and back myself. So, it's not a matter of mindset to change. If you don't change in difficult times, then you don't change in such times," he added. Social media doesn't matter. Another aspect of modern cricket that Shami dismissed as insignificant is the social media scrutiny that the players face. "I always say that the social media of today is such that you create some unwanted

things. You always run things in the media that shouldn't run. So, I don't think we should think too much," he said. Shami dedicated his performance to his late father Touseef Ali, a farmer who had tried his hand at fast bowling in his youth. "That is for my father because he is my role model. He was always there for me," he said. He also thanked the Indian team management for backing him. "Whether it's a question of the captain or the coach, it's very important for every player to have this support...If you have players who trust you, it gives you peace of mind," he said. "The responsibility that I have been given, the role that I have been given, whether I am able to fulfil the responsibility that has been given to me, I always try to find that out," he added.