

Want a Kashmir where no life is lost due to terrorism: Shah

EVERYONE SAYS 'CONTENT IS KING,' BUT FEW ACTUALLY BELIEVE IN IT

Razesh danda confirms Mazaka and Samajavaragamana SEQUEL IN WORKS

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer
 Tell me when Prabhakar Rao and Sravan Rao will be brought back from the US. We will put BRS leaders in jail within 48 hours of bringing them to the state. Union Ministers Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar are protecting KCR and KTR. If Prabhakar Rao and Sravan Rao fled to the US, why are Modi and Union Minister Sanjay not bringing them back? We filed cases in the sheep scam, but the ED took all the files. When will the ED arrest the suspects in that case?
 - Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister

DON'T MISS...

Archives digitizes 18 L documents

The Heritage department, in collaboration with Noor International Microfilm has digitized nearly 18 lakh documents of history available in Telangana State Archives and Research Institute for conservation. These documents were put on presentation for public at State Archaeology Museum and the method of preserving the history oriented documents without damaging them was explained on ...

-PAGE: 3

3 in 5 die after cancer diagnosis

Three in every five people in India succumb to cancer following diagnosis with women bearing a "disproportionate burden" compared to men, an analysis of global cancer data has estimated. The incidence to mortality ratio in the US was found to be about one in four, while in China it was one in two, according to the results published in 'The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia' journal. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) study ...

-PAGE: 5

Gold rises Rs 350 to reclaim Rs 89K-mark

Gold prices rose Rs 350 to trade near a record high at Rs 89,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid firm global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 88,750 per 10 grams on Friday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity increased Rs 350 to Rs 88,700 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 88,350 per 10 grams. Gold traded with a modest gain ...

-PAGE: 8

Playing cover drive is 'catch-22': Kohli

Indian batting maestro Virat Kohli admitted that his trademark cover drive puts him in a "catch-22" situation as it has been a weakness lately but playing the shot gives him control over the innings. Kohli crafted a memorable unbeaten century against Pakistan, steering India to a six-wicket win. His 111-ball masterclass featured the cover drive prominently, a shot that has in recent time led to his downfall but remains a signature weapon in his arsenal. "It's a ...

-SPORTS



SLBC TUNNEL COLLAPSE
Rescue team races against time to save eight trapped workers

- 584 experts, 14 rat-hole miners deployed
- Cell Phone of one of them rang which helped track location
- Jharkhand CM Hemanth Soren in touch with TG govt
- Family members of workers from Jharkhand heading to TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Rescue operations at the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel collapse site near Domalapeda have intensified, with efforts underway to locate and extract the trapped workers. A multi-agency team, including personnel from the Army, Navy, Singareni Collieries, the central government's roadways department, Jaypee, and Navayuga, has so far conducted seven rounds of tunnel inspections. The team comprises 584 expert personnel who have previously been involved in successful rescue missions in Uttarakhand. Additionally, 14 specialized rat-hole miners have been deployed to aid in the search. The team of rat miners, who had



rescued the construction workers trapped in the Silkyara Bend-Barkot tunnel in Uttarakhand in 2023, has joined the rescue teams to extricate the men. Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy expressing optimism, he stated that a mobile phone belonging to one of the trapped officials had rung, and based on its signal, their

location had been identified. After being trapped for over two days under debris and muck, the chances of survival of the eight persons in the SLBC tunnel following a partial collapse appear bleak, even as every effort is made to reach them. On the orders of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, officials left for Telangana with the family members of workers from Jharkhand trapped in the under-construction tunnel in Telangana. Under the leadership of Gujula District Administration, one member each from 4 families and a police officer left for Telangana from Birsa Munda Airport. Hemant Soren said, "Our officers are in touch with the Telangana government"

Continued on Page 2



HC postpones order on petition filed by KCR, Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The High Court reserved its verdict on the petition filed by former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and BRS MLA T. Harish Rao in connection with the sinking of the Medigadda Barrage after listening to the arguments of both sides on Monday. It may be recalled that KCR and Harish had approached the HC challenging the Bhupalpally district court's orders. It may also be recalled that a person named Rajalingamurthy had filed a criminal revision petition in the Bhupalpally District Court on the Medigadda Barrage sinking issue. The court issued notices to KCR and Harish while accepting the case for hearing. However, KCR and Harish filed a petition in the High Court saying that the district court has no power to issue notices to them. Continued on Page 2

'CM busy campaigning while SLBC tunnel workers remain trapped'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 BRS Working President KT Rama Rao launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accusing him of prioritising MLC election campaigning over the SLBC tunnel rescue operations. He termed the Chief Minister's actions as "degrading politics" and questioned the government's seriousness in handling the crisis. "Although eight workers are missing inside the collapsed SLBC tunnel, the Chief Minister is fully immersed in MLC election campaigning. If the head of the state lacks seriousness during such a tragedy, how can the administration function efficiently? How will the rescue operations move forward?" KTR asked. He pointed out that while Revanth had time to tour districts for votes, he could not spare a moment to visit the SLBC tunnel, where trapped workers' families were anxiously waiting for updates. "Is this the value given to human lives in Indira Park Rajyam? Is governance chasing votes and money?" he asked. Continued on Page 2



BJP protecting KCR & KTR in phone tapping case: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said the BJP is 'protecting' former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and BRS Working President KT Rama Rao in the phone tapping case. "The BJP is forcing the BRS to support it in the MLC elections using the phone tapping cases. The BJP threatened BRS leaders that there would be arrests in the phone tapping cases if they failed to support the BJP in the MLC elections. The BJP won eight LS seats in Telangana using the phone tapping case," the CM said. "Tell me when Prabhakar Rao and Sravan Rao will be brought back from America, we will put the BRS leaders in jail within 48 hours of bringing them to the state. Union ministers Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay are protecting KCR and KTR. If Prabhakar Rao and Sravan Rao fled to America, why is PM Modi and Central Minister Bandi Sanjay not bringing them back to the country?" Continued on Page 2



'CM weakened phone tapping case'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy weakened the phone-tapping case, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said. He made it clear that the BJP will not let go of the phone-tapping case even if the Congress government takes it lightly and challenged Revanth to hand over the phone-tapping, e-formula and Kaleshwaram cases to the CBI if he had the guts. Addressing the media at the State BJP office on Monday, Kishan said that the CM took part in the MLC election campaign due to somebody's pressure. He said that the CM spoke at meetings like an opposition leader while taking part in the MLC election campaign. He said that Revanth made such comments due to fear of defeat. Revanth has accepted defeat before the elections, Kishan said.



TG's tourism industry lost ground last decade

NAVEENA GHANATE
 naveena.ghanate@gmail.com
 ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana, once among India's top 10 domestic tourism destinations, slipped into obscurity in the last decade. The latest India Tourism Data Compendium 2024 reveals that Telangana, which ranked seventh in domestic tourist visits in 2013, is not in the top 10 rankings in 2023. Foreign tourist arrivals at Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport saw a slight increase from 3.41 lakh in 2019 to 3.56 lakh in 2023. In 2013, Telangana reported 54.08 million domestic tourist visits, securing the seventh rank among Indian states. By 2019, its ranking went to eighth with 83.04 million visits. However, by 2023, Telangana had dropped to ninth place with 60.75 million visits. The situation worsened in 2023 as Telangana was completely absent from the list of top 10 states in domestic tourism, marking a significant setback for the state's tourism sector. Telangana remained out of the top 10 states in domestic tourism, marking a significant setback for the state's tourism sector. Telangana remained out of the top 10 states in domestic tourism, marking a significant setback for the state's tourism sector. This downturn contrasts with the national trend, where domestic tourism saw a sharp rebound in 2023, reaching 2.5 billion visits, a 44.98% increase from 2022. Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 478.53 million visits, followed by Tamil Nadu (286.01 million) and Karnataka (284.12 million). Despite the state's overall decline in tourist footfall, Hyderabad's iconic sites recorded an increase in visitors. Charminar attracted 12.90 lakh domestic visitors in 2023-24, compared to 9.29 lakh in 2022-23. Golconda Fort also saw a rise, welcoming 16.08 lakh visitors in 2023-24, up from 15.27 lakh in the previous year. Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi has urged the state government to take immediate steps to enhance visitor facilities at Charminar and Golkonda Fort. He has called for the construction of a parking lot at the Old Charminar Bus Stand space to accommodate tourist buses and private vehicles. Continued on Page 2



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Invest in AI City
TG govt invites Queensland

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Telangana is set to take a major leap in Artificial Intelligence with its AI City. IT & Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu has invited the Queensland Government of Australia to invest in the project. On Monday, a high-level Queensland delegation led by Finance, Trade, Employment & Training Minister Rosin Bates met Sridhar Babu at the Ministers' Quarters in Banjara Hills. The discussions focused on strengthening ties across key sectors and identifying collaboration opportunities. Sridhar outlined Telangana's vision for its Life Sciences University, which aims to be a global hub for biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. The Queensland delegation expressed a strong interest in strategic partnerships, recognising Telangana's dominance in the life sciences sector. The talks also delved into the establishment of Telangana's Sports University, with Queensland pledging support for future collaborations. The delegation commended the Skill University initiative, designed to bridge the gap between workforce demand and industry requirements through specialized training programmes. Both parties agreed to explore international partnerships in education, research and development, and agriculture. The Queensland representatives expressed enthusiasm for Telangana's innovation-driven growth and showed interest in being actively involved in its key initiatives.

True leadership survives failures with perseverance

The quality of political leadership does not lie in achieving successes or victories but in surviving and facing failures and defeats head-on without losing moral strength and gaining lost ground each day with persistence and perseverance. This has been the survival tactic of most political parties worldwide for decades. The parties and their leaders who could not digest failures and lost confidence lost ground and went into oblivion. The very nature of power is such. It lures and eludes forever. Success follows those who understand the elusive nature of power and keep going irrespective of the

severity of pain, strain and struggle. Power is not permanent, and so is defeat or failure. It is a game of losing and gaining and meanwhile, mastering the art of survival. Whether it is the US or India or for that matter, any nation elections do not come each day and power does not change every day. It has its time. Endurance matters for every party and leader. Here is where the quality of leadership stands and counts. Without understanding the facts and realities of the day, there is no use in criticising the decisions of ruling parties every day without any substance. The ruling party cannot fall each day and opposi-

The parties that lost power should analyse the reasons for their defeat and take remedial measures to regain public confidence. This is the way to shoulder the weight of defeats rather than warning officials and current governments about their deeds

tion does not come to power every day. They have to stay their course until their time comes to face the test of the day. If we observe the developments in Telugu states, it comes to our mind that opposition parties have no patience to wait for their chance. It is

not even one year since elections were held in these states and power changed hands. We can't understand the minds of seasoned politicians who ruled the states for years without allowing the opposition to utter a word against them and are now unable to



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confine themselves to the roles mandated by the people in

democratic elections. We speak great about the US and praise its democratic values. The Democratic Party lost in the recently held Presidential elections and the Republican Party under the leadership of Donald Trump came to power. This is the fact of the day and the Democratic Party that lost does not want the Trump admin to fall day and it plays its role as the constructive opposition by allowing the ruling party to have its day. They respect and honour the public mandate and wait for their chance to strike. This is what happens and should happen logically. By ignoring these fundamental tenets of democracy,

why do these leaders create chaos every day as if something unthinkable had happened and their respective states are getting ruined under the current admins? If this kind of propaganda goes unending it will mar the development prospects of the states concerned. Governments may change but the official setup does not change and remains permanent. Whichever party comes to power, must work with the same officials and use their services to implement their policies. Despite knowing the facts and role of officials, why should politicians warn officials about their acts under the present admin? Warning them doesn't

serve any purpose but makes them wary about carrying out their responsibilities. The parties that lost power should analyse the reasons for their defeat and take remedial measures to regain public confidence. This is the way to shoulder the weight of defeats rather than warning officials and current governments about their deeds. Five years are more than enough to properly assess the reasons for defeat and take steps to gain public support. Nothing happens in isolation. Leaders should search for the cause of their defeats instead of getting isolated. (The writer is a senior journalist)

Modi gave jobs only to Kishan & Sanjay in TG: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government did 'nothing' for Telangana in the last 12 years, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said.

"The Prime Minister assured during the 2014 and 2019 LS elections that he will create two crore jobs a year. The Centre should have given 24 crore jobs in the last 12 years. However, Modi gave only two jobs to Telangana. One is for Kishan Reddy and the other one is for Bandi Sanjay Kumar. Has the Centre given jobs to anybody else other than these two? What right has the BJP to seek votes when it could not give jobs to crores of unemployed people," the CM said. Addressing an MLC election campaign meeting for Congress graduate MLC candidate V. Narendar Reddy at Mancheril on Monday, the CM said the Congress government issued 55,163 appointment orders at the LB Stadium. The Congress government



CM A Revanth Reddy addressing the MLC election campaign public meeting at Mancheril on Monday

issued DSC notification for appointing 11,000 teachers and conducted TET. The Congress government appointed 6,000 paramedics. The government filled 15,000 posts in the police, he said. "Don't vote for the Congress candidate if my words are wrong. If you think my words are true then ensure the victory of Congress MLC candidate V. Narendar Reddy," the CM said. The CM said the BRS did

not field candidates. However, BRS leaders T. Harish Rao, KTR and Kavitha are asking voters to defeat Congress candidates. BRS leaders KCR, KTR, Harish, and Kavitha should reveal whom they will vote for in the MLC elections. During the Lok Sabha elections, the BRS lost deposits in eight seats, while the BJP won eight seats, the CM said and asked what is the logic behind it. The BJP needs MPs from Telangana but did 'nothing' for

Telangana, he said.

"We conducted a caste survey. We passed a resolution on SC categorisation. Modi hugged and kissed Manda Krishna Madiga but why did they fail to pass a law in Parliament? Sanjay is weakening cases when KTR and Harish touched the feet of Delhi BJP leaders. Kishan blocked the Metro Rail and Eatala Rajender blocked the Musi Project. If Kishan is sincere, he should get funds for Musi rejuvenation and permissions for the Palamuru-Rangareddy project and Metro Rail," the CM said.

The CM said that the Adilabad district would have become green if the Pranahita-Chevella project had been executed. However, they said that Maharashtra did not permit it. Why did the BJP fail to make Maharashtra permit the construction of the Pranahita-Chevella project? Modi and KCR are blocking the development of Telangana, Revanth said.

Harish blasts govt over urea shortage

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao came down heavily on the Congress government, accusing it of failing to supply adequate urea to farmers and pushing them into distress under the scorching sun.

He lashed out at the administration, stating that while farmers struggled in long queues for fertilizers, the government remained in deep slumber, showing no urgency to address the crisis.

Referring to recent incidents, Harish pointed out that in Mahbubabad, police had to issue tokens for urea distribution, while in Jagtial, farmers were forced to stand in lines with pass-books and Aadhaar cards just to get fertilizers.

He accused the Congress admin of repeating the painful scenes of distress that farmers endured in united AP, calling it a betrayal of Telangana's agrarian community.

"During BRS rule, Telangana was a state where farmers were treated like kings. Today, under Revanth Reddy's government, farmers have been pushed to the streets, struggling for basic agricultural needs," he said.

He said the government had completely failed to ensure the timely supply of urea, causing widespread suffering.

Harish slammed the Congress for deceiving farmers with its so-called 'Rythu Declaration' and failing to deliver on promises of farm loan waivers, Rythu Bharosa and crop bonuses.

BRS opposes govt move to monopolise sand transport

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS has strongly opposed the Congress government's move to monopolise sand transportation in Telangana, alleging that it will severely impact small truck operators and their drivers across the state.

The Telangana Mineral Development Corporation (TMDC) has issued tenders for the empanelment of sand transportation agencies, restricting participation only to companies or transporters with a turnover of Rs 5 crore. This,

the BRS said, will hand over control of sand transportation to a few contractors, leaving thousands of small-scale transporters struggling for livelihood.

Criticizing the Congress government's handling of the sand mining sector, BRS leader Krishank Manne accused the administration of fostering illegal mining and causing losses to the government.

He pointed out that the TMDC had initially issued an order allowing 24-hour sand mining, but following widespread criticism, revised it to

extend sand loading timings from 6 am to 9 pm instead of the earlier 6 am to 6 pm schedule. This, he argued, directly violates environmental regulations.

With the latest tender process, Krishank warned that the government would now face strong opposition from lorry drivers across the state. He demanded that the Congress government withdraw the tenders, asserting that they were designed to benefit a select few big contractors while thousands of small truckers and drivers would be left to suffer.

Reddys prevented me from becoming Union Minister: Anjan Kumar Yadav

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Congress MP Anjan Kumar Yadav said that the sycophant (Reddys) prevented him from becoming the TPCC Working President. However, former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav spoke to Sonia Gandhi and made him the TPCC Working President, Anjan said.

Anjan said that M. Uttam Kumar Reddy and T. Jagga Reddy prevented him from becoming the TPCC Working President. The same people prevented him from becoming a Union Minister, Anjan added.

He said that they did not give tickets when there were chances of winning an LS MP seat. "I would have won if the Secunderabad LS seat had been given to me. The party lost the election as it gave the ticket to Danam Nagender. Danam lost



Former MP Anjan Kumar Yadav along with Yadav community leaders at the meeting held at Adarsh Nagar on Monday

the election at a time when there were chances of winning. The caste census was conducted only because of Rahul Gandhi. Otherwise, these leaders (Reddys) would have prevented the creation of Telangana, he said.

Anjan said that they (Reddys) contested to the LS after they lost the Assembly elections. However, they did not give an LS ticket to us even

though we asked them. The party gave the ticket to Danam Nagender and lost the Secunderabad LS seat. The party took a wrong decision regarding the Secunderabad LS seat. The party would have won Secunderabad if it was given to the Yadav community. The party gave the LS ticket to Jeevan Reddy, who lost the Assembly elections.

UNVEILS TECH & INNOVATION HUB

Amgen to invest Rs 1,600 cr in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amgen, the largest biotechnology company in the United States, is making a major investment of Rs 1,600 crore (\$200 million) in Hyderabad by the end of 2025, further cementing the city's position as a global biotech hub. As part of its expansion plans, Amgen inaugurated its new Technology & Innovation Site in Hyderabad, marking a significant milestone in the company's long-term vision for India's biopharma sector.

Currently employing 300 professionals in Hyderabad, Amgen aims to double its workforce by the end of this year, adding another 300 employees. Over the next three to four years, the company plans to expand its team to 2,000, making Hyderabad a strategic global base for its operations.

The inauguration ceremony took place at Amgen's facility nearHITEC City, with Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and IT & Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu officially launching the new centre. The event was attended by Amgen Chairman & CEO



Robert A Bradway, U.S. Consul General Jennifer Larson, Amgen India representative Som Chattopadhyay, and Amgen India Managing Director Naveen Gullapalli.

Amgen's investment will not only drive job creation but also boost Hyderabad's reputation as a leading innovation hub in the biopharma sector. The company's new site will focus on leveraging artificial intelligence and data science to enhance digital capabilities and support the expansion of its pharmaceutical portfolio in Telangana. With additional investments planned in the coming years, Amgen's commitment to Hyderabad underscores the city's growing significance in the global biotechnology landscape.

TG-Queensland to collaborate on mining, critical minerals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana is set to play a key role in India's critical minerals mining sector, with the state government taking a significant step towards collaboration with the Queensland government in Australia. The partnership will focus on technology sharing, mining operations, and trade agreements for the production of 11 crucial minerals essential for green energy and electric vehicle industries.

Deputy Chief Minister and Energy Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, addressing a high-level meeting at Singareni Bhavan with Queensland's Minister for Economic Development, Trade, Employment, and Training, Ros Bates, hailed the partnership as a milestone in Telangana's mining history. He stated that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy extended his appreciation to the Queensland delegation for their willingness to collaborate in the sector.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	
Dwadashi:	Feb 24 01:45 PM to Feb 25 06:30 PM
Trayodashi:	Feb 25 12:47 PM to Feb 26 11:08 AM
Nakshatram:	
Uttara Ashadha:	Feb 24 06:59 PM to Feb 25 06:30 PM
Shravana:	Feb 25 06:30 PM to Feb 26 05:23 PM
Rahukalam:	03:23 PM to 04:50 PM
Yamagandam:	09:34 AM to 11:02 AM
Varjyam:	10:19 PM to 11:51 PM
Gulika:	12:29 PM to 01:56 PM
Amritakalam:	12:14 PM to 01:48 PM
Ahijit Muhurtham:	12:05 PM to 12:52 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 32°
Humidity: 37%
Sunrise: 6:40 AM
Sunset: 6:17 PM
Updated: February 24, 2025 5:00 PM

BJP protecting ...

Continued from page 1

If we filed cases in the sheep scam, the ED took all the files. When the ED will arrest the accused in it. Why is the Centre not heeding Telangana's request to issue Red Corner notices to Prabhakar Rao and Shrivani Rao? Why is the ED not arresting KTR in the E-Car Race case," the CM said.

Addressing an MLC election public meeting at Nizamabad on Monday, the CM said the BJP and the BRS have entered into a dark agreement and asked the BRS to reveal why it is not contesting the MLC elections.

The CM said there was no change in KCR even though the people threw him out. KCR is conspiring against the Congress government sitting in his farmhouse. BRS leaders, who did 'nothing' in the last 10 years are criticising the Congress government. The BRS leaders are now saying that the Congress government did 'nothing' after assuming charge, he said.

"The Congress government is paying Rs 6,000 crore as interest every month for the Rs 7 lakh crore debts contracted by KCR. The Congress government waived farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh for 26.50 lakh farmers. The government implemented a Rs 500 bonus scheme for fine variety paddy. The government has been successfully implementing the Gruha Jyothi and Maha Laxmi schemes. The government has been implementing the Rythu Bharosa scheme also. MLC election voters should vote for the Congress candidate if farm loans have been waived and if the admin has implemented other schemes. If not, don't vote for the Congress candidate," the CM said.

Rescue team race ...

Continued from page 1

Despite relentless efforts by the Indian Army, Navy, NDRF, SDRF and other agencies, no breakthrough has been achieved so far in the rescue operations as the teams had to navigate through thick mud, tangled iron rods, and cement blocks to reach the accident spot in the tunnel to extricate the persons who have remained trapped for over two days inside the tunnel after a section of it collapsed in the SLBC project in Telangana's Nagarkurnool district on Saturday morning.

To trace the missing workers, sniffer dogs were brought in, but their movement was hindered due to water accumulation inside the tunnel. Meanwhile, repairs on the damaged conveyor belt have been initiated. Authorities have ruled out the vertical drilling proposal, which involved creating an opening from above to access the trapped workers. Currently, five gas-cutting machines are operating round the

clock as part of the rescue efforts.

State Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has been personally monitoring the rescue operations from the Domalapenta project site since morning. Later in the evening, he chaired a high-level review meeting at the JP office, attended by Special Chief Secretary for Disaster Management Arvind Kumar, District Collector Badavathi Santosh, local MLA Dr. Vamshi Krishna, HYDRRAA Commissioner Ranganath, and senior officials from the Army, Navy, NDRF, SDRF, MoRTH, Navyuga, SCCL, and JP organizations.

The persons who have been trapped in the collapsed tunnel for the past over 48 hours have been identified as Manoj Kumar and Sri Niwas from Uttar Pradesh, Sunny Singh (Jammu and Kashmir), Gurpreet Singh (Punjab) and Sandeep Sahu, Jegta Xess, Santosh Sahu and Anuj Sahu, all from Jharkhand. Of the eight, two are engineers, two operators and four labourers. Their families are arriving to the Site.

TG's tourism ...

Continued from page 1

Additionally, he has advocated the completion of the Sky Cable project connecting the Qutb Shahi Tombs to Bala Hisar at Golkonda Fort to boost heritage tourism. "The lack of parking facilities near Charminar has been a longstanding issue. Developing proper parking spaces will encourage more visitors and ease congestion," Asaduddin said. Despite having Union Central tourism minister from Telangana being G Kishan Reddy and international event like Formula E race being conducted in 2023, Telangana is not even in top10 for both domestic and foreign visits.

HC postpones ...

Continued from page 1

The petitioner Rajalingamurthy was killed recently. The High Court asked the public prosecutor to tell in what way the petition can be heard when the petitioner has died. The public prosecutor argued that the petition could be heard even if the petitioner had died. The public prosecutor quoted a verdict of the Supreme Court regarding this. Meanwhile, the lawyer of KCR and Harish argued that the district court issued notices without having power to do so. The High Court reserved its verdict after hearing the arguments of both sides.

'CM busy ...

Continued from page 1

KTR criticised the government for giving up on rescue efforts even before exhausting all possibilities.

"On the one hand, the administration is already hinting that the trapped workers may not survive. On the other, the Chief Minister has forgotten his primary responsibility of providing solace to the affected families and is instead prioritising elections," he said.

Drawing a sharp analogy, KTR said, "Just like Nero played the fiddle while Rome burned, Revanth is using the tragic deaths of these workers as bait to lure graduate voters. Telangana's people are watching closely. At the right time, they will ensure Congress faces the heat."

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 25, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Cultural Programmes

By Sangamam Foundation

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
February 25
(1:30 pm to 10 pm)

International Conference on Robotics, Communication Technology, Electronics and Electrical Engineering

Venue

Hampshire Plaza Hotel
February 25, (10 am)

Live Telugu Musical Orchestra

By Chandratejalaya Music Academy

Venue

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
February 25, (4 pm)

SMAAASH FC-25 Championship

Venue

Smaaash Gaming And Bowling Lounge
February 25, (11 am)

Book Release

By Naleswaram Shankaram

Venue

Conference Hall - Ravindra Bharathi
February 25, (6 pm)

Tuesday Open Mic Comedy

Venue

Trailing Ivy Cafe
February 25, (8 pm)

TGBIE releases hall tickets for inter exams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Board of Intermediate Education (TGBIE) has released the hall tickets for the upcoming Intermediate Public Examinations. Around 9.5 lakh students across the State are set to appear for the exams, scheduled to commence from March 5. Krishna Aditya, Secretary, TGBIE stated that hall tickets for both first and second-year students have been made available online at the respective college logins. Students are informed to collect their hall tickets from their respective college principals.

The Board has requested that any necessary corrections in hall tickets be brought to its attention through the college principals. In a new initiative, the hall tickets this year feature a QR code to assist students in locating their examination centers with ease.

GOVT WEBSITES, VARSITIES AMONG KEY TARGETS

TG reports over 6.25 M malware incidents in 2024

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has emerged as one of India's most targeted states for cyber attacks, accounting for 23 per cent of all malware detections nation-wide in 2024. A staggering 6.25 million malware incidents were recorded across the State, with critical government and educational institutions among the worst affected, according to the Telangana Cyber Threat Report 2025 by Secrite, the enterprise arm of Quick Heal Technologies.

The report paints a grim picture of the state's cybersecurity landscape, revealing an average of 47 ransomware attacks daily, amounting to 17,505 incidents last year. Notable victims included the Telangana government portal (data.telangana.gov.in), Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University and the Deputy Chief Minister's website, all of which suffered significant breaches.

Beyond malware, identity theft emerged as Telangana's most common cybercrime, with nearly 30,000 cases reported. It includes 11,125 cases of unauthorised transactions, 5,369 cases of KYC update fraud, 18,647 impersonation scams, including



courier fraud, police impersonation, and digital arrest scams. 26,000 cases of business and investment fraud, 17,669 advertisement fraud cases and 12,589 loan fraud incidents.

Ransomware attacks have also intensified, particularly in the IT, manufacturing and education sectors, causing widespread disruptions. Among the most severe incidents, a ransomware attack on Narayana Group hospitals and educational services crippled electronic medical records (EMR) and billing systems,

affecting critical patient care. Similarly, Sivaraj Medical Colleges faced a devastating breach that exposed student records, financial transactions and payroll data.

The Telangana government portal and educational institutions were among the primary targets, with website defacements and data leaks causing significant reputational damage. The Deputy Chief Minister's website was also compromised, exposing internal documents and raising serious privacy concerns.

Commenting on the findings, Vishal Salvi, CEO of Quick Heal Technologies, emphasised the need for a proactive cybersecurity strategy. "Telangana is becoming a key IT hub, driving India's digital economy through robust infrastructure and innovation-driven policies. As the State develops, cyber threats will continue to rise. Our report underscores the urgent need for stronger security frameworks to protect businesses, government institutions and individuals."

ECI to hold two-day conference of CEOs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced a two-day conference of Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) from all states and Union Territories, scheduled for March 4 and 5 at the India International Institute of Democracy & Election Management in New Delhi. This will be the first such meeting since Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar took charge.

In a significant move, the CEOs have been directed to nominate a District Election Officer (DEO) and an Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) to participate in the conference. As statutory authorities, these officials play a crucial role at the State, district, and Assembly constituency levels in ensuring smooth electoral processes.

The conference aims to provide a platform for election officials to engage in discussions and share best practices. The first day will focus on modern election management strategies, including IT architecture, effective communication and expanding social media outreach.

Additionally, it will highlight the statutory responsibilities of different functionaries in the electoral process. On the second day, the CEOs will present their action plans based on the thematic discussions from the previous sessions.

The conference is expected to foster collaboration and enhance the efficiency of election management across the country.



INSTRUCTS INDIVIDUALS TO MENTION CIVIL COURT MATTERS

Hydraa receives 46 complaints on encroachments at Prajavani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has received 46 complaints in its Prajavani on Monday.

It has also instructed the individuals coming up with complaints to mention in the copies if their matter is already ongoing in civil courts.

The representatives have alleged that the members living in the localities are encroaching on lands allocated for parks, roads and public spaces in various layouts. The complainants highlighted that donated lands meant for public use were also being encroached upon. The walkers at Indira Park pointed out that the park itself is an example of such land grabbing.

Indira Park spread across approximately 76 acres includes land donated by Pingali Venkatarami Reddy. While the government has allocated parts of this land for a power substation, garbage dumping yard and Snow World, the remaining land is



HYDRAA officials receiving complaints through Prajavani

allegedly being encroached upon by businesses, according to the morning walkers who filed a complaint.

The residents of Ahmedguda village in Keesara mandal, under the Dammaiguda Municipality of Medchal-Malkajigiri district, complained that a real estate firm had undertaken construction in a cremation ground and within the nala (sewage) buffer zone.

People from Anthiyapalli village in Shamirpet mandal,

Medchal-Malkajigiri district reported that Chettakunta Lake was being encroached upon, and they urged the authorities to take action to protect it.

The residents of Green Hills Housing Colony in Bahadurpally, Dundigudi Municipality, alleged that lands allocated for parks, schools and community halls were being converted into plots, prompting them to seek intervention from the authorities.

ANNOUNCES VIRTUAL INTERNSHIP RESULTS

TGCHE strengthens research with NRDC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE) is set to enhance the state's research and innovation ecosystem through a strategic collaboration with the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC), New Delhi. In a virtual meeting held Prof V Balakista Reddy, Chairman, TGCHE, discussed the current research landscape in Telangana with Dr BK Sahu, Head-Outreach, NRDC (South India), and his team.

NRDC, a subsidiary under the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology, is India's leading technology transfer organisation.

It plays a key role in promoting, developing and commercialising innovative technologies for R&D institutes and provides intellectual property (IP) consulting and capacity building to over 200 universities, including IISc and IITs.

As part of this collaboration, TGCHE and NRDC have initiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at strengthening the existing incubation centres in public universities through technology

transfer outreach centres and seed funding for startups.

Jointly promoting intellectual property awareness and IPR facilitation for students, researchers, and faculty, it will encourage knowledge sharing through the Telangana Journal of Higher Education and Avishkar publication from NRDC.

This partnership marks a significant step in fostering innovation, entrepreneurship and research excellence in higher education institutions across Telangana.

In addition to its focus on research and innovation, TGCHE has also announced the results of its virtual internship programme, designed to provide students with hands-on experience in policy-making, governance and project management.

Participants come from diverse academic disciplines, including Education, Engineering, Management, Social Sciences, Law, Science, and Commerce. The Selected interns are 23 female and 12 male. They will work on real-world projects in higher education governance.

They will gain expertise in policy analysis, research, and project management in a period of four to 12 weeks.



Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty during the Prajavani meeting

Collector's call to ensure adequate ORS packets at PHCs, CHCs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the Prajavani meeting, Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty instructed officials to take necessary precautions as temperatures are expected to rise and prevent heat stroke among the public.

During the meeting, Collector Anudeep issued several directives to district officials elaborating the need to safeguard labourers and the general public from extreme temperatures.

He instructed officials to identify labour camps and workplaces to ensure an adequate supply of drinking water. Furthermore, all slums, Primary Health Centres (PHCs), and Community Health Centres (CHCs) must stock 200 per cent more ORS packets than the usual requirement. The District Medical and Health Officer has been directed to oversee this.

The Health, Employment, and Labour departments have been asked to formulate an action plan to mitigate the effects of the summer heat. Special awareness programmes on heatwave protection must be conducted at SC, ST, BC and Minority hostels, and ORS packets should be distributed at these locations.

Public awareness campaigns should educate people on 'dos and don'ts' during extreme heat conditions.

The Collector said that people should consume more fluids and health staff should remain available to provide timely advice and assistance.

'Engineering students can complete 160 credits by 6th, 7th semester'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The core committee members had submitted suggestions on revising syllabus for engineering students.

They stated that the Chief Minister of Telangana has advised TGCHC to update the syllabus to enhance employability skills.

Prof V Balakista Reddy, Chairman TGCHC explained the necessity of revising the syllabus in alignment with industry and global requirements.

He emphasised that an engineering student can complete 160 credits by the end of the 6th or 7th semester, allowing them to dedicate the remaining semesters entirely to industrial internships and projects.

Prof Sriram Venkatesh, Secretary, TGCHC and Chairman of the Committee, briefed the context of revision of the Bachelor of Engineering syllabus, emphasising the need for uniformity in the credit framework and strengthening core branches by integrating emerging technologies while adhering to the AICTE model curriculum.

The recommendations are that uniform credit framework across all universities, with 20 credits per semester (160 credits for four years), plus 20

additional credits for minor and honors degree programmes.

Strengthening core branches by integrating emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Data Science (DS), and Cyber Security (CS) and introducing minor or honors degree programmes in all universities and colleges.

Two mandatory credit-based industrial internships at the end of the second and third years, focusing on industry projects.

Flexibility in earning credits for fast learners, allowing students to complete 160 credits by the 6th or 7th semester, enabling them to dedicate the remaining semester(s) to full-time industrial internships or projects are the suggestions.

Credit transfer policy beyond the curriculum, including credits earned through certification courses (e.g., from NASSCOM) and at least four industrial or field visits during the programme.

Engagement of Professors of Practice to teach emerging technologies. Faculty and student exchange programmes in alignment with international MoUs for training and internships are the other recommendations.

NOOR INTERNATIONAL MICROFILM CENTRE PRESERVES THEM

TG State Archives digitizes 18 L historical documents

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

The Heritage department, in collaboration with Noor International Microfilm has digitized nearly 18 lakh documents of history available in Telangana State Archives and Research Institute for conservation.

These documents were put on presentation for public at State Archaeology Museum and the method of preserving the history oriented documents without damaging them was explained on Monday.

These documents are mines of information on history, society and religion of different periods. As the heritage department had old technology in preserving the documents, Noor International Microfilm Centre has expertise in treating the documents and preserving

the paper with new herbal technology which is reversible and enhances lifespan of the documents.

Dr Zareena Parveen, Director, Telangana State Archives and Research Institute said, "The documents which are preserved are from 700 BC and helpful to the stakeholders, including the general public, government, academicians, historians and scholars. It also has details of endowment properties. We have completed over 18 lakh documents for digitization. It has been done with the highest resolution. 60,000 folios have been repaired with beautiful structures. Two components repair and screening is in process and cataloging will commence."

"We are thankful to Noor International Microfilm Centre as the MoU has ended. We are continuing in extending it to preserve, digitize and translate



The dignitaries during the release of a catalogue of Persian and Arabic manuscripts' Facsimile edition

the manuscripts. We currently have 323 manuscripts, 1,414 library books for digitalization and conservation" said Dr K Lakshmi, Director, Department of Heritage.

The catalogue of Persian and Arabic Manuscripts,

Facsimile Edition and Descriptive Catalogue and Records of the Mughal Court in the Deccan: A Facsimile Edition and Descriptive Catalogue by Dr Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel, Former Speaker of the Iranian Parliament,

along with Dr K Lakshmi, Director, Department of Heritage, Government of Telangana, Mahdi Shahroki, Consul General of Iran in Hyderabad, Dr Zareena Parveen, Director, Telangana State Archives and Research Institute, were released.

Mahdi Shahroki, Consul General of Iran in Hyderabad, remembered his visit to Hyderabad 50 years ago. "We are thankful for collaborating with Iran as it develops the relationship with two countries. This information also provides more context for today's world."

These facsimile editions and descriptive catalogues mark a milestone in the documentation of rare Persian and Arabic manuscripts and records, shedding light on the rich cultural and administrative history of the Deccan during the Mughal era.

Special panels to oversee development of zoos, parks

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Forest, Environment and Endowments Konda Surekha reiterated the government's commitment to wildlife conservation while chairing the eighth meeting of the State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) at the Secretariat.

The meeting reviewed the implementation of decisions taken in the previous session and discussed key developmental initiatives concerning wildlife protection, forestry and environmental conservation.

The Minister welcomed expert recommendations and assessed the progress of major State projects sent for review to the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL). The state's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests explained that under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, the forma-

tion of the SBWL is mandatory. He informed that the Telangana Board was officially constituted through GO Ms. No. 52, issued on December 2, 2024.

During the discussions, the expansion of the Medak-Yellareddy road passing through Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary was approved. Proposals for laying OFC lines in forest areas were deliberated. Permission was granted for the construction of an 11 KV power substation in Mulugu and the Peddagattu lift irrigation scheme in the Nagarjunasagar division.

Eighteen proposals regarding modifications to animal passages and 13 proposals for mobile towers were reviewed before being sent to the NBWL. The board also discussed setting up a corpus fund to compensate victims of human-wildlife conflicts through the Mee-Seva

platform.

The resettlement of 1,088 families from Amrabad Tiger Reserve was reviewed, with officials providing updates on the process. Progress on community-based eco-tourism projects was assessed, and the lifting of restrictions on heavy vehicles in Kaval Tiger Reserve was considered. The Minister suggested forming special committees to oversee the development of zoos, national parks and urban parks across the State. She emphasized the need to prioritize indigenous trees and take measures to protect natural forest ecosystems.

The meeting was attended by legislators Payam Venkateswarlu and Ramdas Naik, Chief Secretary Nadeem, PCCF Dobriyal, senior officials Elu Singh, MSS Somaraju and OSD N Sumanth Kumar, along with other senior officials.

Telangana

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 25, 2025

04



Venkat Rami Reddy and his wife Vilasini

Four Sangareddy pilgrims killed in ghastly accident

The tragedy happened when pilgrims from Sangareddy were returning from Maha Kumb in Prayagraj

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

In a horrific road accident near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday night, four people from Sangareddy district lost their lives when a truck collided with their car, while two others were seriously injured.

The deceased were identified as Irrigation Deputy Engineer Venkat Rami Reddy (46), a resident of Mamidigi village under the Nyalkal mandal, his wife Vilasini (40), and Mall Reddy (40) from Malgi village, along with the car driver. Two others are reported to be in critical condition.

The accident took place around 10:40 pm on Sunday night, while they were head-

ing to visit Lord Kashi Vishwanath after taking a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj.

According to reports reaching here, the car in which the pilgrims from Sangareddy district were travelling, met with an accident while trying to avoid hitting a two-wheeler coming from the opposite direction, the driver swerved the car and collided head-on with the tipper. Three people in the car died instantly.

As soon as the incident happened, Varanasi police reached the accident site and shifted the injured to the local hospital. They also informed the families of the deceased. The incident happened while they were returning from the Kumbh Mela.

Area under horticulture declines in Nalgonda dist

PNS ■ NALGONDA

The cultivation of horticultural crops in Nalgonda district is experiencing a decline as more farmers are shifting towards paddy farming. The area dedicated to horticulture has significantly reduced, now covering only a few thousand acres, compared to the extensive cultivation seen in the past.

A key factor contributing to this downturn is the lack of adequate staffing in the Horticultural Department. The number of Horticultural officers in the district is insufficient, with each officer responsible for 8-9 mandals, which leaves little room for providing guidance to farmers on cultivating horticultural crops.

Historically, Nalgonda district supported a thriving horticultural sector, with crops such as sweet lemon, lemon, oil palm, papaya, vegetables, fruits, and flowers. However, this area has now dwindled to approximately 70,000-80,000 acres, a far cry from the expansive acreage in earlier times.

Despite the decrease in horticultural cultivation, the state government has focused on promoting oil palm and vegetable farming. Oil palm is now cultivated on 17,000 acres, with 12,000 acres in Nalgonda, where farmers receive subsidies for its cultivation. Additionally, veg-



etables are grown across 6,000 acres, and recent government funds have been allocated for vegetable cultivation in 90 units.

Sweet lemon cultivation in Nalgonda has fallen to 43,000 acres, while lemon gardens occupy 9,000 acres. Chili farming spans 12,000 acres, and ivy gourd is cultivated in around 800 acres. The market prices for sweet lemons and lemons have become

unpredictable, leading many farmers to reconsider these crops. Both are vulnerable to pest attacks, further discouraging their cultivation.

While lemons have a dedicated market at Nakrekal, sweet lemons lack a local market, forcing farmers to rely on traders and middlemen who purchase the fruit for export to Delhi and West Bengal.

Class 10 student dies as bus hits two-wheeler

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRICILLA

In Sarampalli village of Tangallapalli mandal, a youth died on the spot after an RTC bus collided with the two-wheeler he was riding.

The deceased, Janga Ishanth (17), was from Pothugal village in Mustabadd mandal. Ishanth, who was studying in the Class 10, was traveling with his friend riding pillion from Pothugal village towards Badanapalli. As they were crossing the main road in Sarampalli, an RTC bus from Vemulawada depot collided with their two-wheeler, causing Ishanth's death on the spot.



Janga Ishanth

The pillion rider suffered severe injuries and was rushed to the Siricilla Area Hospital by 108 ambulance.

The police have registered a case and are investigating.

Council elections: Prohibitory orders imposed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nalgonda District Collector and Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda Teachers' Constituency Returning Officer Ila Tripathi has announced that a 48-hour silence period will be enforced ahead of the Teachers' MLC elections scheduled for February 27, 2025. According to the announcement, the silence period will begin at 4 pm on February 25 (Tuesday) and continue until 4 pm on February 27 (Thursday).

During this period, all forms of election campaigning, including public meetings, rallies, and processions, will be strictly prohibited. The Election Commission has also banned the dissemination



Ila Tripathi

of political messages through bulk SMS, social media posts, and any other digital means. Additionally, any content related to opinion polls or exit polls will not be allowed under Section 126(1)(b) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Authorities will

closely monitor social media platforms, and any violations will be met with stringent legal action.

In an effort to maintain law and order, Section 144 will be imposed in all districts in which the elections are held, prohibiting gatherings of more than four people in public places. Law enforcement agencies have been directed to remain vigilant to prevent any untoward incidents.

The Election Commission has reiterated that its primary objective is to conduct the elections in a transparent and orderly manner. The authorities have appealed to all stakeholders to cooperate with the administration and uphold the democratic process.

Renovated 800-year-old Padmanabha Swamy temple inaugurated

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Penjarla village under Kothur mandal in Shadnagar constituency witnessed a historic moment with the inauguration of the renovated 800-year-old Swayambhu Sri Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple. Telangana Legislative Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, who attended as the chief guest, expressed his delight that the temple is now gaining the same spiritual significance as the renowned Anantha Padmanabha Swamy temples in Kerala and Vikarabad.

The event, organised under the auspices of local MLA Veerpalali Shankar, was attended by AICC National Secretary Challa Vamsi Chand Reddy, Rajendranagar MLA Prakash Goud, temple administrators, and other dignitaries. Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar was welcomed with a Poornakumbha ritual by temple administrators, including former ZPTC Shyamsunder Reddy and Temple Chairman Bezawada Anita Reddy. Following special prayers, he emphasized the temple's potential to become a major spiritual tourism center in the future.

The Speaker commended the efforts of Shyamsunder Reddy and Bezawada Anita Reddy for their dedication in developing the temple, which was once surrounded by forest



land. He assured that he would advocate for the allocation of special funds for further temple development. Highlighting the popularity of the Sri Anantha Padmanabha Swamy Temple in Vikarabad, which attracts over 30,000 devotees on weekends, he predicted a similar influx at the Penjarla temple.

Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar expressed his wish for Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's well-being and success in implementing the government's promises. He also prayed for abundant rainfall and prosperity for farmers in the region.

Local MLA Veerpalali Shankar reiterated his commitment to developing Shadnagar constituency as a spiritual hub. He lauded the efforts of Bezawada Anita Reddy and Shyamsunder Reddy in making the temple renovation a grand success. He also extended gratitude to Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar for assuring government support for temple development.

Legal awareness camp for senior citizens held

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Peddapur village under Sadasivpet mandal hosted a legal awareness camp on the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, on Monday. The event was organised by the Legal Aid Society of ICFAI Law School, IFHE, Hyderabad, in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), of Sangareddy District.

Several distinguished guests, including senior civil judge and DLSA Sangareddy Secretary B Ramesh, ICFAI Law School Dean Prof Y Pratap Reddy,

Village Secretary Papaiah, representatives of Peddapur Gram Panchayat, and Faculty Coordinator of the Legal Aid Society, Dr S Kannan.

The primary objective of the camp was to raise awareness about legal provisions ensuring the welfare and maintenance of senior citizens, including the toll-free helpline number 14567. ICFAI law students conducted a poster presentation detailing various government schemes benefiting senior citizens, such as Ayushman Bharat, Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, and Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana. They also highlighted key Constitutional and legislative provisions,

including Article 41 of the Indian Constitution, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

Dr Kesari, a faculty member at ICFAI Law School, spoke about the three stages of life, childhood, youth, and old age, while explaining the distinction between Senior Citizens and Super Senior Citizens. She emphasized the importance of a balanced diet and regular medical check-ups for the elderly.

A mime performance depicted real-life issues faced by senior citizens, illustrating Section 23 of the Parents and

Senior Citizens Regulation Bill.

Judge B Ramesh shared recent legal cases highlighting the hardships faced by elderly parents in society. He said that senior citizens no longer need to approach the courts directly, as DLSA would offer relief without requiring an advocate. He also stressed the importance of registering on the e-portal for quick grievance redressal and engaged with villagers to address their concerns.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by K Ravi Kumar, a faculty member at ICFAI Law School, who acknowledged the collective efforts that contributed to the camp's success.

Centre, State focus on expansion, construction of roads

PNS ■ MEDAK

The Central and State governments are placing a special focus on the expansion of roads and the construction of new roads in Telangana. New roads have already been approved in several areas, and green signals have been given for the expansion of existing roads. The Central government has released funds for the construction of a national highway through Medak and Kamareddy districts, and work is currently progressing rapidly.

The National Highway, which is being built for a distance of 95 kilometers at an estimated cost of Rs 526 crore, is being executed on a war footing. The construc-



tion of National Highway 765 D from Medak to Rudrur via Yellareddy and Banswada is underway.

In the first phase, Rs 213 crore have been allocated by the Centre for the work between Medak and Yellareddy, covering a dis-

tance of 43.91 kilometers. In the second phase, the road will be constructed from Yellareddy to Rudrur via Banswada, with Rs 313 crore allocated for the 51.66-kilometer stretch. The work on both the first and second packages is progressing

rapidly. As part of the road construction, trees on both sides of the road for the double road have already been removed. The widening work has also been completed, and the areas have been filled with gravel, while service roads and drains are being constructed for the villages. The work from Yellareddy to Rudrur under the second package is already 50 per cent complete.

However, the road stretches through a forest area for 18 kilometers. Approval from the Forest Department is required for the construction, and authorities say that once these permissions are obtained, the work can progress even faster.

Poisoned by mother, girl dies

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

In the Jogya Thanda under Dornakal mandal, a mother attempted to kill her two children by feeding poison-laced soft drink to them. Her daughter, Nityashree, who had been undergoing treatment for the last 20 days, succumbed to her injuries. Following this incident, villagers demanded that the mother be arrested.

They are demanding that strict action be taken against the mother, Usha, and that the conspiracy behind the murder be thoroughly investigated. The villagers are continuing their protest on the road throughout the night on Sunday. The villagers expressed anger at Usha as she failed to turn up at the hospital though her children battled for life. They vowed to continue their fight until justice is served. Dornakal police arrived at the scene and convinced the villagers to withdraw the protest.

Miraculous escape for passengers as moving bus catches fire

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

A private travel bus on National Highway 44 caught fire early Monday morning, but fortunately, all 45 passengers managed to escape safely. The incident happened near Malleboynapally under Jachcherla mandal. The bus was travelling from Bangalore to Hyderabad. The bus departed from Bangalore around 11 pm on Sunday, and everything was going smoothly until approximately 4:30 am when the vehicle reached the Mahabubnagar district.

About five kilometres before the accident site, one of the bus tyres burst. Despite the damaged tyre, the driver continued to drive the bus at the same speed. The driver did not even notice the smoke coming out of the engine.

The passengers noticed flames emerging from the back of the bus and immediately alerted the driver. The driver stopped the bus near Malleboynapally. Upon evacuating, the passengers saw the blaze intensifying at the rear of the bus. They initially tried to extinguish the flames with dirt, but the fire continued to intensify.

The air condition unit of the bus exploded, leading to the luggage of the passengers being gutted. Police registered a case.



A BOLT OUT OF THE BLUE

TG border districts witness sharp decline in liquor sales

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

In recent months, the liquor sales in Telangana's border districts, especially Khammam, have drastically dropped. Previously, Telangana saw a surge in alcohol demand, particularly in its border areas, as people from Andhra Pradesh (AP) crossed over to purchase liquor due to the unavailability of premium liquor brands and high prices in AP. However, this trend has now reversed, resulting in a sharp decline in revenue for Telangana.

Khammam, a key district in this context, has seen a sharp drop in liquor sales, especially in the past three months. Compared to last year, the figures have plummeted, and officials are finding it increasingly difficult to meet sales targets. This month, for instance, sales have dropped by approximately Rs 10 crore compared to February last year.

The shift is largely attributed to a new liquor policy implemented in AP in October. Liquor prices were reduced, and popular liquor brands became widely available. As a result, those who used to drink alcohol often in AP relied on Telangana for their alcohol purchases and are now buying liquor from their state, severely impacting sales in Telangana's border areas.

The excise circles in Sathupally, Madhira, Vyra, Khammam-1, and Ashwaravupet, all near the AP border, are particularly affected.

The situation is further complicated by the MLC elections, which will keep liquor shops closed for two days this month, making it even harder to meet



the sales targets. Moreover, rumours suggest that liquor prices in Telangana might go up by another 15 per cent, which could further depress sales and potentially lead to an influx of AP liquor into Telangana.

As things stand, the once-thriving liquor trade in Telangana's border districts is having a rough time.

Meanwhile, Khammam District Prohibition and Excise Officer G Nagender Reddy denied, in an interview, that the liquor is being smuggled from AP into Telangana. Right now, the smuggling of alcohol from Telangana to AP has come to an end. Since the prices are the same in both AP and Telangana, people are purchasing alcohol locally.

In the past, alcohol was smuggled from Telangana to Andhra Pradesh. Brands like Mansion House and OAB were not available in AP. Now, these brands are also available there. As a result, sales in Telangana border districts have decreased. Earlier, there was only one government shop in the mandal headquarters in AP. Now, the number of private shops in mandals of AP has increased. It led to people from AP stopping from buying alcohol from Telangana he said.

Tenant farmer commits suicide due to debt burden

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRICILLA

Entrapped by financial distress and debts, a 51-year tenant farmer J Devayya from Pothugal village under Mustabadd mandal committed suicide by consuming pesticide at his farm early on Monday morning.

Devayya, who owned one acre of land, had taken 5 acres of neighbouring land on lease and was cultivating paddy in it.

However, due to the lack of water the paddy crop dried up, and Devayya, unable to see a way to clear his debts, was mentally distressed, according to his family members.

The deceased is survived by his wife, daughter Padma, Rekha, and son Ajay. Villagers are urging the government to assist Devayya's family.

The police have registered a case and are investigating the matter.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA				
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, LA, HYDERABAD AIRPORT METRO LIMITED, HYDERABAD.				
FORM-F				
Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML				
[See rule 7 (c)]				
File No. : CB/07/2025-RHS		Dated: 24-02-2025		
Whereas the following Notifications were issued and published in the Gazette for acquisition of the land under Extension of Metro Rail Project, Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGSS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Shani-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District for the Public purpose.				
In response to the said Notifications the following affected persons (Property owners and others) have come forward to assert their claims through Notifications.				
The details of the willing affected persons (Land Owners) are as follows:				
S. No.	NOTIFICATION No. & DATE	GAZETTE No. & DATE		
1.	CB / 191 / 2024 - RHS (276 to 300)	HAML No. 32, Dated : 28.11.2024		
Sl No./ PN No.	Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sqyds
1/8	1 Sri Gulam Mustafa, Sri Gulam Rasool (P), 19-4-4109, Bahadurpura, Hyderabad - 500064.	3 285	20-5-23	12.27
S. No.	NOTIFICATION No. & DATE	GAZETTE No. & DATE		
1.	CB / 194 / 2024 - RHS (351 to 375)	HAML No. 35, Dated : 28.11.2024		
Sl No./ PN No.	Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sqyds
1/10	1 Sri Mohd Samiullah Khan, Sri Late Mohammed Abdulrah Khan, Rio 20-6-616, Shah Ali Banda Bahadurpura, Hyderabad-500065.	3 380	20-6-616 / 20-6-618 / A & B	14.17
It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District / Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad within the Seven days of publication of this Notification i.e., by 3-03-2025.				
Sd/- Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad.				
Place: Hyderabad Date: 24-02-2025				
DIPR.No.715/LA/PRADVI/AGENCY/2024-25				

ACROSS THE STATES



Six varsity students booked for thrashing junior

Six students of a private university here have been booked for allegedly beating up a fellow student with a belt, police said on Monday. According to police, the victim, a second-year BA student, in his complaint said that six senior students tried to rag him when he was in his friend's room last Thursday. Upon objecting to their commands, but today, I have witnessed firsthand why it is renowned across the world." "Manipur is known for its richness and diversity in the field of art and culture. While classical Manipuri dance is renowned worldwide, Lai Haraoba and other folk dances from both the valley and the hills vividly showcase the depth and richness of our ancient cultural heritage," he added. The governor remarked, "Ever since its inception in 1972, MSKA has been conferring fellowships and awards to people distinguished not only in art and culture but also in literature and fine arts. These awards symbolise the highest standard of excellence and achievement by artists, writers, and practitioners of fine arts.



Manipur Guv distributes Kala Akademi awards

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Monday distributed Manipur State Kala Akademi (MSKA) annual awards and fellowships to distinguished personalities who contributed to Manipuri art and culture in various forms. Speaking at the event at Raj Bhavan, Bhalla said, "I had heard and read about Manipuri art and culture, but today, I have witnessed firsthand why it is renowned across the world." "Manipur is known for its richness and diversity in the field of art and culture. While classical Manipuri dance is renowned worldwide, Lai Haraoba and other folk dances from both the valley and the hills vividly showcase the depth and richness of our ancient cultural heritage," he added. The governor remarked, "Ever since its inception in 1972, MSKA has been conferring fellowships and awards to people distinguished not only in art and culture but also in literature and fine arts. These awards symbolise the highest standard of excellence and achievement by artists, writers, and practitioners of fine arts.



Arunachal farmers to receive Rs 226.46 crore under PM-KISAN

Farmers in Arunachal Pradesh are set to receive Rs 226.46 crore under the 19th installment of the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN), officials said. Under the 19th installment, around Rs 22,000 crore will be directly transferred to the bank accounts of 9.8 crore farmers nationwide. Eligible farmers will receive Rs 2,000 as part of the Rs 6,000 annual benefit, distributed in three installments. The installment was released by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a programme in Bihar's Bhagalpur. Events were organised at Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) across the country where exhibitions showcased natural farming, organic farming, and GI-tagged products, highlighting sustainable agricultural practices. Arunachal Pradesh agriculture minister Gabriel D Wangsu participated virtually alongside departmental officers. Officials praised the scheme's impact on the agrarian economy and lauded the inspiring messages shared by distinguished guests, an official statement said here.

Want a Kashmir where no life is lost due to terrorism: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is peace in Jammu and Kashmir and this peace has to be permanent, and the Narendra Modi government's aim is to make a Jammu and Kashmir where no life is lost due to terrorism, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Monday.

Interacting with youngsters from Jammu and Kashmir who have come to the national capital under the Watan Ko Jano youth exchange programme, Shah also said the people of Jammu and Kashmir had equal rights over the entire country, like the people of any other state, and the entirety of India looked at the people of the Union Territory with love and respect.

When terrorism comes to an end, there is no need for the deployment of police and that day is not far, he added.

"When there is peace, no police will be required. This message has to be carried by you to your friends, family and villages... When you go home, tell your friends, neighbours that the entire country is living in peace and the people of Jammu and Kashmir should also live in peace," Shah said.

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"When there is peace, no police will be required. This message has to be carried by you to your friends, family and villages... When you go home, tell your friends, neighbours that the entire country is living in peace and the people of Jammu and Kashmir should also live in peace," Shah said

be permanent and "our aim is to make a Jammu and Kashmir where no life is lost due to terrorism", he added.

"Violence brings nothing. Due to the decades of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, 36,000 people lost their lives," the home minister said.

Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had made the country equal for all by abrogating Article 370 and, now,

the people of Jammu and Kashmir had equal rights anywhere in India, like the people of Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat or Rajasthan.

"You have rights over Jammu and Kashmir. Is it not good that you also have equal rights over the other 29 states of the country? Like Jammu and Kashmir, the whole country is yours," he said.

Peace is most important for

everyone and, under the Modi government, peace and development have come to Jammu and Kashmir, hospitals, roads and bridges have come, infrastructure has been created, he added.

"The entire country looks at the people of Jammu and Kashmir with love and respect. It is because peace is prevalent there. It is because of peace, development is taking place in Jammu and Kashmir," the home minister said. There are 30 states in the country and Jammu and Kashmir is one of them. Together, all these 30 states become India, he said.

"Our country is our home. If you don't step out of Jammu and Kashmir, you will not be able to know the country. So, don't you think that you should visit and know the country well? In your next school vacation, you must visit any of the states along with your parents. If required, have a fight at home but you must visit one of the states," he added.

In the past 10 years, terrorism has come to an end in Jammu and Kashmir, incidents of blasts and stone pelting have come to an end, and schools are opening regularly, the home minister noted.

Shah said there was no theatre earlier and no one could go to watch a film.

Social security remains a vital pillar of social justice: Mandaviya



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Social security remains a fundamental pillar of India's commitment to social justice, Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Monday said, noting that its coverage increased to 48.8 per cent of the total population in 2024 from 24.4 per cent in 2021.

Addressing the inaugural session of the Regional Dialogue on Social Justice 2025, Mandaviya said,

"The unemployment rate has declined from 6 per cent in 2017-18 to 3.2 per cent in 2023-24, while the Labour Force Participation Rate has increased from 49.8 per cent to 61.1 per cent".

These positive indicators underscore the impact of our reforms and initiatives. Labour reforms have been a foundation of India's efforts to mod-

ernise its workforce policies, he added.

The consolidation of 29 labour laws into four simplified Labour Codes has promoted labour welfare, universalised wages and social security, and ensured safer working conditions, he pointed out.

These reforms have also improved the ease of doing business by streamlining registration, license, and compliance procedures, the minister noted.

"Social security remains a fundamental pillar of India's commitment to social justice. The ILO's World Social Protection Report 2024-26 highlights India's remarkable progress, reaching 48.8 per cent in 2024.

We are in the process of further collecting the data with the ILO," Mandaviya said.

India proud of its contributions to UN peacekeeping: EAM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will continue to contribute meaningfully to the cause of UN peacekeeping and it is committed to supporting Global South nations in building peacekeeping capacities, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday.

Jaishankar also said that the participation of women in peace operations in various parts of the globe has made the missions more diverse and inclusive. The external affairs minister was speaking at the inaugural session of an India-hosted conference on "Women Peacekeepers from the Global South".

The conference has brought together women peacekeepers from 35 nations to explore the evolving role of women in peacekeeping operations and discuss strategies to enhance their participation.

It aims to strengthen the role of women in UN peacekeeping by fostering dialogue, sharing experiences, and

improving collaboration among the nations of the Global South.

Jaishankar said India is proud of its contributions and association with UN peacekeeping, a commitment that spans decades. "Since the 1950s, India has contributed over 2,90,000 peacekeepers across more than 50 missions. In fact, India remains the largest Troop Contributing Country to this day," he said.

Jaishankar said India strongly believes that peacekeeping is an "effective instrument" in the maintenance of international peace and security. India has unfortunately lost nearly 180 peacekeepers, whose supreme sacrifices are etched in the history of our collective endeavours forever, he said.

"The participation of women in peace operations makes it more diverse and inclusive. It is essential that we continue to increase the representation of women in peacekeeping," Jaishankar said.

Rajasthan Assembly disrupted amid uproar

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan assembly on Monday witnessed uproar by Congress members, who have been holding a dharna in the assembly since Friday evening against a minister's remark against former prime minister Indira Gandhi and suspension of six MLAs.

After 13 minutes of the proceedings, the House was adjourned till 12 noon.

As soon as the Question Hour began at 11 am, the Congress MLAs raised slogans and tried to disrupt the house.

However, Speaker Vasudev Devnani called listed questions and the proceedings began. The speaker also asked suspended MLAs to go out of the House but they remained present.

With the protest of the Congress MLAs continuing,



the speaker adjourned the proceedings till 12 noon.

Chaos erupted in the assembly on Friday after BJP minister Avinash Gehlot's remarks against former prime minister Indira Gandhi.

During the Question Hour on Friday, Gehlot had pointed to the opposition and said, "In the 2023-24 budget also, like always, you named the scheme

(on working women's hostels) after your 'dadi' (grandmother) Indira Gandhi."

The remark had triggered an uproar in the House, which led to three adjournments and suspension of six Congress MLAs, including PCC chief Govind Singh Dotasara, Ramkesh Meena, Amin Kagzi, Jakir Hussain, and Sanjay Kumar.

Farmers are backbone of Indian economy: Union Min Puri

PNS ■ AMRITSAR

Farmers are the backbone of the Indian economy and custodians of food security, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri said on Monday.

Puri was speaking at the "Kissan Samman Samaroh" programme here.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday released the 19th installment of PM-KISAN Samman Nidhi at Bhagalpur in Bihar.

The minister joined the programme virtually from Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar, along with several farmers and dignitaries, an



official statement said.

Addressing farmers and other members of the Guru Nanak Dev University, Puri said farmers' welfare is the top priority of the central govern-

ment led by Prime Minister Modi.

"Farmers are the backbone of our economy. They are the caretakers of our land and the custodians of our food security," he noted.

The minister said farmers have now become energy producers and the government is striving to increase ethanol blending across the country for their benefit.

"Our farmers have now become energy producers. The total ethanol blending earlier was 1.5 per cent, but now it has reached 19.6 per cent, following which the farmers have been paid more than Rs 90,000 crore," he said.

Gujarat to host AICC session after 64 years

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

When the Congress holds its AICC session in Ahmedabad in April, it will only be the third time in the party's 139-year-old history that Gujarat will host this mega conclave with the last one held 64 years ago in Bhavnagar.

Gujarat Congress president Shaktisinh Gohil on Monday thanked the party's high command on behalf of the people of Gujarat for deciding to organise the key session in the state.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC) session on April 8 and 9 will deliberate on the challenges posed by the BJP's "anti-people" policies and its alleged attack on the Constitution, as well as on charting the outfit's future road map, the opposition party said in New Delhi on Sunday.

"The party has given a chance to Gujarat to organise the AICC session on April 8-9 in Ahmedabad city, the biggest centre of independence struggle where an ashram of Mahatma Gandhi (Sabarmati Ashram) is located. I thank the working committee and high command for deciding to organise the session here," Gohil said while addressing the media.

He said the party wanted to organise the session at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar "but have been told unofficially that the venue will not be provided for the purpose". Gujarat, which



houses birthplaces of independence heroes Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, will host an AICC session for the third time in the Congress history with the last one organised at Bhavnagar in 1961 when Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy was the party's president, the Rajya Sabha MP said.

The AICC's first session in Gujarat was organised at Haripura near Bardoli in 1938, when Sardar Patel had taken the responsibility for the event, he said.

It was organised to mark the 10th anniversary of Bardoli satyagraha, a non-violent farmer protest led by Patel which was launched to oppose the British government's excessive taxation. At the Haripura session, Bose had first proposed the idea of establishing a planning commission and launching five-year plans, the GPC president maintained.

"The blueprint issued by Bose in the 1938 session was implemented by the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru 12 years later," he said.



Don't work in silo, get rid of unproductive systems

PrezMurmu to railway services officers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that railway services determine the quality of daily lives of a large number of people, President Droupadi Murmu on Monday asked the railway services officers to get rid of the burdens of unproductive systems and not to work in a silo.

Addressing a group of probationers of the railway services, who had called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here, the president said a major part of India moves on the railway tracks every day and hence it is not an exaggeration to say that Indian Railways is a social, cultural and commercial lifeline of the country.

Railway services determine the quality of daily lives of a large number of people, the president said addressing the officer trainees of the Indian Railway Protection Force Service (IRPFS), the Indian Railway Management Service (Accounts) and the Indian Railway Management Service (Traffic).

"I will make a special appeal to all the young officers of the three different wings of the railways to always keep above what is called 'working in a silo'.

You are not working only for the vertical you are employed in. You are working for the overall effectiveness of the railways as a change agent and service provider to the nation on the move," she said.

Murmu also underlined the need to differentiate between what the railway was during the colonial era and what role it has to play in the India of Amrit-Kaal.

3 in 5 die after cancer diagnosis: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Says women disproportionately affected

Three in every five people in India succumb to cancer following diagnosis with women bearing a "disproportionate burden" compared to men, an analysis of global cancer data has estimated.

The incidence to mortality ratio in the US was found to be about one in four, while in China it was one in two, according to the results published in "The Lancet Regional Health Southeast Asia" journal.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)



study found that India ranked third highest in cancer incidence, after China and the US, and accounted for over 10 per cent of the world's cancer-related deaths, ranking second

after China.

Researchers also projected that in the coming two decades, India will face a formidable challenge in managing deaths related to cancer incidence,

with a yearly increase of two per cent in cases as the population ages.

The team examined trends in 36 types of cancer across age groups and genders in India over the past 20 years, using the Global Cancer Observatory (GLOBOCAN) 2022 and Global Health Observatory (GHO) databases.

"Approximately three out of five individuals would be expected to succumb to mortality if diagnosed with cancer in India," the authors wrote.

The findings also revealed that the five most common cancers affecting both genders

collectively account for 44 per cent of cancer burden in India.

However, women in India were found to bear a "disproportionate burden", as breast cancer continues to be the most prevalent cancer, contributing to 13.8 per cent of new cases from both genders, and cervical cancer the third most (9.2 per cent).

Among women, breast cancer made up for nearly 30 per cent of new cases and over 24 per cent of related deaths, followed by cervical cancer, accounting for over 19 per cent of new cases and almost 20 per cent of deaths.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

German election Tik Toked

As Germany votes to elect its new chancellor, far right may make substantial gains thanks to its Tik Tok campaign

Germany votes in a snap federal election, a political shake-up triggered by the collapse of the three-party coalition government at the end of last year. With 59.2 million eligible voters, this election is set to reshape the country's political landscape, potentially heralding a shift towards conservatism and a stronger far-right presence. At the forefront of the race is Friedrich Merz, the 69-year-old leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Merz has emerged as the frontrunner to become Germany's next chancellor, advocating for economic stability, stricter immigration policies, and a reassertion of Germany's leadership in Europe. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is poised to make historic gains, emerging as the second-largest political force. This comes at the expense of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party (SPD), which has suffered due to economic stagnation and dissatisfaction with the previous coalition government. The Green Party and the Free Democrats (FDP), both



part of the fallen coalition, have also struggled to maintain voter confidence. Meanwhile, the Left Party is fighting to remain relevant amid internal divisions and the broader shift in political sentiment.

This election is taking place at a critical juncture for Germany, with pressing domestic and international challenges shaping the national narrative. Germany, the EU's largest economy, is grappling with slow growth, rising inflation, and concerns about industrial competitiveness. Many voters are looking for a leader who can restore economic stability and drive innovation. Besides, the country has faced growing debates over migration policies, with many Germans expressing concerns about integration and border security. The AfD has capitalised on this sentiment, calling for stricter immigration controls. With growing geopolitical tensions, including relations with China, Russia, and the United States, Germany's next leader will need to navigate foreign policy challenges carefully. But the biggest factor that is being analysed is why the AfD is gaining ground? Indeed, the rise of the AfD can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, economic dissatisfaction has pushed voters towards populist rhetoric, with the AfD portraying itself as the party of change. Secondly, frustration with the previous coalition's handling of immigration and energy policy has bolstered nationalist sentiments. An interesting aspect of this election has been the role played by social media, particularly TikTok. The AfD has effectively leveraged TikTok to reach younger audiences, spreading populist messages through short, engaging videos, often laced with negative content. Meanwhile, mainstream parties have struggled to counteract misinformation and viral narratives that favor the far-right. This election underscores the growing influence of digital platforms in modern politics, raising questions about regulation and the impact of algorithm-driven content on democratic processes. Whatever the outcome, it will have far-reaching implications for Germany, the EU and beyond.

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PICTALK



A parrot perches on a 'Palas' flower, in Bastar

New VC appointment rules undermine State autonomy



K S TOMAR

The UGC's draft guidelines, while ostensibly aimed at ensuring uniformity in VC appointments, have opened a Pandora's box of political and constitutional concerns

The University Grants Commission's (UGC) draft guidelines proposing a shift in the appointment of Vice-Chancellors (VCs) have ignited a political storm. By granting Vice-Chancellors—predominantly Governors—the authority to constitute search-cum-selection committees for appointing VCs, the UGC has stirred concerns about federalism, state autonomy, and academic independence. Adding to the controversy, non-compliance with these guidelines could disqualify state universities from UGC funding schemes, creating a direct clash between the Centre and opposition-ruled states such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh. This move, seen as a veiled attempt to centralise power over state universities, places the spotlight on India's federal structure and the simmering tension between state governments and Governors, especially in opposition-led states. At the core of the debate is the growing role of Governors, often viewed as proxies of the Centre, in state governance. Historically, state governments have played a central role in appointing VCs by constituting independent search committees. However, the UGC's draft proposes a shift, granting Governors—functioning as Chancellors of state universities—control over these committees. Governors, constitutionally expected to act as neutral figures, have increasingly been accused of serving partisan interests, particularly in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal. By formalizing the Governor's role in academic appointments, the UGC guidelines risk politicizing the process, potentially undermining academic independence and turning universities into ideological battlegrounds. The fears of state governments are not unfounded. In Tamil Nadu, for example, the DMK has accused the Governor of deliberately delaying VC appointments to push candidates aligned with the ruling party at the Centre. Similarly, Kerala has witnessed repeated stand-offs between the Governor and the state government over academic



appointments. The new guidelines only add fuel to these already volatile relationships. The UGC's draft guidelines also raise significant constitutional questions. Education, as a subject under the Concurrent List, allows both the Centre and states to legislate on it. However, the Constitution also upholds federal principles, granting states substantial control over their universities. The new guidelines, by empowering Governors to dominate the VC appointment process, are being viewed as an encroachment on states' jurisdiction. Several states may challenge these guidelines in court, arguing that they violate the federal structure enshrined in the Constitution. States like Tamil Nadu have already passed laws to curtail the Governor's powers in academic governance, reflecting a broader pushback against what they see as an overreach by the Centre. For opposition-ruled states, where educational institutions are often viewed as bastions of intellectual and political autonomy, the UGC's guidelines have deepened fears of central overreach. The ruling dispensations in states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal have expressed strong apprehensions about Governors using this newfound authority as an extension of the Centre's political influence. In West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's government has long accused the Governor of interfering in the state's affairs, particularly in



THE FEAR IS THAT SUCH INTERFERENCE COULD STIFLE INTELLECTUAL DIVERSITY, WITH UNIVERSITIES BECOMING VEHICLES FOR PROPAGATING THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL AGENDA

the educational domain. The UGC guidelines could exacerbate this friction, allowing the Governor to influence appointments to academic institutions. Such moves, critics argue, undermine the intellectual independence that universities in the state have historically enjoyed. In Kerala, where the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government has vociferously defended educational autonomy, the guidelines are being seen as an outright encroachment on the state's constitutional rights. The state government fears that politicised appointments could compromise the ideological neutrality and academic standards of its universities. The DMK-led Tamil Nadu government has also repeatedly opposed the Governor's increasing interference in educational appointments. The state has even passed legislation to reduce the Governor's control over the VC selection process, only to have it stalled by the Governor. For Tamil Nadu, these new guidelines are a direct challenge to the state's efforts to safeguard its educational institutions from external political influence. Universities, as centres of higher learning, thrive on autonomy and academic freedom. The UGC's intervention threatens to compromise these principles by potentially turning VCs into political appointees. Critics argue that such appointments could erode academic independence, with VCs prioritising political allegiance over edu-

cational excellence. In opposition-led states, this concern is particularly acute. The fear is that such interference could stifle intellectual diversity, with universities becoming vehicles for propagating the central government's political agenda. This interference also undermines the confidence of academicians and researchers. Scholars worry that political considerations will outweigh merit in appointments, leading to a decline in the quality of higher education. The resulting chilling effect could discourage free thought and innovation in academic institutions.

The controversy over VC appointments is emblematic of a larger tussle between the Centre and states over federalism. For states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal, the guidelines represent an erosion of their autonomy in managing critical domains such as education. This growing centralisation also poses questions about the role of Governors in a federal structure. A balanced approach, one that respects state autonomy while ensuring accountability in academic governance, is the need of the hour. Without such a resolution, the guidelines risk becoming another flashpoint in the Centre-state relationship, with significant implications for India's federal structure and the future of its education system.

(The writer is a senior political analyst and strategic affairs columnist)

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FARMERS DESERVE FAIR PRICES

Madam — The Union Agriculture Minister talking about the government working out schemes (February 23) to prevent distress sale of farm produce is welcome. India continues to be predominantly an agrarian country. It's contribution to the country's GDP was around 51 per cent at the time the country got freedom. Still, we had to depend on aids like PL480 to feed the poor. Thanks to the green revolution taken up with all by the government as well as the farming community with all sincerity the country is upgraded to food surplus status. But due to the shifting of focus from agriculture to industry, agriculture is suffering the worst, facing all sorts of odds at every level.

Though every commodity's price is fixed by the producer, it doesn't hold good for the farm produce. The government doesn't volunteer to take the ground reality into account and fix the cost, leaving it to the market dynamics. This policy has allowed the middlemen to play havoc. This reality, coupled with the apathetic moves of the government, has resulted in millions of farmers resorting to committing suicide. Many small farmers are deserting their farming activities and migrating to cities seeking daily wage jobs for their livelihood. The government is still not sensitised to address the issues but comes out with plans to monopolise farming by a few private corporations. It is good that the minister has now talked about the woes of the farmers who fail to get reasonable returns and the consumers who fail to get the benefit of the plenty. It would be a meaningful act of the government to discuss with the farmers and address their woes without attaching any political strings. Farmers are the real wealth creators and providers of food security.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

MEDIA TARGETS KIIT UNIVERSITY

Madam— After the suicide of a Nepali student at Odisha's KIIT University following an unhealthy relationship, some sections of the media are targeting the university

Virat shines as India beats Pakistan



India has beaten its archrival Pakistan by six wickets in their group A match of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 at the Dubai International Cricket stadium. Virat Kohli has once again proved his supremacy against Pakistan in the ICC tournaments, delivering a scintillating unbeaten century with a memorable knock off 111 balls. The win propelled India to the top of Group A with 4 points,

virtually securing a semifinal berth, while Pakistan faced the threat of an early exit, suffering their second consecutive defeat. Kohli's knock featuring seven exquisite boundaries dismantled Pakistan's hopes as their premier pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf struggled to make an impact after Afridi dismissed Rohit Sharma (20 off 15) early with a fiery yorker. It is Kohli's 51st ODI tonne by becoming the fastest batter to reach 14000 ODI runs during his innings. With 51 centuries in ODIs and 30 in Tests, with 7 double centuries in international cricket, Kohli is regarded as one of the greatest batsmen of all time. Kohli is often referred to as the King Kohli by his fans and supporters due to his achievements and contributions to the game.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

to satisfy their agenda. Now, the context of justice for the deceased girl has been diverted to their own vendetta. As a result, the last couple of days have been very dramatic for the student fraternity. Other students in KIIT who have come for higher studies from outside and their parents have been in a distributing mind state. They should not suffer from the media trial. Considering the incident, the state government formed a high-level committee to probe into it. Now it's become a political farce; every day different political outfits are staging protests in the evening in front of the main gate like a daily routine, which is ruining the academic environment on the campus. Amid all of this, we should not forget the contributions of this university to the sports and education systems of the state. Let's make a healthy environment for the other students of KIIT and have faith in the law.

Susant Pal | Bhubaneswar

TRUMP DISRUPTING WORLD ORDER

Madam — US President Donald Trump's economic and geopolitical decisions have

raised global concerns. His imposition of tariffs on Mexico, Canada, Brazil, and China has strained trade relations. His remarks about annexing Canada and Panama are alarming, while his characterisation of India as the highest tariff-imposing nation risks diplomatic tensions. On foreign policy, Trump's abandonment of Ukraine, despite US Democrats pushing it into conflict with Russia, has left the nation vulnerable. His call for Palestinians to vacate Gaza and seek refuge in Egypt and Jordan adds to Middle East instability. If America alienates nations through unilateral policies, it risks losing global leadership. A hostile US stance could push China and Russia closer. No country, not even the US, can remain strong forever without allies. For America to truly remain great, Trump must adopt a more cooperative and balanced approach to international relations.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Navigating differences: Lessons in collaboration from a life in leadership

My experiences have taught me that to find common ground one must show patience, open to dialogue and accommodate perspectives different from your own

I have been trying to set up a small library within my condominium complex. A lady was apprehensive about the criticism from a select few for the expenditure on this noble venture. Her sharp rejoinder that she could never stoop so low to my simple solution of inviting the critics to inaugurate the library left me seething. In another instance, a lady unequivocally told me that she would not work with another lady in the Art and Literature Festival I am organizing within my society. I found their response irrational. I have worked in the government sector for more than 30 years out of the 35 years of an active professional life.

The initial 17 years were spent in handling big teams of literate or semi-literate staff. My success depended upon their performance. I could not achieve much without the support of subordinates, peers, and superiors. I did not have the luxury of going back to my seniors to shift a person if he did not perform. I also could not go back asking for a transfer if I felt overwhelmed by the people who



had strong unions, and who would not hesitate to run me down even at the slightest hint of weakness. I was taking stock of the previous days' performance with my senior supervisor in my very first posting in a maintenance shed that had more than 1,000 staff. A group of staff and their leaders barged into the room to air their grievances. An unruly element from the crowd threw an earthen tea cup to landed right in front of me on the table. I had to gulp down the insult to present a brave face as I thundered in the most authoritative voice I could muster that the meeting was over and I would not discuss any further. It turned out that they were testing me and the leaders

tried their best to be on my right side. A senior visited my shop floor during lunch hours in another posting in a production unit a few years later. A place where a lot of grease was used was usually quite gloomy with layers of the sticky substance accumulating over years. The shop floor would also not be the cleanest of the places at lunchtime. Railways was an extremely hierarchical organisation with the seniors considering themselves masters at insulting the subordinates, particularly the officers, who would not retaliate in front of the staff out of a sense of propriety. This senior gentleman shouted at me that if the cleaning staff was not available, then I should have cleaned myself.

My supervisor and the staff showed more compassion as they rushed around. There were many such incidents when I felt degraded and insulted. I did not have the same options that the two young ladies wanted to exercise. To give credit to both, they are well educated, one of them having studied psychology in college, the other is a medical professional. I find a similar unwillingness in other younger professionals. They are rigid in their approach to daily problems and would rather not talk to a person with contrary opinions than sit down to resolve them. The attitude often spills into the personal lives also. There would always be some difficult times. There is a need to discuss and find a middle ground. I would like to bring their attention to the famous words of Abraham Lincoln, "I do not like that man. I must get to know him better." It will take a lot of time and effort. But in the end, it will be worth it.

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



SANJAY CHANDRA



FIRST COLUMN

THE HANDWRITING BLUES: A STORY OF DECLINE

Some see handwriting as a reflection of character, but it shifts, evolves and often declines beyond recognition



APS MALHOTRA

Some conjecture that a person's handwriting can give a glimpse into that person's character. But I am a sceptic in this regard, because, in my opinion, the handwriting of an individual is not a constant, but keeps on morphing as time goes by. A case in point is your humble friend, who has seen his handwriting deteriorate over the past few decades, till now, in my fifth decade, it is nothing more than a painstaking, almost illegible scrawl- although, with the advent of the now ubiquitous personal computer and other sundry devices, the negative impact of this deterioration has been minimised, especially in official work. Because today, when I write a note on any file with my hand, others find it rather difficult to 'decrypt'. Even filling simple financial documents like a cheque is a nightmare now, a stiff challenge, that is increasingly being left to my better half to handle, as bank people, on a few occasions, have raised doubts about the authenticity of my signature. But before the readers start commiserating about the sad and agonising state of my handwriting, I will share with them that this was not always the case. In the early years of school, I was the darling of my teachers because of my neat and clean handwriting, which made me the cynosure of my peers. Writing on four-line copies, I would get full marks in English handwriting.

The slide commenced from middle school onwards, when I shifted from writing with a pencil to writing with a ball pen, and the copy changed from one with four lines to that with two lines. But the hand was still steady, and teachers did not have any problem reading my answer sheets, as was evident from the good grades I continued to get in my exams. But I am sure, that as I entered college and the university in the mid-eighties, the good professors would have become



increasingly impatient in poring over my messy answer sheets, with scribbles galore. Throughout, my father, a diligent and thorough gentleman, with very precise and beautiful handwriting, kept counselling me to stem the rot, even as I secured a job in the public sector in 1991. He gently warned that it would adversely impact my prospects of growth in the corporate world, especially when this was the period when all office work was conducted on well-defined sheets of paper- which, in my case, were to be yellow pages.

Before leaving for Bombay (as Mumbai was then called), I scoffed at Dad's gentle, but consistent reprimands. It was only when I took my first, tentative steps in the company did I realise that what Dad had been emphasising over the years was not an iota away from the truth. I faced a mild, personal nudge from some bosses on this account, but others were not so kind, and their reaction bordered on outright contempt, reprimand and disapproval. But Dad was an eternal optimist. He still harboured a strong wish to get my handwriting back on track, even at this stage, for which he purchased a book- 'Techniques to improve your handwriting'. I was back in kindergarten.

So, whenever I came home to Delhi for a break, he would insist that I sit with him, at least for some time, and practice on ways to improve my, by now abominable handwriting. But by this point, my mind, like that of all young men, was engrossed in finer things of life than improving my writing ability, which, I realised, was destined to be an exercise in futility. This cat-and-mouse game continued even after I got married in 1993. It was only after I became a father in 1995 did Dad finally buried his desire to improve my handwriting to a decent level.

(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

RBI should go for an 'accommodative' stance



UTTAM GUPTA

While inflation has been steadily declining, the RBI opted to retain its 'neutral' stance, signaling a measured approach rather than give push to boost liquidity and demand



On February 7, 2025, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced the decisions taken by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in its sixth bi-monthly meeting of the current financial year (FY). It has reduced the policy rate or the repo rate (the interest rate at which the RBI lends to banks) by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent. This marks the first repo rate cut in nearly five years. Moreover, it has continued with a neutral stance which it shifted in its fourth bi-monthly review/announcement on October 10, 2024, from its earlier stance of "withdrawal of accommodation". In 2016, the Union Government put in place an institutionalized framework to enable the MPC to formulate monetary policy and determine the key interest rates including the policy rate for inflation targeting. It mandated the RBI to fix the policy rate in such a manner as to maintain the Consumer Price Index or CPI (it corresponds to a basket that includes food, fuel, manufactured goods, and select services) within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent).

The RBI decides the policy rates once in two months during each FY. The mandate initially given for five years ending March 31, 2021, has since been extended for a further period of five years. The current mandate will continue till March 31, 2026. The other crucial policy instrument the RBI uses for targeting inflation is Liquidity - jargon for the quantum of credit available in the banking system. Pumping more liquidity along with a reduction in the policy rate represents a scenario which in jargon is described as an 'accommodative' policy stance. The terminology was coined by the outgoing governor Shaktikanta Das in June 2019 when he started going for aggressive cuts in the policy rate and an increase in credit availability. Since June 2022 the RBI changed its stance to "withdrawal of accommodation" and had stuck to it till October 9, 2024, when in the fourth bi-monthly review, the MPC decided to go for a "neutral" stance. A



THE PROBLEM IS RBI'S OBSESSION WITH INFLATION. MALHOTRA RECOGNISES THAT INFLATION IS ON A DOWNWARD TRAJECTORY. YET, HE DOESN'T WANT TO RELINQUISH HIS NEUTRAL STANCE CITING GLOBAL ECONOMIC CHALLENGES "PROGRESS IN GLOBAL DISINFLATION IS STALLING"

"neutral" stance connotes that the RBI has vowed to keep its options flexible meaning it will neither squeeze liquidity by restricting credit availability and keeping policy rates high nor go for unrestrained lending at low interest rates. While inflation targeting is important, it is equally necessary to dovetail the monetary policy to sustain the momentum of high growth. During the second quarter of the current FY, growth in GDP plummeted to a low of 5.4 per cent down from a high of 8.1 per cent during the second Qr of FY 2023-24. For the current FY 2024-25, it is estimated at 6.4 per cent against 8.2 per cent recorded during FY 2023-24. Seen in this backdrop and an overarching need to achieve a growth of 8 per cent on a sustained basis in line to make India a 'developed economy' by 2047, the RBI could have given the desired push. It could have gone for an 'accommodative' policy stance by opting for a significant cut in the policy rate and pumping sufficient cash into the banking system. However, it has stuck to a "neutral" stance while reducing the repo rate by a small 0.25 per cent. RBI's reluctance has to do with a mindset that was reflected in ex-Governor Das's observation while announcing the first bi-monthly policy of the current FY. He had said "The elephant has now gone out for a walk and appears to be returning to the forest. We would like the elephant to return to the forest and remain there on a durable basis." Put simply, he meant there was no need to start reducing interest rates until inflation reached the target of 4 per cent and stayed at that level. The incumbent Governor has continued with this mindset. In February 2023, the policy rate was at a peak of 6.5 per cent. During FY 2022-23, the CPI inflation was hovering around 8 per cent.

In the following year, it started decreasing from 7.4 per cent in July 2023 to 5 per cent in September 2023, 4.8 per cent in October 2023 and 5.1 per cent during January/February 2024. For FY 2023-24, it was 5.4 per cent. During the current FY also, it has kept low; 5.08 per cent in June 2024 and 3.54 per cent in July of 2024. After a brief spurt of 6.2 per cent in October 2024, in January 2025, it declined to 4.3 per cent. During FY 2024-25, the RBI has estimated it at 4.8 per cent. Given the above, from the third quarter of FY 2023-24, the CPI inflation has remained well within the target range of 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent). This position continues during the current FY. For FY 2025-26, the RBI expects it to be 4.2 per cent. Thus, there was a strong case for a significant reduction in the repo rate besides the injection of sufficient liquidity. This would have helped in stimulating demand thereby giving a boost to economic growth besides helping millions of borrowers reduce their EMIs and helping industries, especially MSMEs reduce the cost of servicing their loans. But, this was not to be. The problem is RBI's obsession with inflation. Malhotra recognizes that inflation is on a downward trajectory. Yet, he doesn't want to relinquish his neutral stance citing global economic challenges "progress in global disinflation is stalling". Put simply, he fears imported inflation impacting CPI hence, a "neutral" stance will provide MPC flexibility to respond to evolving macro-economic environment." A major factor contributing to wide variations in CPI inflation is food inflation which has a weight of around 40 per cent and is impacted predominantly by supply side/seasonal factors whereas monetary policy instruments work on the demand side. Invariably, food inflation main-

tains an upward trend even as a small disruption in supply caused by seasonal factors can lead to spiralling prices. As long as food remains a part of the CPI basket, inflation targeting will always remain a problem. There is an urgent need to exclude it while setting benchmark interest rates, an idea that was mooted by the Chief Economic Advisor in the Economic Survey (ES) for 2023-24. The CEA argued that monetary policy has no bearing on the prices of food items, which are dictated by supply-side pressures. For instance, during 2021-22, wheat output was affected by unusually high temperatures. During 2022-23, rains accompanied by hailstorms acted as a spoiler. During the first half of FY 2023-24, food inflation went up due to a spike in the prices of vegetables caused by seasonal factors. The spurt in food prices during October 2024 also had to do with supply-side pressures only. The RBI can achieve little to control them by keeping the policy rate high. The RBI should take the idea mooted in the ES - 2023-24 on board. Meanwhile, it should consider reducing the weight of food inflation in CPI to reflect the contemporary reality. The current 40 per cent weight is based on the Consumption Expenditure Survey (CES) of 2011-12 whereas Summary Statistics from the 2022-23 CES point towards a significant reduction. While formulating its monetary policy, the RBI's prime responsibility is to ensure macro-economic stability its pivotal focus being on keeping inflation within reasonable bounds. However, it can't be oblivious of the dire need to support economic growth which could be adversely impacted if it doesn't relax the credit environment. (The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

M23 rebellion and Rwanda's role: The escalating crisis in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

At the heart of this conflict lies a web of ethnic tensions, political grievances, and economic exploitation, particularly vast mineral wealth of DRC

The recent escalation of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a stark reminder of the region's deep-rooted instability. The resurgence of the M23 rebellion, which led to the seizure of Goma and further advances into South Kivu, is not merely an internal Congolese crisis—it is a conflict with significant regional and international implications. Rwanda's involvement, whether direct or indirect, remains contentious, as accusations of its support for M23 persist. While Kigali denies these allegations, the sophistication of M23's operations raises serious questions about its backing. At the heart of this crisis lies a complex mix of ethnic tensions, political grievances, and



DEBASHISH JAINA

economic exploitation, particularly concerning the DRC's vast mineral wealth. For years, Rwanda has been accused of providing M23 with financial and military support, a claim reinforced by multiple UN reports and statements from Western governments. Kigali, however, insists that it is acting in self-defence, citing the threat posed by the Democratic Forces for the

Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Hutu militia operating in eastern DRC with historical ties to the perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Yet, Rwanda's actions go beyond border security. The conflict's economic dimension cannot be ignored, with Rwanda being accused of profiting from the illicit exploitation of Congolese minerals, particularly coltan, a key component in electronic devices. The capture of Rubaya, a coltan-rich area, by M23 last year suggests that economic interests play a crucial role in shaping the rebellion's trajectory. M23 claims to be fighting for the rights of ethnic Tutsis in eastern DRC, arguing that the Congolese government has failed to protect them from persecution. While

there is historical evidence of ethnic violence against Tutsis in the region, M23's actions undermine its credibility. Rather than advocating for political rights through diplomatic means, the group has engaged in violence, forced displacement, and human rights violations. Its strategy of seizing key cities and resource-rich territories suggests an agenda extending far beyond self-defence. The DRC, backed by the international community, has dismissed M23's claims, arguing that the group is acting as a proxy for Rwanda's regional ambitions. The latest attempt by regional leaders to broker peace, with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community



(EAC) calling for an immediate ceasefire, reflects a growing recognition that the crisis cannot be resolved through military means alone. However, the reality on the ground tells a different story. M23 had briefly declared a ceasefire before resuming attacks, signalling that diplomatic efforts are struggling to keep up with battlefield developments. The DRC's call for UN sanctions against Rwanda, coupled with protests in Kinshasa

where demonstrators burned portraits of President Paul Kagame, indicates a deepening rift between the two countries. With diplomatic ties severed and hostilities intensifying, the prospects for a negotiated settlement remain bleak. A purely military solution is unlikely to yield lasting peace. The Congolese army has historically struggled to contain well-equipped rebel groups, and the presence of the UN peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO, has done little to prevent the latest wave of violence. Foreign military intervention, whether from regional forces or international actors, risks escalating the situation rather than resolving it. The most viable path forward is a combination of military containment and political

engagement. Strengthening the DRC's security forces to prevent further territorial losses is crucial, but diplomatic efforts must also address the root causes of the conflict, including ethnic grievances and economic exploitation. The global demand for coltan and other precious resources ensures that armed groups can sustain themselves through illegal mining operations. Without stronger international regulations and accountability measures, companies sourcing minerals from conflict zones will remain complicit in financing violence. Holding both state and non-state actors accountable for their role in resource exploitation is essential for breaking the cycle of conflict. The ongoing crisis in eastern

DRC is not just about M23 or Rwanda's alleged involvement—it is part of a larger geopolitical struggle that has plagued the region for decades. Unless regional actors commit to genuine peace efforts and the international community enforces stricter measures against illegal mineral trade, the conflict will persist. The path to stability requires addressing both security concerns and economic incentives that drive armed groups. Without meaningful action, eastern DRC will remain trapped in a cycle of violence, with its people bearing the brunt of a war that serves the interests of powerful actors far beyond its borders. (The writer is a foreign policy researcher; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



DBS to 'shrink workforce' by 4,000 due to AI adoption

Global banking major DBS Group expects a 10 per cent reduction in its workforce over the next three years as artificial intelligence adoption goes deeper into the operations, its chief executive Piyush Gupta said on Monday. Gupta said AI is different and unlike any other technologies adopted in the past, and added that he is struggling to create new jobs for the first time in his over 15-year stint at the helm of the Singaporean bank. "This year, my current projection is that in the next three years, we are going to shrink our workforce by 4,000 or 10 per cent," Gupta said, speaking at the Indian IT industry lobby group Nasscom event here. Attributing his outlook to the advent of AI, Gupta said, "AI is very powerful. It can self-create and also mimic". Pointing out that AI is "different", Gupta said in the last ten years, there have not been any job cuts in the group. He reminisced that in 2016-17, the bank embarked on a digital transformation which was impacting 1,600 people but added that almost all of them were repurposed in consultation with unions and other representatives.

NTPC, Reliance, Adani commit Rs 4 lakh cr investment in MP

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group, Reliance Industries Ltd and state-owned power producer NTPC were among over a dozen companies that on Monday committed to investing about Rs 4 lakh crore across businesses in Madhya Pradesh. While Adani promised Rs 1.1 lakh crore in pumped storage, cement, mining, smart-meters, and thermal energy, Reliance committed Rs 60,000 crore to set up biofuel projects in the state.

Speaking at the Invest Madhya Pradesh, the state's eighth edition of investment summit, Adani promised another Rs 1 lakh crore in a greenfield smart city, an airport project, and a coal-gasification project for which the ports-to-power conglomerate is in talks with the state government. "Today, I am proud to announce new investments of over Rs 1,10,000 crore in the areas of pumped storage, cement, mining, smart-meters

and thermal energy. These multi-sectoral investments will create more than 1,20,000 jobs in Madhya Pradesh by 2030," he said.

Adani said the plans are not just about investments, but they are milestones in a shared journey one that would make



the state a national leader in industrial and economic growth.

NTPC Chairman and Managing Director Gurdeep Singh said his firm and its subsidiaries and joint venture partners will invest Rs 1.2 lakh crore in setting up 2 gigawatt of renewable power generation capacity in Madhya Pradesh. NTPC will also look at investing another Rs 80,000 crore in two sites of greenfield nuclear power plants in the state.

INDIA, UK FTA TALKS

Goyal pitches for liberal visa regime to promote trade, investments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday pitched for a more liberal visa regime for businesses and professionals to promote bilateral trade and investments between India and the UK.

He also said that India has "never ever" discussed immigration in any free trade agreement negotiations.

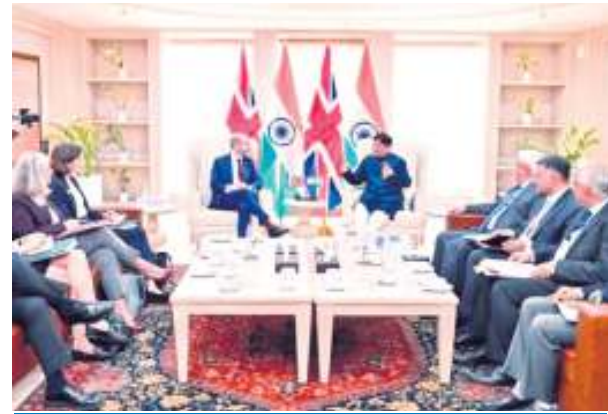
The remarks assume significance as India and the UK trade ministers announced resumption of talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA).

The announcement was made by Goyal and UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds, who is here on an official visit.

As part of the FTA, India is seeking easy visa norms for smooth movement of skilled professionals.

Under the pact, he said, the two countries are opening up services in a "big way" and also opening up economies to attract more investments.

"We have also as a part of



In almost all these countries, to incentivise education, business and attract more people, countries "do give a certain period of time for students to gain practical experience to work in their country but that is short-term business work visas. It has nothing to do with immigration as such," he added.

He said that immigration has never been a part of any trade negotiations.

"India has never ever discussed immigration in any free trade agreement negotiations," Goyal said.

Reynolds said that business mobility is a separate issue from immigration. India's ask for easier business and professional visas have been a sticking point in the pact.

already quite open between the two countries. And if we both wish to expand our trade and investments, obviously we have to be faster and more liberal in our issuance of visa," he said.

Goyal added that in several countries, including the US, UK, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, Indian students travel for education.

In almost all these countries, to incentivise education, business and attract more people, countries "do give a certain period of time for students to gain practical experience to work in their country but that is short-term business work visas. It has nothing to do with immigration as such," he added.

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Rupee declines 4 paise to close at 86.72 against USD

The rupee dropped 4 paise to 86.72 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday amid a steep fall in the domestic equity markets and a rise in Brent crude prices. However, a flat greenback against major currencies prevented further decline in the domestic unit, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 86.58, went up 10 paise from Friday's close of 86.68, but gave way through the session. It eventually settled at 86.72 (provisional), 4 paise lower than the previous day's close. "The RBI is all set to do a 3-year buy/sell swap of USD 10 billion on February 28 to ease the tightening liquidity position, thus bringing premiums further down. Exporters may sell the cash dollars requirement on an upticks while importers may buy good dips," Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading flat at 106.61. "The dollar has slid more than 3 per cent from its January peak on tariff issues leaving little appetite for traders to load up on fresh dollar holdings.

US market a wild card for Indian IT: Nasscom

PNS ■ MUMBAI

United States, the largest market for the USD 282 billion Indian IT sector, is a "wild card" for the industry, lobby grouping Nasscom's president Rajesh Nambiar said on Monday.

Speaking to reporters Nambiar said the tariff threats by the US may turn out to be the biggest headwind for the sector.

"Broadly, if you were to look at the headwinds, the biggest unknown there would be the tariffs and the impact of what happens in the US market," Nambiar said.

He was quick to add that one should not forget that the US contributes 60-62 per cent of the revenues for the sector.

"It is a bit of a wild card at this point of time. We do not know what is going to be in store," Nambiar said.

It can be noted that since assuming office on January 20, President Donald Trump has threatened to impose reciprocal tariffs with the intent of strengthening the American economy.

Speaking at Nasscom's annual NTLF event earlier in the day, the country's second largest IT services exporter Infosys' chief executive and managing director Sahil Parekh said the Indian IT sector should not fear the Trump impact.

Gold rises Rs 350 to reclaim Rs 89,000-mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose Rs 350 to trade near a record high at Rs 89,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid firm global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 88,750 per 10 grams on Friday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity increased Rs 350 to Rs 88,700 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 88,350 per 10 grams.

"Gold traded with a modest gain on Monday as geopolitical and trade tensions continued to provide a safe haven demand to hedge against uncertainty," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of



Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Last week, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity hit fresh peaks of Rs 89,450 and Rs 89,050 per 10 grams, respectively.

However, silver traded flat at Rs 1 lakh per kg.

Further, Gandhi highlighted that the US dollar has provided an additional boost for the precious metal. The dollar

index fell for the third week in a row and is trading lower amid mixed US macro data.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for April delivery appreciated Rs 118 to Rs 86,128 per 10 grams.

"Gold traded within a range, posting minor gains, supported by Comex gold holding above USD 2,925. Rupee weakness provided additional support to MCX gold," Jateen

Trivedi, VP Research Analyst -- Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

Comex gold futures for April delivery quoted higher at USD 2,954.71 per ounce in the overseas markets.

Globally, spot gold also rose USD 5.50 to USD 2,941.55 per ounce. "Gold prices continue to hover near all-time highs as the dollar weakens amid escalating geopolitical and economic uncertainty," Abans Holdings' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said.

The precious metal's rally is expected to persist as safe-haven demand remains strong, with central banks worldwide continuing to accumulate gold to hedge against economic volatility and policy uncertainty, Mehta added.

Starbucks lays off 1,100 corporate staff

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Starbucks plans to lay off 1,100 corporate employees globally as new Chairman and CEO Brian Niccol streamlines operations.

In a letter to employees released Monday, Niccol said the company will inform employees who are being laid off by mid-day Tuesday. Niccol said Starbucks is also eliminating several hundred open and unfilled positions.

"Our intent is to operate more efficiently, increase accountability, reduce complexity and drive better integration," Niccol wrote in the letter.

Starbucks has 16,000 corporate support employees worldwide, but that includes some employees who aren't impacted, like roasting and warehouse staff. Baristas in the company's stores are not included in the layoffs.

Niccol said in January that corporate layoffs would be announced by early March. He said all work must be overseen by someone who can make decisions while the Seattle coffee giant reduces the complexity of its structure and eliminates silos within the company that slow communication.

"Our size and structure can slow us down, with too many layers, managers of small teams and roles focused primarily on coordinating work," Niccol wrote.



LG Corp chief visits India ahead of IPO

LG Corporation Chairman and CEO Kwang Mo Koo is on a two-day visit to India ahead of the proposed initial public offering of its Indian unit, according to industry insiders. Koo is meeting with the senior leadership of LG Electronics India, including its Managing Director, to review the performance and take stock of the preparations for the local subsidiary's upcoming IPO, they added. He is also expected to discuss investment proposals for the Indian market, one of the largest markets for the South Korean chaebol. It is unclear whether he is scheduled to meet with any top policymakers here. He is likely to visit the Greater Noida plant of LG Electronics India. An e-mail sent to LG Electronics India remained unanswered. Last week, LG Electronics started roadshows for the upcoming initial public offering of its Indian units, where the South Korean chaebol will sell over 10.18 crore shares amounting to a 15 per cent stake, which, according to some reports, may raise up to USD 1.5 billion.

'Water security critical for \$30 tn economy'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Water security challenges could significantly impact India's ambitious economic growth targets, India G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant said on Monday.

Addressing an event here, Kant highlighted the stark disparity between India's population and water resources, noting that while the country houses 17 per cent of the global population, it has access to merely 4 per cent of the world's freshwater resources.

"India's ability to grow from a USD 4 trillion economy to a USD 30 trillion economy is fundamentally a function of



water (management)," Kant said.

"Our capacity to grow in an environmentally sustainable manner and improve

citizens' quality of life depends entirely on how we manage this critical resource," he added.

He outlined three key solutions: restoring local water bodies, deploying advanced technology for real-time monitoring, and community-based water management.

Kant encouraged the industry to take a leading role in efficiently managing water resources.

"Industry must lead the way in recycling and reusing water, bringing in the best technology and capabilities. This will be crucial for ensuring India becomes water secure," he emphasised.

MARKET BENCHMARK INDICES SINK OVER 1 PC

Investors become poorer by Rs 4.22 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 4.22 lakh crore on Monday as the BSE Sensex fell below the key 75,000-mark, down over 1 per cent, amid a sharp fall in US markets, non-stop foreign fund outflows and worries over US tariffs.

The 30-share BSE benchmark tanked 856.65 points or 1.14 per cent to settle at 74,454.41, registering its fifth day of decline. During the day, it slumped 923.62 points or 1.22 per cent to 74,387.44.

The NSE Nifty dropped 242.55 points or 1.06 per cent to 22,553.35.

In the last five trading sessions, the BSE barometer lost 1,542.45 points or 2 per cent, and the Nifty tanked 406.15 points or 1.76 per cent.

In the last five trading sessions investors' wealth eroded by Rs 2.34 lakh crore, which is less than Monday's loss of Rs 4.22 lakh crore.

In the past five trading days, on two occasions investors' wealth rose.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 4,22,983.08 crore to Rs 3,97,97,305.47 crore (USD 4.59 trillion) in a single trading session on Monday.

"The market is more concerned about the US' likely move to reciprocate higher tariff levies on exporting nations,

which could impact developing countries including India.

"Also, FIIs showing no signs of putting brakes on their India exit strategy continue to weigh heavily on markets, with expensive valuations driving investors to curb their equity bets here," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the Sensex pack, HCL Tech, Zomato, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel and NTPC were among the biggest laggards.

Tech sector revenues to grow 5.1pc to USD 282.6 bn

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian tech sector's revenues are set to grow 5.1 per cent to USD 282.6 billion in FY25, and likely to climb up further to USD 300 billion in FY26, lobby grouping Nasscom said on Monday.

The revenue growth is on the "right trajectory", the body's president Rajesh Nambiar told reporters here, pointing out to revenue growth of 4 per cent in FY24, 5.1 per cent in FY25 and the over 6.1 per cent needed to cross its expectation of crossing USD 300 billion in FY26.

"It has been a good outcome broadly given everything happening around us," Nambiar said pointing to aspects like geopolitics, and tariffs which are dominating the worries at present.

Nasscom said the sector, which includes IT services companies, business process management companies, global capability centres and e-commerce companies, added 1.26 lakh new jobs in FY25 to take the overall employment to 58 lakh.

Nambiar hinted that the industry will continue to add employees in the same pace



that it did last year.

The Indian IT sector's FY25 growth is likely to be faster than the 4.7 per cent growth in global tech services spending in the calendar year 2024,

Nasscom said, adding that India's share in global sourcing stood at 58 per cent as of FY25.

Among the segments, the IT services companies' rev-

enues will grow 4.3 per cent to USD 137.1 billion while the BPM industry will see its revenues grow by 4.7 per cent to USD 54.6 billion.

The engineering research and development space is the fastest growing at 7 per cent at USD 55.6 billion, Nasscom said.

The domestic revenues for the sector which has been traditionally focused on exports will grow 7 per cent to USD 58.2 billion, outpacing exports' 4.6 per cent growth at USD 224.4 billion, Nasscom said.

The body said the export

revenues between Indian and global multinationals are evenly split at present, and denied that the heft of the foreign 'companies has increased courtesy of the global capability centres (GCC) play.

It pegged the total number of GCCs at 1,760 and added that such units employ 19 lakh people at present.

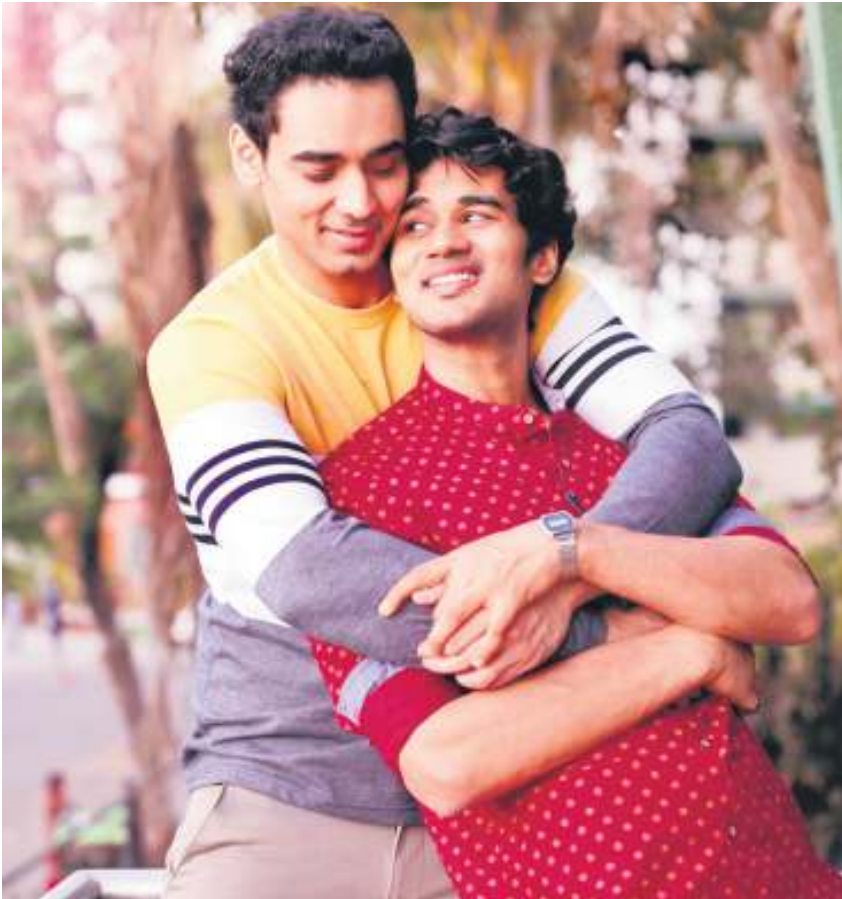
A Nasscom official said the overall sentiment is still positive despite all the headwinds which the industry is facing, and a survey of chief executives conducted by the body revealed that they are more confident than last year.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
 EE-Div. 16/ EE/Divm.16/16/SB2/GHMC
 Name of Work: procurement of stationery/Work in Amberpet Circle-18, Secunderabad Zone, GHMC. Tender Amount Rs. 7.48 Lakhs SI. No. 1 Start Date: 24-02-2025 From 3:00 PM; Last Date & Time for receipt of Bid 27/02/2025 at 3:00 PM. Sri K. Ramesh Babu, Executive Engineer, Division-16, Circle-16 Amberpet, Secbad Zone, GHMC Cell: 6309620591/ 6796374855. Address of the Concerned Executive Engineer, Div-16, SB2, GHMC, Abids, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. Further details can be seen at E-Procurement www.tender.telangana.gov.in
 Sd/- Executive Engineer Div-16, SB2, GHMC

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
 E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
 (1) MIT No. 539/UB/GHMC/2024-25 Dated: 24.02.2025
 No. of Works: 01 Work. Estimated amount: Rs. 12.31 Lakhs, Bid Submission Start Date & Time: Dt: 25.02.2025 @ 11.30 AM, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: Dt: 03.03.2025 @ 11.30 AM.
 (2) MIT No. 1159/UB/GHMC/2024-25 Dated: 24.02.2025
 No. of Works: 01 Work. Estimated amount: Rs. 1.41 Lakhs, Bid Submission Start Date & Time: Dt: 25.02.2025 @ 11.30 AM, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: Dt: 26.02.2025 @ 11.30 AM.
 Name & Address Officer Cell No.: Dy. Director, UB, Secbad Zone, GHMC, Cell No. 9190036791. Further details can be seen at: https://www.tender.telangana.gov.in
 Sd/- Dy. Director, UB, Secbad Zone, GHMC
 R.O.No: 18912-PP/LAD/17/12024-25, Dt: 24-02-2025

SRIDHAR RANGAYAN

Everyone says 'CONTENT IS KING,' but few actually believe in it



SRIDHAR RANGAYAN, WHO IS CURRENTLY ENJOYING THE SUCCESS OF HIS LATEST VENTURE, KUCH SAPNEY APNE, GETS CANDID WITH THE PIONEER SHARING MORE INSIGHTS AROUND THE PROJECT

to the storytelling: "Humans exist within society, and all our emotions are shaped by our interactions with it. But we shouldn't be bogged down by societal pressures."

He further describes Kuch Sapney Apne as a "complete family film" that integrates romance, drama, songs and humour while addressing real-life issues. "We aspired to create a mainstream film that appeals to the masses while staying true to its social message," he adds.

For Rangayan and co-writer cum co-director Saagar Gupta, authenticity is paramount. They drew inspiration from real people, avoid exaggerated cinematic techniques, and focus on casting actors who truly embody their roles rather than relying on star power.

"We believe in creating scenes that reflect everyday life, carefully strung together to form a nuanced narrative," he says. By keeping the storytelling raw and relatable, the film ensures that audiences remain engaged while absorbing its deeper themes.

While the film faced no creative challenges, securing funding and distribution was a struggle. Rangayan points out the paradox in the industry: "Everyone says 'content is king,' but few actually believe in it. Most chase big stars and major production houses."

Despite these hurdles, the film was made possible through the support of 125 crowdfunding contributors and a few dedicated investors who believed in its vision.

"Our hopes rest with those who still value good cinema—films that not only entertain but also hold a mirror to society," he says.

Rangayan credits the film's emotional depth to its talented cast. "We prioritise casting actors based on the character's needs, not their celebrity status," he explains. The team conducted workshops before shooting, ensuring that everyone was on the same page.

Having collaborated with actors Mona Ambegaonkar, Shishir Sharma and Abhay Kulkarni for over 25 years, Rangayan shares that the trust between them played a crucial role. "We knew they would deliver, and they always have," he says.

Kuch Sapney Apne challenges societal norms while celebrating love and resilience. It is a story that dares to dream and dares to love—one that is bound to leave a lasting impact on audiences. With a stellar cast, evocative storytelling, and a heartfelt message, the film promises to be a poignant addition to India's evolving cinematic landscape.

It is 2025 and we are beyond stories of coming out and identity angst. It is time to delve into real issues head-on

TEJAL SINHA
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resonated not only in India but across the globe, from Serbia to Jamaica.

With *Kuch Sapney Apne*, which won the highest award at the Mysuru International Film Festival - the Best Indian Feature Film Award, the filmmaker wanted to move beyond conventional queer narratives. "It is 2025 and we are beyond stories of coming out and identity angst. It is time to delve into real issues head-on," he asserts. At its core, the film conveys the message that love is love and that every relationship—regardless of gender or identity—comes with its own set of challenges.

The film seamlessly weaves personal emotions with broader societal issues, tackling topics like patriarchy, infidelity and transphobia. Rangayan explains that this balance was key

With *Kuch Sapney Apne*, filmmaker Sridhar Rangayan once again delivers a deeply personal yet universally resonant story. The Indo-Swedish co-production, set to release on February 21, explores the complexities of love, trust, and acceptance—not just in queer relationships but in all human connections. Featuring acclaimed actors Shishir Sharma (*Raazi*, *The Family Man*) and Mona Ambegaonkar (*Godmother*, *Evening Shadows*), the film navigates themes of resilience, societal norms and personal aspirations.

Rangayan explains that the film's international collaboration came about through the NFD Film Bazaar Co-Production Market in 2023. While scouting for a location outside India to align with the script's demand—where the lead character Kartik has a fleeting romance abroad—Sweden emerged as the ideal choice. "We had many friends there who generously supported us—offering their homes, offices and even a motorboat for shooting," Rangayan shares, emphasizing the warm and collaborative spirit that helped bring the film to life.

Known for crafting narratives that are both intimate and globally relevant, he believes in starting with a personal story and blending it with experiences from the world around him. "For mass audiences to enjoy a film, it has to be both personal and universal," he says. His films have



Rarity and seasonality of lichen planus

PNS| EXCLUSIVE

Lichen Planus is a chronic inflammatory skin condition that can impact the mouth, nails and genitalia. Although the precise reason is unknown, potential causes include immunological or allergic reactions, exposure to specific medications, dyes, and other chemicals, as well as illnesses like Hepatitis C. One out of every 100 persons will eventually get lichen planus. It cannot spread to other people and it is not brought on by an infection. Middle-aged men and women are typically affected by lichen planus. Lichen planus on the skin affects men and women equally, but oral (within the mouth) lichen planus is twice as common in women. In very young or very old people, the sickness is uncommon. Although lichen planus isn't strictly "seasonal" in the sense that it only manifests during specific seasons, some research indicates that its symptoms may intensify or worsen with the changing of the seasons. This is especially true for actinic lichen planus, which is exacerbated by sun exposure and may be more obvious in the summer.

Symptoms of Lichen Planus

Typical symptoms of Lichen Planus include lacy-white lesions in the mouth that can hurt or cause burning, thin white lines over the rash, purplish coloured bumps or lesions with flat tops on the skin or genitalia that develop and spread over the body for several weeks or a few months or itching at the site of the rash, which typically appears on the wrists, lower back, and ankles.

Lichen Planus increase during Covid-19

Dr. Sunil Kumar Prabhu, consultant - dermatology, at Aster RV Hospital highlights, "There has been an increased incidence of certain autoimmune disorders post Covid-19 and Lichen Planus can be considered one such immunological disorder that tends to have a slight higher preponderance in the years following covid and has been substantiated in certain academic scientific journals. However, the exact mechanism of this, though not known, can be an immunological

Lichen Planus is a chronic inflammatory condition that affects the skin, mouth, nails and genitalia, often causing discomfort and long-term complications. While its exact cause remains unclear, experts link it to immune system reactions, allergies, certain medications, and infections like Hepatitis C. *The Pioneer* delves into this condition, shedding light on its symptoms, potential triggers and management strategies to help those affected navigate its challenges with better awareness and care



trigger that can increase the incidence of Lichen Planus. Approximately 1-2% of the global population is affected by it. A specific type of Lichen Planus known as "Actinic Lichen Planus" can flare up during the summer."

Treatment

For oral lichen planus, special mouthwashes and sprays can be used to relieve symptoms like burning or sore gums; however, topical corticosteroid creams or ointments are usually used to manage inflammation and itching on the skin, while oral medications such as antihistamines can help with itching and in severe cases, oral steroids may be prescribed. It's important to consult a healthcare professional for the best treatment plan based on the severity of your condition.

Prevention

Lichen planus cannot be prevented, but once it has developed, there are things you may do to prevent its progression - Prevention of any skin damage, Using cool compresses rather than scratching, reduction of stress in life helps prevent progression. Stopping smoking, drinking, proper oral hygiene practice and staying away from foods that tend to irritate the mouth are also preventive measures to be followed.

Effects if left untreated

The chronic inflammation caused by lichen planus can cause chronic itching, discomfort, painful sores, scarring, especially in the mouth and genital areas and in severe cases, an increased risk of oral cancer. Depending on the severity, lichen planus can also have a significant impact on quality of life due to pain and difficulty eating or having sex.

BEYOND GREAT PRODUCTS

The secrets to hair care business success

The hair care industry is booming, driven by growing consumer demand for high-quality products and innovative solutions. But creating a profitable business in this space requires more than great products—strategy, customer focus, and operational excellence. Here are essential tips to help you stand out and succeed in this competitive market:

Know your customers inside out

Success in hair care starts with understanding your customers' unique needs. Hair is personal—everyone has different concerns, hair types and routines. Use tools like social media interactions and direct feedback to learn what your audience wants. Whether it's solutions for curly hair, damaged strands, or scalp care, tailoring your products to meet these needs builds trust and long-term loyalty with us.

Focus on quality first

No matter how great your branding is, your products must deliver results. From shampoos to treatments, invest in high-quality ingredients and innovative formulations. Research and development are your best friends here—products that genuinely solve problems drive repeat purchases and encourage word-of-mouth recommendations, which are priceless for growth.

Make your products easy to find

A solid distribution network ensures your products reach the right people at the right time. Whether you sell online, in stores, or through salons, your products need to be accessible and visible. An omnichannel strategy—one that combines online platforms and physical locations—can help you expand your reach and maintain steady sales.

Offer personalised experiences

Today's end-consumers expect personalisation. Use data to recommend products that suit individual hair concerns, and engage them with meaningful content like styling tips, hair care routines and product guides. Brands that offer value beyond just selling products build stronger relationships with their customers.

Deliver exceptional customer service

Great customer service can set you apart in a crowded market. Be prompt, empathetic, and knowledgeable when resolving customer issues. A smooth purchasing experience and effective support turn one-time buyers into loyal customers who trust your brand.

Collaborate with influencers

Influencer marketing is a game-changer in the hair care space. Partner with influencers who align with your brand's values and speak to your target audience. Positive testimonials and social proof, like customer reviews, also go a long way in building credibility and trust.

Diversify your product range

The more versatile your product line, the wider your audience. Offer solutions for different hair types and concerns, such as frizz control, hair growth, or color protection. Expanding your product range ensures you stay relevant while addressing evolving consumer needs.

Invest in smart marketing

Digital marketing is non-negotiable in today's landscape. Use social media, SEO and targeted ads to build awareness and drive sales. A seamless e-commerce experience—from user-friendly websites to smooth checkouts—also makes it easy for customers to buy your products online.

Go Green

Sustainability matters more than ever. Consumers increasingly choose brands that prioritise eco-friendly packaging, cruelty-free practices, and responsibly sourced ingredients. Adopting sustainable practices not only enhances your brand image but also connects you with environmentally-conscious customers.

Adapt to seasonal trends

Hair care needs change with the seasons. From sun protection products in summer to moisture-rich treatments in winter, staying ahead of seasonal demands ensures your offerings remain relevant year-round. Smart marketing campaigns can further highlight these shifts and drive sales.

Manage your finances wisely

Profitable businesses are built on sound financial management. Keep track of expenses, optimise cash flow and budget for slower periods. Allocate resources for growth opportunities, product improvements, and team training to ensure long-term stability.

Building a thriving hair care business isn't just about what you sell—it's about how you deliver value to customers. By focusing on quality, personalization, and customer satisfaction, while staying agile and innovative, you can create a brand that truly stands out. In this fast-evolving industry, staying connected to your audience and adapting to trends will be the keys to long-term success.

Mahesh Ravaria is the Founder and CEO of Beauty Garage India Pvt Ltd, a trailblazing figure in the beauty industry. His primary responsibilities within the organization include spearheading sales, marketing strategies, and overseeing expansion initiatives to ensure Beauty Garage's continued growth and market dominance.

(Beauty Garage Professional is transforming a multi-million dollar Hair Care Sector and reinventing hair and scalp health with groundbreaking products and a top-notch distribution network. It's a truly Made in India success story with the only Indian company manufacturing products and introducing innovative treatments such as Hair Botox. With a dedicated team engaged in continuous product research and technology exploration, the company has a remarkable growth story in the thriving Indian hair care market.)

(The author, Mahesh Ravaria, is the Co-founder and CEO of Beauty Garage Professional.)



what's brewing?

Welyke Makeup and Hair Academy has announced its grand opening at Yousufguda, ushering in a new era in beauty education and training. The academy's formal inauguration was done by Founder and Director Mumtaz Khan along with Co-founder Javed and Keith. The event marked the presence of Jyothi, Aksha Khan, Rapper Roll Rida and choreographer Joseph.

Aksha Khan
Mumtaz Khan
Manjusree
Jyothi
Ankita
Roll Raida

Navyanta University, established under the Maharashtra State Private University Act, is poised to commence classes in August 2025, with a mission to nurture future leaders for India. At a conference in Hyderabad, Raj Dugar emphasized the need for higher-quality educational institutions in India.

Independent candidate for Khammam-Nalgonda-Warangal Teacher MLC elections, Purushottam Reddy Talakola (Serial No. 13), officially launched the "TEACHERS-2030 Manifesto" at the Somajiguda Press Club in Hyderabad. For the first time in the history of Teacher MLC elections, an extensive educational governance plan has been developed, speakers at the event stated. The manifesto presents a comprehensive action plan focusing on teacher welfare, education protection, and institutional development.

The Confederation of Women Entrepreneurs (COWE) is set to host the prestigious Women's International Summit on Entrepreneurship (WISE) & B2B Expo 2025 on February 28th and March 1st, 2025, at the Engineering Staff College in Gachibowli, Hyderabad. Funded under the International Cooperation Scheme of the Ministry of MSME, Government of India, WISE aims to empower women entrepreneurs by providing a transformative platform for networking, learning, and collaboration.

Vidyaryanam, a forward-thinking Vedic center, celebrated its 7th Varshikotsavam, marking a significant milestone in its journey to revive the traditional Gurukul system. The event, held in Hyderabad, was attended by esteemed guests, including Padma Bhushan K.I. Varaprasad Reddy, Shantha Biotechniques, Anantha Lakshmi, Spiritual Speaker, Anantha PadmaNabha Rao, SVBC, Rtd AIR/Door Darshan DDG and Dr. M Vidyasagar, Fellow of The Royal Society, among the rest.

ViewSonic Corp., a leading global provider of visual solutions, has formed a strategic partnership with Vishal Peripherals to bolster its display business in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. As part of this partnership, Vishal Peripherals will distribute ViewSonic's extensive range of monitors in the region.

FUN

ARCHIE

WHY'D YOU GET DETENTION THIS TIME?
FOR NAPPING BETWEEN CLASSES!
THAT PUNISHMENT SEEMS A LITTLE HARSH IF YOUR NAP WAS BETWEEN CLASSES!
HE NAPPED BETWEEN HIS FIRST-PERIOD CLASS AND HIS FOURTH-PERIOD CLASS!

CALVIN AND HOBBS

OK, WE'RE TIGERS. WE'RE OUT IN THE WILDERNESS. TEACH ME HOW TO SURVIVE.
LET'S SAY WE'RE HIDING UP IN A TREE. OUR KEEN TIGER EYES AND NOSES DETECT SOME PREY NEARBY. WHAT DO WE DO?
I SUPPOSE IT WOULD DEPEND ON WHAT KIND OF PREY IT WAS.
I DON'T CARE. PICK SOMETHING.
WELL, IF IT'S A BOX OF RIGATONI NOODLES, FIRST YOU WOULD GO PUT ON SOME WATER...

GARFIELD

PLINK
OW!
LOOK! YOU'RE SHEDDING TOO!

REALITY CHECK

PLEASE ROLL OVER AND BARATHE THE OTHER WAY.

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2		3	4	5
		6			
7		8			
		9			
10					
11			12		
		13			
14					15
16				17	
				18	
18				19	

NANCY

NANCY-- IT'S SNOWING TOO HARD TO KEEP SHOVELING--
HERE-- LET ME HAVE YOUR SHOVEL FOR A MINUTE--
WE MIGHT AS WELL WAIT 'TIL IT STOPS

SUDOKU

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

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

ACROSS

- Meat from a sheep
- Talk in a friendly way
- A sewed joint
- Wound someone
- Envious
- A green gemstone
- Cunning
- Moist
- Border
- Jail
- A region's weather conditions
- Save from danger
- Forever
- A long sharp animal tooth
- Twirl around

DOWN

- A face disguise
- Go on a journey
- Drag along
- Three times four
- Ask

SOLUTION

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

RAZESH DANDA CONFIRMS MAZAKA AND SAMAJAVARAGAMANA SEQUEL IN WORKS

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Razesh Danda is a producer who has been making films with actors like Sundeep Kishan, Allari Naresh, Kiran Abbavaram and Sree Vishnu and he has been doing well. Out of his four films, *Samajavaragamana* was a huge hit, while *Ooru Peru Bhairavakona* turned out to be a profitable venture.

Now, he is coming up with a new film titled *Mazaka*, starring Rao Ramesh and Sundeep Kishan. The producer shared that he no longer wants to make experimental films and will focus on entertainment.

"I experimented with *Itlu Maredumilli Prajaaneekam* and *Bachchalamalli*, but both didn't perform well commercially, though the first one earned me a good reputation," said Razesh Danda. "So, I have decided not to take the experimental route in the coming days."

Razesh had high hopes for *Bachchalamalli*, but it

AHEAD OF THE FILM'S RELEASE, MAZAKA PRODUCER TALKS ABOUT HIS FILM AND ADDRESSES RUMORS ABOUT HIS ALLEGED DIFFERENCES WITH SUNDEEP KISHAN

didn't meet expectations. What went wrong? "I think the execution didn't work," he admitted. However, he is confident about *Mazaka*. "We screened the film for many of my friends, distributors and others, and everyone liked it. They all said that the entertainment and emotional quotient would definitely work for this film," he said.

The film was initially set for a Sankranti release in January but is now releasing on February 26 for Shivaratri. Was the last-minute rush a concern? "In the industry, many films are made with the release date in mind and my film was no different," Razesh explained. "Sundeep Kishan was busy with three projects and coordinating dates for multiple actors caused delays in shooting."

The trailer was released only on Sunday, just three days before the film's release.

"Actually, we released a song earlier, which is trending on top, so we delayed the trailer release," he said. He added that if a film has strong content and positive word-of-mouth, people will come to theaters.

"For my earlier film *Samajavaragamana*, we released the trailer well in advance, but I believe the paid premieres held a few days before release contributed to its huge success. That's why I'm planning paid premieres for *Mazaka* on Tuesday night as well," he said.

There were reports that Bheems Cecirolo was the first choice for the film's music. Razesh clarified, "From the beginning, we had Leon James onboard for the music."

The producer believes *Mazaka* will be a big film for Sundeep Kishan. "It will perform better for him compared to *Ooru Peru Bhairavakona*," he

said. He also confirmed that the film is being released with table profits. When the script was first presented, Rao Ramesh was the immediate choice for the father's role. "Then we were looking for another actor, and Sundeep Kishan agreed to do the film after hearing the story," Razesh revealed.

Speaking about *Mazaka*, he said that the scenes between Rao Ramesh and Sundeep Kishan are definite highlights. "There's a twist just before the interval that drives the second half of the film. There are also many emotional moments. But the unique aspect of this film is Rao Ramesh's romance with a girl. We've never seen him in such a role before—it's packed with entertainment and I'm sure people will love it," he said.

The producer is planning a big release on Shivaratri. "Generally, big films don't expect high collections on Thursdays, so I'm confident that my film will gain momentum over the weekend," he said. Did the delay in production increase the budget?

"Generally, for any film, the budget increases by around 10% beyond the estimated cost," he stated.

Razesh is already planning a sequel to *Mazaka*. "Yes, we are planning it with the same director, and it's going to be titled *Double Mazaka*," he confirmed.

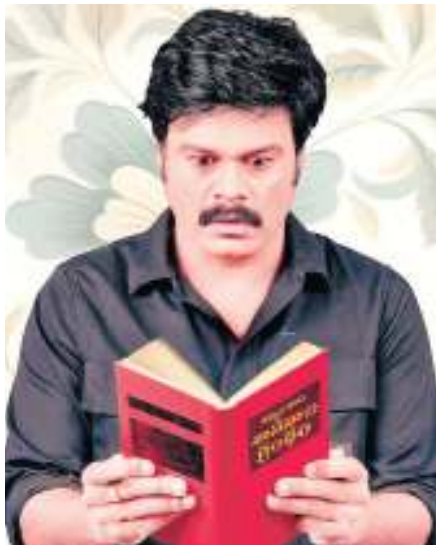
Regarding a sequel to *Samajavaragamana*, he said, "Yes, the director is currently working with Ravi Teja and after that, we will move forward with the sequel."

As for his upcoming projects, Razesh revealed that two films are in the pipeline. "One is an action thriller with Samyuktha, and the other is a love story with Kiran Abbavaram," he said.

There have been reports about differences between Razesh and Sundeep Kishan, allegedly causing delays in *Mazaka*. Will Sundeep Kishan be a part of the *Mazaka* sequel? "You shouldn't ask that question," Razesh responded. However, he added, "I want to continue making films with Allari Naresh, Sundeep Kishan and others."



Saptagiri returns as lead in *Pellikani Prasad*



look, generating buzz among audiences.

Directed by Abhilash Reddy Gopidi and produced by KY Babu, the film is getting a major boost as it will be released by Dil Raju's prestigious banner, Sri Venkateswara Creations (SVC).

The title *Pellikani Prasad* is a well-known phrase among Telugu audiences, popularised by the film *Malleswari*, starring Venkatesh and Katrina Kaif. The first look poster showcases Saptagiri in various quirky expressions, emphasising the film's

humorous and lighthearted tone. Shekar Chandra is composing the music, while Priyanka Sharma plays the female lead. Muralidhar Goud, Laxman and Annapurna are also part of the supporting cast. The film is set for release on March 21.

Saptagiri, who began his career as a comedian before transitioning into lead roles, is making a comeback as a hero with *Pellikani Prasad*. After a brief return to comedic roles, he is now back in the spotlight with this film. The makers have unveiled the first



SECOND SONG FROM DEPUTY CM'S FILM RELEASED

Actor-turned-politician Pawan Kalyan, now the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, is gearing up for the release of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*. Promotions began a few weeks ago and now, the makers have released the second single, which has become an instant chartbuster, further heightening anticipation for the film. From the very first note, the song captivates listeners with its high-energy beats and electrifying vibe. Pawan Kalyan's powerful screen presence after a long hiatus adds to the excitement, keeping fans glued to their screens. Nidhi Aggarwal, starring opposite Pawan Kalyan, brings a refreshing charm, while Anasuya Bharadwaj and Pujitha Ponnada add elegance with their graceful dance moves. The film's music is composed by MM Keeravani, with vocals by Mangli, Rahul Sipigunj, Ramya Behara and Yamini Ghantasala. Lyrics are penned by Chandrabose. With director Krish exiting the project, Jyothi Krishna has taken over. Produced by AM Ratnam, *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* is slated to be the first major summer release of 2024, hitting theatres on March 28.



Nani turns brutal as Sarkaar in *HIT 3*

Director Sailesh Kolanu is back with the third installment of the *HIT* series, and this time, Nani takes the lead. In the previous films, Vishwak Sen and Adivi Sesh played investigative cops, but in *HIT: The Third Case*, Nani steps in as Arjun Sarkaar. The film is produced by Prashanti Tipirneni along with Nani. To mark Nani's birthday, the teaser, titled *Sarkaar's Laathi*, was released on Monday.

The story follows a string of murders with a disturbingly similar pattern, leaving the police baffled. As a last

resort, they turn to Arjun Sarkaar—a name that instills fear in criminals. Nani's portrayal of Sarkaar is intense and brutal.

The teaser hints at an action-packed, violent narrative. One particularly harrowing scene shows Nani stabbing a criminal in the stomach and lifting the knife upwards, causing blood to splatter onto the ceiling—a chilling testament to the character's ruthless nature.

Srinidhi Shetty of *KGF* fame plays the female lead. *HIT: The Third Case* is set for a theatrical release on May 1.



Yash's *Toxic* sets a new benchmark as India's first dual-language spectacle!

After the phenomenal success of *KGF*, Kannada cinema has gained international recognition, and Yash has become a global star. Now, he is back with *Toxic*, a high-budget venture that is already making history. This is the first large-scale Indian film to be conceptualised, written and filmed in both English and Kannada. The film will also be dubbed into multiple Indian and international languages, including Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam.

Written and directed by internationally acclaimed filmmaker Geetu Mohandas, *Toxic* is set to redefine cross-cultural storytelling. Shooting in both English and Kannada ensures authenticity for

Indian audiences while making the film accessible worldwide. "Our vision for *Toxic* was to craft a narrative that resonates authentically with both Indian and global audiences," says director Geetu Mohandas. The film is jointly produced by Venkat Narayana and Yash's Monster Mind Creations.

The international crew includes action choreographer JJ Perry, known for his work in *John Wick* and *Fast & Furious*. Last month, on Yash's birthday, the team released a *Birth Day Peek*, offering a glimpse into *Toxic's* world. The teaser generated significant excitement, showcasing the film's massive scale and international-standard production values.



Namrata Shirodkar attended a star-studded wedding in Abu Dhabi, UAE, alongside Jr NTR, Ram Charan and others. She shared photos with the attendees on Instagram. Notably, Mahesh Babu's absence from the event sparked speculation about the actor working on his upcoming project with SS Rajamouli and Priyanka Chopra.

Australia vs South Africa: Two batting firepower clash

PTI ■ RAWALPINDI

Australia and South Africa, two teams possessing plenty of batting firepower, will look to outmuscle each other here on Tuesday and put one foot in the semifinals of the Champions Trophy (CT).

Not many were giving a depleted Australia a chance in the tournament but their record-breaking chase against England in Lahore has once again shown their penchant for rising to the occasion in ICC events.

The dew played its part the other night in Lahore and could once again aid the chasing team in Rawalpindi.

Australia are bound to miss the pace trio of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood in the tournament but at least in the opener, the audacious batting display compensated for their absence.

Josh Inglis' confidence must be sky high after playing the innings of his life with runs also coming from the bat of Matthew Short, Marnus Labuschagne, Alex Carey and Glenn Maxwell.

That leaves out only skipper Steve Smith and opener Travis Head in the batting department and they could score a big one against the



Proteas. A better bowling effort would be expected from left-arm pacer Spencer Johnson and Maxwell too was on the expensive side against England. The sixth bowler's role is likely to be shared by Labuschagne and Short. Like Inglis, Ryan Rickleton in the

South African dressing room would be beaming with confidence after an attacking hundred against Afghanistan. Number three, four, five striking half-centuries augurs well for the Temba Bavuma-led side. Heinrich Klaasen missed out on the last game due to injury and his participation in Tuesday's game is

not certain. South Africa's pace attack is certainly stronger than their opponents with Kagiso Rabada leading the charge. With first choice players not available, South Africa did not have the best of build ups for Champions Trophy but are backing themselves

to go all the way. "I think as a group we might not have had the best results coming into this tournament, but quietly I think everyone's quite confident. We do have incredibly good players in this team, not just in the team but obviously the whole squad as well," said Rickleton.

"There's guys that are maybe a bit young in the side as well that are also looking to make an impact. But I don't think we're too burdened by the hunt to win the whole thing. "Obviously, we're here to do that. But we don't let that restrict us. We have to play our best game, have fun, enjoy each other's company," he added.

Squad:

Australia: Matthew Short, Travis Head, Steven Smith (captain), Marnus Labuschagne, Josh Inglis (wk), Alex Carey, Glenn Maxwell, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Adam Zampa, Spencer Johnson, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Aaron Hardie, Sean Abbott, Tanveer Sangha.

South Africa: Ryan Rickleton (wicketkeeper), Tony de Zorzi, Temba Bavuma (captain), Rassie van der Dussen, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, Heinrich Klaasen, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Corbin Bosch.



Delhi Capitals, Gujarat Giants eye improved batting effort

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Struggling with batting frailties, Gujarat Giants and Delhi Capitals will look to return to winning ways when they clash in the Women's Premier League here on Tuesday.

Both teams head into this fixture on the back of defeats. Gujarat Giants, who finished last in the previous two seasons, remain at the bottom of the points table with just one win in three games.

Meanwhile, Delhi Capitals have slipped to third after a 33-run loss to UP Warriorz, their third defeat in five matches.

Despite being one of the most consistent teams since the league's inception, Delhi Capitals have endured a patchy run this season. They are yet to live up to their pre-tournament favourites tag, struggling to put together commanding performances.

Their batting lineup, in particular, has failed to fire consistently. Openers Shafali Verma and Meg Lanning have shown glimpses of form but haven't capitalised.

Lanning, in particular, has struggled, with just one strong performance so far, suggesting that international retirement might have impacted her game.

While Shafali, Jemimah Rodrigues, and Annabel Sutherland have provided occasional fireworks, none have converted their starts into substantial innings.

"We have played extremely well in patches but haven't been as good at other times. We just have to put everything together moving forward," Lanning said after the loss to Warriorz.

Gujarat Giants, on the other hand, have been heavily reliant on Australian all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner, who has been their standout performer. Gardner is the third-highest run-scorer in the tournament, amassing 141 runs in three innings.

However, in the match against Mumbai Indians, her failure exposed the team's lack of batting depth, as Gujarat crumbled for just 120.

The pressure is mounting on the Indian batters, particularly number three D Hemalatha, to step up. South African batter Laura Wolvaardt is also due for a big innings.

With the ball, Gardner has led from the front, receiving good support from leg-spinner Priya Mishra. However, Gujarat will need an all-round effort if they hope to turn their season around.

Squads:
Gujarat Giants: Ashleigh Gardner (c), Bharti Fulmali, Laura Wolvaardt, Phoebe Litchfield, Simran Shaikh, Danielle Gibson, Dayalan Hemalatha, Deandra Dottin, Harleen Deol, Sayali Satghare, Tanuja Kanwar, Beth Mooney (wk), Kashvee Gautam, Mannat Kashyap, Meghna Singh, Prakashika Naik, Priya Mishra, Shabnam Shakil.

Delhi Capitals: Meg Lanning (c), Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Sneha Deepthi, Alice Capsey, Annabel Sutherland, Arundhati Reddy, Jess Jonassen, Marizanne Kapp, Minnu Mani, N Charani, Niki Prasad, Radha Yadav, Shikha Pandey, Nandini Kashyap (wk), Taniyaa Bhatia (wk), Sarah Bryce (wk), Titas Sadhu.



Our Champions Trophy campaign as good as over, says Rizwan

PTI ■ DUBAI

Pakistan captain Mohammad Rizwan has conceded that his team's Champions Trophy (CT) campaign is as good as over following the loss to India here.

The six-wicket defeat to India was Pakistan's second in as many games. From Group A, India and New Zealand are expected to reach the semifinals. Pakistan's last league game is against Bangladesh on February 27.

"We can say that our campaign is as good as over. We have to depend on results of other matches. There is hope as there is one more game left. As a captain, I don't like this scenario (depending on other teams). We should have our fate in our hands," said Rizwan at the post-match press conference.

He gave due credit to India and especially Virat Kohli, who completed his 51st ODI hundred and his fourth against the arch-rivals.

"I am amazed at the hardwork he puts in. The whole world was saying he was out of form but coming into such a big game, he scored runs effortlessly. His fitness and work ethic is indeed praiseworthy. We tried our best to get him out but we could not. "As far as the match is concerned, we are obviously disappointed. We made mistakes in all three

departments. We were not able to take wickets in the middle overs," he added.

Pakistan came into the tournament as defending champions having won the last edition back in 2017. They are hosting an ICC event for the first time in 29 years and an early exit as hosts will indeed be a big setback for Rizwan's team. Pakistan had lost to New Zealand in their tournament opener. The Blackcaps had also beaten them twice in the preceding tri-series in Pakistan.

Rizwan said the team is not learning from its mistakes. "Look, honestly, we made the same mistake that we have been making in the past with four matches.

"We are trying to do our work and put in our efforts. Because what I believe in is that our Indian team put in more effort than us today. Maybe they were more brave than us. And we needed energy in our fielding. So maybe we lacked that energy," said the wicket-keeper batter.

Rizwan acknowledged the injuries to openers Saim Ayub and more recently Fakhar Zaman did impact them adversely.

"Our loss occurred when we missed out on Saim Ayub, because we had a package with Saim Ayub because of which our team had settled down. But when Saim Ayub left, our balance and our team's combination faced a big impact," he said.

"But if we would have played more aggressively we would have won a bit earlier I felt," he added. Iyer, nonetheless, termed India's as a "sweet" one because it came against a competitive team and involved warding off a lot of "external pressures."

"I haven't played that many matches in Pakistan, so I don't know exactly how it would have felt. But it's a neutral venue and it's a challenge for both the teams.

Playing cover drive is 'catch-22': Kohli

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian batting maestro Virat Kohli admitted that his trademark cover drive puts him in a "catch-22" situation as it has been a weakness lately but playing the shot gives him control over the innings.

Kohli crafted a memorable unbeaten century against Pakistan, steering India to a six-wicket win. His 111-ball masterclass featured the cover drive prominently, a shot that has in recent time led to his downfall but remains a signature weapon in his arsenal.

"It's a 'catch-22'. I mean, it's (cover drive) kind of been my weakness as well over the years, but I've scored a lot of runs on that shot," Kohli said in a video posted by BCCI.

"I think today was just about backing my shots and I think the first couple of boundaries I got were cover drives on the rise, so I really had to just let it go a little bit and take a bit of risk and follow through with my shots.

"Because when I hit that kind of shots, then I feel in control when I bat out there. So, it was a good innings for me personally and it was a great team win," he added.

An India-Pakistan game is always a blockbuster, but Kohli felt Sunday's



clash was even more electrifying, with Dubai's stands packed with passionate fans from both nations.

"The occasion is a bit more lively when you play against Pakistan, especially in this region because you have an equal number of fans from both countries, yeah, it was a great day for us as a team and for me personally as well."

Delighted to contribute to India's victory once again, Kohli, who became the fastest batter to complete 14,000 ODI runs, said his role at number three has remained unchanged over the years

– minimising risk, stabilising the innings, and, when possible, finishing the chase.

"One thing that I've always thought of batting at three is to minimise risk and make sure that I put my team in a winning position and if you have a chance to finish off the game in a chase, obviously, that's much better and I always preferred that kind of a situation. "My role over the years has remained the same, whatever the demand of the game, I put my head down and try to do that," he added.

Kuldeep feels good rhythm after comeback from injury

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian spinner Kuldeep Yadav feels he has found his rhythm following a comeback from injury and expects to get better with every game he plays in the ongoing Champions Trophy (CT).

Kuldeep struck thrice in the death overs against Pakistan on Sunday and was also on a hat-trick. The 30-year-old had undergone a surgery for sports hernia last year, keeping him away from the game for more than three months.

"Injuries take six months to recover. I played two matches against England. I had a good rhythm. I had a good rhythm even against Bangladesh.

"But obviously, you always look for wickets (he went wicketless against Bangladesh). But today, when I bowled my first over, I felt that I am in a better rhythm. I am in a comfortable position. "Even now, I feel that I can bowl

better. I have played 3-4 matches. I will get better as I play more," Kuldeep told newsmen in the Mixed Zone after six-wicket win over the arch-rivals.

Kuldeep's three victims included Salman Agha, Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah.

Talking about his specific plans, he said; "In the first spell, I hit a lot of Chinaman. And the wrong one is a variation of mine. I also hit a topspin with the wrong one.

"The first wicket of Salman was a normal Chinaman. It was slow, but I varied the pace. Obviously, the second wicket was a first-ball swing. I was targeting the wicket. I thought it was a better option to hit the wrong one.

"So, I have to think about which delivery I can hit. And the incoming deliveries are difficult if it's a slow track. So, that was my plan."

However, Kuldeep feels he can get better on the accuracy front.



"To be very honest, in terms of accuracy, I feel that if I play more games, I will be much better. Obviously, when you play a lot of games, you tend to mix your pace."

He also relishes the challenge of bowling in the death overs.

"I was able to become the first choice in bowling the last 10 overs. Even the captain felt that it's very

difficult to hit spinners when you have variations. Luckily, it was good for me. The wicket was slow. I was trying to mix with the pace and wrong ones or topspin.

"If you get one or two wickets in the middle, the batsmen tend to block you. That's what they did in the last 10 overs. Playing Pakistan, there is a lot of pressure from the fans. There are a lot of expectations. I enjoy it," said Kuldeep.

The wily operator credited the NCA for his speedy recovery from hernia.

"I give a lot of credit to the NCA. I worked with Rajni. Dhananjay, who is our physio, was under Nitin Patel. I didn't take a day off. I took two days off. He called me back. I was very focused. I knew that if I delayed even a little, I would miss the Champions Trophy. I didn't expect to recover in time, but the staff was working very hard," Kuldeep added.

Love to take on bowlers when we are under pressure: Shreyas Iyer

PTI ■ DUBAI

Giving a peek into his mindset when faced with high-pressure situations, India batter Shreyas Iyer has said that he likes to be aggressive to "steady the ship", something that he demonstrated quite well in the Champions Trophy (CT) win over arch-foes Pakistan after making a sedate start.

Iyer's 56 off 67 was the perfect supporting act to Virat Kohli's unbeaten 100 as India chased a 242-run target with more than seven overs to spare on Sunday night. The win has pushed Pakistan to the brink of elimination and taken India within touching distance of a semifinal berth.

"I love to take on the bowlers when we are under pressure. And that is my mindset. If we take charge, if we gain the momentum towards us, then it is easy to steady the ship," Iyer said in the post-match press conference.

"And from there on, the rest of the batsmen, when they come in, it becomes easy for them." He expected India to take way less than the 42.3 overs that the side consumed for the six-wicket victory.

"I think we could have won a bit earlier, could have been a convincing win based on how the wicket was playing. It was initially coming on pretty well with the new ball and after that it was difficult to score runs when the ball got a bit old," he said.

"But if we would have played more aggressively we would have won a bit earlier I felt," he added.

Iyer, nonetheless, termed India's as a "sweet" one because it came against a competitive team and involved warding off a lot of "external pressures."

"I haven't played that many matches in Pakistan, so I don't know exactly how it would have felt. But it's a neutral venue and it's a challenge for both the teams.

But any victory against Pakistan is sweet because they are always competitive," Iyer told reporters.

"It's a challenge and there's a lot of pressure externally as well. It was a lot of fun. It was my third game in Pakistan," he added but did not elaborate what exactly he meant by external pressure.



Iyer, who formed a vital 114-run alliance with Kohli for the third wicket, lauded his senior colleague for making a fluent hundred. It was Kohli's 51st ODI hundred, and he also completed 14,000 runs in the format during the course of the knock.

"I have never thought of Virat struggling for runs. He is always hungry for runs. He remember yesterday, he had come almost an hour before us for the practice session and he played a few balls and he was looking from outside,"

struggling for runs. He is always hungry for runs. He remember yesterday, he had come almost an hour before us for the practice session and he played a few balls and he was looking from outside,"

rotating the strike is going to be important because that puts a decent amount of pressure on the bowlers.

"They keep changing their line lengths. And once you keep taking singles, the bowlers are more under pressure and you can keep hitting the scoreboard from there on," he added.

Iyer also lauded the Indian spinners for keeping Pakistan batters quiet in the middle overs.

"They bowled tremendously, especially in the middle phase where the ball was turning. As we know, even in the previous game when we played over here, the wicket is a bit slow.

"It's spinner friendly and the way they have been bowling consistently over a period of time, I think the amalgamation of all three bowlers mixing up quite well, also the experience that they possess. I think that brings a lot of clarity in their bowling," he said.