

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
 The pioneer  
 Sanjay is hitting below the belt. He has been linking every issue with India and Pakistan and Hindus and Muslims. Sanjay is habituated to inciting communal hatred during every election. It is not proper for Sanjay to give the impression that the BJP ensured the victory of India in the Champions Trophy match between India and Pakistan at Dubai  
 - Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC chief

**Assam to play key role in India's growth story: PM**  
 5

**LEADING CHARGE IN GLOBAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS**  
 9

**With Fun, I Want Values in My Films: THRINADHA RAO**  
 P11

**DON'T MISS...**  
**Radial road linking ORR to RRR**  
 The Telangana Government has launched the construction of a Greenfield Radial Road (Ratan Tata Road), a key project which improves connectivity between the Outer Ring Road (ORR) and the Regional Ring Road (RRR). This major corridor will pass through critical development zones like Skill City and Future City facilitating seamless transportation for businesses and the public. The Hyderabad Metro politan Development Authority (HMDA) and the Hyderabad Growth Corridor Limited (HGCL) have been entrusted with ...  
 -PAGE: 3

**India, Japan kickstart wargame**  
 Armies of India and Japan have kickstarted a mega two-week wargame at a Japanese military base in the foothills of Mount Fuji in line with the overall aim to bolster bilateral defence ties. The sixth edition of the 'Dharma Guardian' exercise that began on Monday is set to include an "expanded" range of activities that will reflect the growing defence cooperation between India and Japan, the Indian Army said. The wargame at the East Fuji training area is taking place amid mounting concerns in India...  
 -PAGE: 5

**'India, UK trade pact beneficial for both'**  
 The proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the United Kingdom is "genuinely beneficial" to both countries as it would help boost bilateral trade and investments, UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds said on Tuesday. India and the UK on Monday announced resumption of negotiations for the FTA, which is expected to double or even triple bilateral trade from the current USD 20 billion in the next 10 years. Reynolds met Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal to...  
 -PAGE: 8

**Atherton, Hussain praise Kohli**  
 In awe of Virat Kohli's formidable ODI statistics, former England captains Michael Atherton and Nasser Hussain believe that the Indian mainstay is probably the best batsman in the history of the format. Kohli played a master-class innings of unbeaten 100, his 51st century in ODIs, to steer India to a comfortable six-wicket win over arch-rivals Pakistan in a Champions Trophy match here on Sunday. "Virat Kohli in a run-chase in 50-over cricket, there's been nobody better in the history of the game, really...  
 -SPORTS

**Delhi govt suffered losses of Rs 2,000 cr due to liquor policy: CAG**  
 PNS ■ NEW DELHI  
 The Delhi government suffered cumulative losses of over Rs 2,000 crore due to the 2021-2022 excise policy for reasons ranging from weak policy framework to deficient implementation, according to a CAG report tabled in the assembly on Tuesday.  
 The report, one of 14 on the previous Aam Aadmi Party government's performance to be tabled by the new Rekha Gupta-led dispensation, has also flagged violations in the process of issuing licences. It has pointed out that recommendations of an expert panel, formed to suggest changes for the formation of the now scrapped policy, were ignored by then deputy chief minister and excise minister Manish Sisodia.  
 The report on the alleged liquor

**5L jobs to be created CM says govt developing 10 pharma villages between ORR & RRR Inaugurates Bio Asia 2025**  
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD  
 The Telangana Government is developing 10 pharma villages between ORR and RRR which will generate around 5 lakh jobs, said Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.  
 He was speaking while inaugurating the 22nd edition of BioAsia 2025, Asia's largest life sciences and healthcare conference, themed 'Catalysts of Change - Expanding Global Healthcare Frontiers, Transforming Healthcare with Innovation, Collaboration and Progress.'  
 Dr Jeannette Young, the Governor of Queensland and IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu along with other dignitaries attended the inauguration function.  
 Addressing the conference, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that

BioAsia has helped position Hyderabad as a global life sciences hub. "This event is crucial in strengthening India's role in the healthcare sector. Hyderabad has a strong presence in healthcare, biosciences, pharma, biotech and bulk drug manufacturing. The government aims to make Hyderabad and Telangana a top destination for biotech innovation, R&D, skill development and investment," the CM said.  
 "Telangana leads in attracting domestic and foreign investment. It has the lowest inflation rate and is creating jobs. The state has a 160 km Outer Ring Road (ORR) and is building a 360 km Regional Ring Road (RRR) with radial roads, connecting new manufacturing hubs for pharma, EVs, green energy and agri-processing."  
 Continued on Page 2

**CM goes to Delhi to meet Modi**  
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD  
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy went to New Delhi on Tuesday to meet Prime Minister Modi along with DCC president C. Rohin Reddy.  
 The Chief Minister will meet the Prime Minister at 10 am on Wednesday along with IT Minister Sridhar Babu, Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, CMO Secretary Sheshadri and DGP Jitender.  
 The Chief Minister would give a memorandum to Modi seeking financial assistance for the Musi Project, Metro extension works and an increase in the number of IPS cadre officials. The Chief Minister would also meet some Union Ministers on Wednesday.

**Telugu mandatory subject in all schools: Govt**  
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD  
 Telangana government has officially mandated the implementation of Telugu as a compulsory subject in all schools across the State, including CBSE, ICSE, IB, and other board-affiliated institutions. This decision aligns with the Telangana Telugu Compulsory Act (2018) and aims to strengthen Telugu language education among students.  
 According to a government memo issued by the School Education department, from the 2025-26 academic year, Telugu will be mandatory for Class IX, and from 2026-27, it will also be implemented for Class X. Additionally, the government has approved the replacement of SINGIDI (Standard Telugu) with VENNELA (Simple Telugu) (CBSE subject code 089) to accommodate students who are new to the language.  
 The decision follows a proposal examined by the Director of School Education, Telangana which was granted formal approval by the government. In the issued order, Dr Yogita Rana, Secretary to the government, has directed the Director of School Education, Hyderabad, to ensure necessary implementation measures.

**No drinking water crisis in Hyd HMWSSB dismisses allegations of shortage**  
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD  
 The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has dismissed allegations of a drinking water crisis in the city, stating that the demand for water tankers has been increasing annually by 10-15% since 2021. Officials clarified that this year's demand spike is in line with past trends, attributing the rise to factors such as urban expansion, depletion of groundwater levels, and steady supply management by the water board.  
 According to HMWSSB data 2021-22: Tanker demand increased by 32%, 2022-23: Demand rose by 19%, 2023-24: Demand surged by 31% and 2024-25 (until February): Demand has already grown by 37%  
 In January and February 2025 alone, bookings reached 1,19,752 and 1,50,000, respectively, compared to 81,821 and 1,12,921 in the same months of 2024. This trend indicates a worsening water situation, as peak summer months from March to June typically see the highest demand.  
 Continued on Page 2

**1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS Delhi court awards lifer to Sajjan Kumar**  
 PNS ■ NEW DELHI  
 A Delhi court on Tuesday awarded life-term imprisonment to former Congress MP Sajjan Kumar in a murder case connected to the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.  
 Special judge Kaveri Baweja pronounced the judgement for the murders of Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh on November 1, 1984.  
 A detailed verdict is awaited.  
 The court on February 12 convicted Kumar for the offence and sought a report from Tihar Central Jail on his psychiatric and psychological evaluation in view of a Supreme Court order asking for such a report in cases attracting capital punishment.  
 The offence of murder attracts a maximum punishment of death penalty, while the minimum sentence was life imprisonment.  
 Continued on Page 2

**All out bid to save lives**  
 SLBC tunnel becoming dangerous; water, silt impede progress  
 Rescue teams continue relentless efforts to save trapped workers

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The rescue operation inside the collapsed SLBC (Srisailem Left Bank Canal) tunnel entered its fourth day, with the situation inside the tunnel growing increasingly dangerous.  
 Despite continuous efforts by 11 national and state agencies, including the Indian Army, Navy MARCOS, NDRF, SDRF, the Geological Survey of India (GSI), SCCL rescue teams and experts from the L&T, the rising water levels, thick silt and unstable debris continue to impede progress.  
 Nagarkurnool Collector B. Santhosh, who has been closely monitoring rescue operations, described the conditions inside the tunnel as "extremely treacherous."  
 Rescuers are moving through waist-deep sludge with visibility reduced to near-zero due to the murky water and dust from the collapse.  
 "We are facing a major challenge in reaching the last 50 meters where the eight workers are trapped. The tunnel is completely blocked by four to five meters of accumulated silt and debris, making entry almost impossible at present," the Collector said.  
 The tunnel, which has only a single entry and exit point, presents a very difficult problem for rescue



teams. With no other escape route any movement inside the structure is dangerous. The Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) used for excavation remains stuck in the collapsed section complicating access. Experts are currently assessing the feasibility of drilling from the top or sides of the tunnel to create an access point. However, given the tunnel's unstable condition and the continuous inflow of water every step must be taken with extreme caution.  
 Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, who has been overseeing the rescue mission, described the operation as one of the most difficult in India's history.  
 "Some experts believe this could be the most difficult tunnel rescue ever attempted in the country. The continuous flow of water and silt is not just blocking access but also putting the lives of rescuers at serious risk. We are taking expert advice before making any critical decisions," he stated.  
 Continued on Page 2

**KTR demands judicial inquiry**  
 BRS Working President KT Rama Rao has demanded the immediate formation of a judicial commission led by a sitting High Court judge to investigate the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel accident.  
 Alleging gross negligence by the Congress government, KTR held Chief Minister Revanth Reddy responsible for prioritising election campaigns over rescue operations.  
 KTR accused the government of allowing tunnel construction without  
 Continued on Page 2

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# Why did KCR and Jagan skip Legislative Council polls?

It's natural for any political party to contest elections to ascertain its standing among the public. Political parties are always trying to gauge the public mood by contesting elections so that they can demonstrate their standing among the public, particularly during the period between two general elections. It's a must for political parties in the opposition to face the 'ability test' to get a chance to become the ruling party in future. All political parties assess their strength by contesting elections. If a political party skips elections it is nothing but allowing its cadres to remain idle and it will have a cascading effect on organisational strength. This will affect the party during crucial times like general elections. There may

be strong reasons for a particular party to keep itself away from elections. There is an opinion in politics that a political organisation gets an opportunity to strengthen its cadre base by taking part in elections. Every election enables political parties to interact with the people and thereby influence them.

The main opposition parties in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the BRS and the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), have decided to skip elections to their Legislative Councils. In Telangana, the BRS which ruled for nearly a decade is now licking its wounds after the defeat in the 2023 Assembly polls. Although it has 39 MLAs in the TG Assembly, the BRS has not been effective in facing the

**The main opposition parties in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, the BRS and the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), have decided to skip elections to their Legislative Councils. In Telangana, the BRS which ruled for nearly a decade is now licking its wounds after the defeat in the 2023 Assembly polls**

ing Congress. After suffering two defeats at the hands of the BRS despite granting statehood for Telangana, the Congress endured agony for 10 long years facing desertions and loyalty switching to the BRS. The Congress also lost its principal opposition tag. Now the Congress, after getting an opportunity to rule the state, has been paying back the BRS in the same coin. It brought

BRS MLAs into its fold by assuring development in their constituencies. It has now become a fashion for all MLAs and MLCs to say some words like a caged parrot that they were compelled to switch over to the ruling party as their people demanded development. Now the BRS is not taking part in Council elections. The absence of the BRS has paved the way for a direct fight



**M D RATNA KUMAR**  
Senior Journalist  
ratnakumarm@gmail.com

between the two ruling parties (the Congress and the BJP). The BRS prevented a triangular fight by distancing itself from Council elections. This move of the BRS would help the BJP as the BRS vote bank might vote for the BJP.

BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) has by and large been a critic of the BJP. Now he has indirectly turned the poll in the BJP's favour by deciding to avoid the Council polls. What kind of strategy is this? How is it justified by the party's activists? Nearly 10 legislators out of 39 elected on the BRS ticket have gone to the Congress. This act of the MLAs has been challenged by the BRS in court under the anti-defection law. The BRS is anxiously waiting for the court verdict on this issue and is confident that it would win if by-polls are held. It may be mentioned here that the BRS had encouraged defections from the Congress when it was in power. The BRS leadership had assured the legislators who had defected that there would be no by-polls in their seats come what may. The

BRS is now suffering at the hands of the Congress whose principal opposition tag in the TG Assembly it had stripped when it was in power. Acquiring dominance over the principal opposition was the prime aim of the BRS's leadership. The BRS is now learning lessons as it gets the same treatment. The BRS is not confident of winning the Council elections. Interestingly, the BJP candidate in the Council polls has claimed the BRS's support. Although it appears to be avoiding elections the main beneficiary will be the BJP. In that way, the BRS leadership might be able to see the Congress getting defeated by the BJP. The BRS which has almost five times more MLAs in the Assembly (39 seats) than the BJP (8 seats) is now helping the latter. Boycotting

elections can affect its prospects. Coming to the YSRCP in AP, it has decided not to participate in the Council elections for its own reasons. Earlier, it had won a local body seat in the Council from North Coastal Andhra on its own. But the party had a nightmarish experience in the case of a Council seat (graduates) in the Rayalaseema districts where its chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy hails from. It lost that seat despite being the ruling party. The fear of a possible repetition of that might have made the party's leadership skip Council elections. The chances of a win may be bleak for the party if there is a direct fight like last year's general elections. The YSRCP might have thought that avoiding the polls was better than getting defeated.

## BJP is Team India, Cong is Team Pakistan: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"India won the recent India-Pakistan Champions Trophy match. The BJP is Team India. The Congress is Team Pakistan as it has aligned with those who celebrate Pakistan's victories. The BJP will win the MLC election match on February 27, just like India defeated Pakistan," Union Minister of State Bandi Sanjay Kumar said. He challenged Chief Minister Revanth Reddy asking if he was ready to treat the MLC election as a referendum on his 14 months of governance. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday at his MP's office in Karimnagar, Sanjay

spoke along with MLAs Payal Shankar, Katipalli Venkataramana Reddy, former MLA Chintala Ramachandra Reddy, former Mayor Sunil Rao and the BJP state spokesperson J. Sangappa. During the event, Sanjay strongly criticized the statements made by the CM during his MLC election campaign. He demanded transparency in how much funding the Centre has given to villages, municipalities and city corporations in Telangana and how much the state spent and called for an open debate. Recalling his earlier challenge, Sanjay said that the CM had backed down then as well. "On February 27, the MLC elec-

tion will be a match between Team India and Team Pakistan. If you want India to win, vote for the BJP. If you want Pakistan to win, vote for the Congress. If the BJP wins, we will fulfil the hopes of all graduates and teachers," he said. "We are not against caste enumeration. We oppose including Muslims in the BCs' list. Reservations for communities like Dudukulas have been implemented for a long time in Telangana, and we never objected. But why should we accept including 8.8% of Muslims in the BCs' list when they make up 12.5% of the population? Merging over 88% of Muslims into the BC category will harm bonafide BCs.

## Congress objects to Sanjay linking it with Pakistan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress objected to the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, describing Congress as the Pakistan team. TPCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud said that Sanjay was "hitting below the belt." He has been linking every issue with India and Pakistan and Hindus and Muslims. Sanjay is habituated to inciting communal hatred. It is not proper for Sanjay to give an impression that the BJP ensured the victory of India in the Champions Trophy match between India and Pakistan at Dubai. The Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, said that Sanjay has been speaking as he liked. "What

else is there to talk for Sanjay except castes, Muslims, India and Pakistan," he added. He said that it is the responsibility of the Centre to bring the phone-tapping culprits to India. "But the BJP is protecting them. The ED, the CBI and the IT Department are working like BJP activists," the MP said and asked the Centre to explain why the Enforcement Directorate did not arrest the culprits involved in the e-car racing scam. Government Whip Adi Srinivas said that Sanjay has been 'encouraging communalism' to gain ground in the MLC elections. "Is it right for Sanjay to speak using the religion factor as a Union Minister? Sanjay should feel ashamed to compare the Congress to Pakistan," he said.

## Sanjay shielding BRS chief KCR & KTR: Rammohan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC Media and Communications Chairperson Sama Rammohan Reddy lashes out against the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, saying that he is protecting BRS leaders involved in the telephone tapping case. He accused Sanjay of shielding BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao and Working President KT Rama Rao in the case. He was responding to Sanjay's demand to hand over the phone tapping case to the CBI. Addressing a press conference at the Gandhi Bhavan on Tuesday, Rammohan said that the suspects in the telephone tapping case, A-1 T. Prabhakar Rao and A-6 Sravan Rao, are in the US, and it is the responsibility of the Union Home Ministry in which Sanjay serves as the Minister of State to bring them back. He said that the state government had sent multiple letters to the CBI, which functions under the Union Home Ministry, to issue red corner notices for the repatriation of A-1 and A-6. However, the CBI has not yet issued the red corner notices through INTERPOL. "Sanjay should explain why the red corner notices have not been issued till date, as it falls under his ministry, and why our requests are being ignored," he said. He added that the police department had written several letters to the CBI and the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy had raised the issue with Union Ministers during his visits to New Delhi.

## Raja Narasimha washes feet of Madiga martyrs' kin

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Health and Family Welfare Minister, Damodar Raja Narasimha, paid tributes to the portraits of the martyrs at the Madiga Martyrs' Memorial Meeting on Tuesday. Rajanarasimha himself washed the feet of the family members of Madiga Martyrs and honoured them. He also provided financial assistance

of Rs 5 lakh each to the family members of the six martyrs who died in the SC classification struggle. Speaking on the occasion, Raja Narasimha said the sacrifices of the Madiga Martyrs would not be forgotten and that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had the honour of announcing it in the Assembly within an hour of the Supreme Court verdict.

## BRS team to visit SLBC tunnel, warn police against blocking them

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao announced that they will visit the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel on Thursday morning and warned the police not to create obstacles. He clarified that they had refrained from visiting the spot earlier to ensure that rescue operations were not affected. In a strong statement, Harish warned the government against any attempts to block their visit. "We stayed

away to ensure that that relief operations are not affected. But now we will go, and the police should not create any problems," he declared. The visit comes amid growing criticism of the Congress government's handling of the SLBC tunnel collapse, where eight workers remain trapped. The BRS has been demanding accountability, asking why Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and his administration failed to conduct technical studies before resuming tunnel work.

## No drinking ...

**Continued from page 1**  
To address the increasing need for tanker supply, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has expanded its infrastructure significantly. Over the past year, the number of filling stations has increased from 69 to 79, while filling points have risen from 93 to 123. Additionally, the tanker fleet has been expanded from 577 in January 2024 to 907 in January 2025, in an attempt to reduce delays and ensure timely supply. However, despite these

efforts, residents in many areas, including Kukatpally, Alwal, Malkajgiri, Gachibowli, and the Old City, have reported longer wait times and a growing reliance on private suppliers due to high demand. With March to June historically being the most critical period for tanker bookings, Hyderabad is likely to experience one of its worst water crises this summer. While the HMWSSB assures that the situation is being managed efficiently, the rapid increase in demand suggests that emergency measures may be necessary to prevent severe shortages in the coming months.

## Harish slams Congress over MLC poll corruption

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Minister Harish Rao launched a scathing attack on the Congress government, alleging large-scale corruption in the Mahabubnagar local body MLC elections. He claimed that Congress candidate Jeevan Reddy had spent a staggering Rs 90 crore to campaign during the election with MPTCs and ZPTCs allegedly receiving bribes ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh for their votes. These shocking details, he said, were not mere allegations from the opposition but were

revealed by senior Congress leader and Telangana State Planning Commission Vice Chairman Chinna Reddy during his recent statement in Vanaparthi. Harish asked why Central agencies like the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the CBI, the Income Tax (IT) Department and the Election Commission had not taken action despite such blatant election malpractice. He pointed out that when ED conducted raids on Minister Ponguleti's residence, no notices were issued against him. But in this case, there is

complete inaction. "Why is there no suo-motu action? Why are cases not being filed?" he asked. Targeting the Congress leadership, Harish questioned Rahul Gandhi's silence on the issue. "Rahul constantly speaks about the Constitution, but is this what Congress means by public governance and constitutional protection? Does he endorse such corruption?" he said. He linked the matter to the alleged 'nexus' between the Congress and the BJP, stating that this was yet another example of their covert deals.

## Is it prudent to have state administrative tribunals? SC asks Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed concern over cost of litigation for the public and multiplicity of petitions leading to delay in disposal and asked the Centre if it was prudent to have state administrative tribunals.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh, which was hearing a plea related to filling up of vacancies in Karnataka State Administrative Tribunal (SAT), said petitions kept coming for filling up of vacancies in these tribunals.

"What is the point in keeping these institutions when we don't have manpower to manage it," the bench told additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, representing the Centre. The court said the situation only increased petitions and cost of petition.

"People challenge every order before the high court and then again matters goes back before the tribunal. It only delays the disposal of cases," it added. Bhati said these were policy decisions, taken at the highest level.

## TG govt must reveal whether it will probe phone-tapping case: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of Coal and Mines, G. Kishan Reddy, asked the Congress government to reveal whether it will probe the phone-tapping case or hand it over to the CBI. Addressing the media at the State BJP office on Tuesday, Kishan said the BJP has asked the state government to hand over the phone-tapping case to the CBI and wondered why the BJP will block inquiry into the case. "There are rules for bringing back culprits to India. A US court recently permitted the handing over of bomb

blast case culprits even though the country had been trying for this since 1996. The CM should not become a joker by speaking like this. The Centre would take responsibility for investigation if the state hands it over to the CBI," he said. The Congress demanded a CBI probe into Kaleshwaram, ORR, phone tapping, power purchase agreements, land purchasing and other issues. However, after coming to power, Revanth changed his word. He should take up the probe if he can or else he should hand it over to the CBI," Kishan said.

## All out bid ...

**Continued from page 1**

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, along with Ministers Uttam Kumar Reddy and Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, visited the accident site on Tuesday to review the rescue operation. A high-level meeting was held with senior officials of the Army, Navy, GSI and disaster response teams to explore alternative rescue strategies. Officials are currently considering advanced dewatering methods, including high-powered pumps, to reduce the water levels inside the tunnel. SP Vaibhav Gaikwad confirmed that geological experts have collected soil samples to analyse the extent of instability within the tunnel. "The safety of the rescuers is paramount. We are assessing the stability of the collapsed section before

making any attempts to enter," he said. Despite the grim conditions, efforts to establish communication with the trapped workers continue. Oxygen is being pumped into the tunnel at regular intervals, but rescuers have not yet been able to make direct contact. "We are hoping that once we clear some of the silt, we will be able to send in a small camera or probe to check on their condition," the Collector added. Meanwhile, political tensions escalated as BRS Working President KT Rama Rao demanded a judicial probe into the incident, questioning the government's handling of the rescue operation. Congress Lok Sabha MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy dismissed the demand, stating that this was not the 'time for politics' and that the focus should be on saving lives.

Uttam Kumar Reddy strongly condemned the opposition's criticism, calling it "disgraceful politics." He pointed out that during past tragedies, like the fire at the Srisailem Power Plant and the Kaleshwaram Project accident under the BRS government, the Congress had refrained from politicising the incidents. With time running out, officials remain focused on exploring every possible option to reach the trapped workers. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is said to be personally monitoring the situation, and emergency consultations with national and international disaster management experts are underway. Special Chief Secretary Arvind Kumar is heading the unified command centre, coordinating rescue operations and ensuring that all available resources are being utilised efficiently.

## KTR demands ...

**Continued from page 1**

mandatory approvals from the Geological Survey of India (GSI) experts, calling it a "shocking display of incompetence and inexperience." He questioned the Chief Minister's absence during the rescue operations while eight workers remained trapped. "Is there no time for the CM to ensure the rescue of these workers while flying around in helicopters for poll campaigns?" he asked. Pointing to a series of mishaps under the Congress regime, KTR recalled three major accidents in the last 14 months. He cited the complete washout of the Peddavagu Project in Khammam and the collapse of the Sunkishala Project's retaining wall - meant to supply drinking water to Hyderabad - causing losses amounting to hundreds of crores.

## Delhi court ...

**Continued from page 1**

The complainant, Jaswant's wife, and the prosecution, had sought maximum punishment for Kumar. He is currently lodged in Tihar jail. Though Punjabi Bagh police station registered the case initially, a special investigation team later took over the investigation. On December 16, 2021, the court framed charges against Kumar, finding a

## Delhi govt ...

**Continued from page 1**

The alleged irregularities in the formulation and implementation of the policy had snowballed into a political punching bag used by the BJP after Lt Governor V K Saxena recommended a CBI probe in July 2022. Top leaders of AAP, including Arvind Kejriwal, Sisodia and Sanjay Singh, have spent months in jail after probe agencies arrested them in the case. The report said the Master Plan Delhi-2021 prohibited opening of liquor vents in non-conforming areas, but the Excise Policy 2021-22

## mandated opening at least two retail vends in each ward.

According to the report, the tender document for opening new vends had said no liquor stores would be located in a non-conforming area. In case, a vend was in a non-conforming area, it had to be considered with the prior approval of the government, said the report. "The excise department did not take timely action to work out modalities for proposed vends in non-conforming areas and the initial tender was floated on June 28, 2021 without taking comments from the DDA and MCD," it said.

## "prima facie" case against him.

According to the prosecution, a huge mob, armed with deadly weapons, resorted to large-scale looting, arson and destruction of properties of Sikhs to avenge the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

**LOST**  
Original Share Certificates of FRONTIER SPRINGS LIMITED with certificate number 18492, number of shares 100, Distinctive number 1828512-1828611, certificate number 18499, number of shares 100, Distinctive number 1829212-1829311, certificate number 18498, number of shares 100, Distinctive number 1829112 - 1829211, certificate number 18503, number of shares 100, Distinctive number 1829612 - 1829711, certificate number 18500, number of shares 100, Distinctive number 1829312 - 1829411 belonging to GHANTA VIJAY KUMAR, S/o. GHANTA SUBBA RAO, R/O. Flat No C-712, Kendriya Vihar, Phase - 3, Hydershahpet Village, Bandlaguda Jagir Municipal Corporation, Gandipet Mandal, Range Reddy Dist. - 500091 while traveling from Narsingi to Hydershahpet. Finders may send certificate to address mentioned above.

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# City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | FEBRUARY 26, 2025

03

## CITY EVENTS

**Telugu Drama**  
By Nishumbita Group  
**Venue**  
Ravindra Bharathi  
February 26,  
(9 am to 10 pm)

**Uttar Dakshin Season 14**  
Flute Recital By Ronu Majumdar  
**Venue**  
Jawaharlal Nehru College  
Of Architecture & Fine Arts  
University (JNAFAU) -  
JNTU  
February 26, (7 pm)

**Sri Shyam Falgun Mahautsav**  
Music Concert By Sagar Vyas,  
Reshmi Sharma  
**Venue**  
Maheshwari Bhavan  
February 26, (7 pm)

**Shivastuti**  
Hindustani Concert In  
celebration Of Maha Shivaratri  
**Venue**  
Lamakaan  
February 26, (7 pm)

**The Quiet Man**  
English Movie  
**Venue**  
Lamakaan  
February 26, (7 pm)

**Job fraudster arrested**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police have arrested a fraudster from Uttar Pradesh involved in six job scam cases across India, including Hyderabad. The accused identified as Dharmender Kumar (30), allegedly ran a fake job call centre in Delhi, deceiving job seekers by promising employment opportunities in India and Dubai.

A 49-year-old man from Amberpet, Hyderabad, lodged a complaint stating that in July 2024, he was searching for jobs online when he came across the Go2Career website. After registering, he received a call from an unidentified number, informing him that he had been selected for a job at OPTUM Company, Hyderabad branch.

The fraudster convinced the victim to pay Rs 15,88,347 in multiple transactions, claiming the money was required for internal file processing. After making the payments, the victim was repeatedly asked for more money. Realising he had been scammed, he approached the Cyber Crime Police.

**LAWCET & PGLCET notification released**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Osmania University has released the Telangana Law Common Entrance Test (IG LAW CET) and PG Law Common Entrance Test (PGLCET) 2025 notification for admissions to three-year and five-year law degree programmes and LLM courses for the 2025-26. Online registration for applications without a late fee will be open from March 1 to April 15. The candidates can still apply with a late fee of Rs 500 until April 25, Rs 1,000 until May 5, Rs 2,000 until May 15 and Rs 4,000 until May 25.

Applicants will have the opportunity to edit their submitted applications between May 20 and 25, and hall tickets will be available for download from May 30. The entrance exams are scheduled to be conducted on June 6, with the preliminary answer key set to be released on June 10. The final answer key and results will be announced on June 25.



BIOASIA 2025

## Call to companies to extensively use AI

**SAMUEL JOSHUA**  
samueljoshua@jmc@gmail.com  
■ HYDERABAD

Healthcare companies should develop their own frameworks strategically and use AI extensively, said Ken Washington, CTO of Medtronic, USA. He spoke at the panel discussion on AI Transformation in Healthcare at BioAsia 2025 on Tuesday.

Addressing the conference, Ken Washington, Chief Technology Officer of Medtronic, emphasised the necessity of a strategic approach to scaling artificial intelligence (AI) within companies. He highlighted that such a strategy does not develop organically and stressed the importance of creating an organised framework to integrate AI into products and practices. Washington also highlighted the significance of upskilling employees and training researchers and engineers, citing Medtronic's establishment of an AI Center

of Excellence as an important step in this direction. He noted that this center serves as a catalyst, enabling 15 of Medtronic's operating units to adopt strategic frameworks that accelerate development.

Ken mentioned that in collaboration with Pure Data AI in India, Medtronic is leveraging AI to enhance the rapid and effective detection of stroke patients. Washington said that the company applies best practices to ensure data privacy, asserting that doctors utilising AI can provide superior healthcare. He also mentioned that Medtronic employs AI through its IT team to boost personal productivity, utilising tools like Medtronic GPT and the AI Center of Excellence.

Meanwhile, Dr Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman and Founder of AIG Hospitals, discussed AI's applications in diagnostics, therapeutics and hospital management. He highlighted AI's role in assisting with high-risk operations and introduced ini-

tiatives like the Code Blue alert system and PRISM for meaningful medical records at AIG Hospitals. Dr Reddy pointed out challenges in AI adoption, such as reliance on Western data and the difficulty of building high-quality Indian datasets. He emphasised the need for trust in AI within Indian healthcare management and called for reducing skepticism among doctors. Additionally, he raised concerns about cybersecurity, noting that medical records can be sold on the dark web for significant sums, like \$250 per record. Dr Reddy concluded that AI should aim to provide equitable care to all patients.

Dr Shyam Bishen, Head of the Centre for Health and Healthcare at the World Economic Forum, highlighted AI's potential to expedite clinical development, which traditionally takes 10-15 years. He suggested that AI could streamline regulatory processes, making them faster and more cost-effective.

## GHMC launches 'Build Now' training for officers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi officially launched the 'Build Now' training programme at the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) headquarters on Tuesday.

The initiative is part of the implementation of an advanced Unified Single Window System integrated with a Fast Drawing Scrutiny System (FDSS) powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Speaking at the programme, Mayor Vijayalakshmi emphasised that the FDSS technology will simplify and expedite the construction approval process. She stated that through 'Build Now', city residents can apply for building permissions online and receive approvals quickly. The system will enhance transparency and benefit citizens, government officials, architects and engineers. The initiative ensures all necessary permissions are



GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi and GHMC Commissioner Ilambarathi launch the training for Build Now application

obtained through a single window system, eliminating unnecessary delays. The Mayor urged professionals to make full use of the training programme.

GHMC Commissioner Ilambarathi highlighted that 'Build Now' will introduce new features to the existing system, creating a unified platform for transparent and efficient construction approvals.

Chief City Planner Srinivas explained that the Build Now

Scrutiny System will help resolve construction-related issues more efficiently. The training programme will run until March 9, with two sessions conducted daily. A full-fledged rollout of the system is expected from March 10.

During the training, practical demonstrations were provided on the Build Now DCR system, covering template creation, layering and various entity developments involved in building approvals.

## Run for Action poster launched to promote women's safety

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the lead-up to International Women's Day on March 8, 2025, Hyderabad City Police Commissioner CV Anand unveiled the 'Hyderabad City Police Run for Action 2025' poster and officially opened registrations for the event. The run, featuring 2K and 5K categories, will be held at People's Plaza, Hyderabad, under the theme 'Accelerate Action on Women's Safety'.

Encouraging women and safety advocates to participate, Anand emphasised the significance of the event in reinforcing collective responsibility toward women's safety. "Women's safety is our top priority. This run is a clarion call to increase awareness and spark discussions on all aspects of women's safety. Together, let's show our commitment to enhancing security for women. See you there!" he urged.

Interested participants can register through the following link: <https://rfa.bebetter.run>.

The Hyderabad Police has been at the forefront of ensuring women's safety through proactive and innovative initiatives. Programmes like SHE Teams, Bharosa Centers, and exclusive Women's Police Stations have played a crucial role in creating a safer urban environment.

## 1,195 petitions received at Prajavani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 1,195 petitions were received at the Prajavani grievance redressal programme held on Tuesday at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan.

Officials reported that the highest number of applications - 937 - were related to the Indramma Housing Scheme.

According to officials, the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development department received 108 petitions, while 66 applications were related to power supply issues. Additionally, 30 grievances were submitted regarding revenue matters, while one application was filed under the Pravasi Prajavani category, concerning issues faced by migrants. The remaining 53 petitions pertained to various other departments.

Authorities assured that all applications would be processed promptly, and necessary action would be taken based on merit.

## Revised entry, service charges at Zoo Park from March 1

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad has revised its entry fees and service charges, effective March 1, 2025.

The new entry fee for adults is Rs 100, while for children, it is Rs 50. Photography and filming charges have been updated, with a still camera costing Rs 150, a professional video camera priced at Rs 2,500

and commercial movie camera shooting set at Rs 10,000.

For visitors looking to explore the zoo through rides, the Toy Train Ride (20 minutes) is available at Rs 80 for adults and Rs 40 for children.

The Battery-Operated Vehicle (BOV) Hop-On Hop-Off service costs Rs 120 for adults and Rs 70 for children while an exclusive 60-minute BOV ride is priced at Rs 3,000 for an 11-

seater and Rs 4,000 for a 14-seater. A single-point BOV ride from the Elephant Enclosure to the exit costs Rs 40 for adults and Rs 20 for children.

Entry into special attractions within the zoo has also been revised. The Fish Aquarium entry fee is Rs 20, while the Reptile House costs Rs 30 for adults and Rs 10 for children.

The Nocturnal Animal House charges Rs 20 for

adults and Rs 10 for children. The Safari Park Drive (20-minute ride in a CNG bus) offers Non-AC rides for Rs 100 per person and AC rides for Rs 150 per person.

Parking charges have also been updated, with cycles charged Rs 10, bikes Rs 30, autos (three-wheelers) Rs 80, cars or jeeps Rs 100, tempo or Toofan Rs 150, mini buses (up to 21 seats) Rs 200, and buses (above 21 seats) Rs 300.

## Govt plans radial road linking ORR to Regional Ring Road

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has launched the construction of a Greenfield Radial Road (Ratan Tata Road), a key project which improves connectivity between the Outer Ring Road (ORR) and the Regional Ring Road (RRR). This major corridor will pass through critical development zones like Skill City and Future City facilitating seamless transportation for businesses and the public.

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMUDA) and the Hyderabad Growth Corridor Limited (HGCL) have been entrusted with the project, which will span 41.50 km across six mandals and 14 villages in Ranga Reddy district.

The construction will be carried out in two phases:

Phase I: ORR at Raviryal (Tata Interchange) to Meerhanpet (19.2 km) - Estimated cost: Rs 1,665 crore

Phase II: Meerhanpet to RRR at Amangal (22.3 km) - Estimated cost: Rs 2,365 crore.

## CM issues orders to work on Charminar parking

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

To address the longstanding parking challenges around Hyderabad's iconic Charminar, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has instructed the Principal Secretary of Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MAUD) and the Commissioner of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) to conduct an immediate feasibility study. This directive comes in response to a proposal by AIMIM chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, suggesting the development of a parking facility at the site of the old Charminar bus stand.

The Charminar area has grappled with parking issues for years. A multi-level parking project, initiated seven years ago after the demolition of the old bus terminus, remains incomplete.

In light of these challenges, MP Asaduddin Owaisi has urged the immediate commencement of the parking



Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) officials in spot visit for parking facility near Charminar

lot's construction at the old bus stand. He emphasised that such a facility would provide designated parking for tourist buses and cars, thereby alleviating congestion in the vicinity. Additionally, Owaisi proposed the initiation of a sky cable project connecting the Seven Tombs to Bala Hissar in

Golconda, aiming to boost tourism to the historic Golconda Fort.

Responding promptly, GHMC officials have already conducted a site visit of old Charminar bus stand site and are actively evaluating the feasibility of the proposed projects.

## CHIKUNGUNYA VACCINE MANUFACTURING Biological E, Bavarian Nordic to create 300 new jobs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major boost to vaccine production and employment, Biological E Limited (BE) has announced a strategic partnership with Bavarian Nordic to manufacture and expand access to Bavarian Nordic's Chikungunya vaccine in low and middle-income countries (LMICs). This initiative is expected to generate up to 300 new jobs at BE's Hyderabad facilities.

The agreement marks the first step in a long-term collaboration, with an initial technology transfer of the drug product manufacturing process, followed by the possibility of a drug substance transfer at a later stage.

The project aims to increase vaccine availability in endemic LMICs while simultaneously expanding

BE's manufacturing capacity in Hyderabad's Genome Valley, read the statement.

Mahima Datla, Managing Director of Biological E, highlighted the collaboration's importance, stating, "We are excited to partner with Bavarian Nordic to enhance global access to the Chikungunya vaccine.

With our world-class manufacturing capabilities, we are committed to addressing public health needs in endemic regions."

Chikungunya is a mosquito-borne disease that has spread across Asia, Africa, and the Americas, often causing severe joint pain and chronic illness in up to 40 per cent of patients. In 2024 alone, 620,000 cases and over 200 deaths were reported globally, with many cases misdiagnosed as dengue due to similar symptoms.

## Infant trafficking racket busted, 11 arrested

**DEEPIKA PASHAM**  
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com  
■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Police Special Operations Team (SOT), along with Chaitanyapuri Police, has arrested 11 individuals involved in an illegal infant trafficking network. Among those apprehended are both sellers and buyers, including an Assistant Professor at NRI Institute of Technology, who has attempted to purchase an infant illegally.

Addressing the media, G Sudheer Babu, Commissioner of Police, Rachakonda, highlighted that educated individuals, fully aware of legal adoption procedures, were still opting for illegal means to procure infants. He emphasised that both buyers and sellers would be held accountable under the Juvenile Justice Act and the Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956.

The police revealed that K Krishnaveni and Battu Deepthi had illegally procured four infants from Vandana



Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Sudheer Babu addressing the media on Tuesday

(absconding) a resident of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, with the help of Sunitha Suman and Savitri Devi. These infants were then sold to three families across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana through intermediaries Sharada and Sampath Kumar, who are based in Hyderabad. The racket begins with Rs 5 lakh and reaches until Rs 2-and-a-half lakh until it reaches their purchaser.

The arrested individuals include K Krishnaveni (26), private employee, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Battu Deepthi (35), homemaker, Ranga Reddy, Goutham Savitri Devi (27), housekeeping staff, Ahmedabad, Battu Sravan Kumar (38), pan shop worker, Ranga Reddy, Amtho Sharada (38), Asha worker, Hyderabad and Budidhi Sampath Kumar (40), Gandhi hospital ward boy, Secunderabad.

Oguti Naga Venkata Pavan Bhagavan (35), Assistant Professor, Vijayawada (baby girl purchaser), Oguti Rama Sravani (31), homemaker, Vijayawada (baby girl purchaser), Teppala Vinay Kumar (40), Internet operator, Hyderabad (baby girl purchaser), Teppala Swathi (38), homemaker, Hyderabad (baby girl purchaser), Lingala Ramesh (39), barber, Mahabubabad (baby boy purchaser) were also apprehended.

Krishnaveni and Deepthi sourced infants through contacts on social media and arranged illegal adoptions. They established connections with Vandana in Ahmedabad, who agreed to send babies for Rs 1.5 lakh (baby girl) and Rs 2.5 lakh (baby boy). Infants were transported from Gujarat by Sunitha Suman and Savitri Devi. Once in Hyderabad, mediators Sharada and Sampath Kumar arranged buyers, selling baby girls for Rs 2-3 lakh and baby boys for Rs 4-5 lakh, splitting the profits among themselves.

## SCR offers cashback on unreserved tickets

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

South Central Railway (SCR) is offering cashback on unreserved tickets via the UTS mobile app. The 'UTS' mobile app was launched in 2016 at 26 suburban stations in Hyderabad and later expanded to all non-suburban stations in 2018. It allows passengers to book platform, journey and season tickets conveniently.

To make ticketing easier, paperless booking is now available across Indian Railways. The UTS app supports cashless payments through R-Wallet, Paytm, PhonePe, Google Pay, UPI, and internet banking. Users can add up to Rs 20,000 in R-Wallet and get a 3% cashback on ticket purchases.

The app has gained popularity, with daily users increasing by 12% in 2024. Distance restrictions have been removed, allowing passengers to book tickets from anywhere.



Fake currency abandoned in an agricultural field at Bothalpallem village in Nalgonda district



## Youngster killed in suspected gang war

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Three assailants attacked and brutally killed a 30-year-old driver at the agricultural market yard at Indiranagar here on Tuesday morning. The murder had its roots in the gang rivalry. Police identified deceased as Kommavar Ravi Teja, a 30-year-old car driver from Indiranagar. The alleged assailants were identified as Karthik, Sai Kumar, and Siddu, who are also from the same neighborhood.

The incident took place around 3 am. Ravi Teja's body was found in a pool of blood at the market yard, who promptly alerted the police. Officers arrived at the scene and began their investigation into the incident. Based on a complaint from Pravalika, Ravi Teja's wife, a murder case was filed against Karthik, Sai Kumar, and Siddu.

Pravalika claimed that the three harboured resentment towards her husband for refusing to join their group and accused them of killing him.

Police said that Ravi Teja had been involved in five criminal cases, while the accused also had a history of criminal activity.

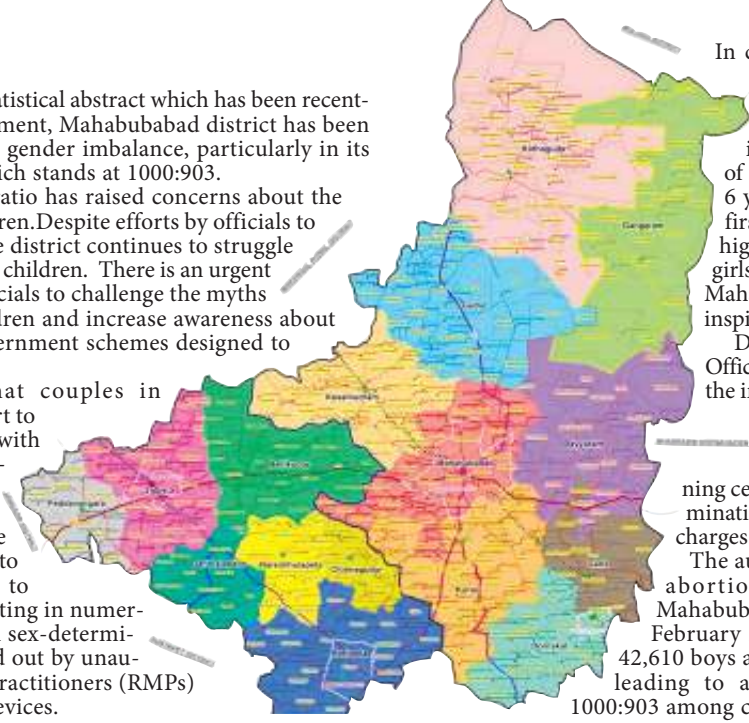
## Sex ratio in Mahabubabad district at its lowest

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

According to the state's statistical abstract which has been recently released by the government, Mahabubabad district has been flagged for its significant gender imbalance, particularly in its male-to-female ratio, which stands at 1000:903.

The district's low sex ratio has raised concerns about the treatment of female children. Despite efforts by officials to improve the situation, the district continues to struggle with a preference for male children. There is an urgent need for government officials to challenge the myths surrounding female children and increase awareness about the state and central government schemes designed to benefit girls.

Reports indicate that couples in Mahabubabad often resort to sex-selective abortions, with many opting for these procedures after secretly determining the sex of their unborn child. Some families are even willing to have additional children to try for a male child, resulting in numerous dangerous and illegal sex-determination tests, often carried out by unauthorized Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs) using mobile scanning devices.



In contrast, Mulugu district, a neighboring region, has demonstrated greater awareness and achieved an improved boy-to-girl ratio of 1000:971 for children aged 0-6 years. The district is ranked first in the state for having a higher sex ratio in favor of girls, serving as an example that Mahabubabad should look to for inspiration.

District Medical and Health Officer G Muralidhar emphasised the importance of sensitising the community to prevent female fetus abortions. He warned that any scanning centers conducting sex-determination tests would face criminal charges.

The authorities report that 2,218 abortions were performed in Mahabubabad from January 2024 to February 2025. In the same period, 42,610 boys and 38,471 girls were born, leading to an alarming sex ratio of 1000:903 among children aged

## Constable dies by suicide

PNS ■ NALGONDA

A constable attached to the Armed Reserve Police allegedly committed suicide in Bhuvangiri on Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Anusha. She hailed from Varikolu village in Siddipet

district. According to sources, the constable belonged to 2020 batch. She had stayed in a rented house in Bhuvangiri. The reason behind the suicide is yet to be ascertained. The body was sent to government hospital for post-mortem.



## Child labourers rescued from poultry farm

PNS ■ SIDDIPEET

A group of children engaged as labourers in a poultry farm were rescued. In fact, the Labour Department officials had to make strenuous efforts to find the child labourers in the poultry.

The raids were conducted on poultry farms near Mittapalle under the Siddipet Urban Mandal on Monday.

Acting on a tip-off, the officials conducted the raid on the poultry, but they were surprised to find that the children were conspicuous by their absence.

After waiting for a while, they searched the premises with the help of the police and found that the children had been confined in rooms.

The officials warned that such unlawful practices, including hiding children, would lead to severe action if regulations were violated again. They instructed the poultry management to comply with all regulations, send the children to school.

The poultry farm manage-



Labour Department officials with rescued child labourers at Mittapalle village in Siddipet district on Monday

ment was given a week's time to carry out the task. Otherwise, action would be taken against the management.

Assistant Labour Officer Vikar Baba led the raid on the poultry farm. Child Protection staff Reshma, Ramesh, Penchayath Secretary Vijay, Police personnel Kalyan, and others took part in the operation.

Assistant Commissioner of Labour Srinivasa Rao said that strict action would be taken if children were employed in poultry farms, violating regu-

lations, and that the farms would be sealed, if necessary. Speaking to the media, he said that many poultry farms brought labourers from different places.

Though a case was filed against a poultry farm in the past, the management continued to violate the regulations. He emphasised that if the poultry farms engaged labourers from out, their managements should set up schools for labourers' children.

The officer warned that the Labour Department officials would soon inspect all poultry farms in the Siddipet soon.

## Leaking pipeline leads to withering of crops

PNS ■ BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEMI

The negligence of officials Mission Bhagiratha has turned into a curse for tribal farmers. During the installation of the Bhagiratha pipeline, the irrigation pipeline supplying water to the farmers' fields was damaged. Though it happened long ago, the irrigation authorities failed to repair the damaged pipeline.

The farmers, who depended on the pipeline for irrigation, are now in distress as the leakages in the pipeline have stopped water from reaching their fields.

In Charla mandal, in the village of Vaddipet, tribal farmers are cultivating rice in around 70 acres of land, using water from a lift irrigation system set up on the Taliperu river.

During the previous BRS government, a pipeline was constructed through the Mission Bhagiratha scheme to provide drinking water. However, during the pipeline installation, the main pipeline that supplied water from the Taliperu lift irrigation system to the farmers' fields was dam-



A farmer pouring out his grievances over damaged pipeline leading to withering of crops at Vaddipet in Bhadradi Kothagudem district

aged. It has been five years since this incident, yet Mission Bhagiratha officials did not respond to the issue, according to tribal farmers Nagarjuna, Uykya Ramu, and Nagesh. They complained that despite bringing the issue to the authorities' attention multiple times, no action was taken.

Only recently, under pressure from the farmers, temporary repairs were carried out without offering a permanent solution. Farmers, who relied on this pipeline, have cultivated rice on around 70 acres.



## Khammam Police seize marijuana worth Rs 89.43 lakh

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Khammam district police seized 178.870 kilograms of marijuana worth Rs. 89.43 lakhs while it was being transported illegally. The seizure took place around 7:30 pm on Monday when Kusumanchi police were inspecting vehicles at the Chegomma crossroads. A car which was on its way from Kusumanchi to Pune through Khammam district was stopped and inspected. Upon inspecting the car, police found cannabis packed in 90 packets inside the vehicle.

The accused, Pallapu Raghu and Mohammad Khaja Pasha, who operated a travel service, were found to be purchasing the cannabis at a low price from individuals named Babu, Subbu, and Ramjanayulu from Odisha.

They would then sell it at a higher price to an individual named Sohal in Pune. Kusumanchi police revealed these details.

## Clear LRS applications by March-end: Collector to officials

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

District Collector Muzammil Khan directed the officials to clear Layout Regularisation Scheme (LRS) applications by March 31.

On Tuesday, the District Collector, along with Khammam Municipal Commissioner Abhishek Augustya, held a review meeting with the officials at the Municipal Corporation office.

During this meeting, Collector Muzammil Khan stated that LRS applications should be processed and resolved by the Town Planning Section officers in coordination with SUDA, and corporation officials. He noted that there are many pending LRS applications with the Revenue and Irrigation Departments and said that all such applications should be resolved by March 31. He mentioned that LRS applications should be scrutinised in three phases. Applications for



District Collector Muzammil Khan holding a review meeting in Khammam on Tuesday. Khammam Municipal Commissioner Abhishek Augustya is also present

land that are free from court cases, water resource buffer zones, and areas within the FTL should be approved. Importantly, the officials should ensure that the

lands for which LRS was applied were not government lands.

The Collector suggested that special teams be formed under the Revenue Department for the

scrutiny of LRS applications and that targets should be set every day for the staff of the Revenue and Irrigation Departments. He asked the officials to depute necessary staff to ensure that the target is met.

He emphasised that a clear plan should be devised on how to complete the pending LRS applications scrutiny within the available time.

He proposed the formation of 14 teams with officials from Town Planning, Revenue, and Irrigation Departments and that targets should be set for each team. He also advised the Revenue and Irrigation Departments to create necessary logins for LRS applications and send proposals for deputation of required staff.

The meeting was attended by Khammam Revenue Divisional Officer Narasimha Rao, Revenue Inspectors and other concerned officials.

## Old woman's body found in well

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALPALLY

The body of an old woman stuffed in a gunny bag was found in an agricultural well on the outskirts of Boinipally in the district on Sunday. According to sources, Sorapaka Veeramma (70) from the village has four sons. Due to some family disputes, Veeramma did not stay

with her sons. She used to sell tamarind at Garmillapally daily. As usual, she went to Garmillapally to sell the tamarind but did not come back home in the evening. Villagers searched in the surrounding areas. But, she could not be traced. On Sunday, the villagers found her body in a well at Boinipally and informed her sons. The incident caused a stir in the village.

**Indian Bank**  
GACHIBOWLI BRANCH ADDRESS: PLOT NO. 12-16  
CYBER APARTMENT, INDIRA NAGAR, GACHIBOWLI

**VEHICLE AUCTION SALE NOTICE**

Branch Name	Borrower Name & Address	Vehicle Type	Registration No. & Year	Reserve Price (Rs.)	EMD Price (Rs.)
GACHIBOWLI Branch	Mrs. Kallu Sulochoora	Model Eicher Pro 5035 Tanker	TS-07-LH-3741 No. E54CDJC2 02597	5.00 Lakhs	0.50 Lakh
		Type of Fuel: Diesel	Chassis No. MC2T5DRC		
		Colour: Dazzling White			

Open Auction will be conducted for participants who deposits as above mentioned EMD on or before 16.03.2025, 3:00 PM by DD/Pay order to Indian Bank, Gachibowli Branch, Hyderabad. Date & Time of Auction: 11.03.2025 between 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM. For further details, Terms & Conditions, contact: (Separate details of Branch Manager and SAC/Agent to be given) Mr. Deepak K. Shrivastava Ph: 946-2300066 Mob: 9848172875 E-mail: gachibowli@indianbank.co.in

Successful bidder should NEFT/RTGS/Bank on the same day. The vehicle shall be auctioned on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" condition. For further details, terms and conditions, the interested bidders can contact Indian Bank, Gachibowli Branch. The Authorized Officer may accept/cancel the auction without assigning any Reason thereof.

Date: 25-02-2025

Sd/- Chief Manager  
Indian Bank

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, LA, HAML, HYDERABAD FORM-F Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML (See rule 7 (c))			
File No.:	C6/11/2025-LHS	Dated:	25-02-2025
Where as the following notifications were issued and Gazettes were published for the Public purpose for Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-I, from MBS to Charanpally, Corridor-VI, situated at Sham-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadrapur Mandal of Hyderabad District. In response to the Said Notifications the following affected person (Property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiations. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows:			
S.NO.	NOTIFICATION No. & DATE	GAZETTE No. & DATE	
1.	C6/27/2024-LHS (26 to 50)	HAML No.22, Date 16.11.2024	
Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds
1. Sri Mohd Shahnewaz, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 68	22-3-495/4 22-3-495/5	17.76
2. Mohd Shahzoor, S/o. Mohd Farooq,			
3. Mohd Shahbaag, S/o. Mohd Farooq, R/o 22-3-422/2, Mir Alam Mansi, Charmanar, Hyderabad-500002			
1. Sri. Mohd Shahnewaz, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 69A	22-3-495/5	30.97
2. Mohd Shahzoor, S/o. Mohd Farooq,			
3. Mohd Shahbaag, S/o. Mohd Farooq, R/o 22-3-422/2, Mir Alam Mansi, Charmanar, Hyderabad-500002			
1. Sri. Mohd Shahnewaz, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 70B	22-3-494/6	15.41
2. Mohd Shahzoor, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 70C	22-3-495/5	
3. Mohd Shahbaag, S/o. Mohd Farooq, R/o 22-3-422/2, Mir Alam Mansi, Charmanar, Hyderabad-500002			
1. Sri. Mohd Shahnewaz, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 71	22-3-494/A	40.68
2. Mohd Shahzoor, S/o. Mohd Farooq,			
3. Mohd Shahbaag, S/o. Mohd Farooq, R/o 22-3-422/2, Mir Alam Mansi, Charmanar, Hyderabad-500002			
1. Sri. Mohd Shahnewaz, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 72	22-3-494/A	42.09
2. Mohd Shahzoor, S/o. Mohd Farooq,			
3. Mohd Shahbaag, S/o. Mohd Farooq, R/o 22-3-422/2, Mir Alam Mansi, Charmanar, Hyderabad-500002			
1. Sri. Mohd Shahnewaz, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 73	22-3-494/A	11.92
2. Mohd Shahzoor, S/o. Mohd Farooq,			
3. Mohd Shahbaag, S/o. Mohd Farooq, R/o 22-3-422/2, Mir Alam Mansi, Charmanar, Hyderabad-500002			
1. Sri. Mohd Shahnewaz, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 74	22-3-494/A	37.16
2. Mohd Shahzoor, S/o. Mohd Farooq,			
3. Mohd Shahbaag, S/o. Mohd Farooq, R/o 22-3-422/2, Mir Alam Mansi, Charmanar, Hyderabad-500002			
1. Sri. Mohd Shahnewaz, S/o. Mohd Farooq,	LHS 75	22-3-494/A	20.00 22.48
2. Mohd Shahzoor, S/o. Mohd Farooq,			
3. Mohd Shahbaag, S/o. Mohd Farooq, R/o 22-3-422/2, Mir Alam Mansi, Charmanar, Hyderabad-500002			42.48
S.NO.	NOTIFICATION No. & DATE	GAZETTE No. & DATE	
1.	C6/109/2024-LHS (101 to 125)	HAML No.37, Date 07.12.2024	
Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds
1. Sri. Mohammed Owais, S/o. Late Mohammed Ishaq, R/o 23-1-369, Jaleel Gali, Aliphalakki Charmanar, Hyderabad-500022	LHS 105/1	22-3-220	11.30
It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed by the District Collector, Hyderabad District/ Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Raosoolpura, Hyderabad within the Seven days of publication of the Notification.			
Signature of: Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Raosoolpura, Hyderabad. Date: 25-02-2025			

ACROSS THE STATES

# Assam to play key role in India's growth story: PM

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said East and Northeast India are embarking on a new journey toward the future with Advantage Assam, connecting the state's incredible potential with global opportunities.

"History is witness to the major role played by eastern India in India's prosperity. Today, as we progress towards Viksit Bharat, these regions will display their true potential," the PM said while inaugurating the Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit here.

"Despite global instability, experts unanimously agree on one certainty: India's rapid growth," he added.

He emphasised that today's India is working with a long-term vision for the next 25 years of this century. "The world has immense trust in India's youth, who are rapidly becoming skilled and innovative," he added. He asserted the growing confidence in India's new middle class, which is emerging from poverty with fresh aspirations.

"India is bolstering its local supply chains and entering free-trade agreements with various global regions," he said.



"History is witness to the major role played by eastern India in India's prosperity. Today, as we progress towards Viksit Bharat, these regions will display their true potential," the PM said while inaugurating the Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit here

He said India's robust connectivity with East Asia and the newly launched India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor is opening up new opportunities.

"Assam's contribution to the country's growth is increasing and it now boasts an economy of around Rs 6 lakh crore," he added.

The Assam government, he noted, is focusing on education, skill development, and fostering a better investment environment.

"In 2014, there were three bridges over the Brahmaputra,

built over 70 years. In the past 10 years, four new bridges have been constructed and one of them is named after Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika," Modi said.

"Between 2009 and 2014, Assam received an average rail budget of Rs 2,100 crore. However, the current government has increased Assam's railway budget more than four times, to Rs 10,000 crore," he added.

Modi said more than 60 railway stations in the state are being upgraded and the first semi-high-speed train in the

Northeast runs between Guwahati and New Jalpaiguri.

On air connectivity in Assam, the PM said until 2014, flights operated on seven routes. Now, nearly 30 routes are operational, he added.

"India is undergoing significant reforms across all sectors and levels of the economy. Continuous efforts have been made to enhance the ease of doing business, and a comprehensive ecosystem has been established to promote industry and a culture of innovation," he said.

## NEW RULES FOR KOTA HOSTELS Security fee waiver, installation of anti-suicide ceiling fans

PNS ■ KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

Ahead of the upcoming academic session 2025-26, the district administration has released new guidelines for coaching centres and hostels under the Kota Cares Campaign, officials said on Tuesday.

The aim of the campaign is to reduce the cost of living for the students coming to Kota to prepare for the competitive exams.

The key features of the new guidelines include the elimination of security and caution money in all the 4,000 hostels in the city. Earlier, the hostels would charge the amount and refund it by the end of the year.

Following a meeting with the stakeholders of the coaching industry, Kota District Collector Dr Ravindra Goswami announced that hostels can charge of maintenance fee of Rs 2,000. They will also be provided with anti-suicide ceiling fans and mandatory gatekeeper training for hostel staff, the statement said.

The students will be provided free entry to Chambal Riverfront and Oxygen Zone Park on a one-time pass basis. A Kota Cares helpdesk will be set up at the railway station and bus stand, and functional CCTV and biometric systems will be installed in the hostels, the statement read.

The hostel staff will be required to maintain manual



attendance at night. The accommodation will have recreation areas and parents will be provided with receipts of all payments.

Dr. Goswami said, "Under the Kota Cares campaign, efforts are being made to provide students with better facilities and an improved environment. With the growing number of students in Kota, excellent infrastructure has been developed. Better accommodations and care facilities can now be offered to students in different areas of the city, and issues that previously existed have been resolved. We are confident that students in Kota will receive the best coaching along with excellent housing and an ideal environment."

"This comes as the number of students coming to Kota for the preparation of competitive exams saw a sharp decline from over 2 lakh to over 1.24 lakh in 2024-25. This caused a revenue loss of around 50 per cent, leaving many hostels with less than 40 per cent occupancy.



## '73 pc waste pickers lost income during COVID'

More than 73 per cent of Delhi's waste pickers suffered severe income loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing many into debt and extreme financial distress, said a report released on Tuesday. The report, "A Governance Landfill: The Tragic Story of Capital's Waste-Picking Community During the Pandemic", was published by the People's Commission and Public Inquiry Committee (PC-PIC). The report also found that 56.5 per cent of waste pickers faced harassment from municipal authorities, while 52 per cent had to borrow money for basic healthcare, an official statement of PC-PIC said. According to the statement, the findings based on field research, public hearings and testimonies, paints a stark picture of how the pandemic's economic fallout, coupled with government neglect and increasing privatization of waste management, pushed waste pickers further into precarity. At the report's release event, waste pickers shared firsthand accounts of their struggles.



## DRDO recruitment scam: CBI registers FIR

The CBI has registered an FIR to probe a fraudulent recruitment racket, which allegedly cheated unemployed youths by making fake promises of ensuring employment in the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), officials said on Tuesday. The case registered against unidentified suspects alleged that racketeers offered jobs on various posts like Peon, Cleaner, Multi-Tasking Staff (MTS) and Lower Division Clerk (LDC) in the DRDO, they said. The gang charged Rs 5-10 lakh from the candidates promising the jobs, the officials said. The racketeers even conducted medical examination at a purported DRDO-affiliated facility located in New Delhi after extracting payments from the aspirants, they said. "Subsequently, the job aspirants were issued fake appointment letters and were directed to report for a three-month training session in a fake DRDO office at Jaipur.



## CRPF personnel destroy 2 Maoist camps in Jharkhand

Security personnel destroyed two camps of a proscribed Maoist outfit and recovered a large quantity of arms and ammunition from West Singhbhum district, a senior police officer said on Tuesday. The incident happened in the forested areas of Tonto under the jurisdiction of the Tonto police station in the district, the police officer said. Acting on intelligence input that the members of the banned outfit CPI (Maoists) have kept hidden a large quantity of arms and ammunition in the forests, the security personnel comprising CRPF and district police force conducted a search operation in the villages of Sarjamburu, Tumbahaka, Purty Tola and Jimkiekir villages located close to the forested areas on Monday, the Superintendent of Police, Ashutosh Shekhar, said during a press meet here. In the course of the operation, the personnel of the law enforcing agencies stumbled upon two Maoist camps in the Jimkiekir forest, which were destroyed, the SP said.

## YAMUNA POLLUTION

# 'Changed situation' may see better implementation of plans

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday observed that there might be better implementation of plans, such as cleaning of Yamuna river, in view of the "changed circumstances".

The observation by a bench of Justices B R Gavi and Augustine George Masih assumes significance in the wake of the BJP unseating the Aam Aadmi Party government in Delhi in the recently-concluded assembly elections.

The apex court is hearing a suo motu case titled 'Remediation of polluted rivers' in which it is dealing with the issue of contamination of Yamuna river.

"I think with the changed circumstances now, there may be better implementation of plans," Justice Gavi said during the hearing.

Senior advocate Meenakshi Arora, who's assisting the apex court as an amicus curiae, said earlier that the National Green Tribunal (NGT) was monitoring the issue concerning Yamuna river through a committee.



She said after the top court took suo motu cognisance of the matter in January 2021, the tribunal disbanded the committee.

The bench observed that it appeared there were some other petitions concerning pollution in Yamuna river, which were pending before another bench of the apex court.

It asked additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, who appeared for the Centre, to find out from the authorities as to whether there were any other petitions pending with regard to the same issue.

The bench posted the matter for hearing after the Holi

vacation.

The amicus said the NGT had passed several orders, giving directions from time to time regarding various compliances to be met with regard to Yamuna river.

She said the monitoring committee constituted by the tribunal was supervising what was being done between Haryana and Delhi regarding the setting up of sewage treatment plants and common effluent treatment plants.

"Should we send it back to the NGT," the bench asked.

The amicus suggested this might be better monitored by the NGT.



## Varanasi gears up for Mahashivratri

PNS ■ VARANASI

With an increased influx of devotees from the Maha Kumbh, Varanasi is all set to celebrate Mahashivratri with grandeur, officials said here on Tuesday.

Various Akharas, along with a large number of saints and Naga sadhus, will take out a grand procession before offering prayers at the revered Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple on Wednesday.

The district administration and the Kashi Vishwanath Temple management have completed preparations for the celebrations, Commissioner Kaushal Raj

Sharma said on Tuesday.

Discussions have been held with the heads of Akharas and other saints who have arrived from the Mahakumbh regarding their scheduled visit to the temple, he said.

According to Sharma, the saints and Akhara members will be allowed to offer prayers at the temple from 6 am to 9 am.

In the evening, at 5:30 pm, a grand procession will commence from Hanuman Ghat and Harishchandra Ghat, proceeding towards Godaulia.

From there, the saints and Akhara heads will walk to the temple and enter through Gate No. 4 for darshan, he said.

## LAND-FOR-JOBS 'SCAM'

# Delhi court summons Lalu, family members

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Tuesday summoned former rail minister Lalu Prasad and some of his family members, including his wife, two sons and two daughters, in connection with the land-for-jobs 'scam'.

Special Judge Vishal Gogne summoned the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) supreme's wife and former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi, two sons -- ex-Bihar deputy chief minister Tejashwi Prasad Yadav and former state minister Tej Pratap Yadav -- and



daughters Misha Bharti, a member of Parliament, and Hema Yadav, in connection with the case.

The accused have been directed

to appear before the court on March 11.

The judge said the allegations and material cited in the chargesheet with respect to the

role of Lalu Prasad Yadav, "with the active participation of his aides Bhola Yadav and R K Mahajan, the transfer of parcels of land in favour of Lalu Prasad's family members -- Rabri Devi, Hema Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav -- and the appointment of candidates, who were also arrayed as accused, upon the recommendation of railway officials, also named as accused in the chargesheet, form cogent prima-facie indication of the role of all 76 accused persons in the allegations crystallised in the concluding chargesheet".

## 'Leftist forces true third alternative in Bengal'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Asserting that the Leftist forces are the "true third alternative" in West Bengal, CPI(M) leader Prakash Karat on Tuesday said that the party will fight both the Trinamool Congress and the BJP tooth and nail.

He said that neither the BJP can be an alternative to the TMC, nor can the latter be an alternative to the saffron party in West Bengal.

"The Leftists are the true third alternative in the state," Karat said, addressing a public meeting at Dankuni in Hooghly district on the completion of a four-day West Bengal state conference of the CPI(M). Karat, who is the coordinator of CPI(M)'s central committee, claimed that the RSS has plans to make West Bengal a hub for "Hindu fanaticism" in eastern India.

Stating that RSS supremo Mohan Bhagwat recently made a 10-day visit to West Bengal, the CPI(M) leader said, "He had come to chalk out a strategy to strengthen the RSS in the state."

Karat said that the CPI(M) has decided in its just-concluded state conference that any act that will create differences among people in West Bengal will be defeated by the Marxists.

"We have decided to fight against both the TMC and the



BJP-RSS tooth and nail," he said. "No communal force, either Hindu or Muslim, were given any chance to gain ground in West Bengal during the Marxist rule in the state," he said.

The CPI(M), which led the Left Front in West Bengal to run the state for 34 years till 2011, could not win any seat in the 2021 assembly elections in the state. It could not win any seat out of 42 Lok Sabha constituencies in the state in 2019 and 2024 parliamentary polls.

The ruling Trinamool Congress and the opposition BJP have cornered almost all seats in the state assembly and the Lok Sabha from West Bengal.

Karat claimed that CPI(M) workers have faced atrocities at the hands of the ruling TMC in West Bengal, but have taken up such challenges bravely.

# India, Japan kickstart two-week mega wargame

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Armies of India and Japan have kickstarted a mega two-week wargame at a Japanese military base in the foothills of Mount Fuji in line with the overall aim to bolster bilateral defence ties.

The sixth edition of the 'Dharma Guardian' exercise that began on Monday is set to include an "expanded" range of activities that will reflect the growing defence cooperation between India and Japan, the Indian Army said.

The wargame at the East Fuji training area is taking place amid mounting concerns in

India and Japan over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific region.

This significant exercise marks a "major milestone" as it is being conducted at an enhanced scale, with the participation of troops expanded to a company-strength level for the first time, the Indian Army said in a statement.

The opening ceremony of the wargame was graced by India's Ambassador to Japan Sibi George, and Lt Gen Toriumi Seiji, the Commanding General of the Japan Ground Self-Defence Force's First Division.



The sixth edition of the 'Dharma Guardian' exercise that began on Monday is set to include an "expanded" range of activities that will reflect the growing defence cooperation between India and Japan, the Indian Army said

The joint drills will involve counter-terror operations in urban terrain, a critical area of operational focus given the

contemporary security landscape, the statement said.

It said the troops will also rehearse activities conducted

during United Nations peace-keeping operations, simulating real-world situations where multinational forces must col-

laborate effectively in complex environments.

This collaboration aims to improve both forces' ability to respond swiftly and effectively during operations, the Indian Army said.

"As the exercise progresses, the participating forces will engage in a series of tactical drills, exchanging knowledge and expertise, while building lasting ties of friendship and trust," it said.

"The culmination of the exercise will see the two armies further solidifying their commitment to peace, security, and stability in the region," it added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Liberty is sacrosanct

The Supreme Court's directive affirming bail as the norm and emphasising liberty is a welcome step

The Supreme Court in a recent ruling and observation made a very pertinent prece-

dentence that could have far-reaching implications in the functioning of the democracy. The Supreme Court in the case of Kailash Kumar vs State of Himachal Pradesh wherein it set aside a High Court order cancelling the bail of an accused has rooted for individual's liberty. This ruling underscore the judiciary's commitment to protect personal liberty and ensuring that courts do not meddle with individual's right to freedom. Liberty is a cornerstone of the Indian Constitution, protected under Article 21, which states that no person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law. Bail, in this context, serves as a safeguard against arbitrary detention and ensures that an accused remains free unless proven guilty. The Supreme Court has consistently held that bail should be the norm and jail the exception, especially when the accused does not pose a threat to the legal process. The Supreme Court, while overturning the High Court's decision, made critical observations regarding the protection of personal liberty. The Supreme Court's ruling aligns with a broader judicial philosophy that bail is a right and should not be treated as a privilege granted at the discretion of the courts. The idea is that pre-trial detention should not be punitive but rather a measure to ensure the accused's presence at trial. In numerous judgements, the Court has clarified that unless there is compelling evidence of misconduct, denying bail would violate an individual's fundamental rights. However, courts must balance the rights of the accused with the interests of justice and the safety of society. The Supreme Court's reaffirmation that bail is a fundamental right serves as a significant reminder to lower courts to uphold personal liberty. The judiciary must ensure that bail decisions are guided by legal principles rather than subjective interpretations of the accused's culpability. This observation is likely to have far-reaching implications and may pave the way for several undertrials, especially political activist who are languishing in the jails. For instance as of February 2025, several individuals accused in connection with the 2020 Delhi riots continue to await bail, leading to prolonged incarceration without trial. Notable among them are activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, as well as a politician Tahir Hussain. Despite multiple bail applications, courts have consistently denied them relief. As of October 2024, Khalid had spent over four years in jail without trial, highlighting concerns about prolonged pre-trial detention. The prolonged detention of these individuals have sparked debates about the use of stringent laws like the UAPA and the rights of undertrials in India. These cases exemplify the challenges within the Indian judicial system regarding prolonged pre-trial detention and the balance between ensuring justice and upholding individual rights.



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### PICTALK



A sadhu performs a yogasana at a Ganga ghat, in Varanasi

## Caught in the middle: The great generational balancing act

Our generation's greatest contribution might be our ability to bridge opposing worldviews. We're creating a new paradigm of family dynamics, blending the two

Remember when we trembled at the sound of our father clearing his throat? When "because I said so" was an unassailable argument, and questioning authority was as foreign as the smartphones that would one day rule our lives? We, the Generation X, find ourselves in an extraordinary position today - delicately balanced between reverential traditions and revolutionary change, between "yes, papa" and "ok, dude."



Our generation has witnessed perhaps the most dramatic transformation in human history. We are the last ones who know what it feels like to run home to catch a TV show, to memorise phone numbers, to write letters that took weeks to reach their destination. We're also the first to navigate the brave new world of social media, digital parenting and a workplace that transforms faster than we can update our LinkedIn profiles. The contrast is stark. We grew up in homes where children were to be seen, not heard. Today, we raise children who not only want to be heard but expect to be consulted on family decisions,

feet isn't just an empty ritual. The technological revolution has added another layer to this generational sandwich. While we pride ourselves on mastering email and Facebook, our children roll their eyes at our confused attempts to understand TikTok algorithms or cryptocurrency. Meanwhile, we spend weekends teaching our parents how to make video calls or use digital payment apps. We are the bridge generation, fluent in both analog and digital, traditional and modern, hierarchy and equality.

Our generation has had to rewrite the rulebook of life multiple times. The career advice we received - "join a good company and stay loyal" - seems quaint in an age where our children talk about side hustles and personal branding. The values we were taught - sacrifice, stability, saving for tomorrow - clash with the modern emphasis on self-care, work-life balance, and living in the moment. Perhaps the most challenging aspect is managing the emotional landscape. We were raised to believe that mental health issues were character

flaws, that anxiety was just weakness, and that depression could be cured by "going out for a walk." Now, we find ourselves unlearning these notions, supporting our children's therapy journeys, while also gently helping our parents understand that their grandchild's panic attacks are not just "attention-seeking behaviour."

The irony isn't lost on us. The same generation that was told "log kya kahenge" (what will people say) now has to defend their children's right to be themselves, regardless of what people say. We who learned to suppress our emotions now have to validate our children's feelings while managing our parents' disapproval of this "oversensitive" approach. Yet, there's a unique strength in being this sandwich generation. We understand both worlds intimately. We can appreciate our parents' wisdom while embracing our children's progressive ideas. We can see how tradition provides roots while change enables growth. (The author is a Dubai-based columnist and children's writing coach. She has published six books. Views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR

## The growing threat of radicalisation of Central Asia

The rise of extremist ideologies among Central Asian youth has become a critical security concern, exacerbated by economic hardship and geopolitical conflicts



NISHAKANT OJHA

In recent years, the increasing attraction of Central Asian youth to extremist and Takfiri groups has become a significant security concern for regional governments and international experts. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict has only intensified these concerns, with reports indicating that young migrant workers are being recruited for extremist activities, a pattern reminiscent of the recruitment seen during the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. The emergence of the Turan Battalion, a group of Turkic-speaking Central Asians fighting alongside Ukrainian forces against Russia, highlights the pressing need to address radicalisation among young people. At the same time, extremist propaganda spread by figures such as Idas Sadegh has contributed to the rising tide of radicalism, further complicating the region's security landscape. The radicalisation of Central Asian youth stems from a combination of social, economic and political factors that make them vulnerable to extremist narratives. Economic hardship is one of the most significant drivers, particularly in countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, where persistent poverty, high unemployment, and limited socio-economic opportunities push young people toward alternative ideologies. Over three decades of independence, Kyrgyzstan has experienced multiple coups, widespread corruption, and growing dissatisfaction with the secular governance model. Many young people, disillusioned with their governments, seek a sense of purpose and community in extremist ideologies that not only provide identity but often come with financial incentives. Migration also plays a critical role in this radicalisation process. Millions of Central Asians migrate to Russia for work, where they frequently face exploitation, legal difficulties and social alienation. The absence of integration programs and social support leaves them vulnerable to extremist recruiters who exploit their grievances and isolation. These recruiters present extremist ideology as a means of empowerment and justice, a dangerous proposition that finds traction



among individuals struggling to navigate foreign environments with little institutional support. Religious education, or the lack thereof, is another crucial factor in the rise of extremism. In countries like Tajikistan, where Islamic teachings are heavily restricted and even prohibited for individuals under 18, a significant knowledge vacuum has emerged. This vacuum is quickly filled by extremist propaganda, often disseminated via social media. Many young Tajik migrant workers in Russia rely on online content to shape their religious understanding, unknowingly consuming distorted interpretations of Islam that align with extremist beliefs. This unchecked exposure to radical ideologies fuels the rapid spread of extremist sentiment within vulnerable communities. Kazakhstan presents a unique case where extremist ideologies have infiltrated even the highest levels of power. Salafi groups, for instance, gained traction with backing from influential figures such as General Kairat Satybaldy, making the fight against radicalisation more challenging. The entrenchment of these ideologies within powerful circles emboldens extremist sympathisers and complicates government efforts to dismantle radical networks. The rise of social media has dramatically accelerated the spread of extremist propa-



THIS UNCHECKED EXPOSURE TO RADICAL IDEOLOGIES FUELS THE RAPID SPREAD OF EXTREMIST SENTIMENT WITHIN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES. KAZAKHSTAN PRESENTS A UNIQUE CASE WHERE EXTREMIST IDEOLOGIES HAVE INFILTRATED EVEN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF POWER

ganda. Extremist groups have mastered the use of digital platforms to reach and recruit young people, leveraging engaging content that is often more accessible and persuasive than state-backed religious teachings. Many of these online materials promise a sense of belonging, purpose, and spiritual rewards, making the path to radicalisation dangerously appealing. Experts emphasise that without a strong digital counter-narrative, governments and moderate religious leaders will continue to struggle in preventing the indoctrination of young minds. The psychological manipulation employed by extremist groups goes beyond simple recruitment, leading some individuals to commit acts of violence, including suicide attacks. The belief that martyrdom ensures a direct path to heaven is a powerful motivator, and extremist groups exploit feelings of injustice, social exclusion, and spiritual ignorance to persuade young people to sacrifice themselves for a perceived greater cause. By manipulating these vulnerabilities, these groups create a mindset in which violence is not only justified but seen as a divine mission. Governments in Central Asia have responded to this growing threat with various strategies, though with mixed success. Initial measures included mass arrests and harsh prison sentences, particularly in

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. However, this approach has often backfired, as prisons have become breeding grounds for further radicalisation. Inmates exposed to extremist ideologies behind bars frequently emerge more radicalised than before, exacerbating the problem rather than solving it. Recognising the limitations of purely repressive measures, some governments have turned to religious reforms as a more effective means of combating extremism. Uzbekistan, for example, has eased restrictions on religious practices, allowing the call to prayer from loudspeakers and providing greater freedom for Islamic education. These initiatives have had a noticeable impact, significantly reducing extremist recruitment within the country by offering legitimate avenues for religious expression. Education is widely regarded as one of the most effective tools in preventing radicalisation. Experts stress the importance of integrating religious education into school curricula to provide young people with a correct understanding of Islamic principles. Only through a holistic and sustained effort can Central Asian nations protect their youth from extremist influences and work toward a more stable and peaceful future.

(The writer is expert in national security, radicalization, and counterterrorism; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### RIGHT IS NOT ALWAYS RIGHT

Madam — The editorial, 'Right is Raising' (24-2-25), presents a balanced fact. The fact is that the Right will collapse due to its own weight and internal contradictions but will manage to overcome the setback for some time. The great economic depression of 1930s, which was saved by applying Keynes theory of equipping the mass with more purchase power. The worst recession in 2008, which marked the collapse of the capitalist order, had to be restored by huge spending of people's money to save the insolvent institutions. The countries are still in the recovery process. But the division Right creates in the society with its unquenching thirst for more and more profits and the avaricious attitude will reach its unbearable stage, compelling the victims to raise their voices for justice and their justified place in the society. This trend is already gaining momentum. The victims are on an active search for an alternate. In some countries, like Sri Lanka, the victims could identify the Left as the right alternate. The process of bringing in a new alternative is too difficult but is still going on. In India, the BJP is given power purely because of the nonavailability of such an alternate national party and not because of the party's communal or far-right policies, as reflected in the last election that denied the party an absolute power. It is inevitable that when the Right reaches its peak it forces the majority to accept Left to be the right choice.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

### KOHLI HITS 51ST CENTURY

Madam— Kohli came out sensational and passed out in the acid test to prove that he is 'King Kohli' for his brilliant tonne against Pakistan in the Champions Trophy at Dubai. What the experience can deliver during the personal crisis for oneself was Kohli's class act when he hit his 51st ODI tonne with 7 fours to his credit in his century and paved the way for Team India's win. One can observe that this is the innings rated much higher in character because this calls for great perseverance to

### BSNL turns profitable after 17 years



In its remarkable comeback, the state-run telecom BSNL has posted a Rs 262 crore profit in the quarter ending December 2024. This is the first profitable quarter since 2007. The company's renewed focus on profitability and its future growth strategy have ultimately led it to profit for the first time in the last 17 years. In a cutthroat competition with private players like Airtel and Jio, the revival of chronically ailing BSNL was not

an easy task. But the government kept its trust in its capabilities and announced a Rs 89,047-crore revival package in 2023. Finance and market gurus termed it a waste of taxpayer money and raised doubts on the wisdom of the government. But the company's efforts on network expansion, cost optimisation and customer-centric service enhancements have now borne fruit.

BSNL has successfully reduced its finance costs and overall expenditure, leading to a decline in losses by over Rs 1,800 crore compared to the previous year. The government should be given credit for this achievement of BSNL, which not only allocated spectrum but also granted funds for strengthening network infrastructure.

Manoj Parashar | Ujjain

stay at the wicket with the will to kill to succeed in his important comeback game. When at the time skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill were dismissed, it is Virat's a kind of vengeful vigour and Shreyas Iyer's sensible batting put team India on top to cross Pakistan's target of 242 by six wickets victory. Pakistan's leg spinner Abrar Ahmed was spectacular when he gave the timely breakthrough but Kohli was completely defensive by not scoring a single boundary against the spinners. He showed his shrewd way to play them with a clear focus that he must prove a 'king is always a king' by his historic tonne to help the Indian flag fly high in the stadium.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

### MELONI EXPOSES GLOBAL HYPOCRISY

Madam — The battle of ideologies has always been a part of the global political stage. But when those who preach neutrality themselves fall into the trap of bias, questions are bound to arise. Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni recently made a striking remark on this hypocrisy. She

accurately pointed out - "When I, Trump, and Modi engage in discussions, it is labeled a threat to democracy. But when leftist leaders unite, it is considered a symbol of progress!" This statement is not just an opinion; it exposes the harsh reality of global politics. Why this double standard? Does democracy only mean the acceptance of a single ideology?

Do leaders with differing views not have the right to dialogue and cooperation? If democracy belongs to everyone, then why this discriminatory wall? In today's multipolar world, it is essential to give all perspectives an equal platform. Leaders like Modi, Trump, and Meloni represent the mandates of their respective nations. Ironically, those who claim their dialogue is a threat to democracy are the same people who applaud the alliances of their own ideological counterparts. It is time to recognise this hypocrisy. Democracy is not just for one group-it is for all.

R K Jain | Barwani

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### SHIVARATRI: THE NIGHT OF SHIVA AND SHAKTI

On this sacred night, one can ignite the power of Shiv and Shakti within



ASHWANI GURUJI

Shivratri is the night of Shiv and Shakti, the night of merger, the night of completeness - Understanding this is a sadhana... which can span lifetimes or be accomplished in a moment just, a beautiful journey bestowing myriad siddhis en route... Shiv is an experience. This experience begins at the feet of the Guru and unfolds as per the capacity of the sadhak. Ravan composed the Shiv Tandav Stotram to describe it. Adi Shankaracharya said 'na paapam, na punyam, na saukham, na daukham...' to describe what it's not. These were the Shiv sadhaks of finest quality, a rare phenomenon. What they described was their experience of Shiv; Shiv however is beyond description, for what is limitless cannot be bound in words and meanings. So no amount of reading and writing can grant you the experience, to get that experience you need to tread the path of sadhana, under a Guru.

The first experience of Shiv is the Shakti of Guru. As you walk the path shown by Guru, something that you want manifests in your life. It could be health, relationship, job etc. That becomes your experience of the Shiv tatva - that which has manifested the un-manifested. There are as many examples of such manifestations at Dhyan Ashram in present times as there are narratives from the past of sadhaks who were able to get the boon they desired.

That 'boon' or manifested desire, however, is only an aspect of Shiv. 90 per cent of the people were satisfied with the experience and their focus shifted from Shiv to that 'thing' that they wanted. So the experience of Shiv for them gets limited to that. A thousand names of Shiv, stem from here. Those who don't let their focus shift, move further into the dimension of Shiv. Next, the subtler siddhis of yog start manifesting - clairvoyance, clairaudience, premonition, extrasensory perceptions etc. Many take this to be the ultimate and end their experience here. They immerse themselves in the siddhis and powers so acquired and forget that this too is just an aspect.



The finer sadhaks progress ahead where they start interacting with the energies that run creation, aiding and assisting them in the process of Creation. Mentioned above are just some siddhis, the domain of Shiv however is endless. The key to accessing it is vairagya (detachment). The moment one gets attached to any aspect of Shiv or Siddhi that it bestows, the upward progression stops. Vairagya is possible only when one has the gyan of reality and gyan is possible only when one can sit in dhyan. Dhyan happens only when one has accumulated good karmas, which are acquired from seva or service. Seva is the first step. It is through seva that one increases the size of their container or the experience of Shiv that one can hold.

This Shivratri, embark on the journey to increasing the size of your container... to experience Shiv. Shiv is real, not a myth. Shiv is all-encompassing. All are accepted in the abode of Shiv - bhoot, pret, pisach, yaksh, kinnar, naag, dev, danav and humans. You don't have to be of a special caste to experience the various dimensions of Shiv. Shivratri is the night of Shiv and Shakti, the night of merger, the night of completeness. Guru, on the night of Shivratri, awakens the power of Shiv and Shakti in each and everyone who follows the path shown, without exceptions. In my journey of 25 years, I have yet to come across a sadhak who under Guru Sanidhya has not experienced Shiv. The seva and sadhana performed on this night grant one the experiences and siddhis of many lifetimes, in just one night. It is a 100 per cent science, not a religion. Try and test it for yourself.

*(The writer is a spiritual guru; views are personal)*

# Women pioneering change in Indian higher education



SUJATHA KSHIRSAGAR

Women academic leaders and entrepreneurs are not only shaping institutions but also fueling India's socio-economic growth with their grit and determination

Women are leading from the front today - in academics or education, media, healthcare, armed forces and many other fields. The country is witnessing a pivotal shift in how women leaders were perceived before. Indian higher education landscape is also being driven by a strong women-led force, laying the foundation of the nation's progress, unlocking opportunities for socio-economic growth, self-reliance and an improved quality of life. Needless to say, education is essential for women's empowerment in the journey to Viksit Bharat. Educated women drive change, uplift families, strengthen communities and fuel national progress, creating a lasting impact for future generations.

### The current scenario and notable mentions

Indian higher education remains male-dominated when it comes to leadership, even as women are playing a significant role, data suggests. In 2021, women headed just 9.55 per cent of Indian higher educational institutions, whereas men headed 89.57 per cent. This makes more inclusive representation of females in academic leadership extremely important. If we compare India with the international landscape, it still has a huge gap to fill. Internationally, 25 per cent of leadership positions in the top 200 universities globally are occupied by women.

The good news is that the picture is drastically changing, especially over the last few years. Even in the past, the country has seen visionary women leaders like Savitribai Phule, a pioneering social reformer who, alongside her husband Jyotirao Phule, established India's first school for girls in 1848, championing women's education and social justice.

Other notable and pragmatic women leaders who are marking a significant shift in higher education include Ms Rashmi Mittal, Pro-Chancellor, of Lovely Professional University, and Dr Uma Bhardwaj, Vice-Chancellor, of Noida International University. Other honourable mentions include Dr Madhu Chitkara, Pro-Chancellor at Chitkara University and a Higher Education entrepreneur with a vast experience of 42 years, who has built a successful university from scratch; Dr. Ananya Mukherjee, Vice-Chancellor of Shiv Nadar University, Delhi-NCR, recognised as an Institution of Eminence.

Apart from that, women leaders in business and entrepreneurial space have also inspired aspiring Indian youth. Notable mentions include Kiran Mazumdar Shaw and Indra Nooyi. Women leaders are transforming Indian higher education through inclusive environments and innovation. More women in leadership positions increase diversity and bring new perspectives to academia. Through their efforts, they are paving the way for future generations to have a more progressive and equitable educational landscape in India.

### The Challenges Faced by Women Leaders in Academia

The challenges for women leaders include social stereotypes at one end and the barriers of an institution at the other. Several women are even still facing serious prejudices against them regarding their potential as leaders, especially in traditional fields. Women lack opportunities to get mentors and network for their professional advancement.

The chief issues for women leaders world-



APART FROM THAT, WOMEN LEADERS IN BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL SPACE HAVE ALSO INSPIRED ASPIRING INDIAN YOUTH. NOTABLE MENTIONS INCLUDE KIRAN MAZUMDAR SHAW AND INDRA NOOYI. WOMEN LEADERS ARE TRANSFORMING INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND INNOVATION

wide relate to work-life balance and insufficient presence in senior leadership positions. India has taken a holistic approach to orient and train women faculty across the country through the University Grants Commission (UGC).

These initiatives are designed to prepare women for leadership roles, equipping them with the right skills and knowledge. Other countries have programs that focus on leadership training and inclusivity to break barriers for women in academia. Some countries have witnessed an impressive increase in the number of women represented in academia, but the world still has a long way to go, including India.

**Women as Educators and Leaders** Empowerment in education is not merely a question of access; it involves equipping women with the role of teachers, leaders, and models. An increased number of women in schools and colleges has acted as a motivating force for girls to achieve excellence in academics. Diverse viewpoints among women in higher education leadership institutions create an inclusive and innovative atmosphere.

Female professors have formed the backbone for progressive educational policy and research quality. Many critical departments and significant research initiatives now have women running them, evidence of their burgeoning influence in university life.

Programmes and fellowships dedicated to providing opportunities for girls and women, especially in these STEM fields, have helped a culture of creativity and excellence flourish within these disciplines. At present, there are some of India's most high-profile universities and institutions, with women at the helm, spearheading the trend of making education more accessible and equitable. Women leaders are

playing an important role in academics.

For instance, women-led institutions, like competitive exam coaching institutions, have been responsible for guiding thousands of students in shaping their aspirations. Thus, it is clear that women leaders can bring transformational change in education and can be great change managers.

### Women as Catalysts or Agents of Change

Women are educators and agents of change. They are innovators who are good leaders in filling knowledge gaps, fostering inclusivity, and empowering communities. Their contribution to a forceful, solution-focused, and responsive workforce is particularly indispensable for the simple reason that it is tantamount to ensuring not only economic prosperity but also social justice.

The most deep-seated effect of women in education has been in adult literacy and skill development. Women educators have led the process of increasing rural and marginalised communities' literacy rates, greatly improving their socio-economic conditions. Female entrepreneurs also are revolutionising education delivery by coming up with innovative solutions for diverse learners across India.

EdTech platforms of female founders have promoted flexible models, digital classroom applications, and AI-based analytics with their introduction; thereby, performance from students at high-quality education gets scaled up because access to more is also made easily feasible. Social development and the tech revolution are mutually supporting each other here.

**The Future of Women's Leadership in Higher Education** Increasing the number of women

leaders in higher education is not only about gender equality; it is a strategic imperative for India's progress.

Women leaders in higher education institutions bring diverse perspectives and transformative decision-making into academic administration, which drives innovation and excellence. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has recognised the importance of women's participation in academia and thus proposed reforms, to ensure gender inclusivity. Through the incorporation of leadership training under the framework of higher education and initiating mentorship opportunities, India can usher in an optimum pipeline of women academic leaders. Furthermore, the vision of Viksit Bharat and Atmanirbhar Bharat is in line with the very need to absorb India's demographic dividend. Education is at the heart of this vision, and empowering women as educators and leaders would be crucial in realising India's aspiration to become Vishwaguru—that is, a global leader in innovation and knowledge.

### Conclusion

Women leaders are undeniably shaping the future of Indian higher education. Despite all existing challenges, their excellence is bringing innumerable positive transformations within the present academia, which will lead to a more inclusive, progressive, and innovative educational landscape. The overall transformation of Indian education and the socio-economic liberalization of India can be achieved by removing all barriers to leadership, implementing supportive policies, and championing women's participation in higher education.

*(The writer is President at Career Launcher; views are personal)*

# Maha Kumbh 2025: A grand confluence of tradition, technology and transformation

IIT Kanpur research highlights how government initiatives are shaping the Mela—blending ancient traditions with modern infrastructure to enhance accessibility and efficiency

The Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj draws millions of pilgrims worldwide to the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers. As this grand spiritual event unfolds, an ongoing IIT Kanpur study provides real-time insights into stakeholder experiences. This research examines how government initiatives shape pilgrim experiences, blending ancient traditions with modern technology.

For devotees, the Mela remains a deeply spiritual journey, with bathing in the Triveni Sangam seen as a path to salvation. While age-old rituals and processions inspire awe, an extensive logistical network operates behind the scenes to manage massive crowds. A key focus of the study is



PRADIP SWARNAKAR

transportation. With pilgrims arriving from across India and abroad, the government's commitment to improving accessibility is evident. Nearly 40 per cent of attendees rely on public transportation, primarily trains and buses. Despite expanded shuttle services and improved parking facilities, feedback is mixed. While most find transportation satisfactory,

some report overcrowding and delays during peak hours. A hallmark of Maha Kumbh 2025 is its technological integration, earning it the title "Digital Maha Kumbh." Mobile apps, e-wallets, and real-time crowd monitoring enhance the experience for pilgrims and organisers. Many appreciate online registration, virtual darshan booking, and real-time updates on crowd density, transport, and amenities.

These tools streamline accessibility, particularly for international visitors and those from remote areas. However, bridging the digital divide remains a challenge. While tech-savvy pilgrims adapt easily, older attendees and those from rural regions often struggle with digital platforms.

Some report difficulties using smartphones or accessing the internet, highlighting the need for alternative engagement methods. Feedback underscores the importance of inclusive communication strategies blending digital and traditional approaches. Security and crowd management are also key concerns. Managing millions of attendees in Kumbh Mela is a massive undertaking. The government has deployed extensive security personnel, CCTV surveillance, and designated safe zones, including lifeguard-staffed bathing areas. Nearly 93 per cent of respondents feel secure within the Mela's vast grounds, affirming these measures' effectiveness. However, congestion near ghats causes anxiety among some pilgrims,



emphasizing the need for refined crowd management as the event progresses.

Health and sanitation remain top priorities. Overall, 81 per cent of respondents find sanitation facilities adequate, reflecting high satisfaction with cleanliness. Temporary medical camps and mobile health units ensure pilgrims' wellbeing, yet restroom overcrowding persists during peak

hours. Despite thousands of cleaning staff and waste management facilities, additional measures are needed to maintain hygiene during busy periods. These findings highlight commendable efforts while emphasising the need for continued improvements.

Inclusivity is also a focus, with the government enhancing accessibility for differently-abled individuals and senior citizens. Dedicated pathways, toilets, and designated spaces reflect a commitment to inclusive participation. The widely appreciated 'Lost and Found' services further ease concerns, helping separated families navigate the crowd more efficiently. Environmental impact remains a major concern. The government has introduced eco-friendly initiatives, includ-

ing waste segregation, solar-powered lighting and over 25,000 trash bins to reduce the ecological footprint.

Despite these efforts, concerns persist over plastic use and non-biodegradable waste. While 62 per cent of respondents recognise sustainability progress, stronger awareness campaigns and stricter enforcement of eco-friendly practices are needed.

The ongoing study suggests green initiatives must be reinforced through greater public education on waste management and sustainability. As the IIT Kanpur study continues to document stakeholder experiences, the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 is a testament to the evolving nature of large-scale spiritual events. Government initiatives have improved effi-

ciency, security, and inclusivity. Stakeholder feedback highlights the need to refine transportation, expand digital inclusion, enhance crowd management, and address environmental concerns.

The success of the Mela hinges not only on preserving spiritual traditions but also on integrating modern infrastructure, technology, and inclusive governance. More than a massive gathering, the Maha Kumbh exemplifies how government initiatives can transform spiritual events into safer, more efficient, and enriching experiences. As it unfolds, it remains a dynamic confluence of tradition, technology and transformation.

*(The author is a professor of Sociology at IIT Kanpur. Views expressed are personal)*

## IN BRIEF



### Gold jumps Rs 250 to Rs 89,350

Gold prices jumped by Rs 250 to Rs 89,350 per 10 grams on Tuesday extending gains for the second day amid depreciation in rupee, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose by Rs 250 to Rs 88,950 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 88,700 per 10 grams. On February 20, gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity hit all-time highs of Rs 89,450 and Rs 89,050 per 10 grams, respectively. However, silver prices slipped below the Rs 1 lakh mark, falling by Rs 500 to Rs 99,500 per kg. "Silver fell due to weakness in the industrial metals and rebound in the dollar index. Global equity markets are also struggling due to Trump's tariff fears and pressure on industrial metals but reversal in the US Treasury yields could support silver prices at lower levels," Rahul Kalantri, VP Commodities at Mehta Equities Ltd, said. On Tuesday, the rupee fell sharply by 51 paise to settle at 87.23 (provisional) against the US dollar due to month-end dollar demand by importers amid uncertainty over US trade tariffs.

## 'India has lower exposure to US tariffs than APAC peers'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Moody's Ratings on Tuesday said India has a lower overall exposure to the US relative to others in the APAC region, although certain sectors such as food, textiles and pharmaceutical products face risks.

Moody's said most companies in its rated portfolio are domestic-focused with limited exposure to the US market.

To mitigate pressure from reciprocal tariffs, the US and India are reportedly engaged in talks to lower import tariffs on select US products, increase market access for US farm products and increase US energy purchases, while seeking to initiate a trade deal by the fall of 2025.

Across APAC, developing countries like India, Vietnam and Thailand have among the widest rate differentials relative to the US, Moody's said.

It said electronics, motor vehicles, food and textiles are the most exposed sectors. In addition to the hit from lower export demand, a key risk facing emerging economies in the region is that those aiming to nurture an export-led growth model similar to



To mitigate pressure from reciprocal tariffs, the US and India are reportedly engaged in talks to lower import tariffs on select US products, increase market access for US farm products and increase US energy purchases, while seeking to initiate a trade deal by the fall of 2025.

China and other advanced APAC economies will find it difficult to compete in an increasingly interventionist trade environment.

US President Donald Trump has announced he will impose reciprocal tariffs on its trading partners, including India.

The new US administration has already enacted additional 10 per cent tariffs on imports from China and 25 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminium.

Moody's said while the US is an overall net exporter of food, feeds and industrial supplies to APAC, it is a net importer of capital goods,

automotive vehicles and parts and consumer goods.

Reciprocal tariffs will have an impact on a number of key sectors in APAC with exposure to US final demand, such as computer and electronic products, chemicals, motor vehicles, as well as food, textiles and wood products.

"India has a lower overall exposure relative to most others in the region, although certain sectors such as food and textiles as well as pharmaceutical products face risks," Moody's Ratings said.

The rating agency said APAC's overall policy response will be crucial in

determining the full impact on credit strength.

"We expect governments will likely act pragmatically, aiming to avoid escalation with the US, preferring to negotiate on a bilateral basis, as shown by recent developments," Moody's said.

Given a more restrictive trading environment, currencies of targeted APAC economies could face continued downward pressure given potentially higher capital outflows and a likely stronger US dollar, with regional central banks having a much narrower window for easing domestic monetary policies to support economic growth.

## ADVANTAGE ASSAM SUMMIT Investment proposals worth over Rs 90,000 signed

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Investment proposals worth over Rs 90,000 crore were signed on the first day of the Advantage Assam business summit on Tuesday, with the figure expected to increase substantially by the end of the two-day meet, a senior official said.

The MoUs pledging investment in the north-eastern state have been signed with several top PSUs and private companies, while non-financial MoUs have been inked with foreign entities.

The agreements signed so far include a Rs 30,000 crore-pact with Tata Power, Rs 7,000 crore one with JSW Group, Rs 5,850 crore with Greenko Energies Pvt Ltd, Rs 5,000 crore MoU with Adani Total Gas Ltd, Rs 3,000 crore with PNB Investment Services Ltd and Rs 2,100 crore pact with Essar Group, he said.

Among the PSUs that signed

major MoUs during the day are OIL, pledging investment of Rs 23,300 crore, and an investment proposal of Rs 10,711 crore by the Numaligarh Refinery, he said.

"More than 30 MoUs have been signed so far and many more are likely to be signed in the next few hours. There are some major announcements



tomorrow as well," the state government official said.

He said that private companies have signed agreements worth more than Rs 53,000 crore, while the state-run entities have inked pledges for pumping in over Rs 35,000 crore in Assam



### Karnataka to host GAFX 2025 from tomorrow

Bengaluru GAFX, India's premier AVGC-XR Conference—a platform for the Animation, VFX, Gaming, and Comics communities—organised by the ITBT department of the Karnataka Government, will kick off on February 27, officials said on Tuesday. The AVGC-XR Conference (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics, and Extended Reality), scheduled from February 27 to March 1, aims to foster innovation, facilitate knowledge-sharing, and encourage strategic collaborations, they said. According to an official statement, with an anticipated attendance of over 20,000—double that of past editions—this year's event is poised to be the most influential gathering for creators, developers, investors, studios, and enthusiasts from across the AVGC-XR ecosystem. The theme for GAFX 2025 is "The Future of Immersion: Experience. Explore. Disrupt". The Government of Karnataka acts as an enabler for the digital media industry, fostering the full spectrum from skills and education to studios, from startups to global leaders, all of whom leverage the state's innovation ecosystem.

## Create ecosystem for banks to offer equity support to startups: Setty

PNS ■ MUMBAI

SBI Chairman C S Setty on Tuesday pitched for creating an "ecosystem" where banks can offer "equity support" to startups in the country.

He said the government is also looking at a guarantee scheme where support for loans up to Rs 100 crore will be provided to the startups.

"We need to work out an ecosystem where the equity support from the banking system is also available to the startups," Setty said, speaking at the annual NTLF event organized by tech industry lobby grouping Nasscom here.

Banks are not allowed to offer equity support to startups at present, and can only offer debt support.

Setty said the country's largest lender has been active on the debt support front when it comes to startups, pointing out that it lends directly to such enterprises or through dedicated funds.

It also has seven dedicated branches across the country which offer dedicated banking

support and loans to the start-up ecosystem, which is the third largest globally.

Setty said the fledgling fintechs of the country are not able to handle the traffic which is generated by SBI, pointing out that the "standards of operations" are not the same when the traffic grows.

SBI's engagement with the fintechs is one of the largest, he said, adding that it has 33 partnerships for the Yono app alone.

Meanwhile, Setty said SBI is "working very seriously" to improve its agril loan vertical, where it will be using satellite data and other structured and unstructured data sets to better serve the farmers. The solution will also go into crop pattern data for a particular region in its analysis, he added.

Speaking to the technology industry leaders, Setty said SBI has been the first lender in the country to set up a resilience operations centre (ROC) along the lines of security ops centre, and hinted that the RBI is planning to make a ROC an industry-wide practice.



## EPFO net members addition grows to 16.05 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retirement fund body EPFO added 16.05 lakh net new members in December, which is 9.69 per cent higher compared to November 2024, as per the payroll data released on Tuesday.

Further, a labour ministry statement said there was a growth of 2.74 per cent in net payroll additions compared to December 2023.

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) has released provisional payroll data for December 2024, showing a net addition of 16.05 lakh members.

An increase of 9.69 per cent was registered in net payroll addition during December 2024 as compared to the previous month.

The data showed that EPFO enrolled around 8.47 lakh new subscribers in December 2024. The new subscribers' addition shows growth of 0.73 per cent from December 2023, the ministry said.

This surge in new subscribers can be attributed to growing employment opportunities, increased awareness of employee benefits, and EPFO's successful outreach programmes.

## Sensex bounces back after 5-day slump

Nifty ends marginally lower

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex recovered 147 points in a range-bound trade on Tuesday, ending its five-day slide on the back of buying in financial and FMCG shares.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 147.71 points or 0.20 per cent to settle at 74,602.12 with 17 of its constituents ending higher and 13 lower. During the day, it rallied 330.67 points or 0.44 per cent to 74,785.08.

The broader Nifty of NSE, however, fell for the sixth day slipping by 5.80 points or 0.03 per cent to finish at 22,547.55 due to fag-end selling in pharma, metal and IT shares.

Weak Asian and US markets along with foreign fund outflows made investors risk-averse, analysts said.

Among Sensex shares, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Zomato, Nestle, Bajaj Finserv, Maruti and Titan were the biggest gainers.

Sun Pharma, Power Grid, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Asian Paints and Tata Motors were among the laggards.

In the last five trading ses-



ahead of expiry this week," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.13 per cent to USD 74.68 a barrel.

"The domestic market experienced a range-bound trading session in anticipation of key economic data releases this week, alongside the monthly expiry.

"Concerns over high valuations led to continued declines in small and midcap stocks. Market sentiment is expected to remain cautious in the near term due to persistent pressure on the INR, ongoing FII outflows, and tariff-related developments," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Key macroeconomic indicators, including the US Core PCE and GDP data for both the US and India, will be instrumental in shaping expectations for the central bank's future monetary policy, Nair added.

The Sensex had tanked 856.65 points, or 1.14 per cent, to settle at 74,544.41 on Monday while the Nifty declined 242.55 points, or 1.06 per cent, to 22,553.35.



### GEG eyes Rs 2,000 cr revenue from energy solutions biz

Godrej Enterprises Group (GEG) is eyeing revenue of Rs 2,000 crore from its energy solutions business over the next three years on the back of data centre growth and other factors, the company said on Tuesday. According to GEG, the order book for the current year stands at over Rs 2,400 crore for reinforcing its leadership in clean energy power transmission, particularly in the 400kV and 765kV segments. India is witnessing a rapid transformation in its energy and digital infrastructure, said GEG, with data centre capacity projected to grow 30 per cent annually across major cities and a strong national focus on sustainable energy solutions. "India's energy landscape is undergoing a historic transformation, driven by the urgent need for sustainability and self-reliance. As a homegrown conglomerate committed to nation-building, we are strengthening the country's power infrastructure with high-capacity transmission solutions," said Raghavendra Mirji, Executive vice president of GEG.

## Centre: Set up skill centres in-house

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Centre has urged the corporate sector to set up skill centres in-house so that the employability of graduating youth is improved and the overall hiring scenario is boosted, an official said on Tuesday.

Ministry of Corporate Affairs Secretary Deepti Gaur Mukherjee said that there is a need to upscale the numbers of skilled youth in society.

Under the Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS) launched in 2024, the target is to provide skills to 1.25 lakh youth in the pilot phase and one crore over the next five years.

Speaking at an event organised by CII here, Mukherjee said, "The response from companies is very encouraging and



there is a need to upscale the numbers. The companies should set up skilling cells in-house so that the quantum of the employable workforce increases."

The internship programme under PMIS has been made a part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) with the view

to provide flexibility.

"This internship programme is a part of CSR and not a normal HR function. This will provide flexibility to the programme. Under the scheme, the industry will benefit from getting employable workforce which will contribute to the society," she said.

Mukherjee said that 50 per cent of the population in India is below the age of 28 years.

"This is a huge demographic dividend. If the youth of the country are not skilled, the demographic dividend will turn into a demographic nightmare," the official said.

She said the internship programme will help the youth learn teamwork and improve communication skills.

## 'India, UK trade agreement 'genuinely beneficial' for both'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the United Kingdom is "genuinely beneficial" to both countries as it would help boost bilateral trade and investments, UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds said on Tuesday.

India and the UK on Monday announced resumption of negotiations for the FTA, which is expected to double or even triple bilateral trade from the current USD 20 billion in the next 10 years.

Reynolds met Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal to discuss about the agreement.

After concluding the two-day talks with the Indian minister, Reynolds said: "This is about an agreement which is genuinely beneficial to both countries. That is possible. That's the prize. Getting it right is what we are here to do, and that's what we are working very hard towards".

Termining it a "substantial" agreement, he said these pacts make a "real difference if you" get them right.

The negotiations are resum-



ing after a gap of over eight months. The talks are happening following the UK general elections, which resulted in the Labour Party coming to power. The talks were launched on

January 13, 2022. "I am very encouraged by the progress we have been able to make," Reynolds told PTI. The two countries are actively negotiating at three

different fronts - FTA, bilateral investment treaty (BIT), and a Double Contribution Convention Agreement.

"I gave assurances about the strengths of our commitment to the FTA and the investment treaty..." the UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade added.

Further, he noted that the two economies are complementary in terms of services, and goods.

"This (India) is such an important market for UK goods," he said adding huge demand is also there in the UK for Indian goods and services.

Goyal has said that the agreement will be "pathbreaking" and would provide huge opportunities to grow "our current USD 20 billion bilateral trade in merchandise to probably two or three times in the next 10 years".

He added that enthusiasm is there in both the countries about the FTA. "Going forward, our trade relations will further strengthen."

In the FTA, India is looking for greater access for its students and professionals in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty.

## 'MP gets Rs 30.77 lakh cr investment commitments'

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh has received investment commitments for a record Rs 30.77 lakh crore at the end of its two-day investor summit, chief minister Mohan Yadav said on Tuesday at the 8th edition of Invest Madhya Pradesh Summit aimed at

attracting investments to the state and promoting its industrial growth. This summit served as a platform to showcase the state's potential for business and investment, highlighting its strategic advantages, economic opportunities, and industrial capabilities.

**NORTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED**  
CIN No. U40109TG2008SGC034119

Tender Notice No. 07/2024-25 with Specification No. 81 to 103 of SE/OP/BKGM

Sealed Tenders are invited from TGNPDC registered contractors of Bhadrachal Kotagudem District for carrying out of erection of 33kV Interlinking lines for providing alternate supply to various 33/11kV Sub-Stations & Civil works of renovation & modernization of existing 33/11kV Sub-Stations in Bhadrachal Kotagudem Circle. The details of works and other information can be obtained from our website [www.tgnpdc.in](http://www.tgnpdc.in)

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Operation Circle, TGNPDC, Bhadrachal Kotagudem.

R.O. No: 10675-AP/CLAD/NT/12024-25 Dt: 25-02-2025

**Indian Bank**  
GACHIBOWLI BRANCH ADDRESS: PLOT NO. 12-11 CYBER APARTMENT, INDRA NAGAR, GACHIBOWLI

**VEHICLE AUCTION SALE NOTICE**

Branch	BORROWER NAME & ADDRESS	VEHICLE TYPE	REGISTRATION NO & YEAR	RESERVE PRICE (RS.)	EMD PRICE (RS.)
GACHIBOWLI Branch	M/s. Pratik Enterprises	Model Eicher Pro 5035 Type of Body: Tanker Type of Fuel: Diesel Colour: Dazzling White	TS-07-UH-3755 Engine No. EG24CUM2543 Chassis No. MC2T5DRCOJ M013904	5.80 Lakhs	0.58 Lakh

Open Auction will be conducted for participants who deposits above mentioned EMD on or before 16.03.2025, 3.00 PM by DD/Post order to Indian Bank Gachibowli Branch, Hyderabad. Date & Time of Auction: 11.03.2025 between 1.00 PM to 4.00PM For further details, Terms & Conditions, contact: (Separate details of Branch Manager and SADA Agent to be given) Mr. Deepak K. Shrivastava Ph: 040-23000889 Mob: 9648172875 Email: gachibowli@indianbank.co.in

Succeeded bidder should NEFT/RTGS/Bank IF on the same day. The vehicle will be auctioned on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" condition. For further details, terms and conditions, the interested bidders can contact Indian Bank, Gachibowli Branch. The Authorised Officer may accept/cancel the auction without assigning any reason thereof.

Place: Hyderabad, Date: 25-02-2025

Sd/- Chief Manager



## Leading charge in global health and wellness

**A** change on a global scale is underway. As a leader in responsible nutrition innovation, Nutrifly Today celebrates five years of revolutionising the global nutraceutical market with innovative AI-driven product development, industry-first projects and a steadfast dedication to sustainable and ethical nutrition. With the opening of its office in Somerset, New Jersey, it is also making its US debut, further solidifying its position as a major player in the North American market and demonstrating its ambitious global expansion. With its exclusive AI-powered platform, NutriflyGenie, it has been transforming the production of nutraceutical products since its founding in 2020. The company has made India a global leader in health solutions by empowering companies all over the world to design and introduce scientifically proven, legally compliant nutrition products with previously unheard-of efficiency. Beyond innovations in technology, it has inspired audience with a vision and influence, helping to shape the future of responsible nutrition. It has brought together industry executives, regulators and policymakers through its flagship C-Suite Sumflex project to promote meaningful conversations on sustainability, ethical product creation and global nutrition standards. Policies that strike a balance between responsible innovation and corporate expansion have been shaped in large part by this program. The academy has become a leading platform for upskilling experts in the nutraceutical industry, thereby enhancing industry capacity. It provides a variety of training courses and programs with an emphasis on scientific rigour, compliance and expertise. It is fostering the next wave of creative thinkers dedicated to excellence and moral accountability in the sector. These last five years are only the beginning for Nutrifly Today. Redefining global health, raising industry standards and leaving a lasting legacy in responsible nutrition innovation are all priorities. In the upcoming years, it hopes to make a big difference in human health and wellness, maintain its position as an industry leader and broaden its global presence. For the same, here is an exclusive interview with the Founder and Chief Catalyst Amit Srivastava!

Excerpts from the interview:



PNS|HYDERABAD

**How can you make sure AI is a force for integrity rather than efficiency in an industry that is frequently criticised for overstated claims and regulatory gaps?**

The AI of today is a unique precision system in the market. It is based on six years of well selected data rather than open or unstructured sources. Ingredients, biochemistry, pharmacology, toxicity and regulatory systems are all covered by this data, which comprises 3.6 million structured data points from 12 nations. The dataset is kept on specialised servers in Bangalore, Visakhapatnam and New Jersey, guaranteeing security and dependability, which emphasises the system's uniqueness even more. Nutrifly Genie uses retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) AI modeling to process commercial, logistical, regulatory and scientific data all at once. It anticipates long-term safety issues, assesses the toxicity, synergy and modes of action of substances and predicts cellular-level interactions between compounds and receptors. To maximise bioavailability, the system also examines quantum tunneling. Along with ensuring regulatory label compliance for 12 countries, it also creates hypothetical bills of materials and supply chain mappings. Every result is guaranteed to be commercially viable, scientifically proven and compliant with international regulatory standards thanks to this methodical methodology.

**The nutraceutical sector in North America is quite competitive and profitable. What particular difficulties do you foresee?**

The move to the United States, where we now have an office in Somerset, New Jersey, is a proactive move to use it to address issues in the ethical nutraceutical sector. In addition,



tion to solving problems, this endeavour aims to create possibilities. With scientifically differentiated goods supported by rigorous scientific validation, it aims to democratise audited supply chains and allow branded formulation companies to reach the market 200% faster. We connect supply and demand based on merit rather than personal ties, giving even tiny businesses the chance to prosper on our platform thanks to our access to 2,300 verified supply chain partners. Through our proactive activities, we are influencing the industry rather than merely responding to it. We have created our own data infrastructure, in contrast to a large portion of the sector that depends on public data and servers. We have taken steps to reduce the dangers of data theft and unauthorised access since we are aware of the difficulties that may arise while managing health data and intellectual property.

**What are the most important problems that the nutraceutical business is now facing?**

We encourage moral and responsible development in commerce and nutrition at Nutrifly Today's C-Suite, Sumflex. Concerning problems include the selection of components, the reasoning behind mixing compounds without conducting synergy studies, the absence of toxicity research, the incomplete knowledge of mechanisms of action and the possibility of making false claims. The availability of organic land, sustainability, supply security and traceability are issues with raw materials.

With an emphasis on the expansion of trade in responsible nutrition, it brings together business owners, CEOs, investors and government representatives from India and other nations.

**What important knowledge gaps in the sector do you think require immediate attention?**

The academy aims to solve a critical issue in addition to strengthening industry capability in responsible nutrition. It is urgently necessary to close the 6,00,000 educated professionals in responsible nutraceuticals that are expected to be lacking in India alone. It is helping to solve this problem, but other organisations must step forward and help meet the changing demands of the sector. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of this endeavour. The quality gap in scientific research is one of the most urgent issues. The use of traditional documentary research is dwindling as we transition to an AI-driven world and it is anticipated to disappear in the next five years. This change highlights the need of focusing on basic research! AI-driven instruments such as is capable of processing current research and handling sophisticated data, but in order to spur significant innovation in responsible nutrition, the industry must give priority to original research. The development of precision phytopharmaceuticals and nutraceuticals depends on this focus on original research.

**What obstacles does India face in its efforts to become a global leader in responsible nutrition, whether they be scientific, regulatory, or perception-based?**

Although India has a long history in pharmaceuticals, it has experienced difficulties in the production of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and has lost a sizable portion to China. Active Nutraceutical Ingredients (ANI) is currently showing a similar trend. China is at the forefront thanks to its extensive knowledge of botanicals and biochemistry as well as its robust supply of nat-

ural and synthetic ANI alternatives. Regulatory obstacles present further difficulties. Instead of concentrating only on enforcing regulations, the Biodiversity Act poses obstacles for the business, necessitating science-aligned policies that promote responsible nutraceutical growth. The goal of Nutrifly Today is to change this environment. Through Nutrifly Genie AI, the first responsible nutraceutical design engine in the world, which was created wholly in India by specialists in toxicology, pharmacology and biochemistry, we have created and democratised audited data. India's reputation as a leader in deep-tech nutraceutical innovation has been strengthened by the publication of the AI-generated outputs in prestigious, peer-reviewed publications like Elsevier's. Global players are trying to imitate our strategy as a result of the technology's ability to improve India's standing and recognition abroad. In addition, we are making it possible for entrepreneurs from other nations to take advantage of our platform, solidifying India's position as the hub of the global deep-tech, ethical nutraceutical sector.

**In a time when "ethics" and "sustainability" are frequently employed as marketing clichés, how can you make sure that these values stay fundamental rather than performative?**

The pillars of all we do are neutrality, ethics and sustainability. This dedication has gained us credibility in the industry, both in India and internationally, despite the fact that we are still a startup. Six years of rigorous data and supply chain research, driven by science, transparency and sustainability principles, have produced our flagship technology, Nutrifly Genie AI. We perform routine audits to make sure that records are consistently accurate and up to date in order to preserve the integrity of our platform. Rather than being influenced by marketing, scientific principles and financial viability guide our product design and commercialisation operations. Nutrifly Genie AI handles every aspect of the process, from conception to commercialisation. Although toxicology is frequently disregarded in the business, it forecasts toxicological data for each formulation using pharmacology and biochemistry principles. If data already exists, we extract it; if not, the AI creates a forecast using computer-aided drug design principles.

**Do you think there are any concerns**

**associated with an over-reliance on technology in a subject that ultimately impacts human well-being, as AI becomes more and more prevalent in health and wellness?**

Human scientists have educated and continuously improved Nutrifly Genie, a precise AI engine. Scientists are still in charge of developing basic research, even though AI is essential to automating documentary creation and research. Like the mobile phone revolution of the 1990s, artificial intelligence marks a paradigm shift! Precision technologies are gradually replacing process-driven tasks due to continuous innovation. In order to properly serve the healthcare and wellness industry, AI must be further refined because human error has been shown to pose a higher risk than technology over time.

**What do you hope to leave behind in the field of responsible nutrition?**

Our goal is to become the Amazon of the nutraceutical supply chain, freeing up branded formulation firms to concentrate on product and business development. We manage commercialisation concurrently. Fortune 500 firms in the pharmaceutical, over-the-counter (OTC) and nutraceutical industries are already using our platform, demonstrating the viability of this strategy. With the help of a specially trained AI running on a private server network, we have created the largest curated database in the nutraceutical industry. By using this strategy, we have been able to democratise the supply chain, making it more efficient and accessible while working at 200% the speed of the traditional sector. One of our latest innovations is the introduction of the first instant commerce platform for nutraceuticals in the world, which is intended to empower mid-sized businesses to take on bigger competitors. Dealsphere is a game-changing technology that allows businesses to choose a formulation and bring it to market in as little as 15 days, compared to the conventional 1.5-year timeframe. Every recipe is prepared for instant licensing and comes with a scientific dossier, a Bill of Materials, clinical data, stability data, and regulatory approvals. The industry is moving toward plug-and-play models in the future. Over the course of the next five years, branded formulation companies will have the option to either create their own formulations or select from quick commerce options, with the platform handling supply chain, scientific and regulatory challenges with ease.

### MONEY MATTERS

## How early financial education can shape lifelong habits

**I**n the present time, consumption-driven world, financial literacy has become an essential life skill. Yet, most children grow up with little understanding of how money works, often learning through trial and error as adults. Early financial education serves as a compass, guiding young minds toward sound decision-making and financial independence. Teaching children how to save, budget and spend responsibly is not just about preparing them for adulthood but about empowering them to navigate life's complexities with confidence and foresight.

One of the simplest yet most powerful lessons to teach children is the habit of saving. When children understand the concept of saving for something they desire, they learn to appreciate the importance of planning and patience. For instance, giving a child a piggy bank and encouraging them to save for a new toy instills a sense of responsibility and delayed gratification. Over time, these small lessons evolve into more significant financial behaviors, such as setting aside money for emergencies, investing wisely, or avoiding impulsive purchases.

#### LEARNING THROUGH REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES

Practical learning often leaves a lasting impact. Allowing children to manage a small allowance can be a great way to teach budgeting. By dividing their money into categories such as spending, saving and sharing, they get a hands-on understanding of resource allocation. Parents can also involve children in household financial decisions, like comparing prices at the store or discussing how family expenses are managed. These interactions make financial concepts tangible and relatable, fostering a deeper understanding of real-world money management.

#### FINANCIAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

While parents play a critical role, schools can act as a catalyst in promoting financial literacy. Introducing financial education in the curriculum ensures that every child, regardless of their background, gains exposure to essential financial concepts. Topics such as managing loans, understanding credit scores, or the basics of taxation can prepare students for the challenges they'll face as adults. When schools integrate these lessons into subjects like mathematics or social studies, they make financial education both accessible and practical.

#### THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FINANCIAL EDUCATION

In today's digital age, technology offers exciting opportunities to enhance financial learning. Educational apps and games can make learning about money engaging and interactive. For

example, apps that simulate real-life scenarios—such as budgeting for a virtual trip or running a small business—can teach children valuable financial skills while keeping them entertained. Parents and educators can leverage these tools to supplement traditional methods, ensuring that children develop a comprehensive understanding of financial management in a format they enjoy.

#### THE TEEN YEARS: BUILDING ADVANCED SKILLS

As children grow into teenagers, financial education should evolve to address more complex topics. Teenagers can learn about earning through part-time jobs, understanding the basics of banking and managing their expenses. Introducing the concept of credit—how it works, the importance of timely payments and the risks of debt—can prepare them to handle financial responsibilities as they step into adulthood. These lessons ensure they develop a strong foundation for managing their finances when they eventually gain financial independence.

#### BREAKING THE CYCLE OF FINANCIAL MISMANAGEMENT

A lack of financial education often leads to poor financial habits, creating a cycle of mismanagement that's hard to break. Early financial education empowers individuals to make informed decisions, reducing the likelihood of falling into debt or financial crises. When children grow up understanding the importance of budgeting, saving and investing, they are less likely to rely on high-interest loans or struggle with financial insecurity. Over time, this shift can lead to more financially stable families and communities.

#### CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF FINANCIAL AWARENESS

Financial education isn't just about individual success—it's about creating a culture that values financial awareness. When children grow up discussing money openly and learning about its impact, they contribute to a society that is better equipped to handle economic challenges. Employers, too, can play a role by providing financial wellness programs, ensuring that their employees have the tools to manage their finances effectively.

#### THE RIPPLE EFFECT OF FINANCIAL LITERACY

The benefits of financial education extend far beyond personal finances. Financially literate individuals are more likely to contribute to the economy, invest in their communities, and plan for the future. When people understand how to manage their resources effectively, they are better equipped to support their families, avoid financial stress and pursue their goals with confidence. This ripple effect strengthens not only individuals but also the broader economic fabric of society.



to handle life's financial challenges and opportunities. After all, when it comes to money matters, the habits we form early are the ones that stay with us for life.

(The author, Allan Andersen, is the director of Chaman Bhartiya School.)

## VAISHALI SAMANT'S AAYA RE TOOFAN FROM CHAAVA CONTINUES ITS MUSICAL STORM!

**M**arathi singer Vaishali Samant, who once ruled the charts with *Aika Dajiba*, is once again making waves with her latest song, *Aaya Re Toofan* from *Chaava*. With its powerful composition by A.R. Rahman and evocative lyrics penned by Irshad Kamil and Kshitij Patwardhan, the song has struck a chord with listeners, amassing millions of views within hours of its release on YouTube.

The song is picturised on Vicky Kaushal, who plays Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, and Rashmika Mandanna, who portrays Maharani Yesubai. As soon as the track begins with Vaishali's resounding *Aao Virajo*, it sets the stage for an electrifying musical experience. Her soul-stirring voice adds a layer of depth and emotion that perfectly complements Rahman's composition.

A highlight of the song is that Vaishali Samant shares the mic with the legendary A.R. Rahman himself. While Rahman's magical voice has always captivated audiences, Vaishali's powerful rendition elevates the song to new heights. Expressing her gratitude, Vaishali shared, "This song is a significant

milestone in my musical journey. It is incredibly inspiring that A.R. Rahman sir believed in my voice. The overwhelming love the song is receiving is beyond words. Performing Live with Rahman sir at the audio launch was an unforgettable experience, and I sincerely thank both him and director Laxman Utekar for this opportunity."

Since its release, *Aaya Re Toofan* has been trending across platforms, garnering immense appreciation from music lovers. The song not only reflects the valour and grandeur of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj but also instills a deep sense of pride among listeners. With her mesmerising voice and as the lyrics go, "Bhagve ki shaan mein chamka asmaan, aaya aaya re toofan", this song is indeed a storm that has taken the world of music by force.



## Driving innovation, efficiency redefined!

**I**ndia's plastic manufacturing sector is adopting new processes to improve efficiency and reduce material waste. Yudo's hot runner systems are supporting this shift by streamlining injection moulding operations in automotive, packaging and consumer goods industries. Hot runner systems allow molten plastic to flow directly into mould cavities, removing the need for solidified runners. This process helps manufacturers optimise material use

and improve cycle times. With increasing demand for cost-effective production, the industry is seeing a rise in the adoption of this technology. "In manufacturing, efficiency and cost control are key factors. Yudo's hot runner technology is helping businesses meet production targets while managing material use," said Vishal Agarwal, President, Yudo India. In the automotive sector, Yudo's systems assist in the production of injection molded

parts like dashboards, bumpers and interior trims, etc. The packaging industry benefits from precise moulding, faster colour change, ensuring consistency in caps and closures weight and dimensions. Consumer goods manufacturers are using this technology to support high-volume production. India's focus on reducing plastic waste is shaping industry practices. Companies are looking for solutions that improve

production while aligning with sustainability goals and regulatory requirements. Hot runner systems support this approach by reducing excess material and optimising energy consumption. "As demand for plastic components grows, manufacturers are seeking solutions that enhance productivity. Hot runner systems are becoming a part of this change, helping companies improve operations and meet industry standards," added Agarwal.

## INDULGE IN THE CLASSIC PISTACHIO BAKLAVA

### INGREDIENTS

- For Baklava:**
- 2packs(470g each)filo pastry(30sheets) 350g shelled raw pistachios
  - 285g ghee(or clarified butter) For the Sugar Syrup:
  - 450ml water
  - 500g granulated sugar 1 lime, juiced
  - tsp orange blossom water(optional)
  - ¼tsp rosewater(optional)

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Prepare the Pistachios:**
- Blitz the shelled pistachios in a food processor until coarsely ground.Set Aside. Pre-heat your oven to 180°C (350°F).
- Layer the Filo Pastry:**
- Butter a shallow baking tray with ghee.
  - Place one sheet of filo pastry in tray, brush with ghee and layer another sheet on top. Continue this process until you reach 15 layers.
- Add Pistachios:**
- Evenly scatter the ground pistachios over the 15th filo layer. Complete the Layering:
  - Continue layering the remaining 15 filo sheets, brushing each layer with ghee. Generously brush the top layer

A timeless Middle Eastern delicacy, baklava is a symphony crisp, golden layers of filo pastry, rich pistachios and fragrant sugar syrup. Master this indulgent treat with the perfect balance of texture and sweetness.



(Courtesy: Arun Surendran, executive chef, Niramaaya Retreats Backwaters & Beyond)

with ghee and cut into squares before baking.

### Bake Baklava:

- Place the tray in the middle rack of the oven and bake for 40 minutes run till golden brown.

### Prepare the Sugar Syrup:

- While The baklava bakes, heat water, sugar and lime juice in a saucepan over low heat. Stir continuously for 10 minutes until the syrup thickens slightly.
- Add orange blossom water and rosewater, if using, for extra aroma.

### Soak and Rest:

- Once baked, pour the hot sugar syrup evenly over the baklava.
- Let it cool at room temperature for 2-3 hours (or overnight) to allow the syrup to fully absorb.

### Serve and Enjoy:

Garnish with crushed pistachios and serve at room temperature. Enjoy The perfect bromance crisp, buttery layers and nutty sweetness!

### Chef's Tip:

"The secret to a perfect baklava lies in patience and precision. Keep the filo pastry under a damp tea towel to prevent it from drying out, and let the baklava rest overnight for the best flavor infusion."



The Endometriosis Foundation of India, founded by Dr. Vimee Bindra, is organising the second edition of the Yellow Ribbon Run in Hyderabad on March 2, 2025, at Jalavihar Necklace Road. The event, which features 3K, 5K, and 10K categories, aims to elevate awareness about Endometriosis, a commonly misunderstood and misdiagnosed health condition that severely affects individuals mentally, personally, and professionally.



Prachay Capital Limited, an RBI-registered Non-Banking Financial Company – Investment and Credit Company (NBFC-ICC), has announced the public issue of Secured, Rated, Redeemable Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) to raise up to Rs 100 Crore. The issue will open on 28 February 2025 and close on 13 March 2025.



VT Markets hosted an unforgettable Gala Night, themed "A Billionaire's Odyssey," to celebrate an exceptional 2024 and unveil exciting plans for the company's 10th anniversary in 2025. The event brought together key clients, partners, and industry leaders to commemorate the company's remarkable achievements and set the stage for future growth, innovation, and collaboration. The event was attended by Dandelyn Koh, Global Brand and PR Lead, Ross Maxwell, Global Strategy and Operations Lead and Maury Murgioni, Business Development at VT Markets, among the rest.



The Organization for Rare Diseases India (ORDI), supported by Novo Nordisk India, successfully hosted the 10th edition of the "Race for 7" Awareness Run across 21 cities in India to commemorate Rare Disease Day. People living with rare diseases, caregivers, healthcare professionals, and policymakers came together to advocate for better healthcare access for individuals affected by these conditions.



The Global Gems & Jewelry Academy (GGJA) marked a significant milestone with its inaugural Annual Convocation Ceremony, held at its Banjara Hills, Hyderabad campus on February 24, 2025. The event was attended by prominent industry figures, including Anoop Agarwal, CEO of Rysun Jewels & KRIS Diamonds and Javin Kumar Agarwal, Director of Rysun Jewels & KRIS Diamonds, underscoring the significance of the occasion and the promising future that awaits the graduates.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



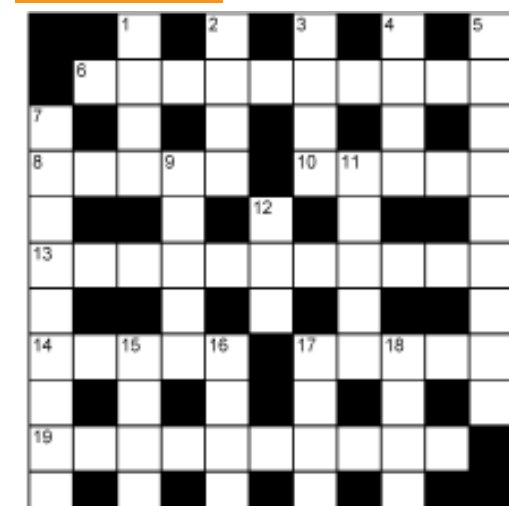
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

### ACROSS

- 6 A flying machine
- 8 Light a fire with this
- 10 Our planet
- 13 In a coma
- 14 A feeling of rage
- 17 Less
- 19 Carrying on

### DOWN

- 1 Remaining
- 2 Wealthy
- 3 Sleep lightly
- 4 Mix with a spoon
- 5 A large group of musicians
- 7 An emergency vehicle
- 9 Nearby



# WITH FUN, I WANT VALUES IN MY FILMS: THRINADHA RAO

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Director Nakkina Thrinadha Rao delivered a massive hit with *Dhamaka*, starring Ravi Teja, which grossed more than Rs 100 crores. Now, the director is working on a smaller film, *Mazaka*, starring Sundep Kishan and Rao Ramesh in lead roles. "I am comfortable with the story that I like, and I go with it," says Thrinadha Rao.

Many directors wait for years to work with a big star, but Thrinadha Rao takes a different approach. "I don't blame them for wanting to build their careers, but I follow my own methods. If I like a story, I go with it, even if it means working with new faces," he shares.

Thrinadha Rao reveals that when he was making *Dhamaka*, writer Prasanna Kumar came to him with the storyline for *Mazaka*. "He only gave me a one-line idea at first, not the whole story. After I finished *Dhamaka*, Prasanna completed the story and dialogues. There wasn't much for me to change, except for a few improvisations when we went to the sets," says the director.

He further explains that the story was initially pitched to several people before finally being brought back to Rao Ramesh. "Prasanna had written the story with Rao Ramesh in mind. When we were looking for the lead actor, Sundep Kishan agreed to take on the role, which was a great decision," Thrinadha Rao adds.



**DIRECTOR NAKKINA THRINADHA RAO, WHO IS EXCITED ABOUT THE RELEASE OF HIS LATEST FILM, MAZAKA TALKS ABOUT HIS FILM CAREER, WHAT HE SEEKS IN HIS FILMS BEYOND ENTERTAINMENT AND MORE**

When asked if the film shares any similarities with the Malayalam hit *Bro Daddy*, the director firmly denies it. "Our film is about a father and son, which may lead people to compare it to the Malayalam film. However, both stories are completely different, and there is no connection between them," he clarifies.

The film is set to release today, coinciding with the occasion of Sivaratri. Thrinadha Rao is optimistic about the film's prospects, noting that, much like the Sankranthi festival, Sivaratri also draws people to the theatres. "I believe it will have a good opening on Sivaratri day," he says. He adds that the film blends fun with emotional depth. "If you look at all my films, there is always a mix of fun and values," he explains.

In discussing *Mazaka*, Thrinadha Rao explains that the film centers on a father and son who feel they need a woman in their lives. "For every man, from youth to old age, there is always a need for a woman—whether it's a mother, wife, sister, or someone else. In this film, both the father and son seek the same," he says. Despite the film's comedic tone, the last half-hour of the film is emotional. "I personally believe that every household should have at least one woman. A festival or a celebration feels incomplete without her presence," he adds.

Anshu plays a key female role alongside Ritu Varma and Thrinadha Rao explains his choice of casting. "I wanted to cast an actress who was relatively unknown to the audience. When I saw *Manmadhudu*, I asked Prasanna about Anshu, but by then, she had already left for Hyderabad. After contacting her, we narrated the story over the phone. She had gone through my past films and agreed to take on the role," he says. He emphasises that he made sure to be upfront with her about pairing her with Rao Ramesh in the film. "We wanted to make everything clear from the start," he explains.

Looking ahead, Thrinadha Rao says he will continue to blend entertainment and emotion in his future projects. "One producer advised me that I've been successful so far because my films haven't been rejected. I intend to continue in this direction unless I face rejection, in which case I will try to change my approach," he shares.

For his first few films, Thrinadha Rao not only directed but also contributed stories. "Prasanna joined me as a dialogue writer for Cinema Chupista Mama and we've worked together ever since. I plan to write another story in the future. Many talented new writers are emerging and I liked a story written by Srinivas," he says.

The director is also producing two films: *Chaurya Paatam*, a crime comedy and *Anakapalle*, a cult love story. Interestingly, Thrinadha Rao hails from Anakapalle, which is where the film is set. "I wrote the story nearly 15 years ago and always wanted to make it. It's a small film, so I'm producing it with a new director and fresh faces," he says.



**Jerome Flynn joins Lucifer sequel, L2: Empuraan**

Malayalam actor Prithviraj Sukumaran made his directorial debut with the successful *Lucifer* in 2019. Malayalam superstar Mohanlal played the lead role, with Tovino Thomas and Manju Warrier also in key roles. Sukumaran himself also played an important role in the film. Now, the sequel to this hit film, *L2: Empuraan*, is set to hit the screens on March 27 this year.

The sequel is bigger in terms of budget, scale and cast, with high expectations already surrounding the film. Adding to the excitement, the makers have revealed that renowned Hollywood actor Jerome Flynn will play a key role, named Boris Oliver. Flynn is best known for his portrayal of Bronn in the iconic web series *Game of Thrones*. He has also appeared in films and series such as *John Wick Chapter 3*, *Soldier Soldier* and *Black Mirror*.

A teaser introducing Jerome's character was released on Tuesday and the actor expressed his excitement about working in an Indian film. "I can't quite remember how I got roped into this job, but I'm so glad I did because it was a completely different experience from what I'm used to in the UK or the USA. To be part of the Mollywood culture is really special," said Jerome.

He further added that the film holds extra significance for him because India has played an important and precious role in his personal journey. "I spent several years visiting India in my late 20s and early 30s, mostly for spiritual retreats. The experience of being in India has changed my life forever in the best possible way."

Subaskaran and Antony Perumbavoor are the producers, while Deepak Dev is the music director. The film will be released in Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Kannada.

## Amani takes the lead in Brahmanda



Actress Amani, known for her versatile roles in Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam films, is playing the lead role in the upcoming film *Brahmanda*, directed by Rambabu. Amani, who has won several awards for her performances as a lead actress, has recently been focusing on character roles. She received accolades for her performance in the recently released *Baapu*, where she was paired opposite Brahmaji.

The first look of Amani in *Brahmanda* was released by director Chandoo Mondeti, known for *Thandel*. On this occasion, Chandoo expressed that the first look is intriguing and wished the team of *Brahmanda* great success.

Director Rambabu shared that the film has a Telangana-based storyline and highlighted that this is the first time OGGU artists, who represent a traditional Telangana folk art, are being prominently featured in the film. He also noted that the story and screenplay promise to captivate audiences with thrilling and devotional elements.

In addition to Amani, the film features actors such as Jayaram, Komaram Bunny Raj, Kanika Vadya, Jogini Shyamala and others in key roles. The music for the film is composed by Varikuppala Yadagiri. Most of the artists and technicians are from Telangana, and many are new to the industry.

## JD Chakravarthy praises Raa Raja for its bold experiment



Popular actor and director JD Chakravarthy has praised the film-makers of the upcoming film *Raa Raja*. Directed by B. Shiva Prasad, the film relies entirely on its story and narration, without revealing the faces of the artists. Filming without showing faces is no small feat and the *Raa Raja* team is ready to impress with this bold experiment. The film is set to release on March 7.

The film's poster was released by JD Chakravarthy and he had high praise for its making and the director. "Usually, when a girl hugs or kisses, it's portrayed as a happy moment. But in this poster, even though the girl is hugging, there's an unsettling sense of fear. The coloring, font, and tagline all suggest that the film is filled with twists and turns. It looks like a supernatural thriller," said JD.

He added, "What's even more interesting is that they aren't showing the faces of the lead pair. Creating fear without revealing any faces is no small achievement. No horror director in the world has made a film without showing faces," said JD Chakravarthy. He called it a fantastic concept and expressed hope that the movie becomes a huge hit.

## Japan emerges as a major market for Telugu films

Japan, along with China, is emerging as a major market for Telugu films. Many Telugu films have been released in these countries, and filmmakers are now looking at Japan as a potential revenue center.

In line with this trend, Jr. NTR's film *Devara* is set to release in Japan on March 28. The actor is scheduled to visit Japan on March 22 to promote the film, and before his visit, he is giving interviews to Japanese media. Directed by Koratala Siva, *Devara* has been a super success in Telugu, grossing significant revenue. This is the first part of the film, with a second part also in the works.

Jr. NTR is focusing on promoting the film aggressively in Japan, where he has a massive fan following. His earlier film *Baadshah* was released in Japan in 2014 and received a positive response. Jr. NTR aims to build on this fan base and strengthen his presence in the Japanese market.

*Devara* released last year and Jr. NTR plays dual roles in it. Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor, the daughter of the late Sridevi, plays the female lead.



## MAD Square promises even more fun & madness than the first

The film *MAD*, directed by Kalyan Shankar, made a huge splash at the box office after its release in 2023. Now, the makers are coming up with a sequel titled *MAD Square*. The teaser for this sequel was released on Tuesday, and it promises even more fun than the first film.

Once again helmed by Kalyan Shankar, *MAD Square* brings back our favorite mischief-makers—Narne Nithin, Sangeeth Shobhan, Ram Nithin, and Vishnu Oi (Laddu)—who redefined entertainment with their infectious energy in the first part. The teaser is a laugh riot, packed with crackling chemistry, perfect punch lines and over-the-top madness. Bheems Ceciroleo returns with a catchy and enchanting score. The film is produced by Haarika Suryadevara and Sai Soujanya and will hit the screens on March 29.



# England, Afghanistan dream of semifinal berth

PTI ■ LAHORE

A battered England will hope to keep their Champions Trophy (CT) hopes alive when they face a dangerous Afghanistan in a crucial group B match here on Wednesday.

A defeat here would severely dent both the teams' dreams of a semifinal berth in the tournament, as South Africa and Australia have already notched up two points.

The days of England's white ball supremacy are far behind now, as the former world champions' creaking unit even failed to defend a 350-plus total against Australia in their tournament opener.

While England may take some comfort in posting a massive total, the reality is that it came against an Australian side missing their premier pacers — Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, and Josh Hazlewood.

The English bowlers then failed to stop an Australian line-up that did not have lead batters such as injured Mitchell Marsh and now-retired Marcus Stoinis.

So, England will need to show massive improvement against Afghanistan on both those counts.

Afghanistan's three-pronged spin attack, consisting Rashid Khan, Noor Ahmad and Mohammad Nabi, has the potential to trouble even the best, and England batters' recent outings



against slow bowlers are not confidence inspiring either.

England also suffered a setback as all-rounder Brydon Carse has been ruled out of the tournament with a toe injury. He has been replaced by leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed in an effort to strengthen their spin department.

This move will also provide Adil Rashid with proper backing, as, until

now, Liam Livingstone had been performing that role with his mixed bag of off-spin, leg-spin, and seam-up deliveries.

But England's real problem lies in the patchy form of opener Phil Salt and Harry Brook in the middle-order.

Salt's only hundred in the format was in 2022 and since then the Welshman has not really converted his starts, often getting out after a

quick 30 or 40.

Brook also offers a similar tale. The Yorkshire man looked in prime form during the home ODIs against Australia last year, hammering a hundred and two fifties in a three-match series.

However, Brook has been riddled with self-doubts against spinners since the tour to India, and fell to Aussie leg-spinner Adam Zampa in

the last match.

Now, the 26-year-old will have to negate three high-quality tweakers against Afghanistan.

The Afghans, on the other hand, have their own problems to tackle. They are coming off a 107-run shellacking by South Africa in their tournament opener.

They had reached the semifinals of the T20 World Cup 2024 with almost the same set of players but the ODI format demands much more consistency in performance and execution of strategies.

Afghanistan have the required talent but they need to find a way to channelise that consistently to challenge England, even in their most vulnerable state.

**Teams (from):**

**Afghanistan:** Hashmatullah Shahidi (c), Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat Shah, Ikram Alikhil, Gulbadin Naib, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Nangyal Kharoti, Noor Ahmad, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Farid Malik, Naveed Zadran. Reserves: Darwish Rasooli, Bilal Sami.

**England:** Jos Buttler (c), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Tom Banton, Harry Brook, Rehan Ahmed, Ben Duckett, Jamie Overton, Jamie Smith, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Saqib Mahmood, Phil Salt, Mark Wood.



# UP Warriorz face Mumbai Indians

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Rejuvenated by their thrilling super-over win over RCB, UP Warriorz will look to continue their momentum when they take on an upbeat Mumbai Indians in the Women's Premier League here on Wednesday.

The Warriorz pulled off a stunning victory against defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Monday, with Sophie Ecclestone delivering a match-winning performance with both bat and ball.

However, they will need more from their batters to avoid finding themselves in a tight spot once again.

While Chinelle Henry led them to victory against Delhi Capitals, Ecclestone took center stage in their latest triumph. Though openers Kiran Navgire and Shweta Sehrawat have shown promise, they have not been able to capitalise on their starts.

Opener Vrinda Dinesh and skipper Deepti Sharma will have to give stability in the middle-order.

Despite a rocky start to the season, the Warriorz have bounced back from consecutive losses, registering two remarkable wins.

However, their batting — especially the openers and middle-order — has struggled to maintain consistency.

Australian all-rounder Tahlia McGrath is another match-winner in the Warriorz lineup, with her explosive power-hitting.

But she is yet to light up the tournament and against MI, the Warriorz will need McGrath to fire along with the rest of the batting unit to avoid falling into a vulnerable position once again.

"We are backing our young

Indian players to step up and perform under pressure. We want to provide them with opportunities," said Jon Lewis, the Warriorz head coach, on Monday.

On the middle-order batting, Lewis added: "It would be nice to get a few more runs, rotate the strike better, and be more consistent. If we can do that, we will be competitive across all conditions and against every team."

For Mumbai Indians, Nat Sciver-Brunt has been the standout performer. The inaugural edition champions are a formidable side, with India captain Harmanpreet Kaur also in fine form, having scored a fifty in their last match against RCB.

Mumbai's batting is a force to be reckoned with, with destructive batters like Hayley Matthews and Amelia Kerr in their ranks but both haven't really fired so far. Opener Yastika Bhatia too is in need of a substantial score.

They also have a rising star in 16-year-old G Kamalini, who brings balance to the team, while Amanjot Kaur's all-round performance that sealed their win against RCB is a good sign for MI.

Their bowling attack is spearheaded by the exceptional Shabnim Ismail and Sciver-Brunt, who are capable of dismantling any batting lineup.

**Teams (From):** Mumbai Indians: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Yastika Bhatia (wk), Nadine de Klerk, Sanskriti Gupta, Saika Ishaque, Shabnim Ismail, Jintamani Kalita, G Kamalini, Amandeep Kaur, Amanjot Kaur, Sathyamourthy Keerthana, Amelia Kerr, Akshita Maheshwari, Hayley Matthews, Sajeewan Sarjana, Nat Sciver-Brunt, Parunika Sisodia, Chloe Tryon.

# Amla labelled Gill as 'next big thing' in international cricket

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

South Africa batting great Hashim Amla on Tuesday labelled India opener Shubman Gill, who has had an "exceptional" start to ODIs, as the "next big thing" in international cricket along with Rishabh Pant and Ryan Rickelton.

The 25-year-old Gill, named India's vice-captain for the Champions Trophy, retook the No. 1 spot in ODI rankings for batters on the opening day of the tournament after his ascent to the top for the first time in 2023.

Gill began with a match-winning century against Bangladesh and struck a vital 46 against Pakistan to steer India to two wins in as many games in Dubai.

"For India, you have got Shubham Gill; Rishabh Pant has been around for a while. For South Africa, we have Ryan Rickelton who has done really well off late," Amla, who is playing for South Africa Masters in the International Masters League, told PTI Videos in an exclusive interaction.

"Every country has about 2-3 cricketers who are going to come through and I think that's pretty normal, that you see that every five years some youngster poke in the head through international cricket, and possibly be the next best, big thing," he added.

Talking further about Gill, Amla said, "He is a brilliant player, the way he started in one-day cricket, he has been exceptional. He has been a huge part of India's success at top of the order."

"To have him and Rohit (Sharma) at the top, it's a very potent and dangerous opening partnership, and then they have got Virat (Kohli) at No 3."

Amla said playing the tri-series in Pakistan ahead of Champions Trophy would



hold South Africa in good stead, especially against spin.

"South African batters are well-equipped. They've had enough practice with the tour to Pakistan just before the Champions Trophy. They've also, by and large, had great success," he said.

"You've got Heinrich Klaasen, who's been very successful against spinners. He's in the middle order. You've got David Miller, who's been an excellent finisher and (there is) Aiden Markram as well. That middle order has been vital for South Africa's success.

"At the top, (Temba) Bavuma is a good player of spin and Rickelton has been very accomplished against spin over the last one and a half years," he added.

Amla said both India and South Africa have got a "great chance" to win the Champions Trophy title.

"India have obviously a very good chance, they have a fantastic team over the (last 15-odd years)," he said.

"South Africa have (a) great chance (too), they have fantastic batting and bowling and whole unit looks very well balanced, they have an excellent chance to make it to top four and then hopefully win it."

With South Africa making finals of the T20 World Cup last year and the World Test Championship final against Australia, Amla said the

Proteas did their best against whichever opponents they faced.

"South Africa getting into the (WTC) final has been a great achievement. Lots of people have said the different teams you (could) have played against, but that's the group that South Africa were put in," he said.

"For them to excel and win as many games as they have to get into a final, they did their part and they did their best and they are in the finals."

"It is going to be a really good final, with Australia being a very competitive team. But in a Test match, you (may) just need one or two players to stand up and yes, South Africa could be champions," he said.

Amla said he has no intention of returning to Test cricket but expressed that competitions such as the IML should be a regular affair.

"It's enjoyable, (there are) these elements of uncertainty that we haven't trained and (were) not involved in cricket for the rest of the year, or batting in nets, or playing matches, and that type of excitement, to just see how it all goes," he said.

"The amount of excitement that has been built around some of the great ex-players, it can only bode well, and who doesn't want to see a (Brian) Lara (or a) (Jacques) Kallis bat? It should be an annual event," he added.

# Atherton, Hussain praise Virat Kohli

PTI ■ LONDON

In awe of Virat Kohli's formidable ODI statistics, former England captains Michael Atherton and Nasser Hussain believe that the Indian mainstay is probably the best batsman in the history of the format.

Kohli played a master-class innings of unbeaten 100, his 51st century in ODIs, to steer India to a comfortable six-wicket win over arch-rivals Pakistan in a Champions Trophy match here on Sunday.

"Virat Kohli in a run-chase in 50-over cricket, there's been nobody better in the history of the game, really. 51 century is an unbelievable number," said the 56-year-old Atherton, who captained England in 54 Test matches, on 'Sky Sports Cricket Podcast'.

En route his century in his 299th 50-over appearance, Kohli became the fastest batter to reach 14,000 ODI runs, joining the elite group of Sachin Tendulkar (18,426 in



452 innings) and Kumar Sangakkara (14,234 in 380 innings).

"I mean, he's got 51 and he's passed 14,000 runs, which only Tendulkar and Sangakkara have got past that mark in one-day cricket," Atherton continued.

"And he got them in 60-odd innings quicker than Sachin, and I think about 90-odd innings quicker than Kumar. "So, I mean, ODI is probably his best. You know, he's been a great all-format player, clearly, but you'd probably say that

ODI is his absolute best format."

Echoing similar sentiments, Hussain, who led England between 1999 to 2003, remarked, "He's been an incredible player. Yeah, and you'd have to say probably the best player in ODIs of all time, really, with those stats you mentioned."

"You'd have Tendulkar in the same conversation. Kumar, you'd have AB de Villiers. They've been some great ones, but he's right at the top of the tree."

# Pakistan will struggle to beat India's B team, says Gavaskar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan's cricket team continued to invite scathing criticism a day after being knocked out of the Champions Trophy (CT) with the great Sunil Gavaskar saying that it would struggle to beat even a second-string Indian team.

India, the 2023 ODI World Cup finalists, defeated defending champions Pakistan by six wickets in the Champions Trophy in Dubai on Sunday, continuing their dominance over the arch-rivals.

"I think a B team (from India) certainly (can give Pakistan a run for their money). C team, I am not too sure. But a B team will be very, very hard to beat for Pakistan in their current form," Gavaskar said on 'Sports Today'.

Pakistan, hosting an ICC tournament for the first time

since 1996, were knocked out of the Champions Trophy after New Zealand beat Bangladesh in another Group A match. Pakistan are still winless in the event.

Since winning the Champions Trophy in 2017, Pakistan's cricketing fortunes have declined, with the team finishing fifth in the last two ODI World Cups.

"I think it's surprising this lack of bench strength. Pakistan always had natural talent. Natural in the sense that they may not have always been technically correct, but they had an instinctive understanding of bat and ball," Gavaskar said.

"Look at Inzamam-ul-Haq, for example. If you look at his stance, you wouldn't recommend that to a young batter, but he had great temperament. With that kind of temperament, he made up



for any technical shortcomings." Gavaskar also noted that despite the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and domestic white-ball tournaments, Pakistan has struggled to produce quality players.

"How has India produced so many young stars in white-ball cricket? It's because of the IPL," said the former India skipper. "Players from there have gone

believes the contest has become "one-sided" and the cricket does not live up to the hype.

"Well, it was completely one-sided," Atherton said on Sky Sports Podcast.

"It looked very predictable from a long way out. An underpowered Pakistan batting line-up, as it was in that first game, actually, against New Zealand. There just seemed to lack a bit of energy and dynamism in the batting."

India and Pakistan only meet in ICC events, and their clashes are often built up as blockbuster encounters.

"There's a bit of an issue for that contest, isn't it? Because it's a highly anticipated contest for all kinds of reasons. Partly, you know, just because of the scarcity value. They only play each other in ICC events on neutral territory for obvious reasons," he said.

# Vidarbha to stake claim for Ranji Trophy title against Kerala

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Former winners Vidarbha will rely on their red-hot form to stake claim for a title that they last won over five years ago, while first-time finalists Kerala will be driven by grit when the two contrasting teams clash in the summit showdown for the 90th Ranji Trophy, starting here on Wednesday.

It has been nothing short of a stellar run for the Akshay Wadkar-led Vidarbha side this season, winning eight of their nine matches so far and drawing one which makes them the side to beat.

Vidarbha emerged from their group stage with six victories in seven matches and won each of the knockouts by heavy margins — by 198 runs against Tamil Nadu in the quarterfinal and by 80 runs against defending champions Mumbai in the semifinal. The winners of 2017-18 and 2018-19 edition, Vidarbha are

making their fourth appearance in the final after losing in the final last year to Mumbai, displaying unmatched consistency in red-ball cricket. They had also played in the final of the Vijay Hazare Trophy this season.

Yash Rathod has been at the forefront of their batting with 933 runs in nine matches at 58.13 with five tons and three fifties — the third highest overall this season.

Not only from behind the stumps as wicketkeeper-captain, Wadkar has had a successful run with the bat, scoring 674 runs in nine matches at 48.14 with two centuries and as many fifties.

Veteran Karun Nair is not far behind with 642 runs in eight matches at 45.85, including three centuries and a fifty, while Danish Malewar (557 runs, 1x100s, 5x50s) and Dhruv Shorey (446 runs, 1x100s, 2x50s) have also pulled in their weight.



If the 24-year-old southpaw Rathod has been a revelation in batting for Vidarbha, the bowling charts have been dominated by another youngster in 22-year-old Aman when he took 68 wickets in eight matches of

the 2018-19 season. On the other hand, making their maiden appearance in the Ranji Trophy final, it hasn't been just luck that has favoured the Sachin Baby-led side from down south. Kerala rode on their luck in

the knockout games to edge out Jammu and Kashmir by one run in the quarterfinal and Gujarat by two runs to make the final after advancing in the two contests on the basis of first-innings lead.

But even that took a lot of hard work. Kerala had to grind out with the bat on the final day of the quarterfinal against J&K to force a draw. Salman Nizar (607 runs in eight matches at 86.71, 2x100s, 3x50s) and Mohammed Azharuddeen (601 runs in nine matches at 75.12, 1x100s and 4x50s), the two batting mainstays for the side, held their nerves to frustrate J and K in Pune and ensure their team's qualification in one of the most exciting finishes this season.

Azharuddeen's monumental 177 off 341 balls in the semifinal against Gujarat on their home turf will go down in Kerala's Ranji history as one of the finest knocks played by any player from the state which has never been so close to winning the toughest red-ball competition in India.

With 38 wickets, Jalaj Saxena has been Kerala's most successful bowler and he will

find strong support from former Vidarbha player Aditya Sarwate, who has grabbed 30 wickets to provide adequate support to the veteran spinner.

Teams (from): Vidarbha: Akshay Wadkar (c&wk), Atharva Taide, Aman Mokhade, Yash Rathod, Harsh Dubey, Akshay Karnewar, Yash Kadam, Akshay Wakhare, Aditya Thakare, Darshan Nalkande, Nachiket Bhute, Siddhesh Wath (wk), Yash Thakur, Danish Malewar, Parth Rekhade, Karun Nair, Dhruv Shorey. Kerala: Sachin Baby (c), Rohan Kunnumal, Salman Nizar, Mohammed Azharuddeen (wk), Akshay Chandran, Jalaj Saxena, Shoun Roger, Aditya Sarwate, Basil Thampi, MD Nidheesh, Nedumankuzhy Basil, Sreehari S Nair, Sharafuddeen NM, Anand Krishnan, Varun Nayanar, Eden Apple Tom, Ahamed Imran.