

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
 The party gave a B-form to Theenmar Mallanna, organised a huge rally and ensured his victory by convincing all sections. Will anybody hope for the loss of a party contestant? It is not proper to organise a meeting and scold other castes. I would welcome Mallanna if he scolds me but it is not right for him to scold the community  
 - Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, TG Minister P4

**GST Council to soon take decision on rates, number of slabs: FM**  
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**REDEFINING GLOBAL DANCE CULTURE WITH THE RHYTHM OF CHANGE**  
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**I am open to do any role: Sai RAM SHANKAR**  
 P12

**DON'T MISS...**  
**YSRCP for original Polavaram design**  
 In a spirited debate in the Lok Sabha, YSRCP MP Midhun Reddy voiced strong opposition to the proposed reduction in the capacity of the Polavaram project, urging the government not to compromise its original design. He emphasised that the project, initially designed to provide water for irrigation and drinking purposes to 7.5 lakh acres, was originally set to deliver 194 TMC of water. However, budget proposals suggest reducing the capacity to 115 TMC, which would significantly limit its effectiveness, providing ...  
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**No additional taxes: CM**  
**Asks officials to devise novel plans for revenue generation**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
 Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday emphasised that revenue-generating departments in the state government must achieve the best results to revive the State's economy, which was left in a dire state during the previous YSRCP regime. Chairing a review meeting at the State Secretariat on revenue growth and resource mobilisation, the Chief Minister urged officials to implement innovative strategies to boost revenue and take effective measures to pull the State out of its current financial crisis. He stressed that routine methods would not yield the desired results and called for a more dynamic approach. By leveraging technology, revenue leakages can be curbed, and officials must work towards enhancing government income, he said. Addressing concerns raised by officials from the Commercial Tax Department regarding tax evasion, the Chief Minister instructed them to ensure strict compliance, leaving no scope for evasion. At the same time, he cautioned against any harassment of businesspersons in the name of tax collection. Recognising that revenue-generating resources are crucial for implementing welfare schemes and development programmes, the Chief Minister urged officials to focus on achieving consistent progress in income generation. Despite the dras-

**● Naidu says routine methods will not suffice; techy must be leveraged to curb revenue leakages.**  
**● Tax evasion must be strictly prevented without harassing businesspersons.**  
**● Discussions with the Centre going on to secure financial assistance.**  
**● Commercial tax revenue for 2023-24 stands at Rs 41,420 crore, with expectations of further growth.**  
**● Excise revenue set to increase due to new policies, but mining revenue is below expectations.**

tic decline in living standards due to the policies of the previous government, he directed officials not to impose any additional taxes on the common man. Instead, he stressed the need to improve revenue collection through better management and efficiency. Chandrababu Naidu also stated that regular discussions are being held with the Centre to secure financial assistance. He mentioned that he had a detailed discussion with the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission, Arvind Panagariya, for one hour and 45 minutes, explaining the State's precarious financial condition. Officials presented a detailed report on the State's revenue receipts to the Chief Minister. They noted that total



**'P4 model launch by Ugadi'**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
 Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has announced that the P4 model, aimed at poverty eradication, will be launched from Ugadi. Speaking on the initiative, the CM said that through this model, the government seeks to support the top 10% of the economically well-off population and the bottom 20% of the underprivileged, ensuring significant socio-economic benefits. To formulate comprehensive policies for its implementation, the Chief Minister directed officials to develop a dedicated portal to collect public opinions, suggestions, and feedback. He emphasised that the P4 model would be executed by incorporating people's views, particularly in poverty alleviation. During a review meeting with Planning Department officials at the Secretariat, CM Naidu discussed the launch of the P4 model. He noted that industrialists, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), and individuals from affluent backgrounds have come forward to support the underprivileged. The government plans to consolidate these efforts under a sin-

**The Chief Minister directed officials to develop a dedicated portal to collect public opinions, suggestions, and feedback. He emphasised that the P4 model would be executed by incorporating people's views, particularly in poverty alleviation**  
 gle framework to ensure the model's effective implementation. Additionally, a special survey will be conducted to identify the most marginalised sections and extend necessary assistance. The CM instructed officials to collect relevant data for this purpose. He also highlighted that several industrialists have volunteered to develop their native towns and mandals. Those interested will be personally invited to participate in the launch of the P4 model on Ugadi. Reiterating the government's commitment, CM Naidu said the Public-Private-People Partnership (4P) model would mark a crucial step towards poverty eradication. Chief Secretary K. Vijayanand, Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav, and Planning Department officials were present.

**AP govt eases building norms**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
 The Andhra Pradesh government has introduced new guidelines for building construction permissions under the Self-Certification Scheme. As per the revised norms, local urban bodies, except the CRDA, will now issue permits, shifting authority from Urban Development Authorities. For constructions up to 300 square metres, owners can self-verify and submit plans for approval. Additionally, architects, engineers, and town planners can apply on behalf of owners, while licensed technical persons are now authorised to certify and upload building plans. These guidelines apply only to residential buildings. The government has simplified the process for submitting plans through an online portal to boost the real estate sector and enhance ease of doing business. Strict action will be taken against any violations in the online permission system. The guidelines were issued by Suresh Kumar, Principal Secretary, Municipal Administration Department.

**Modi takes 'urban naxal' jibe at Rahul**  
 In a scathing attack on Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said some people are openly speaking the language of urban naxals and asserted that those who "declare a war" against the Indian State can neither understand the Constitution nor about the country's unity. He also took a dig at Arvind Kejriwal and AAP a day before the Delhi assembly polls, saying "some parties are like 'AAP-da' for the future of the youth". Modi asserted that while ...  
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**Gold continues record-breaking rally**  
 Gold prices extended the rally for the fifth straight session and rose Rs 500 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 85,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid robust demand from jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity closed at Rs 85,300 per 10 grams in the previous session. In this year, gold has surged Rs 6,410 or 8.07 per cent to Rs 85,800 per 10 grams from Rs 79,390 per 10 grams on January 1. Gold of 99.5 ...  
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**Varun added to Indian ODI squad**  
 In-form mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy has been included in the Indian ODI squad after his heroics in the just-concluded T20I series against England as the team management wants the KKR mystery spinner to "keep up the momentum". There is a fair chance that Chakravarthy might just replace one of the four specialist spinners in the Champions Trophy (CT) squad. It could be one among Kuldeep Yadav or Washington Sundar, who could be axed to accommodate ...  
 -SPORTS

**Inter student found dead in hostel room**  
**PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM**  
 An intermediate student was found dead in his hostel room at Kanuru on Tuesday, allegedly hanging from the ceiling fan. Police identified the deceased as Gurram Venunath (18), a second-year intermediate student at a private educational institution. His fellow students discovered him and immediately informed the principal, who then alerted the police. Authorities found a suicide note in the hostel room. However, the student's parents disputed the police's claim, stating that the handwriting in the note did not match their son's. Grief-stricken, they rejected the suicide theory and demanded a thorough investigation. The police have registered a case and shifted the body to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for postmortem. Further investigations are underway to ascertain the exact cause of death.

**Collective efforts saved VSP: Nara Lokesh**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
 Minister for Education, IT, and Electronics Nara Lokesh emphasised that collective efforts had played a crucial role in saving the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and asserted that this spirit of collaboration must continue for the state's future progress. He made these remarks while meeting Union Ministers Srinivas Varma, Ram Mohan Naidu, Pemmassani Chandrasekar, along with other TDP MPs and BJP leaders, who paid a courtesy visit to him in New Delhi on Tuesday.



During the meeting, Lokesh pointed out that within just seven months of the coalition government taking charge in the state, they had successfully secured funds for key projects such as the Visakhapatnam Railway Zone, Amaravati, Polavaram, and the Steel Plant, all through joint efforts. He lauded the dedication of Union Ministers and MPs in driving the state's development. Expressing his happiness over the swift resolution of crucial issues, including the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, Lokesh called it a matter of great satisfaction.

**AP should conduct caste survey: Sharmila**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
 Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Y S Sharmila on Tuesday demanded that the TDP-led NDA government in the State conduct a caste census similar to the one successfully carried out in neighbouring Telangana. Terming Telangana's caste census an exemplary model for the entire nation, the APCC president called it a historic development and an example of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's 'foresight' for the country's future.  
 Continued on Page 2

**AP's power supply rises by 22.5% between 2020-2024**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
 Andhra Pradesh has witnessed a substantial rise in power supply over the past four years, with energy availability increasing by 22.5%—from 65,414 million units in FY2020 to 80,151 million units in FY2024. In the first nine months of FY2025 alone, the state's energy supply reached 58,555 million units. Additionally, the government has set an ambitious target to expand India's total installed generation capacity to 900 GW by 2031-32, according to Union Minister of State for Power, Shripad Naik, in response to a question raised by MP Parimal Nathwani in the Rajya Sabha.  
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The minister highlighted India's transition from a power-deficit nation to a power-sufficient one over the past decade. The country's current installed generation capacity stands at 462,065 MW. Since April 2014, the government has added 230,050 MW of generation capacity to address power shortages. Looking ahead, the government plans to expand installed capacity to 900 GW by 2031-32, covering both conventional sources such as coal and lignite, and renewable sources including solar, wind, hydro, pumped storage projects (PSP), and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).  
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**Stage set for Delhi battle**  
**AAP eyes third term; BJP, Cong look for a comeback**

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
 The stage is set for the high-stakes Assembly elections in Delhi, with over 1.56 crore voters eligible to cast their ballots from 7 am onwards on Wednesday. Voting will take place across 13,766 polling stations in all the 70 Assembly constituencies to decide the fates of 699 candidates in a contest that could reshape the political landscape of the capital. Led by Arvind Kejriwal, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is seeking a third straight term, banking on its governance record and welfare schemes.

On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is making a determined push to reclaim the capital after more than 25 years. The Congress, which ruled Delhi for 15 years till 2013, is striving to stage a comeback after failing to win a single seat in the previous two elections.  
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**Arasavalli temple sees huge rush of devotees**

**PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM**  
 The Arasavalli Sri Suryanarayana Swamy temple saw an extraordinary crowd of devotees on Ratha Saptami, the biggest festival in Srikakulam. Thousands gathered to pray to the Sun God on Surya Jayanthi, marking the Sun's celestial shift. Devotees stood in long queues, waiting patiently for their turn to receive blessings. Principal Secretary of the Endowments Department, Vinay Chand, presented pattuvastrams on behalf of the State Government, which has declared Ratha Saptami a three-day state festival. Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, and other dignitaries participated in the Ksheerabhishekam ritual, led by Chief Priest Ippili Shankar Sarma. The celebrations began at midnight on Monday, with thousands praying and making offerings at Indra Pushkarani. People from

**Thousands gather to offer prayers on Surya Jayanti**



across Uttarandhra and Odisha took part in the festival. District Collector Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar supervised arrangements and interacted with devotees to ensure smooth movement inside the temple. The Endowments Department, police, revenue, and fire personnel worked together to manage the event smoothly. By Tuesday evening, queues stretched nearly two kilometers. The temple was beautifully decorated with flowers, creating a divine atmosphere. Special prayers started at midnight, attended by central and state ministers, legislators, and senior officials. Authorities estimated that lakhs of devotees visited the temple. Thousands of police personnel were deployed for security, ensuring a peaceful event. For the first time, District SP KV Maheshwar Reddy monitored security from the control room to provide an uninterrupted darshan experience. The State Government extended the festival to three days, including Surya Namaskar on Sunday, February 2nd, which saw thousands participating in religious activities. The festival also included heli tourism, rural sports, cultural programs, a laser show, fireworks, and a grand Shobha Yatra. Ahead of the event, the city saw major improvements such as new lighting, dividers, tree plantations, colorful paintings, and road repairs. Local residents appreciated the efforts of officials and public representatives in making the celebrations successful.

**Madugula lauds Naidu's vision**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
 Renowned Avadhani and Saraswati devotee, Madugula Nagaphani Sharma, praised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for his visionary leadership, stating that no other leader in the country possesses foresight like his. He commended the initiatives taken by Chandrababu during the united Andhra Pradesh to promote the state's culture and traditions. He emphasised that it was Chandrababu's vision that brought the IT industry to Hyderabad, transforming the lives of millions. Nagaphani Sharma recalled how, 30 years ago, Chandrababu Naidu had predicted the transformation of the Madhapur region, which was once strewn with rocks and rubble, into a thriving IT hub. He highlighted that the entire area would be populated with IT professionals,

both domestic and international. In such an environment, he stressed the importance of preserving and promoting Andhra Pradesh's culture and traditions. He added that it was during this time that Chandrababu allocated land for the establishment of the "Avadhana Saraswati Peetham" in Madhapur, ensuring that the state's rich heritage would flourish amidst the rapidly growing IT sector.  
 Continued on Page 2

# Morality in politics needs more than disqualification!

What qualities are needed in public representatives? Is morality needed in politics? Can disqualification stop the unlawful methods used to acquire the required numbers in legislatures? These are the questions exercising both electors and the principal players of the system in the context of the immoral practices that frequently occur in democracies.

his party till his tenure ends. Shifting loyalties to another party after getting elected on a particular party's ticket is considered an offensive act. The Representation of People's Act of 1952 does not permit this shifting of loyalty and those who engage in it will lose their membership in the House.

The issue grabbed attention as BRS Working President KT Rama Rao approached the SC seeking the disqualification of seven BRS legislators who defected to the Congress in Telangana. KTR took up the issue due to the absence of the party's president K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) due to a recent hip surgery



in power games occasionally. The principal political players in the Telugu states have a track record of luring legislators of other parties to defect by offering them Cabinet berths, licenses to expand their businesses and assuring protection for their assets etc.

If one takes a look at recent defections, there are many examples to see how these kinds of things have been made easy to secure desired results. The BRS whose Working President happens to be the petitioner in the present case of seeking disqualification is the accused for the same offence during its decade-old rule. The then principal opposition Congress was stripped of that status by the BRS by decimating it through defections.

Telangana as the BRS decided to wipe it out and almost all TDP MLAs decided to join the BRS. KCR's former TDP colleagues even requested him to allow his parent party to exist instead of wiping it out.

BRS made a legislator who had defected a minister showing the ugly face of defections. The roles of victims and perpetrators on the issue of defections seem to have changed. Naturally, all political parties that seek the people's mandate do whatever is necessary to disturb the opposition. It is considered to be a show of supremacy at that moment. When it becomes the opposition it will cry foul.



## US deports illegal Indian immigrants Sending military transport aircraft carrying them to India

A military transport aircraft of the US is bringing a group of Indian migrants, in the first such deportation to India as part of the big crackdown on illegal immigrants by President Donald Trump in his second term at the White House.

## Subhash calls for effort to ensure MLC candidate's win

Discussions held on key issues ahead of Guntur and Krishna MLC elections

A meeting of coalition candidates was held at the TDP office in Machilipatnam, Krishna district, on Tuesday. The meeting was chaired by Minister for Labour, Vasanmetti Subhash, alongside Krishna district Minister Kollu Ravindra, erstwhile Guntur and Krishna MLC graduates' candidate Alapati Raja, MLAs, and Corporation Chairpersons.



Minister Subhash further stated that the people had reposed their faith in the coalition government, believing that under Naidu's leadership, the state would witness significant development and welfare initiatives. He assured that the coalition government would generate 20 lakh job opportunities, with companies relocating from Davos. He also stressed that addressing crucial issues such as the development

## Stage set for Delhi...

Polling will begin at 7 am on Wednesday and continue until 6 pm under tight security arrangements. The Election Commission has deployed 220 companies of paramilitary forces, 35,626 Delhi Police personnel, and 19,000 home guards to ensure peaceful voting. Nearly 3,000 polling booths have been identified as sensitive, and special security arrangements, including drone surveillance, have been made at some of these locations.

## YSRCP team complains to SEC over poll violence

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has once again lodged a complaint with the State Election Commission (SEC) regarding violence and alleged irregularities committed by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) alliance in the ongoing municipal by-elections.

Vishnu asserted that the YSRCP had foreseen such violent incidents and had repeatedly alerted the SEC and police in advance, urging preventive measures. However, he alleged that the police failed to act, refusing to protect YSRCP corporators in Tirupati despite multiple appeals.

## Madugula...

Nagaphani Sharma underscored that the decision to set up the Saraswati Peetham among prominent IT companies was a testament to the CM's foresight.

## AP's power supply rises...

In coordination with state governments, the Ministry of Power has set a target to add at least 80,000 MW of thermal capacity by 2031-32. Currently, 28,020 MW of thermal capacity is under construction, while contracts for an additional 19,200 MW have been awarded for FY2024-25.

TODAY ALMANAC. Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha. Tithi: Ashtami, Feb 05 02:31 AM to Feb 05 12:35 AM. Navami: Feb 06 12:35 AM to Feb 06 10:53 PM. Nakshatram: Bharani: Feb 04 09:49 PM to Feb 05 08:33 PM. Krithika: Feb 05 08:33 PM to Feb 06 07:29 PM. Rahukalam: 12:30 PM to 1:55 PM. Yamagandam: 08:15 AM to 09:40 AM. Varjyam: 08:01 AM to 09:33 AM. Gulika: 11:05 AM to 12:30 PM. Amritakalam: 04:00 PM to 05:31 PM. Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL. VIJAYAWADA WEATHER. Forecast: Mostly Sunny. Temp: 36°. Humidity: 53%. Sunrise: 6:36 AM. Sunset: 6:05 PM. Updated: February 4, 2025 5:00 PM.

## Govt takes steps to curb poultry mortality

Larger poultry farms have reported significantly higher mortality rates compared to backyard chickens. Dr Damodara Naidu also pointed to the substantial influx of migratory birds, particularly in the Kolleru Lake region of West Godavari district, as a possible contributing factor to the disease spread.

launched awareness programmes. Veterinarians are actively engaging with poultry farmers, offering essential medical advice and guidelines on preventive measures. Scientists and veterinary experts have collected samples from affected farms and sent them for analysis to the State Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Vijayawada and the High-Security Lab in Bhopal.

## AP should conduct caste...

"A caste census should be undertaken in our state (Andhra Pradesh) as well. In a population of 5.5 crore, the number of backward people should be determined. The number of people from weaker sections who are subjected to caste discrimination should also be accounted for," said Sharmila in a post on X.

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# NTR dist resolves 96 pc petitions received at Revenue Sadassulu

● Collector stresses importance of thorough examination of each petition as soon as it is received

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has announced that a remarkable 96 per cent of the petitions submitted during the 33-day-long Revenue Sadassulu in the district have been successfully resolved. He explained that out of a total of 3,111 petitions received, the district administration addressed 3,015 pleas.

In a video conference held on Tuesday, CCLA G Jayalaxmi engaged with collectors from all districts to discuss the resolution of revenue session petitions, progress in PGRS-revenue applications, and other pertinent issues. Dr Lakshmisha was present at the collectorate along with officials, where they outlined the actions being taken to address the petitions and shared insights on the progress made.

During the conference, the Collector emphasised the importance of thorough examination of

each petition as soon as it is received. He mentioned the direct or virtual interactions with relevant field officers and highlighted the importance of robust coordination among officials from various departments, along with effective auditing, as key factors in enhancing the district's petition resolution efficiency. Nodal officers are also continuously focusing on the resolu-

tion of these petitions, he added.

Regarding specific categories of grievances, Dr Lakshmisha reported that 105 petitions related to the Record of Rights (RoR) were registered, with 102 already resolved. For re-survey grievances, out of 148 registered, 137 have been addressed. In terms of grievances related to government land assignments, eight were registered, with seven resolved. In

addition, concerning house site assignments, 272 grievances were recorded, and 269 have been settled. For petitions regarding the inclusion or deletion in the 22-A list, 105 petitions were submitted, with 102 resolved. Dr Lakshmisha assured that efforts are going on to eliminate obstacles to resolving the remaining petitions swiftly. Key officials attended the meeting.

# Naidu went back on 'Super Six': Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



YSRCP president and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy convened a key meeting with senior party leaders after returning from a two-week London tour. The discussions focused on recent political developments and Naidu's latest statements.

YS Jagan accused Chandrababu Naidu of backtracking on his "Super Six" election promises, misleading the public with excuses while burdening them with higher electricity charges. He urged party leaders to expose Naidu's deceptions and actively engage with the people. He also condemned the state government's move to privatize new medical col-

leges and reduce medical seats, calling it a blow to poor students. He criticized Naidu's opposition to additional medical seats, despite the Centre's expansion plans.

Other issues discussed included pension cuts, halted welfare schemes, and municipal poll malpractices. Senior leaders, including Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and several former ministers, participated in the meeting.

# State govt intervenes in TDR Hub admission row

● Inquiry uncovers irregularities; admissions suspended pending review

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



The State government has stepped in to address the controversy surrounding admissions at the Transdisciplinary Research (TDR) Hub, established under former Andhra University (AU) Vice-Chancellor Prof PVGD Prasad Reddy. The hub has faced intense scrutiny over its admission policies, which allowed PhD candidates to enrol outside of their respective university departments, leading to allegations of irregularities and favouritism.

Following the formation of the new coalition government, officials received numerous complaints regarding the TDR Hub's admissions. An inquiry committee, appointed by the in-charge AU

Vice-Chancellor, submitted its findings, prompting directives that all PhD admissions must henceforth be conducted through the relevant

university departments. Despite these directives, several university principals and faculty members voiced strong opposition to the

TDR Hub's admissions. Some faculty members even refused to conduct pre-PhD exams and viva sessions for TDR Hub candidates, escalating the situation and prompting complaints to the State government and the Higher Education Department.

In response, the department has ordered the suspension of all admissions at the TDR Hub. Authorities have been instructed to submit a comprehensive report detailing the centre's past and current activities. Pre-PhD exams and viva sessions for TDR Hub candidates have been put on hold and redirected to the respective university departments. Established in 2022, the TDR Hub admitted nearly 1,000 students in its first year (2022-23). Of these, 681

were admitted through the APR SET, while the remainder were admitted via the executive quota. While RSET admissions have not been challenged, the executive quota admissions have come under intense scrutiny, with calls for a thorough review. Allegations have surfaced that a close associate of a then-senior official played a key role in facilitating these admissions.

The State government and university authorities are now under pressure to resolve the ongoing concerns surrounding the TDR Hub's admissions and determine the future of the centre. The controversy has raised questions about transparency and adherence to established procedures within the university system.

# Long waits, broken equipment plague Cardiology Dept at KGH

● Only treadmill machine has been out of order for the past four months

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



Patients seeking cardiac care at King George Hospital (KGH) are forced to endure long waits for crucial diagnostic tests. A recent visit by The Pioneer correspondent revealed a chaotic scene at the cardiology department, with scores of patients and their families waiting anxiously for essential procedures like 2D echocardiograms and treadmill tests.

The cardiology outpatient department (OPD) sees approximately 250 patients daily. While emergency cases are prioritised, routine diagnostic procedures are hampered by severe bottlenecks. On Tuesday, over 100 people were observed waiting outside the 2D echo test room, some for hours. Ramamma, an elderly patient, expressed her frustration after a two-hour wait.

The 2D echo test, vital for assessing heart structure and function, is particularly problematic. Tokens for the test are distributed at 8 AM, but only 100 are given out daily, leading to a rush as early as 5 AM by inpatients and their attendants. Many OPD patients struggle to get a test despite multiple visits. Even those with tokens aren't guaranteed a test, as testing concludes at 2 PM, forcing those who miss the cutoff to return the next day. Rameshwara

Rao recounted his experience of being turned away on Saturday and having to return on Monday.

Adding to the patients' woes, the department's only treadmill machine, essential for stress testing, has been out of order for the past four months. This forces patients to seek these tests elsewhere, often at greater expense and inconvenience. Despite repeated requests from doctors, hospital administration has yet to resolve the issue. The cardiology department operates in an aging building slated for demolition and reconstruction under the Nadu-Nedu programme, but progress has been slow. With the cardiology OPD serving nearly 3,000 patients monthly, there is an urgent need for a larger, better-equipped facility.

Allu Simhachalam, a patient from Bobbili admitted to Rajendra Prasad ward, described the overwhelming situation. "I came with oxygen support, yet I have been waiting for hours for a 2D echo. After this, I need a scan, where there is also a heavy rush. Critical patients should be able to get these tests within their wards." Dr. Adilakshmi, Head of Cardiology, acknowledged the demand, stating they conduct 100-120 tests daily with two machines, including special paediatric tests. She emphasised efforts to streamline services despite space constraints. The situation underscores the need for better infrastructure and resource management at KGH to ensure timely cardiac care.

# Grandeur marks Rathasaptami

● MALAYAPPA SHINES BRIGHT ON SURYAPRABHA

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

In connection with Surya Jayanti on the auspicious day of Radhasapthami, Sri Malayappa Swamy, in all His celestial grandeur, shone bright on the Suryaprabha Vahanam and blessed His devotees along the four mada streets on Tuesday morning.

The first and foremost divine car-

rier, Suryaprabha Vahanam, commenced from Vahana Mandapam at 5:30 am and moved swiftly along the four mada streets. The devotees were mesmerised to witness the elegance and majesty of the Utsava Murthy atop the Sun carrier. As per available inscriptional data, Radhasapthami has been observed as an annual festival since 1564. Meanwhile, the first rays of the Sun

touched the holy feet of Sri Malayappa Swamy at around 6:48 am. The devotees, eagerly waiting to witness this divine moment, chanted "Govinda... Govinda" in unison, making the entire Tirumala reverberate with the sacred name.

TTD Chairman BR Naidu, EO J Syamala Rao, Board members Jyothula Nehru, MS Raju, Bhanuprakash Reddy, N Sadasiva

Rao, Naresh, Santaram, Rajasekhar Goud, Panabaka Lakshmi, Vemireddi Prasanthi Reddy, Suchitra Ella, Janaki Devi, and Rangarsi were present.

Among other officials, Additional EO Venkaiah Chowdary, JEO Veerabrahmam, CVSO Manikantha Chandolu, SP Harshvardhan Raju, and CE Satyanarayana were also present.

# WOMAN DONATES LIFETIME SAVINGS OF RS 50L TO TTD

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A septuagenarian woman on Monday donated Rs 50 lakh to Sri Venkateswara Sarva Shreyas (SV Balamandir) Trust of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which she saved over the past 35 years.

C. Mohana from Renigunta donated the amount from the savings she made while working in the development and disaster management sector under various capacities across Kosovo, Albania, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and India, including in the United Nations.



# Public outreach programme marks World Cancer Day

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In observance of World Cancer Day, the Tata Memorial Centre, Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Visakhapatnam, organised a 'Public Outreach Programme' on Tuesday. The event, aimed at raising awareness about cancer prevention and early detection, was held at the institute, a Grant-in-Aid facility under the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India.

District Collector Vijaya Krishnan was the chief guest. In her address, she commended the hospital's efforts in providing quality cancer care in Andhra Pradesh and emphasised the importance of public awareness. "Do not fear cancer. Maintain menstrual hygiene, spread awareness, take preventive measures, and seek early detection and treatment. Utilise the hospital's services for care and prevention," she urged.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Umesh Patan Shetty, Director of Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre, Visakhapatnam, highlighted the critical role played by Mid-Level Health Providers (MLHPs), Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), and Medical Officers in cancer detection and prevention. "Each of you is a champion. The fundamental training provided for early cancer detection, which was once a challenge, now enables early diagnosis, facilitating effective prevention and treatment. Let us work together towards this goal," he stated.

# VMC plans amphitheatre in KL Rao Park

● OFFICIALS ASKED TO EXPEDITE REPAIRS WITHIN THE PARK

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra has said that in a bid to enhance recreational experiences for the citizens, the VMC plans to establish an amphitheatre in KL Rao Park. During an inspection on Tuesday, he visited the park located in the Chittinagar area, along with the Suryaraopet and One Town regions, assessing the potential site for the new facility.

During his visit, Commissioner Dhyanchandra emphasised the need for the amphitheatre to foster a more enjoyable atmosphere at KL Rao Park. He directed officials to expedite repairs within the park to prevent any inconvenience to visitors and suggested dedicating a specific area for parking to accommodate the high foot traffic that the park experiences daily.

The VMC Commissioner reviewed restoration efforts of the Indoor Stadium, which had been

damaged by recent floods. He instructed officials to complete the flooring with quality standards and make it accessible to the public as soon as possible. The ongoing lighting installations at the park were also evaluated. Dhyanchandra instructed for accelerated progress on these repairs and instructed officials to enhance the entrance of KL Rao Park to make it more aesthetically appealing.

Dhyanchandra undertook a field assessment of sanitation management in Bandar Road and Suryaraopet, as well as an inspection of the Anna Canteen located near Gandhi Women's College. He examined critical aspects such as the issuance of designated token numbers, food quality, kitchen cleanliness, drinking water facilities, sanitation, and toilet maintenance. He instructed that all nodal officers remain vigilant to ensure that citizens do not face any difficulties.

# Call for collective action in fight against cancer

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Observing the World Cancer Day on February 4, Manipal Hospitals successfully organised a cancer awareness programme, with City Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu as the chief guest. Addressing the gathering, the Police Commissioner con-

gratulated Manipal Hospitals for organising the event. He highlighted that cancer affects a significant number of people, but it can be controlled and lives saved through early detection and awareness. He stressed the need for such awareness programmes in society, stating, "These types of awareness initiatives are crucial

for the community." The event, held under the theme "United by Unique", aimed to stress the importance of collective action in the fight against cancer. The Commissioner urged the public to focus on raising awareness about cancer, early detection, and the importance of advanced treatment methods. He

further encouraged everyone to take part in cancer awareness efforts, get screened, and contribute to the battle against the disease. The event was also attended by Guntur District SP S Satish, administrators of Manipal Hospitals, renowned oncology specialists, cancer survivors and hospital staff.



# Collector emphasises need for bolstering cooperative sector

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector P Prashanthi has emphasised the need of bolstering the cooperative sector and directed the officials concerned to formulate an action plan. The East District Cooperative Society committee meeting was held here on Tuesday, attended by Eluru, Kakinada, DCCB CEOs/Zilla Parishad CEOs, and committee members. Speaking on the occasion, Collector P Prashanthi recalled that the year 2025-26 has been declared as the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives. She said that a proposal should be made on suitable activities following Vision 2047 towards economic strengthening.

The Collector ordered the officials that steps should be taken to benefit tenant farmers and dairy farmers by granting loans to further improve employment opportunities in agriculture-related sectors. She also directed the officials to submit a report on the progress of the schemes being implemented by the Central Government to strengthen the cooperative sector and the details of the programmes undertaken on behalf of the district administration. "The Cooperative Commissioner and Registrar of Cooperative Societies should prepare an annual plan for the implementation of target programmes in the district," she told them.

The Collector highlighted: "A discussion on the annual plan will be held in January, digitalisation loans for tenant farmers in



February, student awareness programmes in March, health camp in April, DWCRAs associations, PACs society training in May, workshops for handloom cooperative societies in June, fisheries cooperative societies in July, financial integration under the District Cooperative Bank in August, youth awareness in September, workshop under the DCMS in October, service provider banking, credit society seminar in November and workshops for cooperative societies under the DCCB in December." Collector Prashanthi instructed the officials to issue orders and take fruitful steps to establish a model cooperative society for the mandal, providing 100% loans to the tenants of agriculture and animal husbandry through DCCB.

The Collector also asked the officials to submit to her a report regarding the financial transactions carried out. Petrol filling stations and generic drug stores which are run under the cooperative sector should be monitored every month. The relevant departments should move forward with equal speed with regard to the respective schemes towards achieving the goals of the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives, she told the officials. District Cooperative Officer M Jagannadha Rao, Agriculture Officer S Madhav Rao, Animal Husbandry Officer K Srinivasa Rao, ZP CEO Subba Rao and Kakinada ZP Deputy CEO Ramgopal were among those who attended the meeting.



## Youth held for blackmailing techie; Rs 1.81 cr recovered

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

A youth was arrested for blackmailing and extorting Rs 2.53 crore from a software engineer, with Rs 1.81 crore recovered from him.

Kovvuru DSP Dev Kumar shared with the media that the victim, a software engineer from Hyderabad, was staying in a women's hostel. Another software engineer, Anusha, also resided in the same hostel.

Anusha's husband, Dev Naik, frequently visited the hostel to meet his wife, and over time, became friends with the victim. Dev Naik allegedly threatened the victim, claiming to possess nude videos of her. He warned that he would upload the videos on social media if she refused to comply with his demands.

Fearing the consequences and the potential social stigma, the woman succumbed to his extortion, handing over a total of Rs

2.53 crore over the past three years. Eventually, concerned for their daughter's safety, her parents took her to their hometown of Nidadavole and filed a police complaint. Following the investigation, Dev Naik was arrested, and Rs 1.81 crore was recovered from him. It was later revealed that Naik never had any nude videos of the victim. Kovvuru CI Viswam and Nidadavole CI Thilak were also involved in the case.

## TDP candidate Munikrishna elected Deputy Mayor

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Munikrishna, the TDP candidate, has been elected as the new Deputy Mayor of Tirupati Municipal Corporation. Munikrishna received support from 26 members, while YSRCP candidate Bhaskar Reddy garnered the support of 21 members. The Deputy Mayor election was initially scheduled for Monday, but due to insufficient quorum, the election was postponed to Tuesday. Out of the 50 corporators in Tirupati Municipal Corporation, currently, 47 members are present. Tirupati Jana Sena MLA Arani Srinivasulu, Tirupati YSRCP MP Gurumurthi and MLC Sipai Subrahmanyam have registered as ex-officio members. For the election, half of the members (25) were expected to attend, but only 22 members, including MLA Arani, showed up on Monday, which led to the postponement of the election. Consequently, the election for the Deputy Mayor was successfully held on Tuesday.

## Wildfire prevented in Rajanagaram forest

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh commended the timely efforts of officials that prevented a wildfire from spreading to other areas of the Rajanagaram protected forest.

The Minister highlighted that swift and effective action by the forest and fire officials had averted a major wildfire in the area. He assured that the coalition government remains committed to preserving the country's rich wildlife and forest resources.

Kandula Durgesh mentioned that a wildfire had broken out in the forest, but the fire brigade

responded promptly and contained the blaze. As a result, the large trees in the forest were saved from destruction, he added.

Accompanied by local MLA Battula Balarama Krishna and other officials, the Tourism Minister visited the affected area and inspected the damaged trees. He praised the fire brigade personnel for extinguishing the flames before they could spread to other parts of the forest, thereby protecting the valuable forest area.

The Minister appreciated the swift response of the forest and fire service officials and emphasised the need for proactive measures to prevent such wildfires in the future.



## Gottipati urges leaders to work in coordination for MLC poll victory

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar called upon coalition leaders to work in a coordinated manner to secure victory in the upcoming Legislative Council graduate constituency elections.

Chairing a meeting with coalition leaders here on Monday, the Minister discussed the strategy to be adopted for the election.

Addressing the gathering, Gottipati urged leaders in the district to take the MLC elections seri-

ously and put in their best efforts to ensure victory. He stressed the importance of taking the coalition government's welfare schemes to the people and highlighting the developmental initiatives undertaken in the last seven months.

"We won three MLC seats while in the Opposition. Now, we must win all the seats. The coalition leaders must ensure there is no lack of coordination or misunderstanding among them," he said.

The Minister also instructed leaders to counter the baseless

allegations and negative campaign being carried out by YSRCP leaders.

"Once the MLC elections conclude, the notification for the DSC examination will be issued, and appointment letters will be handed over before the start of the academic year. Leaders must inform the public about this," he stated.

He further assured that the free bus travel scheme for women would be implemented soon and urged all graduate voters to exercise their franchise without fail.

# Fishermen struggle as compensation remains unpaid

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

Over 2,000 fishermen in Anakapalli district are growing increasingly desperate as they wait for the promised compensation of Rs. 10,000 for the fishing ban imposed between April and June of last year. The total compensation due amounts to Rs. 2 crore, a critical lifeline for families struggling to survive.

The annual fishing ban, aimed at protecting marine life during the breeding season, restricts fishing activities for three months. While the fishermen understand its neces-

sity, the ban results in a significant loss of income, leaving families in financial distress. To mitigate this, the government has traditionally provided compensation, but last year's payments were withheld due to the election code of conduct, leaving fishermen in a vulnerable position. Despite the formation of the new government, the issue remains unresolved.

The district Fisheries Department records show 2,168 eligible fishermen across 27 fishing villages, including hubs like Pudimadaka, Bangaramma Palem, and Rajayyapeta, who



were supposed to receive the compensation. However, fishermen's leaders claim the actual number is higher, estimating the amount owed at around Rs. 2.16 crore.

The delayed compensation has exacerbated the financial hardships faced by these communities. Adding to their struggle, a series of cyclones, storms, and low-pressure systems from August to December last year disrupted fishing activity.

With the next fishing ban just a few months away, the fishermen are urgently appealing for the release of the pending

funds. They complain that this compensation is vital to cover daily expenses and prepare for the upcoming fishing season. Many are already burdened with debt and fear that continued delays will push them deeper into poverty.

Beyond the past compensation, the fishermen are urging the government to fulfil its election promise to double this year's compensation to Rs. 20,000. They argue that the current amount is insufficient to make up for lost income and to address the risks they face on the water.



## 9 red sanders logs seized, 6 smugglers arrested

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Red Sanders Anti Smuggling Task Force (RSASTF) personnel seized nine red sanders logs and arrested six smugglers at Veeraballi forest range in Annamayya district.

DSP V Srinivasa Reddy told the media on Tuesday that a RSASTF team led by RI (Operations) G Suresh Kumar Reddy and SBO G Anil Kumar, conducted combing in the Veeraballi forest range.

After checking the entry and exit points at Veeraballi forest range, the team members reached

Jarikona where they noticed some people carrying red sanders. When the task force team members were nearing them, the red sander smugglers tried to attack them. However the task force member apprehended six of them while others managed to escape into the forest.

The police seized 9 red sander logs and arrested six smugglers. The arrested smugglers and logs were shifted to the task force police station in Tirupati. A massive search was launched to arrest those who escaped.

## Goods train derails

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Three bogies of a goods train derailed at Guntakal railway station on Tuesday. The railway officials said that the 12, 13 and 14 wagons of the goods train derailed. The derailment took place at the south cabin. The trains running on Gooty and Guntakal line came to a halt at various places. The railway engineers rushed to the place and were making efforts to restore the train traffic.



## RS 5 L EX GRATIA GIVEN TO KIN OF ELECTROCUTED MAN

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister Dola Balaveeranjanyulu handed over an ex-gratia payment of Rs 5 lakh to the family of a man who died due to electrocution.

The Minister presented the compensation to the family of Katamreddy Guruva Reddy, who was electrocuted on August 14, 2004, at Dasireddyapalem in Kondapi mandal. The cheque was handed over at his camp office on Tuesday. Minister Balaveeranjanyulu had brought the incident to the notice of Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar, following which the government sanctioned the ex-gratia amount. While handing over the cheque, he assured the family of the government's continued support. The bereaved family expressed their gratitude to the Minister for providing the financial assistance.



## Thenmar Mallanna's remarks flayed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stating that the people would decide the fate of politicians, Roads and Buildings (R&B) Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that the party gave a B-form to Thenmar Mallanna and organised a huge rally and ensured his victory convincing all sections. Would anybody want the defeat of party contestant? Venkat Reddy asked.

However, it is not proper to conduct a meeting and scold other castes.

Venkat Reddy said that the Congress party took a great decision for the sake of the BCs.

Venkat Reddy said that Thenmar Mallanna won on Congress party ticket and was making allegations against Congress leaders and the government. "I welcome Mallanna if he scolds me but it is not correct of him to scold a community", Venkat Reddy said.

Stating that there is a need for a booklet to write the assets of KCR, Harish Rao and KTR, Venkat Reddy said that only



Kavitha participated in the caste census.

Venkat Reddy said that Jacharla MLA Anirudh Reddy is not only close to him but also close to Uttam Kumar Reddy and Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka.





## FIRST COLUMN A DARK CLOUD BEFORE THE GOLDEN DAWN

Are we past the point of no return, or is there still hope for a new dawn?



RAJYOGI BRAHM KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

None of us would deny the fact that the whole world is in chaos today. The human race is in more pain and suffering than ever before. The root cause of this is, because three key powers i.e., religion, politics and science that run the world have miserably failed to function by their essential characteristics to look after the wellbeing of people at large. These powers have deviated from their normal course, lost their essential traits and degraded to the lowest level, which is quite visible from the sorry state of affairs across the world.

The power of religion which was meant to show human beings the righteous path which is necessary to maintain social harmony has today become a perpetrator of conflict. It's evident from the facts that religion has failed to uphold moral values in society which can be seen in the form of ever-increasing molestation and sexual assault cases at homes, workplaces, public places and even at schools and colleges that are considered temples of learning.

The historic Nirbhaya case is still very fresh in the minds of people who were shattered to see the height of barbarism to which a human can



go. Today the power of politics is also in a state of crisis. No government anywhere in the world can claim that they are free from corruption. Laws that are made for the benefit of the common public are turning out to be mere eyewash. People in power go scot-free despite breaking several laws, whereas a common man keeps paying penalties on various occasions for not abiding by the law.

On one side governments talk of clean fuels & make pollution checks mandatory, and on the other side, they continue to add a greater number of vehicles to roads each year to please the automotive sector. So, instead of reducing vehicular traffic by introducing greater modes of public transport, the government is making more and more cars accessible to the public at cheap rates. Is this right? Science, the third key power that runs the world, emerged as a result of man's search for a better life. It harnessed natural resources to channel them into means useful for human consumption. However, today the scenario is such that the energy tapped from nature has gone out of human control.

The use of science in violating the laws of nature has become the root cause of environmental imbalance leading to a rise in natural calamities which is evident by the recent report by the UN Panel on Climate Change making it crystal clear that large-scale global warming has triggered the melting of polar ice caps which is the biggest danger facing humankind. Modern scientific advancement that was meant to help humans live a better life has led to a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, endangering global peace and harmony. So, in short, we can say that three powers governing the world have gone haywire & they are steering us to mass destruction. But, what's more surprising is that despite ample knowledge of this phenomenon, nobody seems inclined to save the situation. Hence it won't be exaggerating to say that we have surely come to the point of no return, because with scarcity of non-renewable natural resources, spread of diseases, population explosion, social chaos and nuclear threat accompanied by natural disasters, the world scenario looks utterly scary. Under such darkness, the common man is bound to look UP to seek Almighty Supreme's help as the last resort to safety. Just imagine, when the world reaches its highest peak of unrest, it will be a sight that only a few of us would be able to bear because the kind of destruction that the world has prepared for is bound to shake the conscience of the most stone-hearted and guilty. Perhaps this impending destruction and clearing of human conscience is like a silver lining in the dark cloud which is perhaps the only way to the golden morning that we human souls have been endlessly waiting for. Remember !! Many hidden truths are often unobserved, not invisible.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

# A fierce three-way battle for the capital's throne

With a closely contested fight and shifting voter sentiments, the Delhi election results could send ripples across the national political landscape



RAMAKANT CHAUDHARY

Chilly Delhi, though, the blitzkrieg of a high-octane election campaign, not bordering on the sort of "AAP-da" while going at hammer and tongs of Tu-Tu-Mai-Mai storm during a prime-time TV news show, for claiming Delhi Ki Kursi, has heated the political cauldron. A strong 1.55 crore voters of Delhi are basking in the sunshine of campaign songs for the Delhi Assembly Elections 2025: "Bahane Nahi Badlav Chahiye..." rendered by BJP against the AAP's Bhojpuri-laced tagline "Babua Phir Se CM Hoyihe... Delhi Ke Badal Dihe Surat, Suhawan, Khubsurat Ho, A Rajaji..." From all perspectives, who will win the ballot battle?

Will AAP score a hat-trick? Or will the resurgent Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), relying on Prime Minister Narendra Modi as its face, hit Mauka (anti-incumbency) Pe Chauka? Or will the Grand Old Party deliver the googly of "Har Jarurat Hogi Puri, Dilli Mein Congress Hai Jaruri," an effort to regain its lost electoral ground in the triangular contest? The fate of Delhi will be sealed on February 5 when people exercise their franchise. And the D-day, February 8, when the results will be announced, will blow the conch of the new beginning of the 70-member eighth Vidhan Sabha.

The Phalodi Satta Bazar, which earlier showed AAP crossing the majority mark of 36, has revised its estimates. The Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP—whose mainstay of incorruptibility is being challenged by the Congress and BJP, which have levelled allegations against its top brass leaders—could clock a significantly reduced tally this time around.

According to the latest revised estimates, the BJP—which looks bullish after its recent victories in Maharashtra and Haryana—may bag around 31 seats, a good 5 seats short of the majority mark. A projection of a wafer-thin margin of victory between the AAP-BJP fierce slugfest has made party workers and strategists somersault to pump up their tally amidst the Delhi election campaign hitting its last leg.

To woo voters, manifestos, guarantees, and welfare schemes appear to be tearing apart the atmosphere of the city-state. The Delhi Assembly Elections 2025 appear to be a big freebie face-off. Mahila Samman Yojana, Sanjeevani Yojana, Sankal Patra, Ayushman Bharat Scheme, Yuva Udaan Yojana, Pyari Didi Yojana, et al—innocent voters find themselves in an Alice-in-Wonderland.

**BJP Resurgence**  
Winning the Delhi assembly poll has become an Achilles' heel for the PM Modi-led BJP while the saffron juggernaut swept Delhi's seven seats in the Lok Sabha Elections in 2014, 2019 and 2024. Having last won the Delhi election in 1993, the BJP wants to turn the tide this time by dismantling the proverbial equation of Modi for PM and Kejriwal for CM. Riding on the cusp of being the only party among the three in 2020 to have recorded an increased vote share, the BJP is leaving no stone unturned to repeat this achievement in 2025 as well. For the BJP, the road to victory runs through North and Northwest Delhi. In the



HAVING LAST WON THE DELHI ELECTION IN 1993, THE BJP WANTS TO TURN THE TIDE THIS TIME BY DISMANTLING THE PROVERBIAL EQUATION OF MODI FOR PM AND KEJRIWAL FOR CM

Wazirpur constituency, Prime Minister Narendra Modi handed over keys to more than 1,650 flats to slum residents, creating a significant connection with local voters. Key areas like Chandni Chowk, Northwest Delhi, and Northeast Delhi have become pivotal grounds for the BJP's potential resurgence.

The BJP should prioritize the 38 constituencies where it secured over 40% of the vote share in 2020. Out of these, the party narrowly lost 17 seats to AAP by less than five percentage points but managed to win eight. These represent easier opportunities to gain ground. For the remaining 21 seats, the BJP will aim to capitalize on anti-incumbency sentiments against AAP to sway voters in its favour.

**AAP Strategy**  
AAP of 2025, which might dominate the elections as the C-Voter survey suggests, looks different from its 2020 avatar. The Lok Sabha Elections 2024 speaks volumes that AAP, despite an alliance with Congress, drew nought in all seven parliamentary seats of Delhi. Kejriwal's AAP looks lacking in sympathy as experts opine. Besieged with corruption charges and stern anti-incumbency, AAP has meticulously evolved strategies to launch popular welfare schemes to outweigh the allegations.

The party leaders are burning the midnight oil to retain floating voters who keep changing allegiance during the Lok Sabha polls and assembly elections. Kejriwal's poll manoeuvre is trying hard to win the hearts of Dalit and Muslim voters. AAP has

viscerally attracted voters from the Purvanchal community—a key demographic in Delhi hailing from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand that account for around 40 per cent of the electorate and holds a significant sway on 27 seats—by connecting the community on the ground level as the party, according to media grapevine, has held around 600 meetings in this context.

**Congress Revival**  
With nothing to lose, Congress, which went from dominating Delhi's electoral landscape from 1998 to 2013 to not having a single MLA since, has entered the poll fray late yet remains determined to lock horns with AAP and dislodge the Kejriwal-led establishment from power, avenging the campaign that cost the UPA government heavily over a decade ago. The results of the 2022 Delhi Municipal polls, in which Congress won five wards in the Northeast district areas that were hit by the riots, buttress the perception that the minority community is disillusioned with AAP.

This electoral scenario could reinforce the poll fortune of the BJP, especially the vote bank of Muslims—21.6 lakh in the national capital—who have Congress in their heart and AAP in mind.

The Muslim voters could play a key role in six assembly seats: Babarpur (35 per cent), Okhla (43 per cent), Seelampur (50 per cent), Matia Mahal (48 per cent), Mustafabad (36 per cent), and Ballimaran (38 per cent). In that sense, if Muslims—accounting for 12.86 per cent of Delhi's pop-

ulation—are divided between Congress and AAP, BJP will have the upper hand. The Delhi Elections 2025 is deemed the cynosure of all states' eyes.

The domino effect of its results, which will be declared on February 8, could rattle the poll pitch in Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, and Kerala, where assembly polls are slated to take place in 2025-26. If BJP wins, it will boost the image of the National Democratic Alliance, positioning BJP on top to record a hat-trick after winning Maharashtra and Haryana. On the other side, the victory of AAP will zoom out the political credibility of Arvind Kejriwal as a principal challenger to PM Modi. Also, if it loses the poll battle, the ramifications of which will give a jolt to Punjab, where AAP is in power. Trying to make the high-decibel contest triangular, Congress has put a concentrated campaign in the boroughs dominated by Dalits and minorities. If the grand old party succeeds in regaining the space it had in 2013—after being relegated to the third position behind BJP and AAP, bagging only eight seats—Congress will muster the courage to reach the position it held in 2008 when it secured 43 seats with around 40 per cent of the votes. So far in the campaign, there is no Kejriwal wave, nor is BJP having tailwinds. In the BJP vs AAP battle, only February 8 will decide who will get the reins of the Delhi Sultanate.

(The writer is a senior journalist and currently working with PRP Group as Content Head; views are personal)

## Budget 2025: Bold reforms and innovations to put startups on growth trajectory

Key measures, including an expanded Credit Guarantee Scheme, higher Mudra loan limits, position India as a powerhouse for entrepreneurship and self-reliance

The Union Budget 2025 has laid a strong foundation for a transformative leap in India's startup and MSME ecosystem. At a time when entrepreneurship is fueling economic growth and job creation, the government has introduced a series of strategic measures aimed at fostering financial inclusion, innovation, and global competitiveness.



POOJA SINGH

A key highlight of this budget is the enhanced access to capital. The expansion of the Credit Guarantee Scheme will enable MSMEs and startups to secure funding without collateral, addressing a significant challenge for emerging businesses. Additionally, the substantial increase in the Mudra loan limit will allow early-stage entrepreneurs to scale their

ventures without financial constraints. Simplified tax structures, reduced corporate tax rates, and streamlined GST compliance will further ease cash flow issues, enabling businesses to reinvest in growth. Beyond financial incentives, the budget embraces a futuristic vision by

integrating infrastructure development with digital transformation. The allocation for plug-and-play industrial parks and logistics hubs will provide businesses with ready-to-use infrastructure, significantly reducing setup costs and expediting time-to-market.

The establishment of e-commerce export hubs will open new global opportunities, particularly benefiting sectors such as manufacturing, agritech, and handicrafts. Furthermore, a renewed focus on AI-driven automation and deep-tech innovation ensures that Indian startups remain competitive on a global scale. A crucial aspect of this budget is its emphasis on regulatory simplification and skill development. By easing compliance

norms, streamlining FDI regulations, and encouraging private sector collaboration in skilling initiatives, the government is fostering an environment where startups can concentrate on scaling rather than navigating bureaucratic complexities. These measures position India as a dynamic startup hub, reinforcing the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Ankit Kumar, CEO of Skye Air, lauded the government's initiatives, stating, "The Union Budget 2025 strengthens India's startup and MSME ecosystem with a Rs 10,000 crore fund, ensuring better access to capital and innovation support. Simplified tax structures and compliance reforms will further ease operations, fostering growth and scalability. By integrating dig-



ital infrastructure with financial incentives, the budget paves the way for startups and MSMEs to expand, innovate, and compete globally." The budget also provides a significant boost to innovation and research. The extension of the period of incorporation for startups by five years is expected to

encourage entrepreneurship. Additionally, the allocation of Rs 20,000 crore to support private-sector-driven research and infrastructure expansion at IITs will create a fertile ground for technological advancements.

The introduction of the Credit Guarantee Startup Scheme (CGSS) and the Customised Credit Card for Micro Enterprises (ME-Card) will improve access to credit for startups and MSMEs, fueling growth and development. Ashish Gupta, CEO of Fretbox, remarked, "The Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGS-MSME) will facilitate collateral-free loans, giving a major boost to the manufacturing sector. These initiatives will empower the next generation

of entrepreneurs, researchers, and innovators, and we look forward to seeing the tangible results of these efforts."

By enhancing geospatial data capabilities, this initiative will equip businesses with better insights for logistics, infrastructure, and resource management. Saurabh Rai, CEO of Aarah Technologies, highlighted its impact: "Leveraging AI and advanced computing, startups can drive innovation in sectors like agritech, smart mobility, and climate tech. The mission's open data-sharing framework will reduce dependency on foreign sources, fostering self-reliance and accelerating growth."

The budget also prioritizes boosting exports and manufacturing. Dr. Mahesh Gupta, CMD of Kent RO, praised the

initiatives, saying, "By facilitating easy access to export credit, cross-border factoring support, and tackling non-tariff measures, the government is addressing critical pain points for exporters."

The customized credit cards for MSMEs, fund of funds for startups, and expanded fund-of-funds will undoubtedly improve capital access and stimulate growth. Enhancing investment and turnover limits for MSMEs will also provide a much-needed boost to their operational efficiency."

Overall, the Union Budget 2025 signals a bold commitment to making India a global leader in entrepreneurship, technology, and innovation.

(The author is senior technical writer at Ksolves, views are personal)







# what's brewing?



## PULKIT SAMRAT GEARS UP FOR OTT DEBUT WITH GLORY

Pulkit Samrat is set to make a powerful entry into the digital space with Netflix's upcoming action-packed thriller, *Glory*. Known for his versatility on the big screen, Samrat's debut on OTT is highly anticipated, especially with the series promising an intense blend of sports and crime drama.

In *Glory*, Pulkit portrays a boxer, a role that demanded a rigorous physical transformation and dedicated training. The recently unveiled trailer highlights his commitment, showcasing high-intensity action sequences and emotionally charged moments that promise to captivate audiences.

Speaking about his debut, Samrat shared his excitement, emphasising his collaboration with creator Karan Anshuman. "This will be my first outing in OTT, and I am grateful to be in such great and safe hands. Karan is one of the best creators in the



country, and we are very excited about the show," he said.

The series follows the journey of Raghbir Singh, a legendary boxing coach forced to reconnect with his estranged sons, Dev and Ravi, following a violent attack that alters their lives. As past conflicts resurface, personal struggles intertwine with professional ambitions, setting the stage for a gripping narrative filled with rivalries, revenge, and the pursuit of Olympic glory.

Produced by Mohit Shah and Karan Anshuman under Atomic Films, *Glory* boasts of a stellar cast, including Divyendu Sharma and Suvinder Vicky in key roles. Crafted by Anshuman, Karmanya Ahuja and Vaibhav Vishal, the series is expected to deliver a high-stakes, character-driven story that blends intense action with emotional depth. With its compelling premise and an explosive lead performance by Pulkit, *Glory* is poised to be a standout addition to Netflix's growing roster of gripping originals.

## 'Delhi Crime's intensity always leaves a mark on me'

Actress Rasika Dugal opened up about how her role in the critically acclaimed series "Delhi Crime" has significantly contributed to both her professional and personal evolution over the past seven years. She shared how the show has not only shaped her career but also helped her grow as an artist and an individual, marking a transformative journey in the entertainment industry.

Rasika, who has been associated with the series since its inception, shared, "The show's intensity always leaves a mark on me. Neeti is very close to my heart. We filmed the first season in January 2018, and we are now in 2025 as we film the third. It has been such an interesting experience to grow along with the character. It's not often that one gets to have an experience like this as a performer. It is a rare show that helped me evolve over the past seven years." The actress is all set to reprise her role of IPS officer Neeti Singh in the third season of "Delhi Crime." On Monday, Netflix announced the return of "Delhi

Crime for Season 3," featuring a challenging human trafficking case.

The announcement video begins with DIG Vartika and her team uncovering a truck filled with young girls, exposing a large-scale human trafficking ring operating in India. The operation is orchestrated by the ruthless trafficker Meena, played by Huma Qureshi. Vartika, along with her team members Neeti (Rasika Dugal) and Bhupi, follows a series of clues that unravel a sprawling trafficking network.

Speaking about the new season, the makers said in a statement, "We're thrilled to return with Season 3 of Delhi Crime. Madam Sir and her elite team face their most formidable challenge yet - an adversary who is brutal and ambitious. Building on the raw intensity that earned the series global acclaim, this season delves deeper into the moral complexities of modern India, where progress has a price and the line between victim and perpetrator sometimes blurs."

## Tribute snub? Adnan Sami slams Grammys for missing out on Ustad Zakir Hussain In Memoriam



The 2025 Grammy Awards, held on Monday morning, featured an emotional In Memoriam segment honouring the legendary musicians who passed away in the past year. However, the absence of Indian tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain from the tribute has sparked disappointment and criticism, especially among Indian music enthusiasts.

Renowned singer Adnan Sami was among those who voiced their discontent over the omission. Taking to Instagram, he expressed his frustration, highlighting that Hussain, a four-time Grammy winner and globally celebrated tabla virtuoso, deserved to be acknowledged. In his strongly-worded post, Sami wrote, "Dear Grammys, in your 'Memoriam', you inexcusably missed mentioning the passing away of the Greatest Tabla Player in the World who was also a 4 Time Grammy Winner - Ustad ZAKIR HUSSAIN from India... SHAME ON YOU!" The singer accompanied his post with an image of the late maestro in his element, playing the tabla.

The In Memoriam segment featured Coldplay's frontman Chris Martin delivering a heartfelt performance of All My Love as a tribute to the artists who left an indelible mark on the music industry. However, the absence of Zakir Hussain's name and legacy left many questioning the Recording Academy's oversight. Hussain, who passed away on December 16, 2024, in San Francisco due to idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, was one of the world's most influential percussionists. His family, in an official statement, remembered him as a devoted teacher,



mentor, and cultural ambassador whose contributions shaped generations of musicians. "His prolific work as a teacher, mentor, and educator has left an indelible mark on countless musicians. He hoped to inspire the next generation to go further. He leaves behind an unparalleled legacy as one of the greatest musicians of all time," the statement read. Given Hussain's immense contributions to global music and his multiple Grammy wins, the Grammys' failure to recognize him in their tribute segment has left many disappointed, reigniting conversations about inclusivity and representation in international music awards.

## PC ON HER RELATIONSHIP STANDARDS BEFORE MARRYING NICK JONAS

Priyanka Chopra has always been candid about her personal and professional life, and in an interview with Harper's Bazaar, she opened up about the qualities she sought in a life partner before she began dating singer Nick Jonas. The actress shared that she had a clear vision of what she wanted in a relationship and was looking for someone who aligned with her values.

One of the most important aspects for her was finding someone who wanted a family. Alongside this, she had a set of non-negotiable traits she expected in a partner. The first was honesty because there were times in some of my previous relationships when I'd been hurt by dishonesty. The second was that he had to appreciate the value of family. Third: he had to take his profession very seriously because I take mine very seriously. Fourth: I wanted someone who was creative and had the imagination to dream big with me. And fifth: I wanted someone who had drive and ambition, like I did," she revealed.

Priyanka further emphasized the importance of respect in a relationship, saying, "I wouldn't have married him if he didn't. You have to look for someone who respects you. Respect is different from love and affection... You've got to kiss a lot of frogs until you find your prince."

The Citadel star found all these qualities in Nick Jonas, whom she married in a grand celebration in 2018. Since then, the couple has been setting relationship goals, often expressing their admiration and love for each other.



## Jonita Gandhi is 'super stoked' to perform alongside Ed Sheeran at Chennai concert

Singer Jonita Gandhi is set to join British musician Ed Sheeran on stage at his highly anticipated concert in Chennai on February 5. The collaboration marks an exciting moment for Indian music fans, as the acclaimed Bollywood playback singer shares the spotlight with the globally renowned artist. Ed Sheeran, known for chart-topping hits such as Shape of You, Perfect, and Thinking Out Loud, is currently on the India leg of his Mathematics (+)=x Tour. The six-city tour began in Pune on January 30 and has already seen performances in Hyderabad.

Gandhi, celebrated for Bollywood tracks like What Jhumka?, Sau Tarah Ke, and Gilehriyaan, took to Instagram to share her excitement about the opportunity. "This week has been ultra crazy and it's not over yet! SUPER STOKED to be sharing the stage with one of my absolute favsssss ED SHEERAN!!!" she wrote, alongside Sheeran's tour poster. She also revealed that her performance would include some of her original music as well as a selection of her popular Bollywood songs. "Going to be playing my own music (of course a couple of my film ones too) so come out and support your girl on Feb 5th in Chennai. CAN'T WAIT," she added. Following the Chennai concert, Sheeran's tour will continue with performances in Bengaluru on February 8 and Shillong on February 12, before concluding in Delhi-NCR on February 15. At the final stop, singer-actor Lisa Mishra will join him on stage, further adding to the star-studded lineup. With Jonita Gandhi's dynamic stage presence and Ed Sheeran's global appeal, the Chennai concert promises to be a memorable musical experience for fans.

### FUN

#### ARCHIE



#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



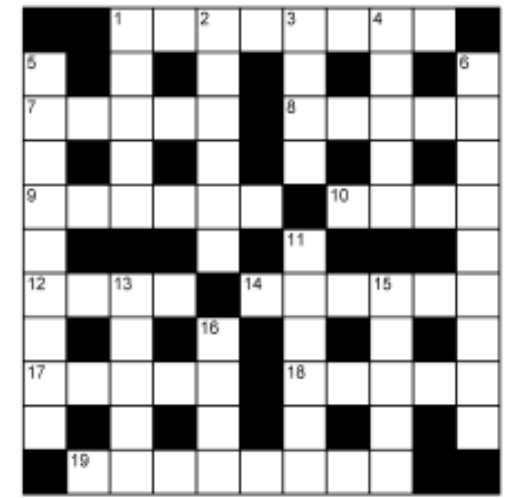
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



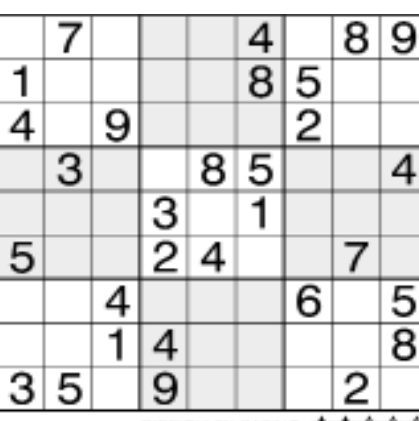
#### CROSSWORD



#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

- 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

- A surgeon's knives
- Egg centres
- Water vapour
- Required
- Burn black by being too close to heat
- Rescue
- Paddle these boats
- Below
- Living
- A very large hill

- A large building for games and training
- The wives of emperors
- A yellow fruit
- Record TV shows with this
- A round vegetable
- Wide smile

#### DOWN

- Find the solution to
- Reply
- Shove
- A flat kind of worm that sucks blood



#### GINGER MEGGS



## Redefining global dance culture with the rhythm of change

TEJAL SINHA  
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Dance is more than just a movement - it's a language of the soul, a bridge between cultures, and a testament to dedication and artistry. Renowned Kathak dancer Ritika Arora embodies all these qualities, her journey weaving together tradition and innovation, discipline and creativity. From the vibrant city of Amritsar to the global stage, she has captivated audiences and inspired students through her mastery of Kathak and other dance forms.

Her love for dance began at a young age, influenced by the colourful Bollywood and Punjabi performances she grew up watching. Her passion soon transformed into a rigorous academic pursuit, as she earned both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Kathak from Guru Nanak Dev University. This formal education laid the foundation for her professional career, allowing her to excel not only as a performer but also as a teacher and choreographer.

Her professional journey started in 2014 when she began working as a Dance and Yoga Teacher at KIDZ Camp Public School. Later, she took on the role of Studio Manager and Choreographer at Pankaj & Preeti Dance Academy, where her talent and leadership skills truly flourished. One of her most remarkable achievements came in 2015 when she choreographed a Guinness World Record performance featuring 8,726 children in Amritsar. This wasn't just a dance event; it was an anti-drug awareness campaign, using the power of movement to spread a vital social message. Reflecting on this experience, Ritika says, "The then Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, Ravi Bhagat, highlighted that the record attempt was designed to raise awareness about drug abuse, which had devastated many lives in Punjab. The performance was a testament to how dance can be a force for social change."

Beyond Kathak, Arora has explored a wide spectrum of dance styles, including Bollywood, Zumba, Bhangra, Bharatanatyam, Hip Hop, Ballroom and Western dance. She attributes her ability to balance these diverse forms to a strategic approach focusing on technical precision, cultural understanding and creative exploration. In 2022, she took a bold step in her career by relocating to the United Kingdom, a move that expanded her artistic horizons and introduced her to new audiences. This transition, she explains, has had a profound impact on her creative vision. "International exposure has given me opportunities to collaborate with artists from different backgrounds. I now have an expanded audience and the chance to engage with the community on a deeper level. Teaching diverse age groups, including the differently abled and elderly, has reinforced my belief that dance is for everyone."

Embracing her role as a mentor and entrepreneur, she founded Nriyarthika Dance Studio Ltd in October 2024, based in Ilford, Essex. With over eight years of teaching experience, she designed her studio to be a hub of artistic excellence, offering classes in multiple dance forms for students of all ages and skill levels. The studio also provides specialized services such as wedding choreography and Zumba sessions. More than just a training center, Nriyarthika is a platform for cultural preservation and community engagement. "We conduct special free sessions for senior citizens and actively promote traditional Indian dance forms like Kathak and Bharatanatyam, ensuring that these art forms continue to thrive in a globalized world."

Her efforts to bridge cultures don't stop there. Ritika's collaboration with KSPARK Entertainment, founded by renowned dancer Karan Pangali, has further solidified her position in the international dance community. Additionally, her partnership with Madhu's Ltd Company has opened up exciting performance opportunities. Through corporate tie-ups, entertainment projects, and educational initiatives, she is

constantly exploring new ways to bring Indian dance to the global stage. Organizing large-scale performances has been another defining aspect of her career. In addition to her Guinness World Record achievement, she successfully choreographed a Zumba and freestyle performance featuring 3,000 children. She recalls, "It was a monumental task that required meticulous planning, securing a venue, coordinating logistics, and ensuring safety measures. Collaborating with schools, community organizations, and volunteers was crucial. The event celebrated the energy and creativity of children while promoting health, unity, and the joy of movement."

Setting ambitious goals is a hallmark of Ritika's career. Whether it's choreographing record-breaking performances or expanding her dance studio, she approaches each milestone with careful planning and perseverance. "Ambitious goals are best achieved by breaking them down into smaller, actionable steps. Engaging with the dance community for motivation and support is also essential. Self-reflection helps me assess my progress and refine my approach to challenges."

As a classical Kathak dancer, she is deeply invested in the role of Indian dance in today's modern, globalized world. She believes that while Kathak preserves tradition, it also serves as a catalyst for innovation. "Kathak has shown remarkable adaptability. Collaborations with Western dance forms like ballet and contemporary dance have led to innovative performances that highlight the universality of artistic expression." She also emphasizes the importance of digital platforms in ensuring the preservation and accessibility of Indian dance for future generations.

Promoting Indian

culture internationally comes with its challenges, including economic constraints, cultural preservation concerns, and audience engagement issues. However, Ritika has tackled these obstacles through digital outreach, collaborations with international institutions, and innovative marketing strategies. "We have adapted to changing audience preferences by making performances more accessible and engaging, often incorporating digital media and cross-cultural collaborations." One of her most fascinating artistic endeavors is her approach to integrating Kathak with contemporary dance forms while staying true to its roots. "Fusion must be approached as a research process. The key lies in preserving the intricate footwork, rhythmic patterns, and storytelling aspects of Kathak while experimenting with modern themes, technology, and cross-cultural elements."

Looking ahead, she has ambitious plans for her dance studio and artistic career. She is currently working on projects involving corporate partnerships, entertainment collaborations, and new dance classes. She is particularly excited about her initiatives focusing on community engagement, ensuring that dance remains accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds.

Despite her global aspirations, Ritika remains deeply connected to her Indian roots. Having worked extensively in both India and the UK, she hopes to bridge these cultures through dance. "By offering a wide array of dance styles, I create an environment where students can explore and appreciate both Indian and Western forms. This exchange fosters understanding and appreciation between different communities."

For Ritika, dance is more than a profession - it is a lifelong mission. "My ultimate goal is to promote inclusivity, creativity and cultural diversity through dance. I want to leave a legacy by contributing to the evolution of teaching methodologies and choreographic techniques."

She credits her biggest inspirations - Birju Maharaj and Madhuri Dixit - for shaping her artistic vision. Staying motivated in her craft involves a continuous process of learning, self-reflection and collaboration. "I attend workshops, engage with diverse dance communities and blend classical techniques with modern innovations. Most importantly, I never lose sight of why I fell in love with dance in the first place."

To aspiring dancers, she offers invaluable advice: "Your greatest asset in dance is not technical perfection but your emotional authenticity and passionate commitment to the art. Embrace continuous learning, view challenges as opportunities for growth and never lose sight of your love for dance."

Through her artistry, mentorship, and dedication to cultural preservation, Ritika Arora continues to make a profound impact in the world of dance. Her journey is a testament to the transformative power of movement - an art that transcends borders, generations and traditions.

Passionate about preserving Indian classical dance while embracing modern fusion, Ritika Arora, in an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, shares her vision for bridging cultures through movement, her challenges in promoting Indian heritage internationally, and the power of dance as a tool for social change.



## HOW NETWORKING CAN ACCELERATE SUCCESS!

**M**any leaders and entrepreneurs underestimate networking and view mentoring as a nice-to-have, but in reality, both are essential tools for long-term success. Archana's journey—from being a first-generation lawyer to co-founding and scaling VERTICES PARTNERS—was built on the strength of relationships, trust and shared knowledge with like-minded people. True networking goes beyond business card exchanges, and true mentoring is more than feel-good advice. Both are about strategic value creation. Networking must be seen as a sustainable investment where confidence and integrity are built over time.

Identifying key stakeholders in your industry and beyond and nurturing relationships proactively—even before you need them—can be game-changing. In her early days, she made it a point to engage deeply with clients, founders and senior leaders—not just for work-related discussions but to understand their long-term vision. These genuine relationships proved invaluable when launching the company, as many of her early clients and referrals came from this trusted network. To build meaningful connections, it is also valuable to attend industry-specific and cross-industry events with a clear objective. Follow up consistently with value-driven interactions, such as sharing insights, offering help, or making introductions. Keep a personal tracker wherein you share greetings, engage in a timely manner, and share potential synergy to nurture a lasting relationship.

Once you choose the right mentor, more than motivating you, they help you navigate your cognitive limitations, enhance your reach to a like-minded fraternity, and protect you from costly hurdles. Rather than looking for basic business coaching, look for mentors who help you wade through similar experiences from the past you are currently facing. She was able to pave her path from an organised legal environment to entrepreneurship through invaluable insights from mentors who had built businesses from scratch. When the time came to pay it forward, she embraced the role of a mentor, guiding the young, rising entrepreneurs—mostly women—through strategic business growth advice, passing on valuable lessons, connecting networks, building platforms and preparing them with the skills that they required, navigating high-pressure moments and transitioning them to new horizons in their business undertakings confidently. More than merely seeking mentorship on broader lines, request guidance on a particular challenge. Leverage structured mentorship platforms like industry councils, accelerators, or invite-only business networks. As you grow, become a mentor yourself—teaching is a powerful way to refine your knowledge. The best ideas often come from outside your immediate industry. Expanding your network beyond your sector gives you a competitive advantage. She didn't limit her network to legal professionals; rather, she connected with entrepreneurs, investors, and thought leaders from various industries. This cross-sectoral approach gave her fresh insights on brand-building and audience engagement, which she applied back to her business. To benefit from cross-industry networking, join diverse industry forums, startup incubators, or global business organisations. For her, joining Asia's one of the largest Chambers of Commerce for

Women and eventually becoming its chairperson proved invaluable, offering her opportunities to learn, give back and build meaningful connections.

Have regular conversations with people in fields unrelated to yours—creativity often sparks in unexpected places. Study how other industries solve problems and see if similar solutions can apply to your field. The most successful relationships are built on mutual value exchange rather than one-sided requests. You will be remembered when you help someone with their business-related hurdle by being a source to add value to help them overcome their hurdle. Throughout her career, she has ensured that she provide value first, be it for ice-breaking introductions, sharing legal insights, or simply being a sounding board. This approach has helped her bolster her relationships and organically brought many opportunities my way. Disengaging from transactional and taking up a relational networking mindset is the key. Making it a habit to help the fraternity grow collectively by helping know peers is certainly helpful to us in the long run too. Follow up and nurture relationships—people appreciate when you check in with genuine interest.

A successful mentorship program should be structured, with clear goals, accountability and feedback loops. Organisations should create internal mentorship frameworks to cultivate leadership from within. At the company, they ensure young lawyers don't just work on transactions but understand client strategy, business implications, and negotiation psychology. This hands-on mentorship approach accelerates their growth far beyond traditional training methods. Even in her role as a leader with certain Chambers of Commerce, she applied the same philosophy for the members and mentees. If you're a senior leader, implement mentorship programs within your company, ensuring mentees have clear milestones. As a mentee, set defined objectives with your mentor to track progress effectively. Use digital tools (like Notion, Trello, or Google Docs) to document key mentorship insights for reference. The real power of networking and mentoring is in its compounding effect—every relationship nurtured today builds a foundation for future success. Leaders who consistently invest in relationships and mentorship create an ecosystem where opportunities flow effortlessly. Many of her firm's breakthroughs came from long-standing relationships—clients, partners and referrals that grew organically over time. To maximise the compound effect, track your key relationships and periodically revisit them to stay connected. Take the long view—business success is rarely about one big break but about the cumulative effect of many well-nurtured relationships. Pay it forward—mentorship and networking thrive when leaders continue the cycle of support and knowledge-sharing. To sum it up, to be successful, one needs to be fortified with the shared strength of the networks and mentors that they build with time. Irrespective of whether one is a seasoned leader or a novice entrepreneur, establishing honest relationships and organized mentorship will govern your long-term success.

As she reflects on her journey—from building a legal practice to engaging with entrepreneurs and thought leaders and leading a chapter of an established chamber of commerce for women—she sees one constant: the right relationships open the right doors.

*(The author, Archana Khosla Burman, is an entrepreneur, Founding Partner - VERTICES PARTNERS, FICCI FLO National Head - Collaborations, Partnerships and Associations.)*

Women and eventually becoming its chairperson proved invaluable, offering her opportunities to learn, give back and build meaningful connections.



### DECODING GUILLAIN-BARRÉ SYNDROME

## How CSF analysis aids in early diagnosis

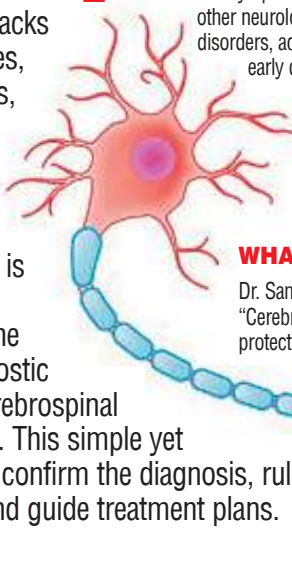
PNS| HYDERABAD

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is a rare autoimmune disorder where the body's immune system attacks the peripheral nerves, leading to weakness, numbness, or even paralysis. This condition can progress rapidly, and early diagnosis is critical for timely treatment. One of the most reliable diagnostic tools for GBS is cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) analysis. This simple yet essential test helps confirm the diagnosis, rule out other conditions, and guide treatment plans.

### UNDERSTANDING GUILLAIN-BARRÉ SYNDROME

GBS often starts with symptoms such as tingling or weakness in the hands and feet, which may spread to other parts of the body. In severe cases, it can cause breathing difficulties or complete paralysis. While the exact cause of GBS isn't fully understood, it is commonly triggered by infections, such as the flu or gastrointestinal illnesses, and, in rare cases, by surgery or vaccinations.

Since the symptoms of GBS mimic other neurological disorders, accurate and early diagnosis is essential.



### WHAT IS CSF ANALYSIS?

Dr. Sameer Bhati, Director of Star Imaging and Path Lab Pvt. Ltd, explains to us, "Cerebrospinal fluid is a clear liquid that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, protecting and nourishing the central nervous system. CSF analysis involves extracting a small sample of this fluid, typically through a lumbar puncture (spinal tap), and examining it in a laboratory. This test is often used to detect infections, inflammation, or other abnormalities in the nervous system."

For GBS, CSF analysis is particularly useful because it helps detect unique markers associated with the condition, allowing doctors to distinguish it from other diseases.



### WHY IS CSF ANALYSIS CRUCIAL FOR DIAGNOSING GBS?

CSF analysis provides key information that is essential for confirming a GBS diagnosis:

#### 1. Increased Protein Levels

A hallmark feature of GBS in CSF analysis is elevated protein levels without a significant increase in white blood cells, a condition known as albuminocytologic dissociation. The increase in protein reflects nerve damage caused by the immune attack, and this pattern is a strong indicator of GBS.

#### 2. Ruling Out Other Conditions

GBS symptoms can overlap with those of other neurological disorders, such as infections, multiple sclerosis, or spinal cord diseases. By examining the CSF, doctors can rule out these conditions. For example, if an infection were present, the CSF might show an elevated white blood cell count or the presence of pathogens, which is not typical in GBS.

#### 3. Understanding Disease Severity

The degree of protein elevation in the CSF can also provide insight into how much nerve damage has occurred. Higher protein levels may indicate more severe nerve involvement, helping doctors determine the appropriate level of care and treatment.

#### 4. Monitoring Progression

CSF analysis can also be used to monitor the disease's progression over time. By repeating the test during treatment, doctors can observe changes in protein levels and evaluate whether the patient is responding to therapy.

"CSF analysis begins with a lumbar puncture, a procedure in which a thin needle is inserted into the lower back to collect a sample of cerebrospinal fluid. While the idea of a spinal tap may seem intimidating, it is generally safe and minimally uncomfortable. Local anesthesia is used to numb the area, so the patient typically feels only slight pressure during the procedure," adds Dr. Sameer. Once the fluid is collected, it is sent to a laboratory, where it is examined for abnormalities, including protein levels, white blood cell counts, and any signs of infection or inflammation.

### WHAT HAPPENS AFTER CSF ANALYSIS?

The results of the CSF analysis are combined with the patient's symptoms, medical history, and results from other tests to confirm the diagnosis of GBS. If GBS is confirmed, treatment can begin immediately.

#### Common treatments for GBS include:

- Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIg): This

therapy involves administering antibodies to neutralize the harmful immune response.

• **Plasmapheresis:** This procedure filters harmful antibodies from the blood, reducing the immune attack on the nerves.

In severe cases, patients may require supportive care, such as mechanical ventilation, if their breathing is affected.

#### Why Early Diagnosis Matters

GBS can progress rapidly, and without timely treatment, it may lead to long-term complications, such as chronic nerve damage or permanent disability. Early diagnosis through CSF analysis allows doctors to start treatments that can reduce the severity of symptoms and improve recovery outcomes.

#### Conclusion

CSF analysis is an essential tool for diagnosing Guillain-Barré Syndrome. By detecting elevated protein levels and ruling out other conditions, this test provides critical information that guides treatment decisions. If you or someone you know experiences symptoms like sudden muscle weakness or tingling, it's important to seek medical attention immediately. CSF analysis can help doctors confirm the diagnosis and ensure that the right treatment is provided at the right time, improving the chances of a full recovery.

# Varun Chakravarty added to Indian ODI squad

PTI ■ NAGPUR

In-form mystery spinner Varun Chakravarty has been included in the Indian ODI squad after his heroics in the just-concluded T20I series against England as the team management wants the KKR mystery spinner to “keep up the momentum”. There is a fair chance that Chakravarty might just replace one of the four specialist spinners in the Champions Trophy (CT) squad. It could be one among Kuldeep Yadav or Washington Sundar, who could be axed to accommodate Chakravarty before the final squad is announced. A lot will depend on how he fares in the ODIs. Chakravarty, who got 14 wickets in five T20Is against England and was adjudged the ‘Player of The Series’, has not been picked for the three ODIs against England and the Champions Trophy later this month. Chakravarty was seen training and bowling in the nets on Tuesday. “Yes, Varun Chakravarty is part of the squad,” India vice-captain Shubman Gill confirmed in a media interaction after the team’s training. It is understood that head coach Gautam Gambhir wants Chakravarty to remain in rhythm and bowl to the likes of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and Rishabh Pant. With the deadline for squad changes



for the Champions Trophy set for February 12, he remains a strong candidate for selection. However, it is unlikely that he will be added to the CT squad without playing a single ODI. India have got three finger spinners – two left-armers (Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel) and one right-arm off-spinner in Washington Sundar.

Kuldeep Yadav, who is returning to the Indian team after undergoing a sports hernia surgery in October 2024, is the lone wrist spinner in the squad. “As of now, the team management wanted Varun to bowl in ODI squad nets ahead of England series. Varun doesn’t play red-ball cricket,” a senior BCCI source said on

conditions of anonymity. “With domestic white ball season already concluded, he does not have any assignments till start of IPL end March. He is in good rhythm and they want him to continue that,” he added. When asked if there is a possibility of him being selected for the ODI series and subsequent Champions

Trophy based on current form, the source replied, “The selectors have already picked four spinners and you only have three ODI games. “But if team management wants Varun, it will certainly have to speak to the chairman of selection committee. Whether they intend to or not, is still not known.” The Men in Blue don’t have a second wrist spinner and Chakravarty’s strong form could work in his favour. When he last played on the flatter tracks in Dubai during the 2021 T20 World Cup, Chakravarty struggled to make an impact. However, he has significantly improved since then, focusing more on over-spin to refine his variations. The English team has not read him well and in Champions Trophy, one of the opposition is Bangladesh, which was bamboozled by him in October during the T20I series. He could also be an unknown entity for most of the New Zealand and Pakistan teams. Additionally, he has performed consistently on batting-friendly surfaces in the recent T20I series against England, finishing as the leading wicket-taker at an impressive average of 9.85. India are set to play all their league matches in Dubai. Chakravarty picked up 18 wickets for Tamil Nadu in the National One Day Championship.



## Dimuth Karunaratne to retire from cricket

PTI ■ GALLE

Former Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne is set to retire from international cricket after playing his 100th Test, which will be the second and final match against Australia starting here on Thursday. The 36-year-old, one of the most prolific batters for Sri Lanka, has scored 7,172 runs at an average of just under 40, with 16 centuries and 34 half-centuries in 99 Tests over nearly 14 years. He has also featured in 50 ODIs, scoring 1,316 runs with one century and 11 fifties. “It is difficult for a Test player to keep himself motivated to play four Tests for a year and maintain his form,” Karunaratne, who made his Test debut in 2012, was quoted as saying by ‘Daily FT’. “In the last two-three years after the WTC (World Test Championship) was introduced, we have been having very little bilateral series. My current form is another reason; completing my 100 Tests, the end of the WTC cycle (2023-25), I thought is the right time to retire.” Karunaratne plans to relocate to Australia with his family next month. Having made his first-class debut for Sinhalese Sports Club (SSC) in 2008, he will play his final match for them against NCC in the SLA Major Club three-Day Tournament from February 14-16. “I have some personal plans of my own. I’ve decided to retire after speaking to other senior players like Angie

(Angelo Mathews) and Chandani (Dinesh Chandimal),” he said. “Rather than the three of us retiring at the same time, it will be better for us to go one by one. I thought I will retire first because I know I cannot go for my next target – 10,000 runs – with the lesser number of Tests being played. “I am happy with what I have achieved so far. I want to announce my retirement with a happy moment like playing in my 100th Test.” Karunaratne has been struggling for form of late, managing scores of 7 and 0 in the first Test against Australia in which Sri Lanka slumped to an innings and 242 run defeat to go 0-1 down in the two-Test series. “Any cricketer’s dream is to play 100 Tests and score 10,000 runs. It’s a big achievement. When you start playing cricket, you don’t think of those targets, but when you continue playing, you come across different targets,” he said. “But as Sri Lanka are playing less Test matches for a year, getting to 10,000 runs seems far away. Appearing in 100 Tests I feel is an achievement,” he added. He would look back at his career as a satisfied man due to its sheer longevity. “Several players play Test cricket but only a handful are able to go and play 100 Tests. To become a member of that exclusive club I am very happy. To become Sri Lanka’s seventh cricketer to play in 100 Tests is also a happy moment,” he signed off.



## I wanted to lead MI Cape Town: Rashid

PTI ■ GOEBERHA

Rashid Khan said he wanted to lead MI Cape Town in the same manner as he led Afghanistan during the T20 World Cup and credited his improved leadership this season to his familiarity with the team, which helped secure a spot in the SA20 playoffs. After two forgettable seasons, MI Cape Town now sits at the top of the points table with 30 points from nine matches ahead of the playoffs. The 26-year-old led Afghanistan to a historic victory over Australia in the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup 2024, following which the team made it to the semifinals. “I wanted to lead MI Cape Town the way I led Afghanistan in the T20 World Cup. Coach Robbie Peterson also encouraged me in this direction,” Rashid, who captained MI Cape Town in the first season but missed out last season due to injury, said in a media interaction ahead of the first qualifier against Paarl Royals. “I think this year I knew the players quite well and spent more time with them so I had the knowledge about which bowler to use at what point of time. “The most important thing was to have clear

communication with the players. To have what is happening in the mind of the captain and to know what is going through in their minds. I think I could have done better in the first year but you just keep learning.” Rashid noted that every player has taken responsibility and risen to the occasion, marking a major shift from the previous seasons. “In the last couple of years, we played good cricket, but it was just about that we haven’t finished well. You know, we haven’t hit those points where it was a matter of going to the result,” he said. “I feel like this year we just have done that well. It’s an overall team effort. Whoever got the opportunity, they have contributed for the team. Even if it’s like he goes for one ball or two balls to hit there, he did it for the team.” Praising the contribution from the bowlers, Rashid said: “Everyone has been contributing with the ball as well. So, I feel like this year, this is a massive difference. The biggest thing is we’re enjoying ourselves. You know, we’re having fun and we’re not much thinking about what the result will be.” Rashid emphasised the importance of having a leadership group in the team.

## Shillong to become new ISL venue

PTI ■ SHILLONG

A new venue will be added to the Indian Super League (ISL) when Shillong hosts NorthEast United FC’s ‘home’ match against Mumbai City FC on Friday at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The football loving fans of Meghalaya have been waiting for this ISL’s debut match with much anticipation. The Guwahati-based Highlanders will also host Bengaluru FC and East Bengal at the same venue here on February 21 and March 8, respectively, as the fans look forward to witness Indian football’s biggest stars, including Sunil Chhetri, Lallianzuala Chhangte and Naorem Mahesh Singh in action. NorthEast United CEO Mandar Tamhane on Tuesday shed light on how



the club’s move to Shillong came about. “When we played the semi-final of the Durand Cup against Shillong Lajong here, it was an eye opener for me even though I’ve been involved in Indian football for over 25 years,” Tamhane said. “The online tickets were sold out in 12 minutes and there were 5km long queues for physical tickets. Fan parks in

different districts were also jam-packed. “We are a club representing eight states and we always wanted to bring football to parts of the Northeast. Seeing the response we got for the Durand Cup, reaffirmed our decision to come to Shillong this season itself,” he was quoted as saying by the official ISL website. He said the Meghalaya

government extended their support to the move. NorthEast United forward Redeem Tlang, who hails from Shillong, has been one of the ISL’s notable domestic talents. With over 100 ISL appearances under his belt and having played a key role in NorthEast United’s historic Durand Cup victory in 2024, Tlang is thrilled about the league’s arrival in his home city. “It’s a very special moment for me personally and also for the people of Meghalaya to experience ISL matches in Shillong,” he said. “ISL is the top league in the country and to have it come to your home is an incredible feeling. People all over Meghalaya love football. Football is like a religion in Shillong. It’s the first game that you play when you grow up here,” said Tlang who began his football journey with Shillong Lajong.

## Ashwin expresses concern over Sanju Samson’s lack of form

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India spinner R Ashwin has expressed concern at T20 batting star Sanju Samson’s lack of form, saying his mind will start “playing tricks” with him if he does not find a way out of the current rut. The 30-year-old Samson, who will be out of action for a month due to a fracture in his right index finger, endured a terrible series against England’s express pace and short balls. He managed a mere 51 runs in the five-match contest that India won 4-1. “...If Sanju keeps getting dismissed like this, as a batter, the mind will be playing tricks,” Ashwin said. “(It will force you to think) the bowler is bowling a certain way and I am getting

dismissed like this, is the bowler bowling well or do I have a shortcoming? Will I be able to adapt? Once so many questions arises, then it becomes difficult,” he explained. Ashwin also advised out-of-form skipper Suryakumar Yadav to change his approach to come out of the form slump that he is also enduring right now. Suryakumar could only manage 28 runs in the just-concluded series against England. “I can understand it happening in one or two games, but it is quite surprising,” Ashwin said on his Hindi YouTube channel. “...When you know you are being attacked in a certain way, there should be a different approach to that ball or just avoid it and force the bowler to bowl at your



strengths.” “Suryakumar Yadav is a very experienced guy. He has a lot of ability. One can say he brought about a change of guard in Indian batting, showing the way. But the time has come for him to take some time out and change his approach,” he added.

Ashwin said Samson, who has blown hot and cold throughout his run in international cricket, should take responsive actions to ensure that doubts don’t creep into his subconscious mind. “But Ashwin cited legendary Sachin Tendulkar’s advice during last week’s BCCI

Naman Awards that players should use their subconscious mind too. “Sachin Tendulkar also said during the (BCCI) awards function that (you must) do so many repetitions that you allow the subconscious mind to take over,” he said. “But if so much confusion comes over on the subconscious mind, then batting becomes a different ball game altogether.” Ashwin said failing in T20 cricket is not the problem but the manner of dismissals can be a cause of concern. “As an experienced cricketer I will not focus on someone failing in T20 cricket but on how is he getting out, what is his decision making like, I will focus on that. They are good enough players to find solutions and they will think over it,” he said.

Ashwin said a player is always rated on his ability to handle pressure in the shortest formats. “T20 cricket is (all) about failures, you are bound to fail. You will not be able to play percentage cricket. As per this, I will think (about) the player who can handle pressure and can deliver wins,” he said. “Those players can be given long rope because T20 cricket is not about consistency, it’s about excitement, putting fear in the opposition.” Ashwin also expressed surprise at England’s approach across formats, saying they are losing more than they are winning due to their aggressive strategy. “...If I was England, I would be really worried, because they play Bazball, one-day and T20 cricket... All that is fine,” he said.

## Virat, Rohit’s form will be key to India’s success in CT: Raina

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

They may have struggled in recent times but the form of skipper Rohit Sharma and his longtime colleague Virat Kohli will be key to India’s success in the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy, reckoned former batter Suresh Raina on Tuesday. The Champions Trophy starts in Pakistan from February 19 and will conclude on March 9 but India will play all their matches in Dubai as per the hybrid model agreement signed by the concerned parties. Speaking to broadcaster Star Sports, Raina said, “Rohit Sharma’s strike rate has improved significantly after the ODI World Cup in 2023. Since then, he has scored runs at a strike rate of 119-120, making him one of India’s best ODI batsmen. “For Rohit and Virat, I

would say that when you have a strong record of past performances, it gives you a lot of confidence. They complement each other well, and both have the skill to score big runs. If they perform well, India’s Champions Trophy campaign will benefit immensely.” India have been clubbed with arch-rivals Pakistan, New Zealand and Bangladesh in the group stage of the tournament. Speaking about the spin department and team combination, Raina said, “I think (Ravindra) Jadeja will definitely play because of his effectiveness in ODIs. Kuldeep (Yadav) has not played a match since his injury, but we also have Axar Patel, who has been consistently performing well. “The pitches in Dubai will offer some seam movement, but spin will also play a role.



That’s why Kuldeep, Axar, and Jadeja need to be in top form. Rohit’s choice of team

combination will be crucial. Before the Champions

Trophy, India are also playing a three-match ODI series at home against

England, and Raina believed it will help the likes of Kohli and Rohit to get some

valuable game time before the mega event. “When it comes to white-ball cricket, Virat knows how to switch on and switch off. He has scored the most runs against England, so his energy will be at a different level automatically. The three ODIs will be played in Nagpur, Ahmedabad, and Cuttack -- all of which are high-scoring venues,” Raina said of Kohli, who has struggled for runs in the Test series in Australia. Sharing his thoughts on the upcoming series, Raina said Rohit should continue to go after the bowlers from the get-go as it has also brought him success in the last ODI World Cup in 2023. Speaking on his expectations from Rohit, Raina said, “I think Rohit should play aggressively. You saw how he batted in the ODI World Cup -- he was attacking even in the final. So, I believe his approach

will remain the same. “The key question is who will open alongside him -- will it be Shubman (Gill)? I remember, whenever they play together, they maintain an aggressive intent.” Raina also lauded Rohit’s captaincy. “Rohit Sharma is an attacking captain. The way he utilises his bowlers is commendable -- bringing in Mohammad Shami at crucial moments and relying on spinners strategically. “When Rohit scores runs, it also reflects in his captaincy. This could be his last ICC trophy as captain, and if he wins, he will become the first Indian player to win four ICC trophies. “He has already won the T20 World Cup, and securing the Champions Trophy would be a remarkable achievement. He will be motivated to make it happen, but scoring runs will be crucial for him.”

# I AM OPEN TO DO ANY ROLE: SAI RAM SHANKAR

**SAI RAM SHANKAR, THE YOUNGER BROTHER OF TOP DIRECTOR PURI JAGANNATH, TALKS ABOUT WHY HE CAN'T WORK WITH HIS BROTHER, WHY HE HAS TAKEN BREAKS AND HIS FUTURE PROJECTS...**



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**T**op director Puri Jagannath's brother Sai Ram Shankar is playing the lead in the film 'Oka Pathakam Prakarum', a crime genre. The film is releasing on February 7 and Sai Ram Shankar is pinning his hopes on this one. "I am confident that the story of this film is definitely a good one and after watching this one, people will appreciate it."

The actor said that he has been approached for many films, but not worked out.

"Some films because of budget and some of them I didn't like.

But I am getting a lot of offers these days," said Sai Ram. He added that after this film he is going to act continuously. "I am open to any roles," he said. If the role is good and he likes it, then he is ready to do it. "I am not sticking to play only lead characters. I am open to any other role, but it should be prominent," he said.

Director Vinod Vijayan is a Malayali and did he know Telugu? "Yes, he knows Telugu and he speaks also," said Sai Ram.

He added that the director has won a few awards for his film and definitely helps for this film. "In

Malayalam, he directed two films with Fahadh Faasil and at a young age he became a director. He is also a friend of mine since the last 15 years," said Sai Ram.

Talking about the role, he said he is playing a criminal lawyer in it. "After the shooting started, for the first two days, I felt something wrong. So, I stopped and then did a workshop for nearly a month learning more about the body language and behavior of lawyers to get realistic." He added that they announced the cash prize of Rs 10,000 to any person if they identified the villain at the interval. "Actually, this announcement helps our film to get popular," he said.

Apart from the director, there are many Malayalam people who worked for this film and do they plan to release it there? "Not now, but once released in Telugu, we will definitely release it in Malayalam and Tamil," said the actor. He added that there are a few actors like Samuthirakani in the film.

The climax fight which they shot nearly with 25 dogs is going to be the highlight. "Yes, there was a big fight and we shot for nearly seven days. The dogs are not friendly ones, but regular breeds. While shooting for this fight, one dog came into my grill which scared me a lot. I called the action choreographer, but he was watching the scene on camera. To escape from it, I climbed the grill and in the meantime, the dog master came to my rescue."

His elder brother Puri Jagannath is one of the top directors and when asked whether there was any chance of acting in his film? "No," said Sai Ram without giving any reason. This film is releasing along with Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi starrer 'Thandel'. "No, I am not competing with 'Thandel', but my film is releasing next to that film," said Sai Ram.

The actor said that he was also approached for a web series. "I am working for a mythological web series in which I am playing a 60-year-old man in it," he said. He added that another film 'Resound' is almost over and a few more projects are in the pipeline.



## Hari Hara Veera Mallu is definitely up to expectations, says AM Rathnam

**P**roducer AM Rathnam made 'Kushi' with Pawan Kalyan in 2001 and it was a huge blockbuster at that time and took Pawan Kalyan into the top league. After that he produced several films and marked his name as one of the top producers in South India. After a long gap, Rathnam is now making a film with Pawan Kalyan titled 'Hari Hara Veeramallu', a period drama.

Directed by his son Jothi Krishna, the film is all set to release on March 28. The film's shooting is almost complete, after Pawan Kalyan allotted his

dates to complete it. The film started a few years back with director Krish, but Pawan Kalyan was busy with politics and is now the Deputy CM of Andhra Pradesh. Krish is moving to another film and Rathnam's son Jothi Krishna has taken over the directorial job and completed it.

Niddhi Agerwal plays the female lead, while MM Keeravani provided the music for this film. There are high expectations on this film, because this is the first one releasing after Pawan Kalyan became the Deputy CM.

"Definitely, this film raises the standards and makes everyone proud. I am confident that this one is going to reach the expectations of everyone and Pawan Kalyan is going to create a new benchmark with this film," said producer Rathnam.

Pawan Kalyan sang a song in this film and it was released recently and it went viral everywhere. With the shoot nearing completion, the post production work is going on to reach the release date. This film is set to surpass Pawan Kalyan's biggest blockbusters across all languages.

## Prashanth Karthi is happy with the response to his film



**M**any films are now directly released on OTT platforms, and 'Pothugadda' is one of them released in ETV Win recently. Directed by Raksha Veeram, the film is getting good response. Prashanth Karthi, who plays a character with different shades, expressed his happiness over the appreciation his role is receiving.

"Initially, the director asked me to grow my beard and also sport long hair. But for some reason, I had to remove the hair. So, I thought I lost this role. But after a few days I got a call from director Raksha, who had seen my original look and decided to go with it. So, my appearance in this film is very natural," said Prashanth Karthi about his role.

The actor said that he is getting positive response from everywhere for his role in it. "I got appreciation for my performance which has different shades in it," said the actor. Though he is getting a lot of messages, when people like Chandra Siddharth and Chandrashekar Yeleti appreciate his acting, it is something special for him. He also revealed that most of the film was shot in the nights and that too in winter. "But, we never felt uncomfortable as we had taken care of everything," said Prashanth. Talking about his upcoming projects he said, "I am working on a film with a Rayalaseema backdrop. It is an action drama and I will reveal more details soon," said Prashanth.



## Mahesh, Rajamouli film being made in three parts?

**T**op director Rajamouli is now shooting with Mahesh Babu and Priyanka Chopra for his upcoming film and it is tentatively titled as SSMB29. Rajamouli is taking all the precautions not to leak anything about the film, even after the shooting started at the Aluminium factory in Hyderabad. But still, people are talking more about the film.

Another news is doing rounds about the film is that Rajamouli is planning to make three parts. Generally, Rajamouli is taking his own time to come up with a film. So, for this film he already told Mahesh Babu that it is going to be in three parts and he has to spend nearly five years for this project, says a source.

Rajamouli in his career made only 'Baahubali' in two parts. But now, he is extending it to three parts with Mahesh Babu for this film as the story has good potential to do it, added the source. He mentioned many times that the film is an adventure one like Indiana Jones, the Hollywood film. So, he wanted to come up with sequels to this film too. The shooting is now taking a break with Priyanka Chopra leaving Hyderabad to attend her brother's marriage. Once after the marriage, she will be back for the shoot. The next schedule is going to be in South Africa, says the source.

## MAZAKA POSTPONED TO SIVARATRI?

**R**ao Ramesh and Sundeeep Kishan are the lead actors in the film 'Mazaka' which is supposed to be released on February 21. Directed by Rakshina Trinadha Rao and produced by Rakesh Danda, the film story was given by Bezawada Prasanna Kumar. The shooting of this film is almost complete except for a song and a few patch-works. Though the makers are confident about the film's release on February 21, they don't want to release it in a hurry. So, they want to postpone it to February 26 to mark Maha Sivaratri.

On the other hand, the distributors are also putting pressure on the makers to release it

on Sivaratri, so that it will get good openings. Ritu Varma and Anshu of 'Manmadhudu' fame are playing the female leads. The film has come out really well and the makers are very happy for the response where they have shown the film to their close people and they said that it is going to be a sure hit.

Zee Studios is also involved in the production of this film and they already paid some advance to the producer. So, they want to release the film on February 21. Under these circumstances, the makers are going to take a decision in a few days. "Most probably, the film may be postponed to February 26," said the source.



## Small films making a big impact: Raj Kandukuri

**D**irector GD Narasimha is coming up with a small film titled 'Bhavani Ward 1997'. According to him, the film has horror, suspense and thriller elements and it is releasing on February 7. Gayathri Gupta, Pooja Kendre, Sai Satish and many others are playing important roles in it. The film's pre-release event was held in the city and producer, distributor Raj Kandukuri was a special guest for it. "I believe this movie has strong content and these days content-based movies are doing good," said Raj Kandukuri. He added that he actually launched the title post of this film sometime back and now attended the pre-release event.

"I am a big fan of horror films and I wish this film is going to be a good success," said Raj. He added that as the release date approaches, there is some tension within the team, because they are eagerly waiting for the audience response. "But these days small films are making a significant impact, and everyone should support this small film," he said.

Director GD Narasimha said that all the actors gave good performances in the film and hope this film enthralls the audience. "I am sure, the music will send shivers down your spine, and the visuals are fresh," said the director. He added that the fans of horror films can enjoy this 'Bhavani Ward 1997'.

