www.dailypioneer.com

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

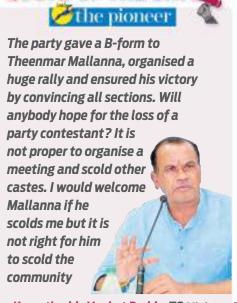


REDEFINING **GLOBAL DANCE CULTURE WITH**

THE RHYTHM OF CHANGE







QUOTE OF THE DAY

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, TG Minister P4

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 ...

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 ...

-PAGE: 5

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

-PAGE: 8

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 T201 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 Yaday or Washington Sundar. who could be axed to accommodate

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

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

elow 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 condi-

Officials presented a detailed report on the State's revenue receipts to the revenue from commercial taxes in 2023-24 stood at Rs 41,420 crore, while the revenue collected so far this year is Rs 41,382 crore. The department expects an increase in revenue during February and March. The Excise Department is also projected to generate higher revenue this year due to new government policies. However, officials informed the Chief Minister that revenue from the Mining Department has not met expectations.

Chandrababu Naidu reiterated that he would conduct regular reviews of income generation, and officials must deliver tangible results by strengthening their respective departments. Finance Minister Payyavula Kesav and officials from various departments attended the meeting.



'P4 model launch by Ugadi'

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

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 selfverify 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

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

Inter student found dead in hostel room



PNS MACHII IPATNAM

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 secondyear 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 investiga-

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 remarks while meeting Union Ministers Srinivas Varma, Ram Mohan Naidu, Pemmassani Chandrasekhar, 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 n of Union Mini MPs in driving the state's develop-

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 Tel 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

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.

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).

Continued on Page 2

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.







Janata Party (BJP) is making a deter- stage a comeback after failing to win mined push to reclaim the capital after more than 25 years. The Congress, which ruled Delhi

On the other hand, the Bharatiya for 15 years till 2013, is striving to a single seat in the previous two elec-

Continued on Page 2

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

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 Ksheerabhisekham ritual, led by Chief Priest Ippili Shankar Sarma.

Thousands gather to offer prayers on Surya Jayanti



Vinay Chand, Principal Secretary of the Endowments Department, presented pattuvastrams to Lord Sri Suryanarayana Swamy at Arasavalli temple on the occasion of Ratha Saptami, celebrated on Tuesday.

The celebrations began at mid- praying and making offerings at

night on Monday, with thousands Indra Pushkarani. People from

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 person-

nel 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 expe-

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,



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!

hat qualities are needed in pubhis party till his lic representa-Shifting loyalties to tives? Is morality needed another party after getting elected on a particin politics? Can disqualification stop the unlawular party's ticket POINT ful methods used to is considered an offensive acquire the required act. The Representation of numbers in legislatures? People's Act of 1952 does not permit this shifting of loyalty These are the questions exerand those who engage in it will lose their membership in the cising both electors and the principal players of the system in the context of the immoral practices that frequently occur The issue grabbed attention

as BRS Working President KT în democracies. Defections by elected repre-Rama Rao approached the SC seeking the disqualification of seven BRS legislators who sentatives who crisscross between parties have made a defected to the Congress in Telangana. KTR took up the mockery of democracy at the national and State levels. A person who was elected to a issue due to the absence of the party's president K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) legislature on the ticket of a particular party has to serve due to a recent hip surgery.
The SC asked KTR to take the public on behalf of the party which gave him/her an opportunity to contest. The

elected person has to represent

up the request for disqualification of the seven BRS legisla-

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

tors by clubbing it with the issue of another three legislators. These 10 MLAs were elected to the TG Assembly on the BRS's car symbol in the 2023 elections. The BRS had to face defeat at the hands of the Congress which granted statehood for Telangana. After the BRS's defeat, the 10 MLAs decided to join the ruling Congress for the sake of 'devel-

oping' their constituencies.

Actually, what has to be considered by the court to judge legislators? Should it simply apply the law? Is there anything like morality in politics? It will be interesting to know the grounds on which the court decides the disqualifica-

Why is this issue being discussed by political observers and all political parties? The reason is that all parties engage



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.

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.

After the bifurcation of

United Andhra Pradesh, the United Andhra Pradesh, the BRS got a chance to rule Telangana. After the BRS secured a simple majority in the Assembly with 60 plus seats, the party opened its gates to the legislators of other parties.

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) which introduced KCR to politics lost its existence in

If one takes a look at recent 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.

During its second stint, the BRS crushed the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) by making it lose its principal opposition status. Interestingly, the current TG Deputy Chief Minister, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, was the then Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the TG Assembly. The BRS allowed the LoP, K Jana Reddy, to continue during its first stint (2014-2018). But it stripped the LoP status of Dalit leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka during its second stint (2018-2023). Probably due to this, the Congress is now merciless towards the BRS. During its first stint, the 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.

As a victim of defections, the BRS is seeking strong action against those who defected from its ranks. Strictly speaking, the BRS is now opposing defections which it had promoted during its rule. The court may not ask the BRS why it encouraged defections when it was in power. But the people would welcome the case's outcome if it promotes morality in politics.



Indian immigrants Sending military transport aircraft carrying them to India

PNS NEW DELHI

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

Without directly commenting on the deportation flight carrying the Indians, a spokesperson at the US embassy in New Delhi said Washington is tightening immigration laws and removing illegal migrants.

The US action comes in the midst of India and the US finalising various elements of a likely visit by Prime Minister not worth the risk," the official Narendra Modi

Washington from February

It is learnt a C-17 Globemaster aircraft of the US Air Force is bringing the Indians. However, there is no clarity on the number of people on board the plane and its specific destination.

A C-17 aircraft can carry up to 140 people. There is no official word from India yet on the US action.

The US embassy spokesperson declined to provide details of the deportation flight but said: "The United States is vigorously enforcing its border, tightening immigration laws, and removing illegal migrants." "These actions send a clear message: Illegal migration is to added.

Subhash calls for effort to ensure MLC candidate's win

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

PNS VIJAYAWADA

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, Vasanmsetti Subhash, alongside Krishna district Minister Kollu Ravindra, erstwhile Guntur and Krishna MLC graduates' candidate Alapati Raja, MLAs, and Corporation Chairpersons.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Subhash emphasised that the coalition government, formed in line with the aspirations of the people, had successfully defeated the YSRCP in the elections. He noted that people from all sections of society had united to teach the YSRCP a lesson. Criticising the previous YSRCP government, he highlighted its failure to provide employment to the youth, support farmers, students, and workers, and ensure overall development and welfare. He asserted that the state could achieve progress only under the leadership of N. Chandrababu Naidu



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

of the state capital and employment generation for youth would only be possible under the coalition's governance.

The minister urged everyone involved in the upcoming Teachers' MLC election to work towards strengthening the coalition and ensuring the victory of its candidate. He called upon all individuals to collaborate with teachers and collectively strive for success. Among those present at the

meeting were Krishna district TDP president Konakolla Narayana, MLAs Venigalla Ramu, Kagita Krishna Prasad, Varla Kumar Raja, Bode Prasad, Corporation Chairpersons Kommareddy Pattabhiram, Marri Reddy Srinivasareddy, Gonuguntla Koteswara Rao, BIP district president Rajababu, Jana Sena in-charge Bandhi Ramakrishna, and other coali-

Stage set for Delhi ...

Continued from Page 1

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.
According to Delhi Police, additional police forces will be deployed for the sensitive booths where Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs) will also be stationed to maintain law and order. Special provisions have been made for senior citizens and persons with disabilities, with 733 polling stations designated for their accessibility. In an effort to streamline the

process, the Election Commission has introduced a Queue Management System (QMS) app, which will enable the voters to check crowd levels in real time. Additionally, 6,980 out of

7,553 eligible voters under the home voting facility have already cast their ballots.

The campaigning, which officially ended at 6 pm on Monday, saw a high-voltage battle between the three main

The AAP focused on its governance model, with Kejriwal and Chief Minister Atishi leading rallies across the

Led by heavyweights like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and party president JP Nadda, the BJP intensified its attack on the AAP over corruption allegations and law and order issues.

The Congress, led by Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, too put up a spirited campaign, targeting both the AAP and the BJP on various issues.

The discourse was marked by aggressive name-calling, AIgenerated spoofs, and debates over issues such as the "Sheesh Mahal" controversy, Yamuna's water quality, and allegations of voter list tampering.

While governance, law and order, and women's welfare were the focal points, freebies dominated the pre-poll promises. The AAP has pledged free bus rides for students, insurance for auto and taxi drivers, and financial aid of Rs 18,000 for temple priests and gurdwara granthis.

The BJP, on the other hand, has promised financial assistance of Rs 21,000 for pregnant women and subsidised cooking gas cylinders at Rs 500, while the Congress has vowed to provide a monthly unemployment benefit of Rs 8,500.

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.

A delegation comprising MLC Lella Appi Reddy, Vijayawada Central constituency in-charge Malladi Vishnu, NTR district party president Devineni Avinash, state secretary Ankamreddy Narayanamurthy, Mayor Vijavawada Bhagyalakshmi, Guntur Mayor

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

Kavati Manohar, and party spokesperson Kakumanu Rajasekĥar submitted a memorandum to the SEC. The delegation highlighted concerns over law-and-order issues and accused the ruling alliance of misusing power.

Addressing the media, Malladi Vishnu strongly criticised the TDP-led coalition, alleging that

it was resorting to unethical means to retain control. He claimed that TDP-backed groups were attacking YSRCP corporators and councillors across the state, intimidating those who refused to comply, and even resorting to kidnappings. Vishnu further accused the police of sid-

ing with the ruling party instead of ensuring a fair electoral

Citing a shocking incident in Tirupati, Vishnu stated that a bus carrying YSRCP corporators was attacked and vandalised, while four corporators were kid-napped by TDP-backed elements. Even MLC Sipai Subrahmanyam was abducted, raising serious concerns over the prevailing law-and-order situation. "Looking at these incidents, one wonders whether we are in Andhra Pradesh or Bihar," he remarked. Vishnu asserted that the YSRCP had foreseen such violent incidents and had repeatedly alerted the SEC and police in advance, urging preventive measures.

Madugula ...

Continued from Page 1

Nagaphani Sharma underscored that the decision to set up the Saraswati Peetham among prominent IT companies was a testament to the

CM's foresight. Speaking on the occasion of receiving the Padma Shri award, Nagaphani Sharma expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Chandrababu for his guidance and support. He conveyed confidence that under Chandrababu's leadership, the state would continue to progress, with various government programmes yielding positive results.

AP's power supply rises...

Continued from Page 1

tion leaders.

In coordination with state governments, the Ministry of Power has set a target to add at least 80,000 MW of thermal capacity by 2031construction, while contracts for an additional 19,200 MW have been awarded for 36,320 MW of coal and lignite-based capacity is at various stages of planning.
The government is also

making significant invest-ments in hydroelectric and

capacity and 8,000 MW of PSP projects under construction. By 2031-32, an additional 24,225.5 MW of hydroelectric projects and 50,760 MW 32. Currently, 28,020 MW of of PSP capacity are planned. thermal capacity is under The minister also noted that 7,300 MW of nuclear power is currently under construction, with completion expect-FY2024-25. Additionally, ed by 2029-30, while another 7,000 MW is in the planning and approval stages.

pumped storage projects, bidding trajectory for procurwith 13,997.5 MW of hydro ing 50 GW of renewable energy annually from FY2023-24 to FY2027-28. Additionally, the government has permitted up to 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) under the automatic route in the renewable ener-

In terms of transmission infrastructure, the National Electricity Plan outlines the addition of 191,474 circuit kilometres (ckm) of transmis-To promote renewable sion lines and 1,274 GVA of energy, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has introduced a 2022-23 and 2031-32.

TODAY **ALMANAC** Month & Paksham Sukla Paksha Feb 05 02:31 AM to Feb 06 12:35 AM Navami: to Feb 06 10:53 PM Nakshatram: 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 08:15 AM to 09:40 AM Yamagandam: 08:01 AM to 09:33 AM Varjyam: 11:05 AM to 12:30 PM Abhiiit 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

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has initiated measures to tackle the increasing poultry mortality in certain areas of the State.

According to Dr T Damodara Naidu, Director of Animal Husbandry, there are approximately 8 crore commercial chickens and 2 crore backyard chickens in the state. While poultry deaths are typically low between December and February, this year has seen a sharp rise due to the severity of diseases.

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

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

possible contributing factor to the disease spread.

One of the primary causes of the outbreak has been attributed to poultry farmers failing to adhere to proper biosecurity measures and the improper disposal of dead chickens. This negli-



gence has exacerbated the spread of disease in affected areas. To counter public concerns and dispel misconceptions regarding the con-sumption of chicken and eggs, the Department of Animal Husbandry has deployed special teams and

launched awareness pro-

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. The department has reassured the public that there is no evidence of any human health risks associated with the consumption of poultry products in the state. Dr Damodara Naidu emphasised that cooked chicken and eggs remain safe for consumption and urged the public not to hesitate in including them in their diet.

AP should conduct caste... Continued from Page 1

"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

Citing Telangana's caste enumeration, the opposition leader said the neighbouring state's population consists of 56 per cent BCs, 17 per cent SCs, and 10 per cent STs, among others, and observed that 90 per cent of the population belongs to backward and weaker sections.

a post on 'X'.

According to Sharmila, the population mix in Andhra Pradesh would likely be similar, as well.

Calling for reservations based

on population proportion in politics, education, and employment, Sharmila demanded that the ruling alliance of TDP, BJP, and Janasena in Andhra Pradesh conduct a similar exercise.

Though the erstwhile YSRCP government had conducted a caste census before the 2024 polls, she said BJP's 'foster son' and former CM Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy had 'suppressed' the survey.

"Under BJP's direction, it (the caste census) didn't see the light of day. While Rahul Gandhi is demanding a nationwide caste census, the BJP is misleading by claiming that this demand is for rescinding reservations," said Sharmila. Advising Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu "not to fall into BJP's trap," she urged him to "immediately undertake the caste census".

Echoing Sharmila, APCC vice president Kolanukonda Sivaji,

who is also a BC leader, noted that the ruling alliance in Andhra Pradesh went into the 2024 polls with the promise that it would contest the next local body election only after increasing BC reservations to 40 per cent.

"I am reminded of this promise by Chandrababu Naidu. The BC sections are enlightened and ready to claim their reservations in politics, education, and employment proportional to their population percentage. Across the country, BCs are campaigning for their rightful share in resources and rights,' said Sivaji.

Observing that the Mandal Commission report had also identified 50 per cent of BCs in the state, he called on the TDP, which claims to be a party of BCs, to immediately chart out plans to undertake the survey and also demarcate the Most Backward Class category.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

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 33day-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 Jayalakshmi 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

lution 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

Stick to original design of Polavaram: YSRCP

PNS VIJAYAWADA

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 water to only 3.2 lakh acres.

Midhun Reddy labelled this

reduction as a grave injustice to farmers and the people of Andhra Pradesh, asserting that the YSRCP and TDP MPs would unite to fight this decision. He stressed that the Polavaram project's original capacity must be maintained as per the division agreement.

He further highlighted the lack the capacity is reduced.



and the government's failure to honour its promises, including the reduction in the capacity of the Polavaram project. Midhun Reddy also questioned how water would be supplied to regions like Banakacharla and Rayalaseema if

Midhun Reddy raised concerns over the gradual removal of English medium in government schools. He pointed out that proficiency in English is essential for securing corporate jobs abroad and advocated for the continued teaching of both English and Telugu in schools.

In addition, Midhun addressed financial irregularities involving Margadarsi, accusing it of a massive Rs. 2600 crore scam that violated RBI regulations. He compared this to the Sahara Saradha scam, suggesting that it was even larger. He demanded a full investigation and urged the Prime Minister to intervene to ensure that depositors money is returned.

He also raised concerns over the privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, calling for its cessation. He further advocated for direct talks with the Jindal Group regarding the Kadapa Steel Plant.

He highlighted the growing drug menace among students and called on the central government to take stringent measures to combat the

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



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, partici-

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 surroundadmissions at 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,



Vice-Chancellor, submitted its findings, prompting directives that all PhD admissions must henceforth be 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 univer-

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 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



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

Grandeur marks Rathasaptami

MALAYAPPA SHINES BRIGHT ON SURYAPRABHA

PNS TIRUMALA

In connection with Surya Jayanti on the auspicious Radhasapthami, Sri Malayappa were mesmerised to witness the ele- ed "Govinda... Govinda" in unison, Rangasri were present. Swamy, in all His celestial grandeur, gance and majesty of the Utsava making the entire Tirumala rever-Vahanam and blessed His devotees along the four mada streets on

Tuesday morning. The first and foremost divine car-

furthy aton 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

rier, Suryaprabha Vahanam, com- touched the holy feet of Sri Rao, Naresh, Santaram, Rajasekhar menced from Vahana Mandapam at 5:30 am and moved swiftly along am. The devotees, eagerly waiting to day of the four mada streets. The devotees witness this divine moment, chant-

TTD Chairman BR Naidu, EO J Bhanuprakash Reddy, N Sadasiva

Goud, Panabaka Lakshmi, Vemireddi Prasanthi Reddy, Suchitra Ella, Janaki Devi, and

Among other officials, Additional Veerabrahmam, CVSO Manikantha Syamala Rao, Board members Chandolu, SP Harshavardhan Raju, Jyothula Nehru, MS Raju, and CE Satyanarayana were also

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

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

VMC plans amphitheatre in KL Rao Park

 OFFICIALS ASKED TO EXPEDITE REPAIRS WITHIN THE PARK

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner ĤM Dhyanachandra 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 fos-ter 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 also evaluated. Dhyanachandra instructed for accelerated progress on these repairs and instructed officials to enhance the entrance of KL Rao Park to make it more aesthetically appealing.

Dhyanachandra 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 diffi-

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.

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 congratulated 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

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.







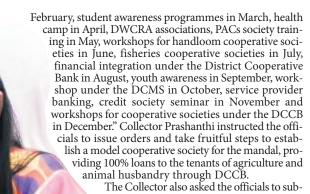
Collector emphasises need for bolstering cooperative sector

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

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



mit 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

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 Srinivasaulu, 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 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 protect-

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 coali-

Addressing the gathering, among them," he said. Gottipati urged leaders in the district to take the MLC elections seri- leaders to counter the baseless

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 tion leaders here on Monday, the win all the seats. The coalition lead-Minister discussed the strategy to ers must ensure there is no lack of

The Minister also instructed

ously and put in their best efforts 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 be implemented soon and urged all graduate voters to exercise their

TDP's Mandava Krishna Kumari elected Nandigama Municipal Chairperson

PNS VIJAYAWADA

TDP candidate Mandava Krishna Kumari was elected as the new Chairperson of Nandigama municipality on Tuesday. The election was held during a meeting organised at Jagjivan Ram Bhavan in Nandigama town, which was attended by ex-officio member and MLA Tangirala Soumya, along with 18 councillors.

Krishna Kumari received support from 15 members, including MLA Tangirala Soumya, while YSRCP candidate Orsu Lakshmi received the support of three members only. As a result, Krishna Kumari was declared elected as the Chairperson. The certificate of election was presented to her by Election Special Officer and RDO Balakrishna.

In the 2020 municipal elections, YSRCP won 13 seats, TDP won six, and Jana Sena one. Later, one member from TDP joined YSRCP.

In the previous Chairperson election, YSRCP's Mandava Varalakshmi and YSRCP's Vice-Chairperson Madugula Nagaratnam were eelected. However, both of them passed

Seven councillors from YSRCP defected to TDP, increasing TDP's strength from five to 12. With Jana Sena's support, their total strength is 13. Including the MLA's vote, TDP

YSRCP now has only five members, and after one resignation, they are left with four. Adding the vote of MLC Arunkumar, YSRCP has a total of five votes. In the recent Chairperson election, YSRCP received support from only three members.

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 crit-

ical 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) K 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

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

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.



RS5LEXGRATIA GIVEN TO KIN OF ELECTROCUTED MAN



Minister Dola Balaveeranjaneyulu 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 Dasireddypalem in Kondapi mandal. The cheque was handed over at his camp office on Tuesday. Minister Balaveeranjaneyulu 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.

Theenmar 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 Theenmar 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 Theenmar 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 Jadcharla MLA Anirudh Reddy is not only close to him but also close to Uttam Kumar Reddy and Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka.



ACROSS THE STATES



President of UNGA Yang on 4-day visit to India

resident of the UN General Assembly Philemon Yang is Paying a four-day visit to India beginning Tuesday. Yang, who assumed the responsibility at the global body in September, previously served as the prime minister of Cameroon. The President of the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly (PGA) is visiting India at the invitation of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, according to an official readout. Under his presidency, the United Nations adopted 'A Pact for the Future' -- a vision document for realising "multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow". "During the visit, the external affairs minister and the PGA will discuss key multilateral and regional issues of mutual interest," the readout said. Yang will also pay a courtesy call on President Droupadi Murmu. Apart from New Delhi, Yang will be visiting Bengaluru. "The PGA is scheduled to visit Infosys and the Indian Institute of Science, where he would have the opportunity to interact with experts on India's innovations in various fields such as sustainability, digital public infrastructures, etc," the readout said



Next round of talks with agitating farmers on 14th

he Centre on Tuesday informed Parliament that the sixth round of discussions with agitating farmers in Punjab and Haryana will be held on February 14. In the previous round held last month, the government had proposed a fiveyear plan for the procurement of certain crops at Minimum Support Prices (MSP), but did not reach a consensus on the farmers' broader demands, including a legal guarantee for MSP. Minister of State for Agriculture Ramnath Thakur, in his written reply to the Lok Sabha, said: "Next round of discussion with the farmers is scheduled on 14th February, 2025". The issues related to agitating farmers and their demands are also sub-judice in the Supreme Court and a committee has also been formed by the apex court, he noted. The Centre had initiated discussions with farmers on their agitation on February 8, 2024. Subsequently, discussions were held on 12th, 15th, 18th February 2024 and January 18, 2025, he added.



PM take holy dip at **Sangam today**

rime Minister Narendra Modi will visit the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Wednesday and take a holy dip at the Sangam around 11 am, his office said. Maha Kumbh 2025, which commenced on Paush Purnima (January 13), is the world's largest spiritual and cultural gathering, attracting devotees from across the globe. It will continue until Mahashivratri on February 26, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said on Tuesday. Modi will visit the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 on February 5 and take a dip at the Sangam and offer prayers to Maa Ganga around 11 am, it said. In line with his commitment to promote and preserve India's spiritual and cultural heritage, Modi has consistently taken proactive steps to enhance infrastructure and facilities at pilgrimage sites, the statement said. During his visit to Prayagraj earlier on December 13, 2024, Modi inaugurated 167 development projects worth Rs 5,500 crore, improving connectivity, amenities and services for the general public. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was in Prayagraj and the Maha Kumbh Mela area on Tuesday ahead

'India-EU relationship more important than ever'

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said a stronger India-EU relationship can be an "important stabilising factor" in a world that promises to be "so volatile and uncer-

Jaishankar also asserted that the relationship between the two sides is more important now than ever before.

Addressing the inaugural session of an annual seminar of IIC-Bruegel here, Jaishankar, without naming any country, said that "in our continent, international law has been disregarded with significant consequences".

"Even on a question like democracy and military rule, different standards have been applied to our neighbours in the East and our neighbour in the

"It is not my case that principles are dispensable or that we must be utterly into realpolitik. But the agenda can no longer be set by some, only to be observed by the rest. This applies to passing judgement on and interfering in the domestic politics of others as well," the external affairs minister (EAM) said.

Jaishankar further stressed that "we can all feel intuitively that the world is on the cusp of

Jaishankar further stressed that "we can all feel intuitively that the world is on the cusp of a big change". "Politics is only the tip of the iceberg. Whether it is energy or connectivity, mobility or technology, major shifts await us," he said.

a big change". "Politics is only the tip of the iceberg. Whether it is energy or connectivity, mobility or technology, major shifts await us," he said

Referring to the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks, the EAM said, "I think it is time we get along with it."

Jaishankar also said that in recent years, there has been a "more intensive engagement" with the European Commission and "we expect that to be even more in the coming days, in fact very soon".

"Deeper India-EU collaboration is clearly in our mutual benefit," he said Former foreign secretary Shyam Saran, and various diplomats and foreign policy experts, among others, attended the

"The world is currently witnessing two major conflicts, and these are often presented as matters of principle. We are told that the very future of the world order is at stake. Yet, record shows how selectively and unevenly these principles have been applied," Jaishankar said.

"We, in India, are yet to see aggression on our territory vacated after so many decades. Equally, terrorism has been overlooked when convenient," the minister said.

In his address, Jaishankar

of trade and digital technology, climate action, and their inter-

play with geopolitics.

Today there is much talk about the "world order unravelling", he said.
"There are North-South con-

tradictions as much as there is an East-West divide. Even these broad characterisations are no longer tenable in an era of sharper nationalism," the EAM

Both economic and political logic of an earlier era needs refreshing, he added.

"A perception grew that the trading system had been gamed for the benefit of a few. It was therefore no surprise -- except for those in denial -- that there would be a political backlash, Jaishankar said.

"It was easy to give a cultural twist to these insecurities as well. So, whether we go back to Brexit, look at political happenings in many other nations, including yours, or now considering the return of the Trump administration, let us appreciate that these consequences actually have causes," he added.

On trade and geopolitics, the foreign minister said, "We are witnessing a serious over-concentration of manufacturing in a limited geography, which has many ramifications.

CAMBATING CROSS-BORDER CRIMES

India expects cooperative approach from Bangla: Govt



PNS NEW DELHI

India has conveyed to Bangladesh that it expects a cooperative approach from the neighbouring country for combating cross-border crimes, the government informed Parliament on Tuesday

India has also informed Bangladesh that it is observing all existing agreements in this regard, including for fencing along this front, the government said.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai said in a written reply to Lok Sabha that the total length of the India-Bangladesh border is 4,096.7 km out of which 3,232.21 km has been "covered" with a fence.

The minister was asked if border fencing "impacted" bilateral relations between the two countries. "Construction of fencing is an important security measure for securing the border. Fencing helps to ensure a crime-free border by effectively addressing the challenges of cross-border criminal activities, smuggling, move-ment of criminals and traffick-

ing," Rai said. It has been "conveyed" to the government of Bangladesh that with regard to security measures at the border, including for fencing, India observes all protocols and agreements between the two governments and between the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), the minister said.

Parl panel flags delays in youth empowerment programme



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A parliamentary report has flagged delays in fund allocations, lack of targeted outreach, and insufficient government action on key recommendations for the youths on disaster preparedness, skilling, and hostel facilities for women. The 360th report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports, presented in Parliament on Tuesday, reviewed earlier recommendations on Rashtriya Sashaktikaran Karyakram (RYSK), a key youth empowerment scheme. The committee expressed dissatisfaction with the pace of implementation and urged the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to take urgent corrective steps. The report flagged concerns over the lack of a structured approach to youth volunteerism in disaster response, citing a 2022 United Development Programme (UNDP) assessment. It urged the government to integrate Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, or NYKS, volunteers into mandatory disaster management committees at the village and district levels and establish Disaster Risk Reduction Teams in every district.

While the Ministry reported that over 12,000 NYKS volunteers have been trained, the committee called for better coordination with disaster relief authorities to ensure effective deployment. The committee also criticised delays in transforming NYKS centres into District Youth Resource Centres (DYRCs), which could serve as hubs for skill development, employment, and entrepreneur-

Go ahead with 158 civil judges appointments: SC to Karnataka HC

PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the Karnataka High Court to proceed with the recruitment of 158 civil judges despite a state government circular prohibiting it.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Sanjay Kumar and K V Viswanathan passed the direction after being informed that the state government issued a circular in November, last year halting the direct recruitment process by making changes to reservations under the Karnataka Judicial Service (Recruitment) (Amendment) Rules 2024.

im measure we direct that the process of direct recruitment of 158 civil judges in Karnataka shall continue notwithstanding the circular ... issued by the state government. This order is subject to the final outcome/decision on the application," it said.

The CJI said the total sanctioned strength of judges in subordinate judiciary had risen from 21,000 to 29,000 in the country and the states, where the numbers rose significantly, would have to bear more expenses and increase the spending to meet the demand.

On the issue of residential accommodations for Delhi judicial officers, the bench directed the Land And Development Office (L&DO) of the Centre to file an affidavit detailing the present status of land at 206, Rouse Avenue in the national capital. "The Union of India will file

an affidavit on the correct position and status of the land located at 206 Rouse Avenue, order will be sent to the L&DO office. List in the week commencing April 1, 2025," it said.

The bench was hearing a 2006 plea related to the filling up of vacancies in the district judiciary and other issues including lack of infrastructural facilities in the country.

Modi takes 'urban naxal' jibe at Rahul, tears into AAP in LS

PNS NEW DELHI

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 his

government's schemes saved lot of money, it was not used to build 'Sheesh Mahal'.

Replying to the debate on the Sabha, he made several veiled attacks at former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, saying those who entertain themselves by getting photo sessions done in huts of the poor will find the talk about the poor in Parliament boring.

Those who walk around with pockets in Constitution, do they



know how they forced Muslim women to live in hardship. We brought in the triple talaq law to give right to them," Modi said.

"Today some people are openly speaking the language of urban naxals. The things that urban naxals say (are being said). These people who speak the language of urban naxals. who declare war against the Motion of Thanks to the Indian State, can neither underthe country's unity," Modi said.

Though Modi did not name anyone, his remarks were an apparent reference to Gandhi's comments last month that "we are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself".

In a veiled jibe at AAP convenor Kejriwal, Modi said some

leaders focus on jacuzzi and stylish showers while his government's focus of providing water to every household.

He also said that "some parties are like AAP-da for the future of the youth" as they promise various kinds of doles at the type of elections but never fulfil them.

"Some government schemes saved lot of money, but we did not use it to build 'Sheesh Mahal'," Modi said.

Without naming Gandhi, Modi took a swipe at him for his reaction on the President's address, saying those who entertain themselves by getting photo sessions done in huts of the poor will find the talk about the poor in Parliament boring.

Soon after the President delivered her address to a joint sitting of Parliament on January Sonia Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were seen discussing the speech in the Parliament complex. During the discussion, Rahul Gandhi was heard asking Sonia Gandhi if the President's speech was "boring".

Shah reviews JK security situation with top officials

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday reviewed the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir which has witnessed a few terror incidents in the recent past, sources said.

Top officials of the Army, Jammu and Kashmir Police and intelligence agencies briefed Shah about the prevailing situation in the Union territory and ongoing operations against terrorists, they said. The meeting was held a day

after a terror attack in south

Kashmir's Kulgam district, in

which ex-serviceman Manzoor

Ahmad Wagay was killed and his wife and niece were injured. Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj



Sinha, DGP Nalin Prabhat,

Army chief General Upendra

Dwivedi and other top army, police and civil officials attended the meeting.
Shah is also likely to chair

another security review meeting with top officials of the paramilitary forces on Wednesday.

During the last review meeting on December 19, 2024, Shah had directed all security agencies to continue working in a coordinated manner to eliminate terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. The government has maintained that there is a significant decline in terrorist incidents, infiltration and recruitment of youth in terrorist organ-

PM has lost connect with people, says Priyanka

PNS NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders on Tuesday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address in the Lok Sabha with Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra stating it seemed from his speech that he has lost his connect with people and their needs.

Replying to the two-day discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the president's address, Prime Minister Modi hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying those speaking of fighting the Indian state can appreciate neither the Constitution nor national unity as he launched a counter-offensive in Lok Sabha against the

Asked about the PM's remarks, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi said, "I think he has lost his connect

speech." Congress MP Shashi Tharoor also hit out at Modi, saying he made a "typical election speech".

with people and their needs.

This is what it seemed from his

"It was a typical election speech with the Delhi elections tomorrow. Just a long laundry list of things the government has done. What is surprising is that, the opposition had raised very specific criticisms of the president's address and those criticisms were not answered by the prime minister," Tharoor said.

Most of Delhi's pollution locally created: Study

PNS NEW DELHI

Delhi-NCR's pollution during October-November is largely of local origin, with stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana contributing 14 per cent to the over-all PM2.5 levels in 2022, a study

has suggested. Researchers, led by those at Japan's Research Institute for Humanity and Nature under the 'Aakash Project', said that changes in the national capital's air quality could be related more with the stepping up or down of the 'GRAP' anti-pollution mea-

The study, published in the journal 'npj Climate and

Atmospheric Science', analysed fine particulate matter (PM2.5) data, recorded during the September-November months of 2022 and 2023. For the study, 30 sensors were installed across Punjab, Haryana and Delhi-NCR. Stubble burning, a common practice for clearing land following rice harvest, is often blamed for the sharp and sustained rise in PM2.5 levels, seen in the national capital region during the October-November

However, the analysis showed that emissions over Punjab from burning stubbles "contributed only a meagre (nearly) 14 per cent to the overall PM2.5 over



Delhi-NCR during October-November 2022"

Further, PM2.5 levels remained stable in Delhi, even as stubble fires in Punjab and Haryana (as recorded by satellites) declined by at least 50 per cent during 2015-2023, the authors said.

"This indicates that there exists only a very weak coupling between PM2.5 mass over Delhi-

NCR and the (crop residue burning) over Punjab, highlighting the effectiveness of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in controlling air pollution in the region," the authors wrote.

GRAP refers to the set of antipollution measures, implemented in a staged manner in response to air quality levels. GRAP-4 is the most stringent, imposed when air quality index (AQI) crosses 450 and reaches 'severe plus' category. The researchers observed that PM2.5 levels varied in line with the stepping up or down of the GRAP "The decrease of PM2.5 levels in Delhi-NCR was main-

ly attributed to GRAP IV when

road traffic and construction activities, among other sources, were reduced. However, a rise in PM2.5 load was recorded after the revocation of GRAP IV for 2022 and 2023," they wrote.

"With the measurements at a network of about 30 sites covering Punjab, Haryana and Delhi NCR, we are able to separate the contributions of paddy straw burning to Delhi's PM2.5 variations on the basis of characteristic PM2.5 events and at weekmonthly averages," said author Prabir Patra, the leader of Aakash Project and principal scientist at Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology.

Rajnath: India will support Bhutan in enhancing defence prowess

PNS NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday reaffirmed India's readiness to support Bhutan in boosting its defence preparedness, including through the supply of military hardware and

Singh conveyed this to Chief Operations Officer of Royal Bhutan Army Lieutenant General Batoo Tshering in a meeting. The top Bhutanese military commander is on a sixday visit to India from Saturday.

The defence ministry said Singh and Lt Gen. Tshering held discussions encompassing a

variety of issues on bilateral relations.' "The defence minister reaffirmed India's readiness to support Bhutan in capability enhancement for defence preparedness, including provisioning of defence equipment and assets to augment capacities of Bhutan, as per its national priorities and in line with India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy," it

On his part, Lt Gen. Tshering appreciated India's continued support and thanked India in assisting Bhutan in augmenting its defence capacities and imparting training on Royal Bhutan Army (RBA) personnel.

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

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 BRAHMKUMAR **NIKUNJ JI**

I one 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

hilly Delhi, though, the blitzkrieg of a high-octane election campaign, not bor-dering 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 bat-

tle?
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 Dday, 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

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 waferthin 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

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 Alicein-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 sig-nificant 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 dom-

inate the elections as the C-Voter survey suggests, looks different from its 2020 avatar. The Lok Sabha Elections 2024 speaks volumes that APP, 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 antiincumbency, 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

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

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 population—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 2015 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 K 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

he 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 competitive-

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



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 entrepreneurs to scale their embraces a futuristic vision by opment. By easing compliance

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-

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 develnorms, 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, infra-structure, and resource management. Saurabh Rai, CEO of Arahas Technologies, highlighted its impact: "Leveraging Al 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 fundof-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 seniro technical writer at Ksolves, views are personal)

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Delhi decides

A 'do-or-die' for AAP, a prestige battle for the BJP and a fight for survival for Congress—Delhi heads to the polls today

n a battle of promises, power and prestige, Delhi votes today. The stage is set for the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, with voters heading to the polls today and results expected on February 8. With 1.56 crore voters across 70 constituencies, the political atmosphere in the national capital is charged, reflective of the high stakes involved. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), led by Arvind Kejriwal, aims for a third consecutive term while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Congress vie to reclaim relevance and power in the capital. The month-long campaign was intense, marked by fiery rhetoric and personal jabs. The BJP leaders accused AAP of corruption, branding their governance as 'AAP-da' (disaster). In return, Kejriwal took aim at the BJP, accusing them of law and order failures and even alleging that the BJP-led Haryana government "mixed poison" in the Yamuna, framing it as a 'genocide' attempt. The Congress, meanwhile, targeted both AAP and BJP with accusations of corruption and inefficiency. This elec-



tion, like many others, saw a flurry of promises aimed at wooing voters with tangible benefits. AAP pledged monthly payments to temple priests, free bus rides, and extensive schemes for youth and students. Both BJP and Congress promised subsidised cooking gas cylinders and financial support for women and unemployed youth. The BJP additionally promised Rs 21,000 for expecting mothers, while Congress offered Rs 8,500 per month to unemployed youth.

Security for the elections is tight, with over 30,000 police personnel and 220 paramilitary companies deployed across the city. Nearly 3,000 polling booths have been marked as sensitive. While assembly elec-

tions are a state matter, the fact that this election is taking place in Delhi, the nation's capital with a cosmopolitan character, gives it national significance. A win for AAP could solidify Kejriwal's model of governance and offer a template for other states and bolster its claim in other states, while a victory for BJP might signal a resurgence of the party in urban governance, reinforcing Modi's narrative of efficient governance. For Congress, a good showing could be the much-needed revival signal after a series of setbacks. As the voters cast their ballots, the outcome of these elections will not just shape Delhi's immediate future but could also influence the national political discourse. The Delhi elections, while significant, are not an ideal model for other states to replicate. The city's unique status as the national capital, with a mix of local and national issues influencing voter behaviour, creates an electoral landscape unlike any other. Additionally, the campaign narratives in Delhi tend to be dominated by highpitched rhetoric and personality-driven politics rather than substantive policy debates. This makes the Delhi election an exception rather than a benchmark, highlighting the need for states to focus on governance models that prioritise long-term development over short-term electoral gains.



The digital age and the decline

of meaningful connections

Labourers plant paddy saplings in a field, in Nadia

Imbuing warrior ethos through strength In Narendra Modi's cabinet, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh enjoys the optics

of seniority, but not necessarily the authority that should come with it

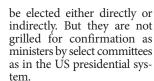
n Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is de jure numero uno. He sits next to him at meetings and in Parliament and like most another minister, regularly invokes Modi's greatness and vision. The optics of seniority are excellent. So is his pedigree. He is a Thakur, dyed-in-the-wool Sanghi and twice President of BJP. His political graph starts as Education Minister to UP, CM Kalyan Singh. As Education Minister in 1992, his signal achievement was ending a regional malaise - copying in exams, sometimes with a knife dug into

Like infiltrators across LoC, invigilators feared to cross the red line. He had an ordinance passed making copying a non-bailable offence – the onus of proving oneself innocent was on the accused. Fourteen and 15-yearolds were sent to jail on charges of copying. The pass percentage in the UP high school board examination for Class X in 1991 was 58.03. In 1992, after the anticopying law was put in place, it slipped to 14.7. He lost the 1993 assembly elections.

A great believer in astrology Singh was ambitious and usually took his cue from RSS leadership. He rose to become chief minister of UP, the second Thakur to do so. As president of BJP, he was asked to inform seven times MP, former Finance, Defence and Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh that he was no longer a member of the BIP (expelled). Jaswant had written the offending book - Jinnah -India Partition and Independence.

Following a stint as Home Minister, he became defence minister after Modi had shuffled around Arun Jaitley, Nirmala Sitharaman and Manohar Parrikar as defence minister. Last month at the Republic Day NCC rally he revealed he was in NCC and a physics teacher. His fondness for Dabang - strength main enemy. It hopes to make association with the redoubtable Raja Bhaiyya of Kunda, famous for rearing crocodiles in his pond is less known.

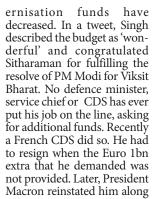
In the Westminster Parliamentary system cabinet ministers are selected by the PM and have to



Otherwise, few would clear the viva, especially for the Defence Minister. Last week former Fox News commentator, Pete Hegseth former Army National Guard who was President Trump's most endangered cabinet choice went through hell before the Senate Armed Services Committee for his confirmation. Poor Pete! he was facing multiple allegations of abuse including sex and alcohol.

He pledged to never drink alcohol if confirmed. Professionally he was well prepared, answering accurate questions on military equipment like the size of a 9mm bullet and the number of rounds in a carbine magazine. He told his examiners he would restore 'warrior ethos' in armed services. Americans have much to worry about as the Chinese are catching up in technology, military and economic prowess. Singh has no similar worries. India has abandoned any catch-up with China, its up the deterrent and capability gap through diplomacy as was evident from the meagre defence allocations (1.9 per cent of GDP) in last week's budget.

After inflation and foreign exchange fluctuations, mod-



with Euro 1bn. For the last few years, Sitharaman has ceased mentioning defence allocation in budget presentations. The armed forces are expected to employ force multipliers like invoking Chanakya, imbibing ancient military craft and becoming contemporary through the fusion of past, present and future, as reflected by the new painting on this theme that replaced the once-in-1000-year surrender ceremony painting in the Army Chief's annexe. For all his virtues - injecting Hindutva in a hitherto secular armed force, venerating weapons with religious symbols and motivating triservice warriors by pledging mooh tod jawab, Singh has ceded his area of responsibility to PMO and NSA Former Defence Minister AK Antony in contrast was the Rock of Gibraltar, never letting the NSA or even the PM bypass

So little reform got done. Singh is an affable team player guided occasionally by a Defence Advisor, a retired Lt General. Recently at a function of the Directorate of Civilian Personnel of Naval Head Quarters, he eulogised the 'civilian in armed forces': "you are civilian before you join service; in some ways, you're civilian even while you serve; and civilian even after you have retired. Your families are also civilians". No mention of veterans! I envy Singh for his immaculately starched white kurta and flowing dhoti which reminds me of my era of razor-sharp starched olive

greens. Last month, Singh went to Madhya Pradesh accompanied by Army Chief Gen Dwivedi. At Ujjain they prayed at the Maha Kaal temple, Dwivedi kitted like Singh. Later Singh visited military institutions in Mhow. At the Army War College, he began reading his speech: "COAS, Gen Umeshji Dwivedi; Commandant Armedpause....kaun sa hai...? someone prompted "War". Pause...someone repeated "War". "Yeah. War College, Lt Gen JS Shahi..." Singh might infuse warrior ethos in the armed forces but as an aspiring politician, will remain the smaid, never the bride

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence *Staff. The views are personal)*



FORCES ARE **EXPECTED** TO EMPLOY FORCE **MULTIPLIERS** LIKE INVOKING CHANAKYA, **IMBIBING** ANCIENT MILITARY CRAFT AND **BECOMING** CONTEMPORARY THROUGH THE FUSION **PRESENT** AND FUTURE

E EDITOR

CANCER CASES RISING RAPIDLY

Madam — Cancer is a major health issue in Southeast Asia with high rates of incidence and mortality. WHO has reported that more than 2.3 million people are diagnised with cancer each year. It is estimated that by 2050 there will be an 85 percent increase in the number of new cancer cases and deaths in the WHO's South East Asia region. It is unfortunate. Among the new cases, breast, cervix, and lung cancer were the most frequently reported. Economic transitions, lifestyle changes, and rising obesity prevalence are increasing cancer risk in this region with existing risk factors such as tobacco and

indoor-outdoor pollution. Although cancer is a life-threatening disease, it can be prevented and treated if detected early. Screening programmes such as breast self-examination and mammography substantially increase breast cancer survival. Options such as breastconserving surgery and breast reconstruction surgery should be more available in the SEA region. Cervical cancer is the second most frequent cancer in the SEA region, caused by high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV), and can be prevented by vaccination. Tobacco is another major cause of cancer and preventable deaths

worldwide. More actions are to be taken as tobacco and smoking are still the cause of many deaths in the region. Equal attention should be paid to less prevalent types of cancer. Governments need to include cancer treatment in national insurance as done in countries like Indonesia, not restricted to surgeries but allowing lifelong treatment. There is an urgent need for continued efforts from clinicians, researchers, and policymakers to collaborate and find the most effective strategies to serve can-



The reappointment of retired judges offers several advantages. Their vast experience and familiarity with legal procedures can enhance efficiency, especially in handling complex matters. Time-bound assignments ensure focus on specific case clusters, improving disposal rates without overburdening the regular bench. Additionally, this reduces the dependency on fresh judicial appoint-

a mere token of its gesture, and it falls too short of the fund it requires to generate 100 GW of power. In fact, this is the same case with other segments of renewable energy also. It needs a lot of political will to do away with the fossil fuels, as the investments and commercial interest of the pri-

vate players are huge.
It needs a lot of social commitment towards the future generations to clear the climate challenges and pass on a safe earth to live in. All over the world, the power of profit is predominating over the safety of the people to live on this secured earth. Recurrent costs in nuclear energy are less, and it makes it the most economical one. But the amount of safety measures to be taken up discourages many countries from thinking of this segment. More than fear of falling lives, the fear of falling profits to the private players in the field seems to be dragging the government from going ahead at a speed it requires. There is a dire need to extend substantial subsidies and promote renewable energies, including

delays. However, concerns remain regarding the potential impact on judicial independence, as government approval could raise questions about executive interference. Transparency in the selection process, clear tenure guidelines and defined performance metrics are essential to mitigate these risks. Moreover, the absence of a concrete framework for lower courts highlights a critical gap. Given that the bulk of pending cases lie at the subordinate level, swift policy formulation for these courts is imperative. This initiative reflects the judiciary's proactive stance in judicial reforms, recognising that traditional measures are inadequate for the scale of India's legal

ments, which often face administrative

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

EGGS ESSENTIAL FOR NUTRITION

Madam —According to the data, around 35-40 per cent of children in rural areas in Maharashtra are underweight, and the highest rate of malnutrition is found in North Maharashtra. Lack of access to nutritious food is one of the major factors behind malnutrition. With this backdrop, it is surprising to learn why the state government dropped eggs from the mid-day meals. Egg is a major source of protein and its substitute, pulses, are costlier than eggs, so eggs should remain a core part of midday meals, and if any student does not

want to eat it, he can skip it. Earlier states like Madhya Pradesh and Goa also made such decisions, while it should be noted that a few states in Southern India have added the number of eggs given to children to ensure protein requirements are met. Such drastic decisions could prove detrimental to the families living below the poverty line.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



remembers former col-

leagues, distant relatives,

neighbours who once lived

next door. And more than just

remembering them, she stays

At an age when many resign

themselves to solitude, she

picks up the phone and calls

people from decades ago.

Not just text messages, voice notes, or hurried "Hope

you're well" followed by

silence. She calls, she convers-

yet in today's world, it feels

shared history, laughter, and

updates on each other's lives.

to the bonds she has nurtured

over the years. She is remem-

bered because she remem-

has loved.

almost extraordinary.

in touch.

are we losing in this hyperconnected yet increasingly impersonal world?

Relationships today are often sustained by a string of forwarded messages, impersonal likes on social media, and hastily typed responses to keep up appearances. In the race for efficiency, we have sacrificed depth.

es, she cares. It is a simple act, Consider this: How many times have we opted to send a WhatsApp message instead of calling, simply because it's quicker? How often do we Her phone conversations are not perfunctory check-ins; they are rich tapestries of reply with an emoji rather than words that could convey something deeper? I suspect And the warmth with which relationships have become she is received at the other more superficial, and perhaps we are to blame. It is easier to type a quick "Happy birth-day!" than to call and hear the end of the line is a testament person's voice. It is more conbers. She is loved because she venient to react to a post than to ask, "How have you really It makes me wonder: What

And yet, watching my mother-in-law, I realise that relationships, like wealth, require us, there will be familiar voicforge and sustain over time are the greatest savings we make in life. They are the human equivalent of a wellkept treasure-present when we need warmth, support, and belonging.

One of the reasons we don't stay in touch is because we assume people are busy. They probably don't have time to talk. Or worse, we convince ourselves that if they really cared, they would call us too. And so, we let months slip into years, waiting for the other person to make the first move.

But my mother-in-law doesn't wait. She doesn't hesitate to pick up the phone, regardless of how long it has been. And what's more, people respond to her with the same warmth and eagerness. It reminds me that relationships are not about keeping score; they are about keeping the connection

just about having company for celebrations; it is also about having shoulders to lean on in times of need. It is

about knowing that when life throws its uncertainties at investment. The bonds we es to comfort us, guide us, and remind us that we are not alone. And yet, many people find themselves growing lonelier with age, not because they lack family or friends, but because they did not nurture those bonds.

ASHA IYER KUMAR

What would it take for us to revive the lost art of staying in touch? It doesn't take grand gestures. It doesn't require hours of free time. Sometimes, all it takes is a simple phone call. A heartfelt message. A conversation that goes beyond the surface.

So here's a small invitation: Think of someone you haven't spoken to in a while-perhaps an old schoolmate, a former colleague, or a distant cousin. Instead of sending a message, call them. Ask about their life. Listen to their stories. Share something about yours. It may feel unfamiliar at first, but you may be surprised at how quickly the warmth

(The author is a Dubaibased columnist and children's writing coach. She has published six books. Views are personal)

cer patients in the best way possible.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

PROMOTE RENEWABLE ENERGY

Madam— India's need and its policy related to power are yet to come close to each other. The allocation of Rs 20,000 crore is

nuclear ones A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

A strong social network isn't

VIJAYAWADA | WEDNESDAY | FEBRUARY 5, 2025

IN BRIEF



Kenya expects 20 pc growth in tourist arrivals from India

enya is expecting 20 per cent growth in footfalls from India as it has received higher enquiries and planned promotional Campaigns in the Asian country, an official said. In 2024, Kenya hosted 106,863 visitors from India compared to 95,038 tourists in the previous year, a 12.4 per cent increase, according to the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) data. "Immediate feedback from the travel trade was positive, with lots of travel inquiries around Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) and leisure expected across the season. We are also stepping up our promotional activities in India to attract more visitors from the country. Therefore, we expect that there will be a 20 per cent rise in tourist arrivals from India this year from 2024," Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO) Chief Executive Officer Fred Kaigwa said in a statement. The travel trade roadshows that have been conducted in the key cities of Ahmedabad, Bangalore, and Kolkata, have made Kenya's presence felt as a destination, which is likely to translate this into sales, he added.



INDIAsize to be released at Bharat Tex

he much-awaited 'INDIAsize' initiative, a study which aims to establish standardized measurements designed to better suit the Indian body types, will be released at the Bharat Tex event later this month, Textiles Secretary Neelam Shami Rao said on Tuesday. A set of anthropometric data will be released in the public domain for the industry to provide feedback on any required changes, before the standardised measurements are adopted for retail apparel. Presently, international and domestic brands available in India use measurements from the US or the UK for garments, having 'small', 'medium' and 'large' sizes. However, Western body types differ from Indians in terms of height, weight or specific measurements of body parts, which sometimes causes fitting issues. The Ministry of Textiles sanctioned the INDIAsize project to develop standard body sizes for the Indian apparel sector to address the prevailing disparities and inconsistencies in provided fits.



Govt selects JSPL, others for Financial Incentive Scheme

he government has selected three private entities, including Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL), under category II of the Financial Incentive Scheme to promote coal/lignite gasification projects. The government, on January 24, 2024, launched the scheme with financial outlay of Rs 8,500 crore to provide viability gap funding (VGF) to promote coal/lignite gasification projects for PSUs and private sector in three categories. The Request for Proposals for category-II was issued on May 15, 2024, and technical bids were opened on January 10, 2025. This category has an outlay of Rs 3,850 crore, the ministry said in a statement. The name of selected applicants for receiving financial incentives under category-II are Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL), New Era Cleantech Solution and Greta Energy Limited. The names of applicants selected in the category I and III of the scheme have already been announced earlier. PSUs come under Category I with a provision of Rs 4,050 crore.

to boost growth over next few years'

PNS NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday said the Budget for 2025-26 will boost India's growth over the next few years via domestic demand through income tax cuts and the country will achieve the targeted 4.4 per cent fiscal deficit despite hiking I-T

S&P said India's union Budget is in

line with its expectation of gradual fiscal consolidation that undergirds the positive outlook on India's sovereign ratings 'BBB-'. The deficit targets are also

consistent with S&P's projec-

"We believe India will hit its deficit targets despite revenue loss from lifting the threshold for minimum taxable income and slower economic growth. Support will stem from continued large dividends from the central bank and potential capital underspending," S&P said in a statement. The fiscal 2026 budget will boost growth over the next few years via domestic demand through tax cuts for households, it added.

"We anticipate consumer spending and public invest-

ments will maintain real GDP growth at 6.7 per cent in fiscal 2025 and 6.8 per cent in fiscal 2026. These growth rates continue to place India above sovereign peers at similar income levels and should continue to support fiscal revenue increase despite the income tax cuts," S&P said.

In its post-budget comments, Fitch Ratings said the govern-



ment's clarification of mediumterm debt reduction targets, if adhered to, could improve India's credit profile over time.

Fitch rates India at THE lowest investment grade 'BBB-' with a stable outlook. The government aims to maintain central government debt on a gradual downward trend, reaching close to 50 per cent of GDP by FY'31, roughly 7 percentage points lower than in FY'25. The focus on a mediumterm debt target should give greater flexibility to manage fiscal deficits, depending on eco-nomic conditions, Fitch said,

Domestic demand | GST Council to soon take decision on rates, number of slabs: FM

PNS NEW DELHI

The GST Council will soon take a decision on having fewer and lower rates as the review work is almost complete, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday.

Currently, Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a fourtier tax structure with slabs at 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent. Luxury and demerit goods are taxed at the highest bracket of 28 per cent, while packed food and essential items are in the lowest 5 per cent slab.

The Council, chaired by Sitharaman and comprising her state counterparts, has set up a group of ministers (GoM) to suggest changes in GST rates as well as reduce

"To be fair to the GST and the ministers who are all in the council, the work on rationalizing and simplifying GST rates has already commenced. In fact, it had commenced nearly three years ago," she said at the India Today-Business Today Post Budget Round Table.

Sitharaman said later the scope was widened and now the work is almost complete.

Mentioning that she told ministers in the Council to have a more in-depth look at the rates since they relate to everyday items consumed by

common people, the minister said it was important to ensure that an opportunity was not lost.

'For me, it was also important that we don't lose an opportunity, that we can even bring down the number of rates, which is also the original intent that we wanted fewer rates and lower rates. So work has got to happen on that, and I hope the GST Council will decide on it

Union Budget 2025-26 that also provides significant income tax relief to the mid-

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is fram-

ing schemes for MSME

exporters to provide cred-

it at easy terms, promote

alternate financing instru-

ment through strengthening factoring services for them, and offer mon-

etary assistance to deal

with non-tariff measures

imposed by other countries, an official said on

The commerce, MSME

and finance ministries are

Director General of

Foreign Trade (DGFT)

Santosh Kumar Sarangi

being formulated under

the export promotion mis-

sion, announced in the

Union Budget for 2025-26.

expected to be rolled out

in about 4-5 months, he

The schemes are

These schemes are

told reporters here.

Tuesday.

dle class, the minister asserted the country's economic fundamentals are strong and there is no structural slow-

Tax relief in the Budget is a reflection of the prime minister's commitment to the taxpayers, Sitharaman said and refuted speculations that the move was aimed at Delhi assembly elections.

She also told the gathering that there is no proposal to "shut down" the old tax regime. On a question related to capital expenditure, the minister further said the capex has not come down, in fact it has increased to Rs 11.21 lakh crore which is 4.3 per cent of the GDP. For fiscal 2025-26, the Budget proposed to spend Rs 11.21 lakh crore towards capital expenditure (capex), higher than Rs 10.18 lakh crore in the Revised Estimates for FY25. It was Rs 10 lakh crore in FY24, Rs 7.5 lakh crore in FY23, Rs 5.54 lakh crore in FY22 and Rs 4.39 lakh crore in FY21. The Budget pegged a fiscal deficit of 4.4 per cent of GDP for FY26 and lowered the target for FY25 by 10 basis points to 4.8 per cent of

Currently, Goods and

Services Tax (GST) is

a four-tier tax struc-

ture with slabs at 5,

12, 18 and 28 per

cent. Luxury and

demerit goods are

bracket of 28 per

cent, while packed

food and essential

est 5 per cent slab

items are in the low-

taxed at the highest

soon," Sitharaman said. Days after presenting the

Jammers, boosters hampering mobile services quality: COAl

PNS NEW DELHI

Telecom industry body COAI has written to the telecom department that illegal jammers and repeaters installed at educational institutes, homes and firms are deteriorating mobile networks ser-

vice quality, resulting in call drops and low data speed for consumers. The Cellular

Operators Association of India (COAI), whose members include Reliance Bharti Jio, Idea, etc, has

requested the Department of Telecom (DoT) to take action against the illegal jammers and boosters and write to all states, informing them that use of such equipment is an offence under the Telecommunications Act 2023, which should be stopped immediately.

COAI Director General SP Kochhar said that there are instances wherein during the India.

The trade war between the US

and China is expected to bene-

fit Indian exporters in increasing

their shipments to the American

They said the country was the

fourth-largest gainer when the

US imposed higher duties on

Chinese goods during US

President Donald Trump's first

After coming to power again,

PNS NEW DELHI

market, sources said.

tenure.

routine monitoring of the network, degradation in RSSI (Received Signal Strength Indicator) parameter is observed.

"Upon further analysis for such degradation, it surfaced that the degradation of RSSI



parameters is primarily due to installation of jammers by educational institutions/ schools without obtaining necessary approval from the competent authority and installation of illegal boosters households/companies, etc," Kochhar said. The industry body also shared link boosters

allegedly being sold on Amazon

Gold continues Govt framing schemes for record-breaking rally **MSME** exporters

Moves closer to Rs 86k-mark

PNS NEW DELHI

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 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 per cent purity also climbed for the fifth straight session and gained Rs 500 to hit another record high of Rs 85,400 per 10 grams on Tuesday.

Silver prices, however, snapped a five-day winning streak and fell Rs 500 to Rs 95,500 per kg against Monday's



Rs 94,222 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). Comex gold futures for April delivery fell USD 17 per ounce or 0.60 per cent to USD 2,840.10 per ounce.

On Monday, the yellow metal futures had hit a fresh high of USD 2,872 per ounce.

According to Abans Holdings' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta, gold hit record highs on Monday

closing level of Rs 96,000 per amid fears of a global trade kg. war, uriving invested the safe-haven metal at high

> "Geopolitical uncertainty continues to rise as Trump's tariffs on Canada and Mexico are paused for a month following negotiations on stricter border enforcement. "Meanwhile, China's central

> bank increased its gold reserves for the second consecutive month in December, as central banks worldwide continue to hedge against economic

MKTS BOUNCE BACK

Investors' wealth surges Rs 5.95 lakh cr

Market investors added Rs 5.95 lakh crore to their wealth on Tuesday as benchmark indices rallied nearly 2 per cent after US President Donald Trump delayed tariffs on Mexico and Canada for a month.

The BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,397.07 points or 1.81 per cent to settle at a month's high of 78,583.81. During the day, it surged 1,471.85 points or 1.90 per cent to 78,658.59.

378.20 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,739.25, a level not seen since January 3.

Following the sharp rally in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged Rs 5,95,996.51 crore to Rs 4,25,50,826.11 crore (USD 4.88 trillion).

"Indian equity markets witnessed sharp rally after US President deferred the planned tariffs both on Canada and Mexico by 30 days, providing a major relief to the escalating trade war," Siddhartha



Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd,

From the 30-share blue-

chip pack, Larsen & Toubro rallied nearly 5 per cent. Adani Ports, IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement and Asian Paints were also among the major gainers. ITC Hotels, Zomato, Nestle

and Maruti were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong ended significantly higher.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.35 per cent and smallcap index surged 1.20 per

Debt funds are also an

option under discussions, he

added. Speaking at the briefing,

Joint Secretary in the DPIIT

Sanjiv said: "This will be differ-

ent from the first one. We will

try to bring something more.

We will frame the scheme in a

way so that 20 times fund

Trump on Saturday signed an order to impose stiff tariffs on

imports from China, fulfilling a campaign promise but raising the prospect of increased prices for American consumers. "India is likely to gain out of this trade war. Significant rise in exports are expected from India," a source

Indian exporters likely to gain

from US-China trade war

said. Exporters have also stated that the imposition of customs duties by the US on imports from China provides huge export opportunities for India to America. The tariffs would affect exports from China to the US as they would push the prices of their goods in the American market, making them less competitive. "The move can create opportunities for Indian exports due to the trade diversion effects as US buyers will seek alternative

suppliers to avoid higher costs," Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said.

He said the extent of benefits depends on India's production capacity and competitiveness.

The sectors which are likely to gain are electrical machinery and components, auto components, mobile, pharma, chemicals, apparel and fabrics," Sahai added

During April-November

2024-25, the US was the secondlargest trading partner of India with USD 82.52 billion bilateral trade in goods (USD 52.89 billion worth of exports, USD 29.63 billion of imports and USD 23.26 billion trade surplus). In 2021-24, America was the largest trading partner of India.

According to think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), the top 100 US export products account for 75 per cent of India's total imports from that

Fund of Funds Scheme to focus on mfg, high-tech startups launched in 2016 investment of startup cap can also be more than Rs 21,700 crore has relooked. PNS NEW DELHI with high-end technology and

The newly announced Rs 10,000 crore Fund of Funds Scheme (FFS) for startups, unveiled in the Budget, will focus on manufacturing and high-technology sectors, which require longer-term funding, a top government official stated on Tuesday.

Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Amardeep Singh Bhatia said this new scheme would be an entirely different fund that will address the needs of startups that lie between those dealing

the ones focussed on improving public service delivery.

The government on Saturday announced a new FFS with Rs 10,000 crore corpus to promote growth of budding entrepreneurs in the country. In 2016 also, the government launched a similar scheme, with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore, with contributions spread over the 14th and 15th Finance Commission

Bhatia said the first series of FFS has helped in building the AIF (alternate investment fund) ecosystem in the coun-



try which provided muchneeded capital to startups.

For the second series, announced in the Budget, "We already had consultations with AIFs, with SIDBI...We expect that this should help in covering the large spectrum of star-

tups which need longer duration of funds, which need different types of funding beyond the equity infusion," he added. He stated that the new

Through the first FFS

scheme would not be topping up the already functional FFS.

(AIFs) in more than 1,180 These AIFs are mobilising a corpus of around Rs 91,000 crore by raising funds from other investors.

already been catalysed by

Alternative Investment Funds

"We want to expand it (new FFS). There was a 10-year limit in the first one, now we can make it for 14-15 years that will meet the longer funding requirements which are into high-tech areas, whose gesta-

mobilisation happens. In the first, 10x fund was mobilised". The Budget also announced tion period is more," the secretary said, adding that the per

a FFS for Deep Tech Startups to enable patient capital, support disruptive innovations and for funding of larger tick-

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 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 trans-formation and dedicated training. The recently unveiled teaser 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

Tribute snub? Adnan Sami slams

Zakir Hussain In Memoriam

Grammys for missing out on Ustad



he 2025 Grammy Awards, held on Monday morning, featured an

musicians who passed away in the past year. However, the absence of

Indian tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain from the tribute has sparked

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',

Tabla Player in the World who was also a 4 Time Grammy Winner - Ustad

vou inexcusably missed mentioning the passing away of the Greatest

accompanied his post with an image of the late maestro in his element,

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 from India... SHAME ON YOU!" The singer

left many questioning the

Recording Academy's oversight.

Hussain, who passed away on

pulmonary fibrosis, was one of

percussionists. His family, in an

official statement, remembered

December 16, 2024, in San

Francisco due to idiopathic

the world's most influential

him as a devoted teacher

emotional In Memoriam segment honouring the legendary

disappointment and criticism, especially among Indian music

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

The series follows the journey of Raghubir 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 highstakes, character-driven story that blends intense action with emotional depth. With its compelling premise and an explosive lead perfor-mance by Pulkit, Glory is poised to be a standout addition to Netflix's growing roster of gripping



what's brewing?

ctress Rasika Dugal opened up about how her role in the critically acclaimed series "Delhi Crime" A in the critically acclaimed series "Delhi Crime" has significantly contributed to both her professional to be a past seven years. sional 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 enter-

tainment 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 ruth-less 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 deep-

er into the moral complexities of modern India, where progress has a price and the line between victim and perpetrator some-

t i m e s blurs.



rivanka 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.

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.

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 (+-=\(\mathbb{I}\x)\) 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 favssss 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.





ARCHIE













SPEED BUMP





GARFIELD

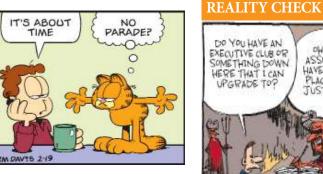




NOW, I WASN'T THERE, BUT AS NANCY TELLS IT--- THE TEEN-AGE BULLY HIT NANCY IN

THE BACK OF THE HUGE SNOWBALL-



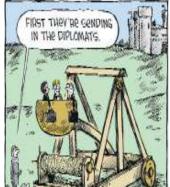






DO YOU HAVE AN EXECUTIVE CLUB OR SOMETHING DOWN HERE THAT I CAN UPGRADE TOP





SUDOKU



DIFFICULTY RATING: **********

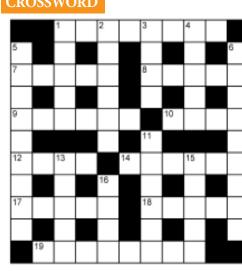
4 5 3 1 7 6 8 9 2 9 8 6 4 3 2 7 1 5 1 2 7 5 8 9 3 4 6 5 3 9 2 6 8 4 7 1 8 7 1 3 4 5 2 6 9 6 4 2 9 1 7 5 3 8 7 6 5 8 9 4 1 2 3 2 1 4 6 5 3 9 8 7

398721654 Rules Each row and column can

contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once. . The sum of all numbers in

3 Shove sucks blood any row or column must equal 45.

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- A surgeon's knives
- 7 Egg centres
- 8 Water vapour 9 Required
- 10 Burn black by being
- too close to heat
- 12 Rescue 14 Paddle these boats
- 17 Below
- 18 Living 19 A very large hill
- DOWN
- 1 Find the solution to 2 Reply
- 4 A flat kind of worm that



5 A large building for

11 A yellow fruit

with this

16 Wide smile

13 Record TV shows

15 A round vegetable

games and training

6 The wives of emperors

WHAT'S A PEDIATRICIAN?

GINGER MEGGS

BACK ON JANUARY 24, 1938, ERNIE BUSHMILLEZ ADDE A NEW "STREET







Vilayawada

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,

Looking ahead, she has ambitious plans for her dance studio

and artistic career. She is currently working on projects

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

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

understanding and appreciation between

For Ritika, dance is more than a profession -

it is a lifelong mission. "My ultimate goal is to

by contributing to the evolution of

teaching methodologies and

She credits her biggest

inspirations - Birju Maharaj and

choreographic techniques."

promote inclusivity, creativity and cultural

diversity through dance. I want to leave a legacy

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.

with dance in the first place."

engage with diverse dance communities

and blend classical techniques with

modern innovations. Most importantly,

I never lose sight of why I fell in love

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,

opportunities for growth and

challenges as

different communities.

This exchange fosters

technology, and cross-cultural elements.

backgrounds.

Follow us on

@TheDailyPioneer

facebook.com/ dailypioneer

Wednesday February 5, 2025

Redefining global dance culture with the rhythm of change

TEJAL SINHA tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

ance 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

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 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 Nrityaritika 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, Nrityaritika 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 culture internationally comes with its challenges, including

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

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 generations

ensuring the preservation and accessibility of Indian dance for future Promoting Indian

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

tool for

social

change

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

HOW NETWORKING CAN ACCELERATE SUCCESS!



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 likeminded 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

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 my early clients and referrals came from this trusted network. To build meaningful connections, it is also valuable to attend industryspecific 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 likeminded 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 brandbuilding 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

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 me 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.)

DECODING GUILLAIN-BARRÉ SYNDROME

How CSF analysis aids in early diagnosis

PNS HYDERABAD uillain-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

other conditions, and guide treatment plans.

WHAT IS CSF ANALYSIS?

GBS often starts with symptoms such as tingling or weakness

in the hands and feet, which may spread to other

breathing difficulties or complete paralysis. While

parts of the body. In severe cases, it can cause

the exact cause of GBS isn't fully

infections, such as the flu or

understood, it is commonly triggered by

Since the symptoms of GBS mimic

disorders, accurate and

early diagnosis is

essential.

gastrointestinal illnesses, and, in rare

cases, by surgery or vaccinations.

other neurological

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." essential test helps confirm the diagnosis, rule out

UNDERSTANDING GUILLAIN-BARRÉ SYNDROME

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

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

indicator of GBS

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.

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

Common treatments for GBS include: · Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIg): This

diagnosis of GBS. If GBS is confirmed,

treatment can begin immediately.

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

GBS can progress rapidly, and without timely treatment, it may lead to longterm 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 Chakravarthy added to Indian ODI squad

PTI ■ NAGPUR

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 Chakravarthy before the final squad is announced. A lot will depend on how he fares in the ODIs.

Chakravarthy, 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

Chakravarthy was seen training and bowling in the nets on Tuesday.

"Yes, Varun Chakravarthy 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 Chakravarthy 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

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 Chakravarthy's strong form could work in his favour.

When he last played on the flatter tracks in Dubai during the 2021 T20 World Cup, Chakravarthy 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.

Chakravarthy picked up 18 wickets for Tamil Nadu in the National One Day Championship.

> 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.



Dimuth Karunaratne to retire from cricket

 $F^{
m ormer\ Sri\ Lanka}$ 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

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." Variantal 11. for a year and maintain mo-form," Karunaratne, who made his Test debut in 2012, was quoted as saying by

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 SLC 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 Chandi (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

wanted to lead MI Cape Town: Rashid

PTI ■ GQEBERHA

 $R^{
m ashid}$ 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 player a spot in the SA20 playoffs.

After two forgettable seasons, MI CapeTown now sits at the top of the points table with 30 points from nine matches ahead of the playoffs.

26-year-old 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 CapeTown 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

"The most important thing

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

"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 have clear leadership group in the team. way and I am getting

Shillong to become new ISL venue PTI ■ SHILLONG government extended their support to the move. NorthEast United forward A new venue will be added to the Indian Super League (ISL) when Shillong Redeem Tlang, who hails from Shillong, has been one of the ISL's notable domestic talents. With over 100 ISL

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

Tamhane Mandar Tuesday shed light on how

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

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

He managed a mere 51 runs in

the five-match contest that

"...If Sanju keeps getting dismissed like this, as a batter,

the mind will be playing

"(It will force you to think) the

bowler is bowling a certain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

current rut.

short balls.

India won 4-1.

tricks," Ashwin said.

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

"The online tickets were sold out in 12 minutes and there were 5km long queues for physical tickets. Fan parks in

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

Ashwin also advised out-of-

from 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

happening in one or two games, but it is quite

surprising," Ashwin said on his

"...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

Hindi YouTube channel.

understand it

explained.

England.

can

for over 25 years," Tamhane

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

cern over Sanju Samson's lack of form

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 is like, I will focus on that. They are good enough players to find solutions and they will think over it," he said.

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,

Ashwin said a player is always

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

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 complement each other well, Sharma and his longtime and both have the skill to colleague Virat Kohli will be score big runs. If they 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 concluded on March 9 but India will play all their matches in Dubai as per the hvbrid 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.

would say that when you have a strong record of past performances, it gives you a lot of confidence. They perform well, Champions

India have been clubbed with arch-rivals Pakistan, Zealand New Bangladesh in the group stage of the tournament.

Trophy campaign will benefit

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

offer some seam movement, and Jadeja need to be in top



"The pitches in Dubai will That's why Kuldeep, Axar, combination will be crucial." "For Rohit and Virat, I but spin will also play a role. form. Rohit's choice of team

Trophy, India are also England, and Raina believed playing a three-match ODI it will help the likes of Kohli Before the Champions series at home against and Rohit to get some

valuable game time before the mega event.

"When it comes to whiteball 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 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**



op director Puri Jagannath's brother Sai Ram Shankar is playing the lead in the film 'Oka Pathakam Prakaram', 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

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 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.

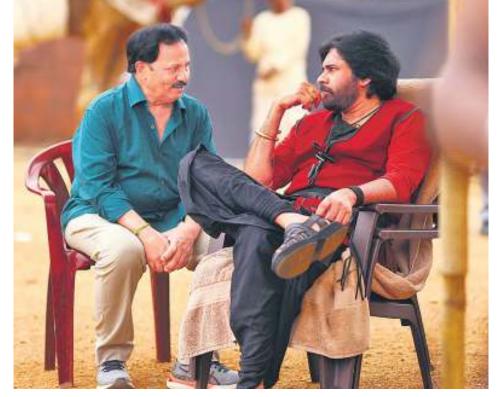
like Samuthirakani in the film.

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 scane on camera. To escape from it. 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 star-rer "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' and definitely helps is almost over and a few more projects are for this film. "In in the pipeline.



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

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 directororial 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

Prashanth Karthi is happy with the response to his film



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 me 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?

cautions 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

MAZAKA POSTPONED TO SIVARATRI?

Ramesh and Sundeep Kishan are the lead actors in the film 'Mazaka' which is supposed to be released on February 21. Directed by Nakkina Trinadha Rao and produced by Razesh 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 patchworks. 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 pro-

duction 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

irector GD Narasimmha 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 Narasimmha 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'.

