

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
 The pioneer  
 It is surprising that KTR did not participate in the caste census. However, he and his family are now speaking about a re-survey. It is ridiculous on the part of KTR to speak about weaker sections. BCs were subjected to immense injustice during BRS's 10-year rule. The BRS and the BJP have compromised in MLC elections. The BRS does not have candidates to field in MLC elections. So it is indirectly supporting the BJP as it did during the 2024 Parliament elections  
 — B Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC Chief and MLC P4

**Govt has taken note of 'objections', says Khattar**  
 5

**'CLIMATE FINANCE TAXONOMY SHOULD BE READY IN 6 MONTHS'**  
 8

**After Majaka, filmmakers know where I can fit: ANSHU SAGAR**  
 P12

**DON'T MISS...**  
**Mary Matha Fest off to grand start**

The three-day annual feast of Gunadala Mary Matha began on Sunday with great enthusiasm and devotion. Devotees from far and wide flocked to the Gunadala shrine to offer prayers. Vijayawada Catholic Diocese Bishop Most Rev. Telagatoti Joseph Raja Rao, Monsignor Fr. Muvvala Prasad, Fr. M Gabriel, Rector Fr Yelati William Jayaraju, and other clergy members lit the ceremonial lamps, officially inaugurating the festivities. The celebrations commenced with a special 'Samishti Divya Pooja Bali' (Holy Mass) at 7:00 AM...

**How Yamuna issue sank AAP**

The Yamuna factor seemingly played a significant role in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, reshaping voter sentiment and helping the BJP script history by defeating AAP. A key driver of this shift was the backlash from Haryana-origin voters who viewed AAP's narrative on Yamuna pollution as an attack on their home state. The BJP, which bagged 48 out of 70 seats, fielded 14 candidates of Haryana descent and 12 of them won. The Aam Aadmi Party had 10 such candidates but...

**Dry spell in Shimla worries farmers**

A prolonged dry spell has got Shimla farmers worrying about the apple crop, which is now threatened by a hampered production. Desired cooling hours (1,200 to 1,600 below 7 degrees Celsius) for traditional varieties and 600 hours for early varieties have not come by this season. Farmers were also restricted from new plantations due to unfavourable weather conditions. Fruit Vegetable Flower Growers Association President Harish Chauhan said on Sunday. About 90 per cent of apple orchardists...

**New Zealand is one of strongest team**

Spin great R Ashwin has called India and New Zealand the strongest sides heading into the Champions Trophy but warned teams against taking Australia lightly despite the loss of key players to injuries as they "bring their A-game" into marquee tournaments. The ICC event starts in Pakistan on February 19 with India playing all their matches in Dubai under a hybrid model agreement. "India has the home advantage in Dubai, and it almost like every other team is playing an away match against..."

# 31 Naxals gunned down

**Fierce encounter ensued between 650 cops and Maoists in Bijapur dist of Chhattisgarh**

**PNS ■ BIJAPUR (CHHATTISGARH)**  
 In one of the deadliest blows to Naxalites in Chhattisgarh, security forces on Sunday gunned down 31 rebels, including 11 women, in a fierce encounter in the state's Bijapur district, police said.



CM Vishnu Deo Sai said the end of Naxalism in Chhattisgarh and the country is certain. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the state will get rid of Naxalism by March 2026, he asserted

Two security personnel were also killed and as many injured in the face-off, they said. More than 650 security personnel entered the Indravati National Park area from different sides and eliminated 31 Naxalites in their den, Chhattisgarh's Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said. With this success, 81 Naxalites have been neutralised by security forces in separate encounters in Chhattisgarh so far this year, compared to 219 in 2024. CM Vishnu Deo Sai said the end of Naxalism in Chhattisgarh and the country is certain. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the state will get rid of Naxalism by March 2026, he asserted. The latest gunbattle took place on a forested hill along the border of Madded and Farsegarh police station areas when personnel from different security forces during an anti-Naxal operation, Inspector General of Police, Bastar Range, Sundarraj P said.

Reinforcement of DRG, STF, Bastar Fighter and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has been rushed to the spot and a search operation is underway in the area, he added. Maintaining the success achieved in the anti-Naxal offensive last year, bodies of 65 Naxalites have been recovered in the first 40 days of this year following separate encounters in the densely forested Bastar region comprising seven districts including Bijapur, he said. As per the intention of the government and people's wishes, different units of state police and paramilitary forces deployed in Bastar have been dedicatedly working towards establishing peace, security and development with strong morale and clear goals, said the official.

DRG Head Constable Naresh Dhruv and Constable Vasit Ravte from the STF were killed in the gunfight and their mortal remains have been brought to Bijapur district headquarters, he said. While Dhruv was a resident of Balodabazar-Bhatapara district, Ravte hailed from the Baldo district in the state. Constables Jaggu Kalmu (DRG) and Gulab Mandavi (STF) suffered injuries during the encounter. They were airlifted to Raipur and admitted at a hospital there, Sundarraj said, adding that their condition was stated to be out of danger.

Acting on inputs about the presence of Maoists belonging to their national park area committee, person-

nel from state police units District Reserve Guard (DRG), Special Task Force (STF) and Bastar Fighters had launched the operation on February 7, he said. At around 8 am on Sunday, an intense exchange of fire broke out on the hill, a part of the Indravati National Park. The intermittent gunfight lasted till around 4 pm, he said. "So far, bodies of 31 Naxalites, including 11 women, clad in 'uniform' have been recovered from the encounter site. Besides, a huge cache of weapons, including AK-47, INSAS, SLR and .303 rifles and Barrel Grenade Launchers (BGL), and explosives have also been seized from the scene,"

**'Naxals will be eradicated by March 31, 2026'** 5

**CM to chair key meet with ministers, secys tomorrow**

**Focus to be on implementation of welfare schemes, particularly 'Super Six' initiatives**

**The agenda is expected to include discussions on major projects such as Amaravati's development, the Polavaram irrigation project, the Visakhapatnam railway zone, and recent MoUs signed for investments. Secretaries will outline their respective department's milestones, challenges, and resource requirements across sectors like infrastructure, education, health, and finance**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
 Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will chair a high-level meeting with department secretaries and ministers on February 11 to review ongoing projects and future plans. The meeting will provide a platform for secretaries to present their achievements, ongoing initiatives, and future strategies through detailed PowerPoint presentations. A key focus of the meeting will be the implementation of welfare schemes, particularly the 'Super Six' initiatives promised during the elections. The agenda is expected to include discussions on major projects such as Amaravati's development, the Polavaram irrigation project, the Visakhapatnam railway zone, and recent MoUs signed for investments. Secretaries will outline their respective department's milestones, challenges, and resource requirements across sectors like infrastructure, education, health, and finance. As the chair, Naidu is expected to assess the effectiveness of ongoing initiatives and provide strategic direction. Known for his emphasis on technology-driven governance, he will guide discussions to align departmental efforts with the state's long-term development goals.

**Continued on Page 2**

# Four women farm workers killed in tractor mishap

**PNS ■ NARASARAOPET**



Four women agricultural workers were killed and eight others injured in a tragic accident on Sunday when the tractor-trolley they were travelling in overturned at Bollavaram village in Muppalla mandal of Palnadu district. The incident occurred as approximately 20 agricultural labourers were returning to their native village, Chaganti Vari Palem, after harvesting chilli in a field. The tractor-trolley overturned while travelling on a narrow irrigation canal bund, leading to the fatalities.

**CM Naidu announces support to bereaved families**  
 CM N Chandrababu Naidu announced support to the bereaved families of the four women who were killed in the tractor mishap. He said the state government will provide financial assistance to the families and ensure that the workers' families are taken care of.

**Continued on Page 2**

# Engineering student raped; 3 accused identified

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**



A second-year engineering student was allegedly raped in Paritala, Kanchikacherla mandal, NTR district. The accused, identified as Shaik Hussain, a local painter, is alleged to have exploited the victim's trust, feigning a romantic relationship before assaulting her. Police reports indicate the victim, who resides in a hostel in Paritala, is a B.Tech student at a local engineering college in Kanchikacherla. Hussain allegedly lured her to a room belonging to his friend, Sidhu, where the assault took place.

**Continued on Page 2**

# Purandeswari opposes KK Line merger with Rayagada Divn

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

In response to a report published in The Pioneer titled "Public fury erupts over KK Line transfer to Odisha," BJP Andhra Pradesh unit president Daggubati Purandeswari on Sunday expressed strong concerns regarding the decision to merge the Kothavalasa-Kirandul (KK) line with the newly formed Rayagada Division of East Coast Railway, including the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, NTPC, and Hindustan Shipyard.

took up the matter with Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, emphasizing the strategic and economic significance of the KK line. She pointed out that the railway line generates an annual revenue exceeding Rs 10,500 crore for the Waltair Division and plays a crucial role in the transportation of raw materials and finished goods to major public sector industrial establishments in Visakhapatnam.

**Continued on Page 2**

# BRIBERY SCANDAL NAAC debars KLEF for 5 years

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) has debarred the Guntur-based Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KLEF) for five years following a bribery scandal involving its accreditation process. The action comes just days after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested three KLEF officials and members of the NAAC inspection committee for allegedly accepting bribes to grant the institution an A++ rating.

**Continued on Page 2**



**Manipur CM N Biren resigns ahead of no-trust motion**

**PNS ■ IMPHAL**

Amidst rumblings within the state BJP seeking a change of leadership, Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Sunday tendered his resignation to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal, officials said. The Governor accepted Singh's resignation, along with that of his council of ministers, and requested that he continue in office until alternative arrangements are made. The development comes hours after he returned from Delhi. Earlier this week, a new controversy erupted after the Supreme Court sought a sealed-cover forensic report on the authenticity of leaked audio clips alleging the role of Singh in the ethnic violence. The tapes reportedly included conversations where Singh allegedly suggested that Meitei groups were allowed to loot arms and ammunition from the state government during the unrest, which has so far claimed 250 lives.

# APSRTC flags off 3 special buses for Kumbh Mela

**PNS ■ KAKINADA**

The Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) has launched three special buses for the convenience of pilgrims travelling to the ongoing Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh. The buses two Star Liner buses and one Super Luxury bus were flagged off by District Public Transport Officer M. Srinivasa Rao at a brief ceremony held at the RTC bus station complex here on Sunday. During the journey, the buses will pass through Bhubaneswar, Puri, and Konark before reaching Prayagraj. After following the pilgrims to take a holy dip at the 'Triveni Sangam', the return journey will include stops at Varanasi, Gaya, and Bodh Gaya for darshan.

# Tirupati JSP in-charge 'dupes' woman of Rs 1.20 cr

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**



Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief K Pawan Kalyan has ordered an internal inquiry into serious allegations against Kiran Royal, the party in-charge of Tirupati. The directive comes after a woman from Bairagapattadugu, Tirupati, accused Kiran Royal of cheating her of over Rs 1.20 crore in cash and 25 tulas of gold. In a video that has gone viral on social media, the woman claimed she had lent large sums of money to Kiran Royal over time, believing his promises to return double the amount after the coalition government came to power. However, she alleged that he only issued cheques and bonds worth Rs 30 lakh and later threatened her when she demanded full repayment. She further claimed that he warned her against pursuing the matter, even allegedly threatening her children. The controversy intensified after an audio clip, purportedly of Kiran Royal threatening the woman over a phone call, also surfaced online.

**Jana Sena has assured transparency in the inquiry, and further action against Kiran Royal will be determined based on the findings. Meanwhile, Kiran Royal has denied all allegations**

Kiran Royal of his duties until the inquiry is completed. He has also been directed to avoid all party activities during this period. The decision was officially announced by Pawan Kalyan's political secretary, P. Hariprasad. Pawan Kalyan urged party members to focus on issues that directly impact society and not be distracted by matters that do not serve public welfare. He emphasised that the JSP leadership must prioritise addressing public concerns and uphold the party's core objectives of social and political progress. The party has assured transparency in the inquiry, and further action against Kiran Royal will be determined based on the findings. Meanwhile, Kiran Royal has denied all allegations.

# 1.12 cr kids to benefit from deworming drive today

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

The Health and Family Welfare Department has finalised arrangements for administering Albendazole tablets to 1.12 crore children and students aged 1 to 19 across the state on National Deworming Day (NDD). G. Veerapandian, Commissioner of the Department of Health and Family Welfare, announced on Sunday. He confirmed that the tablets have been dispatched to all districts, and distribution arrangements are in place. Awareness campaign materials, including posters and pamphlets, have also been distributed. Veerapandian stated that 34% of children and students in the state suffer from intestinal worms. To combat this, 400mg Albendazole tablets will be distributed through Anganwadi centres and government and private educational institutions. The aim is to reach 1.12 crore children. The primary distribution will take place on Monday, targeting children enrolled in Anganwadis and those not attending school. A mop-up round for those who miss the initial distribution is scheduled for February 17. Anganwadi workers and teachers will administer the tablets, following government guidelines. The health department, in collaboration with ASHA workers and ANMs, has coordinated transportation, infrastructure, tablet availability, IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) materials, and safe drinking water.

**Continued on Page 2**



# Gunadala Mary Matha Fest off to a grand start

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The three-day annual feast of Gunadala Mary Matha began on Sunday with great enthusiasm and devotion. Devotees from far and wide flocked to the Gunadala shrine to offer prayers. Vijayawada Catholic Diocese Bishop Most Rev. Telagatoti Joseph Raja Rao, Monsignor Fr. Muvvala Prasad, Fr. M Gabriel, Rector Fr Yelati William Jayaraju, and other clergy members lit the ceremonial lamps, officially inaugurating the festivities.

The celebrations commenced with a special 'Samishti Divya Pooja Bali' (Holy Mass) at 7:00 AM, followed by a cultural programme at the Bishop Grassi High School grounds.

Bishop Raja Rao announced that 2025 has been designated as the Jubilee Year by Pope Francis. He described the Gunadala shrine as a place of miracles, where devotees find solace and blessings. He emphasised the importance of seeking the intercession of the Virgin Mary, particularly during times of hardship and suffering, stating that her prayers bring God's grace.

Fr. PK Joseph delivered a message on the power of divine miracles, citing the biblical story of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Canaan. He also commemorated the 167th anniversary of the miraculous apparition of Lourdes's Mother to Bernadette in France.

Following the spiritual discourse, a Holy Mass was celebrated by Bishop Joseph Rajarao, Monsignor Fr. Muvvala Prasad, Fr. M Gabriel, Fr. Yelati William Jayaraju, Fr. Kolakani Marianna, Fr. Thota Sunil Raju, and other diocesan priests.

In the afternoon, a grand procession, led by Fr. William Jayaraju, made its way through the streets of Gunadala, with devotees reverently carrying the statue of Mother Mary.

The evening celebrations included another special Holy Mass at 6:00 PM, presided over by Bishop Dr. Karanam Daman Kumar of Nalgonda and Bishop Joseph Rajarao of the Vijayawada Catholic Diocese, along with other clergy.

The day was enriched by vibrant cultural performances. These included performances by the youth centre, a Kolatam



## NTR CP oversees security arrangements

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu inspected the crowds of devotees participating in the three-day Gunadala Mary Matha celebrations, which commenced in Vijayawada on Sunday. He monitored the situation via closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras from a temporary Command Control Room set up at Gunadala and offered valuable suggestions to police officials and personnel.

Addressing the officers, Commissioner Rajasekhar Babu stressed the need for seamless collaboration between all departments and the implementation of robust security measures to ensure a smooth experience for the visiting devotees. He pointed out that this year, enhanced security protocols have been put in place, incorporating advanced technology like CCTV cameras and drones around the Mary Mata Temple.

He emphasised the importance of remain-



ing vigilant given the anticipated surge in devotees, urging security personnel to be on high alert to prevent any untoward incidents. He directed that subordinate staff be regularly briefed on their duties and encouraged them to interact courteously with all attendees, fostering a peaceful and pleasant atmosphere for the devotees.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Gowthamishali, Trainee IPS Manisha, ADCPs, ACPs, Inspectors, and other staff members were present during the inspection.

(traditional dance) from Carmel Nagar Blind School, Christian devotional songs, and performances by music groups from Machilipatnam and Gunadala, all contributing to the festive atmosphere.

## 5K run, walkathon on Feb 12

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Customs Commissionerate, Vijayawada, will hold a 5K run and walkathon on February 12, aimed at promoting awareness about leading a healthy lifestyle and highlighting the crucial role of Customs in facilitating global trade.

The event is scheduled to begin at 6 AM from Dr BR Ambedkar Statue, PWD Grounds, MG Road, Vijayawada and all the employees of Central government departments in Vijayawada are invited to participate, with categories designed to accommodate various age groups, said Sadu Narasimha Reddy, Commissioner of Customs (Preventive), Vijayawada, in a release on Sunday. In addition to promoting health and wellness, the event will also commemorate the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Indian Constitution, adding further significance to the occasion.

This event will also mark the observance of International Customs Day 2025. It provides a unique opportunity for government employees and the public to come together, embrace fitness and celebrate a major milestone in the country's history. A commemorative poster for the event was released by Commissioner Narasimha Reddy. Central government officers and staff are encouraged to participate with enthusiasm, ensuring the success of this event while promoting both healthy living and national pride.



## MP launches 'Vikasit Panchayat' to develop 294 villages

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath, popularly known as Chinni, has launched the 'Vikasit Panchayat' initiative in collaboration with the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) to develop 294 villages in the Vijayawada Parliamentary constituency. As part of this programme, 100 young individuals have been selected for self-employment training, with 33 youths from various mandals sent to NIRDPR, Hyderabad, for a week-long training session from February 10 to 16.

On Sunday, Andhra Pradesh Building and Other Construction Workers Advisory Committee (APBOWAC) Chairman G Raghuram Raju, Arya Vysya Development Corporation Chairman Dundi Rakesh, and former Vijayawada Mayor Koneru Sridhar flagged off a bus carrying the trainees from

the MP's office, NTR Bhavan, at Gurunanak Colony.

Speaking on the occasion, the leaders highlighted that the training aims to equip the youth with essential skills to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship, contributing to the socio-economic development of their communities. They emphasised that the partnership between the Vikasit Panchayat initiative and NIRDPR underscores a commitment to strengthening rural economies through targeted skill development programmes.

They also noted that MP Kesineni Chinni had personally attended a one-day training session at NIRDPR, underscoring his vision to transform villages into model settlements. As part of his commitment, he has allocated Rs 15 lakh for the week-long training and is providing a monthly stipend of Rs 10,000 to participants through the Kesineni Foundation. Upon completing their train-

ing, these youths will work in their respective villages, identifying key development priorities.

Meanwhile, MP Kesineni Chinni has been holding meetings with youth and Self-Help Group (SHG) leaders at district and mandal levels, in coordination with NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha and other officials. He has facilitated the participation of 64 SHG leaders to raise awareness about self-employment schemes. The MP has also devised a plan to develop all villages simultaneously by forming clusters in each mandal and leveraging central government schemes with support from NIRDPR.

Several leaders, including VMC Corporator Chennupati Usha Rani, former TDP floor leader Y Ramana, TDP SC Cell president S Sanjay Varma, Minority Cell president Sk Karimulla, and TNSF general secretary Sai Charan, were present at the event.

## Private colleges accused of charging exorbitant fees for practical exams

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Several private colleges in the district are facing allegations of exploiting students by charging exorbitant fees for practical examinations. These institutions are reportedly demanding Rs. 2,000-Rs. 5,000 per student under the guise of "lab fees" or other charges, promising higher marks in return.

The alleged scheme takes advantage of the current system where practical exams are conducted in the students' own colleges, rather than a jumbled system used previously. With intermediate marks crucial for EAMCET rank-

ings, students are under immense pressure to score well. It is alleged that some college managements are collaborating with examiners to guarantee full marks for students who pay the demanded fees. The collected money is then reportedly distributed to the examiners.

Practical exams for MPC and BiPC students are scheduled to begin on Monday. A total of 29,791 MPC students and 4,888 BiPC students will appear for the exams across 146 centres. While examiners will be appointed in a jumbled manner, concerns remain that private colleges have already collected substantial sums from students to influence the evaluation process. Estimates suggest that over 33,000 students from private institutions may have collectively paid up to Rs. 5 crore.

Regional Inspection Officer (RIO) Muralidhar stated that strict action will be taken against college managements if students file complaints. He also warned of departmental action against any staff found involved in exam irregularities. Despite these assurances, students and parents remain concerned about the fairness and transparency of the upcoming exams. They are urging authorities to take immediate steps to prevent further exploitation and ensure a merit-based examination system.

## BJP MLA launches scathing attack on Jagan

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

BJP MLA Vishnu Kumar Raju launched a sharp attack on former chief minister and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, mocking him for living in an "imaginary world" and referring to himself as "2.0." Addressing a press conference at the BJP office in Visakhapatnam on Sunday, Raju alleged that Jagan is facing mental issues and asserted that as long as he remains at the helm of YSRCP, the alliance has nothing to fear. Raju further remarked



that with AICC leader Rahul Gandhi leading at the national level and Jagan in Andhra Pradesh, there is no substantial threat to the BJP-led alliance, either at

the centre or in the state. Expressing confidence in his party's electoral prospects, he stated that the BJP is poised for victory in upcoming elections, spanning from Delhi to local constituencies. He also ridiculed Jagan's political statements, suggesting that they may be more suited for cinema rather than real-life governance.

The BJP MLA also took a stand against ministers who use inappropriate language, emphasizing that such individuals should not be included in alliance parties. Additionally, he shared his personal opinion on the

need for a High Court bench at Rishikonda Palace, highlighting the importance of judicial accessibility in the region.

Furthermore, Raju criticised the YSRCP, accusing it of persistently covering up its failures, whereas the BJP and its allies remain focused on future successes. He underscored that the opposition's rhetoric does not pose a challenge to the alliance's political aspirations. His remarks come at a time of heightened political tensions in Andhra Pradesh, setting the stage for an intense electoral battle in the coming days.

## SRM-AP's Infinitus'25 Fest concludes



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SRM University - AP's four-day Techno-Cultural Fest, Infinitus'25, concluded successfully. The final two days featured performances by music composer duo Salim-Sulaiman, comedian Hoody, singer Ram Miryala, and DJ Akram. The artists entertained the audience with their performances. The fest also included a

"Fresher" competition. Aashir Aftab Md (first-year B.Tech) and Pratyusha Karmakar (first-year MBA) won the Mr. and Ms. Fresher titles. Other events like Tech Tales, Cyber Vogue, Cyber Sway, Cyber Tunes, and Glitch Stage showcased student talent.

Infinitus'25 was organised by the Directorate of Student Affairs and the University Student Council.

## Indian Navy's mega exercise TROPEX 2025 underway

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Navy's largest biennial exercise, Theatre Level Operational Exercise (TROPEX) 2025, is currently underway across the Indian Ocean Region, showcasing India's commitment to maritime security. This year's exercise, running from January to March, involves a significant deployment of naval assets and personnel, along with substantial participation from the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Indian Coast Guard.



TROPEX 25 is designed to test and refine the Indian Navy's operational readiness in complex, high-intensity warfare scenarios. The exercise is structured in phases, encompassing both harbour and at-sea operations, and covers a wide spectrum of naval activities. These include combat manoeuvres, cyber

and electronic warfare, live weapon firings, and a major Amphibious Exercise (AMPHEX). AMPHEX is crucial for enhancing the Navy's capabilities to counter conventional, asymmetric, and hybrid threats in contested maritime environments. A formidable array of assets



is participating in TROPEX 25, including approximately 65 Indian Navy ships, nine submarines, and over 80 aircraft. Among the notable platforms are the indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, Visakhapatnam and Kolkata-class destroyers, Kalvari-class submarines, and advanced aircraft like MiG-29K fighter jets, P-8I maritime patrol aircraft, HALE Sea Guardian drones, and MH-60R helicopters. These assets are undergoing rigorous operational testing to fine-tune strategies and tactics in line with the Navy's Concept of Operations.

A key focus of TROPEX 25 is the high degree of inter-service cooperation. The Indian Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard are playing integral

roles, contributing assets such as Sukhoi-30 and Jaguar fighter jets, C-130 transport aircraft, AWACS aircraft, flight refuellers, an infantry brigade of over 600 troops, and more than 10 Coast Guard ships and aircraft. This synchronized participation underscores the growing emphasis on jointness and interoperability among India's armed forces.

TROPEX has evolved into one of the most comprehensive maritime exercises in the

region, reflecting India's strategic ambitions and its preparedness to address evolving security challenges. The 2025 edition reinforces the Indian Navy's ability to project power, maintain maritime domain awareness, and execute credible joint operations to safeguard national interests at all times. The exercise serves as a powerful demonstration of India's commitment to a secure and stable Indian Ocean Region.

## Attack on chief priest of Chilkur Balaji temple condemned

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) Central Constituency Coordinator Malladi Vishnu expressed concern over the lack of protection for priests in temples across the Telugu states, affecting not only the Hindu religion but also the priests themselves. He strongly condemned the recent attack on the chief priest of Chilkur Balaji Temple.

Vishnu stated that it was horrifying for anyone to attack a priest engaged in the service of God. He stressed that priests, who perform daily rituals and prayers for the well-being of society, are regarded as divine messengers. However, the continuous attacks on priests are



disturbing. He stressed the need for society to universally condemn such incidents and demanded that legal actions be taken against the perpetrators. Vishnu also urged the Telangana government to ensure proper protection for priests and take preventive measures to avoid such incidents in the future.

# SP urges youth to shun drugs, focus on careers



PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Superintendent of Police (SP) A R Damodar has appealed to young people to steer clear of drug addiction and safeguard their careers. He emphasised the detrimental effects of substance abuse during a 5km marathon organized jointly by Rise Krishnasai Engineering College and TechBulls on Sunday.

The marathon, flagged off by the SP at the Mini Stadium, traversed Miryalapalem before returning to its starting point. Addressing the participating youth, Damodar stressed the importance of avoiding harmful habits, particularly drug consumption. "Some youths have tragically ruined their lives by getting addicted to drugs like ganja," he lamented. He urged them to "cultivate good habits and lead a healthy life."

The SP reminded the students of their parents' sacrifices and exhorted them to study diligently and bring pride to the district. He issued a stern warning against drug peddlers, stating that stringent action would be taken against them. He also cautioned against the dangers of tobacco use, highlighting its link to cancer.

Damodar also emphasized road safety, urging two-wheeler riders to wear helmets. He pointed out that helmets can be life-saving in the event of accidents.

The SP reminded the stu-

# Anam announces massive projects in Atmakur segment

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Endowments Anam Ramanarayana Reddy has announced that several development projects will be undertaken in the Atmakur constituency to enhance amenities for the people.



Accompanied by Municipal Administration Minister P. Narayana, Roads and Buildings (R&B) Minister B.C. Janardhan Reddy, BC Welfare Minister S. Savitha, and MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, Anam performed 'bhoomi pooja' for the construction of a temple at a cost of Rs 20 lakh. He also laid the foundation stone for the construction of a Zilla Parishad office, which will be built at a cost of Rs 1.70 crore in Atmakur on Sunday.

The R&B Minister inaugurated the renovated R&B guest house, while the BC Welfare Minister unveiled a statue of Goddess Saraswati on the polytechnic college campus. She also inaugurated the Jyotiba Phule Gurukula School in Atmakur.

Addressing a press meet on the occasion, Anam lamented that Atmakur constituency had seen no development since 2014. He stated that he has now taken initiatives to complete various pending projects. "The Annamayya irrigation project was extensively damaged in the floods a few years ago, but no reconstruction work has been undertaken so far. Several works need to be carried out for the Somasila project. I have instructed officials to take up the Somasila high-level canal and apron works immediately," he asserted.

Anam noted that Jyotiba Phule Gurukula School and a polytechnic college had been established in Atmakur to address educational needs. He directed the District Collector to acquire 10 acres for constructing buildings for the polytechnic college. He also thanked the BC Welfare Minister and the R&B Minister for allocating funds.

BC Welfare Minister Savitha reiterated her commitment to creating an entrepreneur in every household through the

BC Corporation. "The government has sanctioned Rs 100 crore for repairs to BC hostels. There are 105 BC residential schools," she said.

She further announced that fine-quality rice would be supplied to social welfare hostels and that students would be served meals cooked with the same. Inverters, CCTV cameras, and RO plants are also being installed in all BC welfare hostels across the State, she added.

R&B Minister Janardhan Reddy said the government has taken up repairs for 27,000 km of roads, of which 18,000 km have already been repaired at a cost of Rs 1,120 crore. He noted that the Central government had sanctioned Rs 90,000 crore for the construction of national highways in Andhra Pradesh.

MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy said that 1,056 houses had been allocated to the Atmakur constituency under TIDCO. Municipal Administration Minister P. Narayana also addressed the gathering.

# Caste survey was held transparently: Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The caste survey was held transparently in Telangana, TPCC chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said.

Countering the criticism of BRS Working President KT Rama Rao, he said that KTR has been stating that the caste census was not held properly without any evidence. He said the government held the caste

census scientifically by using lakhs of government employees. KTR is criticising the government as it is getting a good name for conducting caste census, he said.

Declaring that the Congress government conducted the caste census as per the directions of Rahul Gandhi, he warned KTR that BCs will not forgive KTR's comments on

caste census. He said the caste census was held after 1931 and it will help BCs greatly. Mahesh said the Congress government completed the caste census perfectly for the first time in the country. KTR cannot stomach the fact that BCs are going to get justice after the caste census, he added.

"It is surprising that KTR did not participate in the caste census. However, he and his family are speaking about re-survey. It is ridiculous on the part of KTR to speak about weaker sections. The BCs were subjected to injustice during the BRS rule. The BRS and the BJP have compromised in MLC elections. The BRS have no candidates to field in MLC elections. So the BRS is giving indirect support to the BJP as it happened during the 2024 LS elections," he said.

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# Sea turtles dying in alarming numbers

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

The once-pristine coastline of North Andhra is rapidly becoming a graveyard for sea turtles, sparking serious concerns about marine biodiversity. These gentle creatures, essential for maintaining healthy fisheries, are dying in alarming numbers due to harmful fishing practices, pollution, and other environmental threats. Tourists have reported sightings of turtles entangled in nets, injured, or washed ashore lifeless. The crisis has escalated in recent weeks.

Harmful fishing practices, pollution lead to large-scale fatalities



severe damage to the turtle population, which is already under threat."

Despite legal protections, enforcement remains weak. The Indian Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 prohibits the killing of turtles or consumption of their eggs, imposing penalties of up to seven years in prison and fines of Rs 25,000. Additionally, the AP Marine Fisheries Regulation Act restricts fishing within eight kilometres of the coast. However, these laws are frequently violated, prompting conservationists to demand stricter enforcement, a ban on harmful nets, and the promotion of turtle-safe fishing methods.

Local fishermen, accustomed to occasional turtle deaths, admit they have never seen such large-scale fatalities before. Experts attribute the deaths primarily to the use of hazardous fishing nets, including Kona (gillnets), Atuka, and Teak nets. These nets, which cover vast ocean stretches of up to 30 kilometres, trap and drown turtles that surface for air or come ashore to nest. Industrial waste pollution is also suspected as a contributing factor. "These nets are incredibly dangerous," a representative from the Tree Foundation Survey stated. "They cause

Sea turtles play a vital role in marine ecosystems. By feeding on jellyfish, which prey on fish eggs, they help sustain fish populations. Their extinction could severely impact the fishing industry. District Forest Officer Kondalarao acknowledged the role of fishing nets in the deaths and announced awareness programmes for fishermen.

# Woman home guard jumps into canal with son; both die

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

A woman Home Guard, Atta Jhansi (32) jumped into Yeleru canal along with her six-year-old son on Saturday, resulting in the death of both. Jhansi was employed as a Home Guard at the DSP office in Anakapalli.

According to police reports, Jhansi had been experiencing marital discord with her husband, Achyut Rao. Her parents



alleged that Achyut Rao had been harassing her for the past year. On Saturday, Jhansi left her home with her son and subsequently jumped into the Yeleru canal. Their bodies were recovered from the canal on Sunday. The police have registered a case and taken Achyut Rao into custody. The bodies have been shifted to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for postmortem examination.

# Interstate burglar gang nabbed, Rs 1.9 cr booty recovered



PNS ■ ANANTHAPUR

The police have arrested three members of a notorious interstate burglar gang from Madhya Pradesh and recovered stolen gold jewellery worth Rs 90 lakh and Rs 19.35 lakh in cash.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Jagadish informed the media on Sunday that the district police apprehended three members of the 'Dhar gang,' responsible for numerous burglaries and other offences in the district.

The gang had recently targeted the residences of Shiva Reddy, Shiva Shankar Naidu, and Ranjit in Rajahamsa villas, Srinagar colony, making off with jewellery and cash. Reddy

had stored the valuables in his home for his daughter's upcoming wedding.

After reviewing CCTV footage, the police identified the 'Dhar gang' as the perpetrators. SP Jagadish formed four special teams to track down the gang. Utilising advanced technology, a police team travelled to Madhya Pradesh, located the gang, and arrested three members.

The police recovered gold jewellery, diamonds, and other valuables worth Rs 90 lakh, Rs 19.35 lakh in cash, and three motorcycles. The 'Dhar gang' has a notorious reputation across the country for burglaries and thefts. Two other gang members are still at large, and a search is under-

way to apprehend them, the SP added.

Among those arrested is the gang leader, Naru Pachavar, the SP confirmed. The gang's criminal activities span several states, including Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat. As many as 32 criminal cases have been registered against the gang in South India, SP Jagadish stated.

The gang's modus operandi involves identifying locked houses during the day and then carrying out burglaries at night after conducting reconnaissance. The SP commended the police personnel for their success in apprehending the notorious interstate burglars.

# Man bludgeons father to death for refusing money for alcohol

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A 35-year-old man allegedly bludgeoned his father to death while he was asleep in Andhra Pradesh after the latter refused to give him money for alcohol, police said on Sunday.

P Mariadas smashed his 79-year-old father, P Yesu, on the head with a metallic component from the chainsaw he used to fell trees. The incident occurred at around 2 am on Sunday in Indlacheruvu village, Prakasam district, police said.

"Mariadas bludgeoned his father to death with a metallic object from the chainsaw after he refused to give him money for alcohol," police said.

According to police, Mariadas, an alcoholic, had been on a drinking spree since Saturday morning. On Saturday evening, he asked Yesu for money to buy more alcohol, but when his father refused, it ultimately led to the murder. Due to the disturbance he was creating, police said Mariadas' wife and children had left their home a few days ago.

Incidentally, both the son and father had been living together for a long time.

# DC's appeal to govt land encroachers

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector P Prasanthi has urged those who have encroached upon government lands to apply for regularisation under the newly introduced Land Regularisation Scheme 2025.

In a statement on Sunday, the Collector said the state government has taken a decision to regularise encroached lands, providing an opportunity for applicants to streamline the process without visiting multiple government offices. Applications can now be submitted through Mee Seva Kendras and village and ward secretariats, with instructions already issued to field-level staff.

The Collector stated that applications for regularisation would be accepted until December 31, 2025, as per GO No. 30, and titles would be issued only in the names of women. She explained that ownership rights would be granted two years after issuing the title deed and conveyance deed. Applicants must upload their complete details along with the prescribed supporting documents through Mee Seva.



Encroachments made before October 15, 2019, will be considered for regularisation as per the rules.

She added that village and ward secretariat staff, under the supervision of Tahsildars, would inspect the encroached areas across the district. A list of eligible beneficiaries would then be displayed at village and ward offices. After resolving any objections, the Tahsildars would forward the final list to the Sub-Collector/RDO.

Once the list is finalised, Tahsildars will send the details to Sub-Registrars and District Registrars for further processing. The Chief Commissioner of Land Administration (CCLA) has advised eligible persons to apply at the earliest and not wait until the last minute.



# Agri college alumni get together to reminisce about happy days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The memories of college life are truly timeless. The halcyon days between 1972 and 1976, spent by Agriculture students at Bapatla Agricultural College, continue to be cherished and relived by those students, now in their seventies.

A group of senior citizens, many of whom held senior administrative and research positions, gathered for a two-day reunion in Vijayawada to reminisce about their college days. They recalled significant events and amusing incidents from their time at Bapatla Agricultural College. Most attendees were accompanied by their spouses and all had grandchildren, the majority of whom live abroad. These alumni now lead relatively isolated lives after retirement, residing in settled locations far from their former peers.

Financially stable and enjoying a relaxed lifestyle, many are now pursuing personal interests.

For instance, KS Saibaba, a retired IFS officer who once held the highest position in Karnataka's Forest Department, now resides in Eluru. He oversees a school set up by the Kali Vana Ashramam in Namburu, where he mentors youngsters aspiring to join administrative services. BVS Kumar, a granite entrepreneur who pioneered value-added granite processing in the State, now coordinates Red Cross Blood Centres and Projects, working to ensure safe and quality blood for emergency victims.

K Satyanarayana Raju, an accomplished industrialist in the pesticide industry with a background in agriculture and a Master's in Business Management, introduced village-level water purification plants in India with the support of Ramalinga Raju of Satyam Computers. He also runs a training centre for rural graduates, focusing on advanced agricultural technology.



# Officials directed to seek MPLAD funds for BC hostels

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

BC and EWS Welfare Minister S Savitha has directed BC Welfare Department officials to secure Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds and Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) funds, in addition to government allocations, for the development of BC hostels. She also advised them to approach industrialists within the district for CSR contributions.

The Minister reviewed the welfare measures for hostel students during a meeting with BC welfare officials at Padmavati Guest House on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, she instructed officials to coordinate with the District Collector to obtain MPLAD funds from MPs, which could be utilised for the development of BC hostels in their respective parliamentary constituencies. She noted that letters had already been sent to MPs across the state requesting MPLAD funds, and some had agreed to allocate funds for hostel development.

BC Welfare Officer Chandrasekhar and other officials attended the meeting. Minister Savitha also directed social welfare hostel officials to ensure 100% pass results in the upcoming Class 10 examinations. She instructed them to provide study

materials, pay special attention to weaker students, and take necessary steps to support their preparation.

"The hostel staff should remain vigilant and avoid putting undue pressure on students. Teachers should adopt methods that help students understand lessons effectively," she said.

She emphasised that welfare department officials must organise special classes and focus on academically weaker students to improve results. She urged them to ensure that Class 10 results in BC hostels and Gurukul schools are on par with those of corporate educational institutions, thereby maintaining parents' trust in the system.

ACROSS THE STATES



Murmu to visit Maha Kumbh Mela today

President Droupadi Murmu will visit the Maha Kumbh Mela in Prayagraj on Monday and take a holy dip at the Sangam, her office said. Maha Kumbh, which began 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. "During her day-long visit to Prayagraj, the President will take holy dip and perform Pooja at Sangam, perform Pooja and Darshan at Akshayvat and Hanuman Mandir, and also visit the Digital Kumbh Anubhav Centre," the Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a statement issued on Sunday. Sangam is the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the mystical Saraswati rivers. According to an Uttar Pradesh government release, Murmu will also offer prayers at the Akshayvat and Bade Hanuman Temple, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath accompanying her. The country's first President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, had also taken a holy dip during the Maha Kumbh.



Cook beaten to death inside Delhi bus over spilled food

A cook was beaten to death inside a bus in the northwest Delhi's Bawana area for allegedly spilling food on a seat, police said on Sunday. The man, Manoj alias Babu, was beaten by three people, the driver of the RTV bus and his two helpers, one of whom shoved an iron rod in his private part, they said. When Manoj became unconscious, the three dumped him near Bawana flyover and fled. Police said they have arrested one of the assailants, while two others remain at large. Manoj, a native of Narela, worked as a wedding cook. On the night of February 1, he and a colleague of his, Dinesh, attended a wedding in Sultanpur Dabas. "After wrapping up work, they packed some leftover food and boarded a bus. During the journey, some food accidentally spilled onto a seat, enraging the driver and his associates," a police officer said. While Dinesh was allowed to get off at Bawana Chowk, the three held Manoj hostage and forced him to clean the seat with his shirt, the officer said.



Tripura to get five-star heritage hotel: CM

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday said the state is all set to get a heritage five-star hotel. Addressing a programme of the State Engineers' Association (SEA) here, the CM said, "We have had discussions with the Tata group for setting up a heritage five-star hotel. This will be a gamechanger for the state as it proposes to have four to five exclusive rooms apart from hundreds of royal rooms," he said. Saha added, "Tata has a worldwide hotel chain and tourists can come from foreign nations by chartered flights and stay in the exclusive rooms." "The foreign tourists will not confine themselves to the hotel. They will visit tourist destinations like Rudrasagar, Unakoti archaeological site, Chhabimura and Dumber lake. There will be 200 direct employments," he said. The CM, however, did not specify where the hotel will be set up. In December, the CPI(M) and Tipra Motha had strongly opposed the government's plan for converting the Pushbant Palace, a royal property, into a five-star hotel. Built in 1917 by Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya, the palace was used as the Raj Bhavan until 2018.

Silent rally in Kolkata demanding justice for RG Kar victim

Doctors and people from all walks of life on Sunday took part in a silent rally to mark the first birthday of the RG Kar hospital medic since her death last year, and demanded justice for her. The rally, which started from College Square near the Calcutta University campus, was halted at the gate of the state-run medical facility in north Kolkata by security personnel. A large contingent of Kolkata Police personnel outside the hospital and CISF jawans inside its premises

were deployed. Officials spoke to the participants, who had wanted to walk to a point inside the premises, where a plaque was put up in memory of the medic by her colleagues. The CISF has been guarding the RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on an order of the Supreme Court, following the post-graduate trainee's rape and murder that had sparked a nationwide outrage and protests. The day also marks completion of six months of the crime that took place on August 9, 2023.

US TREATMENT OF INDIAN DEPORTEES

Govt has taken note of 'objections', says Khattar

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Union minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Sunday said the government has taken note of the "objections raised by everyone" over the manner in which illegal Indian immigrants were recently deported from the US.

There has been an uproar over the deportation of illegal Indian immigrants by the US in handcuffs during their 40-hour flight onboard a military aircraft. The US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed in Amritsar on February 5.

India on Friday said it has registered concerns with the US over the deportation of illegal immigrants in shackles and conveyed that this kind of treatment could have been avoided.

Khattar said, "America has deported people (to India) earlier also. This time, everyone had objections to the method, it (objection) has been registered and the issue will be resolved by talks. This issue is not good for any country and the government will discuss it further after giving due thought."



"Whether our people go or people from other countries come here, when such things happen, all countries engage in deportation. We have also deported many people from Assam."

There has been a constant demand that deportation (of illegal immigrants) be carried out, the Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs said. "There is a formality for it

(deportation), it also has its own sensitivity as to when to do it, how to do it and in what manner," he said.

During the press conference here, the minister was asked that when the US can deport people, why illegal migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh, who are an economic burden on India, are not being sent back.

Khattar said this is a serious problem and the people should not go to any country illegally. "Whether our people go or people from other countries come here, when such things happen, all countries engage in deportation. We have also deported many people from Assam," he said.



'Naxals will be eradicated by March 31, 2026'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday that Naxals will be eradicated by March 31, 2026 and no citizen of the country has to lose his life due to it.

Shah said this after the security forces killed 31 Naxals in Chhattisgarh.

"I also reiterate my resolve that before 31 March, 2026, we will completely eradicate Naxalism from the country so that no citizen of the country has to lose his life due to it," he wrote on 'X' in Hindi. The home minister said in the direction of making India Naxal-free, the security forces have achieved a big success in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh.

He said that 31 Naxalites were killed in this operation and a huge amount of arms and explosives were also recovered.

SC urged to expedite disposal of cases against lawmakers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With nearly 5,000 cases pending against sitting and former members of Parliament and members of legislative assemblies, the Supreme Court has been urged to issue directions to ensure expeditious disposal of cases against the lawmakers.

The latest affidavit filed by senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, who has been appointed amicus curiae by the apex court in a PIL seeking expeditious disposal of criminal cases against MPs/MLAs, said that legislators have great influence on the investigation and/or trial of cases against them, and trials are not allowed to be concluded.

"It is submitted that despite orders by this court from time to time and monitoring by the high court, a large number of cases are pending against the MPs and MLAs, which is a scar on the democratic setup of our country. The pendency of a large number of cases, some of

them for decades, shows that the legislators have great influence on the investigation and/or trial of cases against them, and the trial is not allowed to be concluded," Hansaria's affidavit said.

A Bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Manmohan will take up the PIL filed by Ashwini Upadhyay in 2016 seeking life ban of convicted politicians for hearing on Monday.

Hansari, in his affidavit filed through advocate Senha Kalita, said a total of 4,732 criminal cases are pending against the lawmakers, including 892 cases registered in 2024 as of January 1, 2025.

Referring to a report by the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR), a poll rights body, Hansari said that out of the 543 members in the present Lok Sabha, 251 have criminal cases against them, of which 170 are serious criminal cases (punishable with five years of imprisonment or more).

How Yamuna controversy sank AAP in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Yamuna factor seemingly played a significant role in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, reshaping voter sentiment and helping the BJP script history by defeating AAP.

A key driver of this shift was the backlash from Haryana-origin voters who viewed AAP's narrative on Yamuna pollution as an attack on their home state.

The BJP, which bagged 48 out of 70 seats, fielded 14 candidates of Haryana descent and 12 of them



won. The Aam Aadmi Party had 10 such candidates but only four won. In 13 constituencies with over 10 per cent Jat voters, the BJP secured 11 seats, a major reversal from

2020. The saffron party also dominated 12 out of 13 seats where Haryana-origin voters account for over five per cent of the electorate and won nine out of 11 seats bordering Haryana.

Flowing 52 kilometres through Delhi and passing through 15 constituencies, Yamuna has long been a symbol of environmental neglect.

Kejriwal had promised ahead of the Delhi elections in 2020 that he would clean Yamuna. Every year, as a thick layer of froth enveloped the river, especially around the Chhath

festival when people offered prayers at its ghats, the AAP government was reminded of its unfulfilled promise.

When the BJP stepped up its attack on the issue of Yamuna pollution during the election campaign, Kejriwal alleged that BJP-ruled Haryana had "poisoned" the river water to harm the people of Delhi. His remarks triggered a massive controversy as the BJP swiftly turned it into an emotional issue, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi calling it an "insult to Haryana and all Indians".

Lankan Navy arrests 14 Indian fishermen



PNS ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan authorities have arrested 14 Indian fishermen and seized their trawlers for allegedly venturing into the territorial waters of the island nation, the Navy said on Sunday.

The arrests took place during a special operation conducted in the sea area north of Mannar on Saturday, the Sri Lankan Navy said in a statement.

"The Sri Lanka Navy seized 2 Indian fishing boats and apprehended 14 Indian fishermen while they were poaching in Sri Lankan waters," it said.

The Navy continues to conduct regular patrols and operations in Sri Lankan waters to curb illegal fishing practices of foreign fishing boats, taking into account the impact of those practices on the livelihood of local fishermen, the statement said.

The arrested fishermen were brought to the Iranativu Island, where they will be handed over to the Assistant Directorate of Fisheries, Kilinochchi, for further legal action, the Navy said.

Kejriwal meets new MLAs, asks them to work for people

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the AAP was ousted from power in Delhi, party supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday met its 22 newly elected MLAs at his Ferozshah Road residence here and asked them to work for the people.

Addressing reporters after the meeting, outgoing chief minister Atishi, who is among the 22 AAP leaders who weathered the BJP storm, said the party will play the role of a constructive opposition and ensure



that the saffron party delivers on its promises. Kejriwal directed the newly elected MLAs to

serve the people and solve their problems, she said.

"The AAP will play the role of a constructive opposition and ensure that the BJP pays Rs 2,500 per month to women by March 8 as was promised by it, provides 300 units of free electricity and continues other facilities for the people," she said.

The MLAs will ensure that the BJP does not discontinue the free services and facilities that the AAP government provided in the last 10 years, she added.

Atishi said the leader of opposition will be nominated during the legislative party meeting of the AAP in the coming days.

The BJP won 48 of the 70 assembly seats, returning to power in Delhi after more than 26 years and dislodging the AAP after a decade.

More graduates in the Delhi Assembly

NEW DELHI: The eighth Delhi Assembly will have fewer women members but a higher number of lawmakers with graduate degrees, according to a report. The report by PRS Legislative Research found that five women had been elected to the assembly, the results of which were announced on Saturday, representing 7 per cent of the House. Four women MLAs are from the BJP while Atishi is AAP's only woman member in the House. In 2020, eight women were elected. The BJP swept to power in Delhi after more than 26 years, winning 48 of the 70 assembly

seats. AAP won 22 seats while the Congress drew a blank in the polls held on February 5. The percentage of MLAs with graduate degrees has risen to 38 per cent in the eighth assembly from 34 per cent in the seventh. MLAs with postgraduate degrees and above remain unchanged at 26 per cent. About 61 per cent of the newly-elected MLAs listed politics or social work as their profession, compared to 67 per cent in the previous assembly. The number of MLAs who listed their profession as business also registered an increase from 29 per cent in the seventh assembly to 49 per cent in the eighth.

BJP will come to power in Bengal in 2026 polls: Pradhan

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday asserted that the BJP will come to power in West Bengal in the 2026 assembly elections.

The Union Education Minister also accused the Mamata Banerjee government of putting roadblocks to the implementation of central projects in West Bengal, while falsely accusing the Centre of ignoring the state.

"BJP's vote share in West Bengal has been around 30-40 per cent since 2019 and if the party gets another 10 per cent of votes, it will dislodge the Mamata Banerjee government from power," Pradhan said



while addressing a press meet here on the salient features of Union budget.

Stating that the rout of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi assembly elections showed people's overwhelming faith in the BJP and the rejection of the "corrupt" Arvind Kejriwal government, Pradhan said in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, BJP made its mark in West Bengal by bagging 18 of the 42 seats in the state.

BJP govt working to weaken Constitution: Priyanka

PNS ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

Continuing her criticism of the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday alleged that, for the first time in history, a government is working to weaken both the Constitution and democracy of the country.

Addressing the party's booth-level leaders in Ernad Assembly constituency, the Wayanad MP said, "It's probably for the first time in our country's history, we have a government that is working to



weaken the Constitution and the democracy."

"You must understand that today the fight we are fighting is not just a fight for our own politics and ideology but a fight for protecting the essence of India, everything that makes

our nation what it is today," she added.

On the second day of her three-day visit to Wayanad, Priyanka addressed the issue of human-animal conflicts, stating that she would write to both the Centre and state governments to allocate more funds, as adequate funding is essential for effective protection measures.

Later, speaking to reporters after the meeting on the human-animal conflict issue, she said she has already raised it once and will continue to raise it.

Aero India 2025: IAF, Army chiefs take sortie in Tejas

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Air Chief Marshal A P Singh and Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwiwedi on Sunday set the tone for the grand Aero India-2025 by flying in the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas here at Yelahanka based Air Force Station.

The performance by the top brasses was the prelude to the biannual event, which commences on Monday and will continue till February 14.

All eyes were glued to the sky as the Air Chief Marshal flew the metal bird with the Army

Chief. After the successful sortie, General Dwiwedi termed the experience as the best moment in his life.

For the Army Chief, the experience was such that he called the Air Chief Marshal his guru and even regretted why he

did not opt for the Indian Air Force.

"It was the best moment in my life and as you are aware

that the Air Chief Marshal is my course mate. We have been together from the NDA (National Defence Academy) days. I wish he had met me earlier and I would definitely have changed my option to the Air Force. As I have said earlier, also if I had gone to the Air Force, I would have been fighter pilot," General Dwiwedi told reporters.

"And I must say that from today onwards, the Air Chief Marshal AP Singh is my guru because he made me do lot of roles and other activities while in the sky," he added.

Stating that he enjoyed the

sortie as it carried a great challenge, the Army Chief said, "I am very much grateful to the IAF and I must admire the kind of a challenge the pilots of the IAF take and it takes a great synergistic approach from all of us and I am sure that it is a good start for the Aero India-2025."

LCA Tejas is an Indian combat aircraft designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the Indian Air Force (IAF) and Indian Navy.



"I am very much grateful to the IAF and I must admire the kind of a challenge the pilots of the IAF take and it takes a great synergistic approach from all of us and I am sure that it is a good start for the Aero India-2025."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Delhi dislodges AAP

In a landmark political shift, the BJP has stormed to power in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, marking its return after 27 years

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) that ruled for ten years has been ousted by the BJP. It is one of the major setbacks that AAP has suffered since its inception. Despite its misadventures it always remained voters favourite in Delhi. Now with the BJP making a comeback it has suffered not only a big jolt to the party morale but also to the brand Kejriwal. In a historic political shift, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has secured a decisive victory in the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections, ending the AAP's decade-long governance in the national capital. This marks the BJP's return to power in Delhi after 27 years. The BJP won 48 out of the 70 Assembly seats, surpassing the majority mark of 36 seats. In contrast, AAP managed to secure only 22 seats, a significant decline from its previous tally of 62 seats in the 2020 elections. The Congress party failed to open account, continuing its decline in the region. Notably, AAP's prominent leaders faced unexpected defeats. Aam Aadmi Party chief



Arvind Kejriwal lost the New Delhi seat to BJP's Parvesh Verma by a margin of 4,089 votes. Similarly, former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia was defeated in the Jangpura constituency. Senior AAP leaders, including Saurabh Bharadwaj in Greater Kailash and Somnath Bharti in Malviya Nagar, also lost their seats. After ten years in power, AAP encountered strong anti-incumbency sentiments, with voters expressing a desire for change.

Legal troubles and corruption allegations against key leaders, including Kejriwal and Sisodia, further diminished public trust in the party. Meanwhile, the BJP successfully leveraged AAP's shortcomings, presenting

a development-driven governance model that resonated with the electorate. This electoral outcome serves as a critical juncture for AAP. The party must undertake a comprehensive introspection. Perhaps it is time it realised that it would be a good idea to remain with the INDIA bloc and playing solo is not always a good idea. One of the major reason for its defeat might have been the division of votes. Congress though did not gain but pulled it down. Addressing the corruption allegations transparently and implementing internal reforms will be essential to rebuild credibility. Reassessing policy positions and strengthening grassroots connections can help the party reconnect with its core voter base. In his concession speech, Arvind Kejriwal acknowledged the defeat and extended his congratulations to the BJP expressing hope that the new government will fulfill its promises to the people of Delhi. The results of the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections send a strong and clear message to all political parties—governance, credibility and adaptability matter more than rhetoric. The political parties cannot rely solely on past achievements; they must continuously evolve and deliver on public expectations. Ultimately, there are no shortcuts to winning voters' trust—even freebies have their limits.

## PICTALK



Tourists take a ride on a hot air balloon, in Manali

## The new geopolitical communication era

With emerging technologies, evolving geopolitical alliances and the dominance of visual storytelling, the way messages are crafted and delivered is being redefined



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

One of the critical areas where visible changes will be witnessed post-January 2025 is the communication landscape geopolitically. This era is positioned to redefine the very speedways of global communication, with a pivotal question arising: Are we on the verge of a 360-degree transformation in communication delivery, content orientation, outreach mechanisms, and the tools we deploy? Geopolitically, the communication ecosystem will embrace a new language—a language of immediacy, focused messaging, results-driven delivery, and the prioritisation of measurable outcomes to identify realistic patterns and global impacts.

As the world steps into this new chapter of geopolitical shifts, communication strategies are becoming more sophisticated, dynamic and multidimensional. The need of the hour is to analyse the new alliances afoot in the shifting political landscape and the major geopolitical developments. The evolving political climate is challenging traditional paradigms, compelling communication specialists, diplomats, and policymakers to rethink how messages are crafted, delivered, and received on a global stage.

The era demands a communication framework that not only transcends borders but also bridges divides with precision, creativity, and authenticity. In 2025, the phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words" takes on greater resonance. Visual communication has become the most impactful way to deliver messages. A single, well-composed image has the power to convey emotions, ideas, and narratives that words may struggle to encapsulate. Building on this, the explosion of short-form videos, and 30-second reels, for instance, has transformed the landscape further.

Their brevity and emotional depth make them tools of unparalleled influence in shaping public opinion, mobilising support, and even defusing tensions. This evolution places immense responsibility on communicators in the geopolitical arena. Diplomacy, once conducted primarily behind



closed doors, is increasingly playing out in the public domain through curated visuals, symbolic gestures and strategic messaging amplified by digital platforms. For foreign policy, the challenge is to balance transparency and strategy, using these tools to build trust while maintaining sensitivity.

As social media continues its rapid rise, many ask whether traditional media can still hold its ground in the face of this digital juggernaut. Social media has undeniably globalised and democratised communication, giving individuals, governments, and organisations a direct channel to their audiences.

It thrives on immediacy, engagement, and the power to go viral, making it an essential tool in geopolitical communication. However, traditional media is far from obsolete. In an era of information overload, its role as a trusted gatekeeper remains critical. While social media is the messenger of the moment, traditional media provides depth, analysis, and context—elements that are crucial for informed decision-making. For communication to be effective in this new geopolitical era, the two mediums must complement each other, creating a holistic narrative that is both immediate and enduring.

The rise of artificial intelligence has added another layer of

complexity to global communication. AI-driven analytics enable unprecedented insights into audience behaviour, preferences, and sentiments, allowing for hyper-personalised messaging. These tools are invaluable for diplomats and foreign policy experts, who can now craft messages with immense precision and predict their impact with greater accuracy. However, with these advancements come ethical dilemmas. The line between strategic communication and manipulation can easily blur, necessitating robust frameworks to ensure accountability and fairness. As the communication landscape becomes more intricate, the demand for skilled specialists is growing. These professionals are not just channels for information, they are strategists, analysts, and creators who understand the nuances of messaging in a diverse and rapidly changing world.

Traditional media must evolve to remain relevant, embracing digital innovations and audience-centric approaches. Meanwhile, social media must grapple with issues of misinformation, polarisation, and echo chambers, striving to become a platform that unites rather than divides.

In this era, communication is no longer just about delivering a message; it is about shaping perceptions, building relationships, and driving action. As

the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to communicate effectively will be one of the most powerful tools in navigating the complexities of a neo-geopolitical era. In an era marked by shifting alliances and evolving global priorities, multilateral institutions face both challenges and opportunities.

The reworking of commitments by key nations to international frameworks has drawn notice to the fragility of global consensus, raising questions about the role and relevance of these institutions in addressing shared challenges like public health, climate change, and economic inequality. This shifting landscape calls for a more nuanced approach to diplomacy within multilateral spaces, with a renewed focus on collective responsibility. For these institutions to thrive in a complex geopolitical climate, they must leverage communication technologies to foster transparency, engage diverse stakeholders, and amplify their ability to drive action. Whether through the lens of a camera, the reach of a tweet, or the depth of an investigative report, the stories we tell and how we tell them will shape the world in ways we are only beginning to understand.

(The writer is a former civil servant. Views are personal. Inputs by Vaishnavie Srinivasan and Zoya Ahmad)



SOCIAL MEDIA HAS UNDENIABLY GLOBALISED AND DEMOCRATISED COMMUNICATION, GIVING INDIVIDUALS, GOVERNMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS A DIRECT CHANNEL TO THEIR AUDIENCES

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## WTO NEEDS REFORM

Madam — It is with reference to the editorial page article "WTO is at a crossroads; Reform or perish" - February 8. WTO is the world's largest international economic organisation, established in 1995 with 166 members representing over 98 per cent of the global trade and global GDP. Before the WTO, there was the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), a global trade organisation with 23 countries. Every member country is obligated to follow the laws and policies framed by WTO rules.

India is a significant member of the WTO. Trade disputes are addressed by the WTO's dispute settlement process. It is the WTO that makes efforts to promote transparency in decision-making by encouraging participation and, in particular, the use of the consensus rule. As an international platform, the WTO regulates and negotiates additional trade liberalisation. In recent days, the WTO has been facing many challenges related to changes in the global economy and geopolitical context. Its members have not been able to agree on new rules on agricultural goals, highlighting the conflicting interests between developed and developing countries. Difficult trade relations between the two largest world economies and WTO members—the US and China—also put a strain on the WTO. Unilateral trade measures such as raising tariffs on iron and steel threaten the multilateral trading system. This highlights the WTO might need to be reformed to meet current concerns such as national security, environmental standards, and the impact of technology on trade. If urgent reforms are not undertaken, the global trading system may soon witness the demise of the institution once deemed indispensable.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

## ZERO SEATS FOR CONGRESS IN DELHI

Madam — It will be painful for the Congress for the massive loss in the Delhi elections when people voted against them consistently for the last 3 terms 0-0-0. The most pathetic observation is that they

## BJP returns to power in Delhi



The BJP's long wait of 26 years to return to power in Delhi has ultimately come to an end after it registered an emphatic victory in Delhi Assembly polls. In fact, Delhi was the only erstwhile BJP-ruled state where victory remained elusive for the BJP even under the strong Modi wave since 2014. Hence, this victory has come as a big relief for the saffron party, which faced unceremo-

nious defeat at the hands of the AAP in two consecutive elections. On the other hand, the way the almost top leadership of the AAP, including former CM and party face Arvind Kejriwal and former Dy CM Manish Sisodia, licked the dust in the election reflects the deep anguish of the voters against the party.

No doubt the anti-incumbency of 11 years and the corruption charges have led to the defeat of the AAP. The arrest of Kejriwal and Sisodia in the liquor scam and the Sheesh Mahal controversy dented the party's image deeply. Interestingly, 'theatrics', the biggest tool of the AAP, also failed to impress the voters this time. But the BJP needs to be cautious, as the AAP, which was born out of the agitations, will prove to be a strong opposition.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

couldn't manage even a single seat in the last 3 assembly elections. Capital is Congress's home ground under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi.

The greed for power and dynastic politics made Priyanka Gandhi run all the way from Delhi to Wayanad to come back victorious in the by-election. There's a saying in the villages that 'If one has to assess the quality and power of a person in the village, ask the locals. The same yardstick proved right when there were no takers for Congress locally in Delhi and scoring 0-0-0 in their report card reflects that the quality of the Congress party is under a scanner. For the Congress to survive, the realistic approach must be to keep Rahul and Priyanka from the main limelight and keep them in a low profile so that the party can rebuild the faith for a better future of the party.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

## RBI CUTS INTEREST RATES

Madam — It is a first-rate cut in nearly five years by RBI and it signifies a shift in monetary strategy. With this cut, RBI has clear-

ly sent a signal that it wants to boost lending, stimulate consumer demand and nurture investment. In the recent months, core inflation has shown easing out, providing much-needed headroom to the RBI to implement this rate cut. And a slowdown in the economic growth forced the RBI to take the plunge now.

By lowering the borrowing cost, RBI wants to encourage businesses to expand, boost consumption, and help economic growth. Now banks will be happy to extend credit more freely, but they need to be wary of what they have witnessed with their microfinance and unsecured loan portfolios in recent months. In the real estate sector, SMEs will take a sigh of relief, and individual borrowers will see a reduction in their EMIs and, in turn, more money in their pockets, coupled with recent income tax cuts, which will create a positive environment for the consumption boom to take place.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Flying faster-than-sound travel closer to reality

Boom Supersonic successfully tested its prototype supersonic aircraft, proving that supersonic commercial travel is not just a dream but an imminent reality



RAJNEESH BHANDARI

A significant milestone in commercial aviation history has been achieved. Boom Supersonic, a Colorado-based startup, completed a successful test flight of its prototype supersonic aircraft XB-1, demonstrating that commercial air travel at faster-than-sound speeds is not only feasible but may soon be available for frequent flyers, cutting average intercontinental flight times in half.



They rewrote the rules of the game, overcame longstanding technical barriers and ignited fresh interest in supersonic flight. Established players like Boeing and Airbus often shy away from radical changes for fear of failing or canalising profitable products. Boom took calculated risks, embraced uncertainty, and refined each step through rapid data-driven iteration. Historically, supersonic jets are fuel guzzlers. Boom's approach combines aerodynamic optimisation with advanced high-performance materials and a propulsion system designed ground-up to minimise fuel consumption. The propulsion system (Symphony) will run on zero aromatic 100 per cent sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) for sustainable commercial supersonic flights. As a startup, Boom operates with lean teams. This contrasts sharply with the massive bureaucratic hierarchy within aerospace giants. Swift prototyping, quick feedback loops, and a willingness to pivot ensure that new technology is tested and integrated faster than what Boeing or Airbus might manage.

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The prototype aircraft smoothly transitioned through Mach 1 (the speed of sound) and touched Mach 1.1. This technology demonstration will help refine the design ahead of the company's next goal: launching a full-scale 60 to 75-seater supersonic jet called Overture. The founders' vision is that passengers can fly supersonically at tickets comparable to business class fares. Imagine cutting a 7-hour transatlantic flight to 3.5 hours. Suddenly, a business meeting in Delhi and a dinner date in London are feasible on the same day. Overture is being designed to fly 7800 km. It can fly nonstop on routes like Delhi to Frankfurt or New York to London. Faster travel time can be a game-changer for business travellers and high-priority cargo. While Airbus, Boeing, and other established players have the resources and legacy to make big moves, it often takes a nimble newcomer with a fresh perspective and first-principles thinking to challenge what's possible.

(The writer is an author, innovator and founder of NeuroEquilibrium; views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

## LIFE IS A MOUNTAIN: CLIMB YOUR PEAK, YOUR WAY

Just like climbing a mountain, life's true joy comes from the ascent, not just the summit



O P SINGH

I have come to believe life is a lot like climbing a mountain. It's not a race or a competition, and it's not about finding a shortcut. The absolute joy of life isn't standing at the summit—it's in the climb. It's in slipping on loose gravel, feeling the burn in your legs, and wondering halfway through if you should turn around. But when you catch your breath at a ridge or find your footing after a stumble, you realise something powerful: the climb isn't about the mountain—it's about who you become along the way.

Each of us has a mountain to climb. It doesn't need to be Everest or Kilimanjaro. It doesn't have to impress anyone else. What matters is that your mountain challenges you, excites you and pushes you to grow. And yes, the climb will be messy. The trail will disappear just when you think you're getting somewhere. The air will get thin. You might even feel like quitting. But that's the beauty of it—the mountain shapes you with every step. Every great climb starts with a dream—one so audacious it gives you butterflies. Don't let its enormity overwhelm you. Focus on taking the next step, then the one after that. Progress isn't about giant leaps but small, consistent efforts.

Moving forward, even a little each day, builds the path to big dreams. Mountains don't reward the fastest or most competent climber—they reward perseverance. Talent may get you started, but resilience carries you through fatigue, failure, and seemingly impossible moments. You don't need to be perfect; you need to keep climbing. Your journey is unique; not everyone will understand or agree with it. That's okay. When the trail disappears, create your path, even if it's messy.



The best routes are discovered through improvisation and authenticity, not by meeting others' expectations. Slips and falls are inevitable, and they hurt. Yet, each stumble teaches something valuable about the terrain, limits, and strength. Mountains don't demand perfection—they demand persistence. Learn from every fall, and rise stronger. The mountain doesn't care who reaches the summit first. It isn't about trophies or comparisons. The climb is about pushing yourself, growing beyond your comfort zone, and becoming someone who belongs at the summit.

True success is transformation, not competition. The best climbers don't focus solely on themselves. They lend a hand, share tools, and cheer others on. Life's peaks are more meaningful when shared. Those who help will often support you, making the climb richer for everyone. When you reach your summit, pause and reflect. Did your climb inspire others? Did you leave the path better for those who follow? Success isn't standing alone at the top; it's in the legacy you leave—the encouragement, improvements, and hope for others to climb higher. Ultimately, the climb makes life beautiful.

The summit is fleeting, but the slips, breakthroughs, lessons, and growth endure. These moments shape you into someone worthy of the top. If your mountain feels daunting, don't let the height scare you. Start small. Take one step at a time. You don't need to move fast or know the whole path. Just keep climbing. One day, standing at your summit, you'll look back and realise it wasn't about the peak. It was about the person you became along the way. That's the valuable reward of the climb—knowing every inch of it was unapologetically yours.

(The author is DGP & Head of Haryana State Narcotics Control Bureau, with three books to his credit; views are personal)



GEETA BHATT

Uttarakhand has led the way in formalising laws for women of different faith as equal, upholding the spirit of the constitution. Babasaheb Ambedkar would have been a contented man knowing that Uttarakhand has become the first state in India to have put an end to the disparity in legal protection provided to women, as till now, they were governed by their respective personal laws based on religion and customary state practices.

The courageous step taken by this young state will pave the way as a paradigm for others to follow similar footsteps. For the first time post-independence, a legislative body has drafted rules for marriage, divorce, inheritance of property, and live-in relationships. UCC has been used as a political tool ever since it was

tabled for discussion in the Constituent Assembly when Babasaheb, as Chairman of Drafting Committee, had expressed need for uniformity in fundamental laws, both civil and criminal. UCC was placed under a sub-committee which proposed to list it as a non-justiciable right hence, making it non-disputable in the courts.

Majority of the members of this sub-committee were in agreement with the proposal except Minoo Masani, Hansa Mehta and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who wrote to Patel stating, "One of the factors that have kept India back from advancing to nationhood has been the existence of personal laws based on religion". The dissent observed by the women members of the con-

stituent assembly got support from Dr BR Ambedkar, KM Munshi and Alladi K Aiyar. The opposition from the Muslim members ensued the UCC under Directive Principles Article 44, where the Constituent Assembly was not obliged to enforce the provision and at the same time, the provision could be implemented by the legislatures in the future.

A compromise made between those in support and those in disagreement of the UCC. The changing social milieu has seen a trend in rigorous churning to shed away repressive, orthodox practices so as to evolve a social structure which believes in equal rights. This led to the codification of matrimonial, inheritance, succession and adoption laws for the



Hindus from 1955-56. The women's rights under Muslim Personal law were challenged by Shah Bano in 1985 demanding maintenance from her husband. The landmark Supreme Court judgement in favour of Shah Bano was later overturned when the incumbent Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress government, under pressure, enacted the Muslim Women

(Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986. The lingering wait for gender rights saw a ray of hope after 30 years when on the plea filed by Shayara Bano and others, who were victims of matrimonial dispute, the Supreme Court declared "talaq-e-biddat," or instantaneous triple talaq as unconstitutional in 2017. This time the government of the day stood by the rights of Muslim women and vindicated the crusade undertaken by Shah Bano by legally prohibiting triple talaq and protecting the rights of married Muslim women by bringing The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act in 2019. Though the present government has asserted equal rights and status to Muslim women

by bringing this act, there are miles to go as social customs of polygamy and Halala still looms large. The judiciary has reminded the legislators to fulfil their obligation towards the Constitution and promote equal rights for women. A five-member panel constituted in the chairmanship of retired justice Ranjana Prakash Desai diligently worked on the draft for two years besides holding public interactions, taking suggestions from people of the state and internal meetings of the panel to discuss the points to be taken under the draft. The bill in its four parts covers marriage and divorce, succession, live-in relationships. The section 4 of the bill outlines that "neither party has a spouse living at the time of the

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(The writer is Director, Non Collegiate Women's Education Board, University of Delhi; views are personal)

# Trump's vision for Gaza: Paradise or purgatory?



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

President Donald Trump's proposal for Gaza is more than just another audacious policy move—it is a collision of commerce, geopolitics and power



Everyone saw it unfold. This is the harsh reality of life in the Devil's paradise, where desires are transformed into laws, ambitions become twisted ethics, and behaviour is coerced into the very fabric of the system. The truth? To survive here, one must bow to the powers that be, no matter the cost. Conscience and integrity are irrelevant—praise those in power or face annihilation. President Donald Trump welcomed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—an alleged war criminal wanted by the International Criminal Court—as the first foreign leader in his second term, declaring his grand vision to take control of Gaza, turning it into a "brave new Levantine Riviera" by cleansing over 2 million Palestinians.

Nevertheless, the proposal has sparked strong opposition. Saudi Arabia, a key ally of Trump, swiftly condemned it, insisting that no nation would recognise Israel without the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Jordan and Egypt also rejected the idea of accepting millions of displaced Palestinians. The mere announcement of this plan starkly illustrates the chaotic grandeur of Trump's vision. Yet, his proposal, however audacious, was no accident of rhetoric. It was a calculated, methodical blueprint crafted long before Trump's second term in office. With Netanyahu—a willing ally in these manoeuvres—Trump painted a picture of Gaza not as a refuge for the Palestinian people, but as a commercialised "paradise" defined not by its displaced residents, but by foreign investments and a transformation into a luxury resort.

Trump's proposition, laden with both visionary ambition and horrific repercussions, challenges the entrenched paradigm. This proposal, as reported, was not born of sudden whim, but the culmination of years of deliberation within Trump's inner circle—an enterprise in which his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, played a pivotal role in positioning the geopolitical and commercial components across Asia. Kushner's claim, in a recent interview with the Financial Times, that his "ability to see trends before others" uniquely positions him to capitalise on opportunities others find unpalatable, resonates with the underlying logic of Trump's plan. It's a logic that blurs the line between statecraft and property development, where geopolitical ambitions are pursued not merely for strategic suprema-



THE ARAB WORLD, ONCE INTOXICATED BY THE IDEA OF PAN-ARAB UNITY, HAS REPEATEDLY SUCCUMBED TO ITS INTERNAL FISSURES, NEVER ABLE TO OVERCOME THE CORROSIVE FORCES OF REALPOLITIK AND SELF-INTEREST

cy but also as a means to expand a business empire throughout Asia. This fusion of commerce and conquest is as disquieting as it is unprecedented, conjuring images of modern-day feudalism, where land and people are subjugated to serve the profit motives of a privileged few. What is truly striking, however, is that Trump's plan could offer a rare and pivotal opportunity for Arab nations, whose history of disunity has long hindered their collective potential.

Regional players—Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, Qatar, Jordan, and others—have long danced to contradictory rhythms, using Palestine as a symbol to justify their betrayals, while failing to act with sincerity or consequence. These rivalries, cultivated over decades of political expediency, have reduced Palestinians from champions of an independent cause to mere pawns in a game that has been further complicated by internal rifts within Palestinian movements.

For far too long, the Arab states have abandoned Palestine's plight in favour of personal ambition and strategic alliances, turning the Palestinian cause into a commodity—moulded and shaped according to the whims of foreign powers. This latest manoeuvre must be understood within the context of the convoluted history of Arab disunity—an entangled web of colonial subterfuge, sectarian fragmentation, and a legacy of betrayal that has persistently eroded Palestinian sovereignty and reduced their cause to a tragic geopolitical instrument.

The Arab world, once intoxicated by the idea of pan-Arab unity, has repeatedly succumbed to its internal fissures, never able to overcome the corrosive forces of realpolitik and self-interest. Behind the veneer of solidarity and proclamations of support for Palestinian self-determination, there lies a catalogue of secretive agreements, covert operations, and Machiavellian plots that have long entangled the region.

While the Sykes-Picot Agreement remains the most infamous symbol of colonial partition, it is far from the only clandestine accord that has shaped the fate of Palestine.

Lesser-known pacts, such as the Husayn-McMahon Correspondence, which promised Arab independence in exchange for rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, were later betrayed in favour of European imperial ambitions. Similarly, the post-World War II period saw Arab states engage in secret dealings with both Western and Soviet powers, each prioritising their strategic interests over Palestinian rights. Agreements such as the Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine—purportedly aimed at regional stability—left the Palestinian cause sidelined in favour of Cold War allegiances, perpetuating cycles of betrayal.

And perhaps most insidious of all were the secret negotiations between Arab leaders and Israel, at times tacit and other times more explicit, often involving quiet exchanges of territory, economic support, or even military cooperation, all under the guise of broader diplomatic manoeuvres. These acts of realpolitik—often driven by the selfish interests of a few at the expense of the many—have left Palestine isolated, its sovereignty forfeited in a game of geopolitical chess. The fractured nature of Arab leadership, perpetuated by sectarianism and divergent national ambitions, only serves to deepen the wound. While leaders such as Egypt's Nasser sought to rally the Arab world under a banner of unity, his efforts were consistently thwarted by rivalries and internal conflicts.

Today, these past betrayals reverberate in the region's collective psyche, leaving Palestinian aspirations still choked by the suffocating embrace of powers both external and internal, with the dream of a unified Arab world and a free Palestine rendered ever more elusive by the cynical. Yet, it is precisely this history that

makes Trump's audacious proposal so paradoxically compelling. Here lies an opportunity for the perennial exiles—the Palestinians—not as pawns in a geopolitical chess game, but as potential agents for the reawakening of Arab unity.

For decades, Palestinian suffering has been wielded as a symbol of resistance, a poignant reminder of an exodus that began with the Nakba in 1948. However, the continued instrumentalisation of Palestinian tragedy by neighbouring Arab regimes—who have long used the plight of these people as a rhetorical tool without offering substantial solutions.

It is within this environment of ambivalence and simmering tension that Trump's proposal must be viewed as a paradigm-shifting moment. The convergence of statecraft and property development, epitomised by Trump and Kushner's ambitions, signals a departure from conventional geopolitical paradigms. We are stepping into an era where the shifting power of oligarchies is increasingly driven by the convergence of economic gain and political opportunism—a transformation with far-reaching consequences for the future of West Asia.

Whether this radical reimagining of Gaza could catalyse Arab unity remains uncertain, inherently tied to the unresolved contradictions within the region's historical legacy. Trump's Riviera dream for Gaza is as much a test of American resolve as it is a crucible for Arab unity—a proposition that, if realised, could compel the Arab states to transcend their long-standing acrimony and mistrust.

However, the likelihood remains that this bold gambit, with all its extravagant rhetoric and ambitious visions, will only serve to deepen existing rifts, leaving Palestinians once again at the mercy of external schemes.

(The writer is a journalist and a policy analyst. Views expressed are personal)

## Uttarakhand leads the way: The first state to implement Uniform Civil Code

Uniform laws that empower women will be the common thread binding the nation in oneness and uphold the constitutional spirit

Uttarakhand has led the way in formalising laws for women of different faith as equal, upholding the spirit of the constitution. Babasaheb Ambedkar would have been a contented man knowing that Uttarakhand has become the first state in India to have put an end to the disparity in legal protection provided to women, as till now, they were governed by their respective personal laws based on religion and customary state practices.

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## SALMAN KHAN CALLS SOCIAL MEDIA 'A BIG MIND SLAM'

Life was simpler without social media, believes Bollywood superstar Salman Khan, who says endlessly scrolling through posts online feels like a "big mind slam". The 59-year-old, who sat down for a free-wheeling chat with his nephew Arhaan Khan and his friends on the 'Dumb Biryani' podcast, has a total of over 160 million followers across Facebook, X and Instagram.

"When there was no social media, you didn't know who went where with whom. Now you switch on the phone and if you are following someone, you get the whole (scrolling) account of where she went, whom she met, this post came, that post came. It's a big mind slam," Salman said during the season finale of the podcast shared on its official YouTube chan-

nel. The actor, known for films such as "Maine Pyar Kiya", the "Tiger" franchise, "Bajrangi Bhaijaan", and "Wanted", also emphasised not carrying baggage and living in the present. "You don't need to carry your baggage, you need present. Learn from the past... I keep hearing people saying 'I gave it my best shot'. No, you didn't... If you had, you would have got it. It takes a lot of mental effort to do this," he said. Calling discipline "the worst thing" to have because it often gets boring, Salman said: "You need to fall in love with all the difficult things you want to achieve... When your body says no, your mind should say yes. When the body and mind both say no, you should say 'C'mon guys, one last round'."

## Anil Kapoor completes filming for Subedaar



Actor Anil Kapoor on Sunday said he can't wait for the audience to watch "Subedaar" as he finished working on his upcoming Prime Video movie.

The action-drama movie is directed by Suresh Triveni of "Tumhari Sulu" and "Jalsa" fame. Kapoor shared a video on his Instagram handle, calling the film a "testament to the passion and commitment of every single cast and crew member." The action-drama movie is directed by Suresh Triveni of "Tumhari Sulu" and "Jalsa" fame. Kapoor shared a video on his Instagram handle, calling the film a "testament to the passion and commitment of every single cast and crew member." "We did it... Your dedication and hard work brought this film to life, and I'm beyond grateful. Thank you for bringing your A-game every single day, I can't wait for the world to witness what we've created together in 2025," the actor captioned his post which featured pictures of the wrap party with the cast and crew on the sets. "From the bottom of my heart, thank you #TeamSubedaar @radhikkamadan @sureshtriveni @vikramix @primevideo @openingimageofficial @akfcnetwork @abundantia @PrajwalChandrashekar @saurabhtop @eeshadanait @tiwari\_ravvy," he continued. Kapoor announced the beginning of the filming of the project in October. Described as an "adrenaline-fuelled action drama", Subedaar follows former Army man Arjun Singh who grapples with civilian life, navigating a strained relationship with his daughter and societal dysfunction.

"The man who once fought for the nation, must now fight enemies within to protect his home and family," read the official plotline. Subedaar is produced by Abundantia Entertainment, Opening Image, Anil Kapoor Film & Communication Network Pvt. Ltd

## EKTA KAPOOR PRAISES PM'S WAVES INITIATIVE

Producer Ekta Kapoor on Sunday praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his vision behind the World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES), saying she is excited to make her contribution to the initiative.

India will host the first WAVES in Mumbai from May 1-4 that will bring together media CEOs, entertainment icons and creative minds from around the globe.

Ekta Kapoor was part of the extensive virtual meeting of the Advisory Board of WAVES, the global summit that brings together the world of entertainment, creativity and culture, which the prime minister presided over on Friday.

"Your vision for India as a global entertainment hub is inspiring. We're extremely excited to contribute and be a part of this journey," she wrote on Instagram. Aamir Khan, Anil Kapoor, Anupam Kher, Mohanlal, Rajinikanth, Aamir Khan, AR Rahman, Diljit Dosanjh, Akshay Kumar, Ranbir Kapoor, Shekhar Kapur, Deepika Padukone, and Mithun Chakraborty, were other film celebrities who also attended the meeting virtually. Previously, Anil Kapoor said he was honoured to be part of the Advisory Board of WAVES. "We had a very insightful discussion with fellow members and we look forward to working towards making India a global entertainment hub! @narendramodi @MIB\_India @saju1," he wrote on X on Saturday. Kher called WAVES an "amazing initiative". "It will positively make India - the global entertainment hub. Listening to your vision and the participation of other distinguished members of the board was a clear indication that India will be the DAVOS of entertainment and cultural field globally in few years!"

@AshwiniVaishnav (sic) he said.

"I have no doubts that #WAVES, the brain child of Shri Modi ji will Propel India's 'SOFT POWER' to its deserving heights in the world. Brace for all the Excitement and breaking new grounds very soon!!" added Chiranjeevi.

The WAVES summit is being positioned by the government as India's global event for the entertainment sector to what Davos is for the economic sector.



## TOM CRUISE SAYS HE 'PASSED OUT' FILMING UPSIDE-DOWN PLANE STUNT

Hollywood star Tom Cruise has revealed that he frequently passed out while performing a crucial stunt in his upcoming spy action film "Mission: Impossible 8," where he had to hang onto a plane while he was upside down at an altitude of 10,000 feet.

From shooting an action sequence on a speeding train to skydiving and scaling the top of the tallest building in the world, Burj Khalifa, Cruise has perhaps done it all when it comes to death-defying stunts.

But it was this specific sequence in "Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning" which wasn't a cakewalk even for the action legend.

In an interview with the Empire magazine, Cruise, 62, said he experienced a lack of oxygen during the stunt.

"When you stick your face out, going over 120 to 130 miles an hour, you're not getting oxygen. So I had to train myself how to breathe. There were times I would pass out physically; I was unable to get back into the cockpit," he said.

The sequence, which saw the actor hanging from the wing of a 1930s Boeing Stearman biplane, was featured in the teaser trailer of the movie which was released two months ago.

On Friday, Cruise also shared a behind-the-scenes video of filming the same sequence on his X handle with a caption "Hang on".

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

		4	1	7	8			
							1	6
1		8		2	4			
3						9	2	
7	6						4	5
	9	8						7
		3	4		8		9	
8	5							
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Yesterday's solution

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

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

### ACROSS

- 1 A spring flower
- 6 You might hear this on the radio every hour
- 7 Actors with small parts to play in a film
- 9 The planet we live on
- 11 Sweeten food with this
- 12 A large sea
- 13 A snake's poison
- 16 A light, soft type of cake
- 18 A small round piece of medicine
- 19 Freed from captivity

### DOWN

- 2 Very unsafe
- Not as many
- 3 A sword fight
- 4 A green salad vegetable
- 5 A hot drink
- 8 A way to cook eggs
- 10 Someone who prepares a sports team for a match
- 14 These grow on fingers
- 15 Part of the foot
- 17 A tame animal



## 'My character in *Mission Grey House* is fearless and driven, just like me in real life'



**IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE PIONEER, ACTRESS PUJA SHARMA OPENS UP ABOUT HER INSPIRING JOURNEY FROM CUTTACK TO THE SILVER SCREEN, MAKING HER BIG-SCREEN DEBUT WITH *MISSION GREY HOUSE***



**I joined the gym to get physically fit and took action classes where I learnt kickboxing. Though my character doesn't have a lot of action sequences, I worked hard to perfect the ones I had**

TEJAL SINHA  
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

**M**aking her big-screen debut with *Mission Grey House*, actress Puja Sharma is ready to captivate audiences with her compelling portrayal of a fearless cop. Having already made a mark in the entertainment industry through ad films and popular television shows like *Choti Sardarni* and *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah*, as well as web series such as *Johri* and *Dus June Ki Raat*, Puja's journey from Cuttack, Odisha, to the silver screen is nothing short of inspiring.

Initially, a career in entertainment was never part of her plans. Moving to Mumbai for her studies, Puja aspired to enter the corporate world. However, her adventurous spirit and eagerness to explore new opportunities led her down an unexpected yet rewarding path in acting and modeling.

"Since childhood, I always wanted to learn horse riding, kickboxing, and be aware of everything around me, which wouldn't have been possible in my hometown," she shares in this exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*.

Her entry into acting was purely accidental. "A casting director approached me, and that's when I got to know how things work in acting and modeling," says Puja. Initially hesitant about how her family

would react, she found unwavering support in her sister-in-law. Encouraged, she participated in a beauty pageant - just for fun - only to emerge as the winner.

The victory brought unexpected recognition. "My story was published in newspapers, including my hometown's local press, and people started congratulating my parents. When I went back home, I was even felicitated by my school," she recalls. That moment made her realise she wanted to pursue a career in entertainment rather than the corporate world.

Upon returning to Mumbai, she actively sought opportunities in acting and modeling. "I got my first break in an ad film, and that's how things started out for me," she adds.

Every project she has worked on has contributed to her growth as an actor. While *Choti Sardarni* is widely known as her television debut, she reveals, "I haven't told this in any of my previous interviews, but before *Choti Sardarni*, I had worked on a web show in Goa. It never got released, and honestly, now I don't want it to," she laughs. "Back then, I was a fresh actor with no knowledge of anything."

Her role in *Choti Sardarni* was emotionally intense. "It was a very 'bechari' type role, full of rona-dhona, and I learned a lot about performing emotional scenes there," she explains.

Switching gears, she played a humorous role in *Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah* as Popatlal's love interest. "When you see actors on-screen, you

don't realize how they work, but on set, you observe everything. Watching Popatlal, I noticed how his expressions would instantly change when the director said 'action' and then go back to normal once the shot was over. In real life, he is an introverted person, which is so different from what we see on TV," she shares.

Her versatility continued with *Dus June Ki Raat*, where she played a drug addict, and *Johri*, where she portrayed a love interest. "Both were fun and enriching experiences," says Puja. Now, with *Mission Grey House*, she steps into yet another unique role.

For her, *Mission Grey House* is a dream come true. "Every actor dreams of seeing themselves on the big screen, and I feel so lucky to get this opportunity so soon in my career," she says excitedly.

Playing a cop was particularly thrilling for her. "I used to watch *Chandramukhi Chautala* as a kid, and I always felt that, given my height, I should play a cop at least once," she shares. However, her height initially posed challenges. "In television, most lead actresses are of short height, and I was often told that my height was too much-more than the lead actor's. I always thought I'd only get to play an inspector's role, and I didn't realize it was something I had manifested until I got this role in *Mission Grey House*," she says.

Her character in the film is a determined and confident officer who will stop at nothing to complete her mission. "She's

fearless and driven, which I relate to in real life as well," says Puja. In the film, veteran actor Rajesh Sharma plays her father, who assigns her and the lead actor to investigate a mysterious house where multiple murders have occurred.

To prepare for the physical and emotional demands of the role, Puja underwent rigorous training. "I joined the gym to get physically fit and took action classes where I learned kickboxing. Though my character doesn't have a lot of action sequences, I worked hard to perfect the ones I had," she explains.

One of the most cherished experiences from the shoot was working with Rajesh Sharma. "One day, I was exhausted from the heat and was sitting in my makeup room. He walked in, recited some shayari, and asked his spot boy to bring me butter-milk and nimbu paani. His positivity as a co-actor and a senior actor made a big impact on me," she recalls fondly.

While many cop dramas focus solely on the professional aspects of the role, she emphasizes that her character in *Mission Grey House* has multiple layers. "She's not just a cop - there are so many different aspects to her personality, which makes this role special," she explains.

Looking ahead, Puja is eager to explore more genres - especially horror. "I haven't done horror yet, but it excites me the most. I've actually completed a web series based on paranormal activities, which is currently in post-production," she reveals.

## Empowering women, sustainably

PNSHYDERABAD

Being a hotelier gave Mohit the opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds, each of whom has a distinct story and set of challenges. The tenacity, inventiveness and generosity of women who manage the responsibilities of the home, family and community, however, have continuously impressed him! These extraordinary people, in his opinion, should be given the chance to flourish, develop and follow their aspirations in addition to recognition. He is committed to establishing a workplace that embraces, encourages and inspires women and homemakers to thrive in their jobs and beyond, which is why he gave an exclusive interview to *THE PIONEER*. Notably, the director of Ananta Hotels & Resorts has also spearheaded two noteworthy projects in Udaipur: an inventive lavender laundry project and a state-of-the-art bottling plant.

**The effort to hire housewives and women is impressive. What prompted this choice?**

Beyond providing luxury, my idea also aims to promote empowerment and inclusivity. In order to reshape opportunities in the hospitality business and provide doors for individuals who have historically been underrepresented, the campaign to hire women and stay-at-home moms was born. In 2005, women accounted for just 8% of our workforce. They make up 15% now and by 2026, they want to make up 25%. This change has improved our workplace culture in addition to giving women greater financial independence and opportunities for professional advancement. Our conviction that diversity is crucial to creating a better future for hospitality has been strengthened by their distinct viewpoints and commitment, which have enhanced our guests' experiences with warmth, empathy and creativity.

**You're combining sustainable practices with powerful work with your lavender laundry initiative. Could you explain the project's underlying concept?**

The Lavender Laundry initiative is an example of the dedication to a considerate experience that blends sustainability with significant influence. In addition to its aesthetic appeal, the project gives local women and stay-at-home moms jobs that allow them to become financially independent and advance in their careers. Because sustainable procedures are used to limit the process's influence on the envi-



**The resort's natural attractiveness is enhanced by the Aravalli Hills, which provide a picturesque backdrop for The Ananta Udaipur. How does your approach to sustainability change as a result of your connection to nature?**

The Aravalli Hills serve as a constant source of inspiration and a reminder of the value of living in harmony with the natural world. The sustainability efforts, which range from installing solar energy and gravity-fed water systems to employing eco-friendly building materials, are motivated by this relationship. In order to improve biodiversity and reduce our carbon footprint, we are also committing to planting 50,000 trees in Rajasthan each year. We make sure that our visitors can enjoy the natural beauty while understanding that their stay helps to preserve it for future generations by building our resort to blend in with the hills.

**While your family has a long history of hospitality, what personal legacy do you hope to leave behind?**

I want to leave a legacy based on sustainability and empowerment, even though the heritage of exceptional hospitality is a source of pride. This vision is embodied in the activities, such as the aim to eliminate plastic and our goal of having 25% of women in the workforce by 2026. The ultimate test of success, in my opinion, is building a company that not only provides top-notch hospitality but also improves communities, safeguards the environment and establishes new benchmarks for social responsibility and diversity. I want my ventures to be remembered by future generations as a trailblazer of significant industry transformation.

ronment, it also fits with an eco-conscious worldview!

**The hospitality business has historically been controlled by men. How have you managed to assure women's representation at all levels?**

I'm determined to dispel myths and redefine the hospitality sector as a welcoming one. Since the beginning, the ownership has placed a high priority on giving women chances since they understand how their involvement improves the teams and visitor experiences. My resolve to change the narrative is evidenced by my target of 25% female representation by 2026. We aggressively fund mentorship and training initiatives, empower women in leadership positions and maintain a positive work environment. I have personally seen improved teamwork, inventiveness and resilience as a result of promoting diversity—elements crucial for success in the cutthroat hospitality industry. The goal is very clear: empower women to empower hospitality's future.

**What difficulties do stay-at-home moms encounter when they decide to enter the workforce, in your experience?**

Homemakers frequently encounter major obstacles when they return to the market, such as a lack of recent work experience, self-assurance and the ability to manage family obligations. The hotel wants to close this gap by fostering an atmosphere that supports their special abilities, such as empathy, organisation and multitasking.



**DEWORMING IN CHILDREN:**

### A crucial step towards healthy growth

As parents, ensuring that our children grow up healthy and strong is a top priority. One often overlooked but essential aspect of a child's health is deworming. Intestinal worms are common among children, especially in regions with poor sanitation. These parasites can cause a range of health issues, including malnutrition, poor growth, and developmental delays. Regular deworming plays a critical role in maintaining your child's overall well-being.

**What Are Intestinal Worms?**

Intestinal worms are parasitic organisms that live in the intestines. The most common types of worms affecting children include roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, and whipworms. These worms can enter the body through contaminated food, water, soil, or contact with infected animals. In children, the risk of infection is higher due to their natural curiosity and tendency to play in unsanitary environments.

**Why is Deworming Important?**

**Deworming is essential because intestinal worms can seriously affect your child's health. Some of the key consequences of worm infestations include:**

- 1. Malnutrition:** Worms compete with the host for essential nutrients, which can lead to nutrient deficiencies.
- 2. Abdominal Pain and Discomfort:** Worms cause irritation and damage to the intestines, leading to stomach pain and discomfort.
- 3. Fatigue and Weakness:** As a result of nutrient deficiencies, children may appear lethargic and tired.
- 4. Diarrhea or Vomiting:** Some worms can cause gastrointestinal symptoms, leading to dehydration and loss of appetite.

**Signs Your Child Might Have Worms**  
It is not always easy to spot an infection, as some children may not

**show obvious symptoms. However, some common signs to look out for include:**

- **Itchy Bottom:** This is particularly common with pinworms, which cause intense itching around the anus, especially at night.
- **Abdominal Pain:** Complaints of stomach aches or cramps may indicate a worm infestation.
- **Changes in Appetite:** A sudden increase or decrease in hunger could be a sign.
- **Weight Loss:** If your child is losing weight despite a normal appetite, it may indicate the presence of worms.

**How Often Should You Deworm Your Child?**

The frequency of deworming depends on where you live, the local sanitation conditions, and your child's age. In many countries, health authorities recommend deworming children between the ages of 1 and 5 every six months. In areas with higher rates of worm infestations, children may need to be dewormed more frequently. Your doctor or pediatrician will provide guidance based on your child's specific needs.

**Treatment and Prevention**

Deworming treatment typically involves the use of anti-parasitic medications. These medications are safe and effective, and they usually come in the form of a single dose or a short course of treatment. Over-the-counter deworming medications are also available, but it's essential to seek professional advice before administering them to ensure proper dosage and safety. In addition to deworming, practicing good hygiene is crucial to preventing reinfection. Teach your children the importance of washing their hands with soap and water, especially before meals and after playing outside. Avoiding contaminated food and water and ensuring that your child avoids playing in dirty or contaminated environments can further reduce the risk of worm infections.

(The author, Dr. Parimala V Thirumalesh, is a Sr. Consultant - Neonatology & Pediatrics, at Aster CMI Hospital.)



# After Majaka, filmmakers know where I can fit: Anshu Sagar

**MANMADHUDU FEMALE LEAD ANSHU IS BACK TO TELUGU CINEMA AFTER MANY YEARS AND SHE TALKS ABOUT HER SUDDEN DISAPPEARANCE, HER STUDIES, MARRIAGE AND WHAT MAKES HER COMEBACK...**

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Remember the classic film 'Manmadhudu' that stars Nagarjuna and Sonali Bendre, directed by Vijay Bhaskar and written by Trivikram Srinivas. The film was released in 2002 and another actress Anshu also played a female lead along with Sonali and she made her mark with it. Anshu acted then in 'Raghavendra' opposite Prabhas. Later, she acted in a Tamil film and then she disappeared from the film industry.

After more than 20 years, Anshu is back to Telugu cinema and this time she is acting in a film titled 'Majaka'. She paired opposite Rao Ramesh in his entertainment film. When asked why people called her Anshu Ambani, Anshu Tiwari or with some other surnames, the actress clarified about it. "The surname Ambani is a very popular one as well as known, but I have never been an Ambani. I have no idea how they added it to my name. I am Anshu, I married Sachin Sagar and if you want to add my surname you can call me Anshu Sagar, but I would be happy if everyone called me Anshu," said the actress.

Anshu acted in only three films and she disappeared suddenly from the industry, though she was successful. "Yes, because I was very young when I did 'Manmadhudu' and I was not mature enough to think at that time. If I was 24, I may have taken my career seriously, but I was hardly 14 or 15 at that time. So, I concentrated on my studies. I married Sachin Sagar at 24. I have two lovely children and I did my masters and now I am a qualified psychologist. I have my own clinic. I don't have any regrets," said Anshu about her disappearance.

When asked what made her come back to films, Anshu said that it was after the rerelease of her film 'Manmadhudu'. "Actually, Annapurna Studios asked her to give a bite about 'Manmadhudu' and that's when Anshu changed. She came to India last February and did a couple of podcast interviews which went viral and people came to know that she was here. Actually it also opened up some doors and a few people contacted me for roles," said Anshu. That's how writer Prasanna Kumar contacted her and narrated this 'Majaka' in a zoom call.

When they saw Anshu's photos and also videos, they thought that she may fit in as the lead actress, sister or mother wherever she can fit. "When they asked me, I couldn't give



them an answer, because I don't know where I stand, I am not like Madhuri or Kajol. I am younger than Deepika Padukone. But after 'Majaka', filmmakers have an idea where they can fit me, which I feel helps me to take the right decision also," said Anshu.

To accept 'Majaka', Anshu said that she liked the story. "When Prasanna Kumar narrated me on Zoom, I was laughing continuously. There is a lot of scope to perform and it's a heavy role. People might say that 'she is back' and I tried my best," she said. She added that the first day of the shoot where she faced the camera, she was nervous. "I haven't worked in a movie in the last 23 years, so I was very nervous and like a newcomer. But everyone was really nice on the sets, I know about the makers of the film, because they are doing good films. After day two and three, I was fine and continued shooting without any trouble," said Anshu. She said that the biggest challenge she faced while shooting this film was 'language'. "I am taking Telugu lessons now. My teacher Surekha teaches me Telugu and I want to work for a long time, I want to connect with the Telugu audience fully. I am a British Indian, but now I am learning Telugu, and will keep doing my best," she said.

Talking about her role in this film, she said she played the role of Yashoda. "She is headstrong and stubborn, arrogant woman and at the same time she is emotional also. I just got into the character of Yashoda and tried my best to play the role," said Anshu. She paired opposite Rao Ramesh in the film. "He is such a gentleman, he is very sweet. He has completed his dubbing. He saw my performance and told me that I did very well, which I feel very happy about," said Anshu.

The actress said that a lot changed from then to now in these 23 years. "When I came back to London I was doing my studies and I wanted to sign up for an agency for any roles in British or American films. They would decline my applications, what films you did, we never heard about them, no value of South Cinema. But now, things have changed so much, it has become more united," she said. She added that her husband is now watching Telugu and Tamil films even though he doesn't know the language. "He is enjoying watching South films," said Anshu. Her family members are coming next week to watch her film here in Hyderabad.

"Whether I am playing a mother, lead actress or sister, if the role has some substance, then I just want to act again," she said the kind of roles she is looking for. Talking about the food, "Once or twice in a month, I had Hyderabad biryani and it's very good," she said. "I love doing the gym," she added. She did 'Raghavendra' with Prabhas and asked about him, Anshu recalls and that Prabhas has changed, but he didn't change much as a person. "He came in his second film after 'Eswar', I came after 'Manmadhudu'. At that time he was so sweet, shy, kind and calm. He is so good," said Anshu. She added that he is definitely a humble star.



## Allu Arjun is still feeling nervous

The film 'Pushpa 2' released on December 5, 2024 was a successful one. Allu Arjun played the lead, while Sukumar is the director. Mythri Movie Makers is the producer. Though the film released more than two months back, the team didn't celebrate its success till now. Because, there are few incidents that happened after its release. A woman passed away at the Sandhya theatre stamped, after a few days Allu Arjun was arrested and he spent one day in Chanchalguda jail, making the makers not to hold any event of the film.

On Saturday, the makers held a success meet in a hotel, but it went quiet. Generally Allu Arjun event means, it's more like loud noise from his fans, a lot of activity and so on. But this success meet went without any big noise as many of the actors and other unit members attended and spoke about the film's success.

Though the venue was decided a couple of days back, the actor or the film PR didn't reveal about the venue even to the media. They revealed the venue at the last minute and requested not to forward the venue details to anyone as the fans may come in large numbers. So, they have taken every precaution for this success meet and it went smoothly. But if you look at Allu Arjun's body language, he

is still feeling nervous.

Speaking about the success, Allu Arjun thanked the producers for backing this film for five years. "The producers Ravi and Naveen made this film possible - without them, 'Pushpa' wouldn't have happened. They have taken care of us for five years," said Allu Arjun. He added that music director Devi Sri Prasad made his songs reach billions. The actor thanked director Sukumar and he is the man behind the success of this film.

"He always credits the team for success, but he himself is the reason behind it. My performance has received a lot of appreciation, and the credit goes to Sukumar. I am his biggest fan - I get excited whenever he narrates a scene. He is a genius director," said Allu Arjun about Sukumar. "Pushpa is not just a film, it is an emotion. The five years we spent on this film will be remembered for a lifetime," said the actor. He talks about 'Pushpa 3' and he said he doesn't know what is in store for it, but it is going to be extraordinary.

"I cannot make films without music director Devi Sri Prasad, and I never will," said Sukumar about DSP. Talking about Allu Arjun, he said, he believed in him even when he didn't have a proper story. "This entire success belongs to Allu Arjun," said the director.

## SWASIKA'S LOOK UNVEILED FROM SHAMBHALA

Pooja Vijay, better known as Swasika, is very popular in Tamil and Malayalam where she acted in many films. Now, she is doing this Telugu film, a horror thriller 'Shambhala', in which her look from the film is unveiled. Her recent Tamil film 'Lubber Pandhu' is very successful and even on OTT too it is a super hit. She is playing a very important role in the much-awaited supernatural horror thriller Shambhala: A Mystical World. The makers introduced Swasika's character, Vasantha, with a striking first-look poster that showcases her in an intense, gripping avatar. Swasika is also set to feature in Suriya's upcoming film directed by RJ Balaji and another Telugu film, Nithin's 'Thammudu' adding to her growing list of exciting projects. Talented actor Aadi Saikumar, known for his lively performances, is playing the lead in this project which has already generated excitement with its title and first look posters. The movie will see the actor in the challenging role of a geo-scientist. Directed by Ugandhar Muni, this film is produced by Rajasekhar Annabhimoju and Mahidhar Reddy under the Shining Pictures banner.



## Sid Sriram's magic once again worked for Neevalle Neevalle song



Sid Sriram has a special place when it comes to Telugu songs as he always creates magic with his voice. Whether it's 'Samajavaragamana' from 'Ala Vaikuntapuram Lo', or 'Srivalli' from 'Pushpa' or 'Leharayi' from 'Most Eligible Bachelor', not just one song there are many popular songs sung by Sriram. Now, the singer has come up with another one 'Neevalle Neevalle' from the upcoming film 'Tribanadhari Barbarik'. Directed by Mohan Srivatsa and produced by Vijaypal Reddy Adidhala, this film has an interesting cast by

Sathyaraj, Satyam Rajesh, Vasishta N Simha, Sanchi Rai, Udaya Bhanu, and Kranthi Kiran.

The film has music composed by the Infusion Band. The makers started the musical promotions by releasing the lyrical video for the first single, 'Neevalle Neevalle'. Lose yourself in the magic of the song, as the ever-magical Sid Sriram elevated it to extraordinary heights with his evocative and charismatic vocals. His voice lends the track an irresistible quality, making it an instant earworm. It's no surprise that this enchanting track is expected to top music charts in no time.

## I chose this story as a tribute to my grandfather: Rahul Yadav

After the successful films like 'Malli Raava', 'Agent Sai Srinivasa Athreya', and 'Masooda', producer Rahul Yadav Nakka is coming up with 'Brahma Anandam', which is set to release on February 14. The film stars Brahmanandam and his son Raja Goutham are in lead roles, with Priya Vadlamani and Aishwarya Holakkal playing key roles. It is directed by debutant RVS Nikhil.

"We struggled to find a perfect title, finally decided as 'Brahma Anandam'. The co-directors in our team helped design the title.

I've produced every film of mine on my own, and this is no different," said Rahul.

He added that he liked the grandfather-grandson relationship in the story. "My own grandfather also wanted to see me succeed, but he passed away just before I could return. I chose this story as a tribute to him," he said.

"We approached several actors for the lead actor, but Brahmanandam recommended Vennela Kishore's name. We sent him the script, and after reading it, Vennela Kishore suggested that the character of Giri, a

friend, would suit him better than the lead actor. That's when Raja Goutham's name came up. Initially, I had doubts, but after meeting him, my opinion changed," said Kishore about how Raja landed in this film. "As for Brahma Anandam, I won't talk about hits and flops. Everyone will come for Brahmanandam, but they will leave talking about Raja Goutham. They'll talk about his performance and acting. I'm sure of it," said Rahul about Raja.

Rahul Yadav revealed that he is also working on a film titled 'Vibe' with Raja Goutham. The director who directed 'Agent Sai Srinivasa Athreya', is going to direct this film.

## Madham is a raw and rustic film

These days many directors are giving importance to realistic stories and director Vamsi Krishna Malla is coming up with a film titled 'Madham'. Surya Devara Ravindranath (Chinna Babu) and Ramesh Babu Koya are the producers, while Harsha Gangavarapu, Latha Vishwanath, and Inaya Sultana are the lead actors. The film is set to release on March 14. "This is a raw and rustic film and is rare in Telugu cinema. Such content is more common in Tamil and Malayalam films. I truly connected with the story of 'Madham', and the climax is some-

thing that has never been seen in Indian cinema before," said the director. He added that to experience this film, one needs a lot of heart and courage. Inaya Sultana played a negative role in this film. "I love playing negative roles, and in this one, I had the privilege of portraying a significant character," said Inaya about her role. Another actress Latha Vishwanath said that she played a character very close to her real-life personality, so it was an easy and enjoyable experience. "I am thankful to the director and producer for giving me such a wonderful role," said Latha.

