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What Prudhvi said is completely wrong: Laila DIRECTOR
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QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
 By-elections will be definitely held in constituencies whose MLAs switched parties. The people of Telangana will teach the 10 MLAs who changed parties a lesson. Former Deputy CM Kadiyam Srihari who changed party will be defeated in Station Ghanpur. BRS candidate Thatikonda Rajaiah will become the MLA of Station Ghanpur. The remaining MLAs will also meet the same fate
 — K Chandra Sekhar Rao, Former Chief Minister, Telangana P4

DON'T MISS...
EG on alert over bird flu

East Godavari District Collector P. Prashanthi has assured that all necessary precautions have been taken to prevent the spread of avian influenza in Peravali mandal. During a visit to the affected areas in Kanuru Aghraharam village on Tuesday, the Collector, accompanied by revenue, police, health, animal husbandry, and panchayat raj officials, reviewed the containment measures. She stated that as soon as the virus was detected, the entire district was put on alert and steps were taken as per protocol.
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'India rolls out red carpet, not red tape'

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said India rolls out red carpet, and not red tape to investors and that there is broad consensus for sustainable economic development in the country. Inaugurating Invest Karnataka-2025 meet here on Tuesday, he said India has addressed the crucial point of policy uncertainty by creating a stable and predictable policy environment. "When I speak about the policy uncertainty, I want to emphasise a crucial point. Today across all governance...
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'65 pc of Indians used AI: Report

Reflecting the swift adoption of artificial intelligence in India, a Microsoft study has found that 65 per cent of Indians surveyed have used AI -- more than double the global average. Microsoft on Tuesday unveiled the Global Online Safety Survey, which studies the growing influence of AI. The survey is based on a survey of 15,000 teens (13-17) and adults that was conducted in 15 countries between July 19 and August 9, 2024. "65 per cent of respondents have used AI (+26 per cent from 2023). This is more...
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Team India eye ODI clean-sweep

A big knock from Virat Kohli's currently silent bat along with a series clean-sweep over England will be on Team India's wish-list when the two teams square off in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday, marking the end of their Champions Trophy (CT) build-up. While India hold an unassailable 2-0 lead with identical four-wicket wins in each of the first two ODIs, Rohit Sharma's men will be extra motivated to get a win here at the Narendra Modi Stadium where they had suffered a crushing ODI World...
 -SPORTS

CM stresses cohesive governance

GIVES ROADMAP TO MINISTERS, SECRETARIES ON DEVELOPMENT OF STATE

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
 Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday emphasised the importance of cohesive and collective brainstorming among government departments to empower the common man. Addressing a meeting of Ministers and Secretaries at the State Secretariat, he stressed that effective coordination, integration, and execution are the government's responsibility.

Termining the meeting a brainstorming session, he said it was organised to gain clarity on the government's direction and priorities. Highlighting the state's challenges, he alleged that nearly 90 Centrally Sponsored Schemes had become non-functional due to mismanagement and fund diversions by the previous YSRCP government. The current administration, he said, is focusing on the optimal implementation of central schemes and ensuring that competent individuals are placed in key positions.

Naidu reiterated the long-term vision of Swarna Andhra 2047, aligning with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, which aims for a sustained growth rate of 15 per cent. He underscored the need to strengthen family welfare services, ensure proper street lighting, roads, drainage, garbage collection, and promote a circular economy model to build a healthier and wealthier



- Naidu alleges that nearly 90 Centrally-sponsored schemes became non-functional due to mismanagement by the previous YSRCP government
- The current administration focuses on optimal implementation of Central schemes and placing competent individuals in key positions
- Swarna Andhra 2047 vision, aligning with Viksit Bharat 2047, aiming for a sustained 15 per cent growth rate emphasised
- Strengthening family welfare services, improving infrastructure, and promoting a circular economy identified as key priorities
- CM emphasises the need to accelerate revenue growth, streamline bureaucratic processes, and foster a culture of innovation
- Naidu urges officials to secure Central funds under newly-announced Union Budget schemes by leveraging the first-mover advantage
- He outlines the goal of transforming AP into a \$2.4 trillion GSDP economy
- State's Rs 87,000 crore GSDP shortfall compared to TG pointed
- Officials instructed to expedite file clearances in the e-office system
- Vision Monitoring Unit to be established at the State level, with districts preparing constituency-level plans

society. He also stressed that accelerating revenue growth, streamlining bureaucratic processes, and fostering a culture of innovation are crucial for the state's progress. The Chief Minister directed officials to leverage the first-mover

advantage to secure central funds under newly announced Union Budget schemes. Calling upon officials to rededicate themselves to building a prosperous Andhra Pradesh, he outlined the goal of transforming the state into a \$2.4

trillion GSDP economy. He also pointed out that Andhra Pradesh has a GSDP shortfall of Rs 87,000 crore compared to Telangana and emphasised the need to enhance purchasing power to drive economic growth.
 Continued on Page 2

Dy CM's absence at key meet raises eyebrows

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan was notably absent from the Secretaries' Conference held at the Secretariat on Tuesday, chaired by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. His absence has triggered speculation in political circles. While ministers from all departments, along with secretaries, attended the high-level meeting, the absence of the Deputy CM has raised eyebrows.

In a significant development, Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh was seen seated next to CM Naidu, occupying the chair typically reserved for the Deputy Chief Minister. Sources suggest that this seating arrangement reflects growing demands from party leaders and some ministers for Lokesh's elevation to the position of Deputy CM.

Pawan Kalyan, who leads the Jana Sena Party, had also skipped a recent Cabinet meeting, further fuelling speculation about his political priorities.

His repeated absence from key government meetings has become a topic of intense discussion. Despite having no official engagements on Tuesday, Pawan Kalyan is set to embark on his South India tour from Wednesday. His decision to skip the crucial meeting has raised questions about the internal dynamics of the ruling coalition. Political observers are speculating whether his absence signals emerging tensions or a shift in his focus. With Pawan Kalyan staying away from such significant meetings, political analysts are closely monitoring the situation, as the developments could have a lasting impact on the coalition's future.

Pawan Kalyan, who leads the Jana Sena Party, had also skipped a recent Cabinet meeting, further fuelling speculation about his political priorities. His repeated absence from key government meetings has become a topic of intense discussion

THE RETURN OF LINGAMANENI

Power, politics and business in Andhra



Power, politics and business - all come in package in Andhra Pradesh. Dole out your land and assets to political leaders and reap double in coming days. Stay behind politicians and ensure their funding. Sacrifice five years and invest in the future. That is Lingamaneni Ramesh the businessman behind the politics of Andhra Pradesh.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
 With the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) back in power, prominent realtor and businessman Lingamaneni Ramesh has once again emerged as a key player in Andhra Pradesh's political and business landscape. Known for his close ties with TDP supremo and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Lingamaneni's resurgence signals a shift in fortunes, both for himself and for the companies linked to him. It is learnt that Ramesh's influence extends beyond his business ventures. His association with Naidu has been long established, with the latter residing in a bungalow owned by Lingamaneni along the Krishna River. It is rumoured that his reach, however, is not limited to TDP circles. He reportedly maintains strong connections with the Jana Sena Party (JSP), particularly with its chief Pawan Kalyan and senior leader Nandendla Manohar. Speculation is rife that his clout played a role in JSP securing prime land in Mangalagiri at a significantly discounted price for its party office. However, his fortunes took a hit during the tenure of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government targeted Lingamaneni's business interests, embroiling him in legal battles ranging from allegations of illegal construction along the Krishna riverbank to the Amaravati Inner Ring Road scam. The changed political climate saw his influence wane, as the State government pursued multiple cases against him, severely impacting his real estate empire.
 Continued on Page 2

3-month poultry shutdown in WG

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM
 The AVN Influenza (bird flu), which led to the deaths of thousands of poultry chickens in East Godavari district, has now spread to neighbouring West Godavari district. Samples from Krishnanandam Poultry Farm in Velpuru village, Tanuku mandal, have tested positive for the virus. West Godavari Collector Nagarani held an emergency meeting on Tuesday with officials from various departments at Peddaamiram to review the outbreak and issued precautionary measures. She stated that Krishnanandam Poultry Farm had been identified as



the infection source, with a 1-km radius around it declared as an infection zone. **Shops, poultry transport banned** "All chicken and egg shops within this area have been ordered to

close. The transportation of chickens and eggs within and outside the infected and warning zones (0-10 km) has been completely banned," the Collector announced.
 Continued on Page 2

Medico found dead in hostel room

PNS ■ KAKINADA
 A second-year MBBS student at Rangaraya Medical College, Kakinada, was found hanging from the ceiling fan in his hostel room early Tuesday morning. The student was identified as Ravuru Sairam (22). His hostel mates alerted the authorities. He was immediately taken to a local hospital, where he was declared dead. Police have registered a case and shifted the body to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for postmortem examination. The reason behind this extreme step is yet to be determined, police said.

Amaravati gets Rs 11K cr HUDCO loan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
 The Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) has sanctioned Rs 11,000 crore for the construction of Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh. HUDCO officials handed over the loan sanction documents to CRDA Commissioner Kannababu on Tuesday. They have asked the CRDA to complete the loan agreement process within four months. It may be recalled that HUDCO's governing body recently approved the loan during a meeting held in Mumbai. The Chandrababu Naidu-led coalition government announced the construction of Amaravati soon after



coming to power in 2024. The state government is making all efforts to mobilise funds for the capital city's development.

7 TG pilgrims returning from Kumbh Mela killed in accident



PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 A tense situation prevailed in Nacharam as seven persons returning from the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh Mela to Hyderabad were killed when their mini-bus collided with a truck in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district on Tuesday morning. According to family members, a group of nine pilgrims had hired a mini-bus from Nacharam and left for the Kumbh Mela on Saturday. Most of them were from the same colony, with two or three mutual friends joining the trip. They had taken a holy dip at Triveni Sangam on Monday, but due to heavy crowds, they cancelled their planned visits to other places and decided to return home earlier than scheduled. A team from Nacharam Police has been visiting the victims' houses, consoling their families, and coordinating with the Jabalpur Police to arrange for the transportation of the deceased, said DCP Malkajgiri PV Padmaja. Continued on Page 2

AP secures Rs 2,459 crore in aerospace, defence investments

PNS ■ BENGALURU/VIJAYAWADA
 The Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB) has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with four major aerospace and defence companies at AeroIndia 2025. These agreements represent a combined investment of Rs 2,458.84 crore and are projected to create over 8,000 direct and indirect jobs. The four companies partnering with the State are Sagar Defence Engineering Pvt Ltd (specialising in maritime defence and unmanned surface vehicles), HFCL (a defence manufacturer), Media Matrix Worldwide Limited, and a company specialising in space technology components. The MoUs were signed in the presence of Andhra Pradesh



Industries & Commerce and Food Processing Minister, TG Bharath, along with Dr. N Yuvaraj, Secretary to the Government, Industries & Commerce and Food Processing Department, ITE&C, Infrastructure and Investment, senior officials from the state government, and representatives from the participating companies.
 Continued on Page 2

Gladiolus offers a new economic hope for tribal farmers

PNS ■ PADERU
 In the misty high-altitude regions of Chintapalle in the Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district, a new bloom is offering fresh economic possibilities for tribal farmers. The successful cultivation of gladiolus, a vibrant cut flower, has sparked interest among agricultural experts and local communities alike, raising hopes for a lucrative floriculture industry in the region. This development, announced by A Appalaswamy Babu, Assistant Director of the Regional Agriculture Research Station (RARS), Chintapalle, signals a potential shift in livelihood opportunities for tribal farmers. The high-altitude and tribal (HAT) zone of the ASR district, with its unique agro-climatic conditions, is highly suitable for cultivating exotic and specialty flowers like gladiolus," said Babu. He confirmed that RARS has successfully grown the flower on its



premises, paving the way for wider adoption. Gladiolus, introduced to India by the British in the 17th century, is widely grown in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh. Its intro-

duction to Chintapalle marks an expansion of its cultivation footprint, opening up a new income source for small-scale farmers. Gladiolus, introduced to India by the British in the 17th century, is widely grown in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh. Its intro-

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A decade in power is a 'litmus test' for all parties

Rise and fall are common in politics. But how can one gauge the anti-incumbency in the minds of the electorate? It's natural for all political parties to face some anti-incumbency. There is no guarantee that the electorate will respond positively even if a party delivers good governance. One can conclude that a government would face anti-incumbency if it is in power for a decade. There are many examples for this. The Assembly elections in Delhi once again proved that a party would lose power if it rules for a decade. The BJP emerged victorious in Delhi after 27 years. Right from the beginning, elections in Delhi have been a matter of prestige for the BJP. The BJP lost the Delhi Metropolitan elections in 1982 to the Congress, which was very powerful then under the leadership of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It was

the first defeat of the BJP after its launch on April 6, 1980. (Before 1980, it was Jana Sangh which had become a part of the Janata Party during the 1977 general elections). BJP president Vajpayee had to quit taking moral responsibility for the Delhi defeat. The BJP managed to come to power in the Delhi Assembly polls in 1993. But it couldn't leave its imprint on Delhi although it was claiming to be a party with a difference under LK Advani who took over in 1986. During its five-year rule in Delhi the BJP had three Chief Ministers (Madanlal Khurana, Sahib Singh Verma and Sushma Swaraj). The BJP had been criticising the Congress for changing CMs like playing cards. But eventually the BJP had to follow Congress style by changing its CMs. Later, the BJP made the same mistake in Madhya

The AAP tasted defeat as the public was angry with its policies, particularly its alleged involvement in the liquor scam due to which both the CM and the Deputy CM had to go to jail. The Delhi Assembly elections can be interpreted as a 'Capital Gain' for the BJP and a 'Capital Punishment' for the AAP.

Pradesh where it had three Chief Ministers (Uma Bharati, Babulal Gour and Sivaraj Singh Chouhan). After that, the BJP stopped criticising the Congress for changing CMs frequently. The BJP suffered continuous setbacks when the Congress registered a hat-trick win in Delhi during Sheila Dixit's tenure. After that, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) stormed into power pushing the BJP out. The BJP had to spend an agonising 10 years of AAP rule headed by Arvind Kejriwal who handed

over Delhi to his colleague Aatishi in the end. Delhi, which has the maximum literacy rate in the country, has rejected AAP now and has voted for the BJP. The double-engine sarkar has become a reality in Delhi. The BJP may not change the CM this time. It may try to strengthen the BJP in Punjab where the AAP is ruling while deciding the Delhi CM. The AAP tasted defeat as the public was angry with its policies, particularly its alleged involvement in the liquor scam



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due to which both the CM and the Deputy CM had to go to jail. The Delhi Assembly elections can be interpreted as a 'Capital Gain' for the BJP and a 'Capital Punishment' for the AAP. Decade-old rule has toppled other parties too from power. In United Andhra Pradesh, the TDP lost power to the Congress after winning two consecutive terms in 1983 and in the 1985

mid-term polls. TDP's founder president NT Rama Rao won on both occasions. After two years of winning the 1985 polls, the TDP faced heat in the 1987 municipal polls and almost half the municipal bodies went to the Congress. Ultimately, the TDP lost power in the 1989 elections. The murder of Congress legislator Vangaveeti Mohana Ranga Rao (Vijayawada East) on December 26, 1988, turned the tide in Congress's favour. The TDP tasted defeat once again after its decade-long rule from 1994 to 2004. It came to power under NTR's leadership in 1994 but he was dethroned in an internal revolt led by N Chandrababu Naidu after eight months. CBN managed to retain power in 1999 after a tie-up with the BJP. Finally, he lost power in 2004 to the Congress led by Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy who retained power in 2009. After YSR's death in a helicopter crash on September 2, 2009,

the Congress ruled United AP with Chief Ministers K Rosaiah and N Kiran Kumar Reddy. The bifurcation of AP in 2014 left the Congress with no future in residual AP. It may be mentioned here that the Congress has been experiencing crushing defeats in both Delhi and AP. The Congress managed to bury itself in AP after it decided to bifurcate United AP. Thus the Congress deceived the people of Andhra who had given it two terms at the Centre by giving it 30 plus LS seats in the 2004 and 2009 LS polls. In Telangana, there was a positive vote for the TRS (later BRS) in the 2014 elections. The people voted for the TRS in the 2018 elections believing TRS supremo K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) who portrayed the Congress as an enemy of Telangana. But finally anti-incumbency ended BRS rule in TG in 2023. The Congress which gave statehood to Telangana, bagged power after

being in the opposition for 10 years. The TRS had promised to make a Dalit the first Chief Minister of Telangana but backtracked. The BRS admin crashed due to public discontent on many issues including family rule. In most cases, 10 years is enough time for people to develop anti-incumbency. But there are exceptional cases where some rulers managed to survive after a decade in power. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath suffered heavy losses in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections when the BJP lost 40 LS seats and its LS majority. The continuous rule of Naveen Patnaik in Odisha, Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal and that of the BJP in Gujarat are exceptions to this general rule. Finally, it can be said that if any party rules continuously for a decade it can land in trouble. A decade's rule can be considered the 'litmus test' for political parties.

No disruptions for devotees travelling to Srisailem: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed the Forest Department to ensure that devotees travelling to the Srisailem temple via the forest route do not face any difficulties. He also instructed officials to extend full cooperation for road repairs in forest areas. During a review meeting with ministers and secretaries at the State Secretariat on Tuesday, Special Chief Secretary (Forest) G. Ananta Ramu presented a report on the department's progress till January this financial year and

the action plan for the remaining two months. Endowments Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy informed the Chief Minister that several 'Shaiva' pilgrim sites are located within forest areas and that devotees visiting these temples are facing



inconveniences due to Forest Department regulations. Taking serious note of the issue, the Chief Minister instructed field-level officials to ensure that devotees do not face any disruptions. CM Naidu also emphasised the need to expand greenery to make Andhra Pradesh a pollution-free state. He urged the Municipal and

Urban Development Departments to adopt the best pollution control practices followed in other states. He further instructed the Forest Department to utilise NREGS funds for large-scale contour trench construction in forest areas. The Chief Minister noted that Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan is actively working on bringing 'Kumki' elephants from Karnataka to tackle the elephant menace in certain parts of the state. He directed officials to expedite the process with full cooperation.

3 held for rape of student

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Three men were arrested for allegedly raping and blackmailing a 19-year-old engineering student in Paritala village, NTR district, police said on Tuesday. The accused - Hussain, Prabhu, and Sidhu - were recently arrested and are currently on remand at Nellore Central Jail, police added. "Hussain and the girl were in a relationship. When she visited Hussain at his home, Sidhu sexually assaulted her while Hussain and Prabhu recorded the act," police said. Eventually, Hussain and Prabhu began blackmailing the student, threatening to leak the explicit video unless she complied with their demands.

Job scams trap Vizag youth abroad

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Many job seekers from Visakhapatnam are falling prey to fraudulent overseas job agencies, ending up stranded in foreign countries without employment or valid visas. These agencies lure aspirants with false promises, charge hefty fees, and send them abroad on visiting visas, leaving them with no legal options. Scam operations are widespread in areas like Gajuwaka, Malkapuram, Autonagar, Dwarakanagar, Siripuram, and Marripalem. Police reports indicate that nearly 50 training institutes falsely claim to offer high-paying jobs, especially in Dubai and Singapore, for professionals like welding and fire safety. Many unemployed youths, including those without degrees, pay large sums without verifying the agency's credentials. Once abroad, job seekers face



harsh realities. Some are told they failed mandatory tests and are offered low-paying jobs, while others are forced to work illegally. When they try to return, the agencies become unresponsive, often withholding passports and tickets. In a recent case, five men from Visakhapatnam—Geddada Lokesh, Poluparthi Lakshmana Rao, Gara Rajesh, Paila Ramaswamy, and Kalla Venkata Rao—paid Rs 2-3 lakh each for welding jobs in Sharjah. Sent on visiting visas, they were later offered helper positions after allegedly failing skill tests. When they refused, the agent promised work visas but later disappeared, leaving them stranded. After 20 days, they sought help from Visakhapatnam Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi, whose intervention ensured their safe return. Commissioner Bagchi has urged job seekers to verify agencies through government portals and seek testimonials from past candidates. He also encouraged reporting suspicious agencies to the police. To tackle the growing fraud, Visakhapatnam police are considering forming a regulatory committee, possibly involving Andhra University faculty, to monitor such agencies. Authorities are advising job seekers to thoroughly check credentials before pursuing overseas opportunities.

CM Naidu condemns attack on Chilkur temple priest

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday condemned the alleged attack on Chilkur Balaji Temple priest C S Rangarajan, which took place near Hyderabad. The attack was reportedly carried out by a mob attempting to establish 'Ram Rajya'. "I condemn the heinous incident involving C S Rangarajan Garu, the Chief Priest of Chilkur Balaji Temple. In a civilised society, there must always be room for respectful dialogue and differences of opinion," Naidu said in a post on 'X'. The CM emphasised that violence has no place in society and must be unequivocally rejected.

In his complaint to the police, Rangarajan stated that on February 7, about 20 people barged into his house in Chilkur, Rangareddy district, near the temple premises, and 'manhandled' him for refusing to cooperate with them in fulfilling their agenda.

Midday meal quality declines, alleges YSRCP student wing

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP Student Wing State working president Ravi Chandra has criticised the deteriorating quality of midday meals in government schools, alleging that students are struggling to consume the substandard food being served. Holding Education Minister Nara Lokesh responsible, he demanded his resignation, accusing him of neglecting the education department while interfering

in other ministries as a "shadow Chief Minister." Ravi Chandra questioned why officials were failing to ensure proper funding and quality meals, leading to nearly half of the students avoiding midday meals due to their poor quality. He pointed out that under former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, the "Goru Muddha" scheme provided nutritious meals with strict quality control. However, he alleged that the current coalition govern-

ment has turned the scheme into a failure, forcing children to eat substandard food, including pest-infested rice. He remarked that while the government was quick to rename the scheme after Dokka Seethamma, it has failed to maintain meal quality. Ravi Chandra warned that if immediate corrective measures are not taken, the YSRCP will launch large-scale protests demanding accountability.

YSRCP to raise AP issues in Parl, slams TDP for false charges

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Parliamentary Party has announced that it will raise key State issues in both Houses of Parliament while condemning the TDP for making false allegations against its leadership. Addressing the media on Tuesday, Parliamentary Party Leader YV Subba Reddy, P Mithun Reddy, and others stated that they would focus on Polavaram, Vizag Steel Plant (VSP), and pending provisions under the State Reorganisation Act. However, they accused TDP members of using Parliament to defame the YSRCP leadership instead of advocating for State interests. "We will only raise issues

concerning the State's welfare, as directed by our Party President YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. Parliament is a platform for discussing the State's needs, not for political mudslinging," they said. They criticised the TDP for allegedly compromising on Polavaram, reducing the project's height from 45.7 metres to 41 metres, and settling for a Rs 30,000 crore aid. They claimed that lowering the height would affect drinking water supply to North Andhra and defeat the project's purpose. They further alleged that by accepting the Centre's terms, the State has lost around Rs 27,000 crore, just as Chandrababu Naidu had earlier sacrificed Special Category Status for a Special

Package. They also claimed that the TDP compromised on Rs 17,000 crore for Amaravati. On Vizag Steel Plant (VSP), they pointed out that despite a revival package, employees are not receiving full salaries. They vowed to demand a categorical assurance that VSP will not be privatised and that employees will be paid on time. They also expressed concerns over the split of Waltair Division in the proposed Special Railway Zone. Slamming the TDP's 16 MPs, they said their presence in the Lok Sabha has not translated into tangible benefits for Andhra Pradesh, while Bihar secured major allocations in the Union Budget. They also raised concerns about 75,000 new medical seats announced by the Centre, alleging

that the Chandrababu Naidu government is handing over new medical colleges to private players, making medical education unaffordable for many students. On the Minimum Support Price (MSP) issue, they said that farmers cultivating chilli, groundnut, and other crops in Guntur and Kurnool are suffering due to a lack of support, unlike during YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure, when MSP was ensured. Condemning the TDP MPs' behaviour, they accused them of using Parliament to target the YSRCP leadership instead of focusing on State welfare. MPs Avinash Reddy, Guru Murthy, P Subhashchandra Bose, Golla Babu Rao, and Meda Raghunath Reddy also addressed the media.

CM stresses cohesive...

Continued from Page 1

Naidu instructed officials to expedite file clearances in the e-office system and stressed the importance of efficiency in government operations. He called upon departmental heads to identify bottlenecks in file processing and resolve delays promptly. He made it clear that non-financial files should never be left pending, while budget-related matters should be swiftly reviewed for financial approvals. To track economic progress, the Chief Minister announced the establishment of a Vision Monitoring Unit at the state level, with districts preparing constituency-level plans. He directed district administrations to identify key projects contributing to

GSDP growth, which will be tracked through a dedicated portal. He also stated that department-wise GSDP mapping will be conducted, setting a target of 15.76 per cent overall growth. Naidu instructed officials to ensure quality service delivery through technological touchpoints and QR codes to assess public satisfaction with key programmes such as pension distribution, Anna Canteens, paddy procurement, temple services, and government hospital services. He further directed officials to extend all government services through the recently launched WhatsApp governance platform, Mana Mitra, enabling citizens to access official documents through the messaging app.

Power, politics,...

Continued from Page 1

Now, with the TDP-led coalition at the helm, Lingamaneni appears to be regaining lost ground. His re-emergence seems to have been reflected in the recent decisions of the State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB), chaired by Chief Minister Naidu, where multiple high-value projects were approved - some of which are believed to have ties to Lingamaneni's business network. It is reliably learnt that one such project is the Rs 1,651 crore Ecoren Energy India venture in Anantapur. The company's directors, Lakshmi Prasad Yerneni and Pallavi Chanamolu are reportedly close associates of Lingamaneni, with Yerneni said to be directly related to him. Adding to the speculation, Kakarla Vinay, a former additional director at Ecoren Energy India, is now learnt to have aligned himself with

multiple firms under the Lingamaneni Group. His prior involvement with Kadapa Energy Project Private Limited, which recently secured a significant project, further strengthens the perception of a well-connected business ecosystem benefitting from the change in governance. This growing influence has sparked concerns, particularly within the power sector, where industry experts question the financial stability of companies being awarded large-scale contracts. Critics argue that certain entities, often linked to influential figures, obtain government approvals only to sell off the projects later at a profit, leveraging the State's backing for financial gains. With murmurs of a quid pro quo arrangement gaining traction, the key question remains: Is Lingamaneni merely a businessman making the most of a favourable political climate, or is there a deeper nexus at play? As the TDP government steers its development agenda, scrutiny over its decisions will only intensify, especially when the same names keep surfacing in lucrative State-backed projects.

AP secures...

Continued from Page 1

These investments underscore Andhra Pradesh's ambition to become India's leading aerospace and defence manufacturing hub. The state's pro-business policies, world-class infrastructure, and strategic location are attracting major players in the sector. These partnerships are expected to boost technological progress, encourage innovation, and build a strong industrial base, positioning Andhra Pradesh as a key contributor to India's growing aerospace and defence industry.

7 TG pilgrims returning...

Continued from Page 1

The accident occurred at around 8:30 am near Sihora town, approximately 65 km from Jabalpur. Families were informed of the tragedy by one of the survivors around 10am, and since then, they have been desperately trying to contact their loved ones. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy responds

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy expressed deep shock over the tragic incident. Upon learning that residents of Nacharam, Hyderabad, were among the victims, he immediately instructed officials to ensure the best possible medical care for the injured and provide all necessary relief measures. According to Nacharam Police, the deceased are

Rompally Ravi Kumar (59), Bowrampet Santhosh Kumar, Somavaram Shashikanth (39), Golconda Anand Kumar, Raju (38) the driver of the mini bus, Mallareddy (60) (RSS president Nacharam) and Prasad (50). Sunkuju Naveena Chary and Sriram Balakrishna (63) are undergoing treatment in Government Medical Hospital at Jabalpur.

3-month poultry shutdown in...

Continued from Page 1

"All poultry chickens in the infection zone will be culled and buried. Poultry farms in the infection zone will remain closed for three months, while the 1-10 km radius has been declared a surveillance zone," she added. The surveillance zone covers 17 villages, including Komaravaram, Attili, Kavalipuram, Iyer Cheruvu,

Goteru, Mandapaka, Iragavaram, Thethali, Relangi Gummampadu, Pali, Origedu, Ballipadu, Tanuku, Mallipadu, and Arjunidipalem. Monitoring and sanitation measures All poultry farms in the surveillance zone will be monitored for three weeks. Check posts have been set up at Velpuru Highway, Velpuru Railway Gate, Attili, Veerabhadrapuram, Mallipudi,

and Kothapadu to prevent unauthorised transport of poultry products. The Collector informed that 20 rapid response teams, comprising veterinary doctors and other staff, have been deployed for culling and disposal. The District Panchayat Officer and municipal commissioners have been directed to strictly implement sanitation and disposal procedures. She added that arrangements

had been made for JCBs, lime, and bleaching powder in the red zone areas, while the police department has been tasked with maintaining law and order. "The DMHO has been instructed to provide antiviral medicines to rapid response teams, and medical staff will monitor the health of all personnel involved in culling operations," the Collector asserted.

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Special Holy Mass caps Mary Matha Fest

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 101st Gunadala Mary Festival concluded peacefully on Sunday after three days of celebrations. Vijayawada Catholic Diocese Bishop T Joseph Rajarao presided over the closing ceremony, emphasising the importance of spiritual transformation and renewal for devotees.

In his message to the gathered faithful, Bishop Raja Eao spoke about Mother Mary and the blessings she bestows upon those who visit Gunadala Hill. He explained the significance of the Cross as a symbol of God's power and guidance towards holiness, reiterating the Catholic Church's focus on the path of Jesus Christ. He also noted Pope Francis's declaration of 2025 as a Jubilee Year and prayed for the timely completion of the new century Mother



Mary Church currently under construction near Gunadala.

The Bishop also commemorated the Universal Day for the Sick, established by Pope John Paul II 33 years ago on February 11th, urging compassion and care for the ill.

A special Holy Mass was conducted on a decorated altar at the Bishop Grassi High School

grounds by Bishop Rajarao, along with Guntur Catholic Bishop Chinnabattina Bhagayya, Italian retired bishop Cesare Bonaventure, Monsignor Fr Muvvala Prasad, Vicar General Fr Meshapam Gabriel, Fr Thota Sunil Raju, Fr Telagathoti Paul, and other diocesan priests.

Following the prayer service, Bishop Rajarao, Monsignor Fr Muvvala Prasad, and other diocesan leaders distributed blessings to the devotees. The book "Divyapuja Bali," authored by Fr B John, was also released by church leaders.

The final day of the festival featured a variety of cultural programs that entertained and engaged the attendees.

Follow traffic rules strictly, public urged

Collector, VMC Commissioner flag off 'Road Safety Walkathon'



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In observance of the 36th National Road Safety Month, which runs from January 16 to February 15, the NTR District Transport Department conducted a special event titled 'Road Safety Walkathon' at the East-Street adjacent to the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada on Tuesday. The event was inaugurated by NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha and Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra.

The walkathon commenced at East Street, passed via Mahatma Gandhi Road, and concluded at Benz Circle. Students of PB Siddhartha Arts & Science College, Siddhartha Mahila Kalasala, SRR & CVR Government Degree College, NSS volunteers, and Transport Department officials and staff enthusiastically participated in the walkathon.

Addressing the gathering, the District Collector said that the country's future is in the hands of the youths. He emphasised that everyone should follow traffic rules strictly. The youth should take a step towards a safe society. He underlined the importance of road safety to realise the Swarnandhra@2047 vision. "Everyone should use roads with utmost care to avoid road accidents," he added.

He stated that around 400 people died in road accidents last year. Fifty per cent of them



were pedestrians. He emphasised the importance of road safety. "If we use roads safely, the other people will follow. Avoid riding two-wheelers without wearing helmet," he added.

Collector Lakshmisha warned that officials will take stringent action against those who violate road safety rules. He also appreciated the public and various government department staff, APNGOs and private organisations for their involvement in ensuring road safety.

The VMC Commissioner said that everyone should strictly follow rules to ensure that they return home as safely as they left home. "The VMC is taking necessary steps towards road safety and improved road engineering," he said.

Deputy Transport Commissioner (DTC) A Mohan said that on the occa-



sion of Road Safety Month, the department is conducting many awareness meetings and rallies.

APNGO president KV Siva Reddy, general secretary A Vidyasagar, Transport Department Employees

Association leaders M Raja Babu and Dr Kolleti Ramesh, RTOs R Praveen and K Venkateswara Rao, MVIs A Udaya Siva Prasad, Y Nagawara Rao, K Sivarama Godes, and others were present.

SAAP chief, MP meet Union Sports Minister

Seek Central support for sports infrastructure development



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) Chairman Animini Ravi Naidu, Amalapuram MP and member of the Parliamentary Sports Committee GM Harish Balayogi, and Srikalahasti MLA Bojjala Sudheer Reddy met Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday to discuss advancements in sports infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh. They presented a memorandum seeking support from the Central government for various initiatives. The meeting took place at Parliament House in New Delhi.

The SAAP Chairman requested financial assistance for the development of an athletic track, a grass football field, and both indoor and outdoor facilities at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium in Vijayawada. He further proposed the establishment of a National Centre of Excellence

for Canoeing, Kayaking, and Wrestling in Tirupati.

Moreover, he sought re-evaluation of earlier proposals to create National Centres of Sports Excellence at Acharya Nagarjuna University in Guntur and in Kakinada, intending to improve sports facilities throughout the state. He sought the release of Rs.237 crore from Khelo India funds to enhance sports infrastructure across Andhra Pradesh.

MP Harish Balayogi emphasised the need for funds through the Khelo India programme to establish a Tribal Sports School in Vizianagaram. He also highlighted the dilapidated state of youth hostels across the State's 26 districts and urged the Central government to take steps to construct new facilities, suggesting that the Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK) be instructed accordingly.

In response, Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya assured that appropriate measures would be taken promptly.

IMFR, Meghalaya Govt sign MoU to enhance data systems

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA/SRI CITY

In a significant move to advance data-driven governance, the Institute for Financial Management and Research (IFMR) and the Government of Meghalaya have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at enhancing data systems, fostering innovation, and driving more effective policy implementation. The MoU was signed by Dr Sampath Kumar, Principal Secretary and Development Commissioner, Government of Meghalaya, and Kapil Viswanathan, president of IFMR. In her inaugural address, Professor Nirmala Rao, Vice-Chancellor of Krea University, emphasised: "Synergy is a unique platform for the academic community to engage, debate, and critically analyse some of the most pressing issues in development, focusing on solutions and action."

A key highlight of the event

was the inaugural N Vaghul Memorial Lecture, which honoured the legacy of the late Narayanan Vaghul. Delivering the lecture, S Krishnan, Secretary of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, discussed the potential of artificial intelligence (AI), highlighting how inclusive AI solutions can be developed by leveraging India's linguistic and cultural diversity.

The event also featured a keynote lecture by Dr Karthik Muralidharan, Tata Chancellor's Professor of Economics at UC San Diego, along with a panel discussion on enhancing the State's capacity. Panellists included Dr Sampath Kumar, Government of Meghalaya; Arti Ahuja, Former Secretary of the Ministry of Labour & Employment; Dr Veena Srinivasan, Executive Director of WELL Labs; Dr Muralidharan; and Deepthi Reddy, Chief of Women Empowerment at Reliance Foundation.

MoU between SHRI, SRM-AP opens new pathways

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an effort towards enhancing academic and research capabilities, SRM University-AP and Samistha Hospital and Research Institute (SHRI) formalised an understanding on scientific cooperation in biological sciences and other areas of mutual interest. The MoU was signed by Dr R Premkumar, Registrar, SRM University, and Dr Kalyan Chakravarthy, Managing Director, Samistha Hospital and Research Institute, Guntur.

The MoU will open pathways for collaborative opportunities in research and academics, fostering joint research projects and funding possibilities, while also emphasising the importance of



skill development through seminars organised by both the institutions. Registrar Dr R Premkumar highlighted the significance of this partnership and the potential outcomes of the joint venture. Dr Sutharsan Govindarajan thanked the team from Samistha Hospitals and

Research Centre for joining hands and taking the phage therapy from bench to bedside.

Dr Sandeep, Dr Ravi Teja, Dr Varun, Dr Ramakrishna, and Dr Gnana Prakash from SHRI; Prof. CV Tomy, Dean-School of Engineering and Sciences; Prof. Ranjith Thapa, Dean-Research;

Prof Jayaseelan Murugaiyan, Associate Dean-Sciences (Admission Outreach and Research Collaborations); and Dr Sutharsan Govindarajan, Dr Anil K Suresh, and Dr Pratik Gupta, Assistant Professors at the Department of Biological Sciences, were present.

Kanaka Durga Temple offers services through WhatsApp

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam, located on Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada, now offers WhatsApp services for booking darshan and pujas as well as for making donations. The State government recently introduced the WhatsApp number 9552300009, enabling the temple to provide its services through the platform.

In a press release, the Executive Officer (EO) of the Durga Temple, K Ramachandra Mohan, stated that these services comple-

ment the existing offerings available on the temple's website and at the Arjitha Seva Counter. Furthermore, these services can also be accessed via the State government's WhatsApp service.

He encouraged devotees to initiate contact by sending a WhatsApp message with the word 'Hi' to 9552300009 to access the temple's services.

Following this, they can select the desired service option for temple bookings, complete the required details, and obtain tickets upon finalising their payments.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The government is implementing new strategies to optimise hilltop land utilisation in Visakhapatnam, aiming to establish it as a key IT hub. Unlike Mumbai, where hilltop development is well utilised, Visakhapatnam has significant untapped potential. Current land allocation methods have resulted in underutilised plots and limited employment opportunities, prompting fresh incentives and policies.

A major revision in the IT policy encourages existing firms to expand their infrastructure. Companies adding floors to existing buildings will receive subsidies, and up to 33 per cent of allotted land can be converted for commercial use. These measures aim to boost investment and create a

Visakhapatnam's hilltop land set for IT boom

Revised IT policy, strategic land utilisation, and major corporate interest drive Vizag's transformation into a key technology hub

dynamic business ecosystem. The demand for government land has surged since the coalition government took office, with major IT and tourism players expressing interest. Google plans a Data Centre and office, Infosys seeks land for a full-fledged campus, and TCS is exploring sites for a permanent facility. Other companies also conveyed expansion plans at a recent industry conference.

To manage this interest, the government has directed dis-

trict authorities to draft a comprehensive hilltop land utilisation plan. A team from the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) and Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has been sent to Mumbai to study successful hilltop development models.

The Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) has developed four hills between Madhurawada and Rushikonda

into IT economic zones, boosting industry growth and employment. Hill No. 1 hosts Miracle Company and Fluent Grid (1,000 employees), while Hill No. 2 (25 acres) houses 14 firms, including Symbiosis Technologies and SoftSol (5,000 employees). Hill No. 3 (90 acres) accommodates Wipro, E Centric, Genosoft, and Millennium Towers (4,000 employees). Hill No. 4 (276.77 acres) is dedicated to the Adani Data Centre. These zones drive investment, technological



advancement, and job creation in the region.

Additionally, a 170-acre site in Kapuluppada remains unallocated. The government is reviewing previous land allocations, including those to Chinajiyar Swamy and Sharada Peetha, to ensure better planning and development.

O. Nareskumar, vice-president of the Rushikonda IT Park Association, praised the new IT policy, citing the Rs 2,000 per sq. ft. subsidy for companies expanding beyond their initial allocations. While residential and commercial projects are allowed, they won't qualify for subsidies. With a focus on efficient land use and job creation, these initiatives aim to transform Visakhapatnam into a premier IT hub, fostering investment and technological growth.

Steps taken to check bird flu spread in EG



PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector P. Prashanthi has assured that all necessary precautions have been taken to prevent the spread of avian influenza in Peravali mandal. During a visit to the affected areas in Kanuru Agraharam village on Tuesday, the Collector, accompanied by revenue, police, health, animal husbandry, and panchayat raj officials, reviewed the containment measures.

She stated that as soon as the virus was detected, the entire district was put on alert and steps were taken as per protocol. Three poultry farms in the village were sanitised, and all dead chickens were disinfected. A one-kilometre radius has been declared a restricted zone, preventing the movement of birds and eggs from the farms.

Health camps are being organised in 34 villages, and the Animal Husbandry Department is administering vaccines to livestock to prevent further spread. The Collector clarified that there have been no reports of bird-

Virus spreads to NTR district

Meanwhile, the ANV Influenza (bird flu) virus has spread to NTR district, with officials confirming the death of 4,000 chicks.

Officials stated that around 4,000 chicks have perished over the past three days at Anummolanka village in Gampalagudem mandal. Sources indicated that poultry farms in the Tiruvuru region

and surrounding areas have also reported the death of thousands of chicks in recent days. "Over 4,000 chicks have died due to suspected ANV Influenza at a poultry farm in Anummolanka village, Gampalagudem mandal, during the last three days," confirmed an official from the Animal Husbandry Department.

to-human transmission so far. As a precaution, the supply of eggs to Anganwadi centres and schools has been suspended for a week. A surveillance zone has been set up within a 10-km radius of the affected area, and officials are identifying poultry workers for swab tests to check for infections. Permission from the State Government is required to collect these samples and send them to a laboratory in Kakinada for analysis.

Medical and health teams are conducting door-to-door surveys within a one-km

radius to identify any symptomatic cases. Medical camps have been set up in villages near Primary Health Centres in Kanuru, Samisragudem, Markondapadu, Peravali, Undrajavaram, Velivenu, and Sitanagaram mandals. A total of 64 teams, including ASHA workers, ANMs, and Community Health Officers, have been deployed for surveillance.

RDO Rani Sushmita, DMHO Dr K. Venkateswara Rao, and Animal Husbandry Officer T. Srinivas Rao accompanied the Collector during the visit.

6-member gang of notorious chain snatchers nabbed

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

The police arrested a six-member interstate notorious chain snatching gang and recovered gold jewellery worth Rs 40 lakh.

Informing this to the media here on Tuesday, SP D Narasimha Kishore said a series of chain snatching incidents took place in East Godavari district at various places.

The SP said four special police teams were formed to arrest the chain snatchers. The police patrolling was intensified and night patrolling teams were also set up to prevent chain snatchings.

The police arrested a six-member chain-snatching gang at Kateru Gaman Bridge in the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border area. The gang committed chain snatching in Telangana, Odisha, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh



and AP states. The leaders of the chain snatching gang, Jaheer Hussain and Kishmat Ali were the most wanted criminals in various states. The

police teams used advanced technology and electronic gadgets to arrest the notorious gang. The police recovered gold jewellery weighing 50 surgeons worth Rs 50 lakh.

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11 nominations rejected, 43 accepted for MLC polls

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector and Election Officer K. Vetri Selvi scrutinised the nominations filed for the MLC elections on Tuesday and rejected 11 nominations on technical grounds. However, 43 nominations were accepted.

The scrutiny process was conducted in the presence of candidates, with Election Observer K. Sunita also reviewing the nomination papers.

The nominations of Rayudu Srinivas, Shettibattula Rajababu, Bhavana Dhanyalakshmi, Kondapalli Srinivas, Mohammed Ali Jam



Sheed, D.K.V. Prakash, Korusu Rajakirti, Merla Srivani, Jeevadeva Dayakar Khandavalli, Padamuthy Prapat of the National Navakranti Party, and Neetipudi Ramakrishna of the Republican Party of India—who had filed as independent candidates—were rejected due to invalid nomination papers.



Hospitals in the Arilova Health city

Concerns rise over 'exploitation of patients' in Arilova Health City

Residents seek action as private hospitals accused of overcharging and neglect

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Serious concerns are mounting over alleged exploitation of patients at private hospitals in Arilova Health City. Established in 2006 on land subsidised by the Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC), the area was envisioned as a hub for advanced, affordable medical care. However, many now claim that the reality falls far short of this promise.

"It's like they're taking advantage of our desperation," said a resident, whose family member recently underwent surgery at a private hospital in the health city. "We were already worried about our loved one's health, and then we were hit with a bill that was double what we expected. Where are we supposed to go?"

Arilova Health City, home to 18 private hospitals, attracts patients from across northern Andhra Pradesh, as well as neighbouring States like Odisha and Chhattisgarh. Hospitals received land at concessional rates, ranging from Rs 2.4 crore to Rs 4 crore per acre, with the understanding that they would provide affordable healthcare. But the reality on the ground paints a different picture, according to numerous complaints.

"We brought our daughter in with breathing problems," recounted another local resident. "Two days in the hospital cost us Rs 32,000. Insurance covered some, but we still had to pay Rs 20,000 out of pocket. It's just too much." Other

complaints allege hospitals are charging for services not rendered, such as food, further exacerbating the financial burden on patients.

The problems extend beyond inflated bills. "People come from all over, especially Odisha," explained a frequent visitor to the health city. "They wait on the roads, under trees, with no place to even sit. It's inhumane." Despite the influx of patients, designated waiting areas are sorely lacking. Experts suggest a collaboration between hospital managements and the Industrial Area Local Authority (IALA) could address this issue by securing additional land for shelters.

APIIC guidelines for land allocation mandate that hospitals provide affordable healthcare, including free outpatient services to at least 10 per cent of patients, reserving 15 per cent of beds for free treatment of underprivileged patients, and complimentary medical care to students from government Gurukul schools. "These rules are in place for a reason," one local activist stated. "But it seems like some hospitals are ignoring them while still charging exorbitant fees. It's a clear violation of the agreement."

"The situation is prompting calls for immediate government intervention. "The authorities need to step in and enforce the regulations," demanded a concerned citizen. "We need to protect patients from financial exploitation. Affordable healthcare shouldn't be a privilege; it should be a right."

Collector reaffirms Govt's commitment to 1/70 Act

Urges tribal communities to ignore misinformation surrounding the Act

PNS ■ PADERU

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has categorically refuted rumours about the possible repeal of the 1/70 Act, reaffirming the government's steadfast commitment to the legislation. The Land Transfer Regulation Act 1 of 1970, commonly known as the 1/70 Act, prohibits the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals, ensuring the protection of tribal interests. He highlighted Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's dedication to safeguarding tribal rights and laws, urging tribal communities to ignore any misinformation surrounding the Act.



also revealed the establishment of a tribal council within Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) to oversee the protection of tribal rights and laws, and pledged a comprehensive review of pending cases in coordination with tahsildars.

Addressing concerns about tourism development in tribal areas, Minister Sandhyarani clarified that no statements suggesting a repeal of the 1/70 Act had been made. She emphasised the government's focus on sustainable tourism that respects tribal rights. Plans include boosting tribal income by curbing unauthorised encroachments and promoting homestay tourism, aiming to generate employment and economic benefits with minimal investment.

Minister for Tribal, Women, and Child Welfare, Gummadi Sandhya Rani echoed this commitment, announcing the resolution of 600 Land Possession Rights (LPR) cases within the next three to four months. She

Defected MLAs will be defeated: KCR

Says by-polls sure in their constituencies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Reddy (KCR) asserted that holding by-elections in the constituencies represented by MLAs who switched parties are inevitable and added that he is confident that the people of Telangana will teach them a lesson.

Addressing a gathering of BRS workers, he predicted that in Station Ghanpur Kadiyam Srihari will lose and Rajayya will emerge victorious as the MLA. Meanwhile, former f Station Ghanpur and Dharmasagar ZPTC Member Keerthi Venkateshwarulu and several other activists formally joined BRS in KCR's presence. The move is seen as one strengthening the BRS in the region, ahead of electoral battles.

Consolidating the party's base, a large-scale induction programme will be held on February 15 at the Telangana Bhavan in the presence of BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR). Around 1,000 activists from Station Ghanpur are expected to join BRS during the event.



184 kg ganja seized in police raid in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a major crackdown on drug smuggling, the City Task Force (CTF), in coordination with the Gajuwaka police, seized 184 kg of ganja during a raid conducted near Kanithi Road on Tuesday. Eight individuals were apprehended in connection with the case, including seven from Odisha and one from Rajasthan, the police confirmed.

Addressing the media at the police conference hall, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone II) Mary Prasanthi stated that the operation was carried out based on concrete intelligence

inputs. The accused had reportedly procured the contraband from remote regions of Odisha and transported it to Visakhapatnam with the intention of distributing it to local buyers. The timely intervention by law enforcement agencies



prevented the illicit trade from materialising.

DCP Mary Prasanthi emphasised that strict action would be taken against those involved in the illegal transportation and distribution of narcotics. She assured that the police are maintaining a heightened vigilance to curb drug smuggling activities in the city. Authorities have urged the public to report any suspicious activities related to drug trafficking, assuring that informants' identities will be kept confidential. Further investigations are underway to trace potential links to a larger smuggling network.

Couple commit suicide by jumping before moving train

PNS ■ ELURU

A couple died by suicide after jumping in front of a moving train at Ungatur railway station on Tuesday.

The deceased are Venkata Reddy and Vimala Devi, residents of Tallamunurpadu village in Tadepalligudem rural mandal. They travelled to the railway tracks on their two-wheeler late Monday night and then jumped in front of an oncoming train.

Liquor price hike a burden on public: Kakani

PNS ■ NELLORE

Former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy stated that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has once again started burdening the people by increasing liquor prices. Speaking to media here on Tuesday, he said, liquor shops under government control have been handed over to TDP leaders, who have subsequently raised prices to exploit consumers.



the government has hiked rates, benefiting select individuals at the cost of the public.

Instead of ensuring revenue for the state, the TDP leadership is filling its own pockets, and a syndicate of vested interests has come together to exploit liquor consumers. From licensed liquor stores to illegal outlets, commissions are being collected by local TDP leaders, he said.

The liquor price hikes are part of a larger scheme, where commissions worth hundreds of crores are being collected. Massive amounts of cash are being funnelled to Chandrababu Naidu's residence in Undavalli, facilitated by liquor traders who have struck deals with the government. Kakani estimated that nearly Rs. 3,000 crore per year would be funnelled into the pockets of the Chief Minister through these arrangements.

He also raised concerns over the misuse of technology, stating that liquor is now being delivered via WhatsApp, further proving that the government has completely neglected the welfare of the people.

Excise office, wine shops inspected in Prakasam

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Nishant Kumar, Commissioner of Prohibition & Excise, and Rahul Dev Sharma, Director of Enforcement, inspected the Prohibition & Excise Office in Prakasam district, reviewing crime-related records.

The officials then visited the Addanki Excise Station, where they examined station records and inspected the Urvasi Wine Shop in Addanki for potential MRP violations. They instructed the shop to ensure proper display of MRP rates for customers.

They also directed the Circle Inspector to take action against individuals consuming alcohol



in public places. As part of enforcement efforts, they visited the Ongole Depot to verify stock records.

Additionally, Nishant Kumar and Rahul Dev Sharma visited the Prakasam District Police Office and Parade



Grounds to review preparations for an upcoming rally on February 15. The rally aims to raise awareness about the

Navodayam 2.0 programme and the state's initiative to make Andhra Pradesh free from illicit distilled liquor.

ACROSS THE STATES



NEET aspirant found hanging in Kota

An 18-year-old NEET aspirant from Swai Madhopur district hanged himself in his PG room early Tuesday, police said. The youth, Ankush Meena, did not leave behind any message. Police, however, surmised he killed himself over a love affair. According to police, Ankush had been preparing for (NEET-UG) in Kota for over one and a half years and living in a PG room in Pratap Nagar. He was found hanging from a ceiling fan Tuesday morning by a cousin of his who lives in the same neighbourhood. Circle Inspector at Dadabari police Station Menge Lal Yadav said. His body was sent for a postmortem, and the matter is under investigation, with a case lodged under section 194 of BNSS Act, he said. Head Constable Jitendra said a police team was rushed to the PG in Pratap Nagar after a call about suicide. Ankush scored around 480 marks in routine tests at his institute and showed no signs of stress over study, an uncle of his told reporters here outside the mortuary. He also called his father Tuesday around 8 am but did reveal if anything was troubling him, he added. This is the seventh student suicide this year that took place in the city.



Man shot dead by brother over property dispute

A 35-year-old man was shot dead allegedly by his brother over a property dispute in southwest Delhi's Uttam Nagar Area, police said on Tuesday. According to police, they got information on Monday around 10 pm regarding the murder of Dharminder Dalal, a resident of Mataji Village in Uttam Nagar, behind his house. A case under relevant sections was registered at Bindapur police station and an investigation was initiated. During the initial investigation, the police found that there had been a property dispute between two brothers -- Dharminder and Ravinder. The issue was related to the division of rental income, the officer said. Another officer said that the deceased was the youngest of three brothers and was favoured by their father. Police are searching for the accused, he added.



Army captain killed in IED blast in Jammu

Two Army personnel, including a captain, were killed and another was injured when suspected terrorists set off an improvised explosive device (IED) near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Akhnoor sector near here on Tuesday, officials said. This was the third incident of cross-border action by terrorists in the Jammu region in four days. It came a day after the general officer commanding of the Jammu-based White Knight Corps unit of the Army, Lieutenant General Navin Sachdeva, reviewed 'hostile activities' along the LoC in Rajouri district. The Army confirmed the fatalities in the blast and said "own troops are dominating the area and search operations are underway". The officials said the troops were on patrolling duty when they were hit by the powerful explosion near a forward post in the Bhattal area of Akhnoor in Jammu district at around 3:50 pm. The injured personnel were rushed to a hospital where two of them, including the captain, succumbed to their injuries, they said, adding that the condition of the other injured soldier is "out of danger". The White Knight Corps, also known as the XVI Corps, saluted the supreme sacrifice of the two soldiers.

'Work does not disappear due to tech, its nature changes'

PNS ■ PARIS

Allaying concerns about job loss due to artificial intelligence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that work does not disappear due to technology but its nature changes and new types of jobs are created.

Co-chairing the AI Action Summit along with French President Emmanuel Macron here, Modi called for investment in skilling and re-skilling people for an AI-driven future. "Loss of jobs is AI's most feared disruption. But, history has shown that work does not disappear due to technology. Its nature changes and new types of jobs are created. We need to invest in skilling and re-skilling our people for an AI-driven future," he said.

He said AI is writing the code for humanity in this century but it is very different from other technology milestones in human history.

"AI is already re-shaping our polity, our economy, our security and even our society. AI can help transform millions of lives by improving health, education, agriculture and so much more.



"It can help create a world in which the journey to Sustainable Development Goals becomes easier and faster. To do this, we must pool together resources and talent. We must develop open-source systems that enhance trust and transparency," Modi said. He said that India has successfully built a Digital Public

Infrastructure for over 1.4 billion people at a very low cost which is built around an open and accessible network.

"We are developing AI applications for public good. We have one of the world's largest AI talent pools. India is building its own Large Language Model considering our diversity," Modi said.

MODI OFFERS TO HOST NEXT AI ACTION SUMMIT

PARIS: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday offered to host the next AI Action summit in India. In his concluding remarks at the summit which he co-chaired with French President Emmanuel Macron, Modi said that the discussions have clearly brought out that there is "unity in vision and unity in purpose across stakeholders." Observing that the partnership for AI is truly global in nature, Modi said, "To build on the momentum of this Action Summit, India would be happy to host the next Summit." France is hosting the first global AI Action Summit. The Prime Minister also welcomed the decision to set up the 'AI Foundation' and the 'Council for Sustainable AI' at the summit. Modi congratulated France and President Macron for these initiatives and assured him of full support. "We must also make the 'Global Partnership for AI' truly global in nature. It should be more inclusive of the Global South and its priorities, concerns and needs," Modi said.

Maldives an important pillar of our 'Neighbourhood First' policy: Om Birla

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday reaffirmed India's deep-rooted ties with the Maldives, describing the island nation as not just a friendly neighbour but also a key pillar of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy.

Birla made these remarks during bilateral talks with the visiting Maldivian delegation led by Abdul Raheem Abdulla, Speaker of the People's Majlis of Maldives, at Parliament House here.

Birla highlighted the advances made by Parliament of India in its digital transformation with Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance legislative efficiency.

He informed the delegation that the Parliament of India now provides simultaneous interpretation services in 15 regional languages, which will soon be expanded to 22 languages," an official statement said.

Discussing capacity-building initiatives, the Speaker underscored the role of Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for



Democracies (PRIDE) in providing training on parliamentary procedures.

Birla hoped that this visit would open new avenues for collaboration between the legislative institutions of India and the Maldives.

"Speaker of Maldives appreciated the usage of technology, digitalisation work and use of AI by Parliament of India and requested the Speaker to extend technological support to help Maldives to digitise its parliamentary resources.

The Speaker assured him that every possible help would be extended from Parliament of India to Maldives in this regard," the statement added.

Cricket analogy abound in LS, barbs against BJP, Congress traded

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde on Tuesday described the Congress as a "batsman" who is trying to get the other partners of the INDIA bloc "run out."

Independent MP from Maharashtra's Sangli, Vishal Patil, too resorted to cricketing lexicon to take a swipe at the Mahayuti government, and said that after winning the assembly polls, the alliance got the "12th man" to run the gov-

ernment there.

Participating in the discussion on the Union budget in the Lok Sabha, Shinde said "INDI alliance is like a cricket team that has batsmen named Congress who is bent on getting others run out."

He added, "The Congress is the 'Bhasmasur' of Indian politics, whomever it supports is destroyed. In our Maharashtra, it put off the 'mashaal' of the UBT...those who moved away from the Hindutva ideology, look at their situation in



Maharashtra now."

Alleging that Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi spoke like a "spokesperson of

engineers and doctors, as they are all part of it."

Shinde also lauded the Union Budget to say, "When we call (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ji, the captain of Team India, then we can call Nirmala Sitharaman, the winning all-rounder of Team India."

He said the BJP-led Centre proved everyone wrong in the opposition by building the Ram Temple, and abrogating Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

Be meticulous, don't fell trees unnecessarily: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it was everyone's constitutional duty to protect trees and public authorities should be meticulous and not seek more trees to be felled than necessary.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan made the observation while hearing a plea filed by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) seeking permission to cut over 800 trees in the Taj Trapezium Zone for the development of a six-lane, access-controlled highway between Agra and Gwalior.

It was yet another instance where the court noticed the public authorities seeking to fell a large number of trees though it wasn't required.

"Practically in case of every application made in TTZ and in Delhi, we have noticed this tendency. It is the constitutional duty of all public authorities to save and protect as many trees as possible. Therefore, when applications are made seeking felling of trees, the authorities have to be meticulous and they should not apply for felling more trees than necessary," it added.

The top court said the NHAI had sought permission for felling 850 trees, however, only 650 were required to be cut for the construction of the highway.

It noted the report filed by the centrally-empowered committee (CEC) and

said it had recommended certain conditions including compensatory plantation of 9,000 trees at the cost of NHAI.

In a large number of cases before compensatory afforestation was done, the court said, the permission to fell trees was granted and the order for compensatory afforestation was not implemented in true letter and spirit.

The NHAI was directed by the bench to first comply with the condition of compensatory afforestation and asked the CEC to examine the compliance. The committee would submit a compliance report and only then the permission would be granted, it said.



'India rolls out red carpet, not red tape to investors'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said India rolls out red carpet, and not red tape to investors and that there is broad consensus for sustainable economic development in the country.

Inaugurating Invest Karnataka-2025 meet here on Tuesday, he said India has addressed the crucial point of policy uncertainty by creating a stable and predictable policy environment.

"When I speak about the policy uncertainty, I want to emphasise a crucial point. Today across all governance level in India, including the central government, state government and local bodies, there is a broad consensus that sustainable economic development must be driven by a market led economy with the private sector playing a leadership role," Singh said.

According to him, this shared commitment of sustainable economic development provides a stable and predictable policy environment ensuring that investors can invest with confidence on policy continuity.

Singh said in the past investors faced numerous challenges and one of the biggest hurdles was red tape, but now the time has changed.

"Today India no longer presents red tape to investors. Instead, we roll out the red carpet for them. This kind of cross party consensus on promoting investment plays a crucial role in reducing uncertainty for our investors," the minister pointed out.

Singh told the investors who had gathered from various parts of the world that Karnataka offers everything one seeks in an investment destination.

Prayagraj to turn into 'no vehicle zone' for Maghi Purnima bath

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR (UP)

The Prayagraj administration has chalked out a special traffic plan for Maghi Purnima on Wednesday when the month-long 'kalpvās', an integral tradition of the Maha Kumbh, comes to an end. Kalpvās refers to the practice of living near a sacred river for a set period, adhering to fasting, self-discipline, introspection and spiritual purification. Performing kalpvās during the Maha Kumbh is considered auspicious.

More than 10 lakh devotees have undertaken kalpvās at

the Triveni Sangam this year, a government statement said.

While the fair area has been declared a 'no vehicle zone' from 4 am on Tuesday, the rule will apply to the entire city from 5 pm onwards, with an



exemption for emergency and essential services, an official statement said.

The measures are meant to ensure the safety of the devotees who are expected to take a dip in the Sangam in large

numbers on Wednesday, it said. To avoid traffic chaos, designated parking lots have been marked for public and private vehicles so that the devotees face no trouble in reaching the bathing ghats on foot, the statement said.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday extended hearty greetings and best wishes to the people of the state, the seers and devotees who have come to bathe in the Maha Kumbh on the main bathing festival Maghi Purnima, the UP government said in a statement.

'Everything is in BJP high command's hand'

Manipur MLAs on selection of new CM

PNS ■ IMPHAL

Manipur BJP MLAs Sapam Keba and K Ibomcha on Tuesday said that the party high command will decide on the new chief minister of the state.

The two BJP MLAs, who held a meeting with BJP Northeast in-charge Sambit Patra at a hotel in Imphal on Tuesday afternoon, said they requested the Centre to make efforts to restore peace in the strife-torn state.

Upon being asked by waiting journalists about the selection of a new chief minister, Sapam Keba said, "Everything will be

decided by the high command. We urged the Centre through Patra to find ways to restore normalcy in the state. Within a couple of days, the Centre will decide on what things need to be done."

When asked if there is any time frame for the selection of a new chief minister, Keba said, "We didn't have any discussion on that."

Ibomcha said, "Everything is in the hand of the Centre. We cannot make any comment. We were here to make a courteous call. The only thing we requested him is to bring peace to the state."

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday quashed a more than 33-year old case saying it would be futile to proceed with trial when parties had resolved the issue.

A bench of Justices K V Viswanathan and S V N Bhatti passed the verdict on an appeal against a January 2023 order of the Allahabad High Court which held that the attempt to murder case couldn't be compounded.

The incident is of August 11, 1991, that is, about 33.5 years ago. No doubt, there is a

reference to the firing in the FIR but admittedly there was no injury," it noted.

The high court dismissed the application seeking to quash the proceedings in the case lodged in August 1991.

The top court considered the injury and the nature of weapon used in the case and held no offence under Section 307 (attempt to murder) of IPC was made out.

"It could not be said, on facts, considering all the circumstances that this is a crime which has such a harmful effect on the public and that it has the effect of seriously

"We are also firmly of the opinion that proceeding with the trial, when parties have amicably resolved the dispute in the present case, would be futile and the ends of justice require that the settlement be given effect to by quashing the proceedings."

threatening the well-being of the society," it said.

Referring to the facts, the bench said it would be grave abuse of process to let the trial remain pending, particularly when the dispute was settled.

"We are also firmly of the opinion that proceeding with the trial, when parties have amicably resolved the dispute in the present case, would be futile and the ends of justice require that the settlement be

given effect to by quashing the proceedings," it said.

The bench said it was a case which resulted in a closure report from the police that was rejected by a magistrate in Moradabad, UP.

It dealt with the question whether it was a fit case where the proceeding could be quashed, particularly when Section 307 of IPC was invoked in the summons.

The bench observed the high court did not appreciate the difference between compounding of an offence and quashing of proceedings. "Will the mere mention of

Section 307 IPC in the criminal proceedings force the court to adopt a hands-off approach, when parties come forward with a settlement?" it asked.

Referring to an apex court judgement, the bench said it was held that a mere mention of Section 307 of IPC in the FIR or chargesheet should not be the basis for adopting a "hands-off" approach.

The bench said it was further held that it would be open for the court to examine whether the incorporation of Section 307 of IPC was for the sake of it or there was evidence to back it.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A push for AI and defence

The Prime Minister Modi's France visit underscores a shared vision on technological innovation and global stability

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to France marked a significant chapter in Indo-French relations, focusing on advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), defence collaboration and honouring shared historical ties. AI Action Summit co-hosted by President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Modi convened global leaders, tech industry executives and researchers to deliberate on the ethical deployment of AI and its potential benefits for the society. The summit aimed to position France and India at the forefront of the AI revolution, emphasising the need for responsible and democratic AI governance. Notable outcome of the summit was the announcement of the 'Current AI' partnership, a public-interest initiative with an initial investment of \$400 million. This partnership seeks to provide open-source access to databases, software, and tools for trusted AI actors, promoting the use of AI in addressing global challenges such as healthcare and environmental sustainability.



In a groundbreaking development, France is in advanced discussions to procure India's domestically developed Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launcher system. This potential deal signifies a shift in defence dynamics, as it would be the first instance of one of India's major arms suppliers purchasing Indian-made weaponry. The Pinaka system, with a range of up to 90 km, has been demonstrated to a French delegation and met with positive feedback. During his visit, Prime Minister Modi paid tribute to Indian soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the World Wars by visiting the Mazargues War Cemetery in Marseille. This gesture underscored the deep historical ties between India

and France and highlighted the shared values and sacrifices that bind the two nations. The visit also marked a milestone in diplomatic outreach with the inauguration of India's first consulate in Marseille. This move is expected to bolster bilateral relations, facilitate consular services for the Indian diaspora, and enhance cultural and economic exchanges between the two countries. Prime Minister Modi and President Macron reviewed progress on the Horizon 2047 Roadmap, an initiative launched in 2023 to chart the course of Indo-French relations up to 2047. The roadmap focuses on collaboration in key sectors such as nuclear energy, defence and technology, aiming to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two nations. Engaging in global AI dialogues and partnerships positions India to harness AI for public good, addressing challenges in healthcare, agriculture and education. The prospective sale of the Pinaka system to France not only boosts India's defence exports but also signifies international recognition of India's indigenous defence manufacturing capabilities. The inauguration of the consulate in Marseille and the review of the Horizon 2047 Roadmap reflect India's commitment to deepening bilateral ties with France, fostering cooperation across various sectors.

PICTALK



Farmers pluck Gladiolus flowers at an orchard, in Nadia

The US humanitarian legacy under siege



AMAL CHANDRA

USAID faces an existential crisis as the Trump administration's aggressive restructuring and Elon Musk's vocal opposition threaten its very survival

USAID, long regarded as a pillar of American humanitarian aid and soft power, now finds itself embroiled in an existential crisis that threatens its very survival. Founded in 1961 by President John F Kennedy, the agency has historically been at the forefront of global development efforts, providing critical support in areas such as food security, healthcare, and economic development. Over the decades, USAID has built a complex legacy—on one hand, saving millions of lives through vaccination programmes, disaster relief, and poverty alleviation initiatives, while on the other, facing criticism for allegedly serving as a tool for American political influence and intervention abroad.

Now, under the Trump administration's aggressive restructuring plans and the unexpected involvement of billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, USAID's future hangs precariously in the balance. At the centre of this upheaval is the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), a newly created federal body with a mandate to streamline government operations by cutting budgets, eliminating inefficiencies, and reducing the federal workforce. He has publicly labelled the agency a "criminal organisation" and a "viper's nest" of corruption, accusing it of funding radical leftist causes and supporting groups that oppose American interests. Musk has called for the complete dismantling of USAID, arguing that American taxpayers should not be footing the bill for foreign aid that, in his view, does not serve the nation's interests. While President Trump has not explicitly endorsed Musk's rhetoric, sources within the administration suggest that his views have influenced internal discussions about USAID's future.

Signs of this shift are already visible—nearly 100 USAID employees have been placed on administrative leave, including two security officers who attempted to prevent DOGE's entry. Additionally, the agency's website and official X (formerly Twitter) account have been taken offline, signalling that a fundamental transformation is underway. If these trends continue, USAID's six-decade existence may soon come to an unceremonious end. The ramifications of this crisis extend far beyond the political infighting in Washington, DC. USAID operates in over 50 countries, funding programs that provide clean water, healthcare, sanitation, and education. At the same time, India has increasingly scrutinised foreign-funded NGOs, with the Modi administration tightening restrictions on organisations perceived as meddling in domestic affairs. In this light, a reduced USAID presence may align with India's push for self-reliance. Moreover, as the US pulls back from global aid commitments, India may see an opportunity to expand its influence in South Asia, filling the void left by Washington's retreat. The broader question at stake is what role the United States intends to play in the world moving forward. Should it continue investing in foreign aid as a means of exercising global leadership, or should it prioritise a more insular, America-first approach? Supporters of USAID argue that America's strength is not merely derived from military power but also from its ability to assist those in need.



THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION, WHICH HAS ALREADY FROZEN THE MAJORITY OF FOREIGN AID PROGRAMS, IS PUSHING TO EITHER DRASTICALLY CURTAIL USAID'S POWER OR ABSORB IT INTO THE STATE DEPARTMENT

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In this light, a reduced USAID presence may align with India's push for self-reliance. Moreover, as the US pulls back from global aid commitments, India may see an opportunity to expand its influence in South Asia, filling the void left by Washington's retreat. The broader question at stake is what role the United States intends to play in the world moving forward. Should it continue investing in foreign aid as a means of exercising global leadership, or should it prioritise a more insular, America-first approach? Supporters of USAID argue that America's strength is not merely derived from military power but also from its ability to assist those in need.

A retreat from humanitarian efforts would create a vacuum that rival powers—especially China—are eager to exploit. Beijing has already made significant inroads through its Belt and Road Initiative, offering infrastructure financing and economic partnerships to nations that might otherwise have sought aid from Washington. If the US abandons its foreign aid commitments, it risks ceding valuable influence to geopolitical competitors. The coming months will determine whether USAID's fate is sealed or if political resistance will salvage some version of the agency. What is certain, however, is that this is not just a bureaucratic dispute—it is a battle over the values that America chooses to uphold. If humanitarian aid is sacrificed in favour of a purely transactional foreign policy, the consequences will reverberate not only in the nations that once relied on US assistance but within America itself.

The world is watching, and history will judge whether this moment signifies the decline of American global responsibility or the dawn of a more ruthless, self-serving era in US foreign policy. (Amal Chandra is an author, political analyst, and columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PM MODI ENCOURAGES STUDENTS

Madam — Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the eighth edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha, imparted the invaluable mantra of confidence and positive thinking to students. He emphasised that exams are merely a milestone, not the final destination of life. They serve as a powerful medium to assess one's knowledge and preparation. Encouraging students, Modi advised them to master the art of handling mental pressure, just as a skilled batsman focuses on the next ball despite the loud cheers of the audience. This initiative reflects that the nation's leadership is not confined to policies alone but is also deeply concerned about the bright future of the younger generation. He urged parents not to compare their children with others and to stop treating them merely as a means of performance evaluation.

Every child is unique and should be encouraged according to their individual capabilities. Highlighting the importance of mental balance, a healthy diet and adequate rest, Modi introduced students to the art of effective time management and emphasised that every student deserves the opportunity to fulfil their dreams. The Prime Minister encouraged students to focus on their studies without stress and to challenge themselves continuously. This interactive session not only helps students overcome the fear of exams but also instils confidence in them, fostering a positive outlook on life.

R K Jain | Barwani

ROHIT SHARMA BACK IN FORM

Madam— Form is temporary, class is permanent was at last proved by the Indian skipper Rohit Sharma by his scintillating century at Cuttack against England in the second ODI, which has come at the appropriate time by winning the match with a series lead. However big a player is, self-confidence matters most when it comes to a comeback when in a bad patch. The board and the selection panel have given more than the required time for Rohit to perform. He must be thankful for

Security forces kill 31 Naxalites



In another successful encounter, security officers killed 31 Naxalites in Bijapur district of Bastar division in Chhattisgarh, which is regarded as a den of red terrorism. The magnitude of the success in the recent elimination spree of the security forces against the Naxalites proves that Left Wing Extremism is heading to its end in the country. Their dream of establishing a red corridor from Nepal to Andhra Pradesh has been devastated

by the security forces. The success also reflects Union Home Minister Amit Shah's resolve to completely eliminate naxalism by March 2026.

The better coordination in the now BJP-ruled states of Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra has led to an effective implementation of the anti-naxalite operation. There were reports that some elements connected with left-wing student unions in JNU celebrated the massacre of 76 CRPF jawans by naxalites in Chhattisgarh. On the contrary, the Modi government has zero tolerance against Naxal violence. Besides counterinsurgency, welfare and development schemes launched in naxalism-affected areas have also made the tribal youths disillusioned with naxalism.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

the selectors to repose faith in him. It will be prudent for Rohit to keep the past memories aside and ascertain his position as an invincible hitman to bring the ICC Champions Trophy for Team India as his next milestone. The upright decision to have included the mystery spinner Varun Chakravarty for the second ODI has been a success when he made the breakthrough to begin with by adding salt to the wound of Englishmen by dismissing Phil Salt, the opener. The kind of form maintained by Ravindra Jadeja, both with the bat and ball, would do a world of good with the company of Varun Chakravarty for Team India in the ICC Champions Trophy, giving them a certain edge to win the title.

A.P. Thiruvadi | Chennai

SAFEGUARD INDUSTRY INTERESTS

Madam — The US President Trump knows pretty well the global impacts of imposing tariffs and duties unilaterally. The industries in India apparently were least prepared to face this tariff war and the consequences. It should be noticed and recognised by our Union Government how

strongly the US and China safeguard their industry's interests while we let our industry face the global pressures and turbulence and trade deficits on their own. The US and China advance their policies of trade and strategic interests of futuristic two decades. We have to safeguard our industry's interests, exports and trade balance. The steel industry obviously may not be impacted on a substantial basis as hardly a fraction of its production is exported to the US but as detailed in the news, the Indian steel industry may be stressed if the major producers divert their exports to India, high on steel consumption. If the US continues with tariff escalation, it takes risks of consequent higher cost of domestic production. India will continuously face competition and rivalry in the global trade from the US and China, so there is a need to divert and set up our manufacturing bases in African countries, Southeast Asia and Europe and even in the US.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The comfort of relationships that need no validation



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Let's free our relationships from the weight of constant maintenance, trusting that true bonds don't fade in silence but grow stronger in the depths of our affection

This is a sequel to my column of last week, wherein I underlined the need for us to stay in touch with people to build a robust circle of love, care, and compassion around us. The article, which was lauded by many, also raised a slew of questions. What do people who don't genuinely find the time to make calls and retain personal connections in a tangible way do? They accepted the merits of what I had highlighted in the column but doubted if, in this age when generations are passing in a jiffy and the race to the finish line seems to go on forever, we could squeeze in little niceties like making a call or strengthening our links with people by going beyond pleasantries. I was even asked if I have been able to maintain relationships in the manner I had suggested.



The answer is, "No, I haven't been able to keep pace with my growing connections," but there is something that I do in order to spare myself the guilt of not calling people as often as I would like: keep them close to my heart even when there is prolonged silence, and when the opportunity to meet them or speak to them knocks, pick it up from where we had left off the last time, without complaints or frowns. Now, that's a different equation altogether, and not all are primed to keep up incognito relationships where love and care thrive even without regular check-ins. We look for reinforcements and reassurances, and when they aren't forthcoming, tend to blame it on the other for their lack of affinity. I have many connections where the foundations of the association are so firm and deep-rooted that no time or space can dislodge us from each other's lives. Months and years may pass, but when we meet, it is as if the bond has only grown stronger and our love for each other more pristine, untouched by the patina of time.

Why can't we allow our social bonds the freedom to exist without yoking them to formalities? Why don't we come to terms with the fact that there is no lack of love, but each one of us is just bogged down by the demands of life in the fast lane? There is an unspoken comfort in relationships that do not demand constant validation. Some bonds flourish in silence, in the spaces between meetings, in the warmth that lingers even when words are absent. It is a reassuring truth that not all relationships require the crutch of routine communication to remain strong. Yet, the modern mind struggles to accept this form of connection, often mistaking silence for indifference and distance for detachment. In an age where instant responses are expected, where friendships are measured in the currency of texts and calls, we have begun to equate attention with affection and availability with authenticity. And when someone does not reach out as often as we desire, we assume they have relegated us to the margins of their lives. The expectation that rela-

tionships must be constantly tended to, like fragile saplings that require perpetual watering, stems from a fear of being forgotten. But relationships built on mutual respect and a deep-seated connection are not fragile; they are resilient. Perhaps, instead of lamenting the lack of frequent contact, we should cherish the moments when reconnections happen naturally, without resentment or reproach. True companionship does not wilt under the weight of time; it endures, sustained by the simple yet profound act of keeping someone close in thought and heart. So let us release our relationships from the burden of constant upkeep. Let us trust that genuine bonds, once formed, do not wither in silence but gather strength in the depths of our affection. And when the moment to reconnect arrives, let it be a celebration of love that time could never diminish. This, perhaps, is the only way we can realign our relationships with the changing world. (The author is a Dubai-based columnist and children's writing coach. She has published six books. Views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN PROTECT YOUR SPINE

The spine plays a crucial role in maintaining overall health, yet we often neglect it



RAVI VALLURI

How many of us get up in the morning and virtually struggle to get out of bed as the body feels sore, the neck remains stiff, knees wobble, shoulders and feet pain? In fact, the entire day is torturous. Such individuals run to doctors, seeking a magical cure for the pestilence. Unless the problem is genetic or hereditary, humans get afflicted with such disorders because of a deficient lifestyle, stress accumulated over a period of time and poor dietary habits. The vertebra and our skeletal frame are an extremely important part of the human body, which we ignore at our own peril.

Therefore, a healthy spine leads to a healthy life. Do we recall when a child begins to walk, the preliminary baby steps are raising his/her thumbs; this is called the 'Merudanda Mudra'. The vertebra consists of a series of small bones which form the backbone or the spine, having several projections for articulation and muscle attachment, and a hole through which the spinal cord passes. The spine is the first identifiable structure that provides us with a shape and form rather than being a ball of cells without any differentiation. It keeps us upright, allows us to bend



and twist and connects the different parts of our skeleton. Office goers are programmed – for making a living – to undertake a typical quotidian 9 to 5 routine, and several among them use computers for prolonged hours, or those professionals who are compelled to drive long distances to their places of work from their dwelling paces ought to necessarily know how to protect their backs, necks and hand muscles. Not only are these muscles to be protected and fortified but the tissues should be sufficiently strengthened.

Such working men and women should be educated regarding deploying the correct posture. Many homemakers at times develop severe middle or lower back medical problems for a variety of reasons. Continuously undertaking repeated chores and even activities involving the handling of small or no weights, performed with an incorrect posture, can damage tissues and muscles, which causes irreparable damage to the back and neck. The afflicted suffer from the debility for years together in pain. Awareness about the structure of the spine and adopting the right postures along with simple strengthening stretches significantly helps to avoid these misadventures in one's life. In the cases where these problems assume the shape of chronic disorders the patient suffering can be guided through simple stretching exercises under the supervision of a physiotherapist or an orthopaedic. To ameliorate the condition of those suffering from these debilitating health issues, the patients should take treatment for it. Those in particular suffering from spondylitis, frozen shoulder, middle and lower back problems, and knee problems benefit immensely upon undergoing the rehabilitation process and will certainly see visible dramatic changes in their lifestyle patterns and daily routines. Such programmes generally encompass the techniques mentioned below with the required sensitivity to an individual's health condition:

- Power Walk: alignment of vertebrae and to open energy channels
- Posture Awareness and its correction
- Ergonomics
- Simple but powerful stretches and yoga – for inner surgical alignment of the spine to release the nerves that were being continually pressed
- Gait Training
- Guided Meditation techniques to release stress

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He has authored both fiction and nonfiction and is a faculty member of the Art of Living. Views are personal)

Trump's 'America first' policy causes chaos

As Donald Trump embarks on his second term as the US President, the nation faces a turbulent landscape of climate disasters and economic uncertainty



B K SINGH

One of the first executive orders signed by Donald Trump after his inauguration as US President was the withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord, overlooking a whole lot of climate disruptions that the country has faced since his election campaign. At least 335 human deaths were attributed to Hurricane Beryl and Hurricane Milton, making 2024 the deadliest hurricane season in the continental US since 2005. What followed each time was damaged buildings, roads and bridges and power outages for several days, forcing people to live without electricity for days and weeks. The year 2025 welcomed the US with unprecedented snowfall in the central and eastern part forcing the shifting of Trump's second term inauguration indoors, and a week earlier, catastrophic wildfires ravaged the Los Angeles region in the western part of the country.

The fire lasted for ten days and climate experts have attributed it to strong Santa Ana winds and extremely dry weather making forest vegetation readymade fuel. Los Angeles fire killed at least 25 persons, damaged more than 15,000 structures and ravaged more than 200 square km area. 60,000 persons including Hollywood stars left home for safety. The largest fire in the region the Palisades and Eaton have continued to burn for ten days. After El Nino and neutral weather conditions, La Nina arrived and pushed the storm back to the northern part of the US making the northern part wetter than usual and the southern part drier than usual. Santa Ana winds common in January and February in the region have been aggressive with wind speeds up to 120 km per hour.

This made damage control difficult. The temperature contrast between cooler inland areas (southern California deserts) and warmer coastal areas is the recipe for these winds. The extent of dryness of the area can be understood by the fact that the last half-inch of rain received in the region was only a year ago. In his America First policy, Trump has been continuously announcing to increase tariffs on goods imported from Canada, Mexico, China and several more. He has also named Brazil and India among the countries that harm the US, through their tariffs. Trump's action has the potential to initiate a trade war among countries and impact many developing economies. He has offered two million federal workers the option to resign but get paid till September 2025, in his effort to cut the federal workforce and push out those who do not support his political agenda.

Though federal law has long protected civil servants from pressure and political interference, yet President is testing his power. The process of deportation of illegal immigrants has started in a big way. Search for other undocumented immigrants is aggressively going on. Religious places like Gurudwaras have been searched in New York and New Jersey, at the cost of antagonising Sikh and other religious groups. He has also said that he will hold some in Guantanamo Bay away from legal and social services and support. Some of these migrants are so bad that countries cannot be trusted to



THOUGH FEDERAL LAW HAS LONG PROTECTED CIVIL SERVANTS FROM PRESSURE AND POLITICAL INTERFERENCE, YET PRESIDENT IS TESTING HIS POWER. THE PROCESS OF DEPORTATION OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS HAS STARTED IN A BIG WAY. SEARCH FOR OTHER UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IS AGGRESSIVELY GOING ON

hold them back. Time will tell whether Trump's agenda to bring manufacturing back to the US would succeed in the absence of a labour force that is largely being deported/ housed in Guantanamo Bay where 30,000 beds are being added to expand the government's detention capacity.

Renaming the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America would hardly carry any meaning, but it can irritate a neighbouring country and may be a spoilsport in their relationship. Donald Trump wants Canada to become the 51st state of the USA and his justification is that the US is the only country Canada shares its boundary along the land and makes it secure. The countries have a free trade agreement and Canada takes full advantage of it. Further Trump has expressed to take over the Panama Canal from Panama and purchase Greenland from Denmark for strategic reasons and security of the USA.

These steps are needed to have a check over growing Chinese control on trade with Latin American countries. Greenland is approachable by China from the Arctic side, while the Panama Canal is crucial for Chinese ships to cross from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, which provides a shorter route for trade to all countries in South America. The taking over of the Panama Canal and Greenland can have serious environmental fallout. World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) secretary-general Celeste Saulo, while addressing the 150th Foundation Day celebration of the Indian Meteorological Department referred average global temperature rise of 1.55 degrees Celsius in 2024 over the preindustrial period and she termed it as a "very grave danger"

and called for decisive climate action in 2025 and speed up the transition to renewable energy. Trump has again withdrawn from the Paris Climate Accord and prioritised energy self-sufficiency through domestic drilling and exploration of oil and natural gas with the sole justification of cutting the cost of energy and thereby bringing down inflation.

It is feared that the gains achieved by Biden through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) 2022, where \$369 billion was invested in clean energy initiatives and that also created jobs in the US, will be dismantled. He has declared a National Energy emergency, a first in US history, which may lead to the suspension of environmental rules and grant permission for mining projects. He has halted the lease of federal water for offshore wind farms and called for shutting wind turbines that cause wildfire.

The prohibition on drilling of oil and gas in Polar Bear Wildlife Sanctuary in Alaska has been lifted. It will not only threaten the life of wildlife species but would accelerate the melting of ice in the region, causing undue concern such as sea level rise etc. Why US is keeping an eye on Greenland? It has a history. Immediately after World War II, they planned there to build 600 nuclear missile bases to be mounted on a train riding 3000 km of track.

It never took off. In the late 1950s and early 1960s US Army made a camp there for the 'Project Iceworm'. A small nuclear reactor was brought to power the camp. Once they realized after a few years that the project was not feasible, they gave up but left a lot of nuclear waste water at the camp. They also left thousands of litres of diesel fuel in the middle of Greenland's ice sheet, expect-

ing that it would remain buried in the ice forever. But climate change happened, the planet has warmed and ice has melted.

It has the potential to contaminate water in Greenland. While China has deployed its vast foreign exchange reserve to secure long-term control over strategic minerals critical for advanced technologies in the defence sector, climate change etc. in resource-rich nations like copper and cobalt from Congo and Peru, nickel from Indonesia and lithium from Argentina, the Trump administration is looking to counter it by accessing rare earth and critical mineral deposits in Greenland.

The southern pointed mountains of Greenland are gold belts, which is another temptation for the new US administration. Panama Canal, an engineering marvel constructed in 1913 enables ships to cross from the lower water level of the Atlantic to the higher water level of the Pacific Ocean, saving the costs and journey time in trades. A dam was built on river Cagres and water was impounded in Gatun Lake, where ships pass.

The level of water in Gatun is managed through gates. With the rising water level ships from the Atlantic side gain height and sail towards the Pacific. The flow of water in River Cagres and many other rivers from Amazon forests has been depleted due to massive degradation and deforestation. Panama Canal efficiency is lowered and hardly half the ships can cross. Trump should strive to conserve river catchments, rather than owning the Panama Canal.

(The writer is Retd Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of Forest Force, Karnataka. Views are personal)

Union budget 2025: Transforming agriculture for a sustainable and inclusive future

Union Budget 2025 introduces a bold vision for agricultural transformation, addressing key challenges such as soil degradation, climate change and rural distress

Agriculture has been the backbone of India's economy, sustaining growth and the livelihoods of millions, thus correctly referred to as the primary engine for India's accelerated and inclusive growth in the annual budget presented on February 1, 2025. However, the sector is facing numerous challenges, including deteriorating soil quality, stagnating crop yields, inadequate technologies, shrinking farmlands, poor infrastructure and heightened vulnerability to climate change, which poses a threat to food security and the wellbeing of our Anndatta. Further, these difficulties have led to a troubling trend: many marginal farmers and agricultural labourers from rural areas are being forced to



PUSHPLATA SINGH

migrate to cities in search of better opportunities. Agricultural sustainability is also closely tied to climate change, which affects nearly all of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With a population still heavily reliant on farming, the need for sectoral

reforms is undeniable. New policies and regulations are crucial for inclusive and accelerated growth. India's 2025 budget addresses issues in the agriculture sector with a forward-thinking framework, by enabling improved credit access, and infrastructure development, and preparing farmers for future growth.

One standout initiative is the Pradhan Mantri Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY). India's agricultural sector is marked by significant regional disparities, with certain districts lagging in infrastructure, productivity, and economic opportunities. This ambitious program stands as a transformative initiative for rural India, focusing on the 100 most underdeveloped districts, and directly benefiting around 1.7

crore farmers. PMDDKY focuses on these underdeveloped areas, directing resources to regions that have been overlooked in the broader development process. This initiative seeks to ensure that farmers in these areas have access to the same opportunities as their counterparts in more prosperous regions.

The program aims to address long-standing agricultural challenges and empower farmers, particularly those affected by climate change and those from marginalised communities. With proper execution, PMDDKY can spark a ripple effect of development, improving infrastructure, technology access, and financial services in these districts thus enabling equitable growth across the country. By focusing on sus-



tainability, inclusivity, and empowerment, PMDDKY strives to uplift farmers, women, and marginalised communities while ensuring resilience against future challenges.

The program also offers access to high-yielding varieties of seed and irrigation techniques and training to address the root causes of agricultural stagnation. By supporting farmers in overcoming unpredictable weather

patterns, outdated technologies, and limited market access, PMDDKY provides a pathway to more stable and productive farming. A distinctive feature of PMDDKY is its focus on empowering marginalised groups, particularly the poorest farmers.

These communities often face barriers such as limited access to credit, technology, and education. PMDDKY seeks to address these gaps by providing women farmers with greater control over land, improved training, and better market access. For marginalised communities, the program aims to ensure they are included in the benefits of agricultural development, promoting equality and empowerment. PMDDKY is not only about boosting agricultural

output but also ensuring sustainable practices.

One of the unfortunate consequences of rural stagnation is the mass migration of farmers to urban areas in search of better opportunities. By strengthening agriculture in rural areas, PMDDKY aims to create conditions where farmers can thrive while cultivating their farmlands. If executed well, PMDDKY could be the catalyst for a brighter, more inclusive future in agriculture, where every farmer has the tools to thrive. The hope is that migration for farmers will become a choice, not a necessity—allowing agricultural communities to thrive where they are.

The budget also emphasises investment in innovation and technology, particularly in

developing high-yield, climate-resilient crop varieties. The creation of germplasm banks to restore and introduce local crop varieties will strengthen domestic production. Additionally, the government is working to enhance the agricultural value chain, focusing on better storage, transportation, and export infrastructure, benefiting both farmers and consumers. Targeted schemes for crops like cotton, pulses, oilseeds, and vegetables will help mitigate the effects of climate change on farmers. These programs aim to boost food security and export potential, all while securing farmers' livelihoods.

(The writer is Associate Director, The Energy and Resources Institute; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS



Bharat Tex Fair to showcase organic fabrics

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPCC) on Tuesday said Bharat Tex fair will showcase organic fabrics, recycled materials and energy-efficient production technologies. The second edition of Bharat Tex 2025 will be inaugurated in Greater Noida. AEPCC Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said sustainability has become a central theme in the global textiles industry and Bharat Tex is committed to promoting eco-friendly practices. "The event will showcase sustainable innovations, including organic fabrics, recycled materials and energy-efficient production technologies," he said. He added that the support announced through the Union Budget 2025-26 has also brought the labour-intensive export sector to the focus by credit support to the MSMEs and custom duty rationalisation.



Gold snaps 7-day rally, declines Rs 200

Snapping the seven-day winning run, gold prices declined by Rs 200 to Rs 88,300 per 10 grams in the national capital following selling by stockists amid a bearish trend in global markets. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also dropped Rs 200 to Rs 87,900 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 88,100 per 10 grams. Additionally, silver prices decreased Rs 900 to Rs 96,600 per kg from the previous trading close of Rs 97,500 per kg on Monday. Traders said the yellow metal prices depreciated ahead of Fed Chair Jerome Powell's testimony to Congress, which will be closely watched for insights about the US Federal Reserve's future interest rate-cut path. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had surged by Rs 2,430 to hit an all-time high level of Rs 88,500 per 10 grams on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. In the last seven sessions, gold soared Rs 5,660 or 6.8 per cent. This year, the yellow metal has risen Rs 8,910 or 11.22 per cent. On the MCX, gold futures for April delivery declined Rs 333 to Rs 85,483 per 10 grams. During the day, the yellow metal futures touched a lifetime high of Rs 86,360 per 10 grams.



'Market share of top 15 developers doubled'

Realty firm Godrej Properties Ltd CEO Gaurav Pandey on Tuesday highlighted that the market share of the top 15 developers has doubled in the last five years to nearly 20 per cent and expects further demand consolidation towards big branded builders in the coming years. Addressing a FICCI real estate conference here, he said the housing sector is not an easy sector to operate in. "At a very pan-India level, we are also noticing one more trend that corporate developers and top 15 developers are increasing market share. So, in the last five years, the market share has doubled for them and currently stands at about 19 per cent. I think this will increase, especially three years from today, when maybe the market might slow down because demand aggregation happens whenever there's some sort of market slowdown," Pandey said. He highlighted that the last calendar year was very exciting for the residential segment of the Indian real estate sector. "In 2024, the residential real estate in India did about 1 billion square feet of demand, which is the highest ever till now. So, I think 1 billion square feet is something which I had never imagined when I started my career in the residential sector. And to see that happening in the primary market alone is quite astounding," Pandey said. In value terms, he said this is like close to about Rs 8.5 lakh crore of sales. About 75 per cent of this is largely in the top five cities of India, which is essentially Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune.

Nuclear power to be part of energy discussions: Union min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nuclear power will be part of all energy discussions as its commercialisation has not happened yet, largely in the Indian context, even though the country signed a treaty with the US, Union Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday.

This assumes significance in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US later this week where he will meet US President Donald Trump and have discussion on a series of subjects, including energy. Earlier on Monday during a presser on India Energy Week 2025, which began here on Tuesday, Puri had said, "I will be surprised if sourcing of energy from the US does not figure in the discussions (of PM and Trump)."

Puri had also stated that with President (Trump) saying he wants to see global energy prices coming down, he wants more and more energy to come to the market. For countries like India it is a positive development, he said.

During ministerial panel discussion at IEW25, Puri stated, "Nuclear (power) provides an efficient cost-effective thing but you have to go to a particular route and I'm sure that this is going to be a discussion point in major wherever such discus-



During ministerial panel discussion at IEW25, Puri stated, "Nuclear (power) provides an efficient cost-effective thing but you have to go to a particular route and I'm sure that this is going to be a discussion point in major wherever such discus-

sions take place. I see that happening."

About the commercial expansion of nuclear power, the minister stated, "We had signed an India-US civilian nuclear energy deal. We had an India-specific IAEA safeguards agreement but somehow the commercial contracting never took place... But now we're talking about small modular reactors. Earlier this month in her

Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a Rs 20,000-crore nuclear mission with an aim of developing at least 100GW of nuclear energy by 2047.

She had said that for an active partnership with the private sector to meet this goal, amendments to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act will be taken up, she

informed the House.

A Nuclear Energy Mission for research & development of Small Modular Reactors (SMR) with an outlay of Rs 20,000 crore will be set up.

At least five indigenously developed SMRs will be operationalised by 2033.

Talking about the Trump administration, Puri recalled that during his last term as India's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York he had the "great privilege of knowing Trump when he was not the President".

"I have the privilege of living in the Trump Tower. He used to visit us every year to have the annual get together of the residents of World Trump Tower. I was the minister in waiting when he came here for first official visit. So I have watched the unfolding events with more than a sense of interest," he said.

He also pointed out that we live in an interdependent world and 50 per cent of our (India's) GDP is in the external sector. The new aspect of (US) administration is music to my ears when it says that more energy should come in the market, he stated.

More energy means that prices should come down for a country like India, which is both consumer and producer, he said.



Review of Chinese investment ban unlikely soon: CEA

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A review of the nearly five-year old restrictions on Chinese investments into India is unlikely in the near future, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said both countries have to understand the importance of mutual dependence and mutual benefits.

"I don't think it is something you would expect to see immediate results because both sides are crossing the river by feeling the stones, so to speak," Nageswaran said, replying to a specific question on whether any changes are afoot.

It can be noted that following violent clashes between Indian and Chinese soldiers in Galwan valley in 2020, the Indian gov-

ernment introduced measures restricting investments from countries sharing a land border with India that was taken to be an attempt to restrict Chinese play.

Speaking at the IVCA event here, Nageswaran did acknowledge that both countries have been engaged in a conversation on the trade imbalances, probably drawing from the parleys on various issues lately.

"We triggered a conversation because we basically wanted to highlight the fact that our bilateral trade deficit with China in 2024 might be close to USD 93-95 billion. And India is one of the top-3 countries with a huge trade imbalance with China. Naturally, if you are excessively import-dependent, it raises certain vulnerabilities in terms of supply chain," he said.

GDP growth witnessing speedy rebound: Sitharaman

Says India to remain fastest growing economy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said that the Indian economy is seeing a "speedy rebound" from 5.4 per cent growth clocked in the second quarter of the current fiscal, and the government shall take measures to ensure that India remains the world's fastest-growing economy.

Replying to discussions on the Union Budget for 2025-26 in the Lok

Sabha, the finance minister said the Budget has taken various steps to increase liquidity in the hands of people while maintaining fiscal prudence by using 99 per cent of the borrowing in FY'26 to fund capital expenditure.

She also said that inflation management receives the highest priority of this government with retail inflation within the tolerance band of 2-6 per cent. Inflation trend, particularly in food, appears to be moder-



ating, she added. Speaking about GDP growth, Sitharaman said in the three years

prior to 2024-25, the country's GDP growth rate averaged about 8 per cent.

The Indian economy is projected to grow at 6.4 per cent in the current fiscal -- the lowest pace in four years. The Finance Ministry's Economic Survey has projected growth in next fiscal FY'26 to be between 6.3-6.8 per cent.

Sitharaman said only in two out of 12 quarters, India's growth rate touched 5.4 or remained below it. The GDP growth in the second quarter (July-September) slowed to 7-quarter low of 5.4 per cent.

... on account of strong economic

foundation, a speedy rebound is happening, and we shall take measures which will go forward, help in keeping our economy growing fastest as in the last few years. We will continue to remain the fastest-growing economy," the minister said.

Sitharaman said the private final consumption expenditure is expected to grow by 7.3 per cent in the current fiscal driven by a good rural demand.

The private final consumption expenditure is estimated to be 61.8 per cent of the nominal GDP, which is the highest since 2002-03, she added.

'65 pc of Indians used AI, more than double the global average'



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reflecting the swift adoption of artificial intelligence in India, a Microsoft study has found that 65 per cent of Indians surveyed have used AI -- more than double the global average.

Microsoft on Tuesday unveiled the Global Online Safety Survey, which studies the growing influence of AI. The survey is based on a survey of 15,000 teens (13-17) and adults that was conducted in 15 countries between July 19 and August 9, 2024.

"65 per cent of respondents have used AI (+26 per cent from 2023). This is more than double the global average of 31 per cent in the same time period."

"India is most excited about using AI for translations, answering questions, increas-

ing efficiency at work and helping students with schoolwork," the report said.

The report showed that millennials (people aged 25-44) lead adoption, with 84 per cent reporting usage.

Indian parents are more aware of their children's digital challenges, showing increased awareness compared to the previous year, it said. However, India also has some reservations about AI, including concerns about online abuse, deepfakes, scams, and AI hallucinations, mirroring global trends.

Online abuse was among the top worries regarding AI. "More than 80 per cent of respondents worry about AI usage for children under 18 years," the report noted.

Over 80 per cent of Indian teens said they have experienced an online risk.



Oil retailers pick 26 PACS to set up retail petrol, diesel outlets: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies have selected 26 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) out of 286 applications for setting up retail petrol and diesel outlets, Cooperation Minister Amit Shah told Parliament on Tuesday.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Shah said the government has allowed PACS to operate retail petrol and diesel outlets and LPG distributorship.

As informed by Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), 286 PACS from 25 states and Union Territories have submitted online applications to establish retail petrol/diesel outlets, of which 26 PACS have been selected by OMCs, he said.

Under conversion of PACS, Wholesale Consumer Pumps into retail outlets, OMC reports indicate that 116 PACS from five states have agreed to this conversion, and 56 PACS have



been commissioned. For LPG distributorship, two PACS have applied for the two advertised locations in Jharkhand. As per the revised guidelines, PACS have been included under Combined Category 2 (CC-2) for retail petrol/diesel dealership and Combined Category (CC) for LPG distributorship, for which they can apply online as per the advertisements issued by OMCs.

Further, PACS are also given one-time option to convert their wholesale consumer pumps into retail outlets for which the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has released detailed guidelines.

'Working to decouple economic growth from emissions' Union Minister Yadav at Dubai summit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Environment Minister Bhubendra Patel Yadav on Tuesday said India is actively working to decouple economic growth from emissions while promoting a sustainable transportation system.

Speaking at a roundtable on the future of mobility at the World Government Summit 2025 in Dubai, Yadav said India recorded a 12 per cent growth in the mobility industry last year, strengthening its position as a global innovation and manufacturing hub.

Referring to India's 2070 "net-zero" target, he said the country has made several decisions in this direction that align with its development goals.

"The Government of India is taking proactive policy initiatives and developing frame-



works to achieve its long-term low carbon development strategy. It outlines key transitions including developing an integrated, inclusive and efficient transport system," a statement quoted him as saying.

Yadav said the strategy highlights the need for a coordinated effort from different sectors to reduce emissions while promoting sustainable transportation.

FIVE DAYS OF MARKET CRASH

Investors become poorer by Rs 16.97 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity investors became poorer by Rs 16.97 lakh crore in five days of market crash as persistent foreign fund outflows and fresh US tariffs that reignited trade war fears dented sentiments.

In the past five days, the BSE bellwether gauge slumped 2,290.21 points or 2.91 per cent. Tumbling for the fifth day running on Tuesday, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 1,018.20 points or 1.32 per cent to settle at a two-week low of 76,293.60.

Tracking the weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 16,97,903.48 crore to Rs 4,08,52,922.63 crore (USD

4.70 trillion) in five days. On Tuesday alone, investors' wealth got wiped out by Rs 9,29,651.16 crore.

"Indian markets underperformed global indices as benchmark indices plunged over 1 per cent each on widespread selling, mainly ignited by worries over escalating tariff war," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Among 30 Sensex shares, Zomato tanked over 5 per cent. Tata Steel, Bajaj Finserv, Power Grid, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the other big laggards.

Bharti Airtel was the only gainer from the pack.

Ad revenue growth to slow down to 7 pc in 2025: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Ad revenue growth is estimated to slow down to 7 per cent in 2025 from the 8.8 per cent attained in 2024, a leading media agency said on Tuesday.

WPP Entity GroupM pegged the Indian advertising revenues across all media formats to grow at 7 per cent to Rs 1,64,137 crore in 2025, from Rs 1,53,407 crore in 2024. India will be the ninth biggest advertising market glob-

ally in a list that has the US, China, and the UK as the top-three countries.

Globally, the ad revenue growth is set to slow down to 7.7 per cent in 2025 from 9.5 per cent in 2024.

Digital ad spends will be driving the growth for India with an 11.5 per cent growth in ad revenue to nearly Rs 1 lakh crore, as per the agency's 'This Year Next Year' report.

The report said digital spends will be 60 per cent of the



overall spends in India, as against 82 per cent globally in 2025. Television will be the second

biggest by revenues at Rs 42,431 crore, but is likely to witness a 1 per cent decline in revenues in 2025 from the Rs 42,859

crore in the year-ago period. Print ad revenues will grow 4 per cent to Rs 15,947 crore, giving the medium a 10 per cent share in overall revenues in 2025, the report said.

Outdoor and hoardings advertising will grow 8 per cent to Rs 3,671 crore, radio will decline 1 per cent to Rs 2,009 crore, while cinema advertising will see a 10 per cent growth to Rs 942 crore in 2025, the report said. The company's Chief

Operating Officer, Ashwin Padmanabhan, said streaming TV is now accounting for 12.6 per cent of total TV ad revenue, which signals a critical shift for brands to optimise across high-growth platforms.

He added that key sectors such as small businesses, realty, education, banking financial services and insurance, and technology/telecom will be contributing 60 per cent of total advertising, and are set to grow at around 10 per cent.

When Ariana Grande forced her parents to be friends after 18 years of separation



Singer-actor Ariana Grande says she helped her parents mend their relationship after they divorced. She opened up about "forcing" her mom Joan Grande and dad Edward Butera to be friends again after they split on an episode of the 'WTF with Marc Maron' podcast, reports 'people.com'. "They're not together, but they're best friends. It took 18 years and it took me forcing it. I forced them to communicate again. I really did," Grande said.

Her parents split when she was a child, and the singer explained that she had finally taken a stand around her 24th birthday in 2017.

"I remember just kind of being at this pivotal point where I was just like, 'You guys, I love you both so much. It's been such a long time. Figure it out,'" she recalled. "Like hello, it's been 18 years. I'm 80 (years old). Please get over it. And they did."

The singer's plea worked, and she says Joan, 67, and Ed, 66, are "best friends now". "I can't separate them. It's the best thing in the whole world. I guess they just had like, some sort of beautiful conversation or realised that like, how much they love me, is so much louder than whatever nonsense happened way back when," she said.

"It really is beautiful, and if only they had the tools that I feel like we have now, this generation, with therapy and embracing that, maybe it could have happened sooner, but it was just the perfect thing... It makes me really happy," added Ariana.

Grande's parents often show their support for their daughter; in 2020, she brought them both to the Grammy Awards and they posed together on the red carpet as a happy family. In November, Joan and Ed also stepped out together for the Los Angeles Premiere of 'Wicked', in which Grande is credited as Ariana Grande-Butera.

"I just feel like this experience was such a homecoming for me. That was my name when I went to see the show when I was 10 years old, and it felt like a really lovely way of honouring that. It felt really full circle," she had said.

ALI FAZAL: RULE BREAKERS IS NOT JUST A STORY, IT'S A MOVEMENT

Ali Fazal is all set to make waves in Hollywood once again with his upcoming film, Rule Breakers, which is slated to release in North American theatres on March 7, 2025, just ahead of International Women's Day. The actor has given a glimpse to the first look of his character from the film, expressing his pride in being part of a project that celebrates the power of women, education and resilience in the face of adversity. Ali plays Samir Sinha, a techie from LA.

A gripping, women-centric drama, Rule Breakers tells the story of a visionary woman who dares to educate young girls in a society where such efforts are seen as an act of rebellion. As their innovation captures global attention, their success becomes both a beacon of hope and a source of conflict. With rising opposition and personal sacrifices, their unwavering courage ignites a movement that has the potential to change the world. Sharing his excitement, Ali Fazal said, "This film is a gem, and I couldn't be prouder to be a part of it. Rule Breakers is not just a story; it's a powerful statement about courage, unity, and the impact of education. Releasing it on the eve of Women's Day in the US makes it even more special because it aligns with the global celebration of women's strength and resilience. I can't wait for audiences to witness this journey on the big screen." With its poignant narrative and timely message, Rule Breakers is set to be a significant addition to Ali Fazal's diverse filmography which also stars the iconic Phoebe Waller Bridge and is helmed by the Oscar-winning filmmaker, Bill Guttentag.



'Women's movies opening is much higher than some big male movie stars opening to dismal box office'

Filmmaker Karan Johar has long been a central figure in Bollywood, and his latest insights on gender representation in cinema are resonating louder than ever. In a recent conversation on Lilly Singh's podcast, Johar stressed the critical importance of aligning cinematic politics with responsible storytelling. He pointed out that today's box office trends reveal a growing preference for female-led films - an indicator that audiences are embracing narratives centered on strong, authentic women. Johar explained, "If we can get our politics right... I am not saying always entertain. Cinema is meant for large scale, entertainment, visual spectacle, joy - everything that you are meant to feel - but you can do it all without the wrong politics. You can entertain a large audience across the nation by just not propagating, positioning, and platforming incorrect gender politics or incorrect social norms, incorrect ways of being. Just the basics have to be followed. Unfortunately, there is no censorship in the world that can help you; it has to be self-censorship. A film that doesn't have the right communication may still be a blockbuster, but is that

eventually a good thing? I am not sure." For Johar, this shift toward responsible representation is not merely theoretical. He expressed genuine satisfaction over the commercial success of films like Stree 2 and, notably, Alia Bhatt's Gangubai Kathiawadi. "When Alia did Gangubai Kathiawadi, that, to me, was a big victory in cinema," he remarked. "That character was completely driven by her performance, and it opened to larger numbers than many leading men who are movie stars. This is a big sign that a woman can lead a film. Men talk about pay parity and that they should be paid more because they bring in more money, but here we are witnessing women's movies opening much higher than some big male movie stars who are opening to dismal box office numbers." Karan Johar's comments highlight a pivotal moment in Bollywood - a time when creative choices and storytelling are being reexamined through the lens of gender sensitivity. As the industry evolves, his call for self-censorship and a balanced approach to gender politics in films serves as both a challenge and an inspiration for filmmakers, ensuring that cinema continues to be a powerful medium for positive social change.



Anees Bazmee and Boney Kapoor scout locations in Greece for No Entry 2

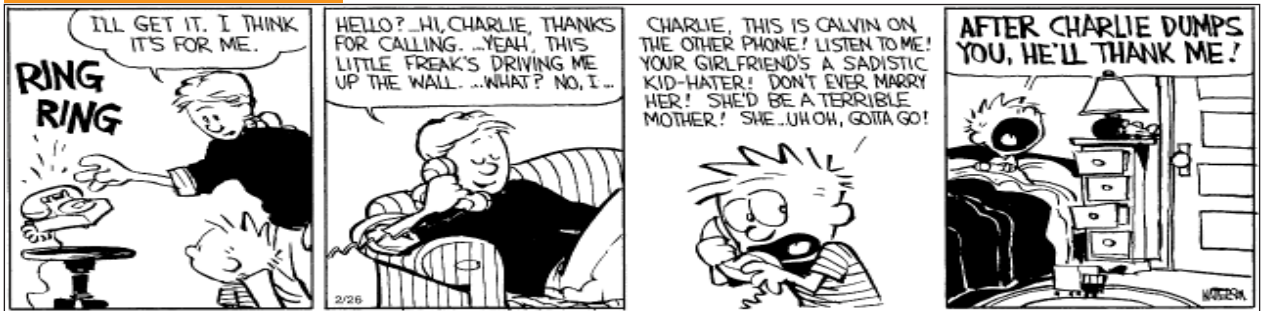
After the massive success of the Bhool Bhulaiyaa franchise, filmmaker Anees Bazmee is all set to bring another comedy entertainer to the big screen with No Entry 2. Produced by Boney Kapoor, the highly anticipated sequel will feature Varun Dhawan, Dilit Dossanj, and Arjun Kapoor in lead roles. With filming scheduled to begin in the third quarter of 2025, the team has already started pre-production, including location scouting in Greece. Producer Boney Kapoor shared a series of pictures on Instagram, offering fans a glimpse of their visit to Greece. The photos feature him alongside Anees Bazmee, with the duo exploring various locations, hinting at exciting developments for the film. In his caption, Kapoor playfully wrote, "No Entry, Mein Entry in Greece," further fueling anticipation among fans. According to reports, the pre-production phase kicked off in January, followed by an extensive second round of location scouting in February. A team of eight to ten members, including Bazmee, Kapoor, and key technical crew, has traveled to Greece to finalize settings for the film's major sequences. With the goal of commencing shooting later this year, the makers are aiming for a 2026 theatrical release. While Dhawan, Dossanj, and Kapoor have been confirmed as the film's leads, the makers are assembling a larger ensemble cast, with casting currently underway. An official announcement about the project is expected soon. With Anees Bazmee's signature comedy style and a fresh cast, No Entry 2 promises to be a major entertainer. Fans eagerly await further updates on what is shaping up to be one of the most exciting comedy sequels in recent years.

FUN

ARCHIE



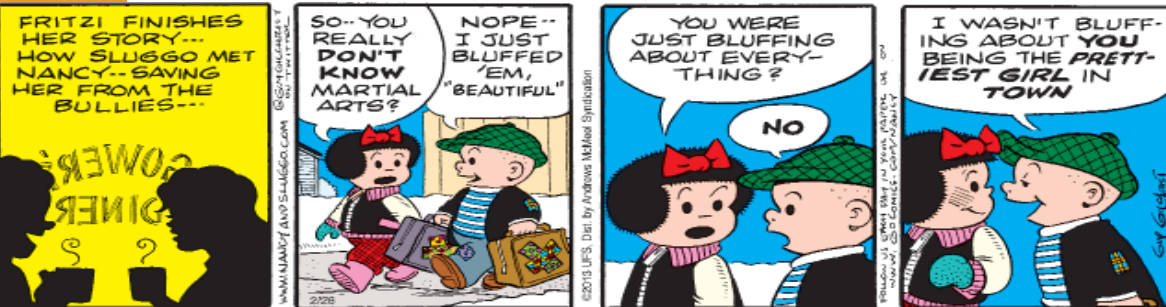
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



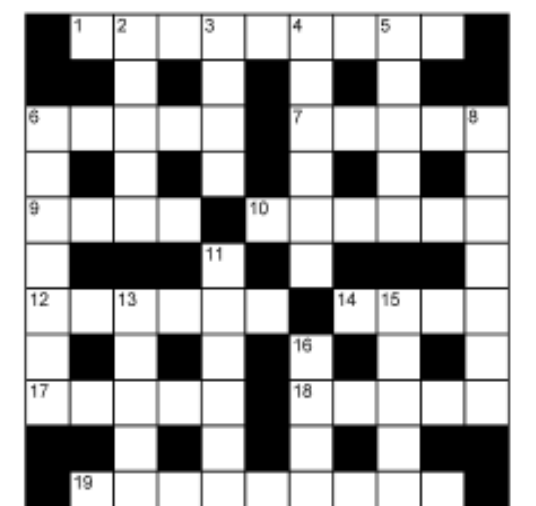
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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8	5	6	4	1	3	2	7	9
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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.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

ACROSS

- A person who lives next door
 - Two times two, times two
 - Speed competitions
 - Have a lie down
 - Sick
 - A bed for a small baby
 - The start of the day
 - Rub out
 - A large bird of prey
 - An exciting experience
 - So dull it makes you feel sleepy
 - The opposite of aunt
 - Pain in your ear
 - No sound at all
 - The arm of a coat
 - A special prize
 - A feeling of rage
 - A compass direction
- SOLUTION
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- DOWN
- The parts along the sides of something
 - Obtains

'Pyaar Testing is not just a love story - it's about families too'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Plabita Borthakur is no stranger to unconventional roles. The Assam-born actress first caught Bollywood's attention with her performance in PK but truly made waves with her fearless portrayal of Rehana Abidi in Lipstick Under My Burkha. Since then, she has built an impressive repertoire across films and web series, from Breathe: Into the Shadows to Bombay Begums. Now, she's back with Pyaar Testing on Zee5, a unique romantic drama that goes beyond the usual love story, weaving in the complexities of family dynamics.

In an exclusive conversation with The Pioneer, she shares what drew her to Amrita, how she navigates generational conflicts in real life, and why she believes every relationship - romantic or familial - needs open-mindedness. She also gives a glimpse into her upcoming projects and reveals a rather unexpected dream role.

What attracted the PK fame to Pyaar Testing was her character, Amrita's boldness and self-awareness.

"What I really liked about Amrita is that she speaks her mind," she says. "She's unapologetically honest about how she feels. She knows what she wants - what she likes, what she doesn't like, what's okay with her, what's not. I like that about her."

While Amrita's worldview is distinctly modern, she relates to her character's determination to challenge outdated ideas. "Coming from a small town and a traditional family, I understand her struggle. Amrita is not ready to blindly accept what the previous generation says is the 'right' way to live. And I resonate with that because I also believe that every generation needs to adapt. At the same time, the younger generation must also listen and learn from the older one. There needs to be a balance."

A central theme of Pyaar Testing is the concept of a "trial relationship" - a couple living together before marriage to test their compatibility. Plabita believes this is a practical approach.

"I think anybody who's looking at marriage, especially in an arranged setup, should consider living together first. It helps you see if the relationship is actually worth committing to."

She acknowledges that traditional families might struggle with such an idea, but she believes that love and understanding can bridge the gap.

"We can't expect traditional families to suddenly change everything they believe in. But if they love their children, they should at least try to understand why they think differently. It's about communication - taking one step towards each other."

As an actor and as an individual, she has experienced the push and pull between personal choice and societal expectations.

In an exclusive chat with **The Pioneer**, **Plabita Borthakur** opens up about her latest project, **Pyaar Testing**, where she plays the fiercely independent Amrita. She also shares behind-the-scenes moments with co-star Satyajit Sharma, hints at an upcoming comedy show and film, and reveals her dream role

"I think everyone faces this dilemma. Every generation is different. Our parents had to convince their parents about things, and now we have to do the same with ours. You grow up with certain values, but as you experience life, you learn and unlearn. Some things that applied to previous generations may not apply to us. The challenge is explaining that without causing conflict."

Her perspective on modern relationships is refreshingly open-minded.

"I don't believe in trends when it comes to relationships. To each their own. If two consenting adults want to live together, great. If they don't, that's great too. Whatever works for them. No one else should have a say in it."

Plabita shares a warm camaraderie with her Pyaar Testing co-star, Satyajit Sharma, with whom she has previously worked.

"Satyajit and I have already done another show together, where we played a couple. Even before that, we were friends - we used to meet at auditions. So, it was really nice working together again. We have great on-screen and off-screen chemistry."

Laughing, she recalls how Satyajit's high-energy personality made for entertaining moments on set.

"He cracks a lot of jokes and is always energetic, even in the mornings. I used to tell him not to bother me with so much energy so early in the day!"

Streaming platforms have been producing bold and unconventional content, and Pyaar Testing fits right into this trend. However, Plabita believes its uniqueness lies in how it balances romance and family dynamics.

"It's not just about a couple in love - it's also about their families. The show explores the relationship between two generations. Every character has an arc - there's something happening with the parents, the grandparents. It's about the amalgamation of two different mindsets coming together, and that's what makes it special."

Plabita has played an impressive variety of roles, but she's eager to explore new territories. "What excites me is playing something I haven't played before. I've been fortunate to get diverse roles, but I want to keep challenging myself. One role I'd really love to play is a serial killer. I think I would be very good at it."

She teases that she has an upcoming comedy show and a film in the pipeline, though she can't reveal details just yet.

As our conversation wraps up, it's clear that Plabita Borthakur is an artist who values growth, authenticity, and pushing boundaries-both on-screen and off. Whether it's playing a fiercely independent woman, breaking societal norms, or even (hopefully) becoming a serial killer on screen, she is here to leave a lasting impact.



I DON'T BELIEVE IN TRENDS WHEN IT COMES TO RELATIONSHIPS. TO EACH THEIR OWN. IF TWO CONSENTING ADULTS WANT TO LIVE TOGETHER, GREAT. IF THEY DON'T, THAT'S GREAT TOO. WHATEVER WORKS FOR THEM. NO ONE ELSE SHOULD HAVE A SAY IN IT



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AI powered cameras revolutionise surveillance industry

PNS|HYDERABAD

Imagine a world in which creativity and intellect collide, pushing the frontier of what is conceivable. Greetings from the Edge AI era, in which the combination of edge computing and artificial intelligence is transforming how companies run. A game-changing technology at the vanguard of this revolution is poised to change the face of numerous sectors.

The next generation of advanced AI cameras is here, with the goal of making AI more widely available, deployable and customisable than in the past. This ground-breaking invention is based on the innovative idea of appization, which enables companies to easily access AI's enormous potential. Whether it's improving security, transforming retail, improving healthcare, or simplifying industrial automation, this technology has the potential to open up new avenues and spur previously unheard-of expansion.

Businesses may now fully utilise AI to spur innovation, boost productivity and obtain a competitive advantage thanks to Edge AI's capability. AI has never had a more promising future and the potential is virtually limitless. With an exclusive conversation with Eric Fonseca, co-founder and VP of marketing at IndoAI Technologies Pvt Ltd, be ready to feel the excitement of invention and explore a world where intelligence and imagination collide!

He explains to us that, "IndoAI is driving innovation through Edge AI, ensuring privacy, security and adaptability as AI evolves. It makes AI solutions faster, safer and more effective by enabling on-device processing and lowering reliance on the cloud, which is in line with international data protection regulations like the GDPR and India's DPDP Act. Edge AI will be used more and more in the healthcare, governance, automotive and security sectors over the course of the next ten years to make decisions in real time, guaranteeing quicker reactions, better data security and less reliance on cloud computing." Consider a solution that is as flexible as your business. You can remain ahead of the curve with real-time processing, flexible

models and smooth scalability. This technology delivers unmatched flexibility and innovation, regardless of your industry-retail, healthcare, or more. Additionally, your data is kept private and safe using localised data processing! Can you imagine? "A major hurdle in AI adoption has always been flexibility-most AI cameras come with fixed functionalities, making customisation a challenge," the interviewee adds to our understanding of this. "In order to address this, there is a modular AI architecture that enables companies to install, modify and update AI models in the same way that apps do. Do you need guest management tomorrow and fire detection today? Simply install the necessary AI model; no hardware modifications are required, which speeds up and simplifies adaptation. Because of this, AI is now more widely available and scalable without requiring significant infrastructure investments."

AI-powered cameras are transforming the surveillance industry by providing unmatched accuracy and real-time analytics! The AI technology is revolutionising the industry by outperforming conventional CCTV systems. Not only that, but even in places with poor internet connectivity, the sophisticated facial recognition system has produced previously unheard-of accuracy. The spokesman goes on to clarify, saying, "There are three main advantages of moving AI computation to the device itself: Faster reaction times: Access control, fire detection and facial recognition in real time without lag or dependence on

internet bandwidth. Improved security: Complete control over the data keeps it on the device, lowering the possibility of hackers and leaks. Energy efficiency: By keeping data on the device, breach risks are decreased. The next stage of AI is being driven by this change, where decisions are made securely and rapidly at the edge rather than depending on centralised cloud servers."

By revealing the full potential of AI-powered cameras, they have made it possible for developers to produce a variety of cutting-edge applications, ranging from visitor control and vehicle number plate recognition to fire and smoke detection. This accomplishment demonstrates the dedication to encouraging domestic innovation and advancing the nation's goal of independence! We also hear that, "IndoAI adheres to a privacy-first approach by guaranteeing: Adherence to national data protection

regulations, stringent access restrictions that guarantee businesses have complete control over how AI is used and their data. The systems are made to monitor authorised users, not to track down employees or assets without permission! They keep refining the models to guarantee accuracy and fairness with data that is trained while on the road." In an audacious attempt to transform operational effectiveness, they have partnered with prestigious institutions and regional

administrations to use the potential of scalable, safe and intuitive technology. Additionally, "AI regulations aren't universally applicable. One needs to maintain compliance with local laws and regulations by storing data on Indian cloud servers in order to stay ahead of the competition! Modify AI models in accordance with local legal specifications. Pay attention to explainability; users should always comprehend the decision-making and data processing operations of AI. Localised AI is the way of the future, requiring businesses to adapt AI to many legal systems. Because the world is ready for this change."

What makes it unique? AI-driven automation is quicker and more secure when there is no reliance on the cloud. In contrast to conventional cameras, it enables companies to select and implement the AI models that are required. Unlike international brands, they are completely compliant with Indian rules. Made in India for India (and beyond!). They don't take a one-size-fits-all approach. The AI ensures improved outcomes for industries including government, healthcare and education. While global players concentrate on mass monitoring, they prioritize privacy-first, industry-specific AI solutions. "Real-time industrial safety monitoring is one of the most effective uses. It strengthens AI's function beyond surveillance by preventing workplace accidents by identifying dangers in manufacturing facilities. They decided to branch out into industrial AI applications because of this unforeseen use case! It strengthened the conviction that AI can actively save lives and enhance operations, not merely be used for monitoring." It is influencing the future of India's AI landscape with strong government support and an expanding AI ecosystem. Building AI-powered cameras in India is not just about business; it's about empowering the country. Less reliance on foreign AI hardware - reduce dependency on imports. More job opportunities - create careers in AI, machine learning and edge computing. Boosting India's AI leadership - strengthening the country's position as an AI innovation hub. Ensuring data sovereignty - keep AI solutions compliant with national security needs. And why not!



EDGE AI ADVANTAGES

Faster reaction times: Access control, fire detection and facial recognition in real time without lag or dependence on internet bandwidth.

Improved security: Complete control over the data keeps it on the device, lowering the possibility of hackers and leaks.

Energy efficiency: By keeping data on the device, breach risks are decreased. The next stage of AI is being driven by this change, where decisions are made securely and rapidly at the edge rather than depending on centralised cloud servers.



Team India eye ODI clean-sweep over England

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A big knock from Virat Kohli's currently silent bat along with a series clean-sweep over England will be on Team India's wish-list when the two teams square off in the third and final ODI here on Wednesday, marking the end of their Champions Trophy (CT) build-up. While India hold an unassailable 2-0 lead with identical four-wicket wins in each of the first two ODIs, Rohit Sharma's men will be extra motivated to get a win here at the Narendra Modi Stadium where they had suffered a crushing ODI World Cup final loss in 2023. Needless to say, having their batting mainstay Kohli among runs and a win would be perfect culmination to the home side's Champions Trophy preparations. The eight-team competition gets underway from February 19 in Karachi with India starting against Bangladesh the next day in Dubai as per a hybrid model of hosting. The team has already got a shot in the arm by Rohit's return to form. His 90-ball 119 in the second ODI was a source of relief to both the side and to him after a prolonged

run of poor scores. Kohli hasn't looked completely out of touch but hasn't stayed at the crease for long enough to give himself a chance for a big knock either. If he manages to click, Kohli is in with a chance create another record. He is 89 runs short of becoming only the third batter in history to score 14,000 runs in the format which arguably has been the run-machine's favourite. India don't seem to have put a foot wrong in this series as they continue to make the most of their rich reservoir of talent. The addition of Varun Chakravarty has given additional ammunition to their lethal spin attack which will be vital for the Champions Trophy and Mohammed Shami's return after lengthy injury layoff has been seamless too. Shami's successful comeback has certainly been assuring given that the Indian team management will spend an anxious day on Tuesday awaiting news on their premier fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah, whose availability for the Champions Trophy is still under doubt. As per the original time-line, Bumrah was slated for a comeback in the Ahmedabad ODI, but the



pace pacer is currently toiling at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru under the watchful eyes of specialists aiming to make the final squad that is set to be unveiled on Wednesday. Bumrah's guile on varied pitches

and conditions is something that no team across the world possesses and India would be desperate to have their trump card back in the mix as they chase another ICC trophy. Both India and England will enjoy

an off day on Tuesday as they have skipped training and other pre-match routines to rest and recuperate. Having ended his troubled run with the bat with a characteristic hundred in Cuttack, Rohit's

confidence will certainly rub off on the rest of the side. While Yashasvi Jaiswal could continue to warm the bench, India will expect better application and results from wicketkeeper-batter KL Rahul, who is going through a lean patch himself. But it would not be a surprise if India give the flamboyant Rishabh Pant a crack to get some game time and have another left-handed batter in the mix to try out additional combinations. India will need Shreyas Iyer's presence in the middle-order which has been bolstered by robust batting performances from Axar Patel. The 31-year-old all-rounder has shown immense maturity at No.5 in pressure situations of both the ODIs so far with knocks of 52 and 41 not out. Patel's exploits with the bat have taken some pressure off Ravindra Jadeja, who has chipped away at England with six wickets so far, exploiting the spin-friendly conditions perfectly to warm-up for similar set-ups in the Champions Trophy. But for Jos Buttler's England, this tour has raised more questions than they would have expected. England have suffered repeated implosions in their core batting

line-up across the T20Is and ODIs which has undone the impressive work that the opening pair of Phil Salt and Ben Duckett has been putting up. Buttler maintains his team remains a work in progress but exit of the talented Jacob Bethell due to injury hampers them further. Harry Brook has blown hot and cold in ideal conditions for batting and Joe Root's impressive returns haven't got the adequate support from others. Among bowlers, Adil Rashid has exploited the conditions perfectly but the onus will be on England batters to produce a unified show. Teams (from): India: Rohit Sharma (c), Shubman Gill (vc), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wk), Rishabh Pant (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh and Varun Chakravarty. England: Jos Buttler (c&wk), Harry Brook, Ben Duckett, Joe Root, Philip Salt, Jamie Smith (wk), Tom Banton, Brydon Carse, Liam Livingstone, Jamie Overton, Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Saqib Mahmood, Adil Rashid and Mark Wood.



Virat Kohli is world's best player regardless of form: Chris Gayle

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli may have been going through a poor run of form but the senior Indian batter remains the "best player in the world," feels former West Indian swashbuckler Chris Gayle. The 36-year-old Kohli endured yet another poor outing as he was dismissed for just five runs in the second ODI against England in Cuttack on Sunday. But Gayle, who has played alongside Kohli at the Royal Challengers Bengaluru in IPL, remains unperturbed by the Indian's lean stretch. "He is still the best player in the world regardless of the form, Virat Kohli is still the best player, the stats prove that, how many centuries across formats he has scored as well," Gayle said on the sidelines of an event here on Tuesday. "It's just one of those things that we cricketers go through in patches. I know it is coming at the back end of his career as well, but these things do happen, so he just needs to pick himself up and come back again." Kohli has been struggling for runs in international

cricket of late, but he was expected to find form in the ODIs, which he has dominated like no other for the longest time. Kohli's return to the format, however, was not a great one as he was caught behind off Adil Rashid in the second match after missing the opening game due to a sore knee. Asked if Kohli can break Gayle's record for most number of runs scored in the Champions Trophy, he said, "It is easy for him just to get 200 runs (more to surpass Gayle)." "I don't know how many games they will be playing but I am sure he can get over 200 runs, and I am sure he will get a century for sure, so it's just a matter of time before he goes on to break that record." Known for his flamboyance besides his big-hitting capabilities, Gayle called Indian captain Rohit Sharma the "new king in town" after the Mumbaier broke the Jamaican's record for most number of sixes in the ODI format. "Congratulations to Rohit, sports always need a new entertainer and Rohit has been entertaining all these

years as well I have done it alongside him. So he is the new king in town now. So congrats to him, and hopefully, he goes on to hit more sixes." Asked about youngster Abhishek Sharma's blistering hundred against England in the fifth T20I, Gayle said, "I heard about his innings, it was a cracking innings and for a youngster to do such a thing on an international platform, is huge and fantastic." Gayle also expressed his disappointment at West Indies' absence in the Champions Trophy. "I am disappointed, no West Indies in the Champions Trophy but it is good to have the Champions Trophy back, so I am looking forward to it." "Hopefully, it will be an entertaining one. I know it is actually taking place in Pakistan and Dubai, so hopefully, we will have some entertaining cricket." Asked to pick his semifinalists for the event starting February 19, Gayle said, "I'm going to be going off just my mind — India, England, Australia, and probably New Zealand."

South Africa could end ICC trophy drought this year: Graeme Smith

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Former captain Graeme Smith is optimistic that South Africa will end its prolonged wait for an ICC trophy this year, long before they host the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in 2027. With the eight-team Champions Trophy beginning on February 19 and World Test Championship (WTC) final scheduled for June this year, Smith believes South Africa is on the brink of breaking their ICC trophy drought. "Hopefully, we will end that wait much before the 2027 World Cup, with the Champions Trophy and WTC final coming up but if South Africa could win a WC trophy in front of a home crowd, it would be amazing," Smith, who serves as SA20 commissioner, told PTI Bhasha. "Over the next three years, we want to just keep pushing to improve our stadiums, pitches and our cricket

ecosystem, so that by the time we host the 2027 WC, we are the favourites." South Africa finished as runners-up at both the men's and women's T20 World Cups in 2024. Earlier this year, they were also defeated by India in the ICC Women's Under-19 World Cup final. However, the Proteas have a chance to lift spirits in the country as they prepare to face Australia in the WTC final this June. This will be their first appearance in the summit clash, having secured their spot after a crucial win over Pakistan in the Boxing Day Test in Centurion. Many believe South Africa had an easier run to the finals, having beaten teams such as India, West Indies, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. However, Smith, who boasts 9,265 runs in 117 Tests and 6,986 runs in 197 ODIs, dismissed the claims. "There is no smooth journey in cricket today. You have got



to do what you got to do. Right in the beginning, everyone knew who they were playing and who they were not playing. "South Africa has won 7 test matches in a row to qualify. Everyone should look into the Test ecosystem, how it works as you play what you have been told to play in that cycle." On the ongoing "country vs club" debate, Smith acknowledged the rise of T20 cricket but stressed the importance of creating a

sustainable model where all member boards collaborate. "I want to see Test cricket stay stronger and if we can keep it strong with at least 6 or 7 nations, that way Test cricket will stay strong," Smith, who led South Africa to a record 54 Test victories, said. "I often say that T20 cricket has to grow. We have seen it moving into America and also in lots of new regions. We will see it in the Olympics now. What amazes me is that how many cricket

fans it has pulled. "I think franchise cricket will probably end up having 3 or 4 outstanding leagues in the world, with maybe a tier-two system. But in the future, it's more about all the member boards working together to keep each other strong." Smith also highlighted the role of scheduling in ensuring financial stability. "Scheduling also helps the revenue model. India is amazing as they tour frequently, providing revenue that keeps nations afloat. But if England and Australia continue playing only each other and not engaging with African or other nations, it gets harder because Test cricket is commercially under pressure," he said. "If you look at how the money flows and the expenses, it puts Test cricket under strain. It's about working together and creating a model that can keep the game sustainable," he added.

Sheldon Jackson retires from first-class cricket

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prolific Saurashtra batter Sheldon Jackson on Tuesday retired from professional cricket after a career spanning 15 years, his last outing ending in a defeat to Gujarat in the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal here. Jackson, 38, retires with more than 7200 runs in 105 first-class matches with a highest score of 186, 21 hundreds and 39 half-centuries. That he ended his career with an average of over 45 speaks volumes about his consistency in first-class cricket. Jackson has been a multidimensional cricketer and besides being a reliable batsman and an excellent fielder. He also kept wickets for Saurashtra in the limited-over competitions. In the longer format,



however, he was not required to do the duty thanks to Sagar Jogiyani's presence. He scored 14 and 27 in his final two outings as Gujarat won by an innings and 98 runs. Jackson, who was once part of the Kolkata Knight Riders

set-up after being spotted by former Bengal player Joydeep Mukherjee, made his debut for Saurashtra in December 2011. After being on the fringes of selection for his state team Saurashtra for three years, he made his debut in December 2011. He made four fifties and three hundreds in the 2012-13 Ranji season, including back-to-back centuries in the quarter-final and semi-final against Karnataka and Punjab respectively, to help Saurashtra qualify for the final for the first time. Owing to his excellent run with the bat that year, he broke into the India A team for the series against West Indies A at home. He was also a prominent member in Saurashtra's second charge towards a Ranji Trophy title in the 2015-16 season. Last month, Jackson had called time on his limited-overs career after scoring 2792 runs in 84 innings, with his highest being an unbeaten 133 during the Vijay Hazare Trophy in 2022. In the limited-overs game, he struck nine centuries and 14 half-centuries in all.

and also because of Haryana losing nine wickets. Haryana's last five wickets tumbled in the final hour, with Dias producing a career-best 5/39 in 10.3 overs — his maiden five-wicket haul. Shardul, who had taken six wickets in the first innings, was the first to strike. Steaming in from the High Court end, he extracted lateral movement on a docile pitch, bowling a relentless 10-over spell across two sessions that read 10-3-26-3. From the Pavilion end, Dias provided perfect support, returning 6-2-12-2 in his first spell. Lakshay, Sumit frustrate Mumbai just as it seemed Mumbai would wrap things up early, Haryana's Lakshay (64 off 130; 9x4) and Sumit (62 off 96; 10x4) dug in, stitching a doughty stand against the run of play. On an eased-out fourth-day pitch, Sumit counterattacked, stepping out to Shams Mulani to negate the turn. Rahane turned to Dube's military

Gujarat crush Saurashtra by innings and 98 runs

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Pacers Priyajit Jadeja and Arzan Nagwaswalla shared seven wickets among them as Gujarat pummeled Saurashtra by an innings and 98 runs to enter the Ranji Trophy semifinals here on Tuesday. The Saurashtra batting malfunctioned again in the match as they were bundled out for 197 in their second innings, far away from the mark of 295 required to make Gujarat bat again. Left-arm pacer Nagwaswalla (3/54) and his right-arm colleague Priyajit (4/32) were unstoppable once Saurashtra resumed the day from 33 for no loss.

Rahane's century, Dias's effort put Mumbai in Ranji Trophy semifinal

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Skipper Ajinkya Rahane conjured a typically gritty hundred and pacer Royston Dias supported his effort with a five-wicket haul as defending champions Mumbai completed a fine escape act, scripting a commanding 152-run over Haryana to enter the Ranji Trophy semifinals here on Tuesday. Rahane, resuming on 88, wasted no time in the morning to notch 108 (180 balls; 13x4) — his 41st first-class century, that guided Mumbai to 339 in the second innings for an overall lead of 353 runs. Chasing 354, Haryana crumbled against left-arm pacer Dias (5/39) and Shardul Thakur (3/26), as the veteran quick completed a creditable nine-wicket haul for the match. They were bowled out for 201 as the joyous Mumbai dressing room might have forgotten that worrisome period when they were 65/5 in the first innings. Rahane made a bright beginning

in the first session, as two exquisite boundaries off Sumit Kumar and Anshul Kamboj took him to 99, before a nudged single towards midwicket carried him past the milestone off 160 balls. The Mumbai stalwart took his helmet off, looked skyward and seemed emotionally relieved as it was his first hundred of the season. However, Mumbai, resuming from 278/4, crumbled after his dismissal. Shivam Dube (44 overnight) fell two runs short of a fifty, and Mumbai lost their remaining five wickets for just 25 runs in under 10 overs. Anuj Thakral (4/70) led Haryana's charge, while Kamboj, Sumit and Jayant Yadav chipped in with two wickets each. But Haryana failed to replicate that spirit in their chase. Barring a Lakshay Dalal and Sumit Kumar sixth-wicket partnership worth 90 runs, Haryana's chase never gathered momentum, as they folded in 57.3 overs on a day when the play was agreed upon to be extended because of good light



medium pace, but Mumbai remained frustrated as misfields crept in, offering easy singles, though the steep target remained their advantage. Sumit soon reached his seventh first-class fifty in 72 balls, Rahane's sharp captaincy changed the game. The breakthrough came via off-spinner Tanush Kotian, who struck in his very first over. Lakshay, attempting to drag a ball from outside, gloved it faintly to the keeper. The umpire wasn't convinced, but Rahane immediately called for DRS and the UltraEdge showed a clear deflection. Dias then delivered another blow, as Rahane's astute bowling change ended Sumit's counterattacking knock. Brief Scores Mumbai 315 and 339 in 85.3 overs (Ajinkya Rahane 108, Suryakumar Yadav 70, Shivam Dube 48). Haryana 201; 57.3 overs (Lakshay Dalal 64, Sumit Kumar 62; Royston Dias 5/39, Shardul Thakur 3/26). Mumbai won by 152 runs.

and also because of Haryana losing nine wickets. Haryana's last five wickets tumbled in the final hour, with Dias producing a career-best 5/39 in 10.3 overs — his maiden five-wicket haul. Shardul, who had taken six wickets in the first innings, was the first to strike. Steaming in from the High Court end, he extracted lateral movement on a docile pitch, bowling a relentless 10-over spell across two sessions that read 10-3-26-3. From the Pavilion end, Dias provided perfect support, returning 6-2-12-2 in his first spell. Lakshay, Sumit frustrate Mumbai just as it seemed Mumbai would wrap things up early, Haryana's Lakshay (64 off 130; 9x4) and Sumit (62 off 96; 10x4) dug in, stitching a doughty stand against the run of play. On an eased-out fourth-day pitch, Sumit counterattacked, stepping out to Shams Mulani to negate the turn. Rahane turned to Dube's military

What Prudhvi said is completely wrong: *Laila* director



Director Ram Narayan entered into the industry as music director, ended up as director and made his debut with *Battala Ramaswamy Biopikku*. Now, he is directing Vishwak Sen in *Laila*. He talks about his struggles, what he likes and also his reaction to Prudhvi's political comments...

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Ram Narayan is the director of 'Laila' and this is his second film. He made his debut with 'Battala Ramaswamy Biopikku' which is a comedy drama with some witty dialogues. "I prefer naughty jokes, but the visuals are good," said Ram Narayan. He entered into the industry as a music director, but ended up as director. "I composed music for a few films, including 'Lavakusa,' Varun Sandesh film," said Ram Narayan.

Now, he is coming up with 'Laila'. "Initially, I narrated the story to a couple of young actors, though liked the story, they did not prefer to play the lady role, because they have to remove the moustache and also a few things to do," said Ram Narayan about the story. He added that in recent times, when he was searching to do a story, he got this female get-up idea.

One of his friends took him to producer Sahu and then he suggested actor Vishwak Sen for this story. "As I told, a couple of actors rejected this story because of the female get-up, so I didn't mention it and narrated the story to Vishwak Sen, till interval and then said about the female get-up. Luckily, he wanted to play a female role. So he liked the story and immediately accepted it," said Ram Narayan about how this story landed Vishwak Sen.

The director said that he likes the Old City culture. Hence, he roped in Gullu Dada for this film. "They are famous in the Old City and they played important roles in my film. They speak a Hindi-Telugu mix and it came out very nice," said the director. Abhimanyu Singh and

Prudhvi also played important roles.

Talking about actor Prudhvi and his goat comments which became viral, when asked how many goats are there in the film? "There are goats in the film, but whatever number he said is wrong. He should not talk like that and there is only one scene between Prudhvi and Vishwak. Abhimanyu Singh is doing mutton business, so he owned these goats," he clarified about goats. He added that the team is not responsible for Prudhvi's comments. "The numbers are wrong and he doesn't have scenes with Vishwak; it is his personal opinion," said the director. After Vishwak Sen accepted the story, they did a look test for him in the female get-up. "Initially, we did a look test and he sent it to a few people, which they liked. When the actual shooting started in his lady get-up, he made a video call to his father; he couldn't make out who this lady was? Then Vishwak revealed it and the next day the entire family came to shoot and they enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun while shooting," said Ram Narayan.

Vishwak turned lyric writer with this film. "Music director gave me the tune and I sent it to Vishwak. He called and showed the lyrics and asked about it. I said the lyrics are nice, then he said he wrote it. Initially, I couldn't believe it, but he changed a few lines on the spot. Actually he penned two songs for the film."

Akanksha Sharma is the female lead, while Kamakshi is also there in the film. "Kamakshi played a special role which she only could only do. I didn't reveal her role in the trailer, but it's a special one and she justified it. Initially, I had my doubts whether she would accept it or not, but when I approached her, she agreed immediately," said the director about Kamakshi.

The director said that he likes comedy and he wanted to continue with the same. "I like situational comedy, rather than writing punch dialogues. I never do punch comedy, as I feel that situational comedy gives more laughs. In this film he preferred it."

Talking about his future projects, he said he wants to focus on this film and once after release, he will think about his next film.



Is Allu Aravind planning to release *Girlfriend* now?

Top producer Allu Aravind is a master planner when it comes to his films and the release dates. He knows when he wants to release a film, how it does and his timing is always perfect and proved earlier many times. Now, the producer is also planning to come up with his film 'Girlfriend' that stars Rashmika

Mandanna and directed by Rahul Ravindran.

According to a source, the film was completed long back, but Allu Aravind kept it in the dark. The film is a romantic drama and Rahul Ravindran provided the story and he also directed it. The film completed its shoot in March last year, says the source. Geetha Arts is producing this film. "Now that 'Pushpa 2' has become a huge hit, especially in the Hindi belt, Rashmika has become a big star. Also she became nicknamed as National crush after her 'Animal' Hindi film which was a huge success. Allu Aravind waited for this time to release his 'Girlfriend'," says the source.

The film 'Girlfriend' has Rashmika as the main lead and all other actors don't are not big names. So, the film's success depends only on Rashmika Mandanna. Allu Aravind waited for a long time after Rashmika made her mark in down South and Hindi also. "It's a female-centric film. The story speaks about the importance of women in every-one's life," added the source. Actor Deekshith Shetty of 'Dasara' fame is playing opposite Rashmika in it.

ANUPAMA'S FIRST RELEASE IN THIS YEAR

Pradeep Ranganathan became an overnight star after the success of 'Love Today'. The film was made with a Rs 5 crore budget and grossed Rs 100 crore in Tamil. Pradeep is the lead actor, writer and also the director of this film. Now, the actor is coming up with a film titled 'Dragon' and is the lead actor. But the director is Ashwath Marimuthu of 'Ori Devuda' fame. The Telugu version is titled as 'Return of the Dragon' and it is produced by AGS Entertainment.

The interesting thing is that Anupama Parameshwaran is playing the female lead in this film. Anupama is a popular face in Telugu as she did many Telugu films and she has also proved as a talented actress. Of late, the actress is also playing glamorous characters from the film 'Tillu Square' and in this film also

she can be seen in both shades as a performer and also as glamorous actress.

Pradeep Ranganathan portrays a young man named Raghavan struggling to achieve something in life. His relationships with Anupama and Kayadu Lohar fall apart due to his irresponsible behavior. The trailer tells that it is an entertainer, designed to appeal to all audiences, with elements showcasing the twists and turns in his life. Popular directors KS Ravikumar, Gautham Vasudev Menon and Mysskin are also seen in key roles in this film. This is the first film for Anupama releasing in Telugu this year. She is busy with multiple projects, but a lot depends on this film which is releasing both in Tamil and Telugu. Leon James composed the music. 'Return of the Dragon' is all set to hit the screens on February 21.



First song from *Kannappa* is out

Vishnu Manchu's dream project 'Kannappa' is all set to hit the screens on April 25. Produced by his father Mohan Babu, the makers have been releasing something from the film on every Monday for the last few weeks. Now, they released the first song 'Shiva Shiva Shankara' and it was launched by none other than Sri Sri Shankar, founder of the Art of Living Foundation. This marks the first time Guruji has lent his presence to the music release of a film, making this a truly landmark event, according to the makers. The song launch event was held at Sri Sri Ravi Shankar ashram in Bengaluru, with the team of 'Kannappa', including Mohan Babu, Vishnu Manchu, director Mukesh Kumar Singh and others. Deeply rooted in devotion, the song captures the essence of Lord Shiva's divine energy, making its release an occasion of immense spiritual significance. In an official statement, the production team expressed their gratitude, saying, "This film is a labour of devotion, and having Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Guruji unveil our first song on our behalf is truly a blessing."

"It is an honour to have Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Guruji launch this divine song. Kannappa is a film deeply connected to Lord Shiva, and this moment adds immense spiritual value to our journey," said Mohan Babu on this occasion. The Telugu lyrics are penned by Ramajogayya Sastry, while Vijay Prakash lends his voice for this song. The song portrays a unique form of love and devotion towards Lord Shiva. Vishnu Manchu plays the role of Kannappa and in this song he shows his affection towards Lord Shiva. Preity Mukhundhan is also there in this song as his love interest.

The film was released at the time of Sankranthi and with this Anil wants to continue the Sankranthi sentiment in the near future. His earlier films 'F2' and 'Sarileru Neekevvaru' were also released during Sankranthi festival and became successful.

Now, Anil is joining hands with Megastar Chiranjeevi for a film which is already announced officially. Anil is going to start the shooting this summer and planning to release it by 2026 Sankranthi. He doesn't want to leave the Sankranthi sentiment; so the title for Chiranjeevi's film is considered to be 'Sankranthi Alludu', according to a source.

After Chiranjeevi's film he once again joined hands with Venkatesh for the sequel of 'Sankranthi Vasthunnam' and he is planning to release it by 2027 Sankranthi. It seems, Anil became the Sankranthi director.

Kiara Advani starts shooting *Toxic*

After 'KGF' film two parts' success, Yash is now shooting his next film titled 'Toxic'. Interestingly, the actor is shooting nearly three years of 'KGF Chapter 2'. He waited for the right story and the director and started this 'Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups' directed by Geethu Mohandas. KVN Production is producing this high budget film.

According to a source, Bollywood actress Kiara Advani has joined the shooting of this film in Bengaluru. This marks the debut of Kiara in Kannada and the film is also shot in English. This is another multi-lingual project for Kiara Advani as she earlier acted in 'Game Changer' opposite Ram Charan, but the film didn't do well either in Telugu or in Hindi.

Now, the actress is acting in another multi-lingual but this time a Kannada film is being released in all other languages including English. The makers aimed to release the film abroad with the English version, added the source. Now, it is getting curious how Kiara and Yash look on the screen as a pair and how the audience will take them. We have to wait and see. The film is all set to release this year. Nayanthara is also there in this film.

Actor Deekshith Shetty of 'Dasara' fame is playing opposite Rashmika in it.



Anil Ravipudi's Sankranthi sentiment continues

Director Anil Ravipudi is the most successful director after Rajamouli in Telugu Cinema. His recent film 'Sankranthi Vasthunnam' that stars Venkatesh, has created history by being the highest grosser in regional cinema. The film was released at the time of Sankranthi and with this Anil wants to continue the Sankranthi sentiment in the near future. His earlier films 'F2' and 'Sarileru Neekevvaru' were also released during Sankranthi festival and became successful.

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