

### DON'T MISS.

### Shallow fog likely in Coastal AP

Shallow fog is likely to occur at isolated places in the morning in Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next three days, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday. In a daily weather report here, it said that the maximum temperatures are likely to be above normal by 2-3 degrees Celsius in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days. Dry weather is likely to prevail in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days. The lowest minimum temperature of 14 degrees Celsius was recorded at ... -PAGE: 4

### **RSS office has 3** 13-storey towers

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has moved back its office in the city to its old address following the near completion of the rebuilding project spread across over 3.75 acre premises, housing three 13-storey towers and around 300 rooms and offices in total. Sources said the rebuilding exercise of the RSS office, Keshav Kunj, has cost nearly Rs 150 crore collected through contributions from over 75,000 people sympathetic to the Hindutva organisation's ideology and took over eight years, a ...



### Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 18L cr

Investors suffered an erosion of Rs 18 lakh crore in six days of market fall, where the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 3 per cent amid continuous foreign fund outflows and trade war worries. The 30share BSF Sensex which tanked more than 900 points intraday, ended at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent following a recovery in bank stocks in the last hour. During the day, the benchmark tanked 905.21 points or 1.18 per cent to sink below the 76,000-level and hit a low of 75,388.39. -PAGE: 8



### 'Protecting devotees' sentiments my concern' Happy that those responsible for Tirumala

laddu adulteration were arrested: Dy CM

### PNS VIJAYAWADA

need for measures to prevent such incidents in the future. Pawan Kalyan Deputy Chief Minister Pawan made these comments after visiting Kalyan has expressed his deep conthe Sri Agastya Maharshi Temple and Ashram in Chottanikkara, Kerala, as cern over protecting the sentiments of devotees visiting the Tirumala part of his personal pilgrimage temple. "Millions of devotees across across South India. the country have unwavering faith Speaking to the media, he said, "It

in Lord Balaji. They come to is unfortunate that the Tirumala Tirumala with deep spirituality and laddu was adulterated. It is good that trust and their sentiments should the special investigation team has arrested those responsible for the adulteration. This is a step forward in the investigation. Continued on Page 7

not be hurt," he said. He expressed his disappointment over the recent laddu adulteration issue in Tirumala, and stressed the

# Are we not creating class of parasites?



P3

# CM reviews annual budget allocation

#### PNS 📕 VIJAYAWADA

The State government is set to present the 2025-26 annual budget in both Houses of the legislature on February 28. With the Assembly sessions scheduled to begin on February 24, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu held a review meeting at his residence in Undavalli to discuss the budget. Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav and other senior officials were present at the meeting. As the government has already

announced the launch of the Super Six schemes this year, much of the discussion centred around budget allocations for these initiatives. Key schemes, such as "Talli ki Vandana", "Annadata Sukhibhava" and free bus travel for women are set to be rolled out this year.

Balancing the funding for welfare schemes alongside development programmes has emerged as a significant challenge for the government.

The Chief Minister provided guidance to officials on how to address these challenges and ensure effective coordination between the welfare initiatives and development projects in the upcoming budget.

### **SC SLAMS FREEBIES PROMISED BEFORE POLLS**

#### PNS 📕 NEW DELHI

On political parties promising "freebies" ahead of polls, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said instead of bringing people into the mainstream for national development "are we not creating a class of parasites"

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih said it would be better to make people a part of the society's mainstream and contribute towards national development.

"Rather than promoting them to be a part of the mainstream of the society by contributing to the devel-opment of the nation, are we not creating a class of parasites?" it asked.

Justice Gavai went on to add, "Unfortunately, because of these freebies, which just on the anvil of elections are declared, like 'Ladki Bahin' and other schemes, people are not willing to work.

The apex court was hearing a matter concerning the right to shelter of homeless persons in urban areas and said people got free rations and money without working. "We quite appreciate your concern

for them but would it not be better

to make them a part of the mainstream of society and permit them to contribute to the development of

appearing for one of the petitioners, said there was hardly anybody in the country who did not want to work, if they had work.

The judge said, "You must be having only one sided knowledge. I come from an agricultural family. Because of the freebies in Maharashtra which they just announced prior to elections, agriculturists are not getting labourers.



### **RBI to issue Rs 50** notes with Guv Malhotra's signature

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday said it will soon issue Rs 50 denomination banknotes



"Unfortunately, because of these freebies,

which just on the anvil of elections are declared, like 'Ladki Bahin' and other schemes, people are not willing to work." "We quite appreciate your concern for them but would it not be better to make them a part of the mainstream of society and permit them to contribute to the development of the nation?" the bench asked.

The court, however, said it did not

want to debate. It said everybody, including attorney general R Venkataramani, was on the same page that providing

shelter to the homeless merited due attention.

"But at the same time, should it Venkataramani said the Centre which would address various issues, including the provision of shelter for

Continued on Page 7



the nation?" the bench asked. Advocate Prashant Bhushan,

not be balanced?" the bench asked. was in the process of finalising the urban poverty alleviation mission,

the urban homeless.



A robust batting show led by the Shubman Gill's attractive century heralded India's 142-run hammering of England in the third and final ODI as the hosts completed a dominant 3-0 clean sweep to culminate preparations for the Champions Trophy, here on Wednesday. India ticked all the remaining boxes with vice-captain Gill (112) following up his twin fifties earlier in the series with a seventh ODI ton of his career while middle-order mainstays Virat Kohli (52) and Shreyas lyer (78) pushed India to a formidable. -SPORTS ing at the Venue Convention Centre in Vijayawada on Wednesday. The primary objective of the gathering was to strategise for the electoral success of Alapati Rajendra Prasad, the NDA-supported candidate for the Krishna-Guntur Graduate MLC position. The meeting was chaired

Leaders of the National Democratic

Alliance (NDA) from the NTR and

PNS VIJAYAWADA

by Nettem Raghuram, the TDP president for the NTR district. During the meeting, Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath, also known as Chinni, expressed confidence in



ថ្មី ចេខដាន ការ

Alapati Rajendra Prasad's victory, graduates registered to vote in the predicting a significant majority in his MLC elections across the seven condistrict. He highlighted the ongoing stituencies within voter mapping initiative aimed at liamentary area. stituencies within the Vijayawada par-Cont

Sanjay Malhotra.

Malhotra assumed office in December 2024 replacing Shaktikanta Das who demitted office after completion of his extended term. "The design of these notes is similar in all respects to Rs 50 banknotes in Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series," the RBI said in a statement.

All banknotes in the denomination of Rs 50 issued by the Reserve Bank in the past will continue to be legal tender.

## Jagan slams TDP, vows YSRCP's return

### Says Chandrababu betraying public trust by discarding manifesto

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Highlighting his administration's Rs 2.71-lakh crore direct benefit transfers and fulfilment of promises despite COVID-19 challenges, former Chief Minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has criticised CM Chandrababu Naidu's coalition government for neglecting key sectors, failing to fulfil the poll promises and cancelling

YSRCP's welfare schemes. During a meeting with public representatives of the united Guntur district, Jagan Mohan Reddy said Chandrababu Naidu has been betraying public trust by discarding the manifesto and neglecting key

sectors like education, healthcare, agriculture, and industries. He stated that the YSRCP secured 40 per cent of the vote share in the last elections, with just a 10-per cent reduction.

He attributed this loss to his refusal to make false promises like Chandrababu.

However, he assured his supporters that he remains deeply connected to the people and will continue in politics for another 25-30 years.

He questioned the future of those in the current government, asking what would happen when people realise the deception.

**Continued on Page 2** 



### Visakhapatnam Airport hit by growth constraints

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

BJP State president and MP Daggubati Purandeswari had a meeting with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari in New Delhi on Wednesday. During the meeting, Purandeswari stressed the necessity of service roads for the bypass as Ámaravati has become the State capital. She highlighted the request of local farmers and residents, who have been asking for service roads in the vicinity of the bypass. d on Page Z

Government inaction, slot restrictions and reduced flights limit airport's potential PNS VISAKHAPATNAM The Visakhapatnam International Airport, a key gateway for Andhra Pradesh, is struggling to reach its full

factors, including perceived govern-ment inaction, slot restrictions, and Air traveller associations have reduced aircraft movements. These challenges are hindering growth in acknowledged the State governboth passenger and cargo traffic, ment's efforts to boost internationimpacting the region's economic al travel, but emphasised the need for stronger focus on Middle-East

connectivity. "The government aims to make Vizag an IT, tourism, and financial hub, but isn't adequately promoting international links to the Middle East," representatives stated.

Tourism and travel industry stakeholders point to missed oppor-tunities. K. Vijay Mohan, president of the Tours and Travels Association of Andhra (TTAA), highlighted the case of Emirates' feasibility study for a Visakhapatnam-Dubai flight.



### MP meets CM, Lokesh to discuss Sports City in Amaravati

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni), along with Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh, met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at the CM's residence in Undavalli on Wednesday to discuss the development of the Sports City.

representatives of various organisa- attract global attention.

tions, including Siddharth from Populous Global Architects, Venkat from NV Architects and Vadamudi Harsha, Managing Director of IBS

Project Management Consultancies, were present. The discussions focused on the plans and developments related to the Sports City project, which aims to boost sports SAAP Chairman Ravi Naidu and infrastructure in Amaravati and

### Over 2 cr devotees take holy dip on Maghi Purnima

#### PNS PRAYAGRAJ

prospects.

Amid heightened security measures, more than two crore devotees took a dip in the Sangam till 6 pm on Wednesday on the occasion of Maghi Purnima during the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela here.

potential due to a combination of

According to an official statement, special arrangements have been made for the sacred bath that began early Wednesday. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath

has been monitoring the event since 4 am at the war room in his official residence in Lucknow, the statement said.

With the 'snan' on Maghi Purnima, another auspicious day for holy bath, the month-long 'Kalpavas' will be ending and around 10 lakh 'Kalpavasis' will start leaving the Maha Kumbh. The administration has requested them to follow traffic rules and use only



authorised parking spaces. While the Maha Kumbh, over 47 crore peolakhs of devotees are headed to the ple have taken a dip in the Sangam, it Sangam area, the government in the Flower petals were also showered statement said that by 6 pm, over two crore people had taken the rituon devotees from helicopter. Cricket legend Anil Kumble took

al dip at the Triveni Sangam and other ghats. Overall since the start of a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam along with his wife Chaitna

After arriving in Prayagraj on Tuesday, Kumble chose to perform the bathing ritual on Maghi Purnima, a day when no VIP protocols are observed.

He joined the devotees as a regular pilgrim, taking a boat to the confluence with his wife for the ritual. Director General of Police Prashant Kumar, Principal Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad and officials of CM Secretariat are also present at the war room, the statement said. Maha Kumbh Mela DIG Vaibhav Krishna said, "Our arrangements are quite good and police deployment is there at all places. Crowd is moving comfortably. Our SOPs are being fol-

lowed. Maha Kumbh SSP Rajesh Dwivedi said the movement of devotees was going on smoothly and that security personnel were taking care of all (crowd) pressure points. "We made elaborate arrangements during the previous 'snan' on Basant Panchami too. Our arrangements have been further augmented this time," he said.

Talking about security arrangements in place for the sacred 'snan', the SSP said, "More deployment has been done at all the pressure points. Along with that, we are briefing people to ensure a smooth movement." The UP government also launched 'Operation Chaturbhuj' at the Maha Kumbh to ensure the safety of the pilgrims.

According to the statement, the initiative has strengthened security with advanced surveillance by the Integrated Command and Control Center (ICCC), which monitored the event using 2,750 high-tech cameras, drones, and an anti-drone system for round-the-clock vigilance.

MAHA KUMBH Ramtirtha.



### vijayawada 02

## **Lokesh meets Sify Technologies Chairman to attract investments**

### Discuss strategies for creating job opportunities for youth

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Minister for Education, Information Technology, Electronics and RTGS, Nara Lokesh, has held a productive Lokesh, has held a productive meeting with Raju Vegesna, Chairman and Managing Director of Sify Technologies, to explore investment oppor-tunities in Andhra Pradesh. The meeting took place at Lokesh's residence in Undavalli on Wedneeday, where both on Wednesday, where both discussed strategies for creating job opportunities for the State's youth through significant investments.

During the meeting, Vegesna highlighted Sify Technologies' prominence as a leading player among Fortune 500 companies. He also detailed Sify's role in providing data services to major corporations, including numerous banks across India, as well as clients in North

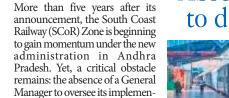


America, United Kingdom and Singapore. Key discussions censtressed the government's tred on Sify's potential expan-'Speed of Doing Business' inision plans in Andhra Pradesh, tiative and the newly introduced particularly in the areas of IT policies designed to attract establishing a state-of-the-art investors. He assured investors Data Centre and a cable landthat the Andhra Pradesh goving station in Visakhapatnam. ernment is committed to facil-Minister Lokesh took the itating business growth, creatopportunity to elaborate on ing local employment, and

Minister Lokesh took the opportunity to elaborate on the State's investment climate, stressed the government's 'Speed of **Doing Business' initiative** and the newly introduced IT policies designed to attract investors.

the State's investment climate, boosting the economy.

Expressing strong interest in investing in the State, Vegesna acknowledged AP's potential for growth. Lokesh encouraged Sify representatives to engage with the Economic Development Board to further explore and solidify their plans.



PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

tation. The Centre sanctioned the new railway zone in 2021 as part of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, incorporating the historic Waltair division. Despite its official approval, progress has been sluggish in the years since. Now, following the formation of the NDA government in the State, efforts to operationalise the SCoR

have been rekindled. At the forefront of this push are Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu, Visakhapatnam MP M Sribharat, and IT Minister Nara Lokesh.



SCoR Zone gains momentum, leadership void persists

Their lobbying efforts recently culminated in Prime Minister Narendra Modi laying the foundation stone for the project during a visit to Visakhapatnam. A significant outcome of this renewed initiative has been the retention of the Waltair Division, now renamed the Visakhapatnam Division, within the new railway zone.

Yet, for all the progress, the lack leader of a General Manager remains a significant concern. Covering

PNS NEW DELHI



ationalisation represents the fulfil-ment of a long-standing demand-one that has been nearly a decade in the making. Yet, with no clear leadership in place, concerns remain over potential bureaucratic delays. As the SCoR inches closer to reality, the chalenge now lies in ensuring that its newfound momentum is not lost

Chalasani Gandhi, former General Secretary of the East to administrative inertia

**1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS** 

Court convicts ex-Congress

MP Sajjan Kumar in murder case

connectivity and economic devel-

opment. However, while General

Managers have been appointed for

both the East Coast Railway

(ECoR) and the South-Central

Railway (SCR), the SCoR remains

without a dedicated administrative

## 79 farmers allocated 91 returnable plots

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

As many as 79 farmers from Mangalagiri and Thullur mandals, who had provided land for the capital city, were allo-cated 191 returnable plots through a lottery system at the APCRDA office on Wednesday. The farmers from Krishnaayapalem, Navuluru 1, 2, Nidamarru 1, 2, Velagapudi, Mandadam 1, 2 were allocated plots from 10 AM onwards, while farmers from Kuralagallu 1, 2, Thullur 1, 2, Nekallu, and Anantavaram received their plots in the afternoon.

APCRDA Commissioner K Kannababu handed over pro-

On Thursday, 364 return-able plots will be allocated to visional certificates to the farmers who received the returnable plots. He urged the 167 farmers from 11 villages farmers to complete the regiswho had provided land for Amaravati, through a lottery tration process as quickly as possible. With development system. work beginning on the LPS lands, the Commissioner reminded the farmers to avoid delays in registration and announced the opening of nine new registration centres. APCRDĂ Additional Commissioner Sai Praveen Chand, Lands Joint Director David Raju, Special Deputy Collectors G Bhimarao, Sheshareddy, Ravinder, P Padmavati, K Swarna Mary and other officials attended the

The lottery for farmers om Dondapadu, from Pichukulapalem, Ainavolu, Lingayapalem, Shakamuru and Venkatapalem will start at 10 AM. Farmers from Uddandarayunipalem, Malkapuram, Rayapudi 1 & 2, Kondamarajupalem, and

Abbarajupalem will be allotted plots starting from 2 PM. APCRDA officials have requested the respective farmers to be present for the



### Silver ornaments donated to temple

#### PNS TIRUPATI

Silver ornaments were donated to Sri Kapileswara Swamy

Temple on Wednesday. Totalling around 9kg 115 grams the silver ornaments were donated to Sri Kamakshi Ammavaru of Sri Kapileswara Swamy Temple by Sri SV Narahari of Tirumala, the devotee, along with his family on Wednesday.

received the ornaments at the Unjal Mandapam.

A total of 12 types of ornaments worth approximately Rs

After that, the priests performed a special puja for the jewels. Temple Deputy EO Devendra Babu, AEO K Subbaraju, Superintendent KP Chandrasekhar, DE Mallaiah, Temple Inspector A Ravikumar and other officers

TTD JEO Veerabrahmam were present.

a murder case stemming from 1984 anti-Sikh riots. Special judge Kaveri Baweja

A detailed judgment is awaited.

### **'Protecting** devotees'...

We must ensure that such incidents do not haprespect to offerings li

Kumar was produced in court from Tihar jail for the pronouncement.

Former Congress MP Sajjan Jaswant Singh and his son Tarundeep Singh were killed on November 1, 1984. Though Kumar now faces a maximum of death penalty and a mini-Punjabi Bagh police station mum of life term in prison after being convicted on Wednesday by a Delhi court in registered the case initially, a special investigation team later took over the investigation.

> court framed charges against Kumar, finding a "prima facie" case against him. According to the prosecution, a huge mob, armed with deadly weapons, resorted to large-scale looting, arson and destruction of properties of Sikhs to avenge the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

### of the complainant, who is Jaswant's wife, killing the men aside from looting articles and setting their house ablaze, the prosecution claimed. Putting Kumar on trial, the court order found sufficient

The mob attacked the house

material to form a "prima facie opinion that he was not only a participant, but had also led the mob". According to a report of Nanavati Commission, constituted to probe the violence and its aftermath, there were 587 FIRs filed in Delhi in relation to the riots that saw killings of 2733 people. Of the total, about 240 FIRs were closed by police as "untraced" and 250 cases resulted in acquittal.

### 'Do not use Parliament for personal attacks'

#### PNS VISAKHAPATNAM/DELHI

Strongly condemning the TDP members levelling false allegations against YSRCP leadership in Parliament, YSRCP has said that the coalition members should try to get nore benefits to the State instead

Govt fully committed to utilising the PMAY Gramin 2.0 scheme efficiently PNS VIJAYAWADA State Minister for Information



### end of March.

mismanagement of housing funds

ciaries were removed from the He said that the previous gov- central portal, resulting in an o those indi niustia

pen again in the future. Precautionary measures should be taken with

### Alapati's victory...

### **Continued from Page 1**

He noted that the NDA alliance is assigning one observer for every 30 voters to facilitate this mapping process. Besides, he emphasised the efforts being made at the grassrootslevel to ensure that the first-choice Rao, Jaggayyapeta MLA Sriram Rajagopal, MLC Ashok Babu, BJP NTR district president Adduri votes in the MLC elections are cast

# Minister slams previous regime for **Continued from Page 1**

On December 16, 2021, the

Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rammohan Rao, Central MLA Bonda Umamaheswara Rao, Nandigama MLA Thangirala Soumya, Mylavaram MLA Vasantha Venkata Krishna Prasad, Tiruvuru MLA Kolikapudi Srinivasa

#### 9.28 lakhs were donated. passed the conviction order and posted the arguments on sentence on February 18. "Accused has been convicted... List for order on sentence on the next date of hearing,' she said.

resorting to personal attacks.

Speaking to media here on Wednesday, Tirupati MP Guru Murthy said TDP members are repeatedly trying to mislead the Parliament by levelling false allegations against our leaders including P Mithun Reddy, Peddireddi Ramchandara Reddy and others.

"We condemn the allegations and the false stories being published by TDP friendly media," he said.

If there is a case, investigation will take its own course and there is no need to misuse the valuable time of the Parliament for repeatedly levelling false allegations against our leadership and restrain from personal attacks, he said.

The State has been witnessing vindictive assaults on YSRCP leaders and cadre across the State which we will raise in the House, he added.

& Public Relations and Housing, Kolusu Parthasarathi, expressed concerns over the negligence of the previous government, which led to the loss of approximately Rs 2,378 crore in Central housing funds. He criticised the earlier government for mishandling the funds and failing to complete housing projects on time, causing significant injustice to the poor.

In a press conference at the State Secretariat on Wednesday, Minister Parthasarathi reaffirmed the current government's commitment to providing permanent housing for all eligible poor families over the next five years. Under the PMAY Gramin 1.0 scheme, the government has completed 1.15 lakh houses and aims to complete 1.50 lakh



out of the remaining 7.35 lakh houses

Furthermore, Parthasarathi assured that the government is fully committed to utilising the PMAY Gramin 2.0 scheme efficiently. A survey to identify beneficiaries for this scheme has already begun, with 11,600 beneficiaries identified so far. The state aims to secure five lakh houses under this scheme and has already sanctioned 50,000 houses, with plans to sanction another 4.5 lakh by the more by the end of June this year,

#### mately Rs 3,598 crore in housing construction funds, depriving the poor of their rightful housing. He pointed out that despite the Central government remaining 684 beneficiaries were allocating Rs 20,726 crore for allocated homes in the current fishousing under the PMAY cal year. (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana) Gramin scheme for the state, these funds were not utilized properly and many housing

projects were not completed on schedule, leading to the loss of over Rs 2,378 crore in central funding. The Minister also revealed that,

under their current administration, in 2018 an extensive housing survey was conducted statewide, identifying 3,18,987 beneficiaries under PMAY Gramin 1.0. However, upon the YSRCP government's return to power in 2019, 1,39,243 benefi-Central government.

Despite this, the central government allocated houses to 1,79,060 ple activities. out of 1,79,744 remaining beneficiaries in 2021-22, and the

Parthasarathi condemned the previous government's attempts to blame the current administration for these issues, calling it absurd and a distortion of the facts. He also pointed out that between 2014 and 2019, the state government had allocated Rs 2.50 lakh per house under the NT Rama Rao Rural Housing Scheme, along with additional amounts for SCs, STs, and PVTGs, whereas the previous government had only allocated Rs 30,000 over and above the Rs 1.50 lakh allocated by the

prasadam and other tem-

He further clarified, "My visit to the temples in South India, including in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, is a completely personal matter, unrelated to politics.

Four-and-a-half years ago, I had planned to visit these temples, but due to health reasons, I couldn't make it.

Now, I am visiting these temples. Along with this, I have raised the issue of illegal sandalwood trafficking with the police and requested the Central government to introduce new policies regarding sandalwood sales across the country.'

#### for Alapati Rajendra Prasad He mentioned that the coalition

leaders and activists are dedicated to mobilising graduates to the polling booths to ensure their participation. He also advocated for the inclusion of knowledgeable individuals like Alapati Rajendra Prasad in the legislature. He remarked that the NDA alliance members are particularly focused on these elections and are actively engaging graduate voters. meeting.

Sriram, Jana Sena Party district president Samineni Udayabhanu, AP State Madiga Corporation Chairperson Undavalli Sridevi, AF Warehousing Corporation Chairman Ravi Venkateswara Rao, Maritime Board Chairman Damacherla Satyanarayana, and Lidcap Chairman Pilli Manikya Rao, among others, attended the

### Purandeswari meets Nitin Gadkari

**Continued from Page 1** 

A memorandum was submitted to Gadkari by Purandeswari, along with the local farmers and residents.

The issue of allocating a service road for the Vijayawada West Bypass Road Package 3 was raised. Purandeswari, MP and BJP State president, explained the situation to the Union Minister for Roads and National Highways, Nitin Gadkari. The Union Minister responded positively to the request.

### IODAY

ALMANAC	
Month & Paksham:	Krishr
Tithi:	
Pratipada:	Feb 12 (
	to Feb 13 (
Dwitiya:	Feb 13 (
	to Feb 14 (
Nakshatram:	
Magha:	Feb 12 (
	to Feb 13 (
Purva Phalguni:	Feb 13 (
	to Feb 14 1
Rahukalam:	1:56 PM to
Yamagandam:	6:47 AM to
Varjyam:	05:48 AM to
Gulika:	9:38 AM to
Amritakalam:	06:34 PM to
	10.07 DM to

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Month & Paksham:	: Krishna Paksha					
Tithi:						
Pratipada:	Feb 12 07:23 PM					
	to Feb 13 08:22 PM					
Dwitiya:	Feb 13 08:22 PM					
	to Feb 14 09:52 PM					
Nakshatram:						
Magha:	Feb 12 07:35 PM					
Dumus Dhalanni	to Feb 13 09:07 PM					
Purva Phalguni:	Feb 13 09:07 PM					
	to Feb 14 11:09 PM					
Rahukalam:	1:56 PM to 3:21 PM					
Yamagandam:	6:47 AM to 8:13 AM					
Varjyam:	05:48 AM to 07:32 AM					
Gulika:	9:38 AM to 11:04 AM					
Amritakalam:	06:34 PM to 08:16 PM					
Abhijit Muhurtham:	12:07 PM to 12:53 PM					
VIJAYAWAD	A WEATHER					
Forecast: Sunny	/					
Temp: 35°° ∫	11/					

Humidity: 68% Sunrise: 6:34 AM Sunset: 6:09 PM

Updated: February 12, 2025 5:00 PM

### Are we not creating class...

#### Continued from Page 1

The bench asked him to verify from the Centre the time frame within which the scheme would be applicable and also place on record the aspects covered by it.

"In the meantime, the attorney general is also requested to take instructions as to whether till the implementation of the said scheme, the Union of India would continue with the National Urban Livelihoods Mission," it said.

The bench further asked the Centre to collate information from all states for the consideration of the issue on a pan-India basis.

One of the petitioners during the hearing 3 lakh urban homeless in Delhi alone. said it was unfortunate that the cause of the homeless was not being addressed as it was last on the priority.

The bench was irked when he claimed the authorities showed compassion only for the rich, not the poor.

"Don't make a speech of Ramlila Maidan in this court," said Justice Gavai, "and don't make unnecessary allegations. Don't make a political speech here. We won't permit our

courtrooms to be converted into a (place of) political battle." The judge went on to add, "How do you say the compassion is shown only for the rich? Even for the government, how can you say this?"

Painting a picture that the government did not do anything or show concern for the poor was not in a good taste, the court added. Bhushan said as per a note placed before the bench, as on December 4, 2024, a total of 2,557 shelters was sanctioned by the states or union territories and 1,995 shelter homes were functional with a capacity of 1.16 lakh beds.

He said a survey showed there were about

Bhushan said as per the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board, the total capacity of the shelters was 17,000 persons of which only 5,900 such facilities had beds.

The DÚSIB counsel said the board had 197 shelter homes running in Delhi as on date with a total capacity of 17,000 persons. In the last four years, he said, the average maximum occupancy was 5,500 in all shelter homes

### Visakhapatnam Airport hit by...

### Continued from Page 1

"The government seems to be prioritising Vijayawada, even with an existing Air India Express flight to Sharjah. A second Gulf flight from Vijayawada is unlikely to be viable,' he argued. He recalled the successful seven-year operation of Air India's Visakhapatnam-Dubai flight (via Hyderabad) before its pandemic-era withdrawal.

Vizag's strategic importance for cargo operations is also clear. 'Maximum exports of seafood, pharmaceuticals, apparel, and finished goods from Andhra Pradesh originate from Vizag," explained Vijay Mohan. "A passenger aircraft can carry two tonnes of cargo, offering a significant advantage." However, logistical hurdles remain. The proximity of Vijayawada to Hyderabad, with its numerous Middle-East flight options, makes it a more cost-effective choice for both air travel and cargo transport,

#### due to the added expense and time of road transport from Vizag.

Operational constraints further complicate matters. O. Naresh Kumar, vice-president of the AP Air Travellers Association (APATA), called for more late-night and earlymorning flights. He expressed concern over the Navy's proposed airport closure from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. between May and August, urging Minister of Civil Aviation K. Rammohan Naidu to address the

issue with the Defence Ministry. Despite these challenges, passenger demand remains strong. "All flights, domestic and international (Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok), are wellpatronised," said Airport Director S. Raja Reddy. "Demand for a direct Dubai flight from Vizag has persisted since its discontinuation." Data reveals a concerning trend. Aircraft movements have decreased from 24,182 in 2018-19 to 20,120 in 2023-24. Domestic flights fell from 22,376 to 19,653, and international flights.

### Jagan slams TDP, vows...

### Continued from Page 1

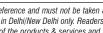
He pointed out that TDP leaders are now afraid to enter villages because they have failed to keep their promises. He mocked Chandrababu's slogans, saying that instead of being a "guarantee for the future", he has become a "guarantee for fraud".

He slammed the coalition government for being involved in multiple scams, including sand and liquor scandals. He said corruption is rampant, bribes have become necessary for any work, gambling clubs are openly operating, and those who question the government are being arrested under harsh laws. He warned that such injustice will not last and that the people will give a strong lesson. He promised that YSRCP will return to power with Jagan 2.0 governance. He assured that no wrongdoers would be spared and that legal action would be taken against those involved in corruption. He admitted that during his tenure, COVID-19 restricted his ability to support party workers fully, but he pledged to stand by every worker in the future. He cautioned that the term of local bodies will end in March and that the ruling party will try to place its people in key positions through pressure and false cases. He urged his cadre to stay strong, saying that such situations are temporary and that YSRCP will soon be back in power.

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### vijayawada 03



# **'Polam Pilustondi' to** improve crop yield

### Collector interacts with farmers at Anumanchipalli

### PNS VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has urged farmers to engage actively in the Polam Pilustondi programme, which aims to improve crop yields while minimising cultivation expenses. This initiative is designed to equip farmers with the latest agricultural techniques and best practices to enhance their farming operations.

On Wednesday, Collector Lakshmisha visited several villages within the Jaggayyapet mandal to assess various development programmes at the grassroots-level. He participated in the 'Polam Pilustondi' pro-gramme held in Anumanchipalli village, where he enquired about the crops being cultivated, the use of fertilisers, and their availability.

Dr Lakshmisha gathered insights from farmers regarding their needs for the effective management of daily agricultural tasks. The farmers highlighted the necessity for agricultural machinery and voiced their concerns regarding the issue of monkey interference.

In his address, Collector Lakshmisha emphasised that the 'Polam Pilustondi' programme serves to inform farm-

Collector Lakshmisha visited several villages within the Jaggayyapet mandal to assess various development programmes at the grassroots-level. He participated in the 'Polam Pilustondi' programme held in Anumanchipalli village, where he enquired about the crops being cultivated, the use of fertilisers, and their availability

ers about the challenges they encounter in their fields concerning their crops and to implement strategic solutions. He encouraged farmers to adopt natural aged farmers to adopt natural farming practices to ensure health and safety and assured them that the district adminis-tration was prepared to offer the necessary support and cooper-ation. He also mentioned that ation. He also mentioned that students are being taken to the fields through the 'Agri Connect' programme to educate them about crops, soil, soil fertility, and related topics.

Besides, the Collector inspected the Solid Waste Processing Centre (SWPC) in Pochampally where he reviewed the organic fertiliser production process. He instructed that operations should continue with a clear objective. He noted that efforts are underway to make the 264 SWPCs across 286 gram panchayats in

the district fully operational, and measures are being taken to establish these centres in the 22 gram panchayats that currently lack them. He directed the officials to promptly finalise any necessary repairs and ensure they were managed effectively. He requested the relevant officials to implement Vermi Seeding across all centres. Subsequently, Lakshmisha inspected the 2.5 km BT road that was construct-ed using DMF funds in Pochampally village. During this inspection, the measurements and documentation on the roads

were thoroughly reviewed. Assistant Collector Shubham Nokhwal, Superintending Engineer of Panchayati Raj Z Ramesh, Agriculture Department Assistant Director Bhavani, Mandal Agriculture Officer V Varalakshmi, among others, were present.

# GVMC Urban Planning under scrutiny

### PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Allegations surface over unauthorised constructions, The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) is embroiled in serious corruption allegations, particularly within its Urban Planning Department. Reports highlight multiple irregulari-ties, primarily during the tenure of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government, with officials accused of enabling unauthorized constructions, policy manipula-tions, and bribery.

Sources indicate that several YSRCP-linked officials occu-pied key GVMC positions, allegedly exploiting urban planning policies for personal and political gains. Violations in Transferable Development Rights (TDR) and Non-Agricultural Lands Assessment (NALA) charges have been flagged. Despite some officials being reassigned under the current administration, critics argue that stringent action has yet to be taken. Complaints persist regarding continued corruption and favouritism toward individuals linked to the previous government. A major case involves a Rs

TDR misuse, and bribery under YSRCP regime GREATER VISAKHAPATHAM MUNICIPAL CORPORATIO STR. 11111111

30 crore TDR sanctioned in Venkatapathi Raju Nagar based on a 1926 document, which officials failed to revoke. Similar irregularities were reported in ASR Nagar, Bilal Colony, and Jalaripeta slums, allegedly influenced by then Special Chief Secretary Srilakshmi. Following a complaint by Jana Sena corporator Peethala Murthy Yadav, these approvals were temporarily suspended but not entirely revoked.

Another major allegation suggests that town planning



cents of Gedda property, classified under Urban Land Ceiling (ULC), were allegedly allocated to a public representative despite regulatory restrictions. Additionally, large-scale projects have proceeded without securing Valid Land Entitlements (VLE), raising concerns over regulatory oversight.

A recent Vigilance probe uncovered Rs 120 crore in unpaid taxes, yet officials reportedly issued occupancy

certificates (OCs) without ensuring financial compliance. Corruption concerns extend beyond Visakhapatnam, with reports of irregular TDR allocations in Kakinada. A senior GVMC official allegedly misused TDRs for the Convention of the Baptist Churches of the Northern Circars (CBCNC) projects. Under the YSRCP government, a TDR worth Rs 209 crore was issued for Revallapalem land, later

revoked, but now reportedly under reconsideration. Further scrutiny surrounds a multi-storey project near Diamond Park, where TDRs worth Rs 5 crore were allegedly sanctioned improperly. Concerns also revolve around TDR allocations for roads over NCC lands (valued at Rs 660 crore) and possible manipulation of TDRs for Dasapalla lands. Officials are additionally accused of approving TDRs for Simhachalam BRS Road victims without verifying ownership rights.

### **Avian Influenza:** 721 Rapid **Response Teams** formed

### PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Director of the Animal Husbandry Department, Dr T Damodar Naidu, has announced the formation of 721 Rapid Response Teams in response to the confirmation of Avian Influenza (Bird flu), which has been linked to the deaths of chickens in the East and Godavari districts, as verified by the National Institute of High-Security Animal Diseases in Bhopal.

These teams, comprising personnel from the Police, Revenue, Forest, and Animal Husbandry departments, have been deployed across the State to monitor the situation.

Dr Naidu detailed that following the discovery of dead chickens in Velpur village of Tanuku mandal in the West Godavari district and Kanur Agraharam in Peravali Mandal of the East Godavari district, officials from both districts promptly collected samples from the deceased birds. They were confirmed to be infected with Avian Influenza.

### Fire breaks out at Jalakanya Handicraft Exhibition

### PNS VIJAYAWADA

A small fire occurred at the Jalakanya Handicraft Exhibition at Sitara Centre in Vijayawada at approximately 12.30 PM on Wednesday, resulting in property damage. Fortunately, there were no injuries or fatalities, according to an official report. Emergency services responded promptly, with personnel from the fire department, municipal authorities, and police arriving swiftly to manage the situation. The fire ignited, prompting an immediate reaction from the closest fire station.

A significant concern during the incident was the safety of the animals present at the

exhibition. Authorities conevacuated safely before the situation escalated. There have firmed that all animals were

been no reported injuries to al harm to the exhibition space, either humans or animals. The he added. fire was contained on time, pre-

venting it from spreading to nearby areas. Vijaywada Fire Officer Sankara Rao, stated, "Our team acted immediately upon receiving the information at 12.30 PM. Additional units were dispatched according to the fire's severity, and we successfully contained it quickly, averting further damage." Further firefighting units were sent in tion will be provided soon as the investigation is being continued, he added.

Further, he said that the precise cause of the fire remains undetermined. However, authorities have initiated a thorough investigation to identify the specific factors that led to the incident. "While the exact cause is still under investigation, a detailed inquiry is underway to confirm this," Rao explained. Officials are currently evaluating the extent of the property damage, and more informa-

response to the fire's intensity, he said. Within a brief period, the blaze was effectively extinguished, minimising addition-

### Format C-7 (for political parties to publish in the newspapers, social media platforms & website of the party)

Information regarding individuals with pending criminal cases, who have been selected as candidates, along with the reasons for such selection, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates.

(As per the Commission's directions issued in pursuance of the Order dated 13.02.2020 of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in contempt petition(C) no. 2192 of 2018 in WP(C) no. 536 of 2011)

# to rise after hike in registration fees

Impact most pronounced in

## Housing prices set | Feb 15 deadline to complete SHGs' online profiling process

Initiative aims to establish comprehensive digital database of SHG members

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Animals were evacuated safely before the situation escalated

### Dabagardens, Dwarakanagar, Madhurawada

#### PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

A recent surge in land registration fees has sent ripples through this coastal city's housing market, squeezing both buyers and developers and raising concerns about affordability. Effective from February 1, the fees, intended to bolster State revenue, jumped from five percent to as high as 20 percent in prime locations.



The impact is most pronounced in commercial hubs like Dabagardens, D w a r a k a n a g a r , Madhurawada, Beach Road and areas along the National Highway, now subject to the 20 percent levy. Residential neighbourhoods, including East Point Colony, MVP Colony and Seethammadhara, face a 15 percent increase. Officials project the changes will boost the district's property registration revenue from approximately 10 billion rupees to 12 billion rupees

annually. But the fee hike has already begun to reshape property prices. "Developers are adjusting to the new fees by raising prices," said Bayana Srinivas Rao, gener-al secretary of the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI)-Andhra Pradesh. He told The Pioneer that gated communities on the city's outskirts have seen prices climb by 1,000 to 2,000 rupees per square foot. In Yendada, prices have risen by a simi-lar amount from 7,000 to lar amount, from 7,000 to 8,000 rupees per square foot, while in Madhurawada, prices have jumped from 4,000 to 5,000 rupees per square foot. "As a result," Mr. Srinivas said, "buyers will need to pay an additional

100,000 rupees on average? The land market has also felt the pinch, with prices in Anandapuram reportedly rising from 10,000 to 13,000 rupees per square yard. This escalation is expected to fur-ther inflate apartment costs, waking homeownership even more challenging. Industry experts also suggest that the increased fees could

slow the absorption of the city's estimated 10,000 unsold flats. Despite these challenges, Visakhapatnam's real estate

sector remains cautiously optimistic, buoyed by ongoing and planned infrastrucprojects. Tata ture Consultancy Services is establishing a large centre in the city, promising a wave of new jobs.

The construction of Bhogapuram International Airport is expected to attract significant investment. Progress continues on the Metro Rail project, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently laid the foun-dation stone for a green hydrogen initiative, which is also expected to draw profes-sionals to the area. While the higher registra-

tion fees may pose short-term obstacles, many believe these major infrastructure projects will sustain housing demand in Visakhapatnam.

Municipal (VMC) Vijayawada Corporation Commissioner HM Dhyanachandra has instructed

officials to finalise the online pro-filing of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) by February 15. He said the Resource Persons (RPs) should ensure that the information of each SHG member is accurately recorded online.

Wednesday, On Commissioner Dhyanachandra conducted visits to the Ward Sachivalayam in Pejjonipeta, Poornanandapeta, Heartpeta, and Pappulamill. During these visits, he assessed the progress of the SHGs' online profiling initiative. He also inspected the solar panels installed at the residence

of beneficiary Muralikrishna in Pejjonipeta, as part of the PM



Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner HM Dhyanachandra talking with Resource Persons regarding the online profiling process of SHGs at a Sachivalayam on Wednesday

Surya Ghar Mufti Bijili Scheme. Speaking on the occasion, he highlighted that this initiative is designed to establish a comprehensive digital database of SHG members, which would enhance monitoring and support for their activities. "The VMC aims to improve the efficiency of SHG operations and ensure that resources are allocated effec-

tively to foster their development through the digitisation of members' details," he said.

Additionally, he noted that the profiling process entails gathering detailed information about each SHG member, including personal data, economic activities, and involvement in various programmes.

He asked the Resource

### Rahul is scared to visit Warangal fearing public backlash: Kavitha

### PNS HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha lashed out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and accused him of cancelling his Warangal visit due to fear of facing pub-lic scrutiny over unfulfilled promises.

She said that the people of Warangal were ready to question him about his father's declaration he had announced earlier but failed to act upon. 'Rahul Gandhi is scared because he knows the people will not tolerate broken promises," she remarked.

Unveiling the poster for Telangana Jagruthi's upcoming "Mahila Shankharavam" event scheduled for March 8 in Hyderabad, Kavitha demanded that the Congress govern-ment fulfil its election promis-es to women. She warned that said if these promises were ignored,

freely.

Congress leaders in Telangana would find it difficult to move women, leaving Chief Minister Revanth Reddy with a pending due of Rs 35,000 per woman. She demanded that this amount be immediately transferred to every eligible woman's bank account.

Accusing the government of betraying young women, she said that the promised free scooters for girls above 18 years never materialized. She also slammed the Congress for

Criticizing the Congress leadership, she claimed that local leaders lacked credibilidiscontinuing the KCR Kit scheme, which had benefited ty, which was why Sonia mothers and newborns. Taking aim at law and order, Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and

Rahul Gandhi had to cam-Kavitha alleged that under paign in Telangana during the Revanth Reddy's administration, crime against women had increased by 20 per cent. "Women now fear travelling elections. "Women trusted their faces and voted, but after coming to power, the Congress government has conveniently alone, and crimes are rampant. Theft cases in suburban homes are rising. During KCR's 10forgotten its promises," she

Kavitha pointed out that year rule, not a single commueven after 14 months in office, nal clash occurred, but under the Congress had failed to Revanth Reddy's governance, provide the promised Rs 2,500 communal tensions are eruptmonthly financial assistance to ing frequently," she alleged.

Name of Political Party : TELUGU DESAM PARTY \* Name of the Election : BIENNIAL ELECTION TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

- Name of State/UT : ANDHRA PRADESH
- (1) Name of the Constituency: Krishna-Guntur Graduates' Constituency Name of the candidate: Alapati Rajendra Prasad

1. Criminal antecedents   a. Nature of the offences 1. U/s 143, 188, 341 r/w 149 lF   2. U/s 143, 341, 188, 269, 270 r/w 149 lPC   b. Case no. 1. 9/2020 Tenali Rural PS   c. Name of the Court Not Applicable   d. Whether charges have been framed or not (Yes/No) Not Applicable   e. Date of conviction, if any Not Applicable   f. Details of punishment undergone, if any Not Applicable   g. Any other information required to be given    2. The reasons for the selection of the candidate. Selection shall be with reference to the qualifications, achievements and merit of the can di date, and not mere "winnability" at the polls (not more than 100 words) No other suitable candidate wa available.   3. Reasons as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates (not more than 100 words) No other suitable candidate wa available.   (2) Name of the Constituency : Krishna-Guntur Graduates' Constituency Name of the candidate : Alapati Rajendra Prasad and so on * In the case of election to Council of States or States or election	SI. No.										
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# **Minister Gottipati visits** renovated SC hostel building

#### PNS BAPATLA

SC hostel

During the district visit pre-

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy responded to the issue and immediately released funds to renovate the building. The renovation works were carried out on war footing. The students expressed hap-

piness for making the SC hos-

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar visited the renovated SC hostel building at Santhamaguluru on Wednesday.

Santa Mangalore was neglected during the previous YSRCP regime and had become dilapidated. The officials had taken to the notice of Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar about the bad condition of the

viously, Minister Gottipati saw the dilapidated SC hostel building and moved to its pathetic state. The Minister ordered the officials to take steps to renovate the building and he ensured release of Rs 45 lakh to renovate the hostel building.

The SC hostel building at

tel available for them with all facilities now.

The parents of the students thanked the Ministers for their swift action to renovate the hostel building. Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar visited the building on Wednesday and saw the facilities provided to the students.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister regretted that the maintenance of social welfare hostels was ignored during the YSRCP regime resulting in the hostels lacking facilities. The Minister reminisced that over 170 students used to

ing the TDP regime as the hostel had all facilities. Now the students strength had fallen to 30 as students did not like to stay in the hostel due to lack of facilities. Now the SC hostel was renovated and all required facilities were provided, stay in the SC hostel at Minister Gottipari Ravi Kumar Santhamaguluru in 2019 duracknowledged.

Shallow fog is likely to occur at

here, it said that the maximum temperatures are likely to be above normal by 2-3 degrees Celsius in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days. Dry weather is likely to prevail in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days.

The lowest minimum temperature of 14 degrees Celsius was recorded at Arogyavaram in the Rayalaseema region on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, the report added.



### **Shallow fog** likely in **Coastal AP in** next 3 days PNS GUNTUR

isolated places in the morning in Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next three days, Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday. In a daily weather report



### PNS B RAJAHMUNDRY

MLC Graduates constituency election Observer K Sunita inspected a polling station, being set up in the MPP Government girls' school at Peravali village on Wednesday. The MLC Graduates constituency election will be held on February 27.

The Election Observer, accompanied by East Godavari district Collector P Prashanthi and other officials inspected the polling station.

Election observers Sunitha advised the officials that the rules set by the Election Commission

should be strictly followed on the Seetharama Murthy is the day of polling. Since the election Assistant Returning Officer of East Godavari district for the process is being conducted through ballot papers, all MLC election

The Collector explained to her that 82 polling stations and 10 auxiliary polling stations are being set up in the district, adding that arrangements have been made for the conduct of the MLC elections as per the gener-

to election Observer Sunita regarding preparations being made for the polling for the Graduate MLC elections to be held on February 27th. The Collector told the Observer that District Revenue Officer T

### Sunita **Tourism Corporation chairman**

## SP emphasises strict vigil on illegal transport of drugs

### PNS BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Superintendent of police Adnan Nayeem Asmi directed the police official to lay strict vigil on the illegal transport of drugs and complete investigation of long pending cases expeditiously.

The SP on Wednesday held a crime review meeting with the police officials. The SP reviewed circle-wise registration and prosecution of grave, non-grave, property-related crimes and other cases registered in the district and he examined the CD files.

The SP conducted a review with the police officers regarding pending grave & non-grave cases, murder cases, POCSO & rape cases, dacoity, robbery, property, vehicle theft, missing, cheating cases, prop-erty cases, road accidents, cyber crimes, 174 Cr.P.C cases, enforcement work, investigation and recoveries in pending NDPS case



officers to visit the villages. "Measures should be taken to check road accidents, black spots should be visited along with the officers of government departments and take appropriate action. Install warning boards. Make people aware of road safety rules," he told the Ex-Minister objects Chief Minister's allegation on adulterated ghee

#### PNS TADEPALLIGUDEM

YSRCP leader and Former Minister Kottu Satyanarayana strongly criticized Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and a section of the media for spreading false allegations regarding the adulteration of ghee used in Tirumala temple laddus.

Addressing the media here Wednesday, Satyanarayana expressed his anguish over the baseless claims, stating that the SIT report did not confirm any adulteration in the ghee supplied for the temple's offer-

ings. Satyanarayana highlighted that the SIT investigation, initiated following allega-tions, only found irregularities in TTD tenders and arrested four individuals related to those violations. bandrababu and certain media outlets twisted the facts, claiming that the arrests were linked to ghee adulteration. "The SIT report clearly states that there was no evidence of adulteration in the ghee. Yet, Chandrababu and his media allies continue to mislead the public for political gains," he said. The former minister



accused Chief Minister Chandrababu of exploiting sensitive religious issues for political mileage.

"Naidu has a history of manipulating facts to suit his agenda. This time, he targeted the sacred offerings of Tirumala, hurting the sentiments of millions of devotees," Satyanarayana flayed. He also pointed out that TTD has its own labs to test the quality of ohee, and anv substandard supply is immediately rejected YSRCP leader The demanded accountability from Chandrababu and the media, calling for an end to the politicization of religious matters. "Such actions not only harm public trust but also disrespect the faith of millions of devotees," he observed.

### Tight security for Celebrity Cricket League PNS HYDERABAD

The Rachakonda Police have put in place stringent security arrangements for the Celebrity Cricket League (CCL) 2025 matches scheduled at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium, Uppal, on February 14 and 15. Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Sudheer Babu chaired a coordination meeting with CCL organisers at the stadium to review security measures and ensure a hassle-free experience for spectators. The meeting was attended by officials from the stadium management, GHMC, electricity department, revenue department, and various police wings, including intelligence, special

branch and reserve police. Speaking at the meeting, Sudheer Babu emphasised the need for foolproof security to ensure smooth conduct of the matches. Given the participation of film stars from various industries, a large turnout of instructed officials to ensure that law and order is maintained without any disruptions. Special attention was given to crowd management, traffic regulation, and entry-exit procedures. The Commissioner directed officials to coordinate closely with CCL representatives and implement security measures at all entry points.

Vigilance officials seize fish feed, medicines, worth Rs 2.20 cr

### visit the important tourist des-

Andhra Pradesh Tourism Corporation chairman Dr.Nukasani Balaji flagged the Maha Kumbh Mela bus at Hotel Sarovar here on Wednesday.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, Tourism Corporation Chairman Balaji said that Andhra Pradesh Tourism has arranged a special package for spiritual pilgrimages. The Andhra Pradesh Tourism Corporation has arranged two AC buses for the convenience of pilgrims going to Maha Kumbh Mela, being held in Prayagraj in

tinations and temples in Andhra Pradesh. The Tourism Corporation

chairman revealed that the Tourism Department is arranging buses and accommodation facilities for places like Tirupati to Arunachalam, Tirupati to Bangalore, Mysore, Ooty, Tirupati to Chennai, Ooty, Visakhapatnam to Lambasingi, Araku Annavaram Simhachalam, SriSailam, Vijayawada and other places.

Dr. Balaji highlighted that the Tourism Corporation is being developed in such a way that Andhra Pradesh tourism is a role model in India As per th suggestions of Tourism Minister Kandulu Durgesh, the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Corporation will organize many new tour packages in the coming summer season to attract tourists, said Dr. Balaji. AP Tourism Corporation Transport General Manager Seshidhar, Divisional Manager Srinivasa Rao and AP Tourism CRMTVS Prasad were among those who were present.

doing trading without license. The officials seized 19 tonnes of aqua feed worth

Rs 31,96,237. Talking to the media,

Enforcement officer Rambabu warned of stringent action if aqua feed and medicine

shops are run without obtaining license

Vigilance Inspectors P Shivarama

Krishna, D Prasad Kumar and Vigilance

AO G Meeraiah were among those who

from the fisheries department.

conducted raids.

arrangements should be made smoothly without any problems. Arrangements should be made to issue voter slips and move other polling equipment in advance, she ordered the officials. The district officials explained

al election guidelines. District Revenue Officer T Seetharama Murthy, RDO Rani Susmita, Peravali Tehsildar and other officials were among those who accompanied election observer

# flags off Kumbh Mela bus



PNS ONGOLE

district.

The SP gave the police officials instructions and techniques that help in resolving cases and controlling crime. The SP ordered the police

The SP issued orders to the police officials to impose fines on vehicles going on the wrong route, overloading, triple riding, motorists without helmets and those who do not fol-

people on cybercrimes. SP (Admin.) V Bhima Rao, DSPs Ravuri Ganesh Jaya Surya, G Veda and D Viswanath were among those who attended the meeting.

low road rules. The SP stressed

the need of implementing vis-

ible policing in the district. SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi

instructed the police officials

to take steps to contain matka

gambling, cockfights and ille-

gal transportation of sand. He

also underlined the need of

He informed t would start from Nellore and go via Ongole, Vijayawada, Rajahmundry, Visakhapatnam, Odisha to Kashi, Prayagraj and other pilgrimage temples in Uttar Pradesh.

Uttar Pradesh.

Stating that plans are being prepared for the development of Andhra Pradesh tourism, Dr. Balaji said that new tourism packages are being prepared so that tourists and devotees can



## 638 stolen/lost mobile phones recovered

#### PNS ELURU

The Eluru district police have recovered 638 stolen/lost mobile phones worth Rs 76.56 lakh and handed over some of them to the owners.

Superintendent of police Pratap Shiva Kishore here on Wednesday said that the CCS police, the Cyber Crime and the Law & Order police personnel jointly recovered stolen and lost mobile phones over the past three months. Using the district toll-free number and the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) portal, a total of 638 mobile phones were recovered in the 14th phase, amounting to a total value of Rs 76,56,000.

These mobile phones were retrieved from current users in various locations, including Eluru, West Godavari, NTR District, Ambedkar deceptive methods for black-

Konaseema, Visakhapatnam, Godavari, Vizianagaram, Telangana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and other places.

The Eluru district police from Phase 1 to Phase 14, have recovered a total of 2,398 lost/stolen mobile phones and the estimated value of the recovered phone is Rs 4,06,39,684," the SP revealed.

The SP emphasized the legal consequences of purchasing or selling stolen goods, as it is a punishable offense. As per Section 317 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) 2023, individuals involved in such activities may face legal action, including imprisonment for up to three years. Cybercriminals are increasingly using inappropriate video calls and other

Krishna, mail and cyber fraud, the SP East said. The SP urged citizens to remain cautious against UPI frauds and to avoid clicking on Kerala, suspicious links to safeguard their mobile devices.

Citizens are encouraged to report their lost or stolen phones immediately at their nearest police station through the CEIR portal, which is available across all states and union territories in India. The CEIR portal helps prevent the misuse of stolen phones and accelerates recovery efforts. For cybercrime-related issues, the SP advised the public to report complaints promptly by calling 1930 or visiting cybercrime.gov.in. Additional SP N Surya Chandra Rao, DSP D Shravan Kumar, CCS Inspector Rajasekhar and other police officials were among those who were present.

# SEIL energy, IIT-Madras collaborate to revolutionize carbon capture technology

microgelated solvent developed

through this collaboration, has

demonstrated better perfor-

#### PNS NELLORE

PNS BHIMAVARAM

worth over Rs 2.20 crore.

The vigilance officials conducted raids on

the aqua feeds shops at Chinaamiram vil-

lage and seized aqua feed and medicines

Vigilance Officials said that on the

directions of Vigilance and Enforcement

ed raids on the Shiva Sai Aqua feed and

Officer V Rambabu, vigilance and fisheries department teams jointly conduct-

SEIL Energy India Limited (SEIL), One of the largest independent power producers (IPP) in India, and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, have joined forces to develop a groundbreaking carbon (CO2) capture technology.

This innovative project, sup-ported by SEIL's CSR initiative, has resulted in the creation of 'Chemogel', a patented (IIT-Madras) nanoparticle-based sol-vent that significantly enhances carbon capture efficiency. The revolutionary research is supported by SEIL as its corporate social responsibility (INR 7.1 million).

Raghav Trivedi, Mr. CEO-SEIL Energy India Limited, said, "We are proud to



Sai Pawan Aqua feed shops and found

they were selling aqu feed and medicines

without obtaining license. The officials

were selling aqua feed and medicines without obtaining a license from the fisheries

department. The officials seized 180

tonnes of aqua feed, worth Rs 1,88,97,176

The officials also conducted a raid on

Sri Sai Pawan Aqua Feeds and found

from the Shiva Sai Aqua shop.

found that the management of the shops

partner with IIT-Madras on this commitment to sustainability project. Our collaboration has the and reducing our carbon footpotential to transform industriprint. Chemogel, the amino derived

al carbon capture processes, and we are excited to take this technology to the next level. This breakthrough aligns with our

mance in lab tests as compared to conventional amine-based solutions. It outperforms traditional amine-based solvents with higher carbon capture rates, improved regeneration efficiency at atmospheric and higher operating temperatures, and improved SO2 tolerance.

A team from the Department of Chemical Engineering, led by Prof. Jitendra Sangwai, along with his research scholar Yogendra Kumar is partnering with SEIL Energy India Limited to develop novel methods for carbon capture. Prof. Sangwai is establishing a pilot plant demon-strator to facilitate improved carbon capture from coal fired power plant stacks.

According to Prof. Sangwai, decarbonizing industrial clusters is crucial for achieving net-

zero transition, which cannot be accomplished without largescale, industry-oriented carbon capture and sequestration technology. Yogendra Kumar added that the pilot studies aim to optimize the performance of Chemogel technology in accordance with established standards in actual industrial operating conditions. The breakthrough has signif-

icant implications for the development of more efficient and effective carbon capture technologies, which are crucial in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change. SEIL Energy and IIT Madras are committed to further developing and deploying this technology to support a sustainable future.



# Nation 05

### VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 13, 2025

### ACROSS THE STATES



### Odisha hikes pay of junior teachers by Rs 5,000

he Odisha government on Wednesday increased the monthly remuneration of junior teachers working in the state's elementary schools under the 'Samagra Sikshya' programme. According to a resolution issued by the school and mass education department, the monthly remuneration of junior teachers (under various schemes) has been increased from Rs 11,000 to Rs 16,000 per month. "The revised rate of remuneration will be effective from the date of issue of the resolution," the department said. On January 17, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi approved a proposal in this regard. Besides the monthly remuneration hike, their EPF (Employees' Provident Fund) contribution will be increased from Rs 1,443 to Rs 1,950 per month. At present, around 13,740 junior teachers (under the Samagra Sikshya scheme) are employed in the state. The state government will bear an additional annual expenditure of Rs 89.15 crore for the enhanced remuneration of the junior teachers

## **PM Modi, French Prez Macron** hold talks, agree to deepen ties

### PNS PARIS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday called for enhancing trade and investment ties between the two countries and committed to further deepening their engagement in the Indo-Pacific and various global forums and initiatives.

After their wide-ranging talks, the two leaders also underlined their commitment to concrete actions to ensure that the global AI sector can drive beneficial social, economic, and environmental outcomes in the public interest.

A joint statement issued after the meeting here said the talks covered a full spectrum of bilateral relations, as well as key global and regional issues. The two leaders stressed an

urgent need for reform in the United Nations Security Council and agreed to coordinate closely on various global issues, including the UNSC matters.

French President Macron reiterated France's firm support for India's permanent mem-bership of the UNSC.

The two leaders reaffirmed

BJP's internal tussle delaying appointment

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Wednesday alleged that the

ongoing internal tussle with-

in the BJP was delaying the

appointment of a chief min-

ister for Delhi and affecting

the governance of the nation-

al capital. There was no imme-

diate reaction available from

the BJP which has defeated

AAP in the recently-held

AAP's chief spokesperson

Priyanka Kakkar alleged that

long power cuts were being

reported in several parts of

the city due to the BJP's

inaction, an official state-

Poll data system robust,

nothing can go wrong:CEC

ment from AAP stated.

Delhi Assembly elections.

of Delhi CM: AAP

PNS NEW DELHI



their strong commitment to India-France Strategic Partnership while noting that it has steadily evolved into a multifaceted relationship over the past 25 years.

Prime Minister Modi flew together from Paris to Marseille in the French Presidential Aircraft last evening and held discussions here on the full spectrum of bilateral relations and key global and regional issues. This was followed by delega-

tion-level talks after arrival in Marseille

The two leaders reviewed cooperation in the strategic areas of defence, civil Nuclear **Energy and Space. They** also discussed ways to strengthen collaboration in the fields of Technology and Innovation.

### MODI DEPARTS FOR US AFTER WRAPPING UP FRANCE VISIT

PARIS: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday departed for the US to meet President Donald Trump after wrapping his two-day visit to France where he co-chaired the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit alongside French President Emmanuel Macron with whom he also held bilateral discussions. In the US, PM Modi will hold a bilateral meeting with President Trump in both restricted and delegation-level formats. Modi will be the fourth foreign leader to visit Trump in the weeks after the American leader's inauguration as the 47th President of the US in January. In France, during the bilateral talks, Modi and Macron on Wednesday called for enhancing trade and investment ties between the two countries and committed to further deepening their engagement in the Indo-Pacific and various global forums and initiatives. Modi and Macron jointly inaugurated India's new consulate in France's Marseille



### India's missiles safeguard borders, draw global attention: Rajnath

### PNS BENGALURU

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said India is going through a revolutionary phase of transformation, and the country's fighter jets, missile systems, naval vessels are not only protecting our borders but are also becoming the centre of attraction for the entire world.

He said this at the indigenisation event and the valedictory ceremony of Aero India 2025 here. "Aero India has reached heights that are not only unparalleled but historic," the Defence Minister said. "I was personally present for

the past three days in this event and if I have to express my experience in three words,

gy," he said. "Whatever we could see in Yelahanka is a manifestation of energy and the energy and enthusiasm could be seen not only among the participants from India but from across the

it is energy, energy and ener-

world. The enthusiasm seen among our entrepreneurs, our startups and innovators is commendable.' Noting that the country is

going through a revolutionary bhase of transformation, the Defence Minister said, "We all know that India has historically been dependent on imports for its defence needs. If I look back about a decade ago, 65 to 70 per cent of defence equipment was being imported into our country.

**EXTREME BRUTALITY** 

### **Film festival begins** in Imphal

he second North East India Film Festival (NEIFF) 2025 Manipur was inaugurated here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, chief guest and chairman of Loktak Development Authority (LDA) M. Asnikumar Singh said films have always been a mirror to reflect the actual image of society and that the industry can generate a number of employments besides promoting cultural heritage. "Manipuri film industry is deeply rooted in our heritage and ethos, as it not only entertains but also highlights the challenges," he added. "Films could be a medium to express the rich culture and folklores of the state. Manipur, with its rich and storied cinematic tradition, has long been a torchbearer of cultural expression in the Northeast and beyond," Singh added. The festival will be continue till February 16.

### Centre endangering national security to benefit billionaires

### PNS NEW DELHI

The Congress hit out at the Centre on Wednesday, alleging that it has endangered national security to benefit private billionaires, over reports that border security rules were relaxed for a business group to set up an energy park.

Reacting to media reports that the government relaxed national security protocols along the Pakistan border in to make way for a renewable energy park of the Adani Group in Gujarat, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the pseudo-nationalism face of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has once again been unmasked

The Adani Group did not respond to the allegations.

Kumar asserted that this

### Cong over reports on Adani energy park



"Is it not true that your government has relaxed such rules, not just at the India-Pakistan border, but also on the land adjoining Bangladesh, China, Myanmar and Nepal, thereby jeopardising our strategic and border security?"

but also on the land adjoining Bangladesh, China, Myanmar and Nepal, thereby jeopardising our strategic and border security?" Kharge asked.

Recalling the prime minister's statement on the Sino-India border dispute that "no one entered our territory", when 20 Indian soldiers made the supreme sacrifice fighting against China in Ladakh, the Congress chief alleged that the Army's concerns have been ignored in this case.

"What happens if there is the need to lay mines, anti-tank and anti-personnel mechanisms to be put in place? What about the concept of space and surprise in offensive and defensive operations?', a senior Army officer has "Is it not true that your government has relaxed such rules, not asked. We repeat the same question," Kharge said.

'NDA will return to power in Bihar'

PNS NEW DELHI



events at the India Expo Centre and Mart in Greater Noida. The events are being rganised under Bhar

tile fair.



### juniors in Kerala

#### PNS KOTTAYAM (KERALA)

Five third-year students have been arrested for allegedly ragging first-year students at the Government Nursing College here, police said on Wednesday.

A case was registered after three first-year students lodged a complaint, alleging that the ragging had been ongoing for nearly three months at the nursing institute, which functions under the Government Medical College.

The accused students have been suspended, college authorities said. The action was taken following an inquiry conducted under the anti-ragging law, they added.

The arrested students have been identified as Samuel Johnson (20), Rahul Raj (22), Jeev (18), Rijil Jith (20), and

#### 'Narendra Modiji, you have near the International Border endangered national security at with Pakistan, to your 'dear friend' our borders in order to benefit priby relaxing border security rules?' he asked the prime minister.

vate billionaires," Kharge alleged in a post on X. 'Is it true that you have gifted

precious strategic land, just 1 km just at the India-Pakistan border,



### **Arunachal Guv advocates** cultural ties with UP

runachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Wednesday highlighted the importance of fostering Astructured and sustainable cultural exchanges between the state and Uttar Pradesh, according to a statement issued by the Rai Bhavan here. He emphasised the need for collaboration in areas such as language learning, heritage preservation, traditions, music, tourism, sports and the sharing of best practices. Parnaik, who met Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel at Raj Bhavan in Lucknow, reiterated that such partnerships help strengthen national unity and promote a deeper understanding of India's cultural diversity. He suggested exploring joint ventures in key sectors like religious tourism, horticulture, organic farming, and skill development, which could lead to growth and knowledge-sharing between the two states. The statement said that both governors also discussed potential areas of collaboration to benefit their respective states, emphasizing the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat,' an initiative to promote unity in diversity.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday asserted that that the system of poll data is robust with in-buit 'red flags" which ensure that "nothing can go wrong". His remarks came amid

PNS NEW DELHI

allegations of data fudging in the Lok Sabha and assembly elections. Addressing an even here to launch the 'Lok Sabha 2024 Atlas', Kumar said lakhs of officials including booth level officers feed data. "...As a design nothing can go wrong . the system throws up red

flags," he said.

dent" that nothing can wrong. He said if someone makes an error, the system won't accept it. Besides allegations on voters' list, there have been allegations regarding spike in the voter turnout around the time

when voting concludes. Atlas-2024 provides detailed information on various aspects of elections and election results. EC said the document is in line with its commitment to maximum transparency, accessibility, and greater disclosure of election-related data.

in the concerned

the

fidence that the NDA would return to power in Bihar, where assembly elections are due later this year.

Singh represents the Begusarai Lok Sabha seat in Bihar. The BJP, JD(U), Lok

Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), Hindustan Awam Morcha and the Rashtriya Lok Morcha are constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar

"Bihar mein NDA ki sarkar hai aur NDA ki sarkar hi banegi (There is an NDA gov-

ernment in Bihar and it will retain power)," Singh, the Union textiles minister, said.

Singh was speaking to reporters after inaugurating garment technology, dyes and chemicals, and handicraft

Singh said as many as 6,000 foreign buyers -- twice as

many as last year -- were par-

ticipating in Bharat Tex, mak-

ing it the world's biggest tex-

Bharat Mandapam from

Friday to Monday with more

Mandapam is expected to

attract buyers from more than

110 countries and over

1,20,000 visitors, including

policymakers, global CEOs, and industry leaders.

The event at Bharat

than 5,000 exhibitors.

A mega event will be held at

Vivek (21). According to the complaint, the ragging began in November last year.

The students reported that the incidents involved extreme brutality. They alleged that they were forced to stand naked and subjected to severe physical abuse using dumbbells, including tying them to their private parts.

Further allegations include injuries inflicted using compasses and similar objects, followed by the application of lotion on the wounds.

**Fused modern** 

tech with ancient

architecture

### Nursery schools to be in buildings constructed as per local bye-laws: SC

### PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday clarified that nursery and elementary schools in the country should run from buildings that were built as per local construction bye-laws.

A bench of Justices B R area," it said. Gavai and Augustine George One of the directions on Masih passed the order on a plea of the Central Board of which Secondary Education (CBSE) CBSE sought seeking a clarification on certhe clarification tain directions issued by the read, "The nursapex court in its April 13, ery and ele-

2009 verdict. "The nursery mentary schools should be and elementary schools should housed in single-storied buildbe housed in the buildings ings and the maximum numwhich are constructed in ber of floors in school buildings shall be accordance with the local building byelaws as are applicable

restricted to three including the ground floor. A clarification was also sought on another direction issued by the top court in

or escape routes, should adhere to the provisions specified in the National Building Code of India, 2005 to ensure quick

evacuation of children. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the CBSE, said the apex court's directions were passed in 2009 keeping in mind fire hazards.

"There are several states where their building bye-laws 2009 which said permit four storied, five storied the staircases, (buildings) with fire safety which act as exits mechanism," he said.

### Rebuilt RSS office has three 13-storey towers

### PNS NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has moved back its office in the city to its old address following the near completion of the rebuilding project spread across over 3.75 acre premises, housing three 13-storey towers and around 300 rooms and offices in total.

Sources said the rebuilding exercise of the RSS office, Keshav Kunj, has cost nearly Rs 150 crore collected through contributions from over 75,000 people sympathetic to the Hindutva organisation's ideology and

took over eight years, a peri-

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan

Bhagwat and general secre-

tary Dattatreya Hosabale

will be attending a "karyakarta sammelan" of

the Jhandewalan office, they

added.

COVID-19 outbreak.

tered in Nagpur, will organ-ise its annual 'Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha', considered its apex decision-making body, in Bengaluru from March 21 to od marked by the disruption and delay forced by the March 23.

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IN ARE AD

Attended by nearly 1,500 persons, including senior functionaries of the RSS and affiliated organisations, the meet sees discussions over key germane issues besides organisational matthe organisation's Delhi unit ters and resolutions are on February 19 to mark the passed to outline the Sangh's beginning of its work from positions on a host of matters. Senior BJP leaders, including the party's presi-The sources said that the dent, also attend the exer-RSS, which is headquar- cise.

# Delhi private schools double down on AI misuse

#### PNS NEW DELHI

Is AI a boon or a bane? As the debate intensifies, several private schools in Delhi are doubling down on the misuse of AI and deploying software to detect if students are taking the help of tools to do assignments.

The fear is that excessive use of AI will stunt creativity and initiative, according to several educators. Sudha Acharya, the principal of ITL International School in Dwarka, says, "We use various software to detect if students have used AI to finish their assignments." She fears that excessive use of AI tools

they receive zero marks." AI can either be a boon or a bane, depending on how it is

used, according to the educators PTI spoke to. It can be highly beneficial if students use it to develop new skills but overreliance can become a disadvantage, they say. Mallika Preman, the principal of Tagore International School in Greater Kailash, believes that with technological advancements, students must adapt to modern learning methods. However, she

discourages complete reliance on

will stunt students' creativity. "If any student is found using ÁI to complete internal assessments,

tools such as AI, instead guiding on AI but guide students on her students on how to leverage how to use these tools to improve their understanding of them to improve creativity. Preman says AI can be intedifferent formats and skills," she grated into learning without says. The Sovereign School in

Teachers have been instructed to identify AI-generated work and, if necessary, ask students to redo their work in school." We do not recommend the use of AI tools for students. However, if future curricula changes necessitate their inclusion, we may reconsider our stance."

hampering students' originality. "As technology advances, students must adapt to modern learning methods. We don't encourage complete reliance

Rohini is also taking action against students using AI to complete their assignments. According to school chairman RN Jindal, "Teachers have

been instructed to identify AIgenerated work and, if necessary, ask students to redo their work in school." "We do not recommend the use of AI tools for students. However, if future curricula changes necessitate their inclusion, we may reconsider our stance," he adds.

Delhi Private Teachers' Association chairperson MS Rawat laid stress on the importance of AI literacy for both students and educators.

"As the current generation moves towards new technologies, they must understand both the uses and consequences of AI," according to Rawat.

"Even teachers use AI tools to brainstorm creative ideas for cultural festivals, games and other school programmes," he adds. Last year, the Union Cabinet approved the IndiaAI Mission, with an outlay of Rs 10,372 crore for five years. The approved corpus will be used to create a large

computing infrastructure. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday took part in the AI Action Summit in Paris, describing it as a commendable effort to bring together world leaders, policy makers, thinkers, innovators and youngsters to have meaningful conversations around AI.

VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 13, 2025

# ne pioneer

pinion 06

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### -PAPER WITH PASSION-----

### Yunus Govt in the crosshair

Bangladesh army shifts away from the Yunus Government as it calls for stronger ties with India amid chaos and downward slide

n angladesh is currently facing a period of political uncertainty and unrest as the government led by Muhammad Yunus finds itself increasingly at odds with the D government led by ivitilation and turned hoor interesting, at the country's powerful military establishment. The recent statements made by General Waker-uz-Zaman, the Chief of Army Staff, at the Dhaka International Marathon 2025, indicate a significant shift in the military's stance towards the civilian government. His emphasis on peace, stability and international cooperation-particularly with Indiasuggests growing dissatisfaction within the army ranks regarding the Yunus administration's policies and governance approach. The military in Bangladesh has historically played a crucial role in maintaining internal stability, often stepping in when political crises spiral out of control. With political tensions escalating under the Yunus government, the army appears to be distancing itself from the administration, signalling a potential realignment in the country's power dynamics. Several factors seem to be driving



the military's dissatisfaction with the Yunus government. This indicates the military's concerns over the deteriorating economic conditions and increasing social divisions under Yunus's leadership. Persistent political unrest could be damaging to foreign investments and economic growth, both of which are essential for national development.

The military appears to be worried about governance inefficiencies and security concerns, especially as political violence and mass protests become more frequent. The Yunus government's inability to control these disruptions may be viewed as a failure to ensure stability, a key concern for the army. Bangladesh's military

leadership values strong bilateral relations with key regional powers. General Waker's remarks about India underscore the army's desire for a pragmatic foreign policy approach that prioritises stability and mutual benefits rather than ideological stances or populist rhetoric. General Waker-uz-Zaman's statement emphasising India as an important neighbour and a key partner in regional security and economic cooperation suggests a strategic recalibration in Bangladesh's foreign policy. His remarks that Bangladesh "depends on India in many matters" and that both countries should respect each other's strategic interests signal a clear endorsement of closer ties with New Delhi. India and Bangladesh share deep economic linkages, including trade, energy cooperation and infrastructure projects. A stable relationship with India ensures continued economic growth and regional connectivity. Cooperation in counterterrorism efforts and border management is crucial for maintaining peace and stability. Bangladesh's military leadership might be viewing stronger ties with India as a means to maintain a balanced foreign policy, ensuring that Dhaka does not become overly reliant on any single regional power. the balance of power between the civilian leadership and the military will be crucial in determining the country's direction in the coming months.



# Mann ki baat: Leading the global revival of radio



SANTHOSH MATHEW

As we celebrate World Radio Day, Mann Ki Baat reminds us that the essence of communication remains the same—connecting, inspiring and bringing people together

adio is not just a medium; it is a lifeline that transcends borders, connects people and amplifies voices. On World Radio Day, as the world celebrates the power of this enduring platform, India stands at the forefront of a remarkable communication revolution. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly broadcast, Mann Ki Baat, which recently aired its 118th episode, exemplifies how radio is experiencing a renaissance in the digital age, proving to be one of the most effective tools of governance, inspiration, and soft power diplomacy. When UNESCO designated February 13 as World Radio Day in 2011, the objective was clear: to recognise the influence of radio in fostering dialogue, spreading awareness, and bridging communities worldwide.

In India, Mann Ki Baat is a testimony to the enduring power of radio. Launched in 2014, this nonthly programme has transformed into one of the largest and most effective communication experiments in the world, reaching millions of listeners not just ı India but globally.

With an unparalleled ability to engage audiences through storytelling, Modi's initiative underscores the relevance of radio in an era dominated by digital noise. At a time when many predicted the decline of traditional radio, Mann Ki Baat has revived and redefined its significance.

The programme's strength lies in its simplicity and relatability. Every episode delivers not just policy discussions but also inspirational stories of common citizens, grassroots innovations, cultural heritage and national achievements. The 118th episode was no different, weaving narratives that resonated with the spirit of nation-building, environmental consciousness, and collective responsibility. Beyond its tional appeal. Mann Ki Baat has

become an instrument of India's

soft power diplomacy. The glob-

al Indian diaspora tunes in eager-

ly, fostering a sense of connection

with the homeland. The broad-

cast's reach extends beyond

national boundaries, often being

translated into multiple languages, including regional South Asian tongues, strengthening India's diplomatic and cultural ties with neighbouring nations. As India emerges as a global leader, leveraging radio as a tool for soft power projection enhances its image as a nation that values dialogue, shared heritage and cooperation. South Asia, a region bound by deep historical, cultural, and linguistic ties, finds an unexpected bridge in Mann Ki Baat.

The programme's themesself-reliance, community-driven initiatives, environmental sustainability and youth empowerment-are not just relevant to India but also resonate with India's neighbours. In an era where integration efforts in South Asia often face political roadblocks, the revival of radio as a medium of cultural and ideological exchange holds immense potential. India's radio diplomacy, through Mann Ki Baat, can become a catalyst for fostering deeper South Asian engagement, promoting shared developmental narratives, and cre-

ating common aspirations

among regional populations.

The 118th episode once again

demonstrated how radio can

be used as a participatory

medium. Modi's interactions

with citizens, his references to



### EMERGES AS A GLOBAL LEADER, LEVERAGING RADIO AS A TOOL FOR SOFT POWER PROJECTION ENHANCES ITS IMAGE AS

VALUES DIALOGUE, SHARED and social media

al discussions revolve around the revival and impact of radio, Mann Ki Baat stands as a shining example of how the medium can be harnessed for nation-building and diplomacy. Countries across the world can draw lessons from India's use of radio as a tool for constructive engagement, leadership communication, and global outreach. In an era where polarization is rampant, radio's ability to create a sense of collective consciousness is more valuable than ever. India, with its vast diversity, has found in Mann Ki Baat a unifying voice that reflects the aspirations of its people. The power of voice, the magic of words, and the intimacy of audio storytelling are elements that make this programme not just a political initiative but

a cultural phenomenon. As the world looks for ways to reinvigorate traditional communication platforms, India's example showcases that radio is not just surviving but thriving in the digital age. Mann Ki munity radio stations, AIR Baat is leading this revival, proving that in the cacophony of digital noise, the human This hybrid model ensures that voice still holds the power to the message reaches every unite and inspire. demographic, from the rural (The writer is an Associate Professor Centre For South farmer with a transistor radio to the urban professional tun-Asian Studies, Pondicherry ing in via a smartphone app. Central University. Views are On World Radio Day, as globpersonal)

AS INDIA

### Baat takes it a step further by combining traditional broadcasting with modern digital integration. The program is A NATION THAT simultaneously aired on multiple platforms, including com-(All India Radio), podcasts,

HERITAGE AND

COOPERATION

teners, and his emphasis on people-centric governance make Mann Ki Baat an inclusive space for dialogue. Unlike social media platforms that are often fragmented and dominated by echo chambers, radio, through this programme, emerges as a unifying force that connects the masses uninterruptedly and intimately. From the fishermen in Tamil Nadu to the farmers in Punjab, from students in Meghalaya to entrepreneurs in Gujarat, Mann Ki Baat speaks to every Indian, transcending linguistic, geographic, and socio-economic barriers. It harnesses the power of storytelling to amplify the voices of unsung heroes, small businesses, and cultural custodians. Radio has always been a tool of influence, but Mann Ki

Devotees perform rituals during the Thaipusam festival at Vadapalani Murugan temple, in Chennal

### Breaking barriers: Building a future for women in science



Trailblazing women scientists continue to defy the odds, proving that inclusion is not just a matter of fairness but a necessity for scientific and societal progress

n the 21st century, where scientific breakthroughs continue to shape our world, the persistent underrepresentation of women in science remains a glaring issue. Women have been at the forefront of some of the greatest scientific achievements across the globe in diverse fields from basic science to space science. Despite these inspiring role models, systemic barriers continue to stifle women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It's time we confront these challenges and build a future where women can truly thrive in science. What kind of scientific world are we building if we exclude half of our population?

Without the full participation of women, we lose access to a vast pool of talent, creativity, and innovative solutions that could address some of our biggest challenges. Many girls are discouraged from pursuing science from a young age due to stereotypes that frame these fields as "unsuitable" or "too difficult." The so-called "leaky pipeline" begins to take its toll as early



as high school, with fewer girls opting for science-related studies and careers. Even for those who break through these initial hurdles, the challenges persist in higher education and professional life. Women in research face a lack of mentorship, unequal access to funding and sys-temic biases in hiring and promotions.

The numbers speak for themselves: UNESCO reports that only 35 per cent of STEM stuthe way for future generations dents globally are women, of women in science. Does and their representation in leadership roles remains even lower. In India, the All India Survey on Higher Education comprehensive solutions (AISHE) confirms that while when women are at the forethe number of women pursuing science has grown, their Areas like maternal health, presence in top research posigender-specific medicine and tions and leadership roles is community health intervenstill dismal. tions often flourish because of women scientists who under-

Despite these odds, many Indian women scientists have stand these challenges first-

defied the status quo and hand. Inclusion isn't just about achieved remarkable success. fairness-it's about enrich-Dr Indira Hinduja revoluing science itself. So, how do tionised reproductive mediwe move forward? Building a cine by developing India's future for women in science requires collective effort on and pioneering the gamete multiple fronts. intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) We must dismantle the structechnique. Dr Soumya

played a crucial role in glob-

India's

tural barriers hindering Swaminathan's leadership as women's advancement, pro-Chief Scientist at the World vide mentorship programmes Health Organization (WHO) and promote policies that ensure equal hiring, funding, al health policy. Kalpana and career progression oppor-Kalahasti, a senior scientist at tunities. Educational institu-ISRO, was instrumental in tions should actively encourtriumphant age girls to pursue STEM Chandrayaan-3 mission and fields, while workplaces must earned a spot in Nature's list offer flexible work environof notable figures in 2023. ments that allow women to These trailblazers not only balance personal and profespushed the boundaries of sional responsibilities.

scientific knowledge but also It is time to tear down these broke societal barriers, paving barriers and build a future where every young girl who dreams of becoming a scienthis make any difference to tist can do so without limitathe society? Society benefits tions. When women are given from more inclusive and equal opportunities to contribute to science, we all stand to gain-from groundbreakfront of scientific innovation. ing discoveries to a more inclusive and prosperous world.

> (The writer is the Dean-Academic Affairs, Garden City University, Bangalore, views are personal)

#### **RS** h ( LETT Ξ

### **AI FOR PUBLIC GOOD**

Madam - Artificial intelligence has become a truly global technology. The adoption of AI in healthcare, education, finance, labour and transportation is impacting society on a global scale while fundamental breakthroughs are being facilitated by research collabourations around the world. Its rapid deployment also creates major challenges in terms of the reliability of information, the protection of basic rights and accessibility. It is the international community's responsibility to maintain balance in our societies and to craft AI that respects universal values. The Paris AI Summit has been focused on several key themes related to opportunities, benefits and governance of ÅL

Also, these themes include AI for public good, for global AI governance, for innovation and culture and for environmentally sustainable AI solutions. The aim of the summit is to strike a balance between technological advancement and the preservation of universal values. The Paris AI Summit is of significant importance for the future of AI due to its focus on global governance, accessibility and ethical development of AI. The AI Action Committee at Paris, co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, shed light on India and France's joint work in the five dedicated working groups to tackle key issues for tomorrow: Public interest AI, future of work, innovation and culture Trust in AI and global AI governance. The role of India in the Paris AI Summit is laudable.

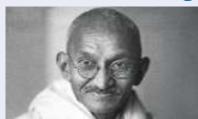
A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

#### **US TARIFFS ON ALUMINIUM, STEEL**

Madam- US President Donald Trump has virtually dropped another bomb on the global economy with the announcement of levying a 25 percent duty on steel and aluminium imports and reciprocal duty on all other imports from all countries. India is one of the largest exporters of steel to the US. While the world was aware of Trump's unconventional policies, his blanket threat to impose reciprocal tariffs-without any exceptions-almost upends the World Trade

### Gandhi's insight on education

annels



propos the article "Rekindling Gandhian values in education." Mahatma Gandhi wrote a few articles in a simple manner on the value of education that should serve as a big motivation for the students of our country. If the students read those writeups and apply them in the modern perspective, they will surely give a new dimension to our education system. Gandhi played a significant role in value

Organisation's (WTO) mandate to promote free trade by eliminating tariffs, quotas and other restrictions.

The free trade regime in the last 20 years kept inflation in manufactured products under control globally. However, Trump's populist agenda to find jobs for his support base consisting of semi-literate people in the US could damage the US-led alliance based on the Bretton Woods system. While the immediate threat from Trump's tariff on steel and aluminium could be negligible, the Indian economy could face the heat from fleeing foreign investors which could affect stock valuations and rupee weakness which could result in imported inflation.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

#### **AFFORESTATION NEEDED TO SAVE FORESTS**

Madam — It is indeed a matter of concern that a government agency like NHAI is overenthusiastic in felling a huge number of trees but not interested in attending to the compensatory afforestation. The government brought amendments in the Forest Act last year, which is sure to reduce

education by emphasising the importance of moral and ethical principles. He encouraged educators to teach values like truth, non-violence and respect for others. He felt that instilling these values in students would help them become responsible and compassionate individuals

Gandhi described himself as a curious and eager learner during his student days. He valued education and believed that it was essential for personal growth. We have to apply Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on value education as a demand of time. Gandhi's unique and refined views about value education are not only important but are worth applying not only in India but also in the rest of the world

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

the forest cover in the country. Already the country's forest cover has come down from the recommended level of 1/3 to 1/5 of the land area.

Now we can expect further deterioration in the status, as using forest land is permitted for shikar and industrial activities. The centuries-old valuable thick forests in the Northeast are threatened with their very existence in the coming years. Mines are given to private players to hasten the process of exploiting the fossil fuels. This is an act that goes against the concern of everyone over the fast-changing climate. Every mine project begins with the destruction of forests in the vast sheet of hill areas, which will take many decades to reconstruct by afforestation efforts. It is high time the moments to save forests take the form of a people's movement to sensitise all the concerned and save the globe to make it fit enough to live. The apex court's concern conveyed to NHAI is welcome.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 13, 2025

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### **FIRSTCOLUMN ONE FAITH ONE WORLD**

It's easy to point fingers when things go wrong, but true growth begins with self-reflection



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Il of us have heard the famous phrase "United We Stand, Divided A We Fall" during our school days through the simple story of an old farmer who, on his deathbed, taught the importance of unity to his disunited sons through a bundle of sticks. That story still holds an important place in our society and has even gained popularity because discord, disunity, strife and warfare have assumed unprecedented proportions in the modern world. Today, one of the most arduous challenges that face humanity is to establish harmony among people of different religions.

There is no doubt that political and religious leaders have time and again endeavoured to bring people onto a common platform and find ways and means to forge better understanding and acceptance of each faith. But despite their hard efforts, not much has changed. Hence, the greatest question of all at present is whether can the diverse religions and faiths ever be united. If so, then how? If we walk down history lane, we would find that one of the important reasons why the need for religious harmony originated is that the most



violent wars and conflicts in human history were based on religious intolerance and hatred. It might be a shocking statement, but it's the harsh reality that religions, which are supposed to make people more peaceful and loving, have today become the biggest cause of discord and bloodshed in the world. It's so appalling to see organized groups across the globe sworn to spread terror in the name of religion and carry out ethnic cleansing in the name of removing evil from the world.

If we closely examine the growth of each faith through the centuries, it reveals an interesting pattern. Even though there are some common values and tenets in all faiths, there are far too many misconceptions and conflicting beliefs that have continually fanned mistrust and hostility among the masses. It's quite imperative to know that, at the time of their inception, every religion had the power of purity, truth, and unity.

Gradually, cracks, factionalism, shallowness, delusion, deception and ritualistic adherence devoid of spiritual significance began to appear. Hence, instead of empowering spiritual values, religions perpetuated dogmas, disciplines, and barriers that segregate people on many lines. Many fall prey to the very evils they preach against, such as the lust for power, pleasure and money. There can be better understanding, tolerance, and acceptance of each faith, but there cannot be unity unless there is a single or common belief. So, what's the best way to reach a common solution acceptable to all faiths? According to divine knowledge imparted by the Supreme Almighty, everything in the eternal cycle of the human world drama goes through a change, which means that everything degrades from a perfect state to an imperfect, fragmented state. Be it human souls, nature, religions, or civilisations, almost everything passes through the sato (pure), rajo (mixed) and tamo (impure) stages as the time cycle spins from the Golden Age to the Iron Age. As of today, we are witnessing the tamo-pradhan (most degraded) stage of all aspects of human existence, and religions are no exception to this process of change. Hence, we can envisage a unified faith only in terms of the spirituality inherent in all faiths. It is said that God is Truth, and true religion embodies that truth. Hence, when humans embrace that truth in their hearts, there will be a unified world. So, let us all stand united with one unified faith to welcome the new world where truth, peace and harmony will prevail.

# The MBA dilemma: Why degrees alone no longer guarantee success



analysis 07

DINESH SOOD

Once considered a guaranteed gateway to lucrative careers, the MBA is under scrutiny as unemployment rates rise—even among graduates from elite institutions



he job market for MBA graduates has reached a critical juncture, sparking conversations that resonate with a and professionals grappling with the changing realities of employment. Once seen as a surefire ticket to high-paying corporate roles, the MBA degree is scrutinised for relevance in an evolving economic landscape. This issue is not confined to India alone; even graduates from elite institutions like Harvard, Stanford, and Wharton feel the squeeze. The Wall Street Journal recently reported that in 2024, 23 per cent of Harvard Business School's MBA graduates were jobless. Other top-tier business schools like Stanford and Wharton have seen similar dips, with unemployment rates hovering around 20 per cent.

The problem is not just limited to the United States. According to the International Labour Organisation's Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024, 13 per cent of the global youth labour force was unemployed in 2023a staggering figure representing nearly 65 million people. This unsettling trend makes traditional, generalist MBA degrees less appealing than targeted skill certifications. A recent Forbes report highlighted how some MBA graduates have succeeded by lowering their expectations and opting for less conventional roles. In an era where industries are shifting dynamically, the rigid, cookie-cutter MBA model is struggling to keep pace. The need for a 360-degree reimagination of this degree has never been more pressing.

Canada, I recently observed an Canada, 1 recently observed an MBA graduate running a salon branded "MBA Barber Shop." This reflects an important reality— many skilled gig jobs are vital for holistic growth, but traditional academic pathways have often dis-WHAT missed such careers as unworthy. Yet, most developed nations USED TO BE A respect one's skills rather than qualifications or family back-ground. We must ask: Why does-CLEAR, STRUCTURED n't Indian society do the same? Skill Respect Over Degree CAREER Prestige TRAJECTORY

The changing job landscape demands a fundamental shift in how we perceive employment, education, and career success. Skill acquisition is about individuals learning new competencies and families being sensitised to alternative career paths. It is about communities understanding the implications of an evolving job market. It is about cities and regions acknowledging and respecting those who possess the skills necessary to sustain a livelihood, irrespective of whether they hold an MBA or a B.Tech degree. The MBA has been a gateway to professional and financial success for decades. However, the economy's evolution demands a departure from this narrow thinking. In India and many other countries, social conditioning has led to an unspoken hierarchy of professions. White-collar corporate roles are celebrated, while vocational or blue-collar jobs are often overlooked. This mindset is outdated and damaging in a world where adaptability and skills matter more than mere academic credentials. A 360-Degree Skills Revolution What we need now is a complete rethinking of education and skill development. The traditional MBA

immunity against unemployment or underemployment. Even more telling is the global shift in job seek-ers' mindsets. While travelling to trends. A 360-degree approach should include everything from finance to marketing and HR. MBA programmes must incorporate niche skills such as data analytics, digital transformation, sus-

tainability management and entrepreneurship in beauty-wellness, the most emerging sector. Instead of theoretical coursework, there should be a stronger focus on apprenticeships, live projects and problem-solving in real-world business scenarios.

Understanding AI, automation, and emerging technologies should be a core part of the curriculum to prepare graduates for future-ready roles. Rather than treating entrepreneurship as an alternative, business schools should actively promote and equip students with the skills to start and sustain their ventures. Business schools must recognise the gig economy's rise and train students to navigate freelance and contract-based work models. Beyond Livelihood—Dignity in Work Redefining career success means placing equal value on all forms of work. Whether a person is an MBA graduate managing a corporate division, an AI consultant, a skilled tradesperson, or a self-employed barber, their ability to contribute meaningfully to society matters. The prestige of a job should be measured not by its title but by its impact and sustainability. Parents, educators, and policymakers have a role in fostering this change. We must instil in young minds that success is not confined to traditional white-collar professions. Regardless of their chosen field, a skilled individual should be celebrated just as much as a corporate executive. If an MBA graduate decides to become an artisan,

a chef, a salon owner or a renewable energy technician, they should be seen as pioneers, not failures. The Need for Institutional Change

Educational institutions must move beyond outdated frameworks and align themselves with industry demands. Business schools should foster adaptive thinking, preparing students for unconventional but lucrative career paths. The focus should be on problem-solving, digital proficiency, and entrepre-neurial agility rather than rigid aca-demic theories.

Governments and industries should also contribute by incentivising skill-based education. Scholarships, subsidies, and awareness campaigns can help shift societal perspectives on what constitutes a respectable and rewarding career.

Conclusion: A Future Built on Skills Once a golden ticket to con porate success, the MBA faces an existential crisis. If it is to remain relevant, it must undergo radical transformation. A degree is no longer a guarantee; what truly matters is an individual's ability to adapt, innovate, and deliver value in an ever-changing world. As a society, we need to support and encourage young professionals in their quest to discover their true potential-even in jobs that were once considered "odd." In reality, no job is odd; what matters is its necessity and impact. By embracing a 360-degree perspective on skills and careers, we can build a more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready workforce. The time for change is now. (The writer is a Co-Founder and

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

#### Degrees Alone Won't Cut It Anymore One fundamental truth is becoming evident: degrees alone no longer guarantee job or entrepreneurship security. The future belongs to professionals who continuously upskill and adapt to meet the ever-changing demands of the workforce. What used to be a clear, structured career trajectory for MBA graduates-typically leading to consulting, finance, or management roles-is now blurred. The stark reality is that a prestigious qualification, while valuable, no longer provides

LEADING TO CONSULTING, FINANCE, OR MANAGEMENT ROLES—IS NOW BLURRED

FOR MBA

TYPICALLY

GRADUATES-

MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation, and a Network

Member, of India International Skill Centres. View express are personal)

### Ethics-driven AI in predictive healthcare: Building a foundation of trust and accountability

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionising predictive healthcare, offering early disease detection, personalised treatment plans and improved patient outcomes

n today's rapidly advancing healthcare landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a transformative role, particularly in predictive healthcare. AI's ability to analyse vast datasets enables early disease detection, person-alised treatment plans and improved patient outcomes. The global AI in healthcare market, valued at approximately \$15.4 billion in 2022, is projected to surge to \$187.95 billion by 2030, growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 37 per cent.

Yet, with this potential comes a responsibility to ensure that AI is used responsibly, ethical-ly, and equitably. Establishing a framework prioritises privacy, fairness, transparency and protect patient rights and By examining patterns in com-



GERALD JAIDEEP

cer and Alzheimer's.

maintain public trust.

The Power of AI in Predictive Healthcare AI's role in predictive healthcare is primarily driven by machine learning and data analytics, empowering it to forecast diseases, assess risk factors, and recomaccountability is essential to mend preventive measures.

prehensive datasets, such as ness AI's potential responsibly, it's crucial to address the ethmedical histories, genetic proical challenges it introduces. Safeguarding Data Privacy files, lifestyle information and real-time health data, AI can predict the likelihood of conand Security The ethical use of AI in healthditions ranging from diabetes and cardiovascular diseases

care hinges on the responsible to complex ailments like canmanagement of patient data. Predictive healthcare AI relies This shift from reactive to preheavily on sensitive informaventive care can ease the burtion, including medical, genetden on healthcare systems ic, and behavioural data. Yet, and improve patient quality of the need for privacy is ever life. For example, AI-based more pressing—72 per cent of diagnostics for diabetic Americans express significant retinopathy have shown an concerns about data privacy in AI applications, particularly in accuracy rate of over 87 per cent, enabling early detection healthcare.

and timely intervention. In 2022, nearly 50 million Similarly, IBM Watson's healthcare records were Oncology AI has achieved 90 exposed to data breaches in the per cent accuracy in cancer United States, underscoring the need for strong data secutreatment recommendations rity protocols. To protect this that align with those of human oncologists. However, to harinformation, AI systems must



prioritise rigorous security measures such as encryption, anonymisation and regular audits.

Patients should also provide informed consent, clearly explaining how their data will be used and stored. By centring data protection in AI development, healthcare can ensure patient confidentiality and foster the trust necessary for AI's continued adoption. Addressing Bias for Fair and Equitable Predictions

AI's reliance on historical data introduces the risk of bias, which can lead to predictions that disproportionately impact certain demographic groups. Research has shown that AI models trained on biased data result in 35 per cent more misdiagnoses for Black and Hispanic patients compared to white patients. In healthcare, such biases could exacerbate disparities for marginalised populations.

Ensuring fairness requires AI systems trained on diverse, representative datasets, as well as continuous monitoring and adjustments to detect and correct biases. A study published in Nature Medicine found Medical Association, 67 per that AI systems trained on cent of healthcare providers

inclusive datasets significantly reduce diagnostic discrepancies, underscoring the importance of inclusivity in training data. Collaboration with healthcare professionals and ethicists is also vital to developing AI solutions that are equitable and serve all patients effectively.

Promoting Transparency and Explainability in AI Models The complexity of AI algorithms often results in "black box" decision-making, where the reasoning behind predictions is not fully understood by users or developers. In predictive healthcare, this lack of transparency can hinder trust and adoption among patients and healthcare providers alike. In a survey by the American

expressed reservations about using "black-box" AI systems, highlighting the need for explainable AI.Currently, only 23 per cent of AI-based diagnostic tools meet explainability standards to ensure transparency. By developing interpretable models, researchers can make AI's decision-making processes accessible to healthcare providers, enabling them to communicate AI-driven recommendations clearly and fostering patient involvement in care decisions.

As AI continues to advance, a strong ethical framework will be essential to uphold public trust and ensure that AI-driven healthcare remains a force for good.

(The writer is CEO, *Medvarsity; views are* personal)





# Money 08

### MONEY MATTERS



### **Japanese companies** to invest in Uttar Pradesh

eputy Governor of Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture, Ko Osada, on Wednesday paid a courtesy visit to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his official residence and discussed investment opportunities in the state among other issues, according to an official statement issued here. Ko Osada said, "Around 250 CEOs from Japan will visit Uttar Pradesh to explore potential investment opportunities. The Japanese delegation will assess the state's investment prospects, driven by its strong law and order, good governance and rapid economic growth. "This initiative will also create significant employment opportunities for the youth of Uttar Pradesh," it said. Ko Osada emphasised his commitment to strengthening friendly relations between Yamanashi and Uttar Pradesh. A key focus of the discussions was green hydrogen, the statement said. It was felt that a pact between UP and Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture would drive green hydrogen initiatives, including a centre of excellence, with Japanese technology at its core, it said. Discussions were also held on organising an international seminar that would bring together global experts and stakeholders in hydrogen technology.



### **Rupee falls 8 paise to** 86.87 against US dollar

he rupee failed to sustained its recovery and depreciated 8 paise to close at 86.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday due to a firm American currency and unending outflow of foreign funds. According to forex traders, rupee stayed firm initially but lost grounds amid volatile domestic equity markets that also added to the trend of withdrawal by foreign institutional investors. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.44 and moved between the high of 86.36 and the low of 86.91 against the greenback during intra-day. The unit ended the session at 86.87 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a fall of 8 paise from its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee appreciated 66 paise, logging the maximum single-day gain since March 3, 2023, to close at 86.79 against the US dollar. The steep surge came a day after the unit plunged to near 88 per US dollar-level during intra-day on Monday, though the currency ended the session with gains at 87.45 against the greenback. Meanwhile, the US dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies,

# **Simplified Income Tax Bill** brings in 'tax year' concept

VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 13, 2025

### Omits 'previous year', obsolete clauses

#### PNS NEW DELHI

The much-anticipated new income tax bill will replace terminologies like assessment and previous year with easier to understand 'tax year' as part of move to simplify language while removing provisos and explanations.

The Income Tax Bill, 2025, which is likely to be introduced in Parliament on Thursday, will replace 298 sections and 14 schedules in the six-decade old voluminous legislations, with a 622 page new law enshrined in 526 sections, 23 chapters and 16 schedules.

The Bill introduces a new concept of 'tax year' as the 12month period beginning from April 1. This would replace the present concept of assessment and previous year.

hend.

debt

'irrespective'.

Currently, income earned in the previous year (PY), say in the year April 2024 to March 2025, will be assessed in assessment year (AY) 2025-26.

The new Bill will come into effect from April 1, 2026, after it is vetted by Standing Committee and cleared by Parliament. The new bill has omitted

redundant sections, like those relating to Fringe Benefit Tax. The Bill is free from 'explanations or provisos', thereby mak-

6 DAYS OF MARKET FALL

ing', which was used excessive-

new Bill and almost every-

outlines the rights and obligaing it easier to read and compretions of the taxpayers. Also, the word 'notwithstand-The Bill replaces the term

previous year' as mentioned in ly in the Income Tax Act, 1961, the Income Tax Act, 1961 with 'tax year'. Also, the concept of has been done away with in the assessment year has been done where replaced with the term away with. Currently, for income earned

The Bill uses shorter senin the previous year (say 2023tences and has been made read-24), tax is paid in assessment er-friendly with the use of tables year (say 2024-25). This previand formulae. Tables have been ous year and assessment year (AY) concept has been removed provided for provisions relating to TDS, presumptive taxation, and only tax year under the simsalaries, and deductions for bad plified bill has been brought in. Once introduced in the Lok The 'Taxpayer's Charter' has been included in the Bill which Sabha likely on Thursday, the

Bill will be sent to the said.



### Retail inflation slows to 5-month low: Govt data

### PNS NEW DELHI

showed. Continuing the downward trend, retail inflation fell to a According to the data, the five-month low of 4.31 per cent in January, mainly due to a decline in the prices of vegeta-bles, eggs, and pulses.

The Consumer Price Indexbased retail inflation was 5.22 per cent in December and 5.1 per cent in January 2024. The previous low inflation was in August 2024 at 3.65 per cent. The Consumer Price Index has been on a decline since October.

The inflation in the food basket was 6.02 per cent in January, the lowest after August 2024 when it was 5.66 per cent. There is a decline of 91 basis

points in headline inflation of January 2025 in comparison to December 2024 and it is the lowest year-on-year inflation after August 2024, the National

top five items showing the highest year on year inflation were coconut oil (54.2 per cent), potato (49.61 per cent), coconut (38.71 per cent), garlic (30.65 per cent), peas (30.17

Statistics Office (NSO) data

per cent). On the other hand, the key items having the lowest year on year inflation in January were eera (-32.25 per cent), ginger (-30.92 per cent), dry chilies (-11.27 per cent), brinjal (-9.94 per cent), LPG (excluding conveyance) (-9.29 per cent).

Last week, the Reserve Bank years effected a rate cut of 25 basis points after a gap of five years to spur growth as infla-tion was in its comfort zone. The central bank has been mandated by the government to ensure CPI remains at 4 per

cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

# Equity investors' wealth erode by Rs 18 lakh crore

### PNS NEW DELHI

Investors suffered an erosion of Rs 18 lakh crore in six days of market fall, where the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 3 per cent, amid continuous foreign fund outflows and trade war worries. The 30-share BSE Sensex, which had tanked more than 900 points intra-day, ended at 76,171.08, down by 122.52 points or 0.16 per cent following 4,07,46,408.11 crore (USD 4.69 a recovery in bank stocks in the trillion) since February 4. last hou During the day, the bench-mark tanked 905.21 points or pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, ITC, Power Grid, Reliance 1.18 per cent to sink below the Industries, IndusInd Bank, 76,000-level and hit a low of Adani Ports, Titan and Infosys 75,388.39. were the biggest laggards. Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, Since February 4, the BSE bellwether gauge has slumped Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech 2,412.73 points or 3.07 per cent. Cement, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tata Motors were among the The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slumped Rs gainers. 18,04,418 crore to Rs Foreign Institutional Investors Equities Ltd, said.

PNS KOLKATA

employees.

Chandrima Bhattacharya on

Wednesday presented a Rs

3.89-lakh crore budget for

2025-26 with a significant

focus on social welfare, and

announced a four per cent

hike in dearness allowance

(DA) for state government

unveiled a series of infrastruc-

ture and agricultural develop-

ment projects in its budget,

allocating significant funds

for rural connectivity, river

erosion control, and agrarian

get of the Mamata Banerjee

government before the 2026

Bhattacharya tabled in the

In the last full-fledged bud-

elections,

support initiatives.

Assembly

The government also



(FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,486.41 crore on Tuesday, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance for further deliberations.

The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the new I-T Bill said that the Income-tax Act passed in 1961 has been subjected to numerous amendments since its passage 60 years

"As a result of these amendments the basic structure of the Income-tax Act has been overburdened and language has become complex, increasing cost of compliance for taxpayers and hampering efficiency of direct-tax administration," it

PNS NEW DELHI



Wholly owned by Cooperatives

IFFCO warns against unauthorized sale of its products

### PNS NEW DELHI

returned to shareholders, Prudential plc said in an The Indian Farmers "We will continue to explore Fertiliser Cooperative Ltd (IFFCO) on Wednesday opportunities to grow our busiissued a stern warning against the unauthorized ICICI Prudential Asset sale of its products commerce platforms, stating it has not granted permis sion to any online market-place to sell its products. The world's largest fertiliser cooperative emphasized that purchases made through these unauthorized platforms would be at the buyer's own risk and liabil-

#### ICICI Bank on Wednesday said the bank intends to retain majority holding in ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company even though its joint venture partner plans listing and partial divestment of its stake in the

fund house. ICICI Bank holds 51 per cent stake in ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company while remaining 49 per cent is with its joint venture partner UK-based Prudential PLC.

"We take note of the announcement made today by



### ICICI Bank to retain majority holding in PAMC

listing of ICICI Prudential Asset

Management Company Ltd involving the partial divestment

It is intended that following

the completion of such a divest-

ment, the net proceeds would be

nesses in the market," it said.

Company ensuring long-term commitment, it said. Prudential plc announced that it is evaluating a potential

was trading 0.04 per cent higher at 107.87.



### **DGGI uncovers Rs 1,196 crore GST fraud**

he Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), Pune Zonal Unit, has uncovered a GST fraud amounting to Rs 1,196 crore and has arrested one individual in connection with the case. The investigation, involving searches at multiple locations in Pune, Delhi, Noida, and Muzaffarnagar, has revealed a sophisticated network of bogus companies engaged in fraudulent Input Tax Credit (ITC) transactions, FinMin said in a statement on Wednesday. The accused had set up shell entities with no legitimate business operations, generating fake invoices and e-way bills to create a facade of genuine trade, it said. However, it said, these e-way bills had no RFID movements associated with them, confirming the absence of actual supply of goods. The fraudulent network facilitated the availing and passing of fake ITC worth Rs 1,196 crore. The arrested individual, the director of a private limited firm in Muzaffarnagar, is identified as the mastermind behind the operation, it said. The investigation uncovered that the cartel maintained a database of addresses, identities, email IDs, and phone numbers, which were strategically rotated to obtain new GST registrations and evade detection, it said.

"Markets were extremely

choppy and gyrated sharply in intra-day trade. After crashing over 900 points in early trade, markets recouped lost ground in late trade but select profit-taking in IT, banking and auto stocks saw benchmarks end marginally lower," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta

Prudential Asset Management Company, subject to market conditions, requisite approvals and other considerations," ICICI

Bank said in a regulatory filing. The bank intends to retain its majority shareholding in ICICI Prudential Asset Management

Mamata govt tables Rs 3.89 L cr Budget

joint venture partner anagement Company I Prudential PLC with respect to recorded a net profit of Rs 1,815 a potential listing of and partial crore in FY24 as compared to Rs divestment of its stake in ICICI 1,508 crore in FY23.

announcement.

of its shares.

In a separate announcement, ICICI Bank announced the adoption of technology to produce drinking water from atmospheric moisture as part of its commitment to enhancing the sustainability of its operations.

connectivity and boosting eco-

nomic activity in remote areas.

government sanctioned Rs 500

crore for the construction of a

4.75 km-long bridge over the

Ganga river at Gangasagar,

which is expected to facilitate

smooth access for pilgrims

Under the 'Banglar Bari'

housing project, the state plans

to construct 16 lakh new hous-

es in the upcoming financial

year, and a proposal of Rs 9,600

crore has been allocated for the

and boost local economies.

ties.

In a bid to address the per-

IFFCO, in a statement, also said these platforms were misleading buyers by charging unfair rates and selling discarded products. "IFFCO will initiate legal action against those involved in unauthorized sales without an FCO licence or the required 'O' Form."

sistent issue of river erosion, The cooperative, which the government set aside Rs has been serving farmers for 200 crore, which would promore than five decades, clarvide much-needed relief to ified that only its authorized retailers can sell IFFCO vulnerable riverine communiproducts through approved Further strengthening its channels focus on infrastructure, the

The official prices for all products, including nanofertilisers, are available on the company's website (www.iffco.in). IFFCO also cautioned

against fraudulent activities involving fake franchise offers or solicitation of money in its name. The cooperative advised buyers to verify purchases through its authorized stores or official website to ensure product authenticity.

#### PNS NEW DELHI

Gold prices declined Rs 340 to Rs 87,960 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid weak global trends, according to All India Sarafa Association.

**Gold declines** 

**Rs 340 to** 

Rs 87,960 per

10 gm

On Tuesday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had ended at Rs 88,300 per 10 grams. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also depreciated Rs 340 to Rs 87,560 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 87,900 per 10 grams in the previous trading session.

However, silver prices increased Rs 600 to Rs 97,200 per kg on Wednesday.

assembly a Rs 3.89 lakh crore budget. West Bengal Finance Minister

In the previous budget, the state saw an allocation of Rs 3.67 lakh crore, marking an 8 per cent increase from the previous year 2023-24.

Bhattacharya announced that the state government would increase the Dearness Allowance (DA) by four per cent from April 1, 2025.

This would bring the total DA to 18 per cent for over 10 lakh state government employees and pensioners. The move is aimed at addressing ongoing concerns raised by the employees who have been agitating for better compensation.

'With this four per cent increase in DA, we are reaffirming our commitment to the welfare of our employees," Bhattacharya said, underlining



the state's focus on the well-

being of its workforce. In the budget speech, Bhattacharya announced an allocation of Rs 44,000 crore for rural development and Panchayats. A major highlight

of the budget is the Rs 1,500 crore allocation for the improvement of rural roads across the state,

This is aimed at enhancing

# Industrial output growth slows to 3-month low

#### PNS NEW DELHI

India's industrial production growth slowed to a threemonth low of 3.2 per cent in December 2024, mainly due to poor performance of mining and manufacturing sectors, according to official data released on Wednesday.

The government has also revised the November 2024 industrial output figure to 5 per cent from the provisional

estimate of 5.2 per cent released in the previous month.

The pace of factory output growth stood at the same level of 3.2 per cent in September and flat in August 2024. The growth was recorded at 3.7 per cent in October 2024.

The country's factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed a growth of 4.4 per cent in December 2023.



Production increased by 3.2 per cent in December 2024, an official statement said.

The data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the manufacturing sector's output grew 3 per cent in December 2024, down from 4.6 per cent in the

year-ago month. Mining production growth declined to 2.6 per cent from 5.2 per cent year-on-year.

Power output increased to 6.2 per cent in December 2024 from 1.2 per cent a year ago.

In the April-December 2024 period, the IIP grew 4 per cent, slower than 6.3 per cent recorded in the year-ago period.

As per use-based classification, the capital goods segment growth accelerated to 10.3 per cent in December 2024 against a growth of 3.7 per cent in the year-ago period.

### **RBI lifts curbs on Kotak Mahindra Bank**

#### PNS MUMBAI

initiative

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday lifted nine-monthold curbs on Kotak Mahindra Bank, allowing it to onboard new customers through its online and mobile banking channels. The Reserve Bank also permitted the private sector lender to issue fresh credit cards.

The RBI in April 2024 had directed the lender to cease and desist from onboarding new

customers through its online and mobile banking channels, and issuing fresh credit cards.

Subsequently, the bank initiated remedial measures to address the supervisory concerns and submitted compliances to the Reserve Bank, the central bank said in a statement on Wednesday.

The bank also commissioned an external audit, with prior approval of RBI, to validate compliance.

# India's Index of Industrial



# what's brewing?

### **Vicky Kaushal on balancing his** role in Chhaava with his true self

Bollywood actor Vicky Kaushal is set to dazzle audiences once again with his highly anticipated film Chhaava, in which he portrays the legendary Maratha ruler, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, son of the iconic Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. The film, a historical epic, promises to take viewers on an immersive journey through the rich cultural and political landscape of the Maratha era. Chhaava is slated for release on February 14 and also stars Akshaye Khanna and Rashmika Mandana.

Known for his dedication to his craft, Vicky Kaushal described this role as his "toughest role yet." In a recent interview, he elaborated on the immense physical and mental preparation required to bring the historical figure to life. "Playing such a historical figure requires a lot of discipline. If you are not used to discipline, where I was, it becomes very challenging," Vicky explained. To achieve an authentic look, he reportedly gained around 25 kg and underwent rigorous training in horse riding and sword fighting, ensuring that every aspect of his performance mirrored the legacy of the Maratha ruler.

Beyond the physical transformation, Vicky immersed himself deeply in the culture, history, and language of the era. "Understanding the history of both Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj was crucial for me," he noted, emphasising the importance of connecting with the past to accurately portray the character. His extensive preparation was further bolstered by close collaboration with director Laxman Utekar, whose guidance helped him delve into the complexities of the role and connect with the emotional undercurrents of the narra-



tive. Vicky also reflected on the challenges of transitioning between his character and his real-life persona. "You become silent, stay more focused, and that stays with vou for that time," he admitted, acknowledging how intense roles can linger in one's mind even after leaving the set.

While Chhaava aims to celebrate the valor and legacy of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, it has not been without controversy. A dance sequence featuring the traditional Maharashtrian Lezim performed by

the character was removed following objections from political figures, including Maharashtra Minister Uday Samant. Despite this setback, the film continues to generate significant buzz and anticipation among fans eager to see Vicky Kaushal's transformative performance. As Vicky Kaushal embarks on

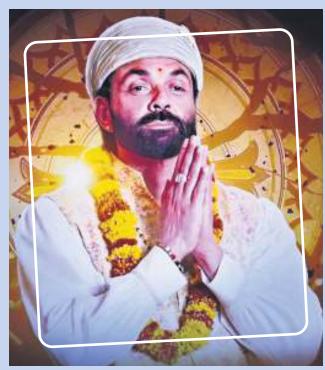
this challenging cinematic journey, Chhaava stands poised to captivate audiences with its blend of historical grandeur, intense character portrayal, and the timeless legacy of the Maratha empire.

Bobby Deol says 'stakes are higher, drama bolder, secrets even darker' in *Ek* Badnaam Aashram season 3-part 2

ontinuing its reign as one of India's most-watched OTT series, the season 3part 2 of Ek Badnaam Aashram, delves deep into the murky intersections of crime, power, and faith, promising to captivate audiences with its relentless nar-rative of betrayal, revenge, and redemption.

Directed and produced by National Award-winner Prakash Jha, Ek Badnaam Aashram features an ensemble cast led by Bobby Deol, who reprises his role as the formidable Baba Nirala. Joining him are Aaditi Pohankar, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Tridha Choudhury, Darshan Kumaar, Vikram Kochhar, Anupriya Goenka, Rajeev Siddhartha, and Esha Gupta, among others. The newly released teaser offers a chilling glimpse into Baba Nirala's resurgence to power, as his unwaver-ing loyalists and an increasingly volatile inner circle set the stage for a series of high-stakes confrontations.

The teaser which released on Wednesday, enriched by the evocative soundtrack "Duniya Mein Logon Ko" by Saregama, underscores the series's promise to deliver a roller-coaster of suspense and intrigue. The narrative centers on a rookie crime journalist's discovery of a fugitive gangster's return, which sets in motion a dangerous web of secrets and rivalries that could upend everything. With each revelation, the stakes rise, challenging the moral fabric of



the characters and threatening to shatter the precarious balance of power.

Bobby Deol, reflecting on his transformative journey as Baba Nirala, added: "The journey of Baba Nirala has been incredible, and the overwhelming love this franchise has received over the years is simply humbling. Portraying this character has been both thrilling and challenging. I can't wait for audiences to witness the next chapter, where the stakes

Set to stream exclusively on Amazon MX Player for free, Ek Badnaam Aashram Season 3 -Part 2 will be available on the Platform's mobile apps, Amazon's shopping app, Prime Video, Fire TV, and Connected TVs. As anticipation builds and fan fervor reaches new heights, this next chapter promises to deliver an unforgettable saga of crime, loyalty, and dark secrets.

are higher, the drama bolder, and the secrets even darker."

Pankaj Tripathi ventures into audio storytelling with **Velvet's cinematic** experience

Renowned actor Pankaj Tripathi has stepped into the world of audio storytelling as the co-founder of Velvet, a platform dedicated to bringing India's rich oral storytelling tra-

dition to a global audience. Launched in October 2024, Velvet is the brainchild of Tripathi along with actor and dialogue coach Vikas Kumar, and cofounders Akshat Saxena, Varad Bhatnagar, and Sharib Khan. The platform seeks to offer listeners an immersive, cinematic audio experience, particularly in Hindi, with plans to expand into English and other regional Indian languages. Tripathi, known for his perfor-

mances in Stree 2, Gangs of Wasseypur, Bareilly Ki Barfi, and Mirzapur, expressed his deep connection to storytelling. "From folk tales to epics, storytelling has been at the heart of Indian culture. With this platform, we wanted to take that tradition forward - creating an audio experience that transports listeners into a world of imagination while staying deeply rooted in our cultural ethos," he shared in a statement.

Velvet aims to bridge the gap between traditional oral storytelling and modern digital entertainment, offering a space where creators can connect with audiences worldwide. Speaking about the potential of the platform, Tripathi added, "This is not just about entertainment; it's about preserving and promoting the art of storytelling in a way that resonates with contemporary listeners. Audio has a unique ability to evoke emotions differently from visual mediums - it allows the audience to imagine, dream, and engage with narratives on a deeply personal level."



ND, JUST COME UP HERE AND

CLOSE YOUR

EVES.

A ctress-singer Selena Gomez appears poised to A concentrate on her acting career in the wake of her breakthrough role in Jacques Audiard's musical crime film, Emilia Perez. The 32-year-old star, whose performance in the film has garnered widespread acclaim, revealed at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival that returning to her music career will be a challenging prospect after experiencing the transformative power of film. "I think film and art-making and being around such incredible, talented people that have done nothing but uplift me along the way - it's going to be very hard for me to ever go back to music after this," Gomez remarked during the event. This statement underscores her deep connection with the craft of filmmaking

# SELENA GOMEZ: 'IT'S HARD TO GO BACK TO MUSIC' AFTER THE SUCCESS OF *EMILIA PEREZ*

and her desire to explore storytelling through a different medium.

Gomez further elaborated on her new direction by expressing gratitude for the trust placed in her by the film's director. "The director just really trusted me and I was so grateful because I've gotten to show people that I am capable of doing more. I hope that this is just the beginning for me," she said. With Emilia Perez serving as a potential launching pad, the hitmaker looks forward to expanding her horizons in film and television projects.

Despite enjoying significant success both as an

actress and as a singer - best known for charttopping hits like "Good For You"-Gomez candidly acknowledged that she might be "a little too old for the pop-star life." In an interview with Variety, she explained, "I definitely think my strong suit is probably acting. But one thing I'm proud of in music is being able to tell a story - my favorite songs are mostly ballads, and they're very transparent and honest. But I think I might be a little too old for the pop-star life. I'm genuinely so happy to just be in this new era of my life, because in a lot of ways, it's just the beginning.

With her sights set on a future filled with film and TV projects, Gomez emphasised that her music career remains a cherished part of her journey but is now a separate chapter. "I love storytelling, and my music career is separate. However, I don't see that being a forever thing," she concluded. As Emilia Perez continues to captivate audiences across various platforms, Selena Gomez's bold transition marks a new era for the multi-talented star - one where her passion for acting and storytelling takes center stage, promising even more diverse and compelling projects in the years to come.

### ARCHIE







### **CALVIN AND HOBBES**

FUN



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TURTLE TIMEOUTS













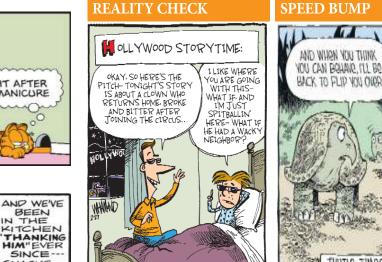








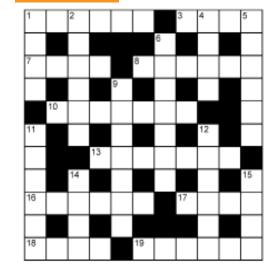
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### **CROSSWORD**



### ACROSS

- A clasp on a belt 3 Hint 7 A foot covering
- 8 Small glass ball
- 10 Very angry
- 13 Borrow books here 16 A large shed for an
- aeroplane
- 17 Leg joint
- 18 Decays 19 Dislike very strongly

### DOWN

- 1 Finest
- 2 A prickly plant
- 4 Part of the ear
- 5 Cricket team number



6 A month 9 Alike

11 A writer of books

14 Rope tangle

15 Departed

12 Medal for third place

SOLUTION

VII avawate pioneer Thursday February 13, 2025

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# **BEYOND CHARITY, BEING VOICE OF THE FORGOTTEN!**



**TEJAL SINHA** tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

n a world where philanthropy is often associated with grand gestures and high-profile charities, Dr. Aneel Murarka has carved a unique path - one rooted in self-reliance, grassroots impact, and an unwavering commitment to the people. Often hailed as the "common man's philanthropist," Dr Murarka through his social enterprise, Ample

Missiion. His journey into philanthropy began not from wealth or influence but from a deep-seated responsibility he felt during his college days. "I started by helping fellow students who couldn't afford their fees," he recalls in this chat with The Pioneer. "Later, as I witnessed the broader challenges that people endured - whether it was access to healthcare, education, or basic sanitation - I realized that I wanted to make a meaningful difference in a

it's your own money, you are more cautious about how it's spent. It also sets an example-if we are willing to invest in social causes with our own resources, it inspires others to contribute as well.

He further stresses the importance of community involvement in decisionmaking. "The people facing these challenges should have a say in shaping welfare initiatives. Our goal is to create solutions that are holistic, sustainable, and promote dignity for all."

For Dr Murarka, the true power of Ample Missiion's work is best reflected in the stories of the people it has uplifted. One such moment that stands out is their work with Warli artisans, a tribal community known for its traditional art. "When we started working with Warli artisans, they were struggling financially and had limited exposure," he shares. "Through skill development and market exposure, they transitioned from financial dependency to self-reliance." Seeing these artisans establish their own sustainable initiatives was deeply fulfilling. His son, Sidhaant Murarka, has also taken

an active role in Ample Missiion, bringing fresh energy and modern perspectives to the organization. Beyond financial support, Ample Missiion also provides skill enhancement workshops. "We encourage them to adapt their traditional

art to modern trends while preserving its authenticity," he adds. "Through these efforts, we are not only protecting a cultural legacy but also creating sustainable livelihoods." Then comes building

crematoriums and dignified last rites. Discussing his work in creating crematoriums in Mumbai and Bihar, he shares the deep sense of duty that led him to these projects.

"The inspiration behind 'Shivdham' in Mumbai and the crematorium in Bihar's Tetia-Bambar came from a pressing need. In these areas, people had to travel long distances to perform last rites for their loved ones. Understanding the emotional and cultural importance of this ritual, we felt it was essential to provide a dignified space with modern facilities, including free funeral materials and priest has spent over three decades championing social causes services. The goal was to ease the burden on grieving families while addressing a major

infrastructural gap." The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of well-maintained

crematoriums "During the pandemic, the surge in deaths revealed the inadequacy of existing cremation facilities, especially for COVID victims. We collaborated with the BMC and state government to operationalize newly built gas-fired furnaces at Shivdham Crematorium. Ensuring safe and dignified last rites while maintaining health protocols was a challenge, but it was crucial work in those difficult times." His connection with people across the country allows him to recognise urgent needs, such as the one in Bihar. "The initiative in Tetia-Bamber, Bihar, was prompted by distress calls from a local villager who repeatedly called my office. He explained that the lack of a crematorium forced people to travel long distances, often borrowing money just to arrange transport for the deceased. This was heartbreaking. Through our trust, we built a modern facility, dedicating it in memory of my late mother. Meena Devi Murarka. It's these direct connections with communities that help us identify and act on critical needs." In 2019. Ample Missiion made history at Times Fashion Week by spotlighting transgender models, marking a



🏓 the pioneer



transgender community feeling empowered and celebrated. Through platforms like the Shoorveer Awards, Bharat Prerna Awards, and Awards Zindagi Ke, he ensures that extraordinary individuals receive the recognition they deserve.

"We created these awards to honor people whose resilience and courage inspire the nation. The Shoorveer Awards celebrate real-life bravehearts, Bharat Prerna Awards recognise unsung heroes, and Awards Zindagi Ke pay tribute to martyrs of the armed forces."

One story that deeply moved him was that of a doctor who lost both her legs in a train accident.

"She faced rejection from the Medical Council but fought tirelessly to fulfill her dream. She ultimately completed her MD in Pathology from KEM Hospital and now serves patients with unwavering dedication. Her journey is a testament to resilience and determination, which is why she received both the Shoorveer Award in 2016 and the Bharat Prerna Award in 2017. Stories like hers deserve to be told and celebrated.

Dr Murarka has also been actively working on road safety especially tackling Mumbai's pothole problem "Every monsoon, potholes become a serious hazard,

leading to accidents and loss of lives. My team and I take direct action by filling potholes using Cold Bitumen Ready Mix, which sets quickly and provides a temporary but effective fix. My son, Sidhaant, leads the team, ensuring timely interventions. We also run awareness campaigns on helmet safety and pedestrian visibility through zebra crossings near schools, colleges, and hospitals.

He believes public participation is key to road safety improvements. "Citizens must report road hazards instead of just blaming authorities. Forming community groups working with NGOs, and using social media to highlight issues can create pressure for action. Road safety is a shared responsibility, and together, we can push for better infrastructure." Another critical issue Ample Missiion addresses is sanitation, particularly in rural areas where open defecation is still common.

"We built hundreds of toilets in regions like Kashmir, Bihar Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. However, the real challenge was changing mindsets. Many adults were hesitant to switch from open fields to toilets, so we focused on educating school children through creative workshops like 'Dhodala.' They, in turn, influenced their families. Continuous awareness programs and community engagement have been instrumental in shifting attitudes toward hygiene." One of the most powerful tools Dr Murarka uses for awareness is filmmaking. "We've produced over 40 short films on crucial issues like Swachh Bharat, anti-smoking campaigns, and breast cancer awareness. Featuring stars like Sunny Leone, Kangana Ranaut, and Amitabh Bachchan, these films have gone viral, reaching millions and sparking discussions on topics that matter." One film, Don't Let Her Go, received special recognition from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "It was an incredible moment when PM Modi ji acknowledged our film on Swachh Bharat. His retweet and the Government of India's recognition of our efforts reinforced the power of storytelling in driving change. The Ministry of Urban Development even appointed us as Brand Ambassadors for the Swachh Bharat Mission, a responsibility I deeply cherish." Despite all he has achieved, Dr Murarka remains focused on new initiatives. "Our next major projects include building a new cremation facility near Gorai Beach in Mumbai, where there is a significant need. We're also constructing temples in Mainpur, Uttar Pradesh, to support spiritual well-being. Additionally, we are working on expanding medical facilities in underserved areas.

# Travel just got whole lot more meaningful!

#### PNS|HYDERABAD

ebruary travel patterns are revealing an intriguing picture of the changing tastes of contemporary adventurers as the year approaches a new chapter. Travellers are adopting a more thoughtful approach to wanderlust, putting meaningful experiences and sustainable habits ahead of the excitement of the next short journey. The days of frantic, frequent short getaways are over. This trend is being driven by rising expenses and environmental concerns, as ecoaware travellers look for longer, more immersive journeys that not only feed their souls but also treat the environment with care. As remote workers take advantage of off-season travel to find hidden gems in less crowded locales, all at a lower price point, flex-ible work arrangements are further driving this trend.

Furthermore, "destination dupes"—affordable substitutes for well-known locations that have a comparable appeal without the crowds-are growing in popularity among individuals who

yearn for the charm of famous locations without the high cost. Pop culture-inspired travel is also flourishing, as fans travel to the actual locations of their favourite TV series and movies. The popularity of wellness-focused travel is still growing, with detox excursions, alcohol-free vacations and holistic retreats providing a break from the stresses of contemporary life. Platforms like Viacation are wellpositioned to meet the changing tastes of tourists as these trends develop by highlighting eco-friendly getaways, highlighting lesser-known locations and match-ing their products with the ideals of

today's conscientious, inquisitive and tech-savvy traveller. And it is exactly in line with the intelligent ideas of our interviewee, Viacation's co-founder and CEO, Jatinder Paul Singh.

'We arrange vacations with the ideal ratio of flexibility to structure. While leaving space for unforeseen, memorable moments, we handle the essentials, such as lodging, major attractions and easy trans portation. Our tours let passengers enjoy the route without feeling constrained by a rigid timetable, whether it's a local's recommendation for a hidden gem, a picturesque stop along the way, or an unexpected cultural encounter," shares the joint founder. He continues, "At the heart of my travel experiences is sustainability. The three main priorities are cultural preservation, community support and environmental protection! By collaborating with neighbourhood companies, we make sure that tourism boosts the local economy while highlighting lesser-known locations to avoid overtourism. The low-impact activities and eco-friendly lodgings enable visitors to make a positive rather than a negative impression." Excessive tourism can degrade natural landscapes, increase pollution and threaten delicate ecosystems. However, community-based tourism enhances livelihoods and local economies. To make sure that travel continues to have meaning for both tourists and the places they visit, they incorporate these ethical standards. "After the pandemic, people want more meaningful travel experiences instead of just sightseeing," he continues. "According to studies, domestic travel currently accounts for 75% of all travel expenditures worldwide, indicating that tourists want more intimate and genuine experiences. By designing vaca-tion experiences with an emphasis on culture, mindfulness and personal development, we continue this trend. We make sure that every trip is purposeful and

enriching, whether it is by selecting wellness retreats. assisting with conservation projects, or visiting local craftsmen.

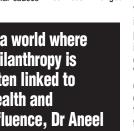
Exploration has become much simpler and more responsible. The options are infinite, with an astounding 50,000+ multi-day activities spread across 160+ countries. A worry-free journey is guaranteed with a flawless booking process, knowledgeable advice from travel experts and round-the-clock assistance. Making a difference is more important than merely traveling." More individuals are trav-elling to locations from their favourite shows and films, a trend known as pop culture tourism. For instance, Formula 1 locations have become more well-known thanks to Netflix's Drive to Survive. We ensure that visitors respect local culture when visiting these well-known locations. In addition to leading tours of popular destinations, we also show visitors undiscovered treasures so they can experience the place in a way that goes beyond what is shown on screen.

By promoting environmentally responsible tourism, collaborating with local operators

and empowering travellers to offset their carbon footprint, a new standard for sustainable adventure travel is being set! With customisable options tailored to diverse interests, solo travelers, couples, families and groups can effortlessly discover their ideal adventure. As the travel landscape evolves, the vision remains clear: to expand sustainable offerings, amplify customer satisfaction and redefine the boundaries of organised adventure travel, guided by decades of industry expertise and a passion for innovation. He continues with more of his unique observations, saying, "Technology is making travel more convenient and intimate. AI

tools are currently used by 22% of travellers to plan their journeys, a 40% increase since last September. People can save time, discover new destinations and consider additional possibilities with the use of these tools. However, if technology is used excessively, travel may become less intimate.'

This innovative travel start-up is reinventing the art of journey-making, driven industry e



In a world where

wealth and

philanthropy is often linked to influence, Dr Aneel Murarka stands out as a self-reliant changemaker.

larder wav

One of the biggest misconceptions about philanthropy, according to Dr Murarka, is that it is reserved for the wealthy. He strongly refutes this notion. "Philanthropy isn't about the size of your bank account - it's about the size of your heart. Small acts of kindness, whether it's volunteering, mentoring, or even helping a neighbor, can create ripples of change." For him, the true essence of giving lies in the intention behind it. "It's not about how much you contribute financially; it's about your willingness to make a difference. When people realise that they have something valuable to offer, irrespective of their financial situation, they become active changemakers in society." While many social organisations

depend on fundraising and grants, his Ample Missiion operates on a unique

self-funded model. Dr Murarka explains that this approach was a conscious decision to maintain independence and ensure that the organization stays true to its values.

"We don't beg, borrow, or steal - we fund our initiatives internally," he states firmly. "This allows us to avoid external influences that might compromise our mission." Moreover, self-funding fosters a deep sense of accountability. "When

Through Ample Missiion, he has spent over three decades driving impactful initiatives. In this exclusive conversation with The Pioneer, he shares about his efforts and initiatives

> breakthrough moment for gender inclusivity in fashion. This was the first-of-its-kind event in India and possibly the world. "Having transgender models open the show with activists like Laxmi Narayan Tripathi and Navya Singh sent a strong message about acceptance and equal representation. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with the fashion industry recognising the importance of diversity, and the

and born out of a passion for discovery. This forwardthinking company, which was founded in 2023 by this visionary leader, creates remarkable experiences by incorporating excellence into each journey. 'Connecting with new people, learning about their viewpoints and uncovering aspects of ourselves while travelling is what travel is all about. I had a life-changing experience when I went to a tiny village and ate and chatted with the residents. It served as a reminder that the most memorable travel experiences involve more than just seeing a place; they involve actually experiencing it. Every journey ought to feel like a unique journey. These days, luxury travel is also about unique experiences rather than just upscale lodging. Nowadays, more individuals prefer unusual activities to pricey ones. For instance, 22% of tourists in the United States are wealthy, yet they spend 46% of their money on experiences. Travellers can do more than just stay at a good hotel; they can study a local trade, have a special meal prepared by a renowned chef, or have a private tour of a historic palace. A journey is genuinely unforgettable because of these moments!'

Jatinder concludes the interview by emphatically saying, "Leave space for the unexpected. While preparation is important, true adventure occurs when you embrace the unplanned. Some of the best travel experiences come from impromptu detours-a conversation with a local, an unplanned sunset stop, or a hidden gem found by chance."

#### **DAMENSCH'S VALENTINE'S MAROON HAND** TINT THAT ELEBRATIN **EMBROIDERED** WON'T QUIT **BOX SETTLES THE SCORE VELVET KURTA WITH** Blush that melts away This Valentine's Day, DaMENSCH is here to celebrate mid-day? Lip color that **SALWAR AND PURE** different sides of love with a quirky, stylish twist. doesn't last? No thx. Introducing the Valentine's Box, where **SILK DUPATTA** Milk Makeup Cooling comfort meets comedy, and Water Jelly Tint **FONZIE FOLKSY LUXURY** Featuring a rich maroon velvet relationships get the buildable stain glides salwar paired with a makhmal playful flag treatment on seamlessly for a PERFUME TRAVEL SET kurta, by WeaverStory's Velvetthey deserve! watercolor finish with Makhmal collection, adorned Whether one is a Discover luxury on-the-go with Fonzie Folksy's serious staying power. with intricate zardozi and green flag couple limited edition Travel Set of four uniquely crafted resham embroidery, it exudes basking in mutual PRICE: INR 3,200 unisex perfumes. Each of these captivating perfection or a red flag luxury and tradition. fragrances will have your loved one swooning Complemented by a handduo laughing their way over you on Valentine's Day and beyond. embroidered pure silk dupatta, through life's chaos, this box turns those moments into a this exquisite ensemble PRICE: INR 2499 creates a regal, sophisticated gift as unique as their love story look that makes a lasting impression. Price: INR 28,990 PERIOD CARE PACK – SEVERE This Valentine's Day, be thoughtful and considerate by gifting the ultimate comfort during a difficult time. Awshad's Period Care Pack, featuring 4500 mg CBD oil, is designed to alleviate severe menstrual cramps, especially when the cold makes things worse.

### sports 11



# India thrashes England by 142 runs, sweeps series 3-0

#### PTI AHMEDABAD

robust batting show led by the Shubman Gill's century heralded India's 142-run hammering of England in the third and final ODI as the hosts completed a dominant 3-0 clean sweep to culminate preparations for the Champions Trophy, here on Wednesday

Wednesday. India ticked all the remaining boxes with vice-captain Gill (112) following up his twin fifties earlier in the series with a seventh ODI ton of his career while middle-order mainstays Virat Kohli (52) and Shreyas Iver (78) pushed India to a formidable 356 in the first half

over the mantle to complete the England demolition job, bundling out the visitors for a mere 214 in 34.2 overs to runs against a familiar opponent.

There was no change in the script for English, who came crashing down against spin after a sparkling start against

pace, which was provided by the pair of Ben Duckett (34)

and Phil Salt (24) in tow. The slowness of the surface attractive aided Indian bowlers as strike-making became difficult as the match progressed.

Duckett took charge of four consecutive boundaries around the park in the fifth over, he again went after the left-arm seamer but was deceived by the 'pace off' knuckle ball.

The mishit was collected cleanly by India skipper Rohit Sharma at mid-off and Arshdeep soon bounced out Salt, albeit off a slower one which the batter hit meekly Indian bowlers then took to Axar Patel for a simple

grab. Tom Banton gave a good example of himself playing his first ODI against India, complete a comprehensive victory — their second largest in ODIs in terms of spinners but he could not push on beyond a 41-ball 38 with four fours and two

> sixes. Joe Root perished for just 24 when an inside edge off Axar (2/22) crashed into his



stumps and Harshit Rana (2/31) hastened the end of tightened the screws with England's resistance by getting the rid of Harry regular strikes and the visitors Brook (19) and Jos Buttler gumption on a pitch which (6) in quick succession. remained true in its nature. From 84/2 after 10 overs, Earlier, Gill led the way with England's resolve petered a fluent 112 while Kohli and

out as Indian bowlers Iyer also cashed in on ideal conditions in their last outing before Champions Trophy, helping lacked India set a 357-run target. Gill anchored India's innings en route to his seventh ODI ton - 112 off 104 balls

(14x4s, 3x6s) which also took his average past 60 in the format — while putting on two century stands with the Kohli and Iyer to consolidate for India.

The India vice-captain Gill also achieved the unique feat

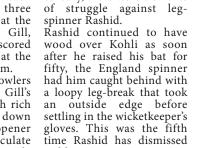
of scoring a century each century, there were elements across the three of struggle against leginternational formats at the venue. Gill, same meanwhile, has also scored

an IPL hundred here at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Attacking the fast bowlers and spinners alike, Gill's and spinners alike, Gill's knock was replete with rich strokes particularly down the ground. The opener displayed immaculate footwork at the crease early on to take the attack to the opposition and remained resolute to score off spin resolute to score off spin, until he was cleaned up by

Adil Rashid (4/64). On his part, Kohli took his time to find the rhythm and when he did, the batting mainstay looked hitting his ctridee strides.

Kohli made the most of a juicy overpitched delivery from Mark Wood which he drove through the covers for his first four, then got on top of the ball from Saqib Mahmood to swat it for another boundary through mid-wicket and punished the England pacer for being wayward as he cut him for his third four.

While his stroke play was compelling in the run-a-ball fifty for his 73rd half-



Kohli in ODIs. Kohli was stranded 37 runs short of becoming only the third batter ever to make 14,000 ODI runs, missing a personal landmark like his teammate Rohit Sharma earlier in the innings. It is expected to be completed

during Champions Trophy. Coming off a terrific century in second ODI, Rohit (1) could not even get a start as a delivery from Wood which was angled in, straightened enough to take the outside edge and Phil Salt collected a sharp catch. Iyer only had himself to

blame for missing out on a triple-digit score after he was caught behind on a delivery fired down the leg stump by Rashid, one that he needlessly chased and edged.



### Strac withdraws, Smith to lead **Australia in Champions Trophy**

decision.

pacers

### PTI SYDNEY

frontline pace attack at the Champions Trophy (CT) after fast bowler Mitchell Starc withdrew from the tournament citing personal reasons.

"His loss is, of course, a blow for the Champions Trophy The ODI World Cup holders have been forced to make campaign, but it provides an several changes to their 15opportunity for someone else member provisional squad to make their mark on the tournament" Bailey said due to injuries to captain Pat

### India, England teams support BCCI's 'Donate Organs, Save Lives' campaign

also

### PTI AHMEDABAD

India and England cricket teams took the field for the third and final ODI here on Wednesday wearing green armbands to support the BCCI's initiative of "Donate Save Organs, Lives"

campaign. The BCCI informed this in a statement shortly after the commencement of the match here at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

"Both teams are wearing green arm bands to support BCCI's initiative 'Donate Organs, Save Lives'. The initiative is spearheaded by ICC Chairman Mr Jay Shah," the BCCI release stated.

The initiative was announced by ICC chairman and former BCCI secretary Shah on Monday.



Shah wrote on X, "On the occasion of the 3rd ODI Donate Organs, Save Lives." inspire, unite, and create lasting impact beyond the field. Through this initiative, we urge everyone to take a

step towards giving the greatest gift of all — the gift of life. "One pledge, one decision,

come together and make a difference!" he added. The initiative was supported

by several Indian players, including Virat Kohli and vice-captain Shubman Gill. "Score the ultimate century.

Your organs can help others live beyond your lifetime. Register as a donor and make every life count," Kohli said in a video shared by the BCCI. Gill added, "Be the captain of life. Just like a captain leads the team to victory, you can lead someone to life by pledging to donate your organs.

Other Indian cricketers to support the initiative were batters Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul.

"One donor can save up to eight lives. Pledge today and hit a six for humanity," Iyer

said. Rahul added, "Play the ultimate winning shot. Your decision to donate your organs can be the match winning moment in someone's life. Be a hero off the field too."

has long been one of the most

iconic players in the history of

He also holds the distinction

the competition.



### Ghazanfar ruled out of both Champions Trophy and IPL

### PTI KABUL

under treatment during this Teenage Afghanistan off-spinner AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of both the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) and the IPL due to a lower back fracture that will keep him on the sidelines for at least four months, the country's cricket board announced on Wednesday. eft-arm spinner Nangevalia Kharote, originally named as a reserve, has replaced the 18-year-old in the main squad for Champions Trophy, which will be held in Pakistan and the UAE from February 19. The 20-year-old Kharote is a left-arm spinner and has played seven ODIs and six T20 Internationals since making his debut last year. Ghazanfar sustained the injury during Afghanistan's tour of Zimbabwe late last year, sidelining him for "at least four months".

period," it added. The IPL is scheduled to take place from March 21 to May 25 and Ghazanfar was to make his maiden appearance at the event after being bought by Mumbai Indians. The ACB also informed that off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman will continue to miss ODI action "until he has fully recovered," despite playing for Paarl Royals in the SA20 through January and early February. Mujeeb, who was not included in the provisional squad for Champions Trophy, last played an ODI during the 2023 World Cup. Afghanistan will begin their Champions Trophy campaign against South Africa on February 21 in Karachi, followed by matches against England and Australia. Afghanistan squad for Champions Trophy "AM Ghazanfar has been ruled out of the ICC Hashmatullah Shahidi Champions Trophy due to a (capt), Ibrahim Zadran, fracture in the L4 vertebra Alikhil Ikram (wk). Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat (located in the lower back), specifically in the left pars Shah (vice-capt), Azmatullah the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) posted on 'X'. Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid "He sustained the injury Khan, Fareeh Ahmad, during Afghanistan's recent tour of Zimbabwe and will Fazalhaq Farooqi, Nangeyalia Kharote, Naveed be sidelined for a minimum

of four months, remaining

#### between India and England in Ahmedabad on February can save multiple lives. Let's 12th, we are proud to launch an awareness initiative -"Sport has the power to

Shikhar Dhawan among four event

Cummins, Josh pacer Hazlewood, and all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, along with Marcus Stoinis' surprise retirement.

"We understand and respect Mitch's decision," Chair of men's selectors George Bailey said on Wednesday.

"Mitch is deeply respected for commitment his to international cricket and the priority he places on performing for Australia." Starc, who appeared to be in discomfort due to a left ankle issue during the latter stages of the final Test in Galle last week, will also miss the upcoming ODI series in Sri Lanka starting Wednesday.

"His well-documented ability to play through pain and adversity, as well as forgoing opportunities in other parts of his career to put his country first, should be applauded," Bailey added.

Cricket Australia said Starc

Smith, who is leading the side on the tour of Sri Lanka, will captain the team in the absence of Cummins and Marsh during the tournament, which will be

played across Pakistan and the ŪAE.

not be commenting on his

The development comes as a

major blow for Australia, who

will be without the three

Hazlewood and Starc – who

played a crucial role in their

2023 ODI World Cup victory.

Cummins,

'The squad has changed significantly over the past month due to untimely injuries and the retirement of Marcus Stoinis," remarked. Bailey

Pacers Spencer Johnson, Nathan Ellis, Sean Abbott, and Ben Dwarshuis have been named in Australia's final 15man squad for the Champions Trophy.

The upside is that we have been able to call on players who have had international exposure and success over the past 12 months," Bailey said. "A strong core of some our most experienced players will provide a strong foundation in

our attempt to win this edition has requested privacy and will of the Champions Trophy.

ambassadors for Champions Trophy PTI 📕 DUBAI

Former India opener Shikhar Dhawan was on Wednesday named as one of the four event ambassadors for the ICC Champions Trophy (CT) to be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9.

Besides Dhawan, the ICC has also named Pakistan's 2017 Champions Trophy winning captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, former Australia all-rounder

Shane Watson, and New Zealand's legendary fast bowler, Tim Southee as event

ambassadors. The quartet will write guest columns and will also attend matches, sharing their thoughts on the event, where the world's best eight teams will compete for the top honour. "It is such a special feeling to be part of a Champions Trophy, and to be given the opportunity to enjoy the upcoming edition as an Ambassador is an honour," Dhawan said in an ICC

release. "It's the ultimate competition where it's all on the line, and that is what makes it such a



thrilling spectacle. It's a tournament full of passion, pride, and determination, and that's what makes it such a thrilling and emotional journey involved." As India's highest run-scorer

in the Champions Trophy, with an outstanding 701 runs across two editions, Dhawan

for

everyone

of being the only player to win two consecutive Golden Bats (for the highest run-getter) in the tournament. His remarkable achievements include being named the Player of the Tournament in the 2013 edition, as well as

holding the record for the most centuries in Champions Trophy history. "Some of my most cherished cricketing memories come

from playing in the Champions Trophy. In the coming weeks, we will see the world's best teams pouring their heart and soul into every

match, with everything they have worked for on the line," said Dhawan.

Zadran, Noor Ahmad.

match, and the big wigs did not want an encore in Dubai.

India is now placing confidence

They are hoping that Kohli will

find a way to return to his imperious scoring ways and

will not put pressure on the rest

The management has taken the

risk of believing that the top

five will be in fine fettle

They have also risked the

traditionally iffy fitness of

Hardik Pandya and his ability

to plug the gap as the third seamer behind Mohammed

Shami and Arshdeep Singh or

Looking at the squad, India

seem to have taken one risk too

many. Will they get the desired

high reward? Or will they

throughout the tournament.

the Champions Trophy.

of the middle-order.

Harshit Rana.

falter?

India adopts high-risk-high-reward approach in squad selection

#### PTI BENGALURU

**T**t aligns with head coach Gautam Gambhir's highrisk-high-reward approach but can India's Champions Trophy squad, having lost its game-changing pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah to injury, deliver the goods at the ODI showpiece? not particularly an average of 28.6 and straightforward given the economy of 4.8 The answer to that question is audacious calls taken to decide the final 15. The selection risks start with

the drafting in of five spinners. The Dubai-bound flight will feature Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy in a spin-heavy bowling attack. Harshit Rana has replaced

Bumrah with the more experienced Mohammed Siraj relegated to the group of nontravelling reserves alongside young batter Yashasvi Jaiswal and all-rounder Shivam Dube.

India's matches will be held in Dubai, a venue where pacers have found more success traditionally in the 50-over format.

Available data shows that the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, where India will play all their matches, has hosted 58 ODIs since 2009, and pacers have taken 466 wickets here at

The spinners have combined to take 334 wickets till now at the DICS, and their average goes up to 30 but with a slightly better economy of 4.2

"The Dubai surface has a bit more carry than say in Sharjah, and the pacers here have found some good success and that's why Pakistan has picked more pacers in their squad, though they are supposed to play only a couple of matches here," a former national selector told

PTI. "If you use the new ball well, then you can have a good

purchase there. I am not faulting the selection of Varun. He is in good form, but I would have liked to see one more experienced pacer in that side, someone like Siraj," he added.

Spinners' role in Dubai From outside, having five spinners looks like an overestimation of the conditions. But the management took a chance with Chakravarthy because of his excellent recent

form. Chakravarthy has been trusted to deliver in a multi-nation tournament, after his failure to do so in the T20 World Cup

2021 at the same venue. What might have tilted the scales in his favour is the fact that none of India's league stage opposition in the Champions Trophy - Bangladesh, Pakistan and New Zealand - have played him before.

The way he managed to trouble England in the ongoing home series on account of being an unknown entity for the visitors



also worked to his advantage. But on the flip side, it leaves Kuldeep Yadav in peril. With Iadeja and Axar being the firstchoice spinners considering their batting prowess, the fight for the third spinner's slot will be between Kuldeep and Chakravarthy.

If India follows the template of the recent second ODI against Cuttack, England at

Chakravarthy can pip the leftarm wrist spinner, at least in the initial stages of the Champions Trophy.

Why Śiraj was overlooked Another selection paradox is placing Rana ahead of Siraj as Bumrah's replacement for a tournament in which teams will have to do the tight-rope walk of three matches in the league phase.

Conventional thinking says that experience more than explosiveness matters in such events, but the wise men went ahead with Rana.

According to skipper Rohit Sharma, ineffectiveness with the old ball led to Siraj's omission from the marquee event.

On that count, Rana has already given them two examples of his ability to strike when the white ball loses its lacquer.

In his T20I debut, Rana was the sixth bowler, a much-debated concussion substitute for Shivam Dube, and walked away with game-changing figures of 3 for 33.

In ODIs, Rana went for a few runs, but showed the gumption to bowl across three spells in three various passages of the match.

The risk that the management has taken is to trust Rana to grow in his role quickly and deliver in a high-pressure missed out in the second

tournament as and when he is called for.

interarticularis,"

Why was Jaiswal dropped A common line of thinking can in Rohit, who made a hundred be that the selectors wanted a at Cuttack, and Shubman Gill, bowler with some mystery who scored two fifties in as element about him in the squad many ODIs against England, to once Bumrah was ruled out deliver at the top consistently in with a lower back injury.

So, they picked an in-form Chakravarthy. Fair call. But why select him in place of Jaiswal, an opener?

Should they have replaced a spinner for him? Perhaps Washington Sundar could have been the one to be omitted to accommodate Chakravarthy. However, in one shot, the selectors have also avoided the opening conundrum that haunted them in the first ODI against England at Nagpur. It was tough to accommodate

Jaiswal and Shreyas Iyer in the same eleven but an injury to Virat Kohli gave them a temporary relief. Once Kohli came back, Jaiswal



# tollywood

# I got the mood to get married: Vishwak Sen

#### SURESH KAVIRAYANI sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

henever young actor Vishwak Sen's film is released, some controversies also surround the film or the actor. His upcoming film 'Laila' is releasing this Friday. Actor Prudhvi's political comments became viral and hurt some people. Later, Vishwak said sorry about it, because it is his film. "I wanted to stop the controversies," said the actor. He added that he does not want to invite controversies, but they are unexpectedly coming. "Now, I am a more mature person, because I am becoming older. So, I would like to maintain more calm," said the actor when asked why he is quiet

these days. The actor has turned into a female in this film 'Laila'. "As an actor I would like to play all types of characters and a female character is one of them. It also shows a new dimension as an actor, and more than that it is almost two decades since a lead actor played a female role," said Vishwak about him playing a female role. He added that in Telugu there are only a few films like 'Madam', 'Chitram Bhalare Chitram' and 'Bhamane Satya Bhamane' released long back.

"So, I wish to play the female character in a strong way, and at the same time director Ram Narayan came up with this and I immediately agreed," he said. He added that in this film 'Laila' is going to dominate, but at the same time the audience definitely likes Sonu too. In Tamil, Siva Karthikeyan played the female character in 'Remo' and it was released in 2016. "He played a nurse'sw character and he did it to get his love interest. But in my film he is facing problems from three sides. So to escape from them he turns into a lady," said Vishwak Sen. He added that singer Sravana Bhargavi lends her voice for Vishwak's female character.

The actor said it's not completely an adult comedy, but it attracts youth. "When the director narrated the story to me, I laughed a lot. There are jokes, but they are more like youth content and different jokes," said the actor. Vishwak said it took him nearly two-and-a-half hours to do the makeup. "It's not easy, though I shaved in the morning, but by evening my beard grows, so again I had to shave," he said about the female character. He added that he didn't take any reference or workshop for it. "I used to mock my sister and my aunts, at school with girls, when I was a kid, so those are now helping me to play this female role," said Vishwak.

For this film, they initially roped in Tanishk Bagchi, but he was replaced by Leon James. "I didn't like Tanishk's work and he also couldn't meet our deadlines, so we replaced him with Leon James," he said about music. He added that he doesn't know that director Ram Narayan is also a music director. "When the motion poster was released, I asked who composed the music for it.' To my surprise he said he did it," said the actor. Vishwak also turned into a lyric writer and he said for it also there was no inspiration. "From the last few years I have had this itch in my mind that I want to write lyrics. So I asked my director if he likes them, he can use them, there is no compulsion. I wrote two songs in this film," he said. When asked if the controversy after actor Prudhvi's political comments settled? "I don't know, whatever needed I did," he said. On the same stage, Chiranjeevi also came up with political comments, "but he spoke about his younger brother," said Vishwak about Chiru. He added that he isn't into politics. The actor accepted that his earlier film 'Mechanic Rocky' was a failure. "Yes, the film did not meet my expectations and we made a few mistakes in the film. I don't want to repeat those mistakes in my future films and I learnt a lesson from it." said the actor. He added that there is a scene in this film

**VISHWAK SEN** TALKS ABOUT HIS MARRIAGE, HIS MATURITY LEVELS, **DISCIPLINE**, CONTROVERSIES **AND HOW** DIFFICULT IS DOING A FEMALE CHARACTER. WHY HE **DOESN'T** WANT TO DO **HORROR FILMS** AND SO ON...

which leads to the sequel, but he wanted to add only in the second week. "If this film is successful, there will be a sequel," he added.

Vishwak Sen is going to enter his 30s in the coming March. When asked about marriage, "I got into the mood of getting married," he said. He added that he doesn't have anyone in his mind, and also he doesn't know what kind of girl he wants. "When it comes, I will see," he said.

Vishwak Sen earlier directed a film 'Falaknuma Das' and will he again wield the megaphone? "No, not now, after five years, I will direct a film," he said. He added that if he directs, he can do only one film in a year, otherwise he can do four to five films a year. "I also want to earn something, so I am focused on acting now," he said.

For another question he said, he doesn't want to do horror genre. "When you feel something in real life, you can do it on the screen. But I watched many horror films even

in an empty theatre, but I wasn't scared, so I don't do horror films," he said. He said, but he was scared of humans. "We human beings can do anything," he said.

Siddhu's film



# Chiranjeevi lands in a controversy for his 'sexist' remarks

ega Star of Telugu Cinema, Chiranjeevi is landed in a controversy. The actor was the chief guest for 'Brahma Anandam' film prerelease event. Though he made comments in a lighter vein, those landed him in a big controversy. In the film Brahmanandam and his real son Raj Gowtham are playing the roles of a grandfather and grandson. Relating to this, they showed pictures of Chiranjeevi along with his granddaughters and asked him to comment. He said, "When I am at home with my granddaughters, it is like a ladies hostel, surrounded by many ladies and I am like a warden," said Chiranjeevi.

The actor didn't stop at that and added, "I am telling Charan next time to have a son, so that the legacy continues. But I am afraid he may have another daughter." He ended up by saying 'Lovely kids'. Though Chiranjeevi said it in a very light-hearted way, his comments landed him in a big controversy about his 'sexist' remarks. Many people reacted to his comment and said a girl also can carry on his legacy. Not about it, his other comment about his In a film's pre-release event, Megastar made comments about his granddaughters. To continue his legacy, he asks Ram Charan to have a boy next time. His political entry and other comments go viral on the social media grandfather also became viral. When his grandfather's photo flashes on the screen and Chiranjeevi says, "He is my mother's father Radhakrishna Naidu. He is from Nellore, but settled in Mogaltur and retired as Excise Inspector. You can get any other person's similarities, but not him. Because he is a romantic person. I officially had two grandmothers, and when he was not in a good mood, he went to a third woman. I don't know there may be a fourth and a fifth woman also," he said about his grandfather. This is the accent d time that Chiraria price

This is the second time that Chiranjeevi attended a film event as a special guest, just one day before he attended 'Laila' prerelease event and then 'Brahma Anandam' event. At the same stage, he clarified that he doesn't want to enter politics again. "I will stay away from politics all my life and I decided to stay in the cinema. There may be doubts that I am meeting many people. So people may doubt, but I am meeting them to do social service," said Chiranjeevi about his political entry. He also added that his younger brother Pawan Kalyan is there to serve people and he will fulfill his vision and mission.

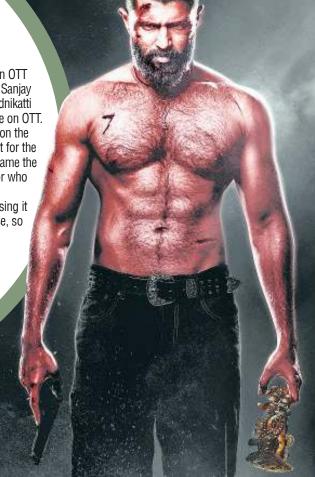
Amma Rajasekhar

### releasing in theatres after five years

Siddhu Jonnalagadda's film 'Krishna and His Leela' was released directly in OTT in 2020. Ravikanth Parepu was the director, while Rana Daggubati and Sanjay Reddy were the producers. Shraddha Srinath, Seerath Kapoor and Shalini Vadnikatti were the female leads. It's a romantic comedy and the film was a successful one on OTT. Now after five years, the makers are releasing this film in theatres this Friday, on the occasion of Valentines' Day. "We are not re-releasing this film. We are releasing it for the first time in theatres," said Rana about the film. He added that they wanted to rename the film as 'It's Complicated'. "We have few names in our mind, but it is the director who

comes up with this title," said Rana. Siddhu said that he wanted to see this film with the audience and hence releasing it in theatres. "We have many requests on social media about this film's release, so we decided February 14 is the best," said Rana Daggubati. Director Ravikanth said that his first short film was titled 'It's Complicated,' so he wanted to use the same title for this film. Siddhu became a big star after his last film 'Tillu Square' which grossed more than Rs 100 crore. Now, the makers wanted to cash in on Siddhu's image. So they are releasing this film now in theatres, says a source.





### Vijay Deverakonda's film titled *Kingdom*

Vigay Deverakonda's upcoming film directed by Gowtam Tinnanuri is one of the most anticipated films of 2025. The makers of this film have officially announced the title as 'Kingdom'. The teaser was also released on Wednesday and it is an adrenaline-fueled action drama packed with intensity, emotions and scale. It promises a larger than life experience leaving audiences on the edge of their seats.

Interestingly, Jr NTR has lent his voice for the Telugu version, Suriya for Tamil and Ranbir Kapoor for Hindi. Vijay

Deverakonda has poured his heart and soul into this film giving it everything to make it as big as possible. After delivering the cult classic 'Jersey', Gowtam Tinnanuri is back, this time showcasing Vijay Deverakonda in a completely new avatar.

Anirudh Ravichander is one of the most in demand music directors, and he provided a powerpacked and electrifying BGM adding to the film's intensity. Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya are producing this film and they announced that the film is to hit the big screens on May 30.

### confident that he is back on track with *Thala*

Prelease and other film events. Big actors like Chiranjeevi and Nagarjuna participated as chief guests in film events, while another small film 'Thala' also held its pre-release event. Popular choreographer turned director Amma Rajasekhar is the director of this film, and he is introducing his son Amma Ragin Raj as lead actor. The film is releasing on February 14. Srinivas Goud is the producer and this film is also releasing in Tamil at the same time. Ankita Naskar is also making her debut as the female lead.

Naskar is also making her debut as the female lead. Ragin Raj, the young actor, who is playing the lead, spoke in an emotional way. He shared how "Thala' has been in the making for two years and how he endured real injuries for the action sequences. "This film is an intense journey of a young man shaped by his mother's sentiments, with elements of romance and action," said Ragin Raj. Director Amma Rajasekhar, acknowledging the

Director Amma Rajasekhar, acknowledging the stress and challenges of the past months, expressed his gratitude to producer Srinivas Goud for unwavering support. He assured everyone that this film would mark his return and sought the audience's blessings for his son's debut. At the same event, Amma Rajasekhar collapsed because of his high blood pressure. First aid was provided immediately and the director recovered after some time.

