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INDIA PLAYED PIVOTAL ROLE: UNION IT MINISTER ASHWINI VAISHNAW

Oh My Laila! – A Lesson in How Not to Make

AFILM



QUOTE OF THE DAY the pioneer

This is yet another desperate diversion tactic from the demand for 42% reservations for BCs. Now the Congress wants to debate the PM's caste. Your research failed so badly that you forgot one fact. Modi was listed as an OBC when the Congress was in power in 1994. Now, what is Rahul Gandhi's caste? What's his religion? Does he know, or do you? His grandfather was Feroz Jehangir Gandhi. If anyone wants to debate who is legally converted or not, may be the CM should start from #10,

- Bandi Sanjay Kumar,

MoS for Home

More jails needed in AP:HM Anitha

Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha has announced that the 2025-26 Budget will include special allocations to strengthen forensic capabilities, particularly fingerprint analysis. She emphasised the need for increased funding for the Home Department and proposed enhanced allocations for the Andhra Pradesh Police Academy (APPA), Octopus, and Greyhounds units. Other key priorities include bolstering the EAGLE system, constructing new jails, and setting up cybercrime police stations. During a pre-budget meeting chaired by Finance...

India-B'desh border talks next week

The border forces of India and Bangladesh will hold their biannual talks here next week with issues such as border fence construction and attacks on BSF personnel and civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants figuring among the discussion points, an official statement said on Friday. The 55th Director General-Level **Border Co-ordination Conference** between BSF and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be organised at the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters here Force (BSF) Heavy 17-20... between February 17-20...

Trump's tariffs and India

US President Donald Trump has asserted that Washington will not spare India from reciprocal tariffs. The President has set in motion his plan to impose reciprocal tariffs on imports, which is global trade war. During 2021-24, the US was the largest trading partner of India. During April-November 2024-25, the bilateral trade in goods between the two countries stood at USD 82.52 billion (USD 52.89 billion exports, USD 29.63 imports). The trade gap was USD 23.26..

-PAGE: 8

India lose to Japan 0-3 in quarterfinals

HS Prannoy fought valiantly, but India succumbed to a 0-3 defeat against a second-string Japan in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships (BAMTC), ending their campaign on a disappointing note here on Friday. India, the 2023 bronze medalists in Dubai struggled to find their rhythm, and trailed 0-1 after going down in the mixed doubles. Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, ranked 37th in the world, showed resilience before going down 13-21, 21-17, 13-21 to world number.

MODI, TRUMP REVIVE TIES

Didn't discuss Adani's issue with Trump: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he did not discuss the bribery charges that the US government had levelled against infrastructure tycoon Gautam Adani during his meeting with US President Donald Trump.

At a press briefing at the White House, Modi was asked if he raised the indictment of Adani and his key associates in a New York court over his involvement in an alleged bribery scheme.

"Firstly, India is a democratic country, and our culture and our thought philosophy is, 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

We consider the whole world as one family. I believe every Indian is mine," he said. He then went on to state that

such "individual issues" are not discussed when two world leaders meet. "Two prominent leaders of

two countries never discuss

such individual issues," he Trump made no mention of the case during the presser.

Trump, Modi firm up big-ticket defence partnership US paves the way for supply of F-35 combat jets to India

PNS WASHINGTON

India and the United States rekindled their relationship on a high note on Friday with a summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump yielding a range of benefits including US sale of oil, gas and F-35 fighter aircraft to India, a possible mega trade deal and the immediate extradition of Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Rana.

After talks with Modi, Trump said that India will buy more oil, gas and military hardware from America to bring down the trade deficit while asserting that Washington will not spare

New Delhi from reciprocal tariffs.

At his Oval Office in the White
House on Thursday (Friday India time), Trump warmly welcomed Modi with a long handshake and a bear hug and described the prime minister as a "great friend" for a long time and a "terrific" man.

"We missed you. We missed you a lot," Trump said as he greeted Modi. The elaborate welcome allayed the trepidation and put to rest the uncertainty that had clouded bilateral relationship after Trump took office last month and unleashed a series of executive orders that have upended the global economic and



diplomatic order. Yet, Modi's visit went off without any hiccups and in fact, produced rich dividends. The only fly in the ointment was Trump's announcement a day before the summit that he would impose reciprocal tariffs on countries that do the

The Modi-Trump meeting with an expansive agenda took place hours after the US President actions by his administration. announced a new reciprocal tariff

policy for all trading partners of the US, the latest in a series of such

KEY POINTS

Modi's visit went off without

any hiccups and in fact,

produced rich dividends

Immediate extradition of

The US President also said

India and the US will work

Islamic terror across the

together like 'never before' to

confront the threat of radical

to expand the overall

defence partnership

that both sides have decided

Mumbai attack accused

Tahawwur Rana

India, US to double bilateral trade



2nd US plane carrying 119 deportees likely to land today

A US plane carrying 119 illegal immigrants is likely to land at Amritsar airport on February 15, the second such batch of Indians deported by the Trump government as part of a crackdown it resolved to carry out when it was sworn in last month.

According to official sources, the plane is expected to land at the airport around 10 pm on Saturday.

Among the 119 illegal Indian immigrants, 67 hail from Punjab, 33 from Haryana, eight from Gujarat, three from Uttar Pradesh, two each from Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan and one each from Himachal Pradesh and Jammu

and Kashmir, they said.

Another US plane carrying deportees is also expected to land on February 16.

The development came days after a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal İndian immigrants landed at the Amritsar airport last week. Of them, 33 each were from Haryana and Gujarat and 30 from Punjab.

Continued on Page 2

Swachhandhra: CM's strong pitch for public participation



PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has urged every citizen to actively participate in the 'Swachhandhra' mission to achieve its goals effectively. Chairing a review meeting on sanitation and cleanliness standards on Friday, he emphasised that setting goals alone is insufficient and that effective implementation is key. The State Government has been

organising special 'Swachhandhra-Swarnandhra' programmes on the third Saturday of every month, with a unique theme each time to raise public awareness, the Chief Minister said. While January's theme was 'New Year Clean Start,' this month's focus is 'Source-Resource,' highlighting the need to utilise available resources for sustainable development. Naidu underscored the importance of enhancing living standards, boosting tourism, attracting investments, and achieving Net Zero emissions while aligning with sustainable development goals. He directed

- AP govt holds monthly 'Swachhandhra-Swarnandhra' awareness drives
- Naidu stresses improving living standards, tourism, and sustainability
- Cleanliness is a shared duty of individuals, employees, and organisations
- NTR district ranked highest in sanitation, Alluri Sitarama Raju dist the lowest

officials to prioritise sanitation, public health, and solid waste management to meet the Centre's targets.

"Swachhandhra is not just about clean surroundings but also about fostering an ethical mindset. Residences, public spaces, schools, colleges, government offices, places of worship, and industries must all be kept clean," he stated.

Pending dues of BC Welfare Dept cleared

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has emphasised the need for accountability in the expenditure incurred by the State government for the welfare of Backward Classes (BC) students.

During a review meeting on Friday, the Chief Minister directed officials to ensure visible improvements in the well-being of BC students. He instructed them to complete the ongoing repair works at 660 government hostels, being carried out at a cost of Rs 13.10 crore, within six weeks. Officials informed the Chief Minister that essential supplies such as plates, glasses, and kitchen items were not provided to hostel inmates by the previous government. Now, steps are being taken to procure these items at a cost of Rs 16 crore, with Chandrababu instructing officials to complete the process by the third week of March. He also approved the immediate clearance of pending honorarium dues for tutors in 485 hostels, amounting to Rs 4.35 crore, including Rs 2.02 crore due till March last year.

Jilted lover attacks woman with acid

PNS KADAPA

In a horrific act of vengeance, a young woman was attacked with acid and stabbed in Perampalli village, Gurramkonda mandal, Annamayya district, on Friday. The 23-year-old victim was targeted by a stalker, identified as Ganesh, romantic advances she ha

repeatedly rejected. The accused had been harassing the woman for months, pressuring her to reciprocate his feelings, police said. Tensions escalated after her marriage was fixed for April 29, triggering the brutal assault. Ganesh allegedly ambushed her while she was walking alone, throw-



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed Annamayya district officials to ensure the victim receives the best possible medical care and has pledged full support to her family.

The woman was rushed to the Government Hospital in Madanapalle. Due to the severity of her injuries, she was later trans-Bangalore. A magistrate recorded her statement at the Madanapalle hospital, given her critical condition, according to sources. While

ing acid on her face before stabbing unconfirmed reports suggest the police have yet to issue a formal statement.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed Annamayya disferred to a private hospital in trict officials to ensure the victim receives the best possible medical care and has pledged full support to her family.

Continued on Page 2

Data-based governance key to growth: Spl CS

PNS ■ GUNTUR

"Data is the backbone of modern governance and business strategy. The ability to harness analytics and artificial intelligence will determine the success of organisations in the coming years,"

said RP Sisodiya, Special inauguration of the National Seminar on Advances in Business Analytics and Intelligence at Acharya Nagarjuna University. Addressing the gathering as chief

guest, Sisodia highlighted the transformative impact of data-driven a data-driven future.

attributing them to the improved

investigative capabilities of forest offi-

cials. She noted that continuous surveil-

lance and awareness programmes are

The Indian Pangolin, protected

under Schedule-I of the Indian Wildlife

(Protection) Act, 1972, and listed in

Appendix-I of CITES, plays a crucial

ecological role in controlling insect pop-

essential to curbing illegal trade.

nance and industry. He noted that artificial intelligence (AI) and big data are reshaping various sectors, from revenue management to public service delivery, enabling governments and businesses to make informed and strategic decisions. He stressed Chief Secretary (Revenue), at the that organisations integrating analytics into their operations would

> Sisodia also underscored the need to equip students and professionals with the skills required for

evolving economic landscape.

gain a competitive edge in the

4 ghee case accused in SIT custody

PNS TIRUPATI

The four accused in the adulterated ghee case at the Tirumala hill shrine were handed over to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) on Friday.

The accused include AR Dairy MD Rajasekharan, former Bholababa Dairy directors Vipin Jain and Pomil Jain, and Srivishnavi Dairy CEO Apurva Vinaykanth Chavda. They were handed over to SIT officials for interrogation. On Thursday night, the court ordered granting SIT custody of the four accused. On Friday morning, SIT officials took them to Ruia Hospital for medical examinations before shifting them to the SIT office.

AP steps up pangolin conservation efforts

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In a laudable step towards wildlife conservation, the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department, in collaboration with the Eastern Ghats Wildlife Society, has unveiled a project report on Indian Pangolin conservation in the Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR). The report was released on World Pangolin Day at Aranya Bhavan, Mangalagiri, Guntur, highlighting ongoing efforts to protect this rare and endangered species. The event was attended by senior forest officials, including Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden A.K. Naik, Additional PCCF (Wildlife) Dr Shanti Priya Pandey, and Rahul Pandey. As part of the awareness campaign, a poster on the Indian Pangolin (Manis crassicaudata) was also launched.

The conservation project focuses on studying and safeguarding pangolins in NSTR, addressing the growing threats the importance of collaborative efforts munities as wildlife informants, would



With enhanced surveillance. community involvement, and stricter anti-poaching measures, authorities aim to curb illegal hunting and habitat destruction, ensuring the survival of this elusive species.

of habitat destruction and illegal poachbetween the Forest Department and ing. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan conservation organisations in ensuring Kalyan, reminiscing about his childits survival. Chief Wildlife Warden A.K. Naik hood encounter with a pangolin, underscored the alarming vulnerabilpointed out that the vast expanse of ity of the species due to illegal hunting NSTR, coupled with the use of camera for its scales and meat. He emphasised traps and the involvement of local com-

help curb poaching. He also stressed the need for habitat conservation, as deforestation, human settlements, and road

expansion near the reserve pose significant threats to pangolin burrows.

success of recent pangolin seizures,

Additional PCCF (Wildlife) Dr Shanti Priya Pandey highlighted the

ulations. However, despite its significance, the species remains highly vulnerable to poaching, driven by the demand for its scales in traditional medicine, despite a lack of scientific evidence supporting its medicinal properties. With the renewed focus on conser-

vation, Andhra Pradesh's forest authorities are determined to strengthen protection measures, involving local communities and deploying advanced technology to safeguard one of the country's most elusive and endangered

Brand ambassadors to promote Capital Amaravati

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In a bid to elevate Amaravati's global image, the Andhra Pradesh government has decided to appoint brand ambassadors to promote the capital city. Principal Secretary of the Municipal and Urban Development Department, S. Suresh Kumar, announced the decision on Friday, releasing guidelines under GO 107 for engaging ambassadors at various stages.

The government is reviewing proposals submitted by the APCR-DA, and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, along with his office, will finalise the nominations. The appointed ambassadors will serve a one-year term, with their primary role being to enhance the image of Amaravati and the APCR-

DA. The ambassadors are expected to actively engage with local communities and spearhead campaigns highlighting Amaravati as a worldclass capital.

They will promote the city's planned development in line with Smart City principles and emphasise its economic, regional, and administrative advantages. Additionally, they will participate in conferences, seminars, and workshops while engaging with investors.

Suresh Kumar stated that brand ambassadors should leverage social media to showcase Amaravati's progress, share success stories, and keep stakeholders informed. Efforts will also be made to involve central and state governments, along with private partners, in the city's devel-

MAGA plus MIGA: a MEGA IndUS Pie

((Tlike thinking big. I always have. To me, it's very simple: if you're going to be thinking anyway, you might as well think big. Most people think small because most people are afraid of success, afraid of making decisions, afraid of winning." Forgiving anyone who thinks Prime Minister Modi penned these words is easy. But the truth is, they were written by Donald Trump, the current President of the United States of America (USA), in his book "The Art of the Deal". And it is this penchant for thinking big, or bigly, as President Trump would say, which made Prime Minister Modi's current trip to the White House a grand success. While world leaders were

scrambling to respond to President Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again) agenda, especially on tariffs, Modi pivoted the negotiation away from a Zero-Sum game, wherein one country's gain becomes the other country's loss, into a win-win for both countries. Modi translated his vision for a Viksit Bharat by 2047 into Trump's language as MIGA (Make India Great Again) and made a simple pitch: MAGA plus MIGA equals MEGA benefit for both the US and India. Instead of fighting over who gets how much of the existing India-US trade pie, Modi pitched to increase the pie, aiming to more than double India-US trade to 500 billion dollars by 2030, benefitting both nations. No wonder Trump said: "He is a much tougher negotiator than me. He is a much better negotiator than me. There is no contest." in response to a reporter's question.

Even senior Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, the Chairman While Trump focused on rebalancing the USA's security and economy vis-a-vis other countries, Modi, being an out-of-the-box thinker,

presented him with a bigger, better deal that he could not refuse. It's a deal founded on our shared and complementary strengths and will serve our countries' interests for decades.

of the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs and formerly an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), praised Modi. Referring to the outcomes of Modi's trip, he said, "This is good news ... very encouraging ... big concerns we all had have been addressed ... we have got pretty much of all that we could have expected at this time". He expressly referred to the conclusion India and the US reached on tariffs - to negotiate a trade agreement by

September, addressing India's fear of hasty decisions by the US that could have affected our exports. On the defence front, he dubbed the commit-ment by the US to sell the state-of-the-art F-35 stealth aircraft to the Indian Air Force as another very valuable

It is well known that Modi and Trump enjoy great bonhomie. However, camaraderie alone, however strong, cannot lead to positive results, especially when both leaders live by the motto "Nation First."



KISHORE POREDDY

Only a strong, convincing argument of aligned national interests, backed by facts and honest intent, can do that. And Modi did precisely that. He convinced Trump that MIGA is complementary to MAGA and that India and the USA are natural partners given their common political, social, economic and securi-

India is the largest, and the US is the oldest democracy. Both are multi-cultural nations. While the US has the largest, India has the fastest developing economy. Both countries are victims of crossborder terrorism driven by fundamentalist, extremist ideologies. Illegal immigration plagues both, causing social, economic, and security problems. Both nations want affordable energy and energy security. Both countries want a tranquil Indo-Pacific. It is not just countries; Trump and Modi are leaders

with similar priorities. While government efficiency is Trump's priority, "minimum government, maximum governance" is Modi's dictum. Both leaders want the Russia-Ukraine war to end and see peace return to Gaza. Both leaders have been the targets of the Deep State propaganda.

Similarly, both put their nation first.

While similarities engender empathy, complementaries consummate deals. The USA has advanced technologies, such as fighter jets and nuclear reactors, which India needs and can buy. America needs an alternative to China in manufacturing, and India wants to become a manufacturing hub. America needs talent, especially in science and technology. India wants lesser restrictions on the movement of its talent. America wants to drill and export oil and gas, while India needs cheap oil and gas imports. To achieve MAGA, India can complement the USA in many ways while achieving MIGA.

While Trump focused on rebalancing the USA's security and economy vis-a-vis other countries, Modi, being an out-of-the-box thinker,

presented him with a bigger, better deal that he could not refuse. It's a deal founded on our shared and complementary strengths and will serve our countries' interests for decades.

They say, "luck favours the prepared mind." Having people who share Indic values, like Tulsi Gabbard, Usha Vance, Vivek Ramaswamy, and Kash Patel, in the President's inner circle, along with a vast Indian diaspora that occupies the higher echelons of economic and technical strata, is bound to add to Modi's efforts and cushion the deal. The only ones disappointed by Modi's US visit are those who hoped Trump would do what they could not do politically - deal a blow to Modi, even if it harms India's

(The author is BJP

Jagan condemns Vamsi's arrest, says NDA govt's act unlawful

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Former chief minister and YSRCP president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has strongly condemned the arrest of former MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi, alleging that the ruling TDP-led coalition is misusing power to suppress political oppo-

nents through unlawful arrests. Taking to X, Jagan accused the government of paralysing legal institutions in Andhra Pradesh by interfering in their functioning. He criticised the ruling party for orchestrating illegal arrests under the pretext of enforcing the Red Book Constitution, which he claimed was being misused to undermine the state's democratic framework. He cited Vallabhaneni Vamsi's arrest as a glaring example of political vendetta.

Referring to the Gannavaram case, Jagan stated that a Dalit youth testified before the court, revealing that TDP leaders had pressured him into filing a false case. He accused Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu of resorting

to unethical tactics, manipulating investigations, and intimidating witnesses. He further alleged that the police were being used as a tool for political harassment, with the Dalit youth and his family facing threats and coercion after his tes-

Despite judicial supervision of the case, the ruling party continued to interfere in the investigation, Jagan said. He strongly condemned the wrongful arrest of Vallabhaneni Vamsi and held the government responsible for his

Jagan also cited the case of former Denduluru MLA Kotharu Abbaiya Chowdary, who was booked under a false SC/ST case. He pointed out that widely circu-

POLICE SEEK 10-DAY CUSTODY OF VAMSI

VIJAYAWADA: The Vijayawada Patamata police have filed a petition in court seeking 10 days of custody for YSR Congress Party leader and former Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi. They have also requested permission to seize his phone for investigation. The petition will be heard on Monday. Vamsi was arrested in connection with the kidnapping of Satyavardhan, a DTP operator at the TDP office in Gannavaram. He faces charges under multiple sections of the BNS Act and SC/ST Atrocities Act. Currently, in judicial remand, he was arrested in Hyderabad and brought to Vijayawada, where the court

lated video evidence showed a TDP MLA verbally abusing Abbaiya Chowdary's driver, yet the police allegedly fabricated a case against Abbaiya Chowdary, even invoking IPC Section 307 (attempt to murder), while ignoring the actual offender. He called this a clear indication of police bias and accused the government of systematically targeting political

opponents. Further criticising Naidu's administration, Jagan alleged that the government had failed to fulfil its 143 promises, including the much-publicised 'Super-6' initiatives. He accused the ruling party of misleading the public and diverting attention from its failures through politically motivated arrests and fabricated cases.

Jagan asserted that YSRCP leaders and workers were being unjustly targeted as part of a larger strategy to silence the opposition. He warned that the people of Andhra Pradesh were witnessing these injustices and would hold the government accountable

Chintamaneni meets Naidu

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Denduluru Telugu Desam MLA Chintamaneni Prabhakar met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in Vijayawada on Friday and apprised him of the recent incidents in Denduluru.

Speaking to the media later, Prabhakar remarked that former MLA and YSR Congress leader Vallabhaneni Vamsi had gone to jail today, Kodali Nani would follow tomorrow, and another leader the day after. He said that irregularities had taken place in several constituencies, including Gannavaram, Gudivada, and Machilipatnam, and people were questioning when these cases would be heard.

Prabhakar asserted that while legal action against those responsible might be delayed, justice would prevail. He alleged that illegal cases, partisan politics, and misuse of power were traits of the YSRC. Refuting allegations by YSRC leaders Ambati Rambabu and Abbaya Chowdary regarding an alleged attack on the latter during a ruckus in Denduluru, Prabhakar said he was prepared to resign if it was proven that he was at fault.

Criminals in politics a threat to democracy: CM

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has said that criminals masquerading as politicians pose a serious threat to democracy. He alleged that those who have been undermining democracy in the state for the past five years are now seeking new ways to further their agenda. He criticised their strategy of repeatedly spreading

falsehoods to mislead the public.

The Chief Minister remarked that such individuals would go to any extent to manipulate people for their selfish gains.

He stated that those who claim to be champions of Dalits are, in reality, exploiting and deceiving them. He further noted that atrocities, murders, and violence occur only in a lawless state and emphasised that governance in a democracy should be conducted through legal

Naidu made these remarks while addressing

Tthose who claim to be champions of Dalits are, in

that atrocities, murders, and violence occur only in a

lawless state and emphasised that governance in a

a review meeting with party leaders at NTR Bhavan in Mangalagiri on Friday. The meeting focused on the upcoming MLC elections and the welfare of party workers. He decided to form a three-member committee to discuss the party's support for the North Andhra Teachers' MLC election. The committee will comprise MP G.R. Bharat, MLC Vepada Chiranjeevi Rao,

and AS Ramakrishna.

He urged party leaders to take the elections for the Combined West Godavari, Krishna-Guntur graduates' MLC seats seriously and work diligently. He expressed confidence in securing a resounding victory for party candidates Alapati Raja and Perabattula Rajasekhar.

The meeting was attended by enior leaders, including Nimmala Ramanaidu, Palla Srinivasa Rao, MLC Ashok Chintamaneni Prabhakar, and Jawahar.

reality, exploiting and deceiving them. He further noted democracy should be conducted through legal means.

2nd US plane carrying..

Continued from Page 1

Most of the deportees

hailing from Punjab had

said they wanted to migrate

to the US for a better life

for their families. However,

their dreams were shat-

tered when they were

caught at the US border

and brought back in shack-

After Donald Trump

assumed office as the US

President, the country's

law enforcement agencies

have launched a crackdown

against illegal immigrants.

Many people from Punjab and some other

Jilted lover attacks ...

Continued from Page 1

Superintendent of Police Vidyasagar Naidu told the media that the victim suffered stab wounds to her neck and hand after the acid attack. Four special teams have been formed to track down and arrest the accused, and police are gathering information about his whereabouts.

IT Minister Nara Lokesh spoke with the victim's parents, assuring them of all necessary assistance. Transport Minister M Ram Prasad and SP Vidyasagar Naidu also visited the victim at the Madanapalle hospital. Home Minister V Anita condemned the attack and directed police to arrest the perpetrator swiftly. Former chief minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy strongly denounced the incident, demanding stringent action against the accused. He urged the government to provide the best medical treatment for the victim and extend comprehensive support to her family.

TODAY **ALMANAC** Krishna Paksha Feb 14 09:52 PM to Feb 15 11:52 PM Feb 15 11:52 PM Chaturthi Nakshatram: Uttara Phalguni: to Feb 17 04:31 AM 9:38 AM to 11:04 AM Rahukalam: 1:56 PM to 3:22 PM Yamagandam 11:03 AM to 12:51 PM Varjyam: 6:46 AM to 8:12 AM Gulika: 05:42 PM to 07:28 PM Amritakalam: Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:07 PM to 12:53 PM VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Sunny Temp: 34°° Humidity: 64% Sunrise: 6:33 AM Sunset: 6:10 PM **Updated:** February 14, 2025 5:00 PM

Lawlessness, political vendetta mark Naidu's governance: YSRCP

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Tatiparthi Chandrasekhar has strongly criticised the deteriorating law and order situation in Andhra Pradesh, alleging that constitutional governance has collapsed under Chandrababu Naidu's administration. He accused the ruling coalition of fostering fear, indulging in unlawful activities, and prioritising political vendettas over jus-

Referring to the Tirupati incident, he pointed out that a woman named Lakshmi was deceived by Janasena leader Kiran Royal. Shockingly, instead of ensur-

Continued from Page 1

Swachhandhra: CM's strong ...

On being informed that Rs 185.27 crore was pend-

ing towards diet charges for students, the Chief Minister

approved an immediate payment of Rs 110.52 crore. He

also sanctioned Rs 29 crore to clear pending bills for cos-

metic charges and directed officials to settle outstand-

Girls Schools at Nasanakota and Atmakur in Satya Sai

district into Residential BC Women's Colleges and sanc-

tioned a BC Girls Residential School at Kuppam. He reit-

erated the government's commitment to restoring the 34%

quota for BCs in local bodies, as cleared by the Cabinet,

and indicated that the state was prepared for a legal bat-

tle if required. The Chief Minister also stressed the need

for fund allocation to BC corporations based on popu-

lation ratios. He reaffirmed the government's commit-

ment to lifting GST on handlooms, stating that neces-

sary guidelines had already been prepared. Additionally,

he instructed officials to focus on repairing dhobi ghats

built between 2014 and 2019 for the benefit of the Rajaka

community and to construct new ones where needed. He

directed that all pending BC buildings be completed with

funds allocated in the upcoming budget and called for

an audit to assess how many beneficiaries of the BC

Welfare Corporation since 2014 have continued in their

professions after availing loans.

Chandrababu approved the upgradation of BC Welfare

ing power bills of hostels without delay.

ing justice, a fabricated case was filed against her, leading to her arrest by out-of-state police forces.

In the Gannavaram case, he alleged that police illegally detained and harassed Śatyavardhan. He questioned how Satyavardhan could have been "kidnapped" if he was found in police custody. He further stated that Satyavardhan himself informed the judge that he was forcibly made a witness and complainant in the case. Unable to counter these revelations, the government falsely implicated and jailed Vamsi. He also recalled that in 2023, TDP leader Pattabhi

against police, injuring CI Kanaka Rao, yet the case was manipulated to shield the

Expressing concerns over suspicious fire incidents near their party office, he questioned the real perpetrators. He concluded that Naidu's government is incapable of maintaining law and order and is instead using state machinery to target political opponents with false cases and wrongful arrests.

Further, he criticised the ruling alliance for neglecting governance and public welfare, particularly the struggles of farmers due to the lack of minimum support allegedly incited violence

Take part in...

He stressed that cleanliness should not be

viewed as the responsibility of a single

department but as a collective effort involv-

ing every individual, employee, and organ-

The Chief Minister also called for reforms

in government offices to ensure a clean and

friendly atmosphere. He warned against

empty slogans and urged citizens to take

ownership of the mission, stating that main-

taining greenery while littering roads or cut-

and other departments briefed the Chief

Minister on the progress of initiatives led by

the Urban Development and Panchayat Raj

wings. They reported on various aspects,

including the construction of individual and

public toilets, door-to-door waste collection,

solid waste segregation, and village sanitation.

indicators, the NTR district secured the top

position with 129 points out of 200, followed

by Visakhapatnam with 127 points. Alluri

Sitarama Raju district ranked last, securing

the 26th position with just 81 points.

As per the latest rankings based on 14 key

Officials from the Pollution Control Board

ting trees would no longer be tolerated.

Govt misusing police for political vendetta: YSRCP Legal Cell

PNS VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP Legal Cell State President Manohar Reddy has strongly condemned the alleged misuse of the police force for political vendetta. He asserted that the arrest of Vallabaneni Vamsi had exposed a malicious conspiracy, with the police being used as a tool for political revenge.

Referring to Vamsi's case, he pointed out that the FIR copy was provided to his family only after his arrest and court appearance. This, he claimed, was a deliberate attempt to keep Vamsi in custody without immediate legal recourse.



Manohar Reddy alleged that TDP leaders were influencing the police, dictating arrests, investigations, imposition of sections, and even the selection of witnesses. He warned that if constitutional principles, as enshrined in the 'Red Book', were not to act lawfully.

upheld, public outrage would be inevitable.

He also highlighted the recent High Court remarks over the handling of CCTV footage, where the authorities claimed it was damaged by monkeys.

The court, however, did not accept this explanation and expressed serious displeasure. Despite judicial reprimands, he said, the police had not changed their approach. He further stated that filing false cases would ultimately backfire on the police. Reminding them that power is never permanent in anyone's hands, he urged them

states, who entered the US through "donkey routes" -- an illegal and risky pathway used by migrants to enter America or other illegal means by spending lakhs of rupees -- are now

facing deportation.

Several political leaders in Punjab had questioned the landing of a US aircraft in Amritsar.
"The BJP-led Central

government wants to defame Punjab. Why does it not land in Gujarat, Haryana or Delhi?" Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said on Thursday while replying to a question on the likely arrival of another US plane carrying illegal immigrants. Notably, the Punjab government had recently formed a special investigation team to probe the issue of illegal human trafficking following the deportation of Indian citizens domiciled in Punjab from the US.

The SIT has so far registered 10 FIRs against fraudulent immigration consultants on the statements of deportees, said a senior police official.

Modi, Trump revive...

Continued from Page 1

In his remarks, Trump said he and PM Modi have reached an agreement that could potentially make the US the "number one supplier" of oil and gas to India, suggesting it was part of measures to bring down the US trade deficit with India that stands at around USD 50 billion. The US President also said that both sides have decided to expand the overall defence partnership.

"Starting this year, we will be increase ing military sales to India by many billions of dollars," Trump said. "We are also paving the way to ultimately provide India with F-35 stealth fighters," he added. The F35 jets are known as the most lethal, survivable and connected fighter aircraft in the world.

Trump also announced that India and the US will work together like "never before" to confront the threat of radical Islamic terror across the world.

"I am pleased to announce that my administration has approved the extradition of one of the very evil people of

the world," he said, referring to the 26/11 Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Rana to India.

The US President also noted positive momentum in India-US cooperation in the civil nuclear energy sector.

"In the ground-breaking development for the US nuclear industry, India is also reforming laws to welcome US nuclear technology to the Indian market," he said. In his remarks, Prime Minister Modi said cooperation between India and the US can shape a better world. A defence cooperation framework will be prepared for the next decade, he said.

"One thing that I deeply appreciate, and I learn from President Trump, is that he keeps the national interest (of the US) supreme. Like him, I also keep the national interest of India at the top of everything else," Modi said.

To a question on whether the issue relating to business tycoon Gautam Adani figured in the talks, Modi said, 'India is a democracy and our culture is 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

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Health Dept takes steps to address GBS cases in AP

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In response to the rising number of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) cases in Andhra Pradesh, Special Chief Secretary for Health, Medical and Family Welfare, M.T. Krishna Babu, has directed the Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh Medical Services and Infrastructure Development Corporation (APMSIDC) to ensure an adequate supply of immunoglobulin at Central Drug Stores across the state.

GBS is a rare autoimmune neurological disorder in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks the peripheral nerves, causing muscle weakness, numbness, and tingling sensations. It is not contagious and does not affect the brain or

As of February 14, 17 patients are undergoing treatment for GBS at various Government General Hospitals in the state. Notably, five patients are receiving care at the Government General Hospital in Guntur, with two having been discharged recently. The affected patients are from Giddalur, Narasaraopet,



GBS is a rare autoimmune neurological disorder in which the body's immune system mistakenly attacks the peripheral nerves, causing muscle weakness, numbness, and tingling sensations. It is not contagious and does not affect the brain or spinal cord. Most GBS cases have been reported from areas with advanced neurological facilities, including Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Guntur, Tirupati, and Kurnool.

Konaseema, and Guntur dis-

Authorities have assured the public that there is no need to panic, as Government General Hospitals are well-equipped to handle GBS cases, with promising recovery outcomes. Moreover, treatment for GBS is covered under the state's Dr NTR Vaidya Seva scheme.

Most GBS cases have been reported from areas with advanced neurological facilities, including Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Guntur, Tirupati, and Kurnool. However, there is no indication that the cases are linked to any specific geographic region.

Approximately 80% of GBS

cases are mild, with many patients recovering without requiring immunoglobulin. However, 10-15% may develop severe symptoms that necessitate intensive care and immunoglobulin treatment. On average, 10-15 patients are treated each month at hospitals such as KGH Visakhapatnam, GGH Kakinada, GGH Guntur,

and GGH Kurnool. Common symptoms of GBS include progressive muscle weakness starting in the legs and spreading to the arms and face, numbness, tingling, pain in the extremities, difficulty walking due to leg weakness, difficulty swallowing (dysphagia), and, in severe cases, respiratory failure requiring mechanical ventilation.

Diagnosis of GBS involves a thorough medical history, physical examination, electromyography (EMG), nerve conduction studies (NCS), and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) analysis.

The primary treatment approaches include plasmapheresis (a procedure to remove harmful antibodies from the blood), immunotherapy to reduce inflammation and modulate the immune system, supportive therapies such as physical, occupational, and respiratory therapy, and pain management through medications and alternative treat-

Helmet awareness drive launched

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Transport Department launched a helmet awareness campaign near Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium to promote road safety among twowheeler riders. Deputy Transport Commissioner Á Mohan initiated the drive, stressing that wearing a helmet is not a burden but a responsibility that saves lives.

In a unique approach, officials distributed chocolates to those wearing helmets, using the slogan "Wear a helmet, grab a chocolate" to engage participants. Speaking on the occasion, A Mohan urged all two-wheeler riders to wear helmets for their safety and that of their families. He pointed out that riding without a helmet endangers not just the rider but also their loved ones.

Expressing concern over the high number of fatalities in road accidents due to noncompliance, he said, "A small act of negligence can turn lives upside down. Helmets act as life-saving shields during accidents.

He emphasised that even careful riders can fall victim to others' reckless behaviour and appealed to all to wear helmets to prevent serious injuries like skull fractures and brain damage.

Rs 2.5 crore iPhones theft case cracked by city police

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada police have cracked a sensational case of theft involving iPhones and electronic devices worth Rs 2.5 crore. Under the city's Suraksha scheme, the police arrested the accused and recovered the stolen items.

Vijayawada Commissioner of Police Rajasekhar Babu shared details of the case with the media on Friday. The prime accused, Deep Chand Prajapati, a resident of Uttar Pradesh and a car rental operator, conspired with his associates Sunil Kumar and Jayaprakash to steal iPhones from a warehouse in Vijayawada. The gang arrived in the city on February 5 and executed their plan meticulously. Six individuals were involved in the heist, cutting through the warehouse roof and disabling CCTV cameras before making away with electronic goods worth Rs 2.5 crore.

Based on a complaint from the warehouse owner, the police registered a case and launched an investigation. Using CCTV footage from the vicinity, they identified the suspects' vehicle and deployed special teams. With the help of technical assistance, the vehi-



cle's location was traced to Bihar, where local authorities assisted in the arrests.

Commissioner Rajasekhar Babu stated that if there had been a two-hour delay, the stolen phones would have likely been sold in Nepal. Investigations also revealed that a person named Ranjith was providing the gang with information about warehouse locations.

The Commissioner credited the city's CCTV network under the Suraksha scheme for helping the police swiftly iden-

Awareness programme on congenital heart diseases held

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Paediatric Cardiology Department of Aster Ramesh Hospital organised an Awareness Week on Congenital Heart Diseases from February 7 to 14. As part of this initiative, an awareness seminar was conducted at the hospital.

Around 100 children who had undergone cardiac surgeries and device-based treatments, along with their parents, participated in the event and shared their expe-

Paediatric cardiologists and cardiac surgeons, including Dr Vasudev, Dr Jyothi Prakash Reddy, Dr Kattula Anusha, and Dr Bharat Siddharth, attended the seminar. They organised dren who had received treatment, and prizes were awarded to the winners.

For parents and families, congenital heart diseases in children can be an emotionally challenging experience. Performing cardiac surgeries on infants and young children is highly complex and requires advanced medical equipment, specialised expertise, and coordinated teamwork.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Students of SRM University-

AP clinched multiple titles at the All India Inter-Collegiate

Sports Meet held at VIT-AP

University, Amaravati. The men's football team secured

the gold medal along with

cash prizes, while the women's

badminton team emerged vic-

torious, claiming the first-

place trophy and a cash award.

SRM AP players also finished

as runners-up in the bad-

minton singles and doubles

categories. The men's and

women's volleyball teams

reached the finals and were

honoured with prizes, while



More jails needed in AP: HM Anitha

get for investigation expenses.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha has announced that the 2025-26 Budget will include special allocations to strengthen forensic capabilities, particularly fingerprint analysis. She emphasised the need for increased funding for the Home Department and proposed enhanced allocations for the Andhra Pradesh Police and Greyhounds units. Other key priorities include bolstering the EAGLE system, constructing new jails, and setting up cybercrime police stations.

During a pre-budget meeting chaired by Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav, Anitha highlighted the government's efforts to secure additional central funds. She also proposed doubling the fuel allowance for police vehicles from 150 litres to 300 litres and increasing the bud-

clinched the top spot with a

meet held at Vignan

University, Vadlamudi, SRM

AP students showcased their

prowess, winning medals in

At the national-level sports

cash reward.

Criticising the previous government for neglecting police stations, she stressed the urgent need for new jails, citing a rise in crimes such as cannabis cultivation and cybercrime. She also pointed out the difficulties posed by the absence of CCTV

cameras at a women's shelter in

Nellore district, which hindered

efforts to apprehend a suspect. Anitha stated that the previbudgetary discussions apart from an annual 5% increase. In contrast, she praised the coalition government's approach, citing a 9% reduction in crime over the last six months. She requested Rs 15 crore for the police academy, Rs 27 crore for the Octopus unit building, and substantial funding for the

Control Centre, and cybercrime police stations. She also suggested allocating

SRM-AP students shine at sports meets

the men's basketball team yoga, the 100m race, chess, Officer Sripathi, and coaches letes for their achievements.

EAGLE system, Command

funds to protect public assets such as the High Court and airports through the APSF, along with funding for a new police commissioner's office in . Visakhapatnam.

Addressing the recent disappearance of a gun magazine containing 30 rounds from the gunman assigned to Cabinet Minister Gummidi Sandhyarani, Anitha termed it a case of negligence and would be conducted to take appropriate action.

Defending the arrest of YSRCP leader Vallabhaneni Vamsi, she asserted that it was carried out lawfully based on clear evidence, underscoring that those who commit crimes will face legal consequences. She also reminded that, under the previous government, opposition leaders were not even allowed to enter the DGP's office.

Collector visits Penuganchiprolu mandal

Inspects special activities being **implemented** under Aakankshita **Block Programme**

PNS VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has said that the development plans being implemented with special activities in Ibrahimpatnam and Penuganchiprolu mandals of the district, selected by the Central government under the Aakankshita Block Programme (ABP), are yielding good results. Also, efforts are being made to ensure that these two blocks lead the way.

On Friday, Collector Dr Lakshmisha visited Penuganchiprolu, one of the target blocks, to inspect the progress of various programmes and initiatives aimed at improving indicators relat-

nutrition. The Collector visited Anganwadi centres to evaluate the nutritional food provided to children. He interacted with the children, assessing their early education skills. Additionally, the facilities available for the physical and mental development of children were reviewed to ensure adequate resources and identify any further needs.

Besides, the Collector par-3.0) con-

Name of Political Party

Name of the Constituency

Name of Election

ducted by health workers. He highlighted the importance of early check-ups, explaining to the public how such proactive measures can greatly benefit their overall health and wellbeing. He said that people should not hesitate or delay in taking necessary health tests to

maintain their well-being.

As part of the government's commitment to providing better opportunities for children ticipated in a comprehensive with special needs, special attent

such children in the target blocks through the implementation of the Right to Education Act. The Collector observed a teacher training programme held on Thursdays and Fridays at the KVR ZP High School, which was attended by 79 teachers from various government and private schools. The training focused on identifying children with special needs, sign language, Braille script, and the various benefits provided under the Right to Education Act. Dr Lakshmisha distributed certificates to the teachers who completed the training, stressing that equal educational opportunities are essential for the overall development of children with special needs. He also stressed that removing barriers to education is a collective responsibility.

The Collector also addressed the rights of workers under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

Mann houses, officials told

PNS PARVATIPURAM

negligence in its execution. The Collector's tour encompassed several villages, including Nereduvalasa, Manthinavalasa, Mantrajola, Biyyavalasa, and Duribili, where he assessed the progress of various welfare programmes. In Neredu Valasa, he reviewed the PM Jan Mann housing project, noting that works on only 14 of the 29 sanctioned houses had begun. He instructed officials to expedite the remaining work, emphasising the availability of construction materials and the employment opportunities these pro-

Expedite PM Jan

District Collector A Shyam Prasad has issued a strict directive to engineers to accelerate the construction of houses under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Mann scheme in Kurupam mandal. During a recent overnight stay as part of his 'Palle Nidra' initiative and subsequent tour of villages under the Grama Darshini programme, the Collector emphasised the urgency of the project and warned against any

FORMAT C-1

Declaration about criminal cases (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of Candidate : Alapati Rajendra Prasad,
H. No. 17-3-305 (New), 4-5-29/85
(Old), 4th Lane, Vidya Nagar, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, Pin Code-522 007.

: Telugu Desam

: Biennial Elections to Legislative Council of Andhra Pradesh 2025.

servant's order, spread a

disease that is dangerous to

life, spread the infection of

: Krishna-Guntur Graduates' Constituency

I, Alapati Rajendra Prasad (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

(A) Pending criminal cases

SI. No.	Name of Court	Case No. and dated	Status of case(s)	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)				
1	Not Applicable	FIR No.9/2020 Dt: 9/1/2020	Under Investigation	Charge sheet yet to be filed Section 143,188,341 r/w 149 IPC. Member of unlawful assembly, disobedience to a public servant's order, wrongful restraint /obstruction				
2	Not Applicable	FIR No.924/2021 Dt: 17/9/2021	Under Investigation	Charge sheet yet to be filed Section 143,341,188,269,270 r/w 149 IPC. Member of unlawful assembly, wrongful restraint / obstruction, disobedience to a public				

any disease dangerous to life for criminal offences

	(b) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences.								
SI. No.	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed						
1	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable						
2	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable						
Sd/- Alapati Rajendra Prasa									

Pawan seeks daily train between Palani & Tirupati

volleyball, and basketball.

Their outstanding perfor-

mances earned them gold and

silver medals along with cash

Assistant Director of Sports Dr Sushmitha Kumari, Sports



PNS VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan visited the Palani Dandayudhapani Swamy Temple in Tamil Nadu on Friday as part of his spiritual tour of prominent temples across South India.

Speaking to the media later, Pawan Kalyan said he prayed for the well-being of the nation and its people. He also stated that he would discuss with the central government the public demand for a daily train ser-

vice between Palani and Tirupati. Additionally, after consultations with officials from the Andhra Pradesh State Transport Department, steps would be taken to resume bus services between the two pilgrim centres.

Vamsi, Srinath, Sheikh Firoze,

and T. Anil Kumar mentored

the teams to victory. The uni-

versity leadership, along with

Director in-charge of Sports

Anup Singh Suryavanshi,

felicitated the triumphant ath-

During the visit, Pawan Kalyan and his son Akira took a ropeway to reach the hilltop temple. The temple authorities welcomed the Deputy Chief Minister with a traditional 'poornakumbham' ceremony. After performing a special

'puja', he received 'prasadam' from the temple priests.

"The spiritual journey in Tamil Nadu has given me immense joy. I always pray to God for the well-being of the country and its people. I will take up the issue of daily bus and train services between Palani and Tirupati with the central government," he said.

This visit is part of his ongoing pilgrimage, which also includes a trip to the Thiruparankundram Kumara Swamy Temple in Madurai.



Speed up ground truthing works: East Godavari DC

PNS RAJAHMUNDRY

District Collector P Prashanthi has directed officials to expedite ground truthing works in 50 revenue villages under the 'Swamitva' scheme.

Reviewing the initiative's progress at a meeting with revenue officials on Friday, the Collector stated that a field-level survey is being conducted to help rural residents utilise their property as financial assets, reduce land disputes, and establish accurate land records.

She noted that ground truthing has been completed for 13,252 acres (17.58%) out of the total 75,388 acres across the district and instructed officials to speed up the remaining work. So far, 16,578 out of 33,326 ground validation certificates have been distributed. She also supported preparing Gram Panchayat development plans, creating survey infrastructure, and issuing 'pattas'. A team has been appointed for district-



level project monitoring. The Collector stated that daily progress would be monitored under the leadership of EO PRD S.V. Rama Prasad, Panchayat Secretary S.K. Babji, Village Secretary Ramakrishna, and Engineering Assistant K. Rajesh. She added that the scheme is being jointly implemented by the

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the

while ensuring due attention

is given to legal matters.

Taking a firm stance

against illegal encroach-

ments, the Collector ordered

revenue officials to identify and address unauthorise

occupations of government lands, water bodies, and

canals. He mandated legal

action against violators and

warned that any new

encroachment would result in

severe consequences for

responsible officials. He also

called for closer collaboration

between the Survey and

Revenue departments to

expedite pending applica-

tions and improve service

ed by Joint Collector K

Mayur Ashok, District

Revenue Officer BH Bhavani

Shankar, Visakhapatnam

RDO P Srilekha, the

Collectorate Administrative

Officer, superintendents from

various departments, and

The conference was attend-

State Revenue Department, the State Panchayati Raj Department, and the Survey of India. Under the initiative, legal ownership cards (property cards/title deeds) are being issued, with 11,682 of the 23,177 targeted cards already distributed. She urged officials to complete the pending distribution at the earliest. Earlier, the Collector conducted a surprise inspection at the Government General Hospital. She visited all wards, interacted with doctors about outpatient and inpatient care, and spoke to patients regarding their treatment. Upon finding a doctor absent in the General Medicine ward, she directed the hospital superintendent to make alternative arrangements.

Red sanders smuggler sentenced to 5 years in jail

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A red sanders smuggler has been sentenced to five years of imprisonment in a case of illegal transportation of red sander

logs.

The RSSADJ court judge, Narasimha Murthy, sentenced the accused, Jayapal, to five years in jail and imposed a fine of Rs 6 lakh. The convict hails from Villupuram in Tamil

Jayapal was caught red-handed while illegally transporting red sander logs in the Mungilipattu forest beat limits. The prosecution pre-

sented the case in court, following which he was convicted. After the sentencing,

the convict was handed over to officials at the Nellore Central Prison.

Officials directed to ensure smooth conduct of MLC polls

PNS ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has directed officials to make elaborate arrangements for the smooth conduct of the MLC graduates' constituency elections in the district.

District Collector and Returning Officer K. Vetri Selvi, along with Joint Collector P. Dhatri Reddy, held a review meeting with officials regarding the West Godavari and East Godavari graduates' constituency elections. They discussed key arrangements, including polling day procedures on February 27, webcasting, ballot box transportation to the strong room, reception centres, route officers, police liaison, distribution centres, ballot papers, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC), and

The Collector emphasised the importance of adhering to prescribed procedures before and during polling to ensure

postal ballots.

free and fair elections without errors. She stated that 35 candidates are contesting in the graduate constituency MLC election.

Vetri Selvi informed that 87 polling stations have been set up in the Eluru district and that the distribution of polling materials would commence on the morning of February 26 at the designated location for polling staff.

She also instructed officials to take up the distribution of polling materials for graduates from the Guntur and Krishna districts from the Nuzvid SubCollector's office.

She further added that a training programme for Presiding Officers (POs) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) would be conducted on February 22. The arrangements for vote counting on

March 3 were also reviewed. ZP CEO K. Subba Rao, DRDA PD R. Vijaya Raju, RDO Acyut Ambarish, Special Deputy Collector M. Mukkanti, DWMA PD Venkata Subba Rao, and Civil Supplies Manager V. Srilakshmi were among those present at the meeting.

Collector cracks down on land encroachments

Stresses importance of timely responses to public grievances

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has issued a stern warning against land encroachments, directing Revenue officials to implement stringent measures to protect government lands. Visakhapatnam Division Revenue Conference held at the Collectorate Meeting Hall on Friday, he emphasised the need for vigilance, proactive measures, and decisive action against unauthorised occupa-

Prasad stressed the importance of timely responses to public requests, instructing officials to resolve grievances within established deadlines while maintaining a citizen-

The conference addressed a range of critical administrative issues, including freehold applications, land regularisation, encroachment removal, issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs), survey and mutation procedures, 22A denotification, legal case resolutions, and the verification of caste, income, and residence certificates. Detailed instructions were provided to streamline these processes.

Underscoring the importance of transparency and accountability, the Collector directed officials to clearly communicate reasons for rejecting petitions and to enhance operational efficiency. He emphasised the need to raise public awareness regarding land regularisation tabsildars from different .



The Andhra Pradesh Regional Office of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) inaugurated the 'Grameen Bharat Mahotsav -Andhra Pradesh 2025' at Maris Stella Indoor Stadium, marking a significant step towards promoting rural artisans, traditional handicrafts and sustainable livelihoods in the State. Previously known as the Crafts Mela, the event has now been rebranded to reflect a broader vision of empowering rural artisans and fostering economic self-reliance.

In his welcome address, Dr KVS Prasad, General Manager, NABARD AP Regional Office, emphasised the significance of the event in providing a platform for rural craftsmen to showcase their talent and connect with wider markets.



PNS ONGOLE

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar has assured justice to the evacuees of the Gundlakamma project.

The Minister visited Yerrabalem village in Koreshepadu mandal, which is facing submergence due to the backwaters of the Gundlakamma project. He inaugurated newly constructed roads in the village, developed at a cost of Rs 20 lakh, along with drainage canals.

Later, he held a meeting with residents of seven villages affected by the project's backwaters. Interacting with the evacuees, he enquired about their problems and assured them of government support.

The Minister directed officials to immediately construct roads, provide drinking water, establish schools, build a temple, and ensure other basic



amenities for the affected villages. He assured the villagers that he would stand by them whenever needed and reiterated that the coalition government, led by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, would safeguard their interests.

Criticising the previous YSRCP government, Minister Gottipati alleged that it had failed to address the concerns of the evacuees during its fiveyear tenure. He accused the YSRCP of neglecting the completion of the project works and leaving the affected families in distress. The failures of the previous

YSRCP regime have become a burden for the present govern-The issues of Gundlakamma evacuees should have been resolved long ago, but due to the negligent approach of the YSRCP, they remain unaddressed," he

'Modi was listed as OBC when Congress was in power'

Saniav asks CM to reveal Rahul's caste & religion

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy enacted one more desperate diversion tactic with his 42 per cent reservation demand and his demand to know Prime Minister Modi's caste, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay said.

He said that the CM's research into Modi's past failed badly as he forgot the fact that Modi was listed as an OBC when the Congress

was in power in "What caste is Rahul Gandhi? What's his religion? Does he know, or do you? His grandfather name was

Jehangir Gandhi. As per Hindu tradition, caste is derived from the father's lineage," Sanjay

Posting about this on Friday on his X account he said, "Yet another desperate diversion tactic from the 42% BC reservation demand.

Now the Congress CM wants to debate the PM's caste. Your research failed so badly that you forgot the fact that PM @narendramodi Ji was listed as an OBC when the Congress was in power in 1994. Now, what caste is Rahul Gandhi? What's his religion? Does he know, or do you? His grandfather was Feroz Jehangir Ğandhi. As per Hindu tradition, caste is derived from the father's lineage. If anyone wants to debate who is legally converted or not may be the CM should start from #10, Janpath. No amount of attention diversion will work. The BJP stands firm on no reservation for Muslims and any attempts regarding that will be foiled."

One killed as car plunges into farm well



PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

One person was killed and another critically injured when their car plunged into an irrigation well at Nadumudoddi village in Narpala mandal on Friday.

According to the police, the deceased, identified as Shabuddin (40), and the injured were travelling from Dharmavaram to Tadipatri when the accident occurred. The car veered off the road and fell into the well after the driver lost control.

The body was retrieved from the car and sent to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for postmortem. Both the deceased and the injured are residents of Anantapur.

FORMAT C-2

(for political party to publish website, newspapers, TV)

Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)

Name of Political Party Name of Election Name of State/ UT

Telugu Desam Party

Biennial Elections to Legislative Council

: Andhra Pradesh

(B) Details about cases Name of Name of of conviction for criminal (A) Pending criminal cases consti candi tuency offences Descrip-Maxi-Section of the Name of Name of tion of Acts mum Court & Court, case offence concerned & Punish No. & date(s) (s) & brief ment status of the punishdescription of lmcase(s) order(s) ment offence(s) posed. imposed Krishna-Alapati 1. 9/2020 U/s 143, 188, Not Not 341 r/w 149 Guntur Rajendra Tenali Appli-Appli-Appli-IPC Prasad Gradu-Rural cable cable cable ates' Unlawful Consti assembly, 2. 924/2021 tuency disobedience Tadepalli to a public servant's order, wrongful restraint. U/s 143, 341

188, 269, 270

r/w 149 IPC

Unlawful

assembly,

wrongful

restraint /

obstruction,

disobedience

to a public

servant's

order, spread

a disease that

is dangerous

Paper modelling workshop inspires young minds

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The GITAM School of Architecture hosted a successful paper modelling workshop on Friday, offering school students a unique opportunity to explore the world of architecture and enhance their creativ-

The interactive session aimed to ignite a passion for design in young minds by demonstrating the versatility of paper as a medium for innovative design concepts.

The workshop was conducted by Arun Desai, a renowned expert in 3D pop-up structures, paper sculptures, and packaging design. MDesai, founder of Bengaluru-based Studio CHITTE, has a distinguished career working with international publications and commercial brands.

He is also a respected educator, having led workshops at prestigious institutions like the National Institute of Design (NID) and the National Institute of Fashion Technology

Participants explored the art



of paper modelling, learning various techniques to conceptualise and create intricate paper-based designs. The workshop introduced fundamental design principles, enhancing students' spatial thinking and creative problemsolving skills. The hands-on training allowed them to experiment with form, struc-

ture, and composition, fostering a deeper understanding of architectural concepts.

Students from KV-1 Nausena Bagh and Pollocks Intelli, Madhurawada, particularly those in the eighth grade, actively participated in the workshop. They received training in architectural paper modelling, discovering the limitless

creative possibilities of paper in architectural design.
Prof. Vibhoothi, Dean of

the GITAM School of Architecture, emphasised the importance of such workshops in nurturing young talent and inspiring a passion for design and architecture. She noted that the initiative provided a valuable learning experience,

allowing budding designers to experiment creatively through paper modelling.

We hope this experience will enhance their creative skills in the Basic Design studio and deepen their understanding of design principles, ultimately shaping their perspective towards architectural innovation," she stated.

ACROSS THE STATES



Over 50 crore devotees take holy dip at Sangam: UP

ver 50 crore devotees have taken a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam till Friday evening during the ongoing Maha Kumbh, the Uttar Pradesh government said. The participation marks the largest congregation in human history for any religious, cultural, or social event, the state government, which is hosting the mega fair in Prayagraj, it said. It added that the footfall at the Hindu pilgrimage has surpassed the population count of all countries except India and China. Being held after 12 years, the Maha Kumbh started on January 13 and will continue till February 26 on the banks of the Triveni Sangam -- the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati rivers, considered holy among Hindus. Despite a deadly stampede on January 29, the fair continued to draw millions of pilgrims from India and the world daily. According to the government, over 92 lakh devotees had taken a dip till 6 pm on Friday alone, pushing the overall footfall at Maha Kumbh past 50 crore (till February 14).



Woman takes help of lover to kill husband

man was killed allegedly by his wife, her lover and one Amore person in Shajapur district in Madhya Pradesh, a police official said on Friday. The incident took place in Farat Khedi village under Mohan Badodia police station limits on Wednesday, he added. "Accused Mamta left the door of her house open to let in her lover Rahul Malviya and the latter's friend Sunil Malviya with the intention of killing her husband Mukesh Malviya (38). They slit the throat of Mukesh," Superintendent of Police Yashal Singh Rajput told reporters. "While killing him, a finger of Rahul Malviya got chopped off and was lying on the scene of the crime. Based on leads provided by the cyber cell and an informer, Mamta, Rahul and Sunil were arrested later that night. They have confessed to the crime." the SP said.



Police busts fake call centre in Delhi, 8 held

olice have busted a fake call centre, run in a rented house Din Delhi's Badarpur area and have arrested eight people, officials said on Friday. The matter came to light on February 4 after a man filed a complaint of being duped of Rs 18,000 under the pretext of providing a loan, police said. The complainant told the police, that a man, who posed as an official from Axis Bank, promised to provide loans and took the amount in the name of filing charges, police said. During the investigation, the police conducted raids and busted a fake call centre in Badarpur on Thursday. Eight people were arrested, including six women, police said. They also recovered 25 mobile phones and wifi dongles from their possession. "During interrogation, the accused revealed that they used to commit fraud by calling people and getting them to transfer money to get loans. In return for this work, the accused got a salary and a commission from the defrauded amount," police said.



India-B'desh border talks next week

FENCING. ATTACKS BY MISCREANTS ON AGENDA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The border forces of India and Bangladesh will hold their biannual talks here next week with issues such as border fence construction and attacks on BSF personnel and civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants figuring among the discussion points, an official statement said on Friday.

The 55th Director General-Level Border Co-ordination Conference between BSF and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be organised at the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters here between February 17-20 February, the first top-level meeting between the two sides post the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August last

by BSF Director General (DG) Daljit Singh Chawdhary while the BGB delegation will be headed by Maj General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui. Discussions will be held on

prevention against attack/assault on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by Bangladesh-based miscreants/nationals, how to prevent trans-border crimes, construction of single row fence, action against Indian Insurgent Groups in Bangladesh, issues related to border infrastructure, joint efforts for effective implementation Coordinated Border Management Plan and Confidence Building Measures

The last edition of these biannual talks was held in

and other issues.

Modi invites US universities to open campus in India

PNS WASHINGTON

India and the US have agreed to strengthen collaborations between their higher education institutions, facilitate study abroad and explore opportunities for setting up campuses of premier American colleges in

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump during their wide-ranging talks at the White House on Thursday also recognised that the talent flow and movement of students, researchers and employees, has mutually benefitted both countries.

According to the latest Open Doors Report, the number of Indian students studying in the US in the academic year 2023-24 is at 3,31,602, a rise of 23 per cent from 2022-23 when the number stood at 2,68,923.

"President Trump and Prime Minister Modi noted the importance of advancing the peopleto-people ties between the two countries. In this context, they noted that the more than 300,000-strong Indian student community contributes over

economy and helped create a number of direct and indirect jobs," the joint statement said.

"Recognising the importance of international academic collaborations in fostering innovation, improving learning outcomes and development of a future-ready workforce, both leaders resolved to strengthen collaborations between the higher education institutions through efforts such as joint and dual degree and twinning programmes," it added.

"Establishing joint Centres of

Excellence, and setting up of offshore campuses of premier educational institutions of the US in India," the statement said. During the joint press confer-

ence, Modi also said," The Indian

community in America is an

important link in our relation-

ship. To deepen our people-topeople ties, we will soon open new Indian consulates in Los Angeles and Boston." He also said, "We have invit-

ed American universities and educational institutions to open offshore campuses in India."

year 2022, according to Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVP) 2023 SEVIS by the Numbers Report.

PM-chaired panel

SEVIS stands for Students and Exchange Information System.

over USD 8 billion annually to the US

economy and helped create a number of

International student enrollment

in the United States in 2023

showed a substantial increase

records for active F-1 and M1

students was 1,503,649 in the cal-

endar year 2023, an increase of

10.4 per cent from the calendar

The total number of SEVIS

from the calendar year 2022.



PNS AHMEDABAD

Union minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Friday expressed concern over a "new genre" of unqualified and "self-styled counsellors" advising people on health and lifestyle, and rued that there was no regulation for them unlike doctors. He also held such people

responsible for spreading "dis-Singh, who is also a diabetes specialist, was addressing a gathering of doctors and healthcare experts after inau-gurating the 'World Congress of Diabetes', which will go on

PNS CHANDIGARH

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla

on Friday said agreements and

disagreements are the strengths

of democracy, but a "planned

deadlock", be it in Vidhan

Sabhas or parliament, is not

Birla was speaking to

reporters here on the sidelines

of a two-day orientation pro-

gramme for the members of

the Haryana Legislative

Assembly which commenced

till February 16."A huge, huge caution against a new genre of self-styled counsellors in Delhi.



You have a variety of diet charts in the market today. More than information, it is disinformation in this country, which plays havoc," he said.

"They will impress you with graphs and you think it's the final truth. Because that's what is driving our culture today. And unfortunately, you don't

the soul of democracy. An

the strength of democracy but

I believe that be it in Vidhan

Sabhas or Parliament, a

planned deadlock is not appro-

priate for democracy," Birla

deadlocks is neither good for

the country nor any state as

they disrupt the House and leg-

islative business is also impact-

ed with precious time getting

Birla said it is a matter of

wasted," he added.

This new trend of planned

'Planned deadlock' not good for democracy: Om Birla

have any regulation for them, and there is no mandatory registration for them like regular doctors," he added. Earlier, uneducated quacks used to do such things, but now English-speaking people are doing it, the minister said.

Singh also called for collective efforts to fight diabetes and obesity in the country.

"In order to overcome this challenge of diabetes and obesity, I think what is important is to have a very synergized approach. Because preventing diabetes is too serious a problem to be left to a diabetologist...It is a national responsibility. All the stakeholders have to be brought together," he

'Airstrikes after 'Pulwama' befitting reply to terrorists'

PNS HALDWANI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday paid homage to the martyrs of the Pulwama terror attack and praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving a befitting reply through airstrikes in Pakistan.

Forty jawans were killed when a Jaish-e-Mohammad suicide bomber rammed an explosive-laden car into a CRPF convoy at Lethpora-Pulwama on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway on February 14, 2019.

Days later, Indian Air Force fighter jets bombed terror training camps in Balakot, deep inside Pakistan.

On the anniversary of the terror attack, Shah said the martyrdom of the jawans made the country's borders safe.

In parliament, we have

nial-era laws. We have also

framed new laws after inde-

pendence as per requirement

It is the job of a state assem-

bly and Lok Sabha to enact a

law, he said as he stressed the

importance of discussions and

debates on enacting a good law.

he said people elect them with

great hope and aspirations and

the elected representatives

should try to resolve the peo-

Speaking about legislators,

of the time, said Birla.

to name next CEC, says sources



PNS NEW DELHI

A selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet here on Monday to finalise the name of the next chief election commissioner, sources said on Friday.

The panel also comprises the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Home Minister Amit Shah It will meet on Monday at the prime minister's official residence ahead of the retirement of incumbent Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv

Kumar on February 18. The panel will recommend a name from among the candidates shortlisted by a search committee. The president will then appoint the next CEC based on the recommendation.

After Rajiv Kumar, Goel last year.

Gyanesh Kumar is the senior-most election commissioner. His tenure is till January 26, 2029. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu is the other election commissioner.

So far, the senior-most election commissioner (EC) was elevated as CEC following the retirement of the incumbent. However, after a new law on appointments of the CEC and ECs came into force last year, a search committee shortlists names of five secretary-level officers for consideration by a prime minister-led panel for appointment to the posts.

Besides the CEC, a new EC could also be appointed to fill the vacancy created by

While provisions of the "Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023" are being applied for the first time to appoint a CEC, it was used to appoint ECs Gyanesh Kumar and Sandhu to fill the vacancies created by the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey and the resignation of Arun

BJP govt in Delhi likely to be sworn in by Feb 19-20

"Discussion and dialogue is pride that India is the biggest

PNS NEW DELHI

The swearing-in ceremony of the BJP government in Delhi is likely to take place on February 19 or 20 and the new dispensation will give priority to clean drinking water supply, improved civic infrastructure, among other things, party leaders said.

The prime minister is coming back from his foreign visit and soon the observers for a meeting of the BJP legislature

party will be appointed, newly elected BJP MLA and national secretary of the party

"The new government will start working around February 19-20," said the Rajouri Garden MLA who is considered a contender for the post of Chief Minister or a ministerial berth.

Manjinder Singh Sirsa said.

Sirsa said that he expected that the BJP legislature party meeting would be held around February 18-19 and added.

Manipur Assembly can be revived in future: BJP

democracy in the world. After

Independence, under the guid-

ance of the constitution, be it

the state assemblies or parlia-

ment, new laws have been

PNS IMPHAL

enacted, he noted.

Reaffirming its commitment to maintaining Manipur's territorial integrity, the BJP on Friday said the state assembly, which was put in a suspended animation following the imposition of President's rule, could be revived on any future date depending on the ground situation.

Sambit Patra, the BIP's northeast region in-charge, said that his party was committed to continuing efforts to maintain peace and normalcy in the state, which has been hit by months-long violence between Meiteis and Kukis and remains polarised along ethnic lines.

Can't allow bar bodies to be divided on caste, religion: SC

PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to order reservations on caste basis in the lawvers body elections saying it would open a "Pandora's box" without any empirical

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said neither would it permit bar members to be divided on caste lines nor allow it

to be politicised. "This is a sensitive issue. It

will open a Pandora's box. Without any empirical data, it can't be done. Reserving seats for women was a different thing. We will not permit bar members to be divided on caste lines or let the

issues to be politicised," it said The bench was hearing a plea of NGO Advocates

for Social Justice

seeking reserva-

tions in the upcom-

elections to members belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes. "There are serious arguable issues from both sides, which

ing Bengaluru Bar Association

can be deliberated in a healthy atmosphere. We don't want different bar bodies to be divided on such grounds. This is not our intention," it added. The matter was then tagged

with a pending issue on the strengthening of bar associations and coming up for hearing on February 17

Prez urges women to gather courage, dream big

PNS BENGALURU

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday urged every woman to be courageous, dream big and use full strength and potential to achieve dreams.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the International Women's Conference of the Art of Living here, she said that India's 'Nari Shakti' is rising to aspire, achieve and contribute.

Whether in science, sports, politics, art, or culture, our sisters and daughters are moving ahead with their heads held high. They are making their families, institutions and the country proud,

Murmu said. "It is not possible to break barriers and challenge stereotypes



without mental strength. I urge every woman to gather courage, dream big and utilise all her strength and potential to achieve her dreams. Every little step that each of you takes toward your goal is a step toward a developed India and a developed world," she

Murmu also stressed how in today's world, mental health has become one of the most crucial

issues facing people of all age groups.
"Women, in particular, are at

the crossroads of multiple challenges, including competing professionally, meeting societal expectations, and fulfilling personal aspirations. Sometimes, cultural norms make it difficult for women to speak openly about their emotional wellbeing," she said.

Noting that each of us needs to understand that mental wellness is fundamental to a woman's ability to lead a meaningful life and contribute to her family, society, and the world, she said, "You all can help break the silence surrounding mental health issues by creating safe spaces for dialogue and providing support systems."

'Ready to lodge 26/11 accused Rana in jail once extradited' PNS NEW DELHI

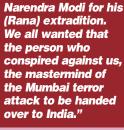
Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday said the state government is prepared to lodge 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana in jail once he is extradited from the United States.

The chief minister's comments came after US President Donald Trump announced that his administration has approved the extradition of 'very evil" Rana, wanted by Indian probe agencies for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, "to face justice in India"."We kept Kasab, what is the big deal here? We will

sised Mumbai's security infrakeep him for sure," Fadnavis said here when asked about structure was capable of handling high-profile criminals. Maharashtra's preparedness once Rana is extradited.

The CM, who also handles the home portfolio, empha-

"I want to profusely thank Prime Minister



The case is in Mumbai so he

(Rana) will be brought to

Mumbai. We handled Ajmal

Kasab. We had got Rana's online statement due to which Pakistan's involvement was proved (in 26/11). He was in American protection at that time. Rana was India's criminal and should face the law here. We will get final justice in the

26/11 case," the ĆM asserted. Ajmal Kasab, one of the 10 terrorists involved in the November 26, 2008, Mumbai terror attacks, was arrested from one of the carnage sites in Mumbai. He was lodged in jails in Maharashtra during his trial for four years and hanged in Pune's Yerwada central jail in 2012.

Fadnavis said during the investigation, Pakistan's role in the terror attack was exposed He thanked Prime Minister

Narendra Modi for his efforts to bring Rana to India for trial. "I want to profusely thank

Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his (Rana) extradition. We all wanted that the person who conspired against us, the mastermind of the Mumbai terror attack to be handed over to India," he said.

The chief minister said initially America was reluctant to hand over Rana to India and wanted to protect him but due to the initiative of the Prime Minister, extradition of the key 26/11 accused has been in a way cleared by America and its President Trump.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

US U-turn on Ukraine war

Trump and Putin have agreed to negotiate an end to the Ukraine war, a move that could have far-reaching implications for global peace and trade

he US President Trump has had a good relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and that is now showing in the policy shift of the US. The US stance on the Ukraine war now seems to be taking a U-turn as in all likelihood the US would now go soft on Russia and leave Ukraine in the cold. In a significant geopolitical development, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin have agreed to initiate negotiations aimed at ending the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. This move marks a notable shift in US foreign policy and has elicited varied reactions globally. President Trump held a 90-minute phone conversation with President Putin, discussing a range of topics, with a primary focus on the situation in Ukraine. Following the call, Trump announced that both Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had expressed a willingness to pursue peace, leading to the initiation of negotiations to end the war. Trump indicated that these talks would commence immediately, with a potential meet-



ing with Putin in Saudi Arabia in the near future. Ukrainian and European leaders have expressed concerns about being sidelined in the negotiations and the potential for unfavourable concessions.

The decision by the US to engage directly with Russia has raised questions about a potential shift in its support for Ukraine. By recognising Ukraine's NATO membership as 'impractical' and the return of Russianoccupied territories as 'illusionary,' the US appears to be moving away from its previous stance of isolating Russia. This shift has led to concerns that Ukraine may be left in a precarious position, especially if European allies are unable to fill the void left

by a potential US withdrawal. The announcement of potential peace talks has had immediate effects on global markets. European stock markets have shown optimism, with indices such as Spain's Ibex 35 reaching new highs. Oil prices have also declined, with Brent crude falling below \$75 per barrel, as traders anticipate a relaxation of sanctions on Russian producers. However, uncertainties remain. Analysts caution that while a de-escalation could stabilise energy and food markets, the specifics of any agreement will determine the long-term impacts. The agricultural sector, in particular, is closely monitoring the situation, given that Russia and Ukraine together account for a significant portion of global wheat exports. A resolution to the conflict could ease supply constraints, but logistical challenges and infrastructure damage in Ukraine may continue to pose obstacles. India, as a major importer of commodities like sunflower oil, stands to be affected by these developments. A potential end to the conflict could lead to more predictable trade flows and possibly lower prices for key imports. While Trump- Putin negotiations it offers a glimmer of hope for peace, the potential shifts in alliances and the impacts on global markets warrant careful consideration by all stakeholders involved.



Kumbh Mela: The catalyst for

Gandhi's freedom struggle



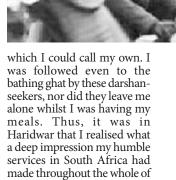
It was at this grand confluence of faith and politics that Gandhi fully grasped his growing influence, reinforcing his resolve for satyagraha

notable episodes in the history of the Kumbh occurred in 1915 when Mahatma Gandhi visited the Haridwar gathering shortly after returning from South Africa after twenty-one years. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Gandhi's political mentor, had advised him to undertake a nationwide tour to understand India's socio-political landscape before formulating his strategies - and plunging himself into the dynamics of the freedom movement. It was during this tour that Gandhi decided to attend the Kumbh, primarily to visit Mahatma Munshiram at his Gurukul in Rishikesh and to oversee the activities of the Servants of India Society.

While Gandhi's views on various issues such as cleanliness and sanitation, including that of communal harmony were critical - which Gandhi distinctly mentions in this autobiography too - his brief political debut at Haridwar Kumbh Mela pointed towards the necessity of bridging the communal divide to achieve a more conscientious goal for freedom. Gandhi was also awestruck, not only by the overwhelming crowds but also by the chaos, superstition, and lack of hygiene. He noted the rampant disregard for cleanliness, which tarnished the sanctity of

'The banks of the Ganga, a symbol of purity, were defiled by human waste and negligence, he lamented in his speeches decades later. In 1947, remembering his Kumbh experience, Gandhi remarked, 'We must ensure that our religious gatherings become sanctuaries of cleanliness and serenity, not breeding grounds for disease and disorder. It was also here in Haridwar that

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi first grasped the profound impact his humble efforts in South Africa had on Bharat's people. Reflecting The Story of My Experiments with Truth: "My business was mostly to keep sitting in the tent, giving darshan and holding religious and other discussions with numerous pilgrims who called on me. This left me not a minute



The Kumbh Mela at Haridwar proved to be a pivotal moment in shaping Mahatma Gandhi's sense of purpose and his eventual entry into the political arena of India's freedom movement. This deepened his realisation that the people of India looked up to him, not just as a spiritual figure, but as a leader capable of addressing the nation's struggles.

This realisation planted the seeds of confidence and responsibility within Gandhi, inspiring him to expand his mission of service and truth to the broader cause of India's liberation - which resulted in his first non-violent satyagraha in 1917 in Champaran, Bihar. The overwhelming response he received at the Kumbh Mela reinforced his belief in the power of collective action and solidified his resolve to dedicate his life to the fight for

It is also fascinating to note that Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Haridwar and his entry into the political arena coincided with a landmark moment in history - the All India Hindu Mahasabha formation during



THE KUMBH MELA AT HARIDWAR **PROVED**

TO BE A **PIVOTAL** MOMENT IN SHAPING MAHATMA GANDHI'S SENSE OF **PURPOSE** AND HIS EVENTUAL

ENTRY INTO THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

1915, amidst the spiritual fervour of the Haridwar Kumbh, Gandhi joined luminaries such as Swami Shraddhanand, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, and other visionaries at the inaugural conference of the Sarvadeshak (All India) Hindu Sabha, marking a pivotal chapter in India's sociopolitical awakening. Gandhi's participation at the Kumbh was also available to British intelligence, who had made records - now available in the

Regional State Archives. The colonial period introduced a fresh perspective to the Kumbh Mela, with European observers chronicling its magnificence and adding valuable historical context. Fascinated by the immense scale and diversity of the pilgrimage, the British left behind detailed records that provide significant insights into the evolution of the Maha Kumbh Mela which also can be found in the well-documented writings of James Prinsep, a British colonial

administrator. It is worth referring to The Sunday Guardian's article, Beyond Faith: How Kumbh Mela Reshapes the Course of History which highlights the Kumbh Mela's role in India's independence movement. A 1920 British intelligence document, displayed at the Allahabad Museum, reveals a pivotal 1918 meeting during the Mela. This meeting adopt-

the Kumbh Mela. In April ed a memorial supporting political reforms, demanded Panchayats, permanent settlements, and tenant protections, and founded the UP Peasants Association. Led by Pt Madan Mohan Malviya, the association grew to 450 branches, fostering unity among peasants and opposing zamindar dominance.

The Sunday Guardian further highlights the pivotal role of the Kumbh Mela in shaping India's post-independence democracy, particularly during the Emergency. The JP Movement gained significant momentum at this Kumbh, with the Sadhu Samaj lending strong support. Events such as the 'Dharma Sansad' and 'Sadhu Sammelans (congregation)' cemented widespread support for the Janata Party across the Hindi heartland.

The 'Maha Kumbh Mela' transcends its role as a spiritual gathering, reflecting the profound confluence of the sacred and the secular.

While it offers a space for deep introspection and devotion, it also acts as a mirror to the socio-political currents that shape Indian society. This timeless festival continues to evolve, bridging spiritual and worldly realms Mela remains a powerful testament to India's enduring cultural legacy.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are

WazirX hack exposes crypto risks: A call for stringent regulations



Such cyberattacks expose regulatory gaps across jurisdictions and underscore the need for investor protection and the need for stricter crypto regulations

t the 2023 G20 Summit under India's presiden-Cy, world economies pledged to create a global regulatory framework for crypto assets. While each country must establish Its regulations, international collaboration is equally important.

This need for both domestic and global regulatory frameworks is exemplified by the recent WazirX case, which underscores the urgency of addressing vulnerabilities in the crypto ecosystem. WazirX, one of India's leading cryptocurrency exchanges, suffered a cyberattack in July 2024 by the North Korean hacker group Lazarus. This has been confirmed by a joint statement issued by the governments of the United States, Japan and South Korea and the three countries have pledged to collaborate to counter this.

In India, the attack has raised concerns about cybersecurity risks and the reliability of custodial exchanges. Custodial exchanges, where assets are held centrally pose significant risks, as evidenced by this cvber-attack. This episode has exposed broader systemic risks and has revived the conversation about a regulatory

intervention into the entire crypto ecosystem in the country. Approximately 4.4 million users were affected.

The Anatomy of a Crypto Crisis WazirX's holding company, Zettai Pte Ltd, is based in Singapore, meaning any legal recourse must go through Singapore's regulatory channels, even though over 95 per cent of WazirX's users

were Indian investors. In response to the crisis, WazirX introduced a Restructuring Scheme aimed at user recovery and longterm operational stability. The proposed scheme promises quicker asset recovery, profitsharing mechanisms and operational changes. Last month, WazirX received approval from the Singapore High Court to propose its Scheme of Arrangement to creditors. Additionally,

asset rebalancing exercise, Scheme includes the issuance which ensures hack victims of Recovery Tokens (RTs), will receive 85 per cent of their portfolio value as of July 18, 2024. Following the breach, WazirX faced a significant shortfall in ERC-20 tokens, leaving it unable to fully cover user balances. Since matching individual token losses would be complex and impractical, the proposed Scheme aims to distribute available assets equitably among all creditors, based on their claim values at the time of the attack.

This standardised valuation approach ensures fairness and transparency and has been approved by the Singapore

The Scheme of Arrangement The Scheme of Arrangement promises to offer a legally binding path to recovery, ensuring equitable treatment of all creditors, regardless of the size of their claims or the type of cryptocurrency they hold. This approach takes an egalitarian stance, providing all users with a fair opportunity to recover their assets. The restructuring and resolution process will only proceed with the approval of a majority of creditors. To enhance WazirX recently completed its recovery prospects, the

which would give creditors a stake in future platform profits and assets. If the Scheme is reiected, WazirX may face liquidation, which would likely erode value, force the sale of assets at distressed prices and drag out the recovery process for years with uncertain outcomes.

The Way Forward

WazirX's restructuring plan represents a bold approach to crisis management, prioritising immediate user recovery and laying the groundwork for a more resilient crypto ecosystem. However, the broader lesson from this case is the urgent need for a robust regulatory framework for virtual digital assets in India. As the G20 emphasised, global cooperation and regulatory consistency are key to addressing the risks in the crypto ecosystem. India must develop a comprehensive regulatory framework to better protect investors and mitigate future risks, ensuring the country's preparedness for a rapidly evolving digital economy.

(The writer is CEO & Cofounder, The Policy Consensus Centre; views are personal)

SAJJAN KUMAR CONVICTED IN SIKH RIOTS Madam — Congress leader Sajjan Kumar stands convicted in yet another case related to anti-Sikh violence in Delhi after the death of the then PM Indira Gandhi, gunned down by two Sikh security guards more than 40 years ago. There were no FIRs and the Congress goons roamed across Delhi to burn alive the Sikhs along with damaging their property continuously for 3 days when the Army was called to contain the violence. The moot question is, "Who was respon-

Obviously, the violence had the blessings of Rajiv Gandhi, who took over as PM immediately after the death of her mother and justified the killings on camera, yet no case was made against him or the family, and even the courts remained aloof to the bare fact about the responsibility of Rajiv Gandhi while hearing the petitions pertaining to the violence. Sajjan Kumar or Jagdish Tytler were only carrying out the orders to finish the Sikhs as much as possible within 3 days. The same courts as well as the media tried and tried Gujarat CM Narendra Modi for the violence that erupted after the gruesome burning alive of 59 Hindus. Doesn't it establish that the special family is much bigger than scores of poor Hindus in the eyes of the media and judiciary?

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala Cantt

US BANS ASSOCIATED PRESS Madam— The decision by U.S. President Donald Trump to ban the renowned news agency Associated Press (AP) from entering the White House is a severe blow to democracy. This is not merely a restriction on a media institution but an attempt to crush independent journalism. The Trump administration accused AP of misusing the term "of America," but can this truly justify curbing press freedom? The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees the

New Income Tax Bill simplifies taxation

E EDITO



he newly tabled Income Tax Bill brings much-needed reforms to India's tax system and deserves commendation. By replacing the outdated Income Tax Act of 1961, the bill aims to simplify tax laws, reduce litigation and remove obsolete provisions, making the tax process more transparent and efficient for both taxpayers and the government. One of the most notable changes is the

to silence the voice of truth. The role of the media is to provide the public with unbiased information and critically examine government policies. Blocking a media organisation from entering the White House, the epicentre of power, is a direct attack on the press. History bears witness that wherever governments have attempted to suppress the press, dictatorship has followed. An independent media is the fourth pillar of democracy, and any restriction on it is an infringement on public rights. In a true democracy, power does not lie with the ruling authorities but with the people. Freedom of the press is the most powerful tool to amplify the voice of the

Jai Prakash Gupta | Tirunelveli

RAGGING MUST STOP

Madam — The Kottayam Nursing College ragging incident is a crude press the right to operate fearlessly, reminder that ragging is very much preimpartially, and independently. However, vailing in our colleges without any when those in power seek to evade deterrent and despite ragging being a

increased tax rebate under Section 87A, which will now provide up to Rs 60,000 for individuals with a net taxable income of Rs 12 lakh or below. This is a significant step towards reducing the tax burden on the middle class, offering greater financial relief.

Furthermore, the introduction of two clear deductions under the new tax regime, a Rs 75,000 standard deduction and NPS contributions, enhances tax planning options for individuals, making it simpler to manage finances. Although the income tax slabs remain unchanged for FY 2025-26, the streamlined approach will likely benefit taxpayers in the long run, fostering greater compliance and reducing unnecessary complications. Overall, this bill paves the way for a more modern and efficient tax system that is better suited to today's economic landscape.

Vishal Mayur | Tumakuru

accountability, their first move is often criminal offence. These ragging incidents continued for three months, telling how much ordeal freshers had to face during that period.

Till about the 90s, ragging in the educational institutes used to be a platform to create affinity, closeness, and rapport between first-year students and seniors. Sadly, it has now taken an unfortunate turn and become a tool to torture. Merely getting parents and students to sign the undertaking was never going to help and prevent ragging from taking place. Punishing culpable students is an absolute must, but college administration must be held accountable in such cases too. One out-of-the-box idea could be to set a rule that any student who is found guilty of ragging and torturing juniors would not be allowed to participate in final placement or not be given passing out certificates. We have to hit it where it hurts them most

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

SHAPING INDIA'S AI FUTURE

As Al redefines global power dynamics, India is

emerging as a key player in its governance and innovation



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

rime Minister Modi's Paris and Washington visit, meetings with the two most powerful leaders from the developed world, comes at a time of shifting geopolitical sands. The buzzword around both these high-level bilaterals was high-end technology cooperation in a world, increasingly getting fragmented. India was the co-chair of the Al Action Summit in Paris, along with the host country France. This is the third global-level event on Artificial Intelligence, making it a Kumbh of technology leaders, policy makers, experts, corporates and world leaders in France. The theme was how to harness the power of this nearly mind-bending technology, whose evolution has been compared to the invention of the wheel and humans learning to use fire safely.

Almost simultaneously, China released a nimble version of the generative AI tool DeepSeek, which is currently a huge challenger to US billions of dollars infused into US technology companies' almost monopolistic dominance on Al tools and standards. US President Biden in his last week at the Oval Office had passed an executive order called the Interim Final Rule (IFR) on Framework for Artificial Intelligence Diffusion, essentially imposing export controls on high-end software and hardware required for AI development across nations which may be considered inimical to US interests (i.e. China) but also, close allies



While the global technology industry stakeholders have requested the new President to be consistent with the Trump Administration's previously stated, Regulatory Freeze Order, and suspend implementation of the Al Diffusion Rule until the Secretary of Commerce and other relevant officials can review the rule appropriately and pursue robust stakeholder engagement so that the rules reflect the government's objectives and ensure companies can engage with key US trading partners. President Trump is yet to revoke the executive order signed by his predecessor, even though he did sign a fresh one on January 23, which potentially hints at a pause.

Three days into the Oval Office President Trump signed the executive order on Al development and deployment stating the purpose as "The United States has long been at the forefront of artificial intelligence (AI) innovation, driven by the strength of our free markets, world-class research institutions, and entrepreneurial spirit. To maintain this leadership, we must develop AI systems that are free from ideological bias or engineered social agendas. With the right Government policies, we can solidify our position as the global leader in Al and secure a brighter future for all Americans. This order revokes certain existing Al policies and directives that act as barriers to American Al innovation, clearing a path for the United States to act decisively to retain global leadership in artificial intelligence. It is the policy of the United States to sustain and enhance America's global Al dominance in order to promote human flourishing, economic competitiveness, and national secu-

India is aiming to have an equal say on global high tables of Al governance, innovation and development. It has an ambitious Al mission of its own, which is heavily dependent on high-end chips and Graphic Processing Units (GPUs) currently available from US technology companies. Any restrictions on access to these high-end processors would upset the ambitious goal envisaged under the India Al mission. The conversation in Paris, India's announcement to host the fourth global Al summit in Delhi, and conversations with President Trump and other leaders this week, are steps in the right direction.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Palestine in ruins: The unbearable cost of war



As political instability deepens and global powers debate the future of Gaza, millions of Palestinians face an uncertain and harrowing future

n October 7, 2003, Hamas fighters successfully launched a massive attack on Israel, but the price that Palestinians had to pay for it is heartbreaking. It will take three centuries to recover from the destruction caused by this war, which lasted for more than 15 months. According to a United Nations survey, it may take more than 350 years to rebuild Palestine, which has been reduced to rubble. The estimated loss in the first four months of the war was \$18.5 billion. At present, about 69 per cent of the structures in Gaza are either damaged or destroyed. More than 50 million tons of rubble have accumulated in the Gaza region, which may take more than 15 years to remove. Piles of rubble are visible throughout Palestine due to bombings and ground operations.

A United Nations report states that the accumulated rubble is approximately 12 times the size of the Great Pyramid of Giza in Egypt. According to estimates, even if more than 100 trucks work continuously, it may still take more than 15 years to clear the debris. Three generations born in tents will likely have to make them their permanent homes for a long time. Reconstruction will require billions of dollars, yet no international institution is willing to invest in an ungoverned region that has seen five wars in less than two decades.

Using satellite data, the United Nations estimated last month that 70 per cent of structures in Gaza have been destroyed, including more than 245,000 residential buildings. The World Bank estimated losses of \$18.5 billion in the first four months of the war-an amount nearly equal to the combined economic output of the West Bank and Gaza in 2022. Major roads have been turned into deep trenches, essential water and electricity infrastructure has been destroyed, and most hospitals are no longer functional due to being targeted during the bombings. According to the United Nations, more than 50,000 people have died in Gaza, 44 per cent of whom are children. The children who have survived are suffering from sickness, stress, insomnia, depression, and fear. They are terrified of every stranger. The children of Gaza have lost the will to live. Amidst the devastation 96 per cent of children express a desire not to live, and 49 per cent say they would have preferred to die. Among those who feel this way, 72 per cent are boys and 46 per cent are girls. A Netherlands-based organisation, War Child Alliance, has collected shocking and heartbreaking data. The alliance gathered this information from 500 parents or caretakers, including families whose children were crippled in the war or separated from their families.

Their findings revealed that 92 per cent of the children surveyed are unable to accept the reality of war. The smell of gunpowder lingers in Gaza's atmosphere. The situation is so dire that 79 per cent of children experience nightmares, and 73 per cent have become so overwhelmed that their behaviour has turned aggressive. Many scream and moan in their sleep. These children have witnessed their homes and schools reduced to rubble. Their young minds are shattered, unable to comprehend why they are being punished and what crime they have commit-

Devastated by this horrific situation, the



DESPITE MULTIPLE **RESOLUTIONS** CALLING FOR A CEASEFIRE IN THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ALL PREVIOUS **EFFORTS HAD** FAILED. ISRAEL WAS EVEN INCLUDED IN THE LIST OF SHAME, A DOCUMENT THAT RECORDS ALLEGED

RIGHTS **VIOLATIONS AGAINST** CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh, has resigned. In his resignation letter, he acknowledged that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are starving. Tensions escalated further when an American airman involved in military operatimal involved in limitary operations set himself on fire outside the Israeli embassy in Washington, DC, repeatedly shouting, "No more involvement in genocide." The United Nations has passed a ceasefire resolution, endorsed by 158 nations, includ-

Despite multiple resolutions calling for a ceasefire in the UN General Assembly, all previous efforts had failed. İsrael was even included in the List of Shame, a document that records alleged rights violations against children in armed conflict. In this report, Israel is accused of committing severe violations of children's rights. This inclusion has angered Israel and damaged its international reputation. Several key European Union countries, which previously sympathised with Israel, have now condemned its actions. Despite continued American support, Israel's economy has begun to collapse. In recent months, GDP growth has been only 0.7 per cent. The Israeli army has requested \$16 billion, equivalent to 3 per cent of the country's GDP. Even after the ceasefire, the military requires \$8 billion annually to address new security challenges.

The fiscal deficit has now reached 8 per cent of GDP. Israel is also deeply concerned that fighting has spread to its major business hubs, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.In January, Israel's debt stood at 62 per cent of GDP, which is still lower than the average for most wealthy nations in the OECD. However, prominent credit rating agencies such as Fitch and Moody's have already downgraded Israel's credit rating once this year, with the possibility of further downgrades shortly.

Following the Hamas attack last year, Israel revoked work permits for 80,000 Palestinian workers. No replacements have been hired, leading to a 40 per cent decline in the construction industry. The same trend is observed in the high-tech sector and other industries. Inflation reached an annual rate of 3.6 per cent last month. If the war had continued any longer, the value of the Israeli shekel might have dropped further, forcing banks to rely on their reserves. Although a ceasefire is in place, this does not mark the end of the war. A recent statement by US President Donald Trump has crushed any hopes of peace efforts. Israel's Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is currently visiting the US, where he has been given priority among the to second-class citizenship. foreign guests invited by the President. However, Netanyahu Additionally, the decision to shift the capital from Tel Aviv to faces growing protests in Israel, driven by both economic instability and widespread public dissent. The situation worsened when Israel's Defense Minister, Benny Gantz, resigned from his position along with other members of his party, putting additional pressure on the government. Both leaders have sparked global controversy following a press conference at the White House, where they announced plans for the US to occupy the Gaza Strip and transform it into a resort city.

The proposed project would turn Gaza into a hub for employment and tourism in West Asia. The entire area would be levelled to develop infrastructure, and the 2.3 million people currently living in Gaza would be relocated to countries such as Egypt and Jordan. However, both Egypt and Jordan have firmly rejected this proposal. Experts argue that international laws and treaties will pose a significant obstacle to

any U.S. attempt to occupy Gaza. Meanwhile, major Arab nations are mobilising against Trump's plan, with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and Turkey openly opposing it.

Hamas has strongly condemned the proposal, labelling it ethnic genocide. Several US lawmakers, both Democrats and Republicans, have also voiced their opposition. In the past, Trump had similarly expressed intentions to occu-Greenfield Island, take control of the Panama Canal, and annex Canada as the 51st state of America. The Israeli parliament has enacted several controversial laws that have further inflamed tensions with Palestine and Arab nations. For example, the Jewish State Bill officially declares Israel as a Jewish state, effectively relegating non-Jewish communities Jerusalem is widely seen as an act provocation against Palestinians. Israel also occupies the Syrian territory of the Golan Heights, which has been under Israeli control since the 1967

A massive city, known as Trump City, is currently being developed in the region. The month of Ramadan is approaching, which is likely to bring additional hardships. Tensions surrounding the Al-Aqsa Mosque also intensify during this time, as restrictions are often imposed on Muslim worshippers. At present, the likelihood of renewed conflict appears higher than the prospect of lasting peace. The international community is also deeply concerned about the Trump administration's decision to withdraw US representatives from the United Nations.

(The writer is a former Member of Parliament; views are personal)

India stands on the brink of an AI-driven revolution

By prioritising comprehensive AI education, ethical governance and transparent regulations, India can lead the global AI revolution

its economy, security, and global influence. At the ongoleadership in AI highlights its commitment to technological advancement and innovation. The Prime Minister's prominent role at the summit undera counterforce to China's deepfake threats. Whether in AI, digital transformation, or healthcare, India is rapidly evolving into a global technology powerhouse, striving for Al self-reliance and econom-

ic growth. AI is no longer a futuristic con-

ndia is emerging as a dom-gest that AI will contribute inant force in Artificial \$500 billion to the Indian economy by 2025, accounting for 10 per cent of the national GDP. The technology is reving AI Summit in Paris, India's olutionising industries, from agriculture to healthcare and revitalising cultural and linguistic heritage. India is not merely adopting AI; it is actively leading the revolution scores the country's strategic through ambitious govern-focus on AI, positioning it as ment initiatives, collaborations with tech giants and extensive investment in AI infrastructure. The Indian government has launched several initiatives to position the country as a leader in AI.

The IndiaAI Mission and the establishment of India's first AI University in Maharashtra cept-it is an immediate reali- reflect a strong commitment to



VINAY PATHAK

firms like NVIDIA are helping develop AI solutions tailored to India's unique challenges. AI-driven tools in agriculture, such as CropIn and Intello Labs, assist farmers in predicting weather patterns, optimising irrigation, and detecting crop diseases, thereby boosting productivity and sustainability.

India's corporate sector is also

Companies like Infosys and TCS are deploying AI-driven solutions to streamline business processes, automate customer service, and optimise supply chains. Infosys' Nia platform enhances efficiency and reduces operational costs, while Zoho's AI-powered CRM tools empower small and medium enterprises to compete globally. Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are increasingly being utilised by job seekers, with 87 per cent leveraging them to refine resumes and prepare for inter-

Despite its rapid progress, India faces significant challenges in AI adoption. A critical skills shortage in AI-related professions remains a pressty reshaping India's digital technological leadership. India's corporate sector is also ing issue. To address this, the Al's rise also brings security landscape. Projections sug- Partnerships with global tech investing heavily in AI. National Programme on AI, concerns. Cyber threats are



launched by NITI Aayog, aims to train over a million workers in AI skills. Additionally, states like Karnataka and Telangana are establishing AI hubs to nurture innovation and talent development. However, while India produces over 1.5 million engineers annually, only a small percentage have the specialised expertise required for AI

development.

growing, with increasing vulnerability to sophisticated cyberattacks. In 2023, a major Indian bank suffered a ransomware attack, disrupting services for millions of customers. AI-powered cyber tools, while beneficial, can be exploited by malicious actors. The dangers of misinformation and AI-generated deepfakes are also becoming more apparent. The viral deepfake video of actor Rashmika Mandanna in 2023 highlighted the risks of AI-driven disinformation. Similarly, AIpowered voice cloning scams are on the rise, posing signif-

AI is also playing a crucial role in preserving India's cultural and linguistic heritage. Institutions like IIT Madras are developing AI models to revive

icant fraud risks.

Toda and Gondi.

The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute is using AI to digitise ancient manuscripts, ensuring the preservation of India's historical knowledge. AI is further enhancing the entertainment sector through immersive experiences, such as virtual reality tours of historical sites and AI-curated regional literature and music

recommendations. In healthcare, AI-driven tools like Niramai are revolutionising early cancer detection, while telemedicine platforms like Apollo Telehealth are providing medical access to rural communities. The education sector is benefiting from AIpowered platforms. In disaster management, AI is helping predict natural disasters and

endangered languages such as coordinate relief efforts. The Indian Meteorological Department employs AI to analyze weather patterns and issue early warnings for cyclones and floods, thereby minimising casualties.

AI is not merely a technological tool; it is a transformative force shaping India's future. However, the country must strike a balance between innovation and regulation to ensure ethical AI deployment. As AI evolves, India must establish a robust framework to address ethical concerns, security risks, and workforce reskilling. Collaborative efforts between the government, industry, and academia will be key in ensuring AI benefits for the society.

> (The writer is an assistant professor at IIIT, Sonepat; views are personal)

VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 15, 2025

MONEY MATTERS



RBI imposes Rs 68 lakh penalty on 2 banks

he Reserve Bank on Friday said it has imposed penalties totalling Rs 68.1 lakh on two banks -- Nainital Bank and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank -- for contravention of regulatory norms. A penalty of Rs 61.40 lakh was imposed on Nainital Bank Ltd for non-compliance with certain directions on 'Interest Rate on Advances' and 'Customer Service in Banks', RBI said in a statement. Further, RBI imposed a penalty of Rs 6.70 lakh on Ujjivan Small Finance Bank for non-compliance with certain directions issued by RBI on 'Loans and Advances - Statutory and Other Restrictions'. RBI also levied a penalty of Rs 5.80 lakh on Shriram Finance, a non-banking entity, for non-compliance with certain provisions, including Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines and directions on 'Data Format for Furnishing of Credit Information to Credit Information Companies'. The penalties are based on the deficiencies in regulatory compliance and are not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the lenders with their customers, according to three separate statements issued by RBI.



India cuts customs duty on bourbon whiskey to 50 pc

ndia has slashed import duty on bourbon whiskey to 50 per cent as it warmed up to negotiating a mega trade deal with the US. The reduction in customs duty on bourbon whiskey was notified on February 13 just ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's talks with US President Donald Trump. However, there has been no reduction in basic customs duty on import of other liquors. They would continue to attract 100 per cent duty. The US is the primary exporter of bourbon whiskey to India accounting for about one-fourth of all such liquor imported into India. As per the notification issued by the Department of Revenue, bourbon whiskey would now attract 50 per cent customs duty on its import. It was 150 per cent earlier. India has imported bourbon whiskey worth USD 2.5 million in 2023-24. The major exporting countries include the US (USD 0.75 million), UAE (USD 0.54 million), Singapore (USD 0.28 million) and Italy (USD 0.23 million). India and the US have resolved to more than double the twoway trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 and announced plans for a bilateral trade agreement with a view to bring down duties and increase market access



NITI Aayog invites Eol for preperation of II Index

overnment think tank NITI Aayog has invited expression of interest for preparation of the India Innovation Index 2025, with an aim to encourage states to improve their innovation environment. In a notice, Niti Aayog said innovation has always been a driver of change and progress in an economy, as it disrupts traditional practices. encourages new processes, and generates new business models. Over the last few years, 'innovation' has been made a priority by the government towards realizing the goal of a "New India", it added. According to the notice, the India Innovation Index (III) was envisaged to encourage states to examine and improve their innovation environment and innovation performance, which could further lead to an improvement in India's overall innovation performance. The terms of reference of the index include understanding and analyzing the overall innovation ecosystem of the country.

India, US to double bilateral trade

Announce plan for mega trade deal



PNS ■ WASHINGTON

India and the US have resolved to more than double the twoway trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 and announced plans for a bilateral trade agreement with a view to bringing down duties and increase market

According to the joint statement issued after the meeting of Prime Minister Narendra of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump here, the two leaders have also pledged the bilateral trade relationship to promote growth that ensures fairness, national security and job creation.

"To this end, the leaders set a bold new goal for bilateral trade - Mission 500 - aiming to more than double total bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030. Recognizing that this level of ambition would require new, fair-trade terms, the leaders announced plans to negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025," it said.

The statement further said that both sides committed to designate senior representatives to advance these negotiations and to ensure that the trade relationship fully reflects the aspirations of the COM-

PACT (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology). "To advance this innovative,

wide-ranging BTA, the US and India will take an integrated approach to strengthen and deepen hillstood trade and the strengthen and deepen hillstood trade and the strengthen and the strengthen are strengthen and the strengthen are strengthen and the strengthen are strengthen as the strengthen are deepen bilateral trade across the goods and services sector, and will work towards increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and deepening supply chain integration," it added.

Normally in a free trade agreement, two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they also ease norms to promote trade in services and boost investments.

During the first term of President Donald Trump, India and the US had discussed a mini-trade deal, but was shelved by the Joe Biden administration as they were not in favour of a free trade agreement.

The leaders also welcomed

The leaders also welcomed early steps to demonstrate mutual commitment to address bilateral trade barriers. In 2023, the US and India bilateral trade in goods and services stood at USD 190.08 billion (USD 123.89 goods and USD 66.19 services trade) and USD 66.19 services trade). In that year, India's merchandise exports to the US stood at USD 83.77 billion, while imports were USD 40.12 billion, leaving a trade gap of USD 43.65 billion in favour of

PARIS AI SUMMIT

India played pivotal role: . Vaishnaw



PNS NEW DELHI

India played a pivotal role in shaping leaders' statement in the AI Action Summit in Paris which was co-chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has said in a social media post.

Vaishnaw said the Prime Minister, as co-chair and voice of the Global South, articulated India's comprehensive approach to artificial intelligence. "India's strategic advantages - a robust IT ecosystem, vast talent pool, and culture of innovation - position us uniquely in the global AI landscape. Our nation played a pivotal role in shaping the summit's leaders statement," Vaishnaw said in a LinkedIn post on Thursday.

He said the leaders' statement emphasised key themes, including greater access to AI infrastructure to ensure inclusion, responsible use of AI, AI for public interest, making AI more diverse and sustainable and ensuring safe and trusted governance of AI. The minister said that in the process of building infrastructure for AI, India is enabling access to more than 18,000 GPUs at a subsidised cost to Indian startups and academia. PM's vision is centered on "AI for Good", Vaishnaw said adding that he emphasised on critical need for collaborative global governance frameworks while ensuring universal AI access.

Trump's tariffs and India: An explainer

PNS NEW DELHI

US President Donald Trump has asserted that Washington will not spare India from reciprocal tariffs.

The President has set in motion his plan to impose reciprocal tariffs on imports, which is expected to further deepen the global trade war.

During 2021-24, the US was the largest trading partner of India.

During April-November 2024-25, the bilateral trade in goods between the two countries stood at USD 82.52 billion (USD 52.89 billion exports, USD 29.63 imports). The trade gap was USD 23.26 billion which is in the favour of India.

The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade.

Trump has announced a 25 per cent duty on all steel and aluminium imports. It will come into effect from March

Moody's Ratings have stated that Indian steel producers will face increased challenges in exporting their products following the US decision to impose the 25 per cent tariff.

What are tariffs?

In international trade parlance, tariffs or customs duties or taxes are imposed on the import of goods. The importer has to pay this duty to the government. Normally, companies pass on these taxes to end users.

For example, if a company is importing a product 'X', having 10 per cent customs duty, valued at Rs 100 from other country, the cost of the product will go up to Rs 110. These duties, which are

indirect taxes, are a source of revenue for a country.

duty, Anti-dumping guard duty are also kinds of

What are reciprocal and retal-

iatory tariffs? Normally, both can be used synonymously. They are imposed by countries to match hike in duties or high tariffs by trading partners. For example when in 2018, the US imposed higher duties on certain steel and aluminium products, India retaliated by raising tariffs on 29 US products, recovering equivalent Why countries impose tariffs? These tariffs are imposed

to make imported goods expensive and in turn, promote domestic manufacturing and job creation.

It also protects domestic players from cheaper imports.

What are the negative impacts of tariffs?

Higher import duties are inflationary in nature and make inputs expensive for the domestic industry. For example, if an auto company needs some component, which is not produced in the country, it will have to pay a higher price for its import because of

This will make the product expensive for domestic users.

Why Trump is talking about

imposing reciprocal tariffs? The US is facing huge trade imbalances with countries, especially with China. With India, the US has a trade deficit of USD 35.31 billion in goods in 2023-24. To bridge this gap, the US President is imposing these duties. imposing these duties.

Is there any substance in Trump's allegations that India is a 'tariff king' or 'tariff abuser'?

According to the economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), these are unfair and the US itself imposes high duties on several goods to safeguard its domestic markets.

Citing data from the World Trade Örganisation's World Tariff Profiles 2023, GTRI has highlighted the significant tariffs the US places on products such as dairy (188 per cent), fruits and vegetables (132 per cent), cereals and food preparations (193 per cent), oilseeds, fats, and oils (164 per cent), and beverages and tobacco (150 per cent).

Other goods, including coffee, tea, cocoa, and spices, while fish products and chemicals are taxed at 35 per cent and 56 per cent, respec-

India's average duty rate stands at 17 per cent, which is higher than the US's average rate of 3.3 per cent.

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava has noted that some countries, including the US, Japan, and South Korea, impose steep tariffs on certain goods, with rates as high as 350 per cent, 457 per cent, and 887 per cent, respectively.

Forex kitty jumps to USD 638.261 bn

PNS MUMBAI

India's forex reserves jumped by USD 7.654 billion to USD 638.261 billion in the week ended February 7, the RBI said

This is the third consecutive which had increased by USD 1.05 billion to USD 630.607 billion for the week ended January 31. The reserves had been on a declining trend recently due to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion at end-September 2024.

For the week ended February 7, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 6.422 billion to USD 544.106 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

PNS NEW DELHI

Gold prices soared by Rs 1,300

to hit an all-time high of Rs

89,400 per 10 grams amid

Sarafa

heavy buying from jew-

ellers and retailers,

according to the All

The precious metal of 99.9 per

cent purity had

closed at Rs 88,100

per 10 grams on Thursday.

Association.

BEARS TIGHTEN GRIP ON D-STREET

Investors suffer wealth erosion of Rs 25.31 lakh cr in 8 days

PNS NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded sharply by Rs 25.31 lakh crore in eight BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled over 3 per cent amid concerns over unabated foreign fund outflows, lower-than-expected quarterly earnings and uncertainty over global trade war.

In eight trading days, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,644.6 points or 3.36 per cent, and the NSE Nifty slumped 810 points or 3.41 per cent.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE bellwether gauge dropped 199.76 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 75,939.21, registering its eighth day of decline.

Tracking an extremely weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms dropped by Rs 25,31,579.11 crore to Rs 4,00,19,247 crore (USD 4.61 trillion) in eight

days.
"The gloomy mood contin-

Gold of 99.5 per

cent purity climbed

by Rs 1,300 to hit

a fresh peak of Rs

89,000 per 10

grams against the

previous close of

Rs 87,700 per 10

grams. Silver also rallied by



lingering foreign fund outflows," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, US President Donald Trump

has asserted that Washington will not spare India from reciprocal tariffs. The President has set in

motion his plan to impose reciprocal tariffs on imports, which is expected to further deepen the global trade war. Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP

- Research & Advisory, Master Capital Services, said, "Investor sentiment took a hit after Trump reiterated his stance on imposing reciprocal tariffs on trade partners, which includes India too, reigniting fears of a potential trade war.

Gold zooms past record Rs 89k-mark

Rs 2,000 to hit a four-month

high of Rs 1 lakh per kg on

Friday. The metal had fin-

ished at Rs 98,000 per kg on

MCX, gold contracts for April

delivery rose Rs 184 to Rs

85,993 per 10 grams.

In futures trade on the

"Gold prices continued their

Silver rallies Rs 2,000 to 4-month high

Thursday.

20 NBFCs surrender registration certificates to RBI

PNS MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Friday said 20 non-banking financial companies, including Reliance Commercial Finance and IDFC Limited, tificate of registration (CoR). Of these, two non-banking

financial companies (NBFCs) have surrendered their CoR as they have exited from the non-banking financial institution business. These NBFCs are Manoway Investments Private Limited and Reliance Commercial Finance Limited. IDFC Ltd, IDFC Financial

other 16 entities surrendered the CoR as it ceased to be a legal entity due to amalgamation or merger. Besides, the RBI cancelled

Holding Company Ltd and

the CoR of 17 NBFCs, the central banks said in another statement.

These NBFCs whose licences were cancelled had their registered office in West

upward momentum, driven

by a weaker dollar index and

sustained support from US tariff policies. Gold rose on MCX, while Comex gold

gained to trade at USD 2,935

per ounce," Jateen Trivedi, VP

Commodity and Currency at

Research

LKP Securities.

Analyst

'K'taka gets Rs 10.26 lakh cr in investment proposals



PNS BENGALURU

Karnataka Medium and Large Industries Minister M B Patil on Friday said the state received investment proposals worth Rs 10,26 lakh crore at the Global Investors' Meet, which will create six lakh jobs.

Addressing reporters after the valedictory session of the Invest Karnataka-2025 summit, Patil said 75 per cent of the investments would be made outside Bengaluru.

"We have received investment proposals of Rs 10,27,378 crore, which will create six lakh jobs. Of this, 75 per cent pertains to 'Beyond Bengaluru.' I am happy to share that 45 per cent of these investments will be made in North Karnataka," Patil said.

The minister said he and his department had been preparing for this event for the past

six months. As part of this effort, he toured various countries to attract investors to Karnataka. Roadshows were also conducted across India,

According to Patil, the highest investments came in the renewable energy sector, with proposals worth Rs 4.26 lakh crore. He said the manufacturing and sunrise sectors, such as aerospace, defence, automobiles, electric vehicles, Electronic System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) and Research and Development (R&D) would receive Rs 1.38 lakh crore in investments.

General manufacturing, including food and agriculture, textiles, pharmaceuticals, machinery tools and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) is set to receive investments worth Rs 1.05 lakh crore.

unveils India's first dedicated GCC policy

PNS BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh has become the first state in the country to bring a dedicated Global Capability Centre (GCC) policy that looks to position the state as a leading hub for global innovation and collabora-

The Madhya Pradesh GCC Policy 2025 combines incentives for capital expenditure, payroll, upskilling, and research

and development with a desig-

nated nodal agency responsible for its implementation, according to a state government note.

The policy targets sectors such as IT, finance, engineering, human resources, and emerging technologies, with a particular emphasis on artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber-

This groundbreaking policy is India's first dedicated framework for fostering GCC growth in tier-2 cities, signalling a strategic shift towards decentralizing business hubs beyond traditional metro cities.

The policy is aimed at attracting over 50 GCCs and generate more than 37,000 direct jobs, thereby establishing Madhya Pradesh as a centre of excellence for IT/ITeS, advanced analytics, R&D and digital transformation.

By facilitating foreign investments and encouraging infrastructure development, the state aims to create a solid ecosystem that caters to multiple industries, including automotive, pharmaceuticals, logistics, textiles, aerospace and emerging technologies like AI and cybersecurity, the note said.

The policy was unveiled ahead of Madhya Pradesh's binennial Global Investors' Summit in Bhopal on February 24-25 that aims to attract investment and showcase the state's economic potential. The summit aims to highlight Madhya Pradesh's investment climate and industrial infra-



opportunities for potential collaborations. Madhya Pradesh presents a

compelling value proposition for GCCs, offering a combina-tion of strategic incentives, skilled talent, and infrastructure readiness. The rapidly growing IT/ITeS ecosystem shows that the state's IT sector has seen exports triple in the last three years, boasting an annual growth rate of 43 per

what's brewing?

HARSHVARDHAN RANE BRINGS NEW 'POWER OF A LOVE WITH DEEWANI ollywood actor Harshvardhan Rane will be seen in the romantic film powerful and heartbreaking love stories he has written along with

Deewaniyat, which director Milap Milan Zaveri says is one of the most

The filmmaker said: *Deewaniyat* is one of the most powerful and heartbreaking love stories I've written along with Mushtaq Shiekh. It has the

Helmed by Zaveri and co-written by Mushtaq Shiekh, Deewaniyat promises to bring an epic tale of passion and heartbreak to the big screen. Harshvardhan, whose re-release of the film Sanam Teri Kasam created a tizzy once again, said that he is grateful to the audience for the overwhelming love they have given him for the movie.

"The power of a love story is eternal and when I heard the madness, passion and craziness of the role and script of *Deewaniyat*, I immediately chose it to be my next film. Excited to be collaborating with my director Milap Milan Zaveri and also with producers Amul V Mohan, Anshul Mohan and the cowriter of this powerful script, Mushtaq Shiekh."

Produced by Amul V. Mohan and Anshul Mohan under their banner Vikir Films, *Deewaniyat* is set to go on floors this year, with a theatrical release slated for later in 2025. The leading lady will be announced soon.

'Playing J.P. Singh allowed me to explore world where power is defined by intellect, resilience'

he trailer for *The Diplomat* has been released and it features John Abraham in a compelling new role as real-life Indian diplomat J.P. Singh.

In this highly anticipated film, John portrays the intricacies and challenges of a diplomatic career with authenticity and intensity. The intriguing trailer offers a first look into the world of international diplomacy, highlighting the high-stakes situations and personal dynamics that shape the life of a diplomat. Released on the birth anniversary of the late Sushma Swaraj, the trailer serves as a tribute to her crucial role in 2017, when she supported Indian diplomat J.P. Singh in the mission to bring India's daughter back home.

Speaking about the film, John shared, "Diplomacy is a battlefield where words carry more weight than weapons. Playing J.P. Singh allowed me to explore a world where power is defined by intellect, resilience, and quiet heroism. Uzma's story is a testament to India's strength and courage and I'm proud to bring this



inspiring journey to life on screen." The upcoming action thriller also stars Sadia Khateeb, Sharib Hashmi, Revathy and Kumud Mishra. The Diplomat marks a new direction for Abraham, as he takes on a role that is deeply rooted in strategy, intellect, and negotiation. This portrayal presents a strong-willed and dynamic

character, offering a fresh and com-

pelling side of Abraham that audiences have never seen before.

The film is produced by Bhushan Kumar & Krishan Kumar (T-Series). John Abraham (JA Entertainment), Vipul D. Shah, Ashwin Varde, Rajesh Bahl (Wakaoo Films) and Sameer Dixit, Jatish Varma, Rakesh Dang.

The Diplomat is set to release on

'I was so charged to do Gully Boy that I took everything head-on'



ijay Varma has cemented his place as one of the most compelling actors of his generation. From intense crime dramas to psychological thrillers, he has consistently delivered gripping performances that leave a lasting impact. With standout roles in Dahaad, Kalkoot, Lust Stories 2, Jaane Jaan, Mirzapur and the upcoming *IC814*, he continues to showcase his versatility and depth as a performer.

However, a defining moment in his career came with Zoya Akhtar's *Gully Boy* (2019), where he played the layered and intriguing Moeen Arif. The film not only expanded his reach as an actor but also reinforced his ability to shine in an ensemble cast alongside Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt.

Looking back on the challenges of portraying Moeen, Vijay once shared: "I was so charged to do this film that I took everything head-on. I was flowing through the course of this film. The challenge was ensuring Moeen's character arc remained intact, even though he appears intermittently throughout the screen-play. His journey unfolds in layers—what seems like a superficial presence at first gradually reveals deeper complexities. It was a process of constant discovery. While my preparation was mostly mental, the hair and makeup team worked extensively to perfect Moeen's look. He couldn't just appear as a mechanic; he had to embody the many facets of his character."

Now, six years after *Gully Boy*, Vijay Varma continues to push artistic boundaries. His upcoming projects, including *Matka King* and *Ul Jalool Ishq*, are among the most anticipated releases of 2025. With his knack for selecting compelling narratives and delivering powerhouse performances, he is poised to make an even greater impact in the years ahead.

'The women I work with have played a significant role in my growth as an artist'

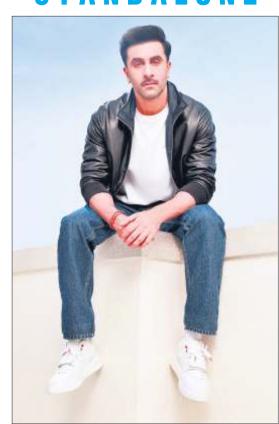
he much-anticipated first look of *Delhi Crime 3* has been released and actor Rasika Dugal is thrilled to be reprising her role as police officer Neeti Singh. The critically acclaimed crime drama, which has captivated audiences with its gripping storytelling, now introduces another powerful addition to its ensemble cast—Huma Qureshi joins the series as the antagonist, adding to the excitement for the upcoming season.

Expressing her enthusiasm for returning to the show, Rasika shares her admiration for her co-stars, particularly Shefali Shah, who has been an integral part of *Delhi Crime* since its inception. "I'm always amazed by Shefali because she's such a phenomenal actor and a warm, nurturing presence. She juggles multiple responsibilities effortlessly, and despite all that, she remains so much

fun to be around. Going back to set with her is always a joy." Reflecting on her experiences of working alongside talented women in the industry, Rasika emphasizes the value of collaboration in shaping strong performances. "I've had the privilege of working with incredible coactors and directors—Mira Nair, Nandita Das, Shefali Shah, Tisca Chopra and the brilliant women of Mirzapur. They are all immensely talented, and working with

them has always been an enriching experience. A great performance isn't created in isolation; it thrives on connection and creative synergy. The women I work with have played a significant role in my growth as an artist, and these relationships are deeply special to me.

With Delhi Crime 3 promising another intense and compelling season, Rasika Dugal's return, alongside Shefali Shah and the addition of Huma Qureshi, sets the stage for an exciting new chapter in the acclaimed series.



Ranbir Kapoor's entrepreneurial venture 'ARKS' was launched on Friday, a product line of premium essentials with a curated wardrobe that is modern, minimalist, timeless and elevated. A lifestyle brand that mirrors Ranbir's ethos and aesthetic in this code of quiet confidence, ARKS' launch collection represents a seamless blend of functionality, style and substance with a carefully assorted line of apparels, accessories and sneakers for men and women.

ARCHIE





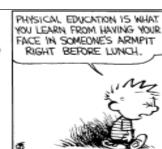


CALVIN AND HOBBES









GARFIELD



WORRIES OF VALENTINE'S DAY FOR GROWN-UPS

I HATE THIS FIRST VALENTINE'S DAY WITH PHIL / WHAT





WORRIES OF VALENTINE'S DAY FOR CHILDREN



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP





GINGER MEGGS

PINNER?

CANDY CARD

WHAT DO I DO?

BUT- I WANT HER TO



50





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7	6	•	 Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once. 								
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all numbers in

- ACROSS 1 A fight using words
- 6 Rip 7 A root vegetable
- 9 Group of eight
- 11 Not ever
- 12 A fruit with pips 13 A hot drink
- 16 Extreme fear

18 Grow weary

19 A large animal

DOWN

- 1 Someone in a spaceship 2 A huge person
- 3 Chews up and swallows
- 4 An underwater missile for attacking a ship



5 Glide over snow

14 A large country in Asia

8 Not temporary

15 Costing nothing

17 A large bird

10 Make bigger

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Saturday February 15, 2025

Vicky Kaushal shines in *Chhaava*, but the story deserves a deeper dive

TEJAL SINHA

tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Plot

hhaava, directed by Laxman Utekar, is a historical action drama that chronicles the tumultuous reign of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of the legendary Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Set between 1680 and 1689, the film follows between 1680 and 1689, the film follows Sambhaji (Vicky Kaushal) as he takes charge of the Maratha empire after his father's passing. His daring raid on Burhanpur, where he loots the Mughal treasury, sets the stage for an intense con-flict with Emperor Aurangzeb (Akshaye Khanna). However, beyond the battle-field. Sambhaji faces internal betrayal field, Sambhaji faces internal betrayal, particularly from his stepmother Soyarabai (Divya Dutta), who schemes to remove him from power. The film navigates his unyielding resistance against Mughal expansion, his bond with his loyal friend and poet Kavi Kalash (Vinee Kumar Singh), and his unwavering defi-ance in the face of brutal captivity and execution.

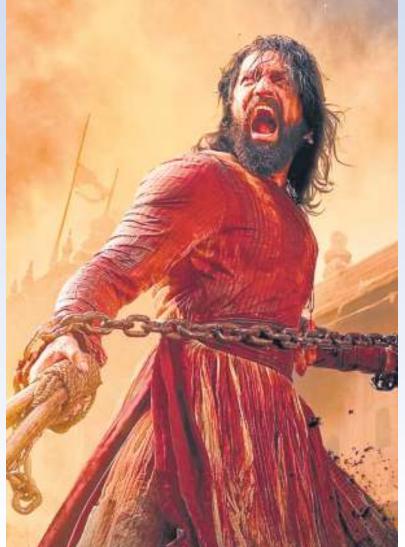
While *Chhaava* delivers thrilling battle sequences and high-stakes drama, it focuses primarily on Sambhaji's military prowess, often sidelining other crucial aspects of his life. The film briefly touches upon his intellect—his fluency in multiple languages and his poetic abilities—but these elements are not explored in depth. Utekar's direction excels in crafting a gripping war narrative, yet it does not delve into the internal conflicts within the Maratha empire or the political chess

game that defined Sambhaji's rule. The father-son dynamic between Shivaji and Sambhaji, which could have added emotional depth, is largely absent. The screenplay prioritises action over character development, making the film an exhilarating but somewhat one-dimensional historical account.

Highlights

One of the film's standout moments is One of the film's standout moments is the depiction of Sambhaji and Kavi Kalash's friendship. A particularly poignant scene features them engaging in a poetry duel while imprisoned, a reminder of their shared intellectual bond despite their impending fate. The film also does justice to Sambhaji's final stand, showcasing his steadfast refusal to submit to Aurangzeb, which remains one submit to Aurangzeb, which remains one of the most powerful moments in history. The battle choreography is another highlight, with meticulously designed fight sequences that effectively capture the chaos and intensity of war.

Despite its visual grandeur, Chhaava struggles with a few narrative shortcomings. The political intrigue within the Maratha empire, particularly the role of Soyarabai and other internal factions, is not explored in sufficient detail. The screenplay misses an opportunity to showcase the strategic mind of Sambhaji beyond his battlefield heroics. Rashmika Mandanna's character, Yesubai, is given limited space to shine and her dialogue delivery feels disconnected, possibly due to dubbing issues. Akshaye Khanna's portrayal of Aurangzeb, while menacing, occasionally dips into exaggerated villainy, particularly with his repetitive execution of messengers, which borders on cution of messengers, which borders on unintentional comedy. Additionally, the



curate exclusive handcrafted pieces.

We also refine traditional motifs, tex-

tures and patterns to suit individual preferences and needs, guaranteeing

a seamless fusion of classic artistry and contemporary luxury."

Finding the ideal balance between

is crucial, even though trends come

and go frequently, lasting only a few

months. So her design strategy is based on an 80-20 approach, with 80% of her collection devoted to timeless, enduring pieces and 20% incorporating current trends through accessories like cushions, throws

and other decor elements. She places

a strong emphasis on timeless silhou-

ettes and neutral colours. This guar-

antees that her areas will always be

effortlessly fashionable while making

interview by saying, "I am thankful that I have increased my global pres-

ence while maintaining a keen awareness of the various cultures and

customs that influence my designs!

She added more context to this

room for new, seasonal additions!

gance and modern designs

Performances

Vicky Kaushal dominates the screen with a powerful performance, embodying the grit and intensity of Sambhaji Maharaj. His physical transformation, coupled with his commanding presence, makes him a convincing warrior king. However, while his action sequences are riveting, the film does not offer enough moments to explore Sambhaji's more nuanced qualities. Rashmika Mandanna portrays Yesubai with grace, but her role is largely relegated to the sidelines. Vineet Kumar Singh shines as Kavi Kalash, bringing warmth and depth to his portrayal of the poet-warrior. Akshaye Khanna, under heavy prosthetics, delivers a calculated performance as Aurangzeb, though his character's overthe-top cruelty at times undermines his Vicky Kaushal dominates the screen the-top cruelty at times undermines his menace. Ashutosh Rana, as Hambirao Mohite, delivers a solid performance, while Divya Dutta, as the scheming Soyarabai, is underutilised.

Technical Aspects

The film's production values are topnotch, with grand set designs and elab-orate battle sequences that effectively recreate the era. Saurabh Goswami's cinematography captures the sweeping landscapes and the gritty battlefield clashes with precision. The editing by Manish Pradhan ensures the second half maintains a gripping pace, though the first half could have been tighter. AR Rahman's background score adds grav-itas to the film, but the inclusion of electric guitar elements in crucial sequences feels jarring and out of place for a his-torical drama. A more traditional

film's pacing dips in the first half, slowing down the momentum before picking up in the latter portion.

Indian orchestration would have been more fitting. The costume and production design successfully transport the audience to the late 17th century, lending authenticity to the film's visual storytelling.

Chhaava is an engaging historical action film that thrives on its battle sequences and Vicky Kaushal's comsequences and Vicky Kaushal's commanding performance. However, it falls short of being a comprehensive biopic, as it largely focuses on Sambhaji's military campaigns while overlooking the deeper complexities of his reign and personality. While the film is a treat for action lovers and history enthusiasts, those expecting a more layered exploration of Sambhaji's legacy might find it lacking. Nevertheless, as a cinematic tribute to one of India's a cinematic tribute to one of India's bravest warrior kings, *Chhaava* is a compelling watch, even if it leaves some aspects of his story untold.

DIRECTED BY: Laxman Utekar

PRODUCED BY: Dinesh Vijan

CAST: Vicky Kaushal, Rashmika Mandanna, Akshaye Khanna, Ashutosh Rana, Divya Dutta, Vineet Kumar Singh, Diana Penty and more

MUSIC BY: A. R. Rahman **RATING:** 3.5/5

DESIGNING WITH SOUL



PNS|HYDERABAD

orm and function blend together like delicate vine shoots in Ambereen Gupta's symphony of spaces, creating an incredibly beautiful universe. Her store, CASA AMBER, is a creative canvas where each brushstroke, colour and texture conveys a story of talent, passion and an unshakable commitment to creating environments that speak to the soul and transcend the ordinary. She has spun a tapestry of brilliance throughout the course of her more than 20year career, establishing herself as a visionary interior designer who captures the spirit of her customers' ambitions and transforms them into ageless, exquisite and incredibly personal settings!

"My vision in curating this onestop experience center was rooted in 'exclusivity'—a value that has always been close to my heart when it comes to selecting what surrounds me," Ambereen explains in an exclusive interview with us, describing how she is motivated by an unwavering passion for innovative design! "During my time styling and creating houses, I frequently heard complaints about how difficult it was to find the ideal carpeting, coordinate sofas, or find décor in the appropriate propor-tions. I wanted to eliminate the headache of having to look for these components one at a time, which they found difficult. My goal with this area was to create a place where peo-

ple could acquire everything they needed for their homes in one place, with the added benefit of being able to customise it to their unique preferences."

For her, a home is more than just a physical building; it's a dynamic, living thing that reflects the soul, feeds the spirit and creates important connections. She is renowned for her skillful fusion of aesthetics, utility and emotional intelligence! She puts her entire being into making rooms that are classic, elegant and incredibly intimate with each project. "I am trying to reinvent luxury for the contemporary day, fusing sustainability with style. I accept this progress while maintaining my distinctive elegance as the world shifts toward conscious living! My strategy supports Indian craftsmen and craftsmanship by incorporating locally sourced and environmentally safe materials. To ensure lifetime and save waste, I place a high priority on quality, robustness and classic design. Luxury is not only beautiful but also significant because each item is carefully crafted to reflect the distinct preferences, lifestyles and values."

From conception to completion, she has gained critical praise in the design community thanks to her painstaking attention to detail, unshakable dedication to perfection and sincere passion for design. The founder continues, "It is situated at the nexus of modern elegance and legacy in this dynamic setting. Despite extraordinary talent for creating intricate and varied designs, I have

always thought Indian artists are underappreciated. I like to embrace international aesthetics while honouring this expertise. Because we are rooted in India's rich cultural heritage, we integrate international influences—from Scandinavian minimalism to Mediterranean warmth—and

Every project is designed with the local climate, architecture and way of life in mind, guaranteeing a smooth fusion of style and use. Transforming visions into reality requires open communication. In order to add authenticity to each place and create settings that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also deeply entrenched in local culture and con-



work with international artisans to sans, suppliers and designers."

Despite being unconventional in comparison to her job in design, her teaching experience has been crucial in forming her design philosophy! She thinks that areas should be memorable, loving and supporting, regardless of how opulent, minimalist, or very practical they are. Beyond aesthetics, her goal is to design spaces that arouse feelings, stimulate the imagination and help people form deep connections with one another. Designing involves more than just form and function; it also involves creating environments that have a deeper emotional impact on people. Her mother's love of nature and her grandmother's passion for bright colours also have a big impact on her design philosophy! She was enthralled as a child by her grandmother's ability to use fabrics and flowers to evoke feelings while transforming her house into a kaleidoscope of hues and textures. She was inspired by them and used natural components, organic textures and vibrant colours to create environments that are not only eye-catching but also profoundly meaningful and personal.

Furthermore, "The foundation of it is the idea that 'home is where the heart is.' Every house has a story to tell and it is my responsibility to help clients make theirs come to life. I adopt a deliberate strategy, striking a balance between their own vision and my creative know-how. I investigate their values, way of life and goals through in-depth discussions to make sure that every design decision captures their spirit. I create houses that are not just aesthetically beautiful but also profoundly personal—homes that have meaning and tell a story that is all their own—by collaborating closely all along the way."

Although there are always high standards in interior design, she doesn't think perfection is the goal! Rather, she concentrates on designing environments that are visually appealing, imaginative and genuinely significant for the people occupying them. She has experienced periods of self-doubt and creativity block like any other designer. She takes a step back during those moments, looks to art, nature and other cultures for inspiration, and reminds herself that great design is about feeling and experiencing rather than just doing it perfectly. She overcame obstacles by remaining receptive to fresh concepts and having faith in the design process. Here she is, years later, demonstrating that every adventure is a teaching moment. She has developed and grown with every step and she is still thankful for the opportunity to create homes across the world.

Al & infrastructure; the drive force behind industry growth

Year-on-Year (YoY) increase is a key financial over a 12-month period, measuring the percentage change in revenue, profit, or other financial rentage change in revenue, profit, or other financial indicators against the same period in the previous year. A high YoY growth rate often signifies strong business performance, driven by higher sales, improved operational efficiency, or successful expansion strategies. Unlike quarter-on-quarter (QoQ) comparisons, YoY analysis eliminates seasonal fluctuations, offering a clearer view of long-term growth trends. Companies and investors closely track YoY changes to evaluate financial health, market trends, and future growth potential.

Reflecting this strong performance, Ceinsys Tech Ltd reported a 79% YoY increase in consolidated rev-

enue for Q3 of FY25, reaching Rs1,118 million.
The company's Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization (EBITDA) saw an impressive 102% YoY growth, rising to ?214 million, with an EBITDA margin of 19.14%. Meanwhile, Profit After Tax (PAT) grew 71% YoY, reaching Rs 178 million, highlighting enhanced profitability and sustained business momentum.

For the nine-month period ending December 31, 2024, they reported a total revenue of Rs 2,757 million, reflecting a 58% YoY increase. EBITDA for the period stood at Rs 513 million (+62% YoY), while PAT surged by 77% to Rs 414 million, underscoring the company's ability to scale operations while maintaining profitability.

As of December 31, 2024, their order book stood at an impressive ?13,900 million, reflecting its diverse portfolio across geospatial, engineering services (53%), and technology solutions (47%).

Key contract wins include: River Linking Project,

Maharashtra - Rs 3,811.8 million, IoT-based Water & Sanitation Project, Maharashtra - Rs 3,316 million, GIS Enterprise Implementation for CIDCO - Rs 291.9 million and Digital Transformation for MHADA -Rs 277.6 million. They also enhanced its financial agility, significantly reducing its working capital cycle from 237 days in March 2023 to 124 days in December 2024. In addition, Rs 2,350 million was raised in Q2-FY25 through equity issuance and share warrants, providing a strong foundation for future expansion and innovation.

In a strategic move to align with its evolving business model, Ceinsys Tech Ltd officially rebranded as CS TECH AI on January 1, 2025. This transformation reflects the company's growing emphasis on Aldriven solutions and digital advancements.

The new brand identity, supported by the tagline 'Enhancing Possibilities,' underscores CS TECH Al's commitment to leveraging cutting-edge technology across industries. With a strong financial trajectory and a robust project pipeline, the company is poised for continued success in AI-led digital trans-

formation and engineering solutions.

As companies adapt to changing market demands, maintaining financial discipline and delivering on large-scale projects will remain critical challenges. The coming years will test how well businesses can sustain growth amid evolving technological and economic landscapes.

ICC announces prize money for Champions Trophy Injury rules out Ben Sears

PTI DUBAI

∧7inners Un p c o m i n g
Champions Trophy
(CT) will walk away with a
whopping \$2.24 Million cash
reward after the International
Cricket Council (ICC) announced a 53 per cent hike in its prize money pool for the eight-team tournament starting February 19.

The winners' purse would be close to 20 crore in Indian currency. The runners-up will receive half the amount, \$1.12 Million (INR 9.72 Crore), while each losing semi-finalist will take home \$ 560,000 (INR 4.86 Crore). The total prize pool has increased to \$6.9 Million

increased to \$6.9 Million (₹60 Crore approx).

"The substantial prize pot underscores the ICC's ongoing commitment to investing in the sport and maintaining the global prestige of our events," ICC chairman Jay Shah said in a statement ahead of the tournament which will be tournament which will be held in Pakistan and the

Each group stage win would



be worth over \$34,000 (INR 30 Lakh) for the victorious

Teams finishing in fifth or sixth place will receive \$350,000 each (INR three Crore), while the seventh and eighth-placed sides will take home \$140,000 (INR 1.2

Crore).

Additionally, all eight teams will receive a guaranteed \$125,000 each (INR 1.08 Crore) for participating in the

This tournament marks the first time Pakistan will host an ICC event since 1996.

Lahore and Rawalpindi. The 2025 edition features The 2025 edition features eight teams split into two groups of four, with the top two from each group advancing to the semi-finals. "The ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 represents a pivotal moment for cricket, requiring a tournement that pivotal moment for cricket, reviving a tournament that highlights the pinnacle of ODI talent, where every match is critical," the ICC chairman emphasised in his statement.

"Beyond the financial incentive, this tournament incentive, this tournament ignites fierce competition, captivates fans worldwide, and plays a vital role in fostering the growth and long-term sustainability of cricket for future generations," Shah added. The men's Champions Trophy was held every four years from 2009 to 2017 before a COVID disruption and deliberations on its

and deliberations on its relevance led to it being postponed. The tournament was first introduced as a biennial event in 1998. The women's Champions Trophy will make its debut in 2027 in the T20 format.

from Champions Trophy

PTI CHRISTCHURCH

Pacer Ben Sears has been ruled out of the Champions Trophy (CT) due to a hamstring injury, a significant setback for New Zealand ahead of the ICC event which kicks off on February 19. New Zealand Cricket (NZC)

has named Jacob Duffy as Sears' replacement.

"Sears felt some pain in his left hamstring at the team's first training in Karachi on Wednesday and a subsequent scan revealed a minor tear that would require at least two weeks' rehabilitation," NZC said in a statement.

'The rehabilitation timeframe means that Sears would likely be available for only the team's final Group A match against India in Dubai, and so the decision was made to rule him out." Sears' absence has paved the way for Duffy, who is currently with the squad for the ODI Tri-Series against Pakistan and South Africa.

"We're all really feeling for Ben. It's always tough being ruled



out of a major event at such a late stage, and it's especially tough in Ben's case given it would have been his first major

ICC event," said New Zealand head coach Gary Stead. The timeframes for Ben to be fit to play again meant he would likely miss the majority of the group stage, and given the short nature of the tournament, we felt it was appropriate to bring in a player who is fully fit and ready to go." "Ben is a player with huge potential and given the short rehabilitation timeframe, we're sure he'll be fit and raring to go for the home series against him."

Pakistan back Zealand?

On Duffy's inclusion, Stead said, "Jacob showed with his performances in the recent home series against Sri Lanka that he is more than capable at international level.

"He's been part of the squad for the ODI Tri-Series so he's fully acclimatised and he's got plenty of experience in these conditions and is fit and ready

to go. "He's another player who will be experiencing his first senior ICC event, so it will be an exciting few weeks ahead for



India lose to Japan 0-3 in quarterfinals of BAMTC

PTI ■ QINGDAO

H^S Prannoy fought valiantly, but India succumbed to a 0-3 defeat Prannoy against a second-string Japan in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships (BAMTC), ending their campaign on a disappointing note here on

medalists in Dubai, struggled to find their rhythm trailed 0-1 after going down in the mixed doubles.

Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, ranked 37th in the world, showed resilience before going down 13-21, 21-17, 13-21 to world number 12 Hiroki Midorikawa and Natsu

With PV Sindhu sidelined due to a hamstring injury, India faced an uphill task against Tomoka Miyazaki, who has quickly risen to world number 8 following her triumph at the 2022 World Junior

Championships.
World number 31 Malvika Bansod, stepping in for Sindhu, put up a brave fight, especially in the second game, but struggled to match the control and consistency of her younger opponent and lost 12-21, 19-21, leaving India 0-2 behind.

It all came down to Prannoy to keep India alive, but despite a determined effort, the 32year-old, returning after a long

break and struggling with early-season form, couldn't fought sustain the pressure against India world number 16 Kenta

Nishimoto. The Japanese star sealed the rubber with a 21-14, 15-21, 21-12 victory in 1 hour and 17 minutes.

India will be disappointed with the loss, especially as Japan did not field their full-India, the 2023 bronze strength team, with several top players absent.

> man were the edition champions in 2017 and were runners-up in 2019. Miyazaki vs Malvika

> Miyazaki, leading the newlook Japanese team, was sharp and precise, quickly surging to

> an 11-3 lead after Malvika hit long. Despite some good net play from the left-handed Indian,

> Mivazaki's cross-court drops and winners kept Malvika on the back foot. Malvika narrowed the gap to

> capitalising on errors from 12-19, unforced Miyazaki.

However, two mistakes from the Indian allowed the Japanese to take the first game. The second game was more competitive as Malvika took a 5-3 lead, engaging in tight rallies. She managed a slim 11-10 advantage after Miyazaki went long. Malvika stayed sharp, not

allowing her opponent to play her usual drops freely, moving

Playing 10 months a year will lead to more injuries: Kapil Dev

However, India will play all

their matches in Dubai owing

to security concerns related to travelling to Pakistan. Rohit Sharma's men will

begin their campaign on February 20 against Bangladesh. The Pakistan leg will feature games in Karachi,

World Cup-winning Captain Kapil Dev on Friday expressed concern over the rising number of injuries among Indian cricketers, attributing it to the demanding schedule that keeps players in action for demanding schedule that keeps players in action for almost 10 months each year. The National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru has turned into a rehabilitation hub, with players spending more time recovering than training

training.
The latest casualty being India
pace spearhead Jasprit out of the second innings of the final Test in Sydney due to a back injury. Initially named in the Champions Trophy (CT) squad, Bumrah has now been

ruled out.

Mohammed Shami, India's top wicket-taker in the 2023 ODI World Cup (24 wickets), suffered a leg injury post-final and underwent surgery. His 14-month recovery



him out of the BGT series, which India lost for the first time in a decade. Shami's absence left Bumrah without players. Why talk about someone

a reliable bowling partner.
"The only thing that worries me is that they play for 10 months a year -- injuries will be much more common," the 1983 World Cup-winning skipper said at the Tata Steel Golf prize distribution ceremony here.

Asked whether Bumrah would be missed in CT, Kapil urged players to focus on

supporting each other rather than dwelling on injured

who is not in the team? It's a team game, and the team has to win, not individuals. This is not badminton, tennis, or golf; we are playing a team sport in the Champions Trophy. If we play as a team, we will definitely win," said the 66-year-old. "You never want your main

players to get injured, but if it vou can't do

anything about it. Good luck to my Indian team -- go and

to my Indian team -- go and play well," he added.
India will begin their Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh in Dubai on February 20.
Kapil said he's excited to see

so much rising talents in the Indian cricket team these

"When you see the youngsters, their confidence is unbelievable. We didn't have this much confidence when we were young. Good lluck to them."

A known golf enthusiast and the current PGTI president, Kapil also made a playful

Kapil also made a playful pitch for the sport.

"Tell everyone to play golf. If they are not playing cricket, they should come and play golf. If they do, their performance will be better. There is a lot of fun in golf."

Emphasising on the importance of infrastructure for young golfers, he said: "If

for young golfers, he said: "If young players get the right facilities, they will improve. We are trying our best

The New Zealand great was responding to criticism that emerged during TV commentary for the third ODI, where Ravi Shastri and Kevin Pietersen suggested that, apart from Joe Root,

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England's head coach Brendon McCullum has

ball tour of India, calling such

claims "factually incorrect".

that India swept 3-0. "Firstly, it's factually incorrect, the whole statement that we don't train," McCullum told 'talkSPORT' after England's third ODI defeat here on Wednesday.

"We've trained plenty right throughout, and guys have come from a lot of cricket as well. I think it's an easy thing to have as a throwaway line that guys don't train enough when the results aren't right." While England had trained before the first match in Nagpur, they opted against formal sessions ahead of the second and third ODIs in Cuttack and Ahmedabad.

England suffered a 142-run defeat to India in their final ODI before the Champions Trophy slated in Pakistan and Dubai next week.

The ODI series loss came after a 1-4 drubbing by India in the T20I rubber. McCullum also pointed out

the injury setbacks to Jacob

Bethell (hamstring) and Jamie Smith (calf).

We trained plenty for

India tour: McCullum

"We've got a style and a method that we believe in. dismissed suggestions that his team did not prepare adequately during their white-We've got guys who are battling injuries and trying to make sure that we've got enough bodies out on the field, knowing that we've got a huge assignment coming up in a week or two.

"Ultimately it's factually incorrect what's been said and we'll stay true to what we believe in," he asserted. England's Test coach

England's players had not trained during the ODI series of the white-ball side before the India series, also stressed the importance of fostering a positive team environment despite recent setbacks.

"Ultimately, you're judged on results... From our point of view, we've got to strip away the fear of failure that results can bring," he said.

"Guys are fiercely determined and competitive... How do you allow an environment to provide the freedom and clarity of thought to go out there and allow your talent to come out?" he asked. England will be in UAE for a

short break before beginning their Champions Trophy campaign against Australia in Lahore on February 22. McCullum said the squadbuilding will continue over the next week as well.

"We'll give the guys a freshen-up in Abu Dhabi, make sure all the bodies are fit and ready to go, and have a full squad to pick from come that first game against Australia," he said.

We want to win every FIH Pro League match: Harmanpreet the national side. 'We have seen some good

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Indian men's hockey team Lcaptain Harmanpreet Singh on Friday said his team's target is to win every FIH Pro League match and finish on top of the league to earn a direct ticket to the 2026 World Cup. India will open their FIH Pro

League campaign against Spain on Saturday in Bhubaneswar. They will next play Spain again the next day, followed by matches against Germany on

February 16 and 19 in the opening leg of the India tour. "Our training is going well from Hockey India League, we have been preparing for months, have learnt a lot from HIL. We have been able to maintain our fitness as well," Harmanpreet said ahead of the



FIH Pro League opener. "We just wan to play good hockey, all players in good shape and the target is to win every game (in Pro League) looking at the World Cup," he added.

The 2026 men's hockey World Cup will be held from August

14 to 30 in Wavre, Belgium and Amstelveen, Netherlands. Harmanpreet, regarded as one of the best dragflickers in the world currently, praised HIL's top-scorer Jugraj Singh for his flicking abilities and said the rise of next generation of domestic players augur well for

domestic players in HIL. It was an opportunity for youngsters and they performed well," he "Jugraj was the top-scorer and he was brilliant. I am happy for him and it is beneficial for the

national team as well." Harmanpreet, however, was in

riarmanpreet, nowever, was in no mood to take Spain lightly. "Spain is a good team, we can't take them lightly. Our focus is to give our best and win the match," he said. India's chief coach Craig Fulton said the FIH Pro League is a "building phase" for the side.

"It's a building phase for us. We will look to try out things and see what best suits us. We will like to use our players' HIL experience and integrate their learning into the team," he said.

Mourinho's Fenerbahce beats Anderlecht 3-0 in Europa League playoff Mokio scored in the 71st Shamrock Rovers debut to

PTI ■ LONDON

Tosé Mourinho's Fenerbahce might have only just squeezed into the Europa League knockout playoff round but it is already on the brink of the round of 16. Fenerbahce dominated to beat Anderlecht 3-0 on Thursday and take a comprehensive lead to Belgium for the second leg next week. Two of Mourinho's former

clubs, Porto and Roma, drew 1-1 in Europe's second-tier competition. Fenerbahce only just reached the playoffs by placing 24th in the new 36standings format — the last qualification place, and on a tiebreaker of goal difference.

Anderlecht had finished 10th, only missing out on automatic progression to the last-16 by goal difference.

Fenerbahce took the lead in the 11th minute Thursday. Anderlecht failed to clear a

corner and the ball was put back to the area where Yusuf Akçiçek nodded it on for Dusan Tadic to head into the net.

Edin Dzeko doubled his team's advantage shortly before halftime following good work from Filip Kostic down the left flank. Dzeko's initial shot was blocked by Anderlecht defender Lucas Hey but the veteran forward fired home the rebound. Youssef En-Nesyri added a third with a powerful header in the 57th minute

several chances to extend its advantage. Notably, Yusuf Akçiçek's header was deflected onto the post — it would have been the 19-year-old's first career goal, after recording

and Fenerbahce missed

his first-ever assist in the first half. Dutch club AZ Alkmaar also has a healthy advantage to take into next week's second leg after it beat 10man Galatasaray 4-1. Dybala injured:

Key Roma forward Paulo Dybala limped off in the first half of the match in Portugal with a knee injury. Dybala had yelled out in agony when his knee felt the full force of Porto midfielder Alan Varela's boot in the 20th minute but the Argentina World Cup winner had played on for another 15 minutes before admitting defeat. Roma took the lead with practically the last kick of the first half, with defender Zeki Celik scoring his first goal for the club.
Porto leveled against the run of play in the 67th minute through Francisco Moura's deflected shot.



Roma midfielder Bryan Cristante was sent off five minutes later following a

second booking. Teenager scores for Ajax Ajax won 2-0 at Union

Saint-Gilloise, with 16-yearold Jorthy Mokio netting his side's second goal.

minute. A corner was cleared but only as far as the Belgium Under-21 international on the edge of the area and he volleyed it in for his first goal for the senior Ajax team. Mokio, aged 16 years and 350 days, became the

youngest player to score in a knockout stage match in the Europa League, UEFA said.

Christian Rasmussen had netted the opener in 59th. Elsewhere, Real Sociedad won 2-1 at Midtjylland and Ferencvaros beat Viktoria Plzen 1-0.

Romanian team FCSB came from behind to win 2-1 at PAOK and a stoppage-time penalty saw Twente beat Bodo/Glimt by the same scoreline.

Another youngest goalscorer record . Sixteen-year-old Michael Noonan netted on his

help the Irish team win 1-0 at 10-man Molde. That made Noonan, at 16 years, 197 days, the youngest-ever goalscorer in a European club competition, his team said. Noonan scored from close range in the 57th minute. He also forced a red card for Molde defender Valdemar Lund for a lastman foul, three minutes before halftime.

European knockout match by upsetting Panathinaikos The match was held in Helsinki as no stadium in Iceland met the

Víkingur Reykjavík

became the first-ever

Icelandic club to win a

requirements to host the game. Armandas Kucys scored twice but also missed a late

penalty as Celje drew 2-2 against 10-man APOEL.

Vijayawada | Saturday February 15, 2025

OH MY LAILA! — A LESSON IN HOW NOT TO MAKE A FILM

SURESH KAVIRAYANI

sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

ishwak Sen's latest film, Laila, released on Valentine's Day, marking his first film of the year. Known for his back-toback releases, Vishwak has been taking on diverse roles, and in Laila, he attempts something unconventional by playing a female char-acter. While legendary actors like Kamal Haasan, Rajendra Prasad and VK Naresh have successfully portrayed female roles in Telugu cinema before, *Laila* struggles to make an impact. Directed by Ram Narayan and featuring Akanksha Sharma as the female lead, the film has also been in the news for the controversy surrounding actor Prudhvi's political comments.

Sonu (Vishwak Sen) runs Sita Beauty Parlour in Hyderabad's Old City, treating it as more than just a business—he sees it as a sentimental venture. One day, he helps a customer financially and allows her to use his name as a brand for her homemade oil, hoping to boost her business. Meanwhile, Rustum (Abhimanyu Singh), a butcher searching for a bride, sees a woman (Kamakshi) at Sonu's parlour and decides to marry her. However, after the wedding, he realizes her appearance was entirely due to makeup and blames Sonu for the deception.

During Rustum's wedding, several guests—including a local MLA—fall sick due to food poisoning. Investigations reveal that they had used Sonu's branded oil, leading the police to take action against him. Adding to Sonu's troubles, a police inspector (Prudhvi) with a personal grudge sees this as the perfect opportunity to target him. To escape the situation, Sonu disguises himself as a woman named Laila. How he navigates the chaos and what ultimately unfolds forms the rest of the story.

The concept of a male protagonist donning a female avatar is not new in Telugu cinema. However, success in such roles depends on how well the transformation is woven into the story. Unfortunately, Laila falls flat in this regard. Director Ram Narayan fails to present an engaging nar-rative, resulting in a weak screenplay that struggles to justify the protagonist's female

disguise.

One of the biggest questions is how an actor like Vishwak Sen agreed to be part of this film. In today's industry, producers are often criticised for blindly investing in projects based solely on an actor-director combination, without evaluating the story's potential. Laila serves as a prime example of this flawed approach. The film lacks a compelling story, engaging moments, or even decent humor. What was intended to be an entertaining comedy instead turns into an outdated, adult-themed film with



CAST: Vishwak Sen, Akanksha Sharma, Abhimanyu Singh, Prudhviraj, Prudhvi, Vineeth Kumar, Kamakshi Bhaskarla, Sunisith, and others

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Leon James CINEMATOGRAPHER: Richard Prasad PRODUCER: Sahu Garapati DIRECTOR: Ram Narayan RATING: 0.5/5

mediocre execution. From start to finish, it feels more like an endurance test than an on both fronts. engaging script. Unfortunately, *Laila* fails on both fronts.

engaging cinematic experience.
While cinema allows for creative liberties, there still needs to be some logic, especially when entertainment value is lacking. The film also suffers from poor scene transitions, making it difficult for the audience to stay invested. Rather than feeling like a well-crafted feature film, *Laila* resembles a low-budget YouTube web series.

PERFORMANCES

None of the actors manage to make a lasting impression. Vishwak Sen, portraying both Sonu and his female alter ego Laila, fails to bring depth to either role. His performance lacks conviction and his portrayal of Laila neither amuses nor engages the audience. What could have been an exciting transformation ends up feeling forced and unconvincing.

Akanksha Sharma, the female lead, serves little purpose beyond adding glam-

our to the film. Abhimanyu Singh, Prudhvi (*Pelli* fame), Prudhvi (*30 Years*), and Kamakshi Bhaskarla contribute little to the story. The film also features YouTube personality Sunisith, but his presence does not enhance the narrative. Additionally, the decision to cast Hindi actors for Telugu character roles, along with their poorly dubbed dialogues, further diminishes the film's impact.

When a male actor takes on a female

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Musically, Laila fails to impress, and even the cinematography remains ordinary. The dialogues, particularly the double-meaning ones, add to the film's overall mediocrity

rather than enhancing the humour.
For any actor, there are films that elevate their career and others that become forgettable missteps. Laila is undoubtedly one of the weakest films in Vishwak Sen's career. From its outdated story and unimpressive dialogues to the lackluster screenplay, weak music, and unremarkable cinematography—everything falls short. The writing department also deserves criticism

for failing to deliver a strong narrative.
While the director shoulders much of the blame, the producer and actor also bear responsibility for backing such an uninspired project. A film should either evoke emotions or provide entertainment—Laila does neither. Hopefully, Vishwak Sen makes better choices in his upcoming films.

Laila is a disappointing attempt at comedy, weighed down by an outdated story, weak screenplay, and subpar execution. With no memorable moments or engaging performances, the film stands out as one of Vishwak Sen's least impressive projects. Those looking for entertainment would be role, there needs to be a strong and justifiable reason behind it, coupled with an better off skipping this one, as it offers little beyond a frustrating cinematic experience.

Brahma Anandam Vennela Kishore shines in this slow narration drama

PNS|HYDERABAD

he real-life father-son duo, Veteran comedian Veteran Brahmanandam and Raja Gowtham play the roles of grandfather and grandson, respectively in this film that was released on Friday. Rahul Yadav Nakka, who has previously produced acclaimed films like Agent Sai Srinivas Atreya, Malli Rava, and Masooda, is the producer for this film. With Chiranjeevi supporting the film and the promotional videos generating interest, expectations were high.

Brahma aka Brahmanandam (Raja Gowtham) is a theatre artiste, living in an apartment with his friend Giri (Vennela Kishore). Having lost his parents, he lives alone and dreams of making it big in the film industry but struggles to get opportunities. One day, he gets an offer to perform in Delhi, but the organizers demand Rs 6 lakhs for his participation. Desperate for funds, he seeks help from his grandfather Ananda Ram Murthy (Brahmanandam), who lives in an old age home.

Murthy offers him a deal—Brahma must accompany him to a village near Kodada and stay with him for a few days, after which he will transfer his 6-acre land to him. Brahma agrees and, along with Giri, travels with Murthy to the village. What follows is a series of events did Brahma get the land, or did Murthy have other plans? What is Murthy's love story with Ivothi (Talluri Rameshwari)? What's the conflict between the sarpanch (Rajiv Kanakala) and his brother (Sampath Raj)? The film unravels these answers as the story progresses.

ANALYSIS

Many young filmmakers are making their debuts with fresh concepts, and RVS Nikhil attempts to do the same with Brahma Anandam. However, while the film has an interesting premise, the execution falls short due to weak storytelling and inconsistent narration.

Before its release, the film was promoted as a heartfelt story about a grandson and his grandfather. However, the bond between them is not explored deeply enough. Instead, the film introduces another interesting element in the sec-ond half, but the director fails to develop it effectively. If the story had balanced both aspects well, the result could have been much better.

The first half focuses on Brahma's struggles—his life as a theatre artiste, his dream of becoming a film actor, his frustration, his girlfriend and his roommate. The narrative takes too long to establish his journey, making it feel stretched. The film picks up only after Brahma meets Murthy and heads to the village. The second half, set in the village, has some engaging moments but is weighed down by forced subplots.

Certain portions work well, with good dialogues and occasional humor, but other elements feel unnecessary such as Sampath Raj's character and his bizarre goal of passing the 10th grade. This subplot is completely illogical and adds no value to the story. The biggest



CAST: Brahmanandam, Raja Gowtham, Priya Vadlamani, Vennela Kishore, Diviia. Sampath Raj, Prabhakar, Rajiv Kanakala, Talluri Rameshwari and others

CINEMATOGRAPHER: Mitesh Parvaneni

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Sandilya

Peesapati PRODUCER: Rahul Yadav Nakka WRITER AND DIRECTOR: **RVS Nikhil**

RATING: 2/5

flaw of the film is its lack of emotional depth. A story revolving around a grandson-grandfather relationship should evoke strong emotions, but the film fails to create that connection.

Some scenes drag on unnecessarily, making the pacing feel sluggish. For instance, the repeated conversations about the land, the prolonged bus journey scene between Raja Gowtham and Brahmanandam, and forced comedic elements slow down the narrative. Additionally, Brahma's sudden transition into a teacher in the village feels random and disconnected from the main plot.

While the last 20 minutes of the film introduce an interesting twist, the director fails to establish it effectively throughout the film. Murthy's love story with Jyothi, which could have added emotional weight, is underdeveloped and does not create the intended impact. The slow narration and stretched sequences make the film feel more like a television serial than a theatrical release. Given its simplistic execution and low-budget production values, it seems more suited for an OTT release than a big-screen experience.

PERFORMANCES

Vennela Kishore steals the show with his natural comedic timing, providing

much-needed Brahmanandam plays a dual-shaded role, balancing his signature humor with a serious side. While he delivers a decent performance, his character's emotional depth is underutilised. Raja Gowtham puts in an earnest effort, especially in the last half-hour, making it one of his better roles. Rajiv Kanakala performs well in his role, but Sampath Raj's character feels unnecessary and unrelated to the core story. Priya Vadlamani does a fine job but has limited screen time, appearing only in the first half. Divija, Aishwarya, Prabhakar, and others provide adequate support.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The music is average, with no standout tracks that elevate the emotional quotient. The cinematography is functional, capturing the village setting decently but lacking visual flair. While some dialogues work well in certain places, they could have been sharper. The editing could have been tighter, especially in the dragged-out portions, to improve the film's pacing.

FINAL VERDICT

Brahma Anandam is a film with potential, but weak storytelling and slow narration prevent it from reaching its full impact. While it has a few good moments, inconsistent pacing, lack of emotional depth, and forced subplots drag it down. With a tighter script and better execution, it could have been a heartwarming entertainer. As it stands, it feels like an overextended TV serial rather than a compelling theatrical experience.

It is good on paper, but when translated onto the big screen, the slow narration and lack of emotional connection make it a disappointing watch. Though the film has a solid concept and some engaging moments, it ultimately fails to

Watching this film is like watching a

'RAMAM RAGHAVAM IS AN **EMOTIONAL FATHER-SON DRAMA'**

A ctor Dhanraj, widely known for his work on the *Jabardasth* show, has now ventured into direction with Ramam Raghavam. In addition to directing, he also plays the lead role alongside acclaimed actor Samuthirakani in this emotional father-son drama. The film, produced by Pridhvi Polavarampu, is set to release on February 21. The story revolves around a father who dreams of seeing his son reach great heights and the emotional journey that unfolds between them. Dhanraj, who has previously proved his versatility as both a comedian and a serious actor, is now stepping into the director's chair for the first time with this heartfelt drama.

The trailer of *Ramam Raghavam* was officially launched on Friday by actor Nani. Speaking at the event, Nani shared his admiration for Dhanraj, saying, "Dhanraj has been my acquaintance since the early days of my career and I have always recognised his talent. So, I wasn't surprised when I heard that he was directing a film." He further revealed that he initially expected Dhanraj to make a comedy film, but after watching



the trailer, he was taken on an unexpected team great success. Dhanraj, elated by the emotional journey. Expressing his fondness for Samuthirakani's work. Nani added, "I personally admire Samuthirakani a lot; he different—an emotional father-son drama. is like family to me." He wished the entire I hope the audience appreciates it."

Kobali season 2 confirmed

the latest web series *Kobali*, streaming on Disney+ Hotstar, has received an overwhelming response from audiences across India, including strong appreciation from the North. Directed by Revanth Levaka, the series is set against a faction backdrop and is packed with intense action sequences. Following its success, the makers have now officially confirmed that Kobali will return for a second season.

Actor Ravi Prakash, known for his character roles in mainstream Telugu cinema, played the lead role in *Kobali*. Reflecting on the journey, he shared, "I have been in the industry for 20 years and always wanted to create something different. When I first heard this story in a coffee shop, I loved it, but I wasn't sure if it would take off. There

were no big stars or major selling points. However, Hotstar trusted us, and the viewers gave us success. This proves that honest work always pays off."

Actor Rocky Singh also played a significant role in the series. Additionally, senior actor Venkat, known for Sri Sita Ramula Kalyanam Chootamu Raarandi, made a brief appearance in the final episode. His character is set to have a much larger role in Season 2, where the real story behind the killings will be revealed. Speaking about the show's success, Venkat said, "This web series proves that good content matters more than big names." The producers expressed their excitement, stating that while they expected the series to do well, the response has far exceeded their expectations.

ARCHANA IYER AS DEVI IN SHAMBHALA

ctress Archana Iyer, widely recognized for her role in the critically acclaimed Krishnamma, is playing the female lead in the supernatural horror thriller Shambhala: A Mystical World. The makers reveal character posters one by one of Aadi Saikumar and Swasika and now Archana Iyer's look was unleashed.

Archana's tense expression and the somber mood of the surroundings suggest that her character named Devi is caught up in an intense, supernatural event, hinting at the film's chilling plot. Aadi Saikumar plays the role of a geo-scientist in this one, directed by Ugandhar Muni and produced by Rajasekhar Annabhimoju and Mahidhar Reddy.

The movie needs lots of graphics as it is a supernatural subject, so the makers are not taking any risk and putting a lot of money on it. The shoot of the movie is presently progressing in RFC, Hyderabad.

