

sunday pioneer

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Democratic India able to feed 800 million people: Jaishankar



Roadmap ready to build a VIKSIT BHARAT by 2047: Minister



'Staying connected IS KEY to success'



QUOTE OF THE DAY

BJP leaders are speaking badly about Rahul Gandhi's grandfather Feroze Jehangir Gandhi. BJP leaders have forgotten the sacrifices of the Gandhi family. Sonia Gandhi was born in Italy. However, she is now an Indian after marrying Rajiv Gandhi. Rahul Gandhi would reveal his caste if the BJP-led Centre conducts a caste survey. Sanjay was born a BC. However, Modi is not a born BC

- Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC chief P4

DON'T MISS...

CS for public role in waste mgmt

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand on Saturday urged citizens to actively participate in waste segregation and recycling efforts, highlighting the need to convert waste into wealth. He interacted with residents at Rajiv Nagar (63rd Division) near the Ayurvedic Hospital as part of the Swachh Andhra - Swachh Divas programme led by Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner Dhyanaachandra. During the event, Vijayanand inspected stalls set up by VMC demonstrating...

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Two Navy officers conquer Cape Horn

Lieutenant Commander Diina K and Lieutenant Commander Roopa A of the Indian Navy achieved a historic milestone on Saturday, successfully navigating Cape Horn, the southernmost tip of South America. Their accomplishment marks a significant moment in Indian maritime history and underscores the nation's commitment to maritime exploration. The two officers braved the notoriously challenging waters of the Drake Passage aboard INSV Tarini during the third leg of the Navika Sagar Parikrama II expedition...

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'Don't make Amritsar deport centre'

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday kept up his attack on the Centre over the landing of US planes carrying illegal Indian immigrants at Amritsar airport and asked it not to make the holy city a 'deport centre'. A second US flight carrying 119 illegal Indian immigrants is slated to land in Amritsar on Saturday night. On February 5, a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian deportees landed at the Amritsar airport. The chief minister visited the airport on Saturday and said his government...

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Modi to address global textile fair

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Sunday address the 'Bharat Tex 2025', a global textile fair that seeks to bring together the entire industry value chain. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the 'mega global event', being held from February 14-16, brings together the entire textile value chain ranging from raw materials to finished products including accessories under one roof. Bharat Tex is the textile industry's largest and most comprehensive event comprising a mega expo spread across two venues and showcasing the entire textile ecosystem, it added. The event also features a global scale conference with over 70 conference sessions, round-tables, panel discussions, and master classes...

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CM Naidu vows to uplift tribals

Highlights TDP's efforts to empower tribal areas by forming new panchayats

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has reiterated his commitment to eliminating poverty among tribal communities and safeguarding their rights. Speaking at a programme marking the birth anniversary of Saint Sevalal Maharaj, he highlighted the significant political opportunities provided by the TDP to uplift these communities.

Naidu emphasised the TDP's initiative to empower tribal areas by converting clusters with a population of 500 into Panchayats, thereby strengthening local leadership. He acknowledged the contributions of NTR, who implemented various welfare programmes for tribal people, and assured continued political support for their development.

Paying floral tributes to Saint Sevalal, the Chief Minister noted that Sevalal's teachings had left a lasting impact. He said that celebrating the 288th birth anniversary of Sevalal, a social reformer and spiritual leader of the Banjara community, was significant as his philosophies continue to inspire future generations.

Naidu announced that the government would implement comprehensive plans to eradicate poverty among tribal populations and protect their rights through dedicated legislation. He stated that the TDP was committed to fostering education and healthcare, particularly



- Govt plans to introduce dedicated legislation for tribal welfare
- 'P4' model to be implemented to combat poverty
- Naidu says TDP aims to enhance political representation for tribals
- Expresses confidence in ensuring prosperity of tribal communities

for marginalised sections of society. The CM also mentioned the launch of the 'P4' programme on Ugadi, aimed at assisting the poorest 20% of the population while economically uplifting the top 10%. He stressed the need for a Public-Private-People's Partnership (PPPP) model to combat poverty and generate wealth for the underprivileged.

Naidu praised Sevalal's principles of non-violence and community service, noting that they had laid the foundation for many movements against societal oppression. He commended Sevalal's resilience against religious conversion pressures and his efforts to promote economic reforms among tribal communities. Reaffirming the TDP's commitment to the socio-economic upliftment of the Banjara community and other tribal groups, Naidu expressed confidence that the government would work tirelessly to ensure their progress and prosperity.

'Dedicate a day each month for cleanliness'

PNS ■ NELLORE/KANDUKUR

Reiterating his commitment to transforming Andhra Pradesh into 'Swachh Andhra', Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday emphasised that cleanliness is key to the State's progress. Addressing a large public gathering at Kandukur in Nellore district as part of the Swachh Andhra-Swarnandhra programme, the Chief Minister urged people to actively participate in achieving the goal of a cleaner Andhra Pradesh. He stressed that public health and a better society could be ensured only through cleanliness.

"The previous government imposed a tax on waste, whereas we are creating wealth from waste. In just eight months, we have put the State on a fast track to development," Naidu remarked.

He also warned that any misbehaviour towards women would be dealt with strictly, assuring that the TDP-led NDA government prioritises women's safety.

Continued on Page 2

Ensure 24X7 power supply to all consumers: CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Chief Secretary and Special Chief Secretary (Energy) K Vijayanand conducted a high-level review meeting with power utilities on Saturday via video conference. He emphasised the need for collective efforts to provide nine hours of free power to the agriculture sector and ensure an uninterrupted 24x7 power supply for all other consumers, considering the rising electricity demand in the upcoming summer.

Reviewing key initiatives, Vijayanand stated that the government has sanctioned 40,000 new agricultural connections, of which 12,846 have been released. He directed officials to expedite the release of the remaining connections. He also instructed APTRANSCO, DISCOMS, APGENCO, and other power sector entities to accelerate project execution while ensuring reliability, efficiency, and consumer satisfaction.

"The peak power demand this summer is estimated to be around 13,700 megawatts, with daily consumption expected to reach approximately 260 million units. APGENCO should ensure a major portion of the required power is generated within the state. The government will extend full support for coal procurement and transportation," Vijayanand said. He appreciated APGENCO for consistently meeting 50% to 53% of the state's grid



Officials instructed to expedite farm connections, rooftop solar installations

demand and stressed the need for proactive measures such as power procurement through swap agreements, Independent Power Producers (IPPs), and short-term purchases while minimising the burden on consumers.

On renewable energy projects, he stated that Andhra Pradesh aims to add 72.6 GW of renewable capacity over the next six years, including 40 GWp of solar, 20 GW of wind, 12 GW of pumped storage, and 0.6 GW of bio-energy.

Continued on Page 2



Royal's 'victim' makes shocking remarks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a shocking revelation, Lakshmi Reddy has claimed that she was among several persons allegedly deceived by Jana Sena leader Kiran Royal and demanded justice. However, Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan's silence on the issue has raised questions about the party's stance.

Lakshmi's latest remarks have sparked intense debate. Addressing the media once again, she accused Kiran Royal of acting with impunity under Pawan Kalyan's protection. "Kiran Royal always told me that Pawan Kalyan and Nadendra Manohar were backing him. He claimed to possess a pen drive containing secrets about Pawan Kalyan's personal life, which is why no action was being taken against him. He even boasted that Pawan Kalyan would not interfere even if he insulted Chandrababu Naidu," Lakshmi alleged.

She further claimed, "At one point, Kiran told me, 'I have blackmailed Pawan many times. Now it's your turn.'"

Lakshmi questioned Pawan Kalyan's support for Royal, asking, "Is it right to back someone who deceives women and misuses their money to build his political career?" High Court advocate Dr Bal asserted that Lakshmi Reddy, who is involved in the Jaipur case, is not a defendant but a victim of conspiracy.

Continued on Page 2

NTR Trust, a legacy of service & dedication: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu lauded the NTR Trust as a beacon of hope, born from sorrow and distress, yet committed to uplifting society through education, healthcare, clean drinking water, and skill development. Speaking at an event, he emphasised how the trust continues to serve the people with unwavering dedication.

Reflecting on the legacy of Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), the Chief Minister highlighted his vision for a better society laid the foundation for the trust. "NTR was not just a great adminis-



trator but also a leader who stood by the people in their times of need. His legacy is being carried forward with the same determination by Nandamuri Bhuvaneshwari," he said,

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commend her resilience in managing the trust.

Over the years, the NTR Trust has played a crucial role in disaster relief and community welfare. From providing aid during the Diviseema cyclone to supporting drought-hit regions in Kurnool, the trust has always been at the forefront of relief efforts.

AP to install 1L CCTV cameras

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government will install over one lakh CCTV cameras across the state to enhance security and tackle rising cybercrime, Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha announced at a state-level workshop on digital evidence on Saturday. Organised by the Directorate of Prosecution, the workshop brought together 150 prosecutors to address challenges in handling digital evidence in court.

Anitha highlighted the increasing cases of cybercrime despite a decline in traditional offences. She stressed the need for more digital forensics



manpower and urged prosecutors and police to collaborate for effective crime prevention. She also emphasised the impact of cybercrime on professionals, including doctors and lawyers, and called for greater public awareness.

Speedy justice was another key focus, with Anitha citing recent cases in Vizianagaram where convictions were secured within six months. She assured the government's commitment to equipping law enforcement with necessary resources.

NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajashankara Babu stressed the role of digital evidence, noting that CCTV cameras have improved case resolutions. Director of Prosecutions Rama Koteswara Rao B underscored the role of AI and analytics in crime detection, urging prosecutors to adapt to technological advancements.

Of castes and casting aspersions!

Ever since the Telangana Government conducted an enumeration of castes, an unexpected rage war has increasingly penetrated the state. That is caste war, a war that kills none but torments and shreds society into pieces and which allows no one to live in peace. After all, where is the need for knowing the caste of people when economically backward classes have been getting the required, legally allowed benefits? The caste survey report submitted to the Telangana Government stated that Backward Classes comprise the major chunk of the population and details of other castes were also given in the report. Based on the report and after a proper assessment of the actual figures, the government may take an appropriate decision as far as reservations are concerned.

To this point everything is okay

and no one should have any objection as to the provision of quota to the classes concerned. But the situation in the state is deteriorating by the day with the main opposition BRS questioning the very standard and doubting its very purpose. Now BJP leaders have taken up the issue and started targeting the government, particularly Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Senior BJP leaders and Union Ministers Bandi Sanjay Kumar and Kishan Reddy have been leaving no stone unturned to blast the government and the survey's legitimacy. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy raised a storm when he questioned the very caste of Prime Minister Modi and he did not stop there and said Modi did not belong to the Backward Classes. The Chief Minister questioning the caste of the Prime Minister is an unprecedented one and such things, if not contained



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or curtailed, may lead to doubting the leadership and its morality and its sincere public service without animosity or favour.

In Indian society, caste plays a dominant role and its influence on

many political parties is significant. Modi has been the head of the government at the Centre for the last 10 years and no one knows his caste and background. People respected him as a tall leader who enriched the very concept of India the world over. His leadership qualities and administrative abilities are the ones that mattered to the people and he was elected thrice as the Prime Minister. On no occasion during the last 10 years, there was mention of Modi's caste, and no one needed to know about it. Unfortunately, his caste has also become an issue that should not have been. Slamming Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's comments about Modi, the BJP leaders have started demanding to know the caste of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. Both Modi and Rahul represent prominent polit-

ical parties and if we weigh their political integrity based on caste, no one can be trusted. We elect leaders and give them the power to govern us. This decision is purely based on the integrity of the leaders and the policies of the parties concerned. No caste-based decision is involved in it. From employment to higher positions, caste has never been a criterion. It is the ability of the people and leaders that mattered most and should and will matter also. Otherwise, no society can survive and no administration can work properly. The motto should and must be common good without any caste considerations. The caste war that ignited in the state of Telangana should be stopped now and leaders' integrity should not be questioned based on caste. Otherwise, it amounts to casting aspersions without having an iota of truth.

OBTUSE ANGLE



Politicians Lost their Voice for Chiranjeevi

It's a curious case of selective outrage. Off-camera, every politician has an opinion on Chiranjeevi's reckless comment about fearing to have a girl child. They shake their heads, condemn it in hushed tones, and throw in a few lines about how regressive it sounds. But the moment a camera rolls? Silence. Not a single leader is willing to call it out. Turns out, Chiranjeevi isn't just a megastar on screen—he's a superstar in political networking too. He keeps in touch with everyone, across parties, across states, making sure no one dares to cross him. One word against him, and the fear is that it might cost them a favor, a connection, or worse, political goodwill. No wonder they're all biting their tongues. But where do all their grand speeches on women empowerment go? What happened to Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao? When it's convenient, they wax eloquent about uplifting women, but when it's time to take a stand, they're suddenly mute spectators. In about 20 days, the same leaders who can't muster a word today will be delivering Women's Day speeches with the same enthusiasm as if this never happened. Hypocrisy, thy name is politics.

Seasoned Journalists on Mute Mode?

Once upon a time, press conferences were battlegrounds, where seasoned journalists fired, pointed questions and wrestled out real responses. Now? It's a masterclass in question-evading, and some in the press gallery are just letting it slide. The veterans, once known for their razor-sharp questioning, seem to have taken a backseat. "What's the point?" they murmur in hushed tones. The speaker, be it a minister or an official, has perfected the art of non-answers—acknowledge, deflect, and move on. "We will take your suggestion into consideration," they say, with a well-rehearsed smile, leaving the room wondering if they were at a press meet or a polite luncheon. For junior reporters, the frustration is real. A well-crafted, newsworthy question lands, only to be met with, "Which organisation are you from?" as if the answer dictates whether the query deserves a response. But the real ones, the hungry ones, aren't laughing. They know a good answer is what makes a good story, and they aren't in the business of collecting pleasantries. So, is the era of tough questioning over? Or is it just a momentary pause before someone decides enough is enough and pushes back? Until then, reporters—junior and senior alike—are left perfecting their poker faces and hoping for a slip-up that turns into tomorrow's headline.

Harish Rao: True Face of Opposition in BRS

T Harish Rao has cracked the code of what being in the opposition truly means—being the voice of the people, not just lamenting electoral losses. While some leaders in BRS are still stuck in the "people made a mistake, they are realizing now" loop, Harish Rao has embraced reality and moved on. He's not whining about the past; he's working for the present. His aides pointed that his phone is constantly buzzing with people sending their grievances. There is no dull day at all. Unlike those blinded by their coteries, Harish has kept his gates wide open, making him the go-to person for real-time issues. Literally any issue, Harish isn't just acknowledging

Red, Pink, and Yellow: The Politics of Colour

The Congress' famed Red Book seems to have faded into oblivion after coming to power, despite all the dramatic warnings about revenge. Now, the opposition BRS has picked up the same playbook—only in a different shade. At Gandhi Bhavan, the discussion turned colourful on Saturday when BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha reminded the ruling party that they were noting everything down in their Pink Book and that double revenge awaited Congress leaders and officials. The statement, of course, didn't go unnoticed. TPCC chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud had a snappy retort: "If Kavitha opens her Pink Book, her reported Kerala scam will also come out." Touché. But the real twist?

REPORTERS' DIARY

problems—he's bringing evidence to the table, thanks to the people who trust him to raise their concerns. And let's talk about accessibility. Harish is out there meeting people, speaking to the media, giving interviews. Big or small media organisation, journalists don't have to chase him for a quote; he's right there, responding and engaging. This isn't just opposition politics; this is leadership that commands respect. If BRS wants to remain relevant, it needs more Harish and fewer coteries. Elevation isn't a choice for him—it's a necessity.

Revanth Reddy's Photos Spark Talk: Is It the Camera or the Crisis?

Political circles are buzzing over the latest images of CM Revanth Reddy that have surfaced in the past few weeks. The consensus? He needs a better photographer immediately. The pictures being released are anything but flattering, with the CM looking visibly weak, sleep-deprived, and often caught in awkward, tense poses. The contrast is stark when compared to the carefully curated images of KCR, who always appear in commanding frames, exuding confidence and control. In Revanth Reddy's case, however, the visuals are fueling whispers about whether his appearance is merely a result of bad photography or a reflection of his struggling administration. Even if the photographer is missing the mark, what about those finalizing the images before release? Are they not seeing what everyone else is noticing? In politics, optics matter, and right now, Revanth Reddy's visuals are doing him no favours. If this continues, people might start believing that the chaos in governance is quite literally showing on his face.

When a reporter cheekily asked Goud why he was sporting a Yellow shirt, he played along with a deadpan quip—"I want to get closer to CM Revanth Reddy." If colours reflect moods, it looks like the Congress' Red rage has mellowed, the BRS' Pink fury is rising, and Yellow... well, that's up for interpretation.

BRS Leaders Squirm as Cockfight at farmhouse Steals Spotlight

Just ahead of the crucial BRS executive meeting on February 19, the party is dealing with an unexpected embarrassment—MLC Pochampally Srinivas Reddy's farmhouse raids over cockfighting. The incident has left BRS circles fuming, with many arguing that this is not in line with Telangana's culture. For a party that prides itself as the flagbearer of Telangana identity, the controversy is proving to be a major headache. What's adding to the frustration is Srinivas Reddy's disappearing act. For 48 hours, he was nowhere to be seen, and when he finally surfaced, his response was lackluster. Party insiders are now whispering that his mentor, ex MP Joganapally Santosh Kumar, may have failed to guide him properly in handling the fallout. And as if that weren't enough, Santosh himself is now drawing flak within the party—for an entirely different reason. His recent tree plantation drive, conducted in the scorching heat, has left some leaders questioning his judgment. With these back-to-back embarrassments, the party high command is in damage control mode. The last thing BRS wants before its big meeting is a debate on whether its leaders are making a mess of their own agenda - be it cultural preservation or environmental consciousness.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate, K Venkateshwarlu)

YSRCP slams 'propaganda' over Orvakal airport

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP spokesperson Putha Siva Sankar accused TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and a section of the media of distorting facts and misleading the public regarding Orvakal Airport.

He alleged that Naidu and Eenu have a history of manipulating narratives for their benefit, with the Orvakal Airport issue being the latest example. Sankar clarified that the airport was named after freedom fighter Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy during YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure as Chief Minister. He pointed out that this announcement was made at a public meeting and had even been reported by the so-called 'yellow media' at the time.

Despite this, he claimed that Naidu and his associates attempted to spread misinformation by orchestrating a petition through fake representatives under the guise of the Reddy community, creating an impression that the matter was under review.

Sankar asserted that such actions not only disrespect Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy but also insult the people of Rayalaseema. He demanded that Eenu issue a public apology for allegedly misleading the people of Andhra Pradesh.

'TTD sets benchmark in waste management'

DEVOTEES URGED TO KEEP TIRUMALA CLEAN

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) is setting an example for other temples across the country in waste management, asserted Additional Executive Officer Ch Venkaiah Chowdary.

He administered the Swachh Andhra pledge to TTD officials at the laddu counter in Tirumala on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Additional EO emphasised that cleanliness reflects civilisation and culture, adding that good governance and discipline thrive where cleanliness is maintained. He announced that the Swachh Tirumala programme will be conducted on the third Saturday of every month as part of Swachh Andhra Pradesh. Several initiatives have been undertaken to ensure hygiene in Tirumala, with 1,200 personnel working round the clock to keep the premises clean.

The TTD health department is continuously monitoring sanitation. Over the past seven months, special attention has been given to waste management.

He stated that 2 lakh tonnes of garbage accumulated at the



Tirumala dumping yard has been converted into manure, while another 40,000 metric tonnes of legacy waste will be cleared in the next two months.

Tirumala generates 78 metric tonnes of wet and dry waste daily. From June, an IOCL plant being set up in Tirumala will produce 1.5 metric tonnes of gas from 45 metric tonnes of wet waste, which will be used at the Tarigonda Vengamamba Prasada centre.

During Ratha Saptami, a feedback survey revealed that 97% of devotees were satisfied with the cleanliness, despite the large volume of waste. Authorities ensured that garbage was cleared promptly.

The Additional EO urged devotees to participate in the

Swachh Tirumala programme by following TTD's waste segregation guidelines and disposing of garbage in designated bins to support sanitation staff.

Deputy EO Lokanatham, EE-1 Subramaniam, Health Officer Madhusudan, Unit Officer Thyagaraju, and other officials attended the programme.

SWACHH PLEDGE

As part of Swachh Andhra Pradesh, TTD officials took the Swachh Andhra pledge at the TTD administration building in Tirupati on Saturday.

Employees were sensitised about segregating wet, dry, and chemical waste.

TTD CE Satya Narayana, Additional Health Officer Dr Sunil Kumar, and other officials participated in the programme.

AP pavilion draws investor interest at Bharat Tex 2024

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Pavilion at Bharat Tex 2024 in New Delhi has garnered significant attention from investors and industry leaders, reinforcing the state's growing presence in the textiles sector.

Leading the AP delegation, Commissioner of Handlooms and Textiles Rekha Rani, along with representatives from the AP Economic Development Board (EDB), held a series of high-level discussions with potential investors. The delegation highlighted Andhra Pradesh's investor-friendly policies, robust infrastructure, and seamless transport and port connectivity, positioning the state as a prime destination for textile investments.

A key highlight of the event was the unveiling of the AP



Textile Apparel and Garments Policy 2024-29, which attracted strong investor interest. Rekha Rani emphasised that the state offers competitive subsidies and a business-friendly environment, making it an ideal location for the textile industry.

Investors from Karnataka have shown keen interest in setting up a Textile Park in Andhra Pradesh, recognising the state's strategic advantages. Discussions were also held on establishing an Integrated

Textile Park in Yemmiganur, Kurnool district, with a leading investor from the region. The proposed park is expected to enhance textile production and boost exports, positioning Kurnool as a key hub for the industry.

Rekha Rani also held talks with the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) to support handloom weavers and introduce them to global markets. The collaboration aims to promote innovative designs and market-driven

products that align with international trends, benefiting traditional weaving communities.

Additionally, the AP delegation engaged with a Russian business delegation, facilitated by the Handlooms Export Promotion Council (HEPC), to explore export opportunities for the state's handloom products. Discussions focused on identifying high-potential products for the Russian market, paving the way for stronger trade ties and increased global recognition for Andhra Pradesh's textile sector.

Rekha Rani's proactive efforts in attracting investments, fostering collaborations, and promoting innovation highlight Andhra Pradesh's vision for sustainable growth in the textiles and handlooms.

Ministers review deployment of women police in Secretariat

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Women and Child Welfare Minister Gummidu Sandhya Rani, along with Home Minister V. Anitha, conducted a comprehensive review of the deployment of women police in the Secretariat on Saturday. The discussions focused on women's safety, child welfare, prevention of sexual harassment, and measures to curb child marriages.

A key aspect of the review was the 'Mission Mahila Shakti' initiative, which aims to empower and protect women through the effective utilisation of women police. The initiative includes integrated support centres providing immediate assistance to women facing violence, with police, lawyers, counsellors, and medical ser-



vices available under one roof.

The review also focused on enhancing security in women's hostels and girls' residential homes to prevent harassment and illegal activities. Dedicated police units have been set up to safeguard children's rights and take strict action against violence and harassment of minors. The ministers stressed the need for stringent enforcement of laws to eradicate child marriages, supported by awareness and training programmes.

During the meeting, empha-

sis was placed on strengthening the implementation of existing laws, particularly in addressing domestic violence and providing support for women in distress. The Home Minister assured that protection and assistance would be available for women facing threats, including through 'Shakti Sadan' centres. The action plan includes setting up night patrols by women police for the security of women and children in childcare homes and Shakti Sadan centres. Plans were also

discussed for the installation of CCTV cameras in working women's hostels and rehabilitation centres to enhance safety. Every police station will be required to maintain details of officials responsible for child welfare and raise awareness about the Child Helpline number and the POCSO Act. Continued protection will be ensured for individuals rescued from child marriages.

This review underscores the government's commitment to strengthening the women police system and prioritising the safety and welfare of women and children.

Under Minister Sandhya Rani's leadership, significant steps are being taken to create a secure and supportive environment for women across the state.

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Ensure 24X7 power supply...

Continued from Page 1

APTRANSCO has commissioned multiple substations and transmission lines, including a 400/220 kV Gas Insulated Substation at Thallayapalem in Guntur district and 220/132/33 kV substations in Kurnool and Chittoor districts. Several 132 kV and 220 kV transmission lines have also been completed in Kakinada, West Godavari, and Anantapur districts.

Vijayanand noted that 2,34,019 smart meters have been installed in APEPDCL and 51,107 under APCPDCL's RDSS scheme.

He emphasised the need for full integration of these meters with the National Feeder Monitoring System to enhance energy efficiency.

He also reviewed the progress of the PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, under which 9,702 rooftop solar installations with a cumulative capacity of 34,465 kW have been completed across various DISCOMs. Under the PM-KUSUM scheme, the government has secured the allocation of 1,00,000 solar pump sets, and he directed utilities to expedite their installation.

The Chief Secretary stressed the importance of

adhering to project timelines to maintain Andhra Pradesh's leadership in power sector reforms and sustainability. He directed officials to submit periodic progress reports and ensure seamless execution of projects supporting the state's clean energy vision.

APGENCO MD KVN Chakradhar Babu, APTRANSCO JMD Kirithi Chekuri, DISCOM CMDs I Prudhvi Tej, AKV Bhaskar, and K Santosha Rao, NRED-CAP MD M Kamalakar Babu, Joint Secretary (Energy) BAVP Kumara Reddy, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

Govt unleashing terror in AP: Ponnavolu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP general secretary Ponnavolu Sudhakar Reddy has alleged that Andhra Pradesh is witnessing "state-sponsored terrorism" under the TDP-led government, claiming that there is a constitutional breakdown with TDP and its allied media creating havoc and driving people away from their villages in an act of political vendetta.

Addressing the media on Saturday, Ponnavolu accused the government of unleashing terror across the State. He alleged that minorities in a village near Macherla were forcibly driven out and warned against returning, while a former MLA was prevented from entering his constituency in Tadipatri, barring a brief court intervention. He also claimed that filing false cases against social media activists under serious charges has become routine.

"YSRCP is raising its voice against this state-sponsored terrorism, which is not just a breakdown of law and order but a complete constitutional failure. The media house that has consistently targeted YSRCP by shaping negative public opinion is now reaping benefits from the State Government, forming a nexus for mutual gain," he alleged.

Referring to the case of Mudunuri Satyavardhan, Ponnavolu stated that despite confessing in court that he was not a victim and had not been abused on caste grounds, he was "hunted down" and brought from Visakhapatnam.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	Chaturthi: Feb 15 11:52 PM to Feb 17 02:16 AM
Panchami:	Feb 17 02:16 AM to Feb 18 04:53 AM
Nakshatram:	Hasta: Feb 16 01:39 AM to Feb 17 04:31 AM
Chitra:	Feb 17 04:31 AM to Feb 18 07:35 AM
Rahukalam:	4:48 PM to 6:14 PM
Yamagandam:	12:30 PM to 1:56 PM
Varjyam:	01:32 PM to 03:20 PM
Gulika:	3:22 PM to 4:48 PM
Amritakalam:	09:48 PM to 11:35 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	12:07 PM to 12:53 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 34°C
Humidity: 71%
Sunrise: 6:33 AM
Sunset: 6:10 PM
Updated: February 15, 2025 5:00 PM

'Dedicate a day....'

Continued from Page 1

Naidu announced that a decision would soon be taken to merge Kandukur with Prakasam district in a way that is acceptable to all. He also assured that Kandukur's water needs would be met by completing the Veligonda project.

Highlighting the State's industrial development plans, he said large-scale industries would be set up to generate employment for youth. He added that Skill Development Centres would be established to enhance their capabilities, reiterating that his ultimate goal is a poverty-free society.

The Chief Minister administered the Swarnandhra pledge to the public and interacted with IT employees and other professionals. Software professionals requested the establishment of a Skill Development Centre in Kandukur, to which Naidu assured that a decision would be taken soon.

Royal's 'victim' makes...

Continued from Page 1

He alleged that Kiran Royal, who operates multiple online businesses, has been involved in illicit activities. The woman, who claims to have lost Rs 16 lakh, has filed a case (44/2023) against Royal. Dr Bal alleged that she had been wrongfully implicated, highlighting the manipulation of chequebooks and credit cards, including the unauthorised use of a deceased person's bank account.

Despite the allegations, Royal has reportedly received support from Nadendra Manohar and Pawan Kalyan. "In the Jaipur case, she is not a defendant but a victim," Dr Bal reiterated. He stated that Kiran Royal would face legal consequences for his actions. The allegations against Royal include deceiving and exploiting young women, with the victim reportedly confronting him in front of his wife during proceedings.

Royal is also accused of having an illicit relationship with a woman named Abhinay Reddy and misusing the sale of Tirumala shrine tickets for personal gain.

Dr Bal further alleged that Royal had been blackmailing and threatening multiple young women. "He has boasted about deceiving many and has a history of arrests," he stated. The statement concluded with a call for authorities to prioritise Kiran Royal's arrest in the morphing case, asserting that those who filed complaints in the Jaipur case had no connection to the victim, Lakshmi.

Pawan caps spiritual tour ...

Continued from Page 1

He also took part in the recitation of 'Skanda Sashti Kavacham' and 'Thiruppugazh Parayana' with great devotion.

Speaking to the media after the 'darshan', Pawan Kalyan said he had completed visits to five Subrahmanya Swamy temples as part of his 'Shashtha Shanmukha Yatra' and that the tour would conclude with a visit to the Sri Subrahmanya Swamy temple in Tiruttani.

During his visit, Pawan Kalyan stopped his convoy upon seeing sanitation workers near the temple, interacted with them, inquired about their well-being, took selfies, and provided financial assistance. Earlier, during his Tamil Nadu tour, he visited the Madurai Meenakshi Temple and the Someswara Temple, offering silk sarees and floral offerings.

As part of his commitment to the preservation of 'Sanatana Dharma', Pawan Kalyan has been touring temples across southern India.

His itinerary included visits to temples in Kerala before proceeding to Tamil Nadu, where he visited the Palani Murugan Temple, the Sri Murugan Swamy Temple in Thiruparankundram, a Veda Pathashala, and temples in Thanjavur, Kumbakonam, and Tiruchendur.

Sanjay asks Revanth to reveal Rahul's caste

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union MoS for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar raised questions about the caste of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the religion of the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi.

He challenged the Congress asking whether they would contest the MLC elections treating this issue as a referendum.

"Rahul Gandhi's grandfather's name is Feroz Jehangir Gandhi. Rahul Gandhi's mother's religion is Christianity and she belongs to Italy. However, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is criticising

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Citizens' role crucial: Vijayanand



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand on Saturday urged citizens to actively participate in waste segregation and recycling efforts, highlighting the need to convert waste into wealth. He interacted with residents at Rajiv Nagar (63rd Division) near the Ayurvedic Hospital as part of the Swachh Andhra - Swachh Divas programme led by Vijayanand Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner Dhyanchandra. During the event, Vijayanand inspected stalls set up by VMC demonstrating household waste segregation using three-coloured bins—green for wet waste, blue for dry waste, and red for hazardous waste. He also observed how organic waste can be composted at home. Additionally, he reviewed VMC's mosquito-control initiatives, including fogging, drone spraying, and anti-larval measures, and visited a stall promoting the ban on single-use plastics.

To raise awareness, a walkathon themed "Source to Resource" was flagged off by the Chief Secretary, covering Rajiv Nagar, Sundarayya Nagar, and Prakash Nagar. Addressing the gathering, Vijayanand emphasised the need for a structured implementation of Swachh Andhra - Swachh Divas. He called on citizens to take responsibility for cleanliness, segregate waste at home, and support recycling efforts. He also stressed the importance of public awareness campaigns in ensuring effective waste management. VMC Commissioner Dhyanchandra highlighted that the civic body is actively distributing three waste bins to households and ensuring proper recycling. He reiterated VMC's commitment to strictly enforcing the ban on plastic items below 120 microns, stating that while awareness campaigns are ongoing, enforcement measures will soon be intensified.

CS: Govt taking steps to stabilise vegetable prices

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand has announced that the government is implementing measures to stabilise the prices of green and red chillies, brinjals, tomatoes, and other vegetables across the state. During a video conference with officials from the Agriculture, Marketing, Civil Supplies, and Marketed departments, he reviewed the current market prices and stressed the need to ensure minimum support prices for farmers. Vijayanand directed officials to coordinate efforts to support farmers, particularly those cultivating tomatoes and chillies, and to monitor price fluctuations to prevent inconvenience to both farmers and consumers. He highlighted the strategy of shifting produce from high-production to low-production areas to maintain price stability. The Chief Secretary also addressed the need to support eucalyptus and subabul farmers, instructing Industries Secretary N. Yuvraj to liaise with ITC and other companies



Vijayanand directed officials to coordinate efforts to support farmers, particularly those cultivating tomatoes and chillies, and to monitor price fluctuations to prevent inconvenience to both farmers and consumers

in all Rythu Bazaars across the state to keep vegetables and fruits fresh. These coolers, already introduced on a trial basis in some Rythu Bazaars, are designed with modern technology to function with water, even without electricity. He instructed officials to install at least one cooler in every Rythu Bazaar, with multiple units in larger markets, enabling unsold produce to be preserved for the next day instead of being sold at lower prices. Special Chief Secretary for Agriculture B. Rajasekhar, who participated virtually, stated that the Marketing Department has already placed an order for 59 Subji Coolers, with plans for further orders to cover 112 Rythu Bazaars. Secretary for Industries and Commerce Dr. N. Yuvraj, Commissioner of Civil Supplies Saurav Gaur, Director of Agriculture Delhi Rao, CEO of Rythu Bazaars Vijaya Sunitha, Marketed MD Dr. Manajir Jilani Samoon, and Director of Horticulture Dr. K. Srinivas also participated virtually in the meeting.

to ensure they receive a minimum support price. Currently, subabul is priced at Rs 5,400 per tonne, while eucalyptus is at Rs 4,400 per tonne. He further announced that Subji Coolers would be set up



Sivanath expressed gratitude to the NDA coalition government and appreciated teachers for opposing previous government policies and raising public awareness. He assured them of his full support for educational institutions providing quality education to middle-class students, highlighting the role of education in shaping the future.

Sivanath campaigns for Alapati in MLC polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) urged teachers to support NDA coalition candidate Alapati Rajendra Prasad in the upcoming Graduates MLC elections on February 27. Speaking at a meeting at KBN College on Saturday, he emphasised that the focus should be on resolving issues rather than staging protests. Sivanath expressed grati-

tude to the NDA coalition government and appreciated teachers for opposing previous government policies and raising public awareness. He assured them of his full support for educational institutions providing quality education to middle-class students, highlighting the role of education in shaping the future. He also outlined the state government's welfare initiatives, including the upcoming

implementation of Rythu Bharosa, Talliki Vandanam, and free bus travel for women from May and June. He reiterated the NDA's commitment to addressing public concerns since assuming office. The meeting was attended by Dr V Narayana Rao from SKPVV Group of Institutions, former MLC Buddha Venkanna, TDP state spokesperson Nagul Meera, and leaders from TDP, BJP, and Jana Sena.

AINEF meet to be held in Kuchipudi

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

The central working committee meetings of the All-India Newspapers Employees Federation (AINEF) will be held in Kuchipudi on February 23 and 24. Addressing the media here AINEF national president Ch Purnachandra said that several key issues, including the formation of a wage board to fix wages of journalists, pension for the retired journalists, pension and health insurance, would be discussed during the central working committee meeting. Several journalists from various national unions will attend the meeting.

MP reaffirms commitment to industrial growth

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MP Kesineni Sivanath has reaffirmed his commitment to promoting industrial growth and educational advancement in the region. Inaugurating a free Udyam Registration Centre at the Andhra Pradesh MSME Industries Association Facilitation Centre, he underscored the need to encourage entrepreneurship in every family, in line with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's vision. During his visit, Sivanath interacted with members of the Manufacturing Association

and JRD Aila Service Society, discussing the development of the automobile sector. Urging a collaborative approach, he said, "Let's set politics aside and work together to strengthen all sectors," and invited suggestions for industry upgrades and enhancing youth employment opportunities. The MP also announced plans for establishing a Sports City Cluster, Leather Cluster, and Defence Cluster in the Amaravati region, signalling major infrastructure developments in the near future.

'Efforts underway to make NTR district accident-free'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha emphasised the need for collective responsibility in ensuring road safety at the closing ceremony of the 36th National Road Safety Month held at the NGO Home in Gandhinagar on Saturday. He urged citizens to adopt discipline in road usage and suggested making helmet-wearing a fashion trend. Dr Lakshmisha highlighted the devastating impact of road accidents on families and cautioned that even cautious drivers are not immune to mishaps. He noted that the transport and police departments are conducting awareness campaigns and have identified accident-prone areas for improvement. However, he expressed concern over reckless behaviour that continues to



cause avoidable accidents. As part of awareness efforts, college students participated in discussions on helmet use for two-wheeler riders. Dr Lakshmisha stressed the goal of 100% helmet compliance through educational initiatives and directed the transport and police departments to take legal action against violators. Deputy Transport Commissioner A Mohan underscored the importance of helmets for public safety, warning that negligence could cost lives. He urged students to spread awareness on social

media. AP NGO Secretary Vidyasagar A pointed out that even in poorer countries, vehicle operators follow road discipline better than in India. He urged government employees and pensioners to set an example by wearing helmets. Awards and certificates were presented to officials, students, and media representatives for their contributions to road safety awareness. Several government officials attended the event, reaffirming their commitment to making NTR District accident-free.

International Customs Day celebrated in City

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Customs Commissionerate (Preventive), Vijayawada, celebrated International Customs Day 2025 at Tummalapalli Kalakshetram on February 15. The event, themed "Customs Delivering on its Commitment to Efficiency, Security, and Prosperity," highlighted the role of Customs in economic security and global trade. Chief Guest Varinder Mehta, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, and Guest of Honour Narendra A Patil, DRM, Vijayawada, attended the event. Commissioner Sadhu Narasimha Reddy stated that Customs revenue for the financial year 2024-25 (up to January 2025) stood at Rs 11,480 crore. Enforcement efforts led to the seizure of 20.5 kg of gold, 83 lakh cigarette sticks, and other contraband, with 16 smugglers arrested. The Commissioner also high-



lighted humanitarian initiatives, including blood donation camps that collected 4,059 units and flood relief efforts in September 2024, benefiting over 200 individuals. The event recognised contributors such as Gudur Sitalahalaxmi, founder of the Andhra Pradesh Body Donors Association, and honoured over 36 employees for their organ donation pledges. A 5K Run & Walkathon, the first by a Central Government office, saw participation from over 300 employees across 25 departments.



Rising Guillain-Barré Syndrome cases raise concerns in port city

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The recent increase in Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) cases across India has prompted concern in Visakhapatnam, with five individuals admitted to King George Hospital (KGH) in the past four days. The patients are currently receiving treatment in the Acute Medical Care Unit of the General Medicine Department and are reported to be in stable condition. Doctors are providing continuous medical supervision to ensure their full recovery. While the rise in GBS cases has caused public anxiety, medical experts reassure the community that GBS is not a new phenomenon. KGH doctors have extensive experience treating the condition, typically seeing around ten cases per month. Though the current situation doesn't warrant panic, health officials advise vigilance and prompt medical attention for any developing symptoms. Investigations are underway to determine the cause of the

nationwide increase in cases. Importantly, doctors have confirmed that GBS is not contagious and cannot be transmitted from person to person. GBS often develops following viral fever or bacterial-induced diarrhea. The condition targets the myelin sheath, the protective covering of the brain's nerves. An autoimmune response causes the body to attack this sheath, disrupting nerve signal transmission and potentially leading to organ dysfunction. Symptoms can include progressive numbness, starting in the legs and spreading to the back, arms, and neck, potentially affecting swallowing and even eye closure. Typically, GBS manifests as sudden weakness in the legs and arms. In severe cases, it can affect the lungs, leading to extreme fatigue and life-threatening complications. The disease usually progresses over one to two weeks before gradually improving as the myelin sheath regenerates, aided by treatments like intravenous immunoglobulin therapy

Corruption in Vijaya Dairy decried

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tadikonda Ramesh Babu, a dairy farmer, has demanded action against alleged corruption and irregularities at Vijaya Dairy. Addressing a press conference in Vijayawada on Saturday, he accused Vijaya Dairy Chairman Chalasani Anjaneyulu and Managing Director Anil Kumar of deceiving farmers, producing substandard products, and engaging in illegal activities. Ramesh Babu raised concerns over the lack of quality standards in products released into the market, questioning who would be held accountable if any fatal-

ities occurred due to inferior products. He sought transparency in the prices offered to farmers, pointing out that while the Chairman claims they provide better rates than other companies, he has failed to specify the actual price increase. He also highlighted discrepancies in bonuses, stating that the promised bonus for farmers had been reduced to just 10 paise, which he termed misleading. Challenging the Chairman to publicly verify these claims, he stressed that as the company's turnover increases, farmers should receive a fair share rather than minimal bonuses. He further pointed to

issues at the newly constructed Kamadhenu factory, citing reported water problems and concerns over the quality of water used in production. Ramesh Babu criticised the practice of using the Vijaya Dairy brand name on products manufactured outside the facility without proper quality checks, questioning who would be responsible for any potential harm caused by such products. Dairy farmers from various regions, including Kodali Ramakrishna, Devarapalli Suresh, Pampidipati Ravi, Kaatru Nani, Edipuganti Baburao, Kota Ramamohan, and Vemana Shekhar, were present at the press meet.

Remote tribal hamlets finally see the light

PNS ■ PADERU

After decades of living in darkness, the remote tribal hamlets of Buruga and Chinakonela in the Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district have finally been electrified. This historic milestone, 77 years after India's independence, has brought much-needed light and hope to the Konda Dora Tega tribe. Residents celebrated this moment with a traditional 'Dhimsa' dance under the glow of newly installed lights. The villages, located under Rompalle Panchayat in Ananthagiri Mandal, now have electricity in approximately 60



Buruga and Chinakonela tribals in ASR district celebrate electrification with Dhimsa dance

households, benefiting nearly 250 residents. The lack of electricity had long plagued the community, creating numerous hardships. Villagers faced constant threats from wild animals, including a recent incident where a tiger killed livestock. Snakebites were frequent, access to clean water was limited, and emergency services were virtually non-existent.

"We repeatedly raised our concerns at Zilla Parishad meetings, protested outside the district

collector's office, and even held lanterns as a symbolic plea," shared a local resident. "After years of persistent efforts, our voices have finally been heard." The electrification of Buruga and Chinakonela marks a significant turning point, but the struggle for light continues in other nearby villages. Rayapadu, Bongija, Cheemidivalasa, and Peddavalasa, under NR Puram Panchayat, remain in darkness. Residents there still rely on torchlights, bonfires, and lanterns, facing the same dangers and hardships. "While people in other villages enjoy television, we have never even seen one," lamented a resi-

dent from NR Puram Panchayat. However, the recent electrification of neighbouring villages has instilled hope that their turn will come soon. "It feels like true independence has arrived only today," remarked Somula Appalaraju, the 10th ward member of Rompalle Panchayat. The successful electrification of Buruga and Chinakonela offers a beacon of hope for other remote hamlets in the district. As government initiatives continue, there is growing optimism that all tribal communities in ASR district will soon have access to electricity, paving the way for improved living conditions and a brighter future.

HCCB launches water ATM in Sri Satya Sai district

PNS ■ DHARMAVARAM

Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages (HCCB) has launched a series of community initiatives in Sri Satya Sai and Anantapur districts, under its CSR programme, Project SHINE. These initiatives include the installation of a Water ATM, Reverse Osmosis (RO) filters, new toilet facilities, and a comprehensive Water Access, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programme.



As part of Project SHINE, HCCB has set up a Water ATM in Sivarampalli, Tadimarri block, Sri Satya Sai district, to provide villagers with safe drinking water and improve their quality of life. Additionally, three RO filters have been installed at the Government SW Girls Hostel, Durga Nagar, Dharmavaram; Zilla Parishad Boys High School, Mudigubba, Sri Satya Sai district; and Kasturba Gandhi Balika

Vidyalaya (KGBV), Tadimarri, Anantapur district. These region-specific initiatives highlight HCCB's commitment to addressing critical needs and promoting rural development.

Further, under the WASH initiative, HCCB is constructing toilet facilities at six locations: Zilla Parishad High School (ZPHS) Girls, Gunjapalle, Mudigubba block;

Government BC College Boys Hostel (Residential), Guttakindapalli village, Mudigubba mandal; ZP High School, Gotluru, Dharmavaram block; Government BC Girls Hostel, Mudigubba mandal; ZP Girls High School, Malyavantham; and ZP High School, Malyavantham. In addition to infrastructure development, HCCB is conducting

WASH awareness sessions in schools and communities, focusing on personal hygiene, proper handwashing techniques, sanitation practices, adolescence-related health, and the prevention of communicable diseases.

Speaking about Project SHINE, Himanshu Priyadarshi, Chief Public Affairs, Communications, and Sustainability Officer, at HCCB, said, "At HCCB, we are committed to empowering communities by addressing their most pressing needs and creating meaningful, sustainable impact. Our goal is to enhance infrastructure, ensure clean water availability, foster skill development, and promote digital literacy—all aimed at significantly improving people's lives. By driving long-term transformation, we nurture the future of our communities and contribute to the prosperity and growth of Andhra Pradesh."

Postal ballot facility for MLC poll staff in EG & WG

PNS ■ ELURU

Staff assigned to election duties for the upcoming MLC elections will be provided with the option of voting through postal ballots, announced East and West Godavari Graduates' Constituency Returning Officer and District Collector K. Vetrivelsi.

The MLC elections are scheduled for February 27, and officials on election duty can exercise their voting rights through postal ballots. To avail of this facility, they must submit Form-12 to the District Returning Officer at the East and West Godavari Graduates' Constituency office or the District Collector's office in Eluru by 5:00 PM on February 20, 2025.

Election staff can download Form-12 from eluru.ap.gov.in and must attach a copy of their duty assignment orders along with the application.

Gottipati slams YSRCP's election campaign in West Godavari

PNS ■ TADEPALLIGUDEM



West Godavari district in-charge minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar has criticised the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), stating that it has no right to seek votes in the upcoming elections. He alleged that former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy failed to deliver any substantial work in the past five years. Speaking at a review meeting on the MLC elections in Tadepalligudem and Tanuku, he urged coalition leaders to secure a decisive victory for their candidates.

Ravi Kumar slammed the YSRCP government for its treatment of teachers, alleging that they were assigned demeaning duties near bars and bathrooms, thereby tarnishing the dignity of their profession. He reiterated that the coalition government is committed to fulfilling all its pre-election promises.

He ridiculed the YSRCP's claim of increasing pensions for 64 lakh people, contrasting

it with the coalition government's swift action under Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, who approved a significant pension hike with a single signature. He also criticised the previous government's neglect of road maintenance, which, he claimed, resulted in deplorable conditions that even caught the attention of political leaders from neighbouring states.

Highlighting the developmental initiatives undertaken in the past seven months since the coalition government took office, Ravi Kumar stressed the importance of engaging educated voters. He accused the

YSRCP of failing to provide jobs to graduates over the past five years and urged voters not to be misled by Jagan Mohan Reddy's campaign.

The minister also reiterated that teachers were humiliated under the YSRCP's rule and asserted that the coalition government is committed to revamping the education system while addressing issues faced by teachers and students in government schools.

As part of the MLC election preparations, Ravi Kumar directed coalition leaders to ensure that voters are well-informed about the polling process.

I&PR Minister reviews steps for Mahasivaratri festivities at Balive

PNS ■ ELURU/MUSUNURU

Minister for Housing and Information & Public Relations, Kolu Parthasarathi, has assured that elaborate arrangements are being made for the Mahasivaratri celebrations at Balive Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy Temple to ensure a hassle-free experience for devotees.



During his visit to the temple on Saturday, the minister reviewed the festival preparations with local elders and temple officials. He emphasised that special measures are being taken to facilitate devotees visiting the temple and taking a holy dip in the Tammileru River while performing ancestral rites.

To improve bathing facilities, additional shower points have been set up this year, compared to only two last year. New borewells are being installed by the Panchayat and Endowments Departments to

ensure an adequate water supply. The Vijay Dairy Chairman has agreed to provide around 1.5 lakh water packets for devotees.

Enhanced sanitation measures have been implemented, with personnel from Eluru Municipal Corporation being deployed. Strict security arrangements, including barricading and CCTV surveillance linked to a control room, are in place to prevent untoward incidents.

For women devotees, the number of temporary tents for changing clothes has been

increased from 10 to 50, with women police officers overseeing their safety.

Parking facilities have also been expanded to accommodate more vehicles. Several voluntary organisations have come forward to provide drinking water and food to devotees, and they will receive the necessary support.

Following the review meeting, the minister inspected the bathing ghats, medical outposts, and surrounding areas. Temple EO and local elders participated in the discussions.

Savitha to attend Bharat Tex today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Handloom and Textiles S Savitha will participate in the Bharat Tex-2025 event in Delhi. She is scheduled to leave for the national capital today.

The Bharat Tex-2025 International Exhibition, being held from February 14 to 17, aims to enhance market opportunities for handloom products and attract investments. Several national and international companies, along with handloom organisations from the state, have set up stalls at the exhibition, which serves as a platform to boost handloom textile sales and promote awareness about designs and clothing production.

Naidu's policies pushing farmers into crisis: Kakani

PNS ■ NELLORE

Former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy has accused the TDP government of jeopardising farmers' welfare by undermining key initiatives introduced by the previous administration. Speaking to the media on Saturday, he alleged that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has systematically weakened Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs), rendering them ineffective.

Farmers are facing severe hardships due to the non-availability of seeds and fertilisers, while paddy procurement centres exist only on paper. Under the previous government, farmers received up to Rs 1 lakh per acre in financial



Accusing Naidu of dismantling key agricultural support systems out of political vendetta, Govardhan Reddy recalled that during his 14-year tenure as CM, Naidu privatised 54 government institutions, weakening the State's economic foundations.

support, whereas they are now incurring losses of up to Rs 40,000 per acre. He also highlighted the plight of chilli farmers, who have suffered losses of Rs 6,000 crore due to plummeting prices and lack of government intervention.

Govardhan Reddy criticised the government's inaction against middlemen exploiting farmers and warned that continued neglect could lead to farmer suicides. He condemned the scrapping of the Annadata Sukhibhava scheme,

which has forced farmers to rely on loans amid rising input costs and falling incomes.

Accusing Naidu of dismantling key agricultural support systems out of political vendetta, Govardhan Reddy recalled that during his 14-year tenure as CM, Naidu privatised 54 government institutions, weakening the State's economic foundations.

He warned that if the government fails to fulfil its promises to farmers, large-scale protests will be launched in collaboration with the farming community.

He also condemned the destruction of Eucalyptus trees on AgriGold lands and criticised the government's indifference to the issue.

Indian Navy officers conquer Cape Horn

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Lieutenant Commander Dilna K and Lieutenant Commander Roopa A of the Indian Navy achieved a historic milestone on Saturday, successfully navigating Cape Horn, the southernmost tip of South America. Their accomplishment marks a significant moment in Indian maritime history and underscores the nation's commitment to maritime exploration.



The two officers braved the notoriously challenging waters of the Drake Passage aboard INSV Tarini during the third leg of the Navika Sagar Parikrama II expedition. This passage, named after Sir Francis Drake, is renowned for its extreme winds, towering waves, and unpredictable weather, making it one of the world's most demanding sailing routes.

"This is a significant milestone for the Indian Navy," stated a representative. "The successful rounding of Cape Horn is a testament to the officers' exceptional seamanship,

resilience, and dedication." By conquering this formidable passage, Lt. Cdr. Dilna and Lt. Cdr. Roopa have earned the prestigious title of "Cape Horners," a distinction reserved for elite sailors who successfully round Cape Horn under sail. Located approximately 800 km (432 nautical miles) from Antarctica, Cape Horn presents an immense navigational challenge, demanding exceptional skill and unwavering fortitude.

The Navika Sagar Parikrama II expedition, flagged off by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi from INS Mandovi, Goa, last year, is an ambitious 240-day voyage. The expedition will traverse four continents, three oceans, and three major capes, covering a distance of 23,400 nautical miles.

Veterinary students seek stipend hike

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Veterinary students from Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, who are on strike demanding a hike in their stipends, met State Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh outside Gannavaram Airport on Saturday.

The students expressed their concerns, stating that despite repeated appeals to university officials and the state government over the past 13 years, their demands remain unaddressed.

HM slams YSRCP over ex-MLA Vamsi's arrest

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha has strongly criticised the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) over its remarks on the recent arrest of former Gannavaram MLA Vallabhani Vamsi Mohan. Speaking at an event, she accused the YSRCP of hypocrisy, recalling how party chief and former Chief

Minister Kandula Durgesh has urged the youth to support Perabattula Rajasekhar, the candidate for the Unified Godavari Districts' Graduates' Constituency, in the upcoming MLC elections. Speaking at a meeting organised by observer Borugadda Vedyavyas at Vijnana Vikas College in Samisragudem, he emphasised the importance of youth participation in shaping their future.

Minister Durgesh stressed that graduates should prioritise their votes for Rajasekhar in the elections scheduled for February 27. He encouraged them to actively participate in the campaign to ensure a decisive victory, stating that Rajasekhar's election would open up employment opportunities and help address key



issues faced by the youth in the region.

He assured the gathering that Rajasekhar has a deep understanding of not just youth-related concerns but also broader community

issues. Highlighting the welfare initiatives undertaken by the coalition government for unemployed youth and marginalised groups, he urged party cadres to effectively communicate these benefits.



5 kids hurt as school bus plunges into pond

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

A major accident was averted in Srikakulam district on Saturday evening when a bus lost control and fell into a pond, injuring five students.

The incident took place near Umagiri in Mandasa Mandal when a Vivekananda School bus veered off the road and plunged into a roadside pond after the driver lost control. The sudden accident caused panic among the students.

Local residents, who witnessed the incident, rushed to the spot and quickly rescued all the students from the submerged bus.

The injured students were taken to Mandasa Government Hospital, where they are receiving treatment. Hospital officials confirmed that their condition is stable.

Authorities have started an investigation into the accident. Preliminary reports suggest that a mechanical failure or driver error may have caused the mishap.

Rahul will reveal his caste if Centre conducts survey: Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rahul Gandhi will definitely reveal his caste if the Centre conducts a caste census across the nation, TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud told BJP leaders.

Addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Saturday, Mahesh said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy did not speak anything offensive about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's caste.

"The CM only said that Modi was not born as a BC and so he did nothing for BCs. However, BJP leaders are speaking offensively about Rahul Gandhi's grandfather Feroz Gandhi. BJP leaders are forgetting the 'sacrifices' of the Gandhi family. People know the caste of Rahul Gandhi. He would reveal his caste if the BJP-led Centre conducts a caste survey," Mahesh said.

He said that Sonia Gandhi was born in Italy. However, she became Indian after marrying Rajiv Gandhi. Sanjay is speaking forgetting the fact that he is

a Union Minister of State. Sanjay should remember that India is a secular country. Modi's Ganshi caste was included in the BCs' list in 1994. Revanth said that Modi was made a BC legally and did nothing for BCs in the last 10 years.

"Sanjay is a born BC. However, Modi is not a born BC. The BJP removed Sanjay from the Telangana BJP President post before the elections even though he had worked hard for his party. The BJP should conduct a caste census along with the population census if it is sincere about BCs. We will introduce a caste census law after the caste survey is over. The BJP-led Centre should help BCs by including the law in the 9th Schedule," Mahesh said.

Responding to a question, he said that Kavitha's Delhi liquor scam was exposed and the Kerala scam is waiting. Nobody knows how many scams will come out if Kavitha opens her Pink Book. Kavitha shouldn't open her Pink Book, he said.

Dhilli's journey from politician to environmental protector

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

Chowdari Lakshmana Rao, popularly known as Dhilli Rao, is a man who chose nature over power. At 66, this resident of Palasapuram village in Sompeta mandal, Srikakulam district, has shown that standing by one's principles is more important than holding a political position.

Rao began his political career in 1980 with the Congress party and held key positions, including as State Director of the Toddy Tappers Corporation. However, in 2008, his life took a different

turn when the government planned to build a thermal power plant (TPP) in the Beela wetlands, an ecologically sensitive area.

Realising the environmental damage the project could cause, Rao decided to quit politics. "I couldn't live with the thought of destroying our wetlands," he says. "Some battles are bigger than political office."

He led a strong protest against the TPP, despite threats and pressure. "They offered me Rs 10 crore and even a luxury flat to stop protesting," he recalls. "But I stood firm with my people



Rao entered politics in 1980 with Congress, holding key roles, including State Director of the Toddy Tappers Corporation. In 2008, he quit after opposing a thermal power plant in the Beela wetlands. "I couldn't destroy our wetlands," he says. "Some battles matter more than politics."

and nature." The movement turned tragic on July 14, 2010, when police fired on protesters, killing three people.

Despite this, Rao and his supporters continued their fight, leading to a major victory in 2014 when the government

cancelled the TPP land allotment. This struggle changed Rao's views on farming as well. Inspired by environmen-

talists, he adopted organic farming and now cultivates paddy, millets, and vegetables without chemicals. "Farming is not just about growing food; it is about protecting the land for future generations," he says. Every New Year's Day, Rao celebrates his birthday by planting saplings. "Planting a tree is a small but meaningful way to give back to nature," he adds.

From a politician to a protector of the environment and organic farming, Dhilli Rao's life proves that true leadership means standing by one's beliefs and making a real difference in the world.

ACROSS THE STATES



Noted Bengali singer Pratul Mukhopadhyay dies at 82

Renowned Bengali singer and songwriter Pratul Mukhopadhyay died on Saturday following a prolonged illness, a senior official of the West Bengal Health Department said. Mukhopadhyay was 82 and is survived by his wife. His mortal remains were accorded full state honours at Rabindra Sadan Cultural Complex in the presence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, before being donated to a hospital. He was known for songs highlighting social issues and singing them without the accompaniment of musical instruments. Condoling Mukhopadhyay's death, Governor C V Ananda Bose said, "We are saddened by the demise of legendary Bengali singer-songwriter Pratul Mukhopadhyay, known for his iconic songs like 'Ami Banglay Gan Gai' and 'Dinga Bhashao Sagore'."

Democratic India able to feed 800 million people: Jaishankar

PNS ■ MUNICH

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said since India is a democratic society, it is able to give nutrition support and food to 800 million people.

Speaking on Friday at a panel discussion titled 'Live to Vote Another Day: Fortifying Democratic Resilience' at the Munich Security Conference, Jaishankar made these remarks as a counter to US Senator Elissa Slotkin's remark that democracy "doesn't put food on the table."

"Senator, you said that democracy doesn't put food on your table. Actually... in my part of the world, it (democracy) does. Today, since we are a democratic society, we give nutrition support, and food to 800 million people," Jaishankar said.

"That is a matter of how healthy they are and how full their stomachs are. So, the point I want to make is that different parts of the world are going through different conversations. Please do not



assume that this is a kind of universal phenomenon, it is not," he said.

"There are parts where it is working well. Maybe there are parts where it's not and the parts which are not. I think people need to have honest conversations about why it's not," the External Affairs Minister said.

"But I would argue that to an

extent, as someone dispassionately viewing it, a lot of it is an accumulated problem of the model of globalisation that we have followed for the last 25-30 years. I think a lot of chickens have come home to roost. So, yes there are issues, but from our point of view, let's not make that 'universal,' the External Affairs Minister added.

"Started the #MSC2025 with

a panel on 'Live to Vote Another Day: Fortifying Democratic Resilience.' Joined PM @jonasgahrstore, @ElissaSlotkin and @trzasowski.

Highlighted India as a democracy that delivers. Differed with the prevailing political pessimism. Spoke my mind on foreign interference," the minister posted on X.



UN climate chief calls India 'solar superpower'

Urges it to submit stronger climate action plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

UN climate chief Simon Stiell has called India a "solar superpower" and urged it to develop an ambitious climate plan covering its entire economy, saying that an even stronger embrace of the global clean energy boom will supercharge its economic rise.

Stiell, who is in India to attend the ET Global Business Summit, lauded India's efforts to mitigate climate change, saying that while some governments only talk, "India delivers".

"India is already a solar superpower, one of only four countries to have installed more than 100 gigawatts of solar... Energy access is on the

rise with villages across the country electrified by 2018, well ahead of schedule," he said.

"Now there is a real opportunity to take the next step and unleash even bigger benefits for India's 1.4 billion people and economy. India is already headed firmly in this direction, but an even stronger embrace of the global clean energy boom will supercharge India's economic rise," he said.

Stiell said India has an opportunity that only a few countries have: "To realise ambitious plans to deploy hundreds more gigawatts of renewable energy capacity. To lead a new wave of green industrialization, developing, scaling, and exporting vital technologies."



Mentally challenged man lynched by mob

A 36-year-old man, suspected to be mentally challenged, was lynched by a mob after he allegedly beat two people to death in Bihar's Bhagalpur district, police said on Saturday. The incident took place in Makandpur village in Nathnagar police station area on Friday night. A statement issued by the district police said, "According to locals, Chotu Kumar, suspected to be mentally challenged, started beating Rajeev Rai (68), Jai Prakash Ram (65) and three others with a wooden log in the village. While Rajeev Rai died on the spot, Jai Prakash Ram succumbed to his injuries during treatment. The other three are undergoing treatment at the nearest government hospital and their condition is reported to be stable." By the time police reached the spot, locals were beating Chotu Kumar.

India needs clear vision to produce new tech: Rahul

Says empty words won't work



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said while India has the talent, it needs a strong production base, and not empty words, to build industrial prowess in new technology to give its youth jobs.

In a post on X, Gandhi highlighted how China has started producing drones which are revolutionising warfare across the world, saying India needs to develop a strategy to become competitive in this area.

"Drones have revolutionised warfare, combining batteries, motors and optics to manoeuvre and communicate on the battlefield in unprecedented ways. But drones are not just one technology -- they are bottom-up

innovations produced by a strong industrial system.

"Unfortunately, PM Modi has failed to grasp this. While he delivers 'teletext' speeches on AI, our competitors are mastering new technologies. India needs a strong production base, not empty words," he said in the post, taking a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"India has immense talent, scale and drive. We must have a clear vision and build real industrial prowess to give our youth jobs and lead India into the future," Gandhi added.

The Congress leader also tagged a nine-minute video on drone technology with the post, saying India has the talent and engineering skills to develop such technology for the future.

15 Bangla nationals detained in TN

PNS ■ ERODE (TAMIL NADU)

Fifteen Bangladesh nationals, including two women, have been taken into custody here for allegedly staying without proper documents, police said on Saturday.

A raid was conducted in Panikkampalayam, Mettukadai and Perundurai based on reports that foreign nationals were residing and working in private firms without valid permits, they said.



During the operation on Friday night, police found the 15 individuals employed in various private companies and as masons.

When asked to provide valid travel documents, including passports and visas, none could do so, they added.

The detainees are currently being interrogated, though no arrests have been made yet.

Perundurai, an industrial hub, is known to have a significant number of undocumented Bangladeshi workers, police said, adding that further raids will be conducted soon.

Mediation is mode for redressal: CJI

Says not all disputes suited for courtrooms

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna on Saturday said not all disputes are suited for courtrooms and litigations, and asserted that mediation is the mode for redressal as it offers creative solutions and strengthens relationships.

Speaking at the third convocation ceremony of the Maharashtra National Law University (MNLU) in Nagpur, he said each case has to be seen not from the eyes of legal issues but as a human story.

Indian legal aid structure is perhaps the most robust in the world where assistance is given to all the stakeholders, he noted.

"Not all disputes are suited for courtrooms, litigation or even arbitration. Mediation is

the mode for redressal that offers us more than just dispute resolution," the CJI said.

It opens doors to creative solutions beyond simple yes or no answers, he said.

By choosing this path, we



not only resolve conflicts efficiently, but also strengthen relationships between people and businesses, he said.

CJI Khanna added that lawyers are the problem solvers who have to come up with creative solutions that address both the legal and human

dimensions of the problem.

"Just as problems cannot be fixed into boxes, neither can their solutions. As our problems keep becoming more dynamic, the need for their solutions has to be more flexible. The road to justice itself cannot be a hurdle to achieve it," he said.

The CJI urged everyone to think beyond the convention and broaden their horizons to make justice delivery cost-effective and time-bound.

He said the generation today faces challenges that our predecessors hardly imagined, like climate change that threatens not only our environment but the very fabric of human rights and social justice, and digital evolution that raises unprecedented questions about privacy, security and nature of human interaction.



CBSE exams for Classes 10, 12 begin, 42 L to take exam

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) exams for Classes 10 and 12 began on Saturday, with more than 42 lakh students set to take the tests at over 7,800 centres across the country and abroad. According to board officials, a total of 24.12 lakh Class-10 students will take the test in 84 subjects, while more than 17.88 lakh students will appear in the Class-12 exams across 120 subjects. The exams are scheduled to be conducted at 7,842 centres in India and 26 abroad. On the first day of the exams, the Class 10 students appeared for the English (Communicative) and English (Language and Literature) papers, while the Class-12 students appeared in the Entrepreneurship exam.

10 devotees killed as car collides with bus en route to Maha Kumbh

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Ten persons travelling in a Bolero car were killed in a head-on collision with a bus on a highway in the Meja police station area of Prayagraj late on Friday night, police said on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Vivek Chandra Yadav said the devotees from Chhattisgarh's Korba district

were heading to the Maha Kumbh to take a dip when the Bolero they were travelling in collided head-on with a bus on the highway.

All the 10 people travelling in the Bolero died in the accident, while those in the bus suffered minor injuries, the DCP said.

While four of the deceased were identified based on their Aadhaar cards, six were iden-



tified on the basis of information provided by their relatives.

The deceased include Somnath (28), Ishwari Prasad Jaiswal (56), Bhagirathi Jaiswal (43), Santosh Soni (55), Saurabh Soni, Ajay Banjare, Ganga Das Verma, Shiva Rajput (60), Deepak Verma and Raju Sahu.

The bodies have been sent to the SRN Hospital in Prayagraj

for autopsy, the DCP said. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed grief over the loss of lives in the accident.

In a post in Hindi on X, the chief minister's office said, "UPCM @myogiadityanath has expressed deep condolences on the loss of lives in a road accident in Prayagraj district. He has expressed condolences to the bereaved families."

'Don't make Amritsar deport centre'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday kept up his attack on the Centre over the landing of US planes carrying illegal Indian immigrants at Amritsar airport and asked it not to make the holy city a "deport centre".

A second US flight carrying 119 illegal Indian immigrants is slated to land in Amritsar on Saturday night. On February 5, a US military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian deportees landed at the Amritsar airport.

The chief minister visited the airport on Saturday and said his government has made arrangements to take the residents of Punjab from among the second batch of deportees to their hometowns.

The deportees who hail from other states will head to Delhi

Mann slams Centre over landing of flights in Punjab



Talking to reporters at the airport, Mann continued his attack on the Centre and said, "Do not make our holy city (Amritsar) a deport centre"

from Amritsar in a flight on Sunday morning and then they will be taken to their respective places, Mann said.

According to official sources, the second deportation flight from the US is expected to land at Amritsar airport around 10 pm on Saturday.

Talking to reporters at the

airport, Mann continued his attack on the Centre and said, "Do not make our holy city (Amritsar) a deport centre."

There are many airbases in the country and the flight can be landed at any one of them, the Punjab chief minister said.

Asked whether the second batch of deportees will be in

shackles, he said they do not have any information on this. The Centre should have sent its own plane to bring illegal Indian deportees, Mann added.

Among the second batch of 119 Indians being deported from the US as part of the Donald Trump administration's promised crackdown on

illegal migration, 100 are from Punjab and Haryana alone.

While 67 are from Punjab, 33 are 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.

On Friday, Mann questioned the decision to land another plane at the Amritsar airport and accused the Centre of trying to defame Punjab as part of a conspiracy.

"The BJP-led Centre always discriminates against Punjab. It does not let go of any chance of defaming the state," Mann had said "As part of a conspiracy, they are trying to defame Punjab and Punjabis."

Mann also asked the Centre under which criteria the Amritsar airport was chosen to land the second aircraft.

'Be smarter than smartphone'

Sadhguru during Pariksha Pe Charcha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Textbooks are not a challenge for intelligence and stress means the brain is not being oiled enough, spiritual leader Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev said, as he shared mantras for playful learning and avoiding stress ahead of exams with students as part of the prime minister's latest 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' episode aired on Saturday.

Sadhguru told students that they have to be smarter than their smartphones. He also shared tips on how to avoid overthinking during a special session of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' -- an annual event in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students appearing for board examinations.

In a shift from the traditional town hall format, Modi pre-



ferred a more informal setting this time and took students to Delhi's iconic Sunder Nursery for his annual interaction.

Eminent personalities such as boxer MC Mary Kom and Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone have also shared their experiences and knowledge on key aspects of life and learning in different episodes of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha'.

Next in the series are Bollywood actors Vikrant

Massey and Bhumi Pednekar sharing tips on cultivating positivity, managing negative thoughts, and tackling exam stress with confidence.

"For #ExamWarriors, among the biggest allies during exam time is positivity. Tomorrow's 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' episode delves into this topic and we have @VikrantMassey and @bhumpednekar share their insights," Modi wrote on X.

Pan-Indian Plates

FACT SHEET
RAAG by Miss Nora
Address : 1st Floor,
R Cube Monad Mall,
Rajouri Garden,
New Delhi
Price for Two:
₹1600 approx

Step into RAAG, where each bite you take, will let you experience original flavours, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

In the heart of *Rajouri Garden*, RAAG orchestrates a dining experience that harmonises India's diverse food heritage with artistry and ambiance. Stepping inside RAAG feels like entering an aesthetic royal world where flavours, soft music, and traditional design comes together as a perfect dining. The menu, inspired by time-honoured recipes and slow-cooked traditions, takes diners on a gastronomic journey across the country. From the rich, aromatic *Ek Taar ki Nihari* to the indulgent *Kaladi Bharwan Gucchi*, every dish tells a story steeped in history.

With a diverse menu of *Chaats, Shorba, Grill and Tandoor, Platters, Main Course, Degh*, and so much more, the restaurant has so much to offer with a literally delicious taste.

If you start from chaats, the beloved street-style delight, *Moradabadi Dal Ki Chaat* is a symphony of textures and flavours. Made with protein-packed tallow-moong dal lentils, this dish is a warm, velvety bowl of comfort, elevated by an array of vibrant toppings. The date-jaggery chutney adds a delicate sweetness, balancing the savoury richness, while the *khas-ta kachori* provides the perfect crunch.

Moving to the vegetarian tasting platter, the appetizers served were just wow in taste where every ingredient's flavour has been differentiated from the other giving a perfect taste. The appetizers in the platter include the *Chenna Dahi Kabab* blending creamy Greek yogurt and ricotta, pan-grilled to golden perfection, *Paneer Tikka* with a smoky finish and stuffed mushroom, *Bharwan Khumb Tikka* showcases teja mirch marinade, cheddar-paneer stuffing. The platter is a must have recommendation.

Beyond the plate, RAAG fascinates with its immersive atmosphere with the striking *Sabyasachi*-designed wallpaper, the gentle strains of the sitar, and a cocktail menu infused with regional spices elevate the eating experience. Signature drinks, like the *Nawabi Sour*, complement the carefully curated flavours, ensuring that every sip and bite resonates with authenticity. At RAAG, dining is a celebration of India's culinary soul with taste that will make you lick your fingers in satisfaction.

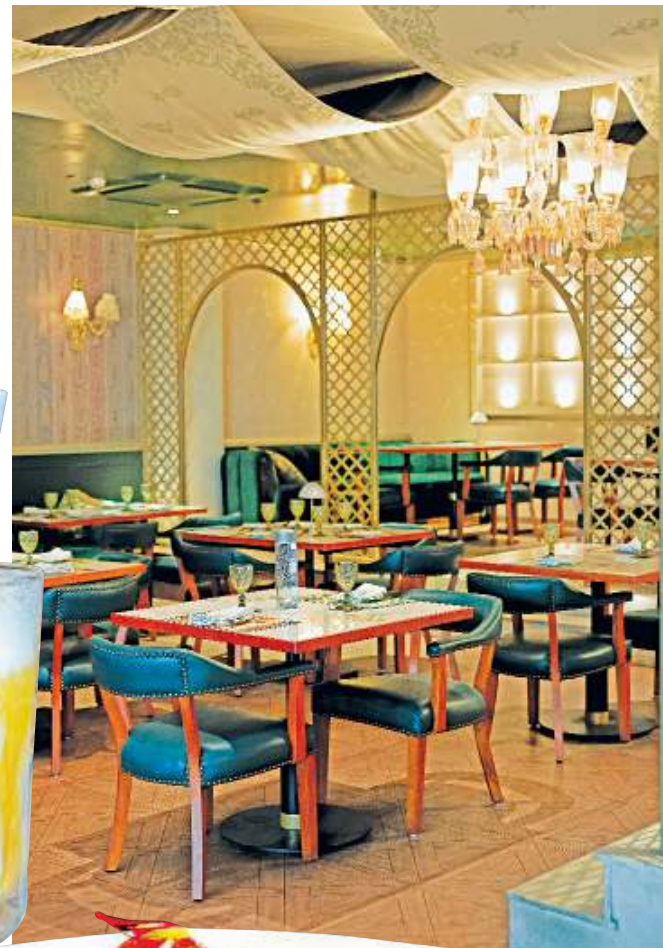


AMRITSARI SERVINGS

From the Amritsari *Kulcha Bar* you can have a *Classic Aloo Pyaaz Kulcha*, taste that directly teleports you to the land of Amritsar with layered Indian flat bread with stuffing of your choice, served with dal makhni, homemade compote and white butter.

SHAKES AND SMOOTHIES

You can go for an *Oreo Caramel Shake* and *Choco Peanut Butter Shake*. Shakes at RAAG break the notion that a milkshake must always be thick, offering a perfect blend of milk and chocolate flavours.



Indulgent Flavours

BY TEAM AGENDA

Food has a magical way of bringing people together. The dessert dishes like *Berry Bliss Cheesecake*, evoke a feeling of satisfaction to your taste buds. Every dish tells a story and satisfies cravings in ways words often fail to capture.

Imagine this, you're sitting at the dining table, the air filled with the warm, inviting aroma of vanilla feels like a hug in every bite. A silky smooth cheesecake layered with a luscious berry glaze, this *Berry Bliss Cheesecake* is a perfect fusion of rich creaminess and tangy berry flavours. Here are the ingredients for a *Berry Bliss Cheesecake*:



INGREDIENTS (SERVES 6-8)

- For the Crust:**
- 1½ cups crushed digestive biscuits or graham crackers;
 - ¼ cup unsalted butter (melted);
 - 2 tbsp sugar
- For the Cheesecake Filling:**
- 2 cups cream cheese (softened);
 - 1 cup heavy cream;
 - ¾ cup powdered sugar;
 - 1 tsp vanilla extract;

- 2 tsp cornflour;
 - ¼ cup milk
- For the Berry Glaze:**
- 1 cup mixed berries (strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries);
 - ¼ cup sugar;
 - 1 tbsp lemon juice;
 - 1 tsp cornflour dissolved in 1 tbsp water
- For Garnish:**
- Fresh berries;
 - Mint leaves

Method

- Step 1:** Prepare the Crust
- Mix crushed biscuits, melted butter, and sugar.
 - Press into a greased cake tin and refrigerate for 30 minutes to set.
- Step 2:** Make the Cheesecake Filling
- Whisk cornflour into milk until smooth.
 - Beat cream cheese, powdered sugar, and vanilla extract until creamy.
 - Add heavy cream and beat until smooth.
 - Gently fold in the cornflour mixture.
 - Pour over the prepared crust and refrigerate for 6 hours or overnight until firm.
- Step 3:** Make the Berry Glaze
- Heat berries, sugar, and lemon juice in a saucepan until soft.
 - Add the cornflour mixture and simmer until thickened.
 - Strain for a smoother texture (optional) and let it cool.
- Step 4:** Assemble and Serve
- Pour the berry glaze over the chilled cheesecake.
 - Garnish with fresh berries and mint leaves.
 - Slice and serve cold.



CHEF'S TIPS

- Use full-fat cream cheese for the best texture.
- Allow the cheesecake to set completely for clean slices.
- Straining the berry glaze enhances the smoothness.

This *Berry Bliss Cheesecake* is a showstopper, creamy, fruity and indulgent, making it the ultimate dessert for any celebration!

Young and Rising Stars of Dining

The new generation of restaurateurs are transforming India's dining scene with passion

The restaurant industry has long been a playground for seasoned professionals, but a new wave of young entrepreneurs is rewriting the rules. These are not just ambitious dreamers banking on Instagrammable décor and buzzy themes, they are deeply invested in the food itself. Menu planning, ingredient sourcing, and tastings are their daily bread, and their knowledge surpasses even some chefs I have met.

Take, for instance, Tusheeta Khanna and Anant Bali, the young duo behind *Encanto*, a newly opened Mexican restaurant in Gurgaon. Their passion for authenticity is evident, not just in the food, which is impressive, but in their understanding of every dish, its origins, and the nuances of each ingredient. Too often, I have seen chefs operate with a superficial grasp of their own menu, but these two could school many in the trade.

Then there is Vanshika Wadhwa, carrying forward her family's legacy in the food business. Daughter of renowned restaurateur Vineet Wadhwa of *Fio*, she has launched *Kamei*, an Asian restaurant

that has already won over some of the most discerning food critics. Though I have yet to visit her outlets, the praise from trusted voices makes me confident she is onto something remarkable.

And let us talk about Bhagyesh Tekriwal and Utkarsh Khandelia, the brains behind *Sorbo*, a Mediterranean restaurant that speaks volumes of their dedication. While not as young as the others, their work reflects the

same meticulous approach, one where the food is the hero, not just the ambience.

Moving beyond the NCR, Jaipur has its own rising star in Sagar Nagpal, the force behind *Swinton House*. Built within an old haveli once owned by a British architect, the restaurant curates a menu inspired by his favourite dishes from around the world. The charm of the setting, combined with a well-thought-out culinary selection, makes it a standout in the Pink City's ever-growing food scene.

Further north, in Mohali, Arpit Singh is making waves with *Prey*, an avant-garde concept built over a dam.

With open-air dining lit by kerosene lamps, the space exudes a dreamy, romantic charm, setting the stage for an unforgettable dining experience. His vision proves that ambience and cuisine can come together to create something truly special.

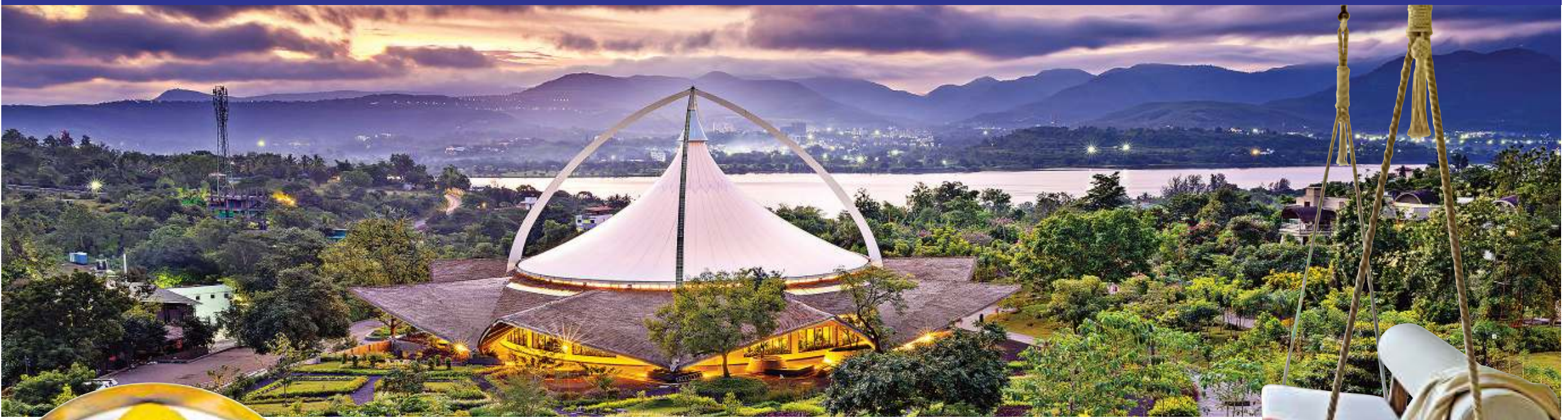
Just today, I met Muskan Katyal, the niece of Porus

Arora, the name behind *Sticky Rice, Enoki*, and more. She is the same age as Tusheeta and Anant and is already making waves with *Mala Project*, a Gurgaon-based restaurant dedicated to the fiery flavours of Chinese Mala cuisine. Her involvement in the project along with Porus and Tanvi Arora is not just token ownership, she is hands-on, ensuring the authenticity of every bite.

If these young restaurateurs are any indication, the future of dining in India is in excellent hands. Their enthusiasm, knowledge, and commitment to quality are setting new standards. This is not just a generational shift, it is a culinary revolution, and I, for one, am eager to see what they cook up next.

—Pawan Soni





RECONNECT WITH YOURSELF

A wellness retreat embracing nature and modern science

Set against the stunning backdrop of the Sahyadri mountains, *Swastik* offers an immersive experience that rejuvenates the mind, body, and soul. Here's a glimpse into this transformative journey that redefines wellness travel.

Wellness today is no longer just a luxury for the affluent or a niche interest for certain travellers. It has become a mainstream pursuit, embraced by individuals from all walks of life. This shift is reflected in the rapidly growing wellness tourism sector, which, according to the Global Wellness Institute, is expected to reach \$1.3 trillion by 2025. Amidst this burgeoning trend, I recently discovered a retreat that perfectly encapsulates the evolution of wellness travel, *Swastik*, a Luxury Wellbeing Sanctuary.

Swastik's Elemental Harmony

- Dhyan Vihar (Space, Akash):** A conical meditation hall promoting self-awareness and stillness.
- Anand Vihar (Fire, Agni):** A transformative space featuring dining, consultation, and performance areas.
- Ayu Vihar (Air, Vayu):** A rejuvenation hub offering therapies to balance body and mind.
- Sukh Vihar (Earth, Bhumi):** Luxurious residential spaces for immersive wellness experiences.
- Ganga Vihar (Water, Jal):** A space dedicated to cleansing and rejuvenation, embodying fluid energy and transformation.



A Journey into the Unknown

As a newcomer to wellness retreats, I wasn't sure what to expect. My understanding of wellness was limited to exercise and meditation, which I had found rather mundane. However, in search of a reset, I embarked on a three-day journey that would challenge my preconceptions in the most delightful way.

Upon our arrival in Pune, we were greeted by a gracious driver who took us on a scenic 1.5-hour drive to the retreat. Having expected bland, restrictive meals, I indulged in a Vada Pav before arriving at *Swastik*. But from the moment we stepped onto the property, the experience exceeded all expectations. The resort's design, crafted by TAOS-TUDIO, is deeply inspired by the five core elements, Earth, Air, Water, Fire and Space, which form the foundation of its architectural brilliance. The property is structured around five key dimensions of life, Health, Wealth, Love, Bliss and Spirituality, ensuring that nature is woven into every aspect of the experience.

the exhaustion, the tranquillity, or the therapy itself, I drifted into deep, restful sleep almost instantly.

Architectural & Philosophical Vision

Swastik's philosophy is embodied in its logo, a blooming flower representing the four core values of Health, Wealth, Love, and Bliss, all rooted in Spirituality, the central force of its existence. The retreat nurtures the potential of every individual, encouraging personal growth and self-discovery. *Swastik* transformed my perception of wellness. It showed me that wellness is not about rigid discipline but about creating a lifestyle that balances indulgence with mindfulness.

— By Rohit Kaul



Unique Rituals and Therapies

That evening, we experienced *Swastik's* signature sleep ritual. Two therapists arrived at our Guha to perform a soothing bedtime routine, applying calming oils, offering a relaxing foot massage, and tucking us in with mindful silence. Whether it was



A TRANSFORMATIVE WELLNESS EXPERIENCE

Our wellness journey began with an assessment by an in-house Ayurvedic doctor, who analysed our doshas (body energies) and recommended therapies to restore balance. The evening's dinner was a revelation. Contrary to my expectations of bland health food, *Swastik's* culinary offerings were a sensory delight. Each meal was a five-course experience, crafted from locally sourced, seasonal ingredients, many of which were grown on-site. Chef Arvind Joshi's thoughtfully curated menu transformed my understanding of healthy eating. It was nourishing, flavourful, and fulfilling without feeling restrictive.

A Retreat in Nature's Embrace

Nestled in the peaceful Peacock Valley, *Swastik* overlooks the backwaters of Khadakwasla Lake and the majestic Sinhagad, with the Sahyadri mountain range as its backdrop. Designed to honour nature's rhythms, from sunrise to moonrise, *Swastik* seamlessly integrates spirituality and wellness. The name itself, derived from Sanskrit, combines well, being associated with, symbolising auspiciousness and wellbeing.



Chettinad: Unleashing the Ghosts of Imagination

Though known for its stunning architecture, rich cultural heritage, and unforgettable cuisine, Chettinad hides a deeper mystery, the kind that stirs the imagination

ground spices from a Chettinad kitchen. And so, here I am, in *Chettinad*, on a journey to unravel its mysteries. It is not merely a destination, it is an experience, an ongoing unravelling that draws you in deeper with every step. When speaking of South India, it is impossible to ignore the region's vibrant culture and magnificent architecture. The interplay of bright colours, lush greenery, and the salty air gives this part of India its unique character, attracting visitors from all corners of the globe. One such captivating destination is *Chettinad*, the homeland of the Nattukottai Chettiars (also known as Nagarathars), a prosperous banking and business community. The name "Chettinad" refers to a region comprising 56 villages in the Sivaganga district and 20 in the Pudukottai district. Historically, this area was part of the Ramnad kingdom of Pandya Nadu.

Despite lacking typical tourist attractions like beaches or lofty hill stations, *Chettinad* captivates visitors with its majestic mansions, architectural masterpieces that stand in stark contrast to the arid landscape. These grand homes, some more

than 300 years old, whisper stories of the generations who once lived under their roofs. The *Chettiar* community, originally merchants and traders dealing in salt, gems, textiles and jewellery, controlled much of India's banking economy in the 19th century. Their legacy is written in the stunning mansions that still stand today, some meticulously preserved as heritage properties, while others gradually succumb to the ravages of time.

The Athangudi Palace is one such treasure, showcasing the finest elements of *Chettiar* architecture. For a modest fee of INR 50, visitors can explore its open courtyards, elegant verandahs, and the seamless blend of European and Indian architectural styles. Built in the early 20th century, the palace boasts imported wood, marble, tiles, and mirrors from around the world. Its interiors, maintained with painstaking care, offer a rare glimpse into the grandeur of the Chettiars' past.

For those with a spiritual inclination, *Chettinad* is home to some remarkable temples. A visit here would be incomplete without exploring the *A r i y a k k u d i* Thiruvangadamudaiyan Temple, dedicated to Lord Srinivasa. Built in the 17th



THOUGH THESE VILLAGES MAY BE VACANT NOW, THEY STILL STAND RESILIENT, HOLDING ONTO THE MEMORIES OF A BYGONE ERA

century by Sevugan *Chettiar*, a devout Saivite, this temple was constructed after the divine Lord Venkateswara appeared to *Chettiar* in a dream, instructing him to build a temple in his village. The temple's Dravidian architecture is awe-inspiring, reflecting the community's deep devotion.

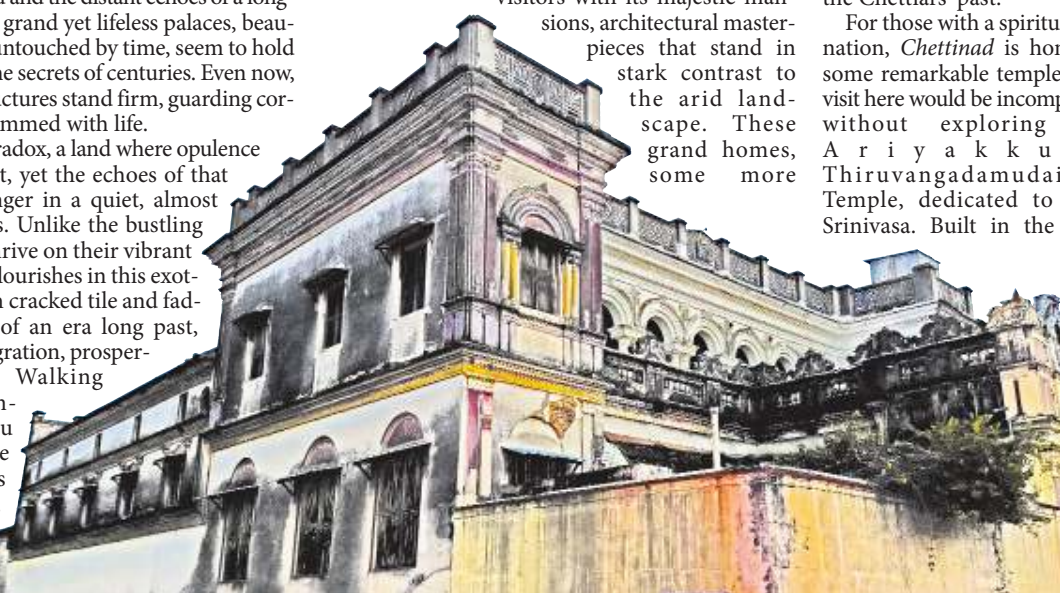
Chettinad also holds its share of ancient fortifications. The Thirumayam Fort, built in 1687 by Raja Raghunatha Thevar of Ramanathapuram, sits atop a hillock. It encompasses temples, caves, a jail, and even a mysterious pond. As my guide, Kavita, excitedly narrated the fort's history, I was particularly drawn to a natural water pond at the summit, whose water level remains unchanged year-round, a phenomenon that adds to the fort's allure. From the highest point, I was rewarded with a stunning 360-degree view of the region, a moment of pure enchantment.

More than the grand mansions, exquisite temples and rich culinary heritage, what truly touched my heart was the warmth of the people. Their genuine smiles and welcoming nature made my journey even more memorable.

— By Divya Bhatia



There is something enchantingly captivating about a place frozen in time. As you wander through the quiet streets of *Chettinad*, its serenity is only disturbed by the soft whispers of the wind and the distant echoes of a long-forgotten past. The grand yet lifeless palaces, beautifully crafted and untouched by time, seem to hold within their walls the secrets of centuries. Even now, these imposing structures stand firm, guarding corridors that once hummed with life. *Chettinad* is a paradox, a land where opulence was once abundant, yet the echoes of that prosperity now linger in a quiet, almost meditative stillness. Unlike the bustling tourist hubs that thrive on their vibrant energy, *Chettinad* flourishes in this exotic calm, where each cracked tile and fading mural speaks of an era long past, brimming with migration, prosperity, and change. Walking through its abandoned villages, you don't just observe history; you feel its pulse in the air, hanging like the intoxicating scent of freshly



IN BRIEF



PM's US visit to strengthen trade, investment ties: CII

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US is a major milestone that will strengthen bilateral trade, investment, defence, and technology partnerships, industry body CII said on Saturday. Welcoming the recently concluded visit, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) said it eyes stronger trade and tech ties. CII noted that the wide-ranging joint statement and initiatives announced during the visit under the framework of US-India COMPACT have set a clear forward-looking agenda for India-US relations, creating new opportunities for Indian industry and economic growth. "A new chapter has been added to the India-US partnership, enabling much stronger collaboration in strategic sectors including defence, energy, semiconductors, space and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, advanced materials, and biotechnology.



HP CM approves 25 project proposals of Rs 883 crore

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday approved 25 project proposals for setting up new industrial enterprises and expanding the existing units involving an investment of about Rs 883.36 crore. The projects approved have potential to generate jobs for about 2,830 persons, a release said. While chairing the meeting of the State Single Window Clearance & Monitoring Authority (SSWC&MA), Sukhu said that this shows that the State continues to attract the investment as a most favoured destination. New proposals approved by the Authority include proposals by Bauji Industries for manufacturing of capsules, tablets, liquid etc. and Jai Pali Infra for manufacturing of PUF panel. Rich Printers proposal for manufacturing of corrugated boxes and Richlyns Healthcare for manufacturing of liquid, tablet, capsule, Indo Spirits' for manufacturing of IMFL and country liquor and Kaumudhi Textiles Private Limited's for manufacturing of textile fabric towel are also among the projects cleared by the authority.



G Square Realtors strengthen TN footprint

Real estate provider G Square Realtors Pvt Ltd has launched various projects, expanding into the apartment and villa categories in Coimbatore, further strengthening its presence in the Tamil Nadu real estate market, a top official said. In a statement on Saturday, the company said it achieved sales of Rs 110 crore from four new projects, which have a total value of Rs 170 crore. "This marks a significant milestone in the company's expansion across the region further solidifying its leadership in the real estate sector," the city-headquartered company stated. The four newly launched projects include G Square 'Bliss' in Neelambur, G Square 'Woodland' in Ramanathapuram, G Square 'Emerald Enclave' in Pollachi, and G Square 'Urbanise' in Saravanampatti, all in and around Coimbatore. "We are thrilled by the overwhelming response to our development projects in Coimbatore. Achieving Rs 110 crore in sales out of a total project value of Rs 170 crore is a testament to the trust our customers place in G Square," said G Square Realtors Pvt Ltd Managing Director Bala Ramajeyam in the press release.

Roadmap ready to build Viksit Bharat by 2047: Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Saturday blamed previous governments for missing the opportunity to develop infrastructure for boosting economic expansion, saying the Modi government has prepared the roadmap to achieve the Viksit Bharat@2047 goal. This assumes significance in view of India's ambitious goal of achieving the target of a fully developed nation in 2047 when the country will be celebrating 100 years of independence.

Speaking at The Times Group's ET NOW Global Business Summit (GBS) 9th Edition, Mandaviya said that many trains (opportunities to push economic growth) came and went but the country was not ready with its luggage and ticket (roadmap for development) at the right time.

The minister, who holds the portfolio of Labour and Employment and Youth Affairs and Sports, was referring to the absence of a clear-cut roadmap for development, especially infrastructure, commensurate with the need of the hour to keep pace with changing times for achieving high economic growth.



"We are not just talking about a Viksit Bharat we are building it with a clear roadmap. In the past six years, 25 crore people have been lifted out of poverty, and 60 crore Indians now have access to free medical treatment under Ayushman Bharat."

He stated that the Modi government has prepared the roadmap to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat@2047.

"India's economic growth must be deeply rooted in our heritage while embracing innovation. Our ancestors—from the Indus Valley traders to Acharya Chanakya—laid the foundations of self-reliance and entrepreneurship, and those lessons remain as relevant today as ever."

He further stated that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we have revived this spirit through

initiatives like Startup India and Make in India.

"A decade ago, India had just four unicorns; today, we have 118, proving that nurturing talent and innovation can transform our economy," he said, emphasising the importance of blending tradition with modern progress.

"We are not just talking about a Viksit Bharat we are building it with a clear roadmap. In the past six years, 25 crore people have been lifted out of poverty, and 60 crore Indians now have access to free medical treatment under

Ayushman Bharat."

He noted that the job creation has nearly doubled compared to previous governments, and our farmers, businesses, and industries are thriving.

"Unlike in the past, when there was no clear vision, today, we deliver results."

Emphasising the collective effort needed, he said, "If each of us takes a step forward, India moves 140 crore steps ahead. Our nation's future depends on the commitment and responsibility of every Indian. Together, we will achieve the dream of a developed India by 2047."

USD 500 BN TARGET

Plans for trade pact to help boost exports to US: Exporters



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A target to take bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 and plans to negotiate a bilateral trade agreement will help India boost its exports to the US, say exporters.

The focus on technology, defence, and green energy will particularly benefit India's export sectors and enhance global competitiveness, exporters said.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ashwani Kumar underscored the importance of enhancing bilateral trade by eliminating barriers and streamlining processes.

International trade expert and Hi-Tech Gears Chairman

Deep Kapuria said that the USD 500 billion bilateral trade target is an important outcome of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-level visit to Washington.

"Since India has surplus in trade with the US, it would bring significant gains to India in terms of enhanced export to the world's largest economy. What is important here is that the two leaders have agreed to negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial multi-sector bilateral trade agreement by fall of 2025," he said.

Kapuria added that this decision will give a big boost to US investors who want to relocate to India and also looking for new investment opportunities in India.

Modi to address global textile fair Bharat Tex today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Sunday address the 'Bharat Tex 2025', a global textile fair that seeks to bring together the entire industry value chain.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said the "mega global event", being held from February 14-16, brings together the entire textile value chain ranging from raw materials to finished products including accessories under one roof.

Bharat Tex is the textile industry's largest and most comprehensive event comprising a mega expo spread across two venues and showcasing the entire textile ecosystem, it added. The event also features a



global scale conference with over 70 conference sessions, round-tables, panel discussions, and master classes.

Besides, it will include exhibitions featuring special innovations and startup pavilions. The event will also host a hackathon-based startup pitch fest and innovation fests, tech tanks and design challenges, providing

Over 110 countries to participate in Bharat Tex fair: AEPC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) on Saturday said that more than 110 countries, including Japan, UAE, Iran, USA, Spain, and the UK, are participating in the Bharat Tex 2025, a global event being held from February 14-17 at Bharat Mandapam here.

AEPC Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said that a large number of global brands and retail

chains have come to attend the fair.

"Japan has the largest number of apparel buyers represented in this show, followed by UAE, Iran, USA, Spain, UK, South Africa, Russia and Australia," he said, adding, "the presence of international delegations will further strengthen India's positioning as a reliable partner in the global textile market."

Bharat Tex platform is the

textile industry's largest and most comprehensive event comprising a mega expo spread across two venues and showcasing the entire textile ecosystem.

Minister of Textiles Giriraj Singh inaugurated the fair on Friday.

Minister of State for Textiles Pabitra Margherita, Textiles Secretary Neelam Shami Rao, and Additional Secretary Rohit Kansal were also present during the inauguration.

funding opportunities for startups. The PMO said Bharat Tex

2025 is expected to attract policymakers and global CEOs, over 5,000 exhibitors, 6,000

international buyers from over 120 countries among various other visitors.

Govt reviews 21 issues affecting 14 infra projects



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has reviewed as many as 21 issues affecting 14 infrastructure projects in Gujarat and Rajasthan for their redressal, an official statement said on Saturday.

The meeting chaired by DPIIT Secretary Amardeep Bhatia was attended by senior officials from central ministries, state governments, and project proponents.

The meeting, it said, was focused on expediting issue resolution through enhanced

inter-ministerial and state coordination facilitated by the Project Monitoring Group (PMG).

"21 issues across 14 significant projects were reviewed, including four projects under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, with a total cost of all projects exceeding Rs 13,162 crore. Additionally, seven issues pertaining to one private project, valued at Rs 600 crore, were also reviewed," it said.

One of the projects included the Khavda Renewable Energy Park in Gujarat.

"Once operational, the park is expected to generate about 81 billion units of clean electricity annually, significantly reducing dependence on fossil fuels," the DPIIT said, adding Reliance Jio's 5G/4G expansion project was also reviewed.

Bhatia asked the relevant authorities to take a proactive approach in addressing pending issues.

Travel advisory major hurdle in attracting foreign investment

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that travel advisory against the northeastern region by several countries is a major challenge in attracting investments, even as the state gears up for a mega business summit here later this month.

Sarma said he has requested the countries to view Assam 'in isolation' and not club all the North Eastern states together, with talks underway with Japan and Australia to persuade them to withdraw the adverse advisory.

Addressing a press conference in the run-up to 'Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit', Sarma said, "Most embassies have marked Assam in 'grey' and have a statutory warning for its citizens against visiting Assam, as the state is clubbed together as 'North East'. Removing these advi-

Alleges Assam CM Himanta



sories is the topmost priority for us."

He said countries like Japan and Australia are being persuaded to change this advisory, with a team from the Asian country already here to look into the matter while an Australian delegation is scheduled to reach shortly.

There is no adverse situation in Assam, and all stakeholders, including government, media and public, have to be together to drive home this point, he

asserted.

"As chief minister of Assam, I cannot influence other states. What I am doing is asking them (foreign nations), to view Assam in isolation," he added.

"To attract foreign investment, the travel advisory has to be withdrawn. And at the same time, we also have to show them our strengths, like skilling options for our human resources, peace and stability - politically, economically and in law and order," he said.

Non-availability of vast tracts of land needed for setting up big industries is also a problem for the state, which the government is working on to address, the CM added.

"The state Cabinet will approve many SEZs tomorrow, and we hope that we can navigate through this problem of acquiring land together," he said.

'Raj discoms can cut transmission losses through PPP model'

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan's power distribution companies can reduce its current 15-20 per cent transmission (AT&C) losses through a structured public-private partnership, an expert said on Saturday.

Tata Power CEO and MD Praveer Sinha said that the state can take inspiration from Odisha's successful model, which has improved efficiency, reduced losses, and enhanced consumer satisfaction through a structured public-private partnership.

"Odisha has reduced its AT&C losses by an average of 11 per cent over the last five years. Their success has been recognized in the Ministry of Power's national discom rankings. Rajasthan can take example from its success," Praveer Sinha, CEO & MD of Tata Power said.

He said that a major factor behind this transformation is the Rs 4,200 crore investment in infrastructure, network expansion, and technology integration, which has strengthened the power distribution system while generating employment through 7,000 local contracts.

SAIL to set up new rail mill with USD 8 mn investment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SAIL is bullish on the demand for rails in the country and has decided to set up a new rail mill at an investment of USD 800 million, the company's Chairman Amarendra Prakash said on Saturday.

The company has decided to go ahead with the investment plan despite not having any order indication from its largest buyer Indian Railways, Prakash said at a panel discussion at the Global Business Summit (GBS) in the national capital.

The chairman said such kind of confidence is a result of growth oriented policies of the government.



"Last week, we decided to put up an 800 million USD investment into a mill, because I am confident that railways will go nowhere and they will have to buy from me if I put up a mill. So, I have taken a decision like that. So, that is the kind of confidence that comes

when the policies we know are growth oriented, and they are bound to continue," he said.

Prakash said SAIL had been following up with the Railways for the past seven years for their future demand so accordingly the steel maker can plan rail production.

"I think, last seven years, we have been running after Indian railways, saying, how much rail track will you buy from us? Should we put up a new mill? Should I make an investment into a new mill? We can produce good railways. Will you buy it? They said, I am not going to give you any comfort about what I will buy in the future," the Chairman said.

India, Myanmar discuss resuming border trade

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Myanmar have discussed the importance of resuming border trade through roads and agreed to take steps on this issue, an official statement said on Sunday.

The issue was discussed during a meeting between Myanmar's Deputy Commerce Minister U Minn Minn and Minister of State of Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada here on February 14.

They discussed possibilities to increase cooperation in areas such as pharmaceuticals, puls-

es, petroleum products and greater use of the recently launched Rupee-Kyat trade settlement mechanism. "During the meeting, both the

leaders deliberated on the potential areas of collaboration to promote bilateral trade and also acknowledged the importance of resuming border trade through roads and agreed to take steps

on this issue," the commerce ministry said.

India is the fifth-largest trading partner of Myanmar. The bilateral trade stood at USD 1.74 billion in 2023-24 against USD 1.76 billion in 2022-23.

'MISAPPROPRIATION' OF RS 122 CRORE

New India Cooperative Bank's General Manager arrested

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Mumbai police on Saturday arrested Hitesh Mehta, General Manager and Head of Accounts of the New India Cooperative Bank, for allegedly misappropriating Rs 122 crore from the bank, officials said.

Mehta was placed under arrest by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the city police after being questioned for more than three hours, an official said.

He was called to record his statement before the probe agency at its south Mumbai office in connection with the case registered against him and



others, he said. Mehta will be produced before a local court on Sunday, the police official added.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday superseded the cooperative bank's board for a year and appointed an administrator to manage its affairs. A

day prior to that, it imposed several restrictions on the lender, including on withdrawal of funds by depositors, citing supervisory concerns emanating from the recent material developments in the bank, and to protect the interest of its depositors.

PILGRIMAGE OF THE SOUL:

Finding peace amidst the chaos of Mahakumbh & eternal call of Triveni Sangam

PIONEER EXCLUSIVE

A

fter 144 years, destiny has once again woven a divine tapestry at the Mahakumbh 2025, where the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati calls upon seekers of salvation. By February 14, an astounding 50 crore devotees had immersed themselves in the holy waters, believing that each dip washes away lifetimes of 'karma', paving the path to 'moksha'. It is believed that taking a dip in these holy waters during this auspicious period purifies the soul, washing away sins and offering a chance at spiritual rebirth. The air hums with ancient chants, the scent of incense mingles with the morning mist and the banks of Prayagraj shimmer under the golden sunrise, bearing witness to the largest spiritual gathering in human history. This is more than a festival—it is a cosmic alignment, a moment of divine grace where faith transcends time and millions unite in a single, sacred rhythm of devotion. Our journey to witness and experience this divine congregation was nothing short of an adventure, filled with unexpected challenges, endurance and moments of profound serenity.

TEJAL SINHA
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THE LONG ROAD TO MAHAKUMBH

Our trip to Mahakumbh began on the afternoon of the February 8, as we departed from Hyderabad. The journey stretched endlessly before us, leading us through changing landscapes and states as we made our way toward Prayagraj—the heart of the Mahakumbh. By the time we reached near Rewa, it was around 4 PM. However, fate had

different plans for us, as we found ourselves stuck at a toll gate for nearly 7-8 hours. The wait was frustrating, with no clear answers on when the congestion would clear. Despite the inconvenience, there was a quiet patience among fellow travellers—an unspoken understanding that this journey was one of faith and patience was merely another test. The contrasting weather conditions made the journey even more challenging. The nights were freezing, while the days were scorching hot. Yet, neither extreme could deter the countless devotees walking barefoot, carrying their offerings and making their way toward the Triveni Sangam for the sacred dip. It was awe-inspiring to witness such unwavering faith, where no discomfort could shake their determination.

A NIGHT IN THE CAR AND AN EARLY START

By the time we reached the outskirts of Prayagraj near the Mahakumbh site, it was already 10 PM on February 10. After an exhausting journey by road, we decided to rest, rather than proceeding for the holy dip immediately. Choosing patience over haste, we allowed ourselves a moment of respite, knowing that the spiritual experience

would be even more meaningful when approached with a fresh mind and body. Even within the confines of the vehicle, we could sense the energy of the gathering—a spiritual hum that filled the air. At exactly 3 AM on February 11, we decided to set off. We took an auto from Arail Ghat towards the Mahakumbh grounds, but due to traffic restrictions, the vehicle could only take us a certain distance. From there, we had to walk a few about 4 to 5 kilometers, navigating through the cold, dark streets. Despite the early hour, thousands of pilgrims were already walking beside us, their faces glowing with devotion and anticipation.

THE SEARCH FOR TRIVENI SANGAM

Finding the Triveni Sangam, the most sacred confluence, was far more difficult than expected. Information was sparse and authorities provided conflicting directions, leading to a long and exhausting search. Many devotees, unaware of the exact location, were performing their holy dip at different ghats, mostly in the Ganga, assuming it to be the Sangam or to not walk more, for that matter. We walked over 50,000 steps, moving from one ghat to another, constantly asking for guidance from the people around us. Some directed us one way, only for another person to contradict them. The sheer magnitude of the crowd and the lack of proper signage made the experience frustrating. Finally, after much effort, we reached Ghat Number One—the actual Triveni Sangam—just as the first rays of the sun began to illuminate the sacred waters. What a timing, we reached!

THE HOLY DIP: A MOMENT OF PEACE AMIDST THE CHAOS

Despite the exhaustion and the confusion, the moment we stepped into the sacred waters of the Sangam, it felt as though time had paused. The cool water sent shivers down our spine, but beneath the initial shock was a profound warmth—an inexplicable sense of peace and purity. Around us, devotees chanted prayers, immersed themselves in the water and offered their respects to the sacred rivers, creating an atmosphere of

KEEP AN EYE!

The Eyebetes Foundation, led by renowned Mumbai-based eye surgeon Dr. Nishant Kumar (a three-time Guinness Record holder), launched a large-scale charitable health initiative at the Maha Kumbh 2025. This transformative mission is designed to provide life-changing eye care and diabetes screenings to tens of thousands of devotees and frontline personnel attending this sacred event. With a dedicated team of 100 professionals, Eyebetes Foundation aims to offer free vision and diabetes screenings to over 20,000-30,000 pilgrims and over 5,000 uniformed personnel, ensuring that preventable blindness and undiagnosed diabetes do not hinder the lives of those who have embarked on this deeply spiritual journey.



THINGS TO MAKE A NOTE OF:

- Nights are colder while days are hotter—Make arrangements accordingly
- Don't browse for hotels on the Internet
- Don't believe on all the reels on Facebook and Instagram
- While travelling by road, make sure to carry light snacks and lots and lots of water
- Get your bargaining skills right with your ride from Arail Ghat to Mahakumbh
- Carry a long dupatta or rope and tied to each other
- Don't carry huge luggage to the ghat • Be careful with the vendors.
- Carry your own bottles for the Ganga water
- Wear the most comfy slippers or shoes

were made about missing persons, helping families reunite in the overwhelming crowd. This initiative provided a great sense of relief, ensuring that those separated from their groups could find their way back.

BASIC AMENITIES AND EXORBITANT PRICES

After taking the holy dip, we found designated changing areas for women, which were surprisingly well-maintained and provided much-needed privacy. However, as expected, the public washrooms were not in the best condition. While there was a continuous water supply, hygiene remained a challenge. One of the most common grievances among devotees was the exorbitant pricing of basic necessities. A small water bottle that normally costs Rs 10 was being sold for Rs 15. Similarly, transportation was highly overpriced. Auto-rickshaws and bikes were available to take people from the parking areas to different locations, but the fares were unreasonably high. Renting a bike within the Mahakumbh grounds cost between Rs 600 to Rs 800 for two people and these bikes were restricted to movement only within the premises.

divine serenity. However, the experience was not without its challenges. Even finding a simple bottle of drinking water near the Sangam was difficult, and to our surprise, there were no boats available early in the morning. Before 7:30 AM, the crowd was relatively sparse, but by 10 AM, the place had transformed into a sea of people, with thousands arriving for their turn at the holy dip.

THE MARKETPLACE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

As we explored the surroundings, we observed various stalls selling religious artifacts, prasad and daily essentials. Continuous announcements were being made, warning pilgrims to be cautious of certain sellers who were overcharging for basic items or for their safety. While the authorities had taken measures to prevent exploitation, some vendors still took advantage of unsuspecting visitors. One of the most well-organised aspects of Mahakumbh was the Lost and Found Center near Ghat Number Six near the Tower. Constant announcements

CONCERNS OVER BOAT SERVICES AND PILGRIMS' STRUGGLES

During a conversation with a vendor near the ghats, we learned that boat services were a major issue. The boats were not being opened at the right time, leading to daily confusion and chaos. Some devotees even got lost or confused about where to perform their rituals, leading to unnecessary inconvenience. This was something we personally experienced too. However, it was a bad luck, boats were available during the afternoon hours.

A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE BEYOND THE STRUGGLES

Despite the logistical challenges, the Mahakumbh was one of our unforgettable experience—one that tested our endurance, patience and faith. It reinforced the belief that spirituality is not always about ease and comfort but about perseverance and devotion in the face of hardships. Mahakumbh is not just a festival; it is a spiritual phenomenon—a gathering of millions who share the same goal: to seek purity, peace and divine blessings. As we left the sacred grounds, weary yet fulfilled, we carried with us the realisation that amidst the chaos, there was an undeniable sense of unity, a thread of faith that connected every single person present. The holy dip, despite all the hardships leading up to it, was a moment of transcendence. The cold water, the chants, the rising sun and the unwavering faith of millions—everything came together to create an experience that was beyond words.



FUR COLLAR KIMONO JACKET

Elevate your style with this impeccably crafted jacket by Uspoloassn.in. Made from fine-quality fabric, it blends sophistication with comfort, making layering effortlessly chic.

Price: INR 5799



SHIMMERS COSMETICS' ARTISTO FALCON HIGH SPEED HAIR DRYER

With an unmatched power of 2400W BLDC motor, this achieves an astonishing 70,000 RPM for unparalleled drying efficiency. Time-Saving Technology: Dries up to 40% faster than conventional dryers, perfect for busy routines.

Price: INR 19,999



WHAT'S NEW

WOMEN BEIGE JACQUARD TOTE BAG

An iconic Marc Jacobs large tote in beige by The Collective, this monogram woven jacquard features signature embroidered namesake branding all-over, a top-zip closure and the essential carryall design. You can carry it by the top handles or use the adjustable, removable crossbody strap for hands-free styling

Price: INR 48,500



CLINIQUE POP LIP + CHEEK OIL IN BLACK HONEY

A two-in-one tinted oil that delivers a dewy pop of our iconic Black Honey shade for lips and cheeks.

Price: INR 2750



LANCÔME'S LA VIE EST BELLE EDP GIFT SET

The gift set contains Lancôme La Vie Est Belle EDP, Lancôme Hypnôse Mascara, and Lancôme La Vie Est Belle Body Lotion. Perfect for a complete beauty experience. Ideal for gifting or personal indulgence. Price: INR 7,600



the pioneer agenda

"Spring: a lovely reminder
of how beautiful change
can truly be"

-UNKNOWN



A SKY FULL OF WINGS

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

A world untouched by noise, where only the wings of birds break the silence, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

WHEN THE SKY COMES TO LIFE

Around 11 AM, the sun began to work its magic. The first rays of sunlight began to filter through, slowly dissolving the fog. The *Dhanauri Wetlands* were finally revealed in all their splendour. The lake shimmered under the golden light, mirroring the movements of birds in the sky.

In every direction, life unfolded in the most mesmerising ways. *Baikal teals*, their green and chestnut plumage gleaming, glided effortlessly across the water. *Sarus cranes*, the tallest flying birds in the world, waded gracefully through the shallows, their striking red crowns standing out against the backdrop of endless blue. *White-throated kingfishers*, streaks of electric blue, darted across the surface, their sharp beaks poised for the perfect catch. *Black drongos*, perched high on bare branches, observed their surroundings with quiet confidence.

Then, in the midst of it all, I spotted something that truly captivated me, a *Painted stork* (*Mycteria leucocephala*), standing still in the water, its pink and white plumage vibrant against the reeds. Nearby, an *Ibis* sat motionless, sharing the space with an egret that hovered just above. They did not interact, nor did they compete. They simply coexisted, bound by the same stillness that surrounded them. It was a reminder that nature does not rush, nor does it seek control, simply is.

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BIRD SPECIES, INCLUDING 150+ SARUS CRANES

At a time when rapid urbanisation threatens natural ecosystems, *Dhanauri Wetlands* stands as a critical stronghold for avian biodiversity. Home to over 150 *Sarus cranes*, the state bird of Uttar Pradesh and sheltering 217 bird species, including 23 endangered and vulnerable ones, this wetland is an ecological necessity.

20,000+

waterfowl, but the push for conservation has yet to gain the urgency it deserves. With habitat loss accelerating, the fate of *Dhanauri* is about the larger battle to protect our natural heritage before it is too late.



There's something deeply soothing about the presence of birds. No matter where you are, the soft flutter of wings or the distant call of a bird can instantly transport you to a place of peace. Birds seem to fill the air with a quiet kind of company that makes you feel connected to the world around you. Unlike most popular nature spots, this wetland remains hidden from the typical tourist routes, untouched and unhurried, just waiting for someone to notice its magic.

I found this solace in the *Dhanauri Wetlands*, near *Thasrana* in *Uttar Pradesh*, a place that feels like a hidden sanctuary untouched by the noise of modern life. Unlike crowded nature reserves, it does not call out for attention. Instead, it waits patiently, its beauty unfolding only for those willing to step into its stillness. It was in this mist-laden landscape that I discovered the true magic of being among birds, where silence speaks, and nature embraces you without asking for anything in return.

A WORLD WRAPPED IN FOG

Arriving early in the morning, I was greeted by a thick blanket of winter fog, softening every outline, blurring the edges of trees, water and distant shapes. It was the kind of silence that didn't feel empty but full - full of life stirring beneath the mist, of whispered movements in the reeds and of birds calling out unseen. The cold air carried distant sounds of wings flapping, making the entire landscape feel like something out of a dream.

At first, I thought the fog would ruin my chance of getting any decent photographs. Everything seemed swallowed up by the mist, with just the faintest shapes of trees and water appearing like ghosts in the haze. But as I stood there, waiting for the fog to clear, I realised that there was a certain calm in it. The mist didn't obscure the beauty of the place, it enhanced it. It gave everything a sense of mystery, as if nature itself was being revealed slowly, almost deliberately.

A FRAGILE HAVEN WORTH PROTECTING

Yet, as untouched as it seems, the *Dhanauri Wetlands* are not invincible. Like many natural spaces, they face growing threats from habitat destruction, pollution and human encroachment. It's easy to assume that places like this will always exist, remaining undisturbed and waiting for the next visitor to discover them. However, the truth is, without conscious effort to protect them, they may not. For those who have ever found comfort in nature, who have stood still just to listen to the world breathe, places like *Dhanauri* are not simply landscapes. They are living sanctuaries, home to thousands of species, each playing its part in the delicate balance of life.

A PLACE THAT DEMANDS NOTHING BUT PRESENCE

One of the most striking things about *Dhanauri Wetlands* is not just its visual beauty but its quietness. In a world constantly buzzing with movement and noise, finding a place that does not demand attention, but instead rewards those who choose to be present, is rare. There were no distractions here, no honking cars, no flashing screens, just the simple, unbroken sounds of water lapping against the shore, wings flapping overhead and birds calling out to one another.

It is a place that does not overwhelm but instead invites you to slow down. Whether you're there to watch the birds, capture the beauty through your camera or just enjoy a moment of peace, it offers more than a pretty sight, it gives you a sense of connection to something much bigger than yourself.

A SANCTUARY ON THE BRINK

The *Dhanauri Wetlands* are at risk, once a sanctuary for birds like the *Sarus Crane* and *Painted Stork*, now threatened by encroachment and neglect. With land repurposed for construction, the ecosystem is shrinking and disrupting its delicate balance. Water pollution and disappearing green buffers worsen the crisis. Without urgent protection, this vital habitat, which supports biodiversity, flood control and climate regulation, may soon be lost, leaving behind only memories of its once-thriving wildlife.



Recognised as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by BirdLife International and extensively studied by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), *Dhanauri* plays a pivotal role in global bird conservation. Each year, between November and March, the wetland transforms into a sanctuary for over 50,000 migratory waterfowl, reinforcing its importance as a breeding and nesting ground



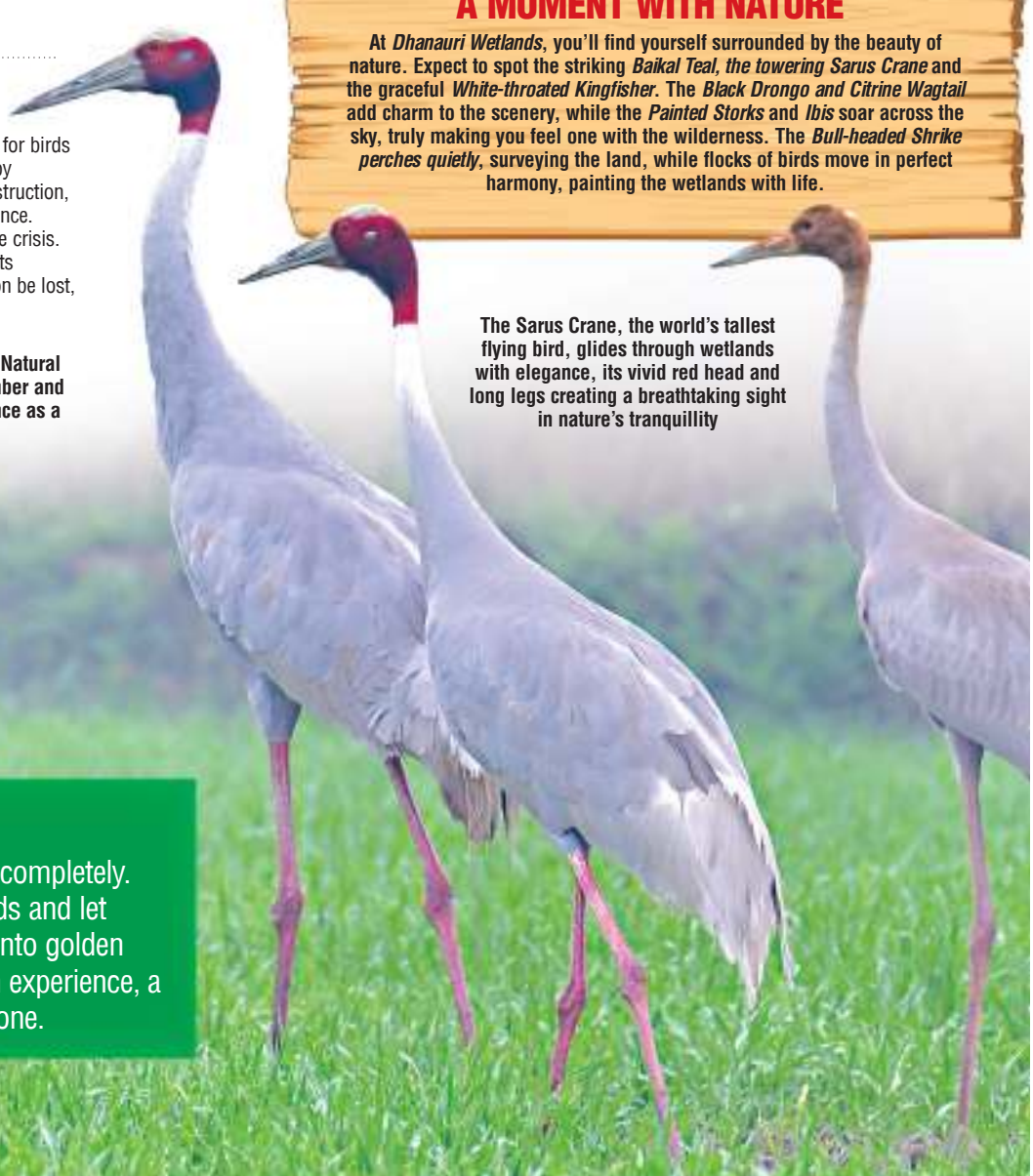
A MOMENT WITH NATURE

At *Dhanauri Wetlands*, you'll find yourself surrounded by the beauty of nature. Expect to spot the striking *Baikal Teal*, the towering *Sarus Crane* and the graceful *White-throated Kingfisher*. The *Black Drongo* and *Citrine Wagtail* add charm to the scenery, while the *Painted Storks* and *Ibis* soar across the sky, truly making you feel one with the wilderness. The *Bull-headed Shrike* perches quietly, surveying the land, while flocks of birds move in perfect harmony, painting the wetlands with life.

The *Sarus Crane*, the world's tallest flying bird, glides through wetlands with elegance, its vivid red head and long legs creating a breathtaking sight in nature's tranquillity

A JOURNEY WORTH TAKING

If you decide to visit, go early in the morning, before the mist lifts completely. Walk quietly along the lake's edge, listen to the calls of unseen birds and let yourself be immersed in the stillness. Watch as the fog dissolves into golden light, revealing a world teeming with life. *Dhanauri Wetlands* is an experience, a reminder that, in the presence of birds, you are never truly alone.



CHAT-O-CINO

Listened! Mimicked! Now dropping bangers the Raftaar-waaay!

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

A "Aankhon mein hustle hi hustle hai, apni toh mehnat ki nasal hai, humble hai tabhi toh awwal hai, tabhi toh sone ki vassal hai. Upar se upar ka level hai, gaanon mein baatein bhi asal hai."

This powerful caption, attributed to Dilin Nair aka Raftaar—perfectly encapsulates his journey. For fans who have followed his evolution over the years, these words speak to his relentless drive and unwavering work ethic. They capture the essence of an artist who, despite reaching the highest echelons of success, remains grounded in authenticity and humility. Every beat, every lyric and every performance reflects a commitment to realism—a testament to a man who has never lost sight of his roots even as he redefines the boundaries of contemporary music.

But how do we know for sure? Well, spend just a few minutes in conversation with the rap star, and you'll feel it—the infectious energy, the unshakable passion, and a vibe so real, it's impossible to



IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT WITH THE PIONEER, RAP SENSATION RAFTAAR DIVES DEEP INTO HIS JOURNEY—FROM MIMICKING EMINEM AND LINKIN PARK TO CRAFTING CHART-TOPPING ORIGINALS. HE TALKS ABOUT HOW LIVE AUDIENCES INFLUENCE HIS MUSIC, WHY AUTHENTICITY IS HIS BIGGEST WEAPON AND TEASES A NEW SONG THAT BREAKS ALL GENRE BARRIERS

miss. From his early days as a dancer on *Dance India Dance*—when he was known as Max—to becoming one of India's most influential rap artists, his journey is a testament to passion, persistence, and a relentless drive for originality. His evolution from uploading rap tracks with Lil Golu and Ikka to winning accolades and commanding the stage with his groundbreaking music reflects a career that's as diverse as it is inspiring. From being a curious listener to becoming a trendsetting artist, his journey was shaped by an early fascination with melodies and an undying passion for originality.

Recalling the moment his musical destiny was set in motion, the *Ghana Kasooti* fame hark back to his early days in this chat with *The Pioneer*. Well, the musical bug etched into him, when he heard of the popular song *Saathiya*, by none-other-than A.R.Rahman and the piano riff on it. "I wanted to play it somehow and that curiosity led me to listen to more songs—paying close attention to them. Then one day, I found a CD with Eminem and Linkin Park on it, and that just pushed me toward my actual choice of music." He realised that this is what he wanted to do. "I kept memorising their songs, and that's where it all landed—just mimicking everybody." What started as an attempt to replicate the music he admired soon evolved into a deep-seated passion for creating something unique. In an industry where trends shift rapidly, Raftaar has distinguished himself by refusing to follow the crowd blindly. "I try to create, not recreate and that helps," the

Yentamma fame emphasised, highlighting his commitment to originality in an ever-evolving musical landscape. For Raftaar, his music is deeply influenced by the energy of live performances. He explains how audience reactions shape his creative process: "I don't think much. By now, we kind of know what they like because we get to be in front of live audiences so many times. You see what parts of the songs they react to more, and once you figure that out, making music that sells is easier."

He is not just a trailblazer in the Indian rap scene but also a dynamic leader who has left a lasting impact beyond music. As a Gang Leader on *MTV Roadies*, he brought his signature energy, strategic thinking, and no-nonsense attitude to the reality show, mentoring contestants with a mix of tough love and motivation. Whether in music or on *Roadies*, he has consistently proven himself as a game-changer, inspiring the next generation to hustle hard and carve their own paths.

The *Baby Marvake Manegi* singers' connection with the audience also fuels his innovation. Oh! Talking of live performances and his connections with his audience, the *Go Pagal* singer has been performing at Royal Stag Boombox' third edition, bringing together artists from diverse genres. Never one to stay confined to a single genre, Raftaar teases an upcoming musical shift. "Yes, definitely. Like I said, I am going to showcase a new song that is totally not my genre, and people are going to love it." His ability to read a crowd has allowed him to shape his music in a way that resonates deeply with listeners. The spontaneous energy of a live performance often plays a crucial role in determining which ideas evolve into full-fledged songs.

"It's like a random thought that came to your head, and you developed it into a song. It is being appreciated by everybody in the audience. It is the best acknowledge-



ment of your craft ever, and that just makes you a euphoric man and that's the energy I use."

Beyond beats and rhythms, Raftaar's music is rooted in authenticity and responsibility. The *Morni* star doesn't just create songs; he sees himself as a medium for the unspoken thoughts and emotions of his audience. "Honestly, I speak what I see and I feel that everybody sees what I see—but not everyone talks about it. That's why I feel my job is to be people's voice and become a medium."

He believes that while everyone may perceive the world differently, there is a shared human experience that connects us all.

"I feel that people have a misconception that they are the main character. We all are common characters, and we have a lot in common. Mostly, I bring forth these commonalities, and some are my thoughts, my understanding of experiences in different situations. So, it either gives you a direction or it makes you feel that you want to be like me." Despite having an extensive discography, *Toh Dishoom* star refuses to pick a favorite track. For him, every song is special, a piece of his journey that holds personal meaning.

"All songs for me just like other artists are my babies and I can't choose one. My best work is yet to come. I always believe that I need to put something out there that I am recognised for." His relationship with music goes far beyond commercial success—it is his anchor, his sanctuary, and his greatest source of peace. "It is my sanity, giving me mental peace because I can pay for everything and ensure my parents are fine. I get to do something I love at any point of the day. That is why I love music."

In an industry that constantly shifts, Raftaar remains grounded in his truth. With every beat and every verse, he continues to redefine what it means to be an artist—always authentic, always evolving, and always pushing the boundaries of creativity.

I FEEL THAT PEOPLE HAVE A MISCONCEPTION THAT THEY ARE THE MAIN CHARACTER. WE ALL ARE COMMON CHARACTERS, AND WE HAVE A LOT IN COMMON. MOSTLY, I BRING FORTH THESE COMMONALITIES AND SOME ARE MY THOUGHTS, MY UNDERSTANDING OF EXPERIENCES IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

HOROSCOPE

- ARIES** Frustration may arise, but persistence wins. Support may get delayed, yet efforts pay off. Stay creative, clear-minded and humble. Opportunities for love and adventure await you.
- LIBRA** Stay confident, avoid negativity and embrace change. Humour and logic can help your career. Persistence ensures success. Business trips thrive. Guidance requests will keep you fulfilled.
- TAURUS** New project ideas flow and experimentation leads to success. Support from siblings helps. Stay resilient through setbacks. Balance emotions, enjoy life, and seek guidance for security.
- SCORPIO** Hard work pays off, but balance is key. Seek guidance, trust instincts and embrace love. Delays in plans are temporary. Family huddles ensure smoother decisions and relationships.
- GEMINI** Avoid negativity and self-pity. Family happiness thrives with your commitment. Embrace artistic talents and meditation. Seek stability in life. Trust time and advice for the best choices.
- SAGITTARIUS** Rise above frustration; success will come. Siblings reunite and innovation thrives. Stay loyal, trust ethics, and handle hurdles wisely. Embrace the unexpected opportunities for harmony.
- CANCER** Overcome insecurity and fear; stay calm in challenges. Balance work and family. Think before speaking. Communicate well to maintain healthy relationships. Enjoy a break to get recharged.
- CAPRICORN** Stay resilient through setbacks. Seek guidance for security. Family supports you and new connections inspire creativity. Analyze situations wisely for success in work and personal life.
- LEO** Hard work pays off—enjoy wisely. Stay calm in challenges. Nurture relationships and embrace your softer side. Balance career and personal life. Embrace changes and challenges.
- AQUARIUS** Stay open to others' ideas and consult before making final decisions. Humour and patience bring success. Avoid rash changes. Analyze your health for renewed energy and clarity.
- VIRGO** New project ideas arise; stay firm through setbacks. Support from siblings helps. Embrace novelties, trust your ethics, and seek security. Family needs are fulfilled, bringing you relief.
- PISCES** Rely on others when nervousness hits. Self-improvement with support from friends is key. Stay confident and prepared for challenges. Family may resist changes; remain firm regardless.

Zero sugar, zero worries? What diabetics should know about diet sodas

PNS/EXCLUSIVE

For people with diabetes, diet and lifestyle choices are the utmost priority, as they constantly have to keep a check on their blood sugar levels. There is an ongoing debate in the diabetic community about whether the carbonated drinks with zero sugar can be alternatives for regular sugar-loaded sodas. The zero-sugar sodas are advertised as sugar-free, making them a go-to option for weight watchers, but are they really posing no risk to your blood glucose levels?

The answer to this, as with most health-related things, is nuanced. As they contain artificial sweeteners instead of regular blood sugar-spiking sugars, it is an interesting topic for ongoing discussions and research.

Blood sugar is the primary source of energy in one's body. Moving through the bloodstream—it powers the cells, and as it gets used up by the cells to perform different bodily functions, it lowers down. Whereas insulin is like a key that allows the cells to absorb the glucose (blood sugar) and carry out the day-to-day activities. As blood sugar levels increase in the body, the pancreas releases insulin. Any issue in the production of insulin or its efficiency can lead to blood sugar staying in the bloodstream for a long time and causing health problems.

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects how the body converts food into energy. In diabetic patients, the body either produces insulin in low quantities or does not use insulin optimally. Hence, it becomes crucial to control blood glucose levels in the body by making healthier lifestyle choices.

Diet sodas such as Coke Zero and Pepsi

Zero are so-called "healthy" substitutes for regular the sugar-loaded ones, making them a better option for persons with diabetes also. These sugar-free sodas are mimicked to taste like regular drinks with artificial sweeteners. While they may taste like regular drinks, they do not contain high fructose corn syrup and sucrose. Instead, they are sweetened with artificial sweeteners such as aspartame, acesulfame potassium (Ace-K), and other additives, which provide them with the sweetness of a regular soda. Diet sodas are considered "free foods" as they contain less than 20 calories and 5 grams of carbohydrates, which makes them a perfect choice for those who monitor their carbohydrate intake.

Senior Nutrition, Divya Malik Dhawan from Apollo Spectra Hospital Chirag Enclave, Delhi explains, "The key ingredients of diet sodas are low-calorie sweeteners such as aspartame, which is around 200 times sweeter than sugar. That is why it takes only a small amount of quantity to sweeten the soft drinks. It does not increase sugar levels, making it theoretically safe for a diabetic patient. Similarly, another artificial sweetener, Acesulfame Potassium (Ace-K), is combined with aspartame for stability and sweetness, which is again calorie-free and doesn't increase glucose levels. Another key ingredient is phosphoric acid, which is used for preservation and tartness; it is found in many carbonated drinks. The sudden boost of energy is achieved from caffeine in diet sodas, which impacts blood sugar levels as it stimulates adrenaline release. Next is a caramel food colouring agent, which gives the sodas their dark brown colour." As diet sodas can be taken some times but not to be taken as an option every time during outings or vacations. We must take more green tea, detox water, herbal tea, turmeric milk and ginger honey tea.

Dr. Ankit Patel, General Physician, Apollo Spectra Jaipur emphasises, "Zero

The Pioneer bring a detailed Health Talk this week, with health experts shed light on whether the zero sugar drinks are safe for diabetics. While these sugar-free sodas contain artificial sweeteners that do not directly spike blood sugar, experts caution against excessive consumption due to potential long-term effects

calories soft beverages available in the market do not contain any sugar, they do not lead to the immediate blood sugar spike. Many studies point out that artificial sweeteners have minimal impact on the blood glucose level. However, the other ingredients in it can still affect the spike. Research suggests that frequent consumption of artificial sweeteners can lead to insulin resistance in the long run. The reason for this could be changes in gut microbiota, which can contribute to metabolic issues or altered perception of sweetness, which increases cravings for sugary foods."



As artificial sweeteners do not increase blood sugar levels directly, they can be a part of diabetes-friendly food choices when taken in moderation. Its excessive consumption can lead to other potential health risks, such as weight gain due to increased appetite, heart health risks, metabolic syndrome, dental issues as sodas can erode tooth enamel over time, and disturbed sleep due to its caffeine content.

Dr. Shamkiran, Consultant Pediatric Endocrinology, Endocrinology and Diabetology, SPARSH Hospital, Yeswanthpur, Bangalore says, "To be frank, I would not recommend a person with diabetes to drink diet sodas excessively even if it doesn't increase your blood sugar levels; it is important to understand that managing diabetes is not just about constant worrying about blood sugar control and

worrying about food every time you sit for your lunch or dinner. Instead, inculcate healthy habits, healthy food choices and eat whole food."

Occasional consumption of diet sodas is unlikely to cause any harm to people with diabetes. Moderation is the key; limit the intake to avoid any metabolic or gut health issues. Some people may react differently to artificial sweeteners, so it is advisable to monitor blood sugar levels after consuming diet sodas or any other beverage with artificial sweeteners in it, and if there is any fluctuation, it should be stopped. Other choices of beverages for people with diabetes can be herbal teas, unsweetened beverages, etc.

"Healthy lifestyle choices are a way of managing diabetes. It will also help prevent other problems related to diabetes which affects the kidneys, heart, eyes and brain. Going for walks, planning meals, watching your sugar intake, finding healthy alternatives for sugar-loaded beverages and snacks, getting enough sleep and quitting smoking and alcohol are small changes in your life which leave a lasting impact in not only managing diabetes but also improving your overall health and wellbeing," says Dr. Shamkiran.

People often worry that having diabetes means giving up their favourite foods. But that's not true—you don't have to completely give up on them, just be mindful of your choices. Diabetes can be managed with a balanced diet, portion control, regular exercise and keeping track of your carbohydrate intake, especially high-carb fruits and vegetables. Choose whole grains, fibre-rich foods and lean protein, as they support your glucose levels. Small efforts such as replacing refined sugars with natural alternatives, and incorporating healthy fats, can make a big difference if you have diabetes. Managing diabetes isn't about restriction, it is about making informed choices which help you enjoy your favourite foods with mindfulness.

'STAYING CONNECTED IS KEY TO SUCCESS'



Kollu Ravindra, a veteran politician and the current Minister for Mines, Geology and Excise, represents the Machilipatnam constituency. His journey is a testament to hard work, determination and an unwavering commitment to public service. Raised in a large joint family as the youngest of six siblings, Ravindra was showered with love and affection from his family and relatives. Coming from an industrialist background, he seamlessly blended his entrepreneurial instincts with his political aspirations, crediting his political insights to his uncle, former minister Nadakuditi Narsimha Rao and the proprietor of Naveena Engineering Works.

In an insightful interview with *The Pioneer's* C Pradeep Kumar, Ravindra opened up about his journey from businessman to a politician and his vision to transform Machilipatnam into the number one constituency in the State.



EARLY LIFE IN MACHILIPATNAM

I was born in Machilipatnam to Kollu Subba Rao, a businessman and the owner of SVS Engineering Works, a rice mill machinery manufacturing company known for its innovations in the field, and Venkata Soubhagyavathi, a homemaker. I am the youngest of six siblings, with three elder

sisters—Sesha Malleswari, Shoba Rani, and Sudha Rani—and two elder brothers, Venkata Ramana and Krishna Balaji.

MOTHER'S ASPIRATIONS VS FATE

My siblings have always been very affectionate and supportive. My mother had a strong desire for me to become a doctor, as she faced health issues when I was born. However, fate led me to become a businessman and later, a politician. I received my education in Machilipatnam, completing my BA at Nobel College. After a brief gap, I went on to study LLB at Hindu College.

LEARNING BUSINESS FROM FATHER

As a child, Sundays were reserved for sports, and my friends and I would spend the entire day on the playground. On holidays, my father would take us to the factory to help him with various tasks, ensuring we gained hands-on experience in the business world.

INSPIRED BY FATHER

From a young age, I aspired to become a businessman, inspired by my father. Additionally, my uncle, former minister Nadakuditi Narsimha Rao, sparked my interest in politics. I was always diligent in academics, sports and other extracurricular activities. My parents played an essential role in nurturing my growth, providing unwavering support and guidance that helped shape me into the person I am today.

BALANCING BUSINESS & POLITICS

Though I wanted to become a businessman, but over time, I found myself balancing both business and politics. After graduating, I took on my first political role as a ward president in 2000. Following that, I served as the Lions Club president and later became the Telugu Yuvatha Krishna district president in 2007. A pivotal moment in my life came in 2006 when I led a movement against the government's decision to relocate Bandar Port from Machilipatnam. Through perseverance and dedication, I successfully influenced the government to reverse their decision, marking a significant turning point in my political journey.

CALM & COMPOSED LEADER SINCE CHILDHOOD

I have always been a down-to-earth individual with a strong academic track record in school. Naturally calm and composed, I actively participated in sports, and my friends and I shared a close bond, often engaging in playful mischief—but always within limits. I built strong, friendly relationships with my classmates and was known as a go-getter. Even from a young age, I possessed a hidden leadership quality, fueled by a deep desire to uplift the underprivileged.

LOST IN FUN, FOUND IN TROUBLE

I still remember a holiday during my school days when I went out with friends and ended up spending the entire day with them. As it got late and I hadn't returned home, my father and family members became worried and searched for me around the playground and near the lake. When I finally came home, my father was furious. That was the first and last time in my life that he ever lost his temper with me.

CHANDRABABU NAIDU'S SUPPORT

I truly cherish the moment when I was appointed as the youth president of Krishna district, despite facing stiff competition. Later, after winning my first term as an MLA, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu supported me by making me a minister for five years. During a period when I was in the opposition, I was falsely implicated in a murder case, which terrified my entire family. Through it all, Chandrababu stood by us. After my release from jail, he personally called me. I thought my political career was over, but he gave me a ticket and made me a minister for the second time.



SUMMERS FILLED WITH JOY

Every summer during the holidays, all our cousins would visit Uttara Chiruvolu Lanka village in Krishna district, which was my uncle Narsimha Rao's village. Those visits were filled with so much joy, and the memories still stay with me. Interestingly, it also happens to be my wife's native place. We used to play in the fields and farmlands there. After marriage, I continued visiting the village with my children, cherishing the beautiful backdrop.

A BLESSED UNION

I got married on June 30, 1999, to K. Neelima. It was an arranged marriage, and she is my uncle's daughter. Our wedding was a grand celebration, filled with joy and attended by family, friends, and well-wishers who shared in our happiness. We are blessed with two children: my elder son, Puneeth Chandra, an engineering graduate who is planning to pursue higher studies abroad, and my younger son, Naveen Chandra, who is a special child. The support of my wife in raising our children and managing the family is priceless.



LESSONS FROM POLITICS & PUBLIC SERVICE

In politics, one must be prepared to handle pressure, whether in power or in opposition. Before I contested in 2009, I campaigned for my uncle, and through that experience, I learned that understanding the problems of the people and addressing them is the key to handling pressure. After losing in 2009, I went door-to-door across all the villages in the constituency, staying connected with the people. In 2014, I won and was made a minister by CM Chandrababu Naidu.



CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE, DRIVING DEVELOPMENT

From the very beginning of my political journey as a youth president, I made it a priority to connect with the public, understand their problems, and do my best to address and support them. Whenever I visit new places, I explore all possibilities to develop the constituency industrially and create employment opportunities for the youth. Additionally, I frequently visit temples to learn about their history and significance.



FINDING JOY AMIDST BUSY SCHEDULE

As a politician, finding leisure time is a challenge due to the constant demands of public engagement. However, whenever I do get a moment to unwind, I cherish the time spent with my younger son, who is a special child. His presence fills me with joy and awe. Additionally, I make sure to attend to my business during any available free time.

MOMENT OF PRIDE

One of the happiest moments of my life was when I was elected as an MLA for the first time, and Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu entrusted me with the responsibility of serving as a minister in 2014, following the bifurcation of the state. Another deeply fulfilling moment was the construction of the Rama temple, a long-awaited dream of both my grandfather and father. When I began the temple construction in 2016, we faced numerous challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and my imprisonment. However, when the statue of Lord Rama was being installed, sudden rain-fall occurred, which I truly believed was a miracle—a divine sign and a positive omen from Lord Rama himself.



FACING ADVERSITY

On the flip side, my lowest moment came when a false murder case was filed against me, driven by political vendetta from the previous government. I was imprisoned for 54 days, and the emotional toll it took on my family was immense, as we were unaccustomed to such malicious political tactics. Adding to the grief, shortly after my release, I lost my uncle, Narsimha Rao, which was a personal tragedy that deeply affected me.

MOVEMENT AGAINST CONGRESS...

My inspiration in politics comes from my maternal uncle, Narsimha Rao, who served as a minister from 1999 to 2004. A significant turning point in my political journey came in 2006 when I led a movement against the then Congress government, during CM YS Rajasekhara Reddy's tenure, to prevent the relocation of Bandar Port from Machilipatnam. On December 15, 2006, the movement forced Rajasekhara Reddy to reverse his decision. Today, the port construction is progressing rapidly, and operations are expected to begin in 2026. This event ignited my deep involvement in politics, fueling my desire to serve the people of Machilipatnam.



UPHOLDING MORALITY & RESPONSIBILITY

I believe that every individual should uphold a moral responsibility towards society and be law-abiding citizens. It is essential to introduce new initiatives that cater to the future needs of the people, in line with the aspirations of CM Chandrababu Naidu.

STRENGTHENING MACHILIPATNAM...

My goal is to strengthen the party within the constituency and transform it into the top-performing constituency in the state, as there are abundant resources for development. Machilipatnam, one of the oldest cities, has seen the influence of the Portuguese, Dutch, and British. It was also home to the second municipality in the state, and I aim to restore its past glory. The construction of Machilipatnam Port is a dream for everyone here, and it is progressing rapidly, presenting significant opportunities for industry, tourism, and showcasing our rich culture and heritage. Many young people are migrating due to a lack of job opportunities. I am committed to supporting people in handicrafts and caste-based professions, creating employment, and working to alleviate poverty. Reviving institutions like Hindu College, Noble College, and National College is also a priority to address local educational needs. Every area within our constituency has its own unique potential, and I am dedicated to exploring and developing it, in line with the CM's vision for a prosperous Swarna Andhra by 2047.



RAPID FIRE

Your nickname : Ravi

Favourite colour: Yellow

Favourite Food: Both veg and non-veg, but I like sweets a lot

Favourite movie: Major Chandrakanth

Favourite holiday: Manginapudi Beach, Machilipatnam

A place you wish to visit: Uttara Chiruvolu Lanka village, Krishna District

Are you religious/spiritual: I am religious and visit temples/churches/mosques

Favourite actor: NT Rama Rao

Inspiration: Uncle Narsimha Rao and Chandrababu Naidu

Driving force: Party workers and quest to do something to the people