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Railwav minister lists steps to prevent





the pioneer Revanth is saying he is playing 20-20 match inside but he is playing Tondi (shady) matches, collecting money while breaking promises. KCR, on the other hand, has played Test, One-Day, and T20 – excelling in all formats of governance. No matter where you go in Telangana, people want KCR back. Farmers, daily wage workers, students and employees everyone is fed up with the Congress's failures - Harish Rao, BRS MLA, Telangana

QUOTE OF THE DAY

### Create awareness on GBS, officials told

District Collector J. Venkata Murali has directed officials to raise awareness about Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) and take necessary steps to prevent its spread in the district. The Collector convened a video conference with district and mandal-level officials from the collectorate on Monday. Addressing the meeting, Collector Venkata Murali emphasised the importance of preventing the spread of GBS by educating the public. He urged officials to focus on creating awareness, particularly among students in government and private schools..

### **SC** reinstates Solan's mayor

The Supreme Court on Monday reinstated Solan Mayor Usha Sharma in her post for the remainder of her tenure while terming her disqualification a case of "political goondaism". A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh made its August 20, 2024 order absolute by which it had stayed her disqualification while terming her removal "a case of male bias". "The interim order of August 20, 2024 is made absolute. Any interference with the order will invite consequences," the bench said, as it adjourned...

## Adani pledges Rs 2K cr for setting up schools

Adani group on Monday announced Rs 2,000 crore donation for building at least 20 schools across the country as it continued to reveal details of the Rs 10,000 crore charity committed Adani's younger son. The conglomerate had previously announced Rs 6.000 crore for constructing hospitals and another Rs 2,000 crore for skill development The Adani Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Gautam Adani-led group, "has

-PAGE: 8

collaborated with..

### India look to continue winning momentum

Their campaign back on track after a jittery start, India will look to continue the winning momentum when they take on Paris Olympics silver medallist Germany in their next men's FIH Pro League match on Tuesday. India had a woeful start to their home leg matches of the Pro League Josing 1-3 to Spain in their opener. But the hosts hounced back strongly to tame Spain 2-0 in the return match on Sunday. With three points from two games, India are currently sitting in eighth place in the standings and will..



# TG plans telemetry to prevent AP from 'over-drawing' water

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy expressed concern over the excess use of Krishna waters by Andhra Pradesh and directed irrigation officials to be more vigilant in monitoring the withdrawals from Srisailam and Nagarjuna Sagar. He asserted that installing a

telemetry system is the only way to prevent Andhra Pradesh from taking more than its allocated share.
Officials informed the CM that

the AP government had not contributed its share of funds for the system. In response, Revanth ordered Principal Secretary (Irrigation) Rahul Bojja to write to the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB), confirming that Telangana would pay the entire amount upfront to ensure the immediate installation of the telemetry system.

Reiterating that the allocation and monitoring of water usage between the two states is the responsibility of the Central Water Commission, Revanth asked officials to complain to the Centre regarding AP's unilateral shifting of water. He urged the Centre to intervene and prevent Andhra Pradesh from exceeding its allocated water share.

With peak summer months approaching, the Telangana government is preparing to handle the increased demand for irrigation, drinking and power generation, ensuring that farmers and residents do not face shortages.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy asked irrigation officials to ensure the judicious use of water from all projects in Telangana to the irrigation and drinking water needs during summer. Reviewing the situation at the Command Control Center on Monday, he emphasised the need for meticulous planning over the next three months to avoid a water crisis

Along with Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, the Chief Minister held a high-level meeting with top irrigation officials to assess water availability in major reservoirs, including Srisailam, Nagarjuna Sagar and SRSP. Officials were told to conduct regular field visits, monitor ground conditions and take immediate action to protect standing crops.

Revanth stressed that collectors must play a proactive role in managing water distribution and instructed them to hold urgent meetings with irrigation engineers to prepare district-wise action plans.

#### **NAIDU'S VISION FOR TEMPLE ECOSYSTEM**

# Self-sustenance, tech integration

### AP GOVT TO BUILD VENKATESWARA TEMPLES IN ALL STATE CAPITALS

PNS TIRUPATI

Addressing the second edition of the International Temples Convention & Expo (ITCX) 2025 in Tirupati, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu unveiled his vision for a self-sustaining, technology-driven temple ecosystem, blending spirituality with modern governance. He emphasised the importance of preserving temple heritage while integrating technology and fostering economic growth within temple ecosystems.

The event saw the participation of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, Union Minister of State for Power and Renewable Energy Sripad Yesso Naik, TTD Chairman BR Naidu, and ITCX Founder Giresh Vasudev Kulkarni.

Referring to ITCX as the 'Maha Kumbh of temples,' CM Naidu highlighted the significance of temple conventions in shaping discussions on temple administration, economic impact, and cultural preservation. He noted that the inaugural ITCX was held in Varanasi, making Tirupati a fitting venue for its second edition. With over 1,500 temples from multiple countries, 685 virtual attendees, 111 speakers, 15 workshops, and 60 stalls, the event marked a milestone in global temple collaboration.



- CM Naidu addresses the ITCX-2025 in Tirupati
- The event sees participation from several prominent leaders, including Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis and Goa CM Pramod Sawant
- Naidu emphasises the evolving role of temples as economic and cultural hubs, with temple-related activities in India valued at Rs 6 lakh crore
- Naidu outlines key reforms for temple security and management, including expanding Trust Boards and creating a dedicated security
- Government allocates Rs 134 cr for temple renovations under the Common Good Fund
- Importance of preserving Tirumala's green cover and promoting environmental sustainability stressed
- Naidu reiterates his commitment to zero corruption in temple management and social impact through temples
- Aligning with PM Modi's Vikasit Bharat 2047 agenda, Naidu projects India becoming the world's thirdlargest economy by 2029

# Stick to People First policy, officials told

VIJAYAWADA: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has emphasised the importance of public satisfaction in review meeting with officials on Monday. He reiterated that the government follows a "People First" policy, urging all departments and employees to align

their performance with this principle. The Chief Minister called upon officials to address any shortcomings in policies or their implementation. He warned that negligence, indifference, or corruption in executing government programmes would result in accountability for those responsible. Naidu stressed that positive

public feedback could only be achieved through effective performance by officials and staff across all departments, ultimately enhancing the government's reputation. Highlighting the need for transparency and efficiency, Naidu stated that mere tokenism would not lead to



# Shallow quake iolts NCR

PNS NEW DELHI

Strong tremors were felt in the national capital and adjoining regions as an earthquake of 4.0 magnitude struck the region early There were no immediate

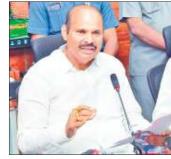
reports of any damage or injuries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people in the region to stay calm and follow safety precautions while keeping alert for possible aftershocks.

Modi said in a post on X, "Tremors were felt in Delhi and nearby areas. Urging everyone to stay calm and follow safety precautions, staying alert for possible aftershocks. Authorities are keeping a close watch on the situation.

The epicentre of the quake was in the Jheel Park area of Dhaula Kuan and there were some reports of people hearing a loud sound as the ground shook.

The National Center for Seismology said the earthquake struck at a focal depth of five kilometres at 5:36 am.

# No need to panic over GBS: I & PR Minister



PNS ELURU

Minister for Housing and I & PR K Parthasarathy has assured the public not to panic over Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) and instructed medical officers to ensure the availability of necessary medicines and injections for treatment.

Speaking to the media on Monday, the Minister urged medical officials to address public concerns about GBS and provide accurate information regarding the disease. He directed that medicines and injections be made available in all government hospitals in Eluru district and called for emergency medicines to be stocked in cardiology, neurology, and general medicine departments.

## **Elederly woman dies** during treatment

VISAKHAPATNAM: A 63-year-old woman, being treated for suspected Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) at King George Hospital (KGH), died on Monday morning after suffering a sudden heart attack. Renuka Mahanti, from Mallividu village in L. Kota mandal, Vizianagaram district, was admitted to the KGH on February 6. She had shown symptoms of GBS and had a history of diabetes and high blood pressure. Despite these health issues, Renuka's condition had been improving. On Monday morning, during routine rounds, KGH Superintendent Dr. P. Sivananda found Renuka complaining of chest pain. She collapsed shortly after. She was immediately taken to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where an electrocardiogram (ECG) confirmed that she had suffered a heart attack. Despite the doctors' best efforts, Renuka could not be revived. Dr. Sivananda expressed his sadness saying, "Yesterday, she was talking normally, but today she collapsed in front of me during the morning rounds It's really unfortunate. It was the heart attack that caused her death, not GBS.

# Tuni civic vice-chief poll put off due to lack of quorum

PNS KAKINADA

Monday amid dramatic develop- ers of threatening their councillors

The Joint Collector, who was the returning officer, announced that the election for the vicechairman post had been deferred due to a lack of quorum. The election will now be held on Tuesday, the JC con-

Earlier, 10 TDP councillors attended the session to elect the vice-chairman, but the YSRCP councillors abstained.

Meanwhile, in protest against the TDP's attempts to secure the means.

vice-chairman post, YSRCP leaders called for a 'Chalo Tuni' protest to The election for the Tuni municipal be held on Tuesday. YSRCP leader and claimed that TDP

> activists attempted to attack him when he visited the municipal Dadishetti Raja fur-

ther alleged that Tuni Rural CI Chenna Keshava Rao had threatened YSRCP councillors who attended the election ses-

Former minister Kurasala Kannababu condemned the TDP's efforts to win the vice-chairman election through undemocratic

### Ex-MP gets bail PNS NARASARAOPET

YSRCP leader and former MP



Nandigam Suresh surrendered Principal Junior Civil Judge in Sattenapalli on Tuesday in connection with a crimi-

nal case. The court later granted him In February 2020, a woman named

Mandava Mahalakshmi lodged a complaint with the Amaravati police, alleging that Suresh had misbehaved with her. Following this, the police registered a case against him. Suresh appeared before the court on Tuesday in connection with the case. However, the court granted him bail.

# Impregnated schoolgirl dies during childbirth

PNS CHITTOOR

A tragic incident has occurred in Chittoor, where a 16-year-old girl died during childbirth. The girl, a Class 10 student from Palamaner, was impregnated by an unidentified

Sources say that her parents, who work as agricultural labourers,

fear of social stigma. When she ment. She was admitted to the went into labour on Saturday night, GGH on Sunday and she gave they took her to the government hospital in Bangarupalyam village.

Doctors at the Bangarupalyam hospital reported that the girl was brought unconscious. Due to her critical condition, they General Hospital (GGH) in kept the pregnancy hidden due to Chittoor for specialised treat- her.

ties raised Rs 2,524.1361 crore -

birth to a baby girl. Sadly, she passed away shortly after delivery, doctors confirmed.

The police have registered a case and begun investigations to identify the person responsible for referred her to the Government the girl's pregnancy. It is currently unknown who impregnated

# Lokesh takes holy dip with family

PNS PRAYAGRAJ

Amidst the grandeur of the Kumbh Mela, Andhra Education, IT, and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, along with his spouse, took a holy dip at the sacred Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj on Monday. The couple performed traditional rituals at the Shahi Snan Ghat, offering prayers to 'Ganga Devi' and seeking blessings for the salvation of their ancestors.

The Kumbh Mela, revered as the world's largest spiritual congregation, resonated with Vedic chants and the rhythmic echoes of devotional hymns as thousands of pilgrims immersed themselves in the sanctity of the event. Lokesh and his family, deeply engaged

in the rituals, also performed oinda daan' and donated clothes to Brahmins as part of ancestral offerings, underscor-Minister for ing the festival's essence of devotion and charity.

The spiritual immersion of the Lokesh family reflects the enduring faith that binds millions to this centuries-old tradition. The belief that a dip in the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati washes away sins and paves the way for 'moksha' continues to draw devotees from across the country.

Following the holy rituals at the Kumbh, the Lokesh couple proceeded to Varanasi to offer prayers at the revered Kashi Vishwanath temple, further deepening their spiritu-



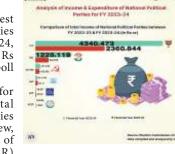
# BJP tops income list with Rs 4,340.47 cr: ADR

PNS NEW DELHI

The BJP reported the highest income among national parties in the financial year 2023-24, declaring total earnings of Rs 4,340.47 crore, according to poll rights body ADR.

The amount accounted for 74.57 per cent of the total income of six national parties during the period under review, the report by Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR)

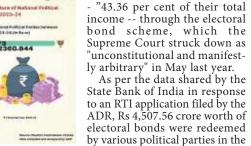
"The BJP declared a total income of Rs 4,340.473 crore during FY 2023-24 but spent only 50.96 per cent of it, amounting to Rs 2,211.69 crore. The total income of Congress was Rs 1,225.12 crore, while its expenditure for the year was Rs 1,025.25 crore or 83.69 per cent of its total income," the report



said. A large portion of the

While the BJP received the highest amount, securing Rs 1,685.63 crore, the Congress received Rs 828.36 crore, and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rs

10.15 crore Collectively, these three par-



income for national parties came from donations through electoral bonds.

The report said the maximum expenditure by the

Congress was made towards election-related expenses, amounting to Rs 619.67 crore, followed by Rs 340.702 crore spent on administrative and general expenses.

2023-24 fiscal. The national par-

ties accounted for 55.99 per

cent -- Rs 2,524.1361 crore -- of

this amount.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) spent Rs 56.29 crore on administrative and general expenses and Rs 47.57 crore on employee costs.

Among the national parties, six declared receiving a total of Rs 2,669.87 crore from donations and contributions.

The report also noted that out of these six parties, only Congress (Rs 58.56 crore) and CPI(M) (Rs 11.32 crore) declared receiving a total income of Rs 69.88 crore from the sale of coupons.

The audit reports of CPI(M), Congress and BJP were submitted with delays ranging from 12 to 66 days.

The most common expenditure among national parties was on elections and administrative expenses, the report said.

# **Anitha asks TTD chief to** develop Upamaka temple

Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha visited the Tirumala temple on Monday, where she was warmly received by TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams) officials. After performing darshan, she received blessings in the Ranganayakula Mandapam

Ranganayakula Mandapam and was presented with sacred offerings of the deity. During her visit, Minister Anitha expressed her well-wishes to the public under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. She reaf-Chandrababu Naidu. She reaffirmed her commitment to celebrating major festivals, including Sivaratri, with grandeur, similar to the Ratha Šaptami and Brahmotsavams.

Following her darshan, Minister Anitha held a meeting with TTD Chairman B. R. Naidu at his office. She urged him to allocate funds for the development of the historic Upamaka



Venkateswara Temple, located in constituency Payakaraopeta. Despite the temple being entrusted to TTD in 2017, she noted that no funds had been allocated for its development so far.

She recalled that a master plan for the temple's development had been designed by the then Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, but highlighted that the previous government had not acted on it. Minister Anitha requested the TTD Chairman's support for the temple's development and submitted a petition

In response to her requests, Chairman B. R. Naidu assured

regarding this matter to TTD

EO Shyamala Rao.

development and instructed the TTD Chief Engineer to prepare a report on the necessary development activities.

Minister Anitha extended an invitation to the TTD Chairman to visit the Upamaka temple ahead of the upcoming festivities on March 10, where over 1,50,000 devotees are expected to attend. She explained the uniqueness of the special offerings during the 20-day festival and emphasised local beliefs regarding their health benefits health benefits.
She also highlighted that

the Upamaka temple is the only place in the country where Venkateswara abhishekam is performed daily and noted that the temple is renowned for its continuous darshan through the northern

The meeting was attended by TTD board member M. S.

# TTD chief seeks land for Padmavati temple in Navi Mumbai

PNS TIRUPATI

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman, BR Naidu, has requested land from the Maharashtra government for the construction of a Sri Padmavati Ammavari Temple in Navi Mumbai and a TTD Information Centre in Bandra. The request was formally submitted to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu during the ongoing three-day International Temple Convention at the Asha Convention Center in Tirupati on Monday evening.

The convention, inaugurated by the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Goa, saw the participation of Pramod Sawant, Goa's Chief Minister.

The TTD currently holds 3.61 acres of land in Ulve, Navi Mumbai, on a 60-year lease, where a Sri Venkateswara temple already

# AP set to emerge as a global textile hub: Minister Savitha

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh is set to emerge as a global textile hub with a focus on attracting investments, modernising infrastructure, and supporting artisans and entrepreneurs, said Handlooms and Textiles Minister Savitha. Speaking on the final day of Bharat Tex 2025 in New Delhi, she highlighted the State's proactive approach under Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's leadership and the recently launched Textile Policy 2024-2029.

The policy aims to boost

investments, generate employment, and strengthen the handloom and textile sectors. During her visit to the Andhra Pradesh Pavilion, the Minister, accompanied by Handlooms and Textiles Commissioner Rekha Rani, explored exhibits showcasing the state's rich textile heritage. She praised the craftsmanship of weavers and assured them of government support through schemes focusing on production industries in the state.



enhancement, financial aid, and global market access.

Reiterating the government's commitment to the handloom and handicrafts sector, Savitha emphasised the need to promote traditional textiles such as Mangalagiri, Venkatagiri, Kalamkari, and Dharmavaram sarees while integrating modern techniques to enhance their global appeal. She also invited national and international investors, highlighting Andhra Pradesh's business-friendly policies, skilled workforce, and robust infrastructure as key advantages for setting up textile

Handlooms and Textiles Commissioner Rekha Rani stressed the importance of strengthening small and medium textile enterprises through policy support and financial incentives. She underlined the need for skill development, better market access, and technological advancements to help artisans and entrepreneurs compete globally.

She also announced that the state government would soon organise a seminar to discuss investment opportunities, export promotion, and sustainable growth in the textile and handicraft industry.

YSRCP leaders

meet SEC over



#### Maha CM Fadnavis visits Tirumala

PNS TIRUMALA

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis visited Tirumala on Monday along with his family and entourage to offer prayers at the Sri Venkateswara Swamy

He was welcomed by TTD officials, and after the darshan, he met TTD Executive Officer J Syamala Rao at the Padmavati Rest House.

During their meeting, the TTD EO discussed the progress of the Srivari temple construction in Navi Mumbai. The Maharashtra CM responded positively and assured his support for the project.

Later, Fadnavis also visited the Sri Padmavati Devi temple at Tiruchanoor, where he was received by Deputy EO Govinda Rajan. After having darshan of Sri Padmavati Ammavaru, he was offered theertha

TTD Trust Board members Bhanu Prakash Reddy, Saurabh H Bora, and other officials participated in both

# Mumbai devotee donates Rs 11 cr to TTD's free food scheme

PNS TIRUPAT

A Mumbai-based devotee donated Rs 11 crore to Tirupati Devasthanams' Venkateswara Annaprasadam Trust. Tushar Kumar from the Prasid Uno Family Trust donated the amount to TTD's

additional executive officer

Venkaiah Chowdary in

Tirumala. "A devotee, Tushar Kumar of the Mumbai-based Prasid Uno Family Trust has made a generous donation of Rs 11 crore to the Sri Venkateswara Annaprasadam Trust on Monday," said a press release from the temple body.

Former Chief Minister N T Rama Rao launched the Nithya Venkateswara Annadanam Endowment Scheme in 1985 to provide free food to 2,000 pilgrims daily.



The scheme was later transformed into an independent trust named Sri Venkateswara Nithya Annadanam Trust in 1994 and further renamed Sri Venkateswara Annaprasadam Trust in 2014.

Funded by donations from across the world, the trust deposits funds in nationalised

banks and covers its expenses through the interest earned.

The mega kitchens of TTD, the official custodian of the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Tirupati, prepare nearly 14 tons of rice and procure 10,000 litres of milk daily. Thousands of devotees receive beverages and three daily meal.



# CM Naidu invited for Srisailam Brahmotsavams

PNS VIJAYAWADA

M Srinivas Rao, Executive Officer of the Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple, along with priests and Srisailam MLA B Rajasekhar Reddy, extended an invitation to Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu the upcoming Brahmotsavams on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri.

The officials informed the Chief Minister that the grand celebrations at the Srisailam Mahakshetra would be held from February 19 to March 1 and urged him to attend the event, emphasising its significance. During the meeting, temple priests presented the Chief Minister with a prasadam and a portrait of the deity, offering their blessings.

poll violence PNS VIJAYAWADA A delegation of YSRCP leaders, including MLA Thathiparthi Chandrasekhar, MLC Lella Appi Reddy, for-mer MLA Malladi Vishnu, and NTR district YSRCP president Devineni Avinash,

Sawhney to file a complaint regarding electoral violence, particularly in Tuni. MLA Chandrasekhar stated that democracy in the State is being undermined by intimidation tactics, questioning how the TDP could

met State Election

Commissioner Nilam

no representation. MLC Appi Reddy accused the Election Commission of inaction despite repeated complaints and called for urgent intervention.

win in areas where they have

Former MLA Vishnu condemned violent incidents in Palakonda, Piduguralla, and Tuni, including the attack on the Tuni Municipal Chairman's residence. He warned that any failure to act would set a dangerous prece-

President Avinash accused the TDP of using fear and violence to manipulate election results. The delegation demanded the cancellation of the Piduguralla election and immediate action to ensure free and fair polls in Andhra Pradesh.

## No need to panic...

Continued from Page 1

"In light of reports of GBS in various districts, urgent immunoglob-GBS patients should be treated through Aarogyasri. Most cases of GBS can be cured without treatment. The disease starts in the legs and spreads to the upper body," Parthasarathy explained, advising the public to maintain proper hygiene. The Minister urged anyone experiencing cramps or difficulty walking to seek treatment at government hospitals.

He also instructed officials to ensure the availability of insulin injections for diabetic patients and factor injections for haemophilia patients in all hospitals. Additionally, Parthasarathy called for a sufficient stock of Tenecteplase injections, crucial for heart disease patients, to be made available in all government hospitals. He highlighted that these life-saving injections are often unaffordable in the regular market and should be provided to the poor.

TUDYA

TUDAY									
ALMANAC									
Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha								
Tithi:									
Shashthi:	Feb 18 04:53 AM								
	to Feb 19 07:32 AM								
Nakshatram:									
Chitra:	Feb 17 04:31 AM								
	to Feb 18 07:35 AM								
Swati:	Feb 18 07:35 AM								
	to Feb 19 10:39 AM								
Rahukalam:	3:22 PM to 4:49 PM								
Yamagandam:	9:37 AM to 11:03 AM								
Varjyam:	01:54 PM to 03:42 PM								
Gulika:	12:30 PM to 1:56 PM								
Amritakalam:	12:44 AM to 02:32 AM								
Abhijit Muhurtham:	12:06 PM to 12:52 PM								
VIJAYAWADA	WEATHER								
Forecast: Sunny Temp: 33°°									
Humidity: 73%									
Sunrise: 6:32 AM	1								
Sunset: 6:11 PM	/ / /								
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# European team explores ties with RvSS for sustainable farming

PNS VIJAYAWADA

A delegation from the 2000m<sup>2</sup> global initiative, which focuses on sustainable agriculture, visited the Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) to explore potential collaborations and knowledge exchange. The team, comprising Jasper Jordan, Benny Haerlin, Diogo Coutinho, and Lukas Kaehler from the German Free Bakers Association, interacted with RySS officials, farmers, and experts to understand Andhra Pradesh's Community-Managed Natural Farming (APCNF)

T Vijay Kumar, Executive Vice Chairman of RySS, briefed the delegation on the APCNF model, highlighting its impact since its launch in 2015.

The visitors appreciated RySS's efforts in promoting natural farming and dis-



cussed their initiative of allocating 2000 square meters of arable land per person for food production.

The 2000m<sup>2</sup> project aims to raise awareness about sustainable agriculture and food security by showcasing small-scale farming models in nearly 30 Global Fields across countries like Germany and Kenya. The initiative plans to expand into Asia and South America to promote agroecological practices.

The delegation later visit-

ed natural farming fields in Nuthakki village, where they observed an A-grade banana model cultivated by Srinivas Reddy, who has practised natural farming for seven years. They were particularly impressed by his commitment to avoiding synthetic

inputs. Both sides expressed interest in fostering global cooperation, including farmer exchange visits between Germany and India, to promote sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture.

# Israel proposes world-class garden centre in Amaravati

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Representatives from Israel have shown interest in establishing an international-level garden centre in Amaravati, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh. A meeting in this regard was held on Monday at the Andhra Pradesh Capital Development Region Authority (APCRDA) office in Vijayawada, chaired by APCR-DA Chairperson and Managing Director D Lakshmi

Parthasarathi. Delegates from Green Tech Limited, Israel, showcased their expertise in setting up world-class garden centres in Israel and Arab nations. Through a visual presentation, they highlighted the variety of flora that can be cultivated based on climatic conditions, including fruits, flowers, and vegetables, along with advanced horticultural tech-



As part of their proposal, the representatives displayed samples of vegetables grown in their nurseries and products developed using innovative gardening methods. They expressed keen interest in setting up the centre in Amaravati, a city emerging as a global destination.

The meeting was attended by Dr David Mizrahi, Prashant, and Kishore from Green Tech Limited, along with APCRDA officials, including Dharmaja, Head Horticulture, and P Suresh Babu and KV Ganesh Babu, who head Urban Planning and Infrastructure Planning &

# Tuni civic...

Continued from Page 1

He urged the Election Commission to take action against the officials involved

in the irregularities. Kannababu also alleged that hundreds of TDP activists had gathered unlawfully at the residence of Municipal Chairman Sudha Balu. He criticised the officials for failing to follow the High Court's order to conduct the election in a democratic manner.

# Self-sustenance, tech...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister spotlighted the evolving role of temples as both economic and cultural hubs, estimating temple-related activities in India at Rs 6 lakh crore. He recalled the legacy of TDP founder NT Rama Rao, who initiated the Annadanam scheme in 1983-84, now with a corpus of Rs 2,000 crore in Sri Venkateswara Temple. Similarly, the Pranadanam scheme, launched by him in 2003 with a corpus of Rs 440 crore, continues to fund life-saving initiatives.

In a significant announcement, CM Naidu revealed that his government would establish Balaji temples in every state capital and key international cities to unite devotees and promote India's spiritual heritage globally. The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) and ITCX will work

together to expand the temple's global

"ITCX 2025 focuses on AI integration, sustainability, security, and financial transparency," CM Naidu said. He stressed the need for efficient fund management, AIpowered surveillance, RFID-based crowd control tokens, and digital governance to streamline temple operations. The Andhra Pradesh government will introduce an IVRS-based feedback system and mechanised sanitation to maintain temple hygiene.

To bolster temple security and ensure selfsustaining temple management, CM Naidu announced key reforms, including expanding temple Trust Boards to include members from the Brahmin and Nayee Brahmin communities. A dedicated committee will oversee temple security, while a Temple Tourism Committee, comprising ministers

from the Forest, Endowment, and Tourism departments, will promote religious tourism. Furthermore, the Dharmika Parishad will

be strengthened under the Endowments Act to improve governance. Demonstrating the government's commitment to temple preservation, Rs 134 crore from the Common Good Fund has been allocated for temple renovations in the past seven

"We are building Amaravati as the abode of angels, inspired by Devendra's capital, and we urge devotees to visit after their Balaji darshan," he said. Additionally, he committed to preserving Tirumala's 75% green cover and promoting environmental sustainability.

"Serving God is serving humanity," he affirmed, advocating for temples to have a social impact. He reaffirmed his commitment to zero tolerance for corruption in temple management, stating, "If you commit fraud near the Tirumala Balaji temple, he will not forgive you."

# Stick to People First policy...

Continued from Page 1

He insisted that all systems must demonstrate a clear departure from previous administrations and contribute to positive public perceptions of governance. Encouraging officials to work diligently and make use of technology wherever possible, Naidu announced that continuous surveys would be conducted to assess departmental performance. He also mentioned that feedback would be collected weekly from four departments, covering initiatives such as the Deepam scheme, ration rice distribution, RTC services, and composting from waste.

Regarding the Deepam scheme, which provides free gas cylinder deliveries, Naidu sought clarification on complaints about delivery agents requesting money. He instructed officials to take action against agencies receiving multiple complaints, particularly those failing to deposit delivery payments within 48 hours.

The Chief Minister also reviewed feedback on RTC services, discussing bus punctuality and the quality of facilities at bus stands. He proposed placing QR codes on buses to gather passenger feedback. Naidu further highlighted dissatisfaction among travellers regarding amenities at bus stations and directed officials to address these issues promptly. Naidu sought feedback on composting centres established in villages under the Panchayati Raj department. Surveys revealed that residents wanted these centres to operate more effectively. The CM pointed out that previous governments had neglected these initiatives and stressed the need to reactivate all composting centres.

The Chief Minister reaffirmed that discussions must lead to action, committing to review public feedback on schemes weekly to ensure visible improvements in services. He instructed that corrections be made where errors are identified and strict action be taken against negligence or corruption.

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# Minister seeks support for Rajendra Prasad

#### Says coalition government committed to providing 20 lakh jobs in next five years

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister Kandula Durgesh has urged party cadres to work towards ensuring a landslide victory for the joint Krishna and Guntur district's MLC candidate, Alapati Rajendra Prasad. Speaking at a Jana Sena Party meeting held in Vijayawada on Monday under the leadership of Minister of Civil Supplies and Political Affairs Committee Chairman Nadendla Manohar, Durgesh emphasised the importance of educating the youth on casting their first priority vote for Rajendra Prasad.

He highlighted the commitment of the coalition government to providing 20 lakh jobs in the next five years, alongside the implementation of the Mega DSC and unemployment benefits. During

the meeting, Durgesh outlined the developmental and welfare schemes successfully implemented by the State government, contrasting them with the failures of the previous administration.

Durgesh reminded the attendees of the remarkable achievements of the coalition government, which holds 164 seats, and spoke about the necessity of forming a coalition to protect democratic rights during challenging times. He noted that the success in the recent elections was due to the leadership of Pawan Kalyan and encouraged party members to carry that momentum forward over the next five years.

He praised Alapati Rajendra Prasad for his political experience and ability to address not only the issues faced by graduates, but also



encouraged everyone to support Rajendra Prasad for his election to the Legislative Council, describing it as a platform for meaningful discussions. The Minister criticised the previous government for dividing the State over five years and deceiving the

public, especially the unemployed and employed. He reminded attendees of the commitment of the coalition government to ensure timely salary payments and the steps taken to provide unemployment benefits despite financial burdens.

Durgesh reiterated that the coali-

tion government is prepared to create 20 lakh jobs in the coming years and urged party members to raise awareness among young graduates to vote for Rajendra Prasad. With only nine days left until polling, he urged everyone to reach out to the outh and ask them to prioritise

their votes for Alapati.
Avanigadda MLA Buddha Prasad, MLC candidate Alapati Rajendra Prasad, and other Jana Sena leaders such as Samineni Udayabhanu and Kilari Rosaiah

# Strictly implement Prenatal Sex **Determination Act: Collector**

Officials asked to collect daily scan data from all scanning centres

PNS VIZIANAGARAM

District Collector Dr BR Ambedkar has stressed the urgent need to address the declining sex ratio in the district, and called for stringent implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act. Speaking at the District Level Committee meeting on the Prevention of Prenatal Sex Determination Tests at the Collector's office on Monday, Dr Ambedkar emphasised the critical role of continuous monitoring of scanning centres.

The Collector directed officials to collect daily scan data from all 110 scanning centres in the district. He expressed concern over the increasing prevalence of unnecessary caesarean sections, which he noted place a significant financial strain on families with limited resources. Dr Ambedkar urged healthcare professionals to exercise greater discretion in recommending such procedures. To improve oversight, the Collector instructed



health officials to compile data on all registered pregnant women, categorised by normal deliveries, caesarean sections, and abortions (both legal and illegal) performed each month. He specifically requested detailed information on the number of caesarean sections,

their locations, and an analysis of

trends in surgical deliveries.

Dr Ambedkar emphasised the importance of comprehensive data collection on abortions, particularly in determining their legality. He directed district officials to intensify inspections of scanning centres to ensure strict adherence to the law. Revenue Divisional Officers have been assigned the responsibility of conducting regular checks as

part of ongoing efforts to prevent prenatal sex determination tests. Health Department officials reported that 47 of the district's 115 scanning centres had been inspected. However, they suggested that sporadic inspections are insufficient and advocated for a sustained and visible monitoring strategy to achieve tangible results.

District Medical Health Officer Dr Jeevan Rani, TB Control Officer Dr Rani, Programme Officer Dr Balasubrahmanyam, CI Narasimha Murthy, District Mass Media Officer Chinnathalli, and RDO Office AO Srinivasa Rao

# Police chief unveils strategy to control online betting, loan apps

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to curb the rising threat of online betting and predatory lending, Visakhapatnam Police Commissioner Dr. Shankhabrata Bagchi has announced a multipronged strategy, including the controversial possibility of tracking app downloads. This initiative aims to protect citizens from the financial and emotional distress caused by these platforms.

The Commissioner has initiated discussions with technology experts to assess the feasibility of monitoring downloads of betting and loan apps from the Google Play Store within Visakhapatnam. This move underscores the growing concern over the impact of these digital platforms on individuals and families in the city.

The online betting issue has intensified, particularly around major sporting events. Bagchi cited a recent raid in Peda Waltair where a bookmaker was arrested, revealing a network involved in transactions totalling Rs 400 crore. Twelve individuals have been remanded in connection with the ongoing. Authorities fear the underway to evaluate the practicalupcoming Champions Trophy and Indian Premier League (IPL) crick-



et season will exacerbate the problem. "We are concerned about the potential for a surge in betting during these high-profile events," Commissioner Bagchi stated. "We are committed to protecting our citizens from the financial ruin these activities can cause."

Law enforcement is increasing surveillance efforts and exploring the use of technology to restrict access to betting apps. This includes investigating the possibility of tracking IP addresses of users who download these apps. Initial consultations with technical ity and legal implications of this

# 'One Cent' housing project hit by irregularities and delays

 CONCERN OVER SLOW PROGRESS, POLITICAL INTERFERENCE, AND POOR CONSTRUCTION QUALITY

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Concerns are mounting over serious irregularities and significant delays plaguing the construction of houses under the 'One Cent' (48.4 square yards) housing scheme in the district. Despite minimal progress in the past six months, priority appears to be given to bill payments rather than actual work completion.

Reports suggest that officials are favouring contractors recommended by YSRCP leaders from the previous government. These contractors, despite having substantial work remaining, are progressing at a snail's pace. Meanwhile, other contractors face neglect, lacking oversight and adequate material supply. Political interference is also cited as a major contributing factor to the project's woes.

The current coalition government has directed the previously assigned contractors to continue, but the pace remains slow. District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has been monitoring the situation, weekly reviews. However, his efforts are yet to translate into significant progress, with nearly 70,000 hous-



es still awaiting even the foundation stage. Official records indicate that construction of 15,000 houses is yet to begin across various layouts.

Adding to the concerns, the quality of construction in some layouts is alarmingly poor. Roofing work, which typically takes nine to ten days, is being rushed and completed in just three to four days. Walls are not being built to standrone survey has revealed discrepancies in numerous structures. Disturbingly, many foundations appear unstable and on the verge of collapse, with cracks already visible in walls at several locations. This underscores the urgent need for stricter monitoring by authorities. A total of 1,14,795 houses have

been sanctioned in the district, with 99,711 currently under construction and 15,084 yet to commence. Only 8,492 houses have been fully completed so far. Foundations have ing has been completed for 12,113. The overall project is valued at Rs



# AU hosts conference on 'Geophysics for Sustainable Development'

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra University's Geophysics Department kicked off its platinum Jubilee celebrations with a conference focused on the intersection of geophysics and sustainable development. The event, titled 'Advances in Geophysics for Sustainable Development: Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources, drew experts, academics, and students to the YVS Murthy Auditorium.

Vice-Chancellor Prof. G. Sasibhushana Rao inaugurated the conference, highlighting the critical role of emerging technologies in geophysics. He encouraged young researchers to explore these innovations, stating that the confor intellectual discussions and launch of a special edition publifostering innovations that will

The conference featured prominent speakers, including Prakash Chauhan, Director of the National Remote Sensing Centre, who praised the Geophysics Department's contributions to national development. He stressed the urgent need for research into alternative energy sources, particularly leveraging India's extensive coastline for generating renewable electricity.

Sujith Kumar Tripathi, Deputy Director General of the Geological Survey of India, echoed concerns about the environment, pointing to the alarming rise in global temperatures due to greenhouse gas emissions. He called upon the younger generation to take a leadership role in creating a sustainable future.

cation commemorating the department's academic achievements.

# **GITAM** launches International Consulting Immersion Programme

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GITAM Deemed to be University's School of Business has launched the International Consulting Immersion Programme (ICIP) in collaboration with the University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW), USA, and the University of Surrey, UK. The programme aims to provide students with hands-on consulting experience and global perspectives.

An expert interaction meeting was held on Monday at GITAM School of Business, attended by a senior delegation from UNCW, including Associate Provost Dr. Chris Finelli and MBA Program Director Dr. Nivine Richie. They were joined by GITAM faculty members to discuss key areas of academic collaboration, including student exchange, faculty exchange,



and joint degree programmes. The ICIP is structured to provide students with nine months of hands-on consulting experience, working on real-world industry challenges posed by corporate partners. The programme will yield multiple benefits for participating students, including the

consulting report, enhanced crosscultural communication and teamwork skills, and increased industry exposure.

GITAM School of Business Dean Prof. Raja P Pappu emphasised that the ICIP presents MBA students with a unique blend of consulting experience, industry engagement, development of a comprehensive and cultural immersion.

# GVMC faces scrutiny over building permits without NALA tax verification

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) is facing scrutiny over alleged procedural lapses in issuing building permits and occupancy certificates (OCs) without verifying mandato-Non-Agricultural Land Assessment (NALA) tax payments. This oversight has led to significant

revenue losses and prompted a

Vigilance Department investigation. The GVMC's Town Planning Department reportedly approved numerous construction projects, particularly in rapidly developing areas like Gajuwaka, Madhurawada, and Bheemili, without ensuring NALA tax compliance. Landowners converting agricultural land for construction are legally obligated to pay five per cent of the land's value

as NALA tax and obtain a conversion certificate. Non-compliance can result in substantial penalties. The apparent lack of verification has created a financial deficit for the GVMC and the Revenue Department. Strict enforcement of NALA tax regulations could significantly improve the GVMC's financial standing and strengthen urban planning.
The allegations extend beyond

administrative oversights to include accusations of corruption involving developers and officials. A Kurmannapalem builder allegedly secured approvals for a large gated community without paying Rs 3.5 crore in NALA tax dues. Similarly, a commercial complex reportedly obtained permissions and an OC despite outstanding liabilities of Rs

Following numerous complaints, the Vigilance Department aunched a confidential inquiry into the Town Planning Department's operations. Jana Sena Party (JSP) leader and GVMC corporator P Murthy Yadav has accused members of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) of facilitating widespread tax evasion, potentially amounting to hundreds of crores over the past ive years.

He specifically alleged that Revenue and Municipal officials favoured YSRCP leaders. Yadav further accused former Visakhapatnam MP MVV Satyanarayana of using political influence to avoid tax liailities and obtain an OC despite regulatory violations.

Yadav cited data indicating outstanding NALA tax dues in GVMC's approval processes.

Visakhapatnam district have reached approximately Rs 700 crore, with significant arrears in Bheemunipatnam, Visakhapatnam Rural, Anandapuram, Pendurthi, Gajuwaka, and Padmanabham. He attributed this accumulation to lax enforcement during the YSRCP tenure, raising broader questions about municipal accountability and

governance. Yadav has called for the government to enforce the Revenue Recovery Act to recover unpaid dues and has requested a high-level investigation led by a senior IAS officer, a special task force for transparency, and direct intervention from Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan to address systemic issues within

# AP MLC polls a litmus test for NDA government

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The upcoming Member of Legislative Council (MLC) elections in Andhra Pradesh have drawn significant political attention, shaping up as a crucial test for the ruling coalition government. Scheduled for the 27th of this month for two graduate constituencies and the 2nd of next month for a teacher constituency, these elections are widely perceived as a referendum on the coalition's governance over the past

eight months. Analysts see these elections as a key indicator of graduate voter sentiment, especially given the ruling alliance's resounding victory in the 2024 general elections. In the previous graduate MLC elections held

ment, the TDP emerged victorious. The key question now is whether the ruling alliance can replicate that success amidst the evolving political landscape.

Recognizing the high stakes, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP Chief N. Chandrababu Naidu has been actively engaging with alliance leaders, underscoring the importance of a united front. However, reports indicate underlying concerns over coordination among coalition partners, which could impact the final outcome.

Senior political observers note that while the coalition assumed power with a strong mandate, internal dynamics among allies remain a challenge. Naidu's repeated

Analysts see these elections as a key indicator of graduate voter sentiment, especially given the ruling alliance's resounding victory in the 2024 general elections. In the previous graduate MLC elections held in 2018 under the YSRCP government, the TDP emerged victorious. The key question now is whether the ruling alliance can replicate that success amidst the evolving political landscape.

emphasis on coalition coordination highlights the necessity for a seamless working relationship. A political analyst from North Andhra stated, "Though these elections are geographically limited, they serve as a crucial barometer for how grad-

uates and intellectuals perceive the government's performance. Any setback for the ruling alliance could signal broader concerns ahead of future elections.

The Krishna-Guntur and Godavari districts hold particular significance, given their overwhelming support for the coalition in the 2024 elections. In Krishna-Guntur, TDP candidate Alapati Rajendra Prasad has been personally engaging with graduates, but reports suggest a lack of strong support from

allies. Meanwhile, in the Godavari districts, TDP's Perabathlu Rajasekhar faces additional hurdles, as former MP Harsha Kumar's son and other influential figures are actively campaigning yet struggling with local coordination. The presence of Left-backed candidates has further complicated the contest, while the YSRCP's decision to stay out of the race raises questions about its strategic positioning.

A media analyst observed, "While TDP's candidates are putting in significant efforts on the ground, translating individual campaigns into collective success remains the key challenge. The opposition's calculated non-participation hints at a

strategy aimed at splitting votes

rather than direct confrontation." To counter these complexities, Naidu has intensified his outreach, conducting teleconferences with party leaders and urging them to highlight the coalition's achievements while reinforcing the message that every election, regardless of scale, is a matter of prestige.

A veteran political analyst comments, "Elections are shaped by perception. If the ruling coalition doesn't achieve a clear victory, it may strengthen the opposition and create a sense of vulnerability." With polling day approaching, the Andhra Pradesh MLC elections have evolved beyond a standard electoral event. They now represent a critical gauge of governance, coalition unity, and political strategy.



# 'Efforts on to resolve issues in Kolleru region'

PNS ELURU

Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar has assured residents of the Kolleru lake region that their longstanding issues will be addressed. He announced plans to meet Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on February 20, along with TDP district president G Anjaneyulu and district MLAs, to discuss and resolve

the concerns of the region's people.

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, the MP stated that discussions with the Chief Minister would provide clarity on the way forward in addressing the Kolleru issue. He emphasised that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and Minister Nara Lokesh were committed to supporting the people of Kolleru and taking necessary steps to resolve their problems. Mahesh Kumar recalled that during the previous TDP government (2014-19), a resolution was passed in the Assembly regarding the Kolleru issue and sent to the Centre. However, he criticised the erstwhile YSRCP government for neglecting the region, stating that their actions had severely impacted the liveli-



hoods of the people living there.
The MP revealed that initially, there were plans to file a petition in the Supreme Court on behalf of the affected people. However, after consultations with legal experts, it was decided that the government itself would take the matter to the Apex Court. Additionally, a fresh resolution would be passed in the Assembly and forwarded to the Centre.

On the Polavaram project, Mahesh Kumar said that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu was determined to complete the works within two years. He blamed the previous YSRCP government for delays, citing its flawed policies.

# Officials directed to create awareness on GBS spread

District Collector J. Venkata Murali has directed officials to raise awareness about Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) and take necessary steps to prevent its spread in the district.

The Collector convened a video conference with district and mandallevel officials from the collectorate on Monday. Addressing the meeting, Collector Venkata Murali emphasised the importance of preventing the spread of GBS by educating the public. He urged officials to focus on creating awareness, particularly among students in government and private schools, colleges, and hostels. He explained that GBS is transmit-

ted through bacteria found in the intestines of chickens, and vendors selling chicken meat must take necessary precautions.

"The waste from chickens should not be discarded haphazardly. It must not be disposed of in areas where it



can contaminate water sources. GBS can spread through contaminated food and drinking water, so it is essential to educate the public on

toms of the disease, including fever lasting more than three days, severe fatigue, diarrhoea, paralysis, nerve damage, and gradual loss of sensation in the fingers and toes.

He advised immediate consulta-

tion with doctors if any of these symptoms appear. Venkata Murali further instructed officials to ensure special medical treatment for those affected by bacterial infections. He noted that the government has set up special centres at GGH in Guntur and RIMS in Ongole, Prakasam district, to provide medical care. The Collector stressed that steps must be taken to safeguard lives in Bapatla

District Revenue Officer G. Gangadhar Goud, District Medical and Health Officer Dr. S. Vijaya, and District Coordinator of Community Health Services Dr. Sheshu were among those present at the meeting.



# 3 killed, 7 hurt as auto collides with RTC bus

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Three people died and seven others were injured on Monday when an auto-rickshaw collided with an APSRTC bus near Budampadu village in Chebrolu mandal. The auto-rickshaw was carrying ten agricultural workers to a field when the accident occurred on the NaraKoduru-Budampadu road. The collision with the Pallevelugu RTC bus resulted in the deaths of Allamshetti Aruna, Kurra Nacharamma, and Thota Sitaramulu, all residents of Siddapalli village. The injured have been admitted to Guntur Government General Hospital (GGH).

# Minister conducts surprise inspection at ESI Hospital



State Labour Minister Vasamsetty Subhash conducted a surprise inspection at the Rajahmundry ESI Government Hospital following complaints about hospital management and medical services.

The minister, posing as a common man, interacted with patients to assess the quality of medical services. He inspected various departments and issued memos to the superintendent and doctors who were absent

During the inspection, he also ordered the suspension of outsourcing staff who were not present. Emphasising the importance of dedicated medical services, he stated that "human service is divine service" and urged medical professionals to uphold their responsibilities. He called for excellence in service delivery, which he said would enhance the government's reputation.

The inspection highlights the government's commitment to ensuring accessible and efficient public health-

Ex-minister comes down

heavily on TDP-led NDA rule

### 65 polling stations set up for MLC elections: DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has announced that 65 polling stations will be set up in West Godavari and East Godavari districts for the Teachers constituency grad-

uate elections, scheduled for February 27. As the District Collector and Returning Officer, Vetri Selvi stated that there are 42,282 voters in the Eluru district, including 24,704 male voters and 17,571 female voters.

#### Kannababu slams TDP over Tuni by-poll irregularities

PNS KAKINADA

Former Minister Kurasala Kannababu has strongly condemned the alleged undemocratic practices of the TDPled coalition government, particularly in the Tuni Municipal Vice-Chairman by-election. He accused the ruling alliance of misusing police support to intimidate and manipulate the election process, including threatening YSRCP councillors and destroying CCTV cameras near the Chairman's residence. Kannababu questioned the commitment of TDP leaders to democratic values, raising concerns about the erosion of constitutional integrity and the rule of

criticized Naidu for abandoning the

promise of a unified capital and failing

to secure assets worth Rs. 1.1 lakh crore

from Telangana. Venu Gopala Krishna also highlight-

ed Naidu's false propaganda when in

opposition, claiming that the state was sinking into debt while his govern-

ment ignored welfare schemes. He

accused Naidu of failing to implement

a single flagship programme smooth-

Additionally, he took a shot at

"Naidu's narrow self-interest has

only deepened the state's woes," he

Pawan Kalyan for his silence on issues

like acid attacks on women and criticized his inefficiency and failure to

address the state's pressing issues.

ly during his tenure.

concluded.



# 'Adarsh School Sports Ground to Get a Makeover'

Adarsh School sports ground in Santhapeta will be developed

according to a master plan. Minister Narayana, accompanied by officials, inspected the ground on Monday morning. He stated that the Municipal Corporation sports ground at Adarsh School (Guntabadi) will be revamped. He mentioned that during a recent visit, he observed the ground was covered with rocks and thorny bushes, and had instructed authorities to clear it.

'This is a large ground, and a master plan has been prepared with a consultancy for its development. Sports equipment will be installed, and we will ensure the ground is useful for all players," the

Minister said. He asserted that within a year, a

walking track, and courts for vol- waste-to-energy plants will be to construct a compound wall around the walking track and basketball court.

Minister Narayana also stated that he had met with the headmasters of all municipal schools in the city to discuss their problems and instructed the Municipal Commissioner to study and resolve them. He highlighted the government's focus on resolving underground drainage and drinking water issues in various localities. Residents expressed their gratitude for his assurance to address the drinking water shortage. He also mentioned that ACT internet service management has responded positively to a request to provide internet facilities in all municipal schools. The Minister announced that sewage treatment plants and

leyball, kabaddi, basketball, football, established across the state. He Municipal Administration Minister hockey, and net cricket would be recalled that during his governenergy plants were set up in Visakhapatnam and Guntur.

"Proposals are in place for ten more waste-to-energy plants. Municipalities across the state generate 6,700 metric tons of garbage daily, and 85 lakh tonnes of garbage has accumulated. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has given clear instructions to completely remove this accumulated garbage by

October 2, Gandhi Jayanti," he said. He added that tenders have been called for a waste-to-energy plant in Nellore, and steps are being taken to set up two plants each in Rajahmundry, Kakinada, and

Rayalaseema. Municipal Commissioner Surya Teja and Deputy Mayor Roop Kumar accompanied the Minister

during the inspection.

# KCR played in all formats while Revanth is still playing matches'

PNS HYDERABAD

PNS RAJAHMUNDRY

Former minister and East Godavari

YSRCP president Chelluboina Venu

Gopala Krishna held a press conference

in which he criticised the current

political climate in the State. He

claimed that the present government

poses a threat to civil society, turning

complainants into accused. He accused

Chandrababu Naidu of practising pol-

itics based on conspiracies and deceit,

attempting to forcibly capture local

bodies despite lacking power. He fur-ther stated that the TDP was buying

leaders against the will of the people. "Chandrababu Naidu is a prime

example of political horse-trading," he

said, referring to Naidu's involvement

in the 'cash-for-vote' scandal. He also

The birthday celebrations of BRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) turned into a political storm, with senior leaders Harish Rao and KTR launching scathing attacks on the Congress Government while rallying support for the former CM's comeback.

The event, held at the Telangana Bhavan, saw an overwhelming turnout of BRS cadres, with leaders proclaiming KCR as the unquestionable architect of Telangana and slamming the current administration under Revanth Reddy.

Addressing the gathering, Harish hailed KCR as more than just a leader, calling him the soul of four crore Telangana people. He traced KCR's journey from the 1969 Telangana Movement, where at the age of 16, KCR joined protests, to his bold resignation from three political posts to instil confidence in the statehood movement.

"Many before him raised slogans of Jai Telangana, only to abandon the fight once they got power. But KCR rejected power, resigned his Deputy Speaker post, MLA post and party secretary posts and won public trust," Harish said, adding that Prof. Jayashankar and many intellectuals saw KCR as the only leader who could bring Telangana to reality. Taking a swipe at Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Harish mocked his 2020 cricket match analogy, stating, "Revanth is playing Tondi (shady) matches, collecting money while breaking promises. KCR, on the other ĥand, has played Test, One-Day, and T20 - excelling in all formats of governance.'

Harish recalled KCR's hunger strike in 2009, which forced the Centre's hand in announcing Telangana statehood.

"Had KCR not gone on a fast-unto-death there would have been no separate Telangana. It is either Telangana or my funeral. That was his resolve and his struggle shook Delhi," he said, referring to P. Chidambaram's announcement on December 9, 2009, which was drafted by Prof. Jayashankar himself.

#### 98 autos seized for traffic rules violation

PNS KAKINADA

The traffic police seized 98 auto rickshaws for violating traffic rules such as overloading passengers, not having proper driving licenses, lack of insurance, speeding, and negligent driving. In a bid to reduce road accidents, the police conducted the special drive on the directions of SP Bindu Madhav, police said. Police said that cases were booked against the auto drivers which included eight for overloading passengers, five for front sitting passengers, 77 cases for overloading of school children, four for not having records, two without insurance, one for not having driving license

and one for drunken driving.

SP Bindu Madhav while addressing the auto drivers after the special drive instructed them to strictly follow traffic rules and not to overload the autos either with school children or the passengers. The SP asked the auto drivers to cooperate with the police in strict implementation of traffic rules and warned that stringent action would be initiated against those who violate traffic rules.

# Keep continuous vigil in bird flu buffer zone: Collector

PNS VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has stressed the need for ongoing precautionary measures in 35 villages within a 10-kilometer radius following the confirmation of bird flu cases in Anumallanka village. During a meeting of the District Coordination Committee held on Monday, he instructed coordination among various departments and field staff to be alert. Dr Lakshmisha reviewed the pre-

ventive and control measures being implemented in response to the Anumallanka incident. Officials from the Animal Husbandry Department reported that results from the National Institute of High-Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) confirmed the presence of the H5N1 influenza virus on February 14. They noted that security measures had already been put in place in response. The Collector stressed the need for strict control measures within the buffer zone, within 10 kilometres of the main centre (0-1 km). He instructed that all chicken and egg shops in the buffer zone should



grammes should be initiated, including the availability of sprayers and fogging equipment for disinfection. Field Revenue staff and panchay-

at secretaries were urged to remain vigilant, and it was recommended that biosecurity measures and 24/7 monitoring be implemented across the 116 poultry farms in the district. The Collector insisted that all actions must follow standard operating procedures.

He reassured the public that there is no need for gear regarding bird flu and advised forest officials

deaths in forested areas. District Animal Husbandry Officer Dr M Hanumantha Rao, DMHO Dr M Suhasini, DPO P Lavanya Kumari and Forest Range Officer P Raju and others were present.

#### **ROLE OF MICRO-OBSERVERS CRUCIAL IN POLLING CENTRES**

In another meeting, the District Collector stressed the vital role of micro-observers in polling centres for the upcoming elections in the combined Krishna-Guntur Legislative Council constituency, scheduled for February 27.

Speaking at a training programme for micro-observers held at the Collectorate's, Lakshmisha stated that these observers are essential for monitoring the polling process closely from start to finish. They are responsible for providing detailed reports to the general observers on every aspect of the election.

He highlighted the importance of training programmes based on the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure a comprehensive understanding of their duties. The Collector noted that 112 polling centres have been established within the NTR district and microobservers have been appointed to

oversee the polling process.
Polling will take place from 8 AM to 4 PM and the Collector urged the observers to report accurately on the nine specific issues and any other challenges that may arise during the polling. Assistant Returning Officer M Lakshmi Narasimham, Nodal Officer K Srinivas Rao and Superintendent of the Collectorate Election Cell Chandramouli were present.



### **ACROSS THE STATES**



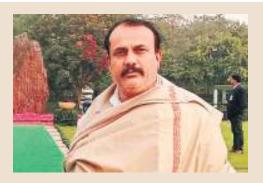
### **Ex-CJI Lalit to appear** before **ONOE** committee

ormer chief justice of India U U Lalit will appear before the parliamentary committee, which is scrutinising two bills advocating simultaneous elections, on February 25 as the panel begins consulting experts and various stake-holders as part of its mandate, sources said on Monday. They said former Law Commission of India chairperson Ritu Raj Awasthi, a judicial member of Lokpal, E M Sudarsana Natchiappan, a senior advocate and former Congress MP who had headed in 2015 a parliamentary committee that favoured simultaneous polls, and IAS officer Niten Chandra, the secretary of the highlevel Kovind committee, are also likely to share their views with the panel. The parliamentary committee's agenda for the February 25 meeting is briefly listed as "interaction with legal experts". The high-level committee headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind was constituted by the Modi government on 'one nation one election' (ONOE) and it had in its voluminous report strongly batted for the concept.



### **Family of four found dead** in apartment in Mysuru

family of four members were found dead at an apartment here on Monday, police said. The incident took place in Avishweshwaraiah Nagar in the city. The deceased have been identified as Chetan (45), his wife Rupali (43), and their son Kushal (15) and Chetan's mother Priyamvada (62) they said. According to the police, in a death note recovered from the spot, it was stated that no one should be held responsible for the deaths and requested authorities to not trouble any of their family members for it. Chetan claimed that he was under financial distress since they had recently purchased two flats at Sankalp apartment and had taken loan for it. He further mentioned that he did not have the money to repay the loan which police suspect could be the reason for taking such an extreme step. Citing preliminary investigation, a senior police officer said that Chetan may have fed his family members with poison and killed them before hanging himself. "We suspect that he might have fed them poison and then smothered them. But this is only our suspicion and there is not clarity yet on the exact cause of death. We are awaiting autopsy and Forensic Science Laboratory reports to ascertain the exact cause of death," he said.



### Sapkal to take charge as **Maha Congress chief today**

arshvardhan Sapkal will take charge as Maharashtra Congress president on Tuesday in the presence of senior leaders, a party functionary said. He will take charge at an event organised at Birla Matoshri Auditorium, a party statement issued here on Monday said. Sapkal, who hails from Buldhana district, was appointed chief of the party's state unit last week after Nana Patole completed his four-year tenure. Sapkal takes over at a time when the Congress is on a low following its disastrous performance in the November assembly polls, in which it would win just 16 seats in the 288-member assembly. It had contested 101 seats in alliance with the Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP). His immediate focus would be the civic polls, which are due in several cities of Maharashtra since early 2022. Local body polls are likely to be held this year.

# STATION HOLDING AREA, CROWD CONTROL MANUAL

# Railway minister lists steps to prevent incidents

Creating holding area at 60 stations experiencing high footfalls, a separate crowd management manual and raising awareness among passengers to not sit at stairs are among the measures being taken to prevent untoward incidents, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday.

These initiatives are being taken in the wake of a stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station Saturday evening which killed 18 passengers, according to official figures, and left several injured.

Interacting with mediapersons at the Rail Bhawan here, Vashnaw said the Railways has identified 60 stations which normally receive a high footfall and decided to make permanent or temporary holding areas outside the platforms to regulate the flow of passengers to the stations. "Sixty stations such as New Delhi, Patna, Surat, Bengaluru, Coimbatore have been identified for creating a holding area to manage the

flow of passengers inside the station. They will be allowed to enter the platform according to departure of their trains so that the station areas don't get overcrowded," Vaishnaw said.

He cited the example of stations in Prayagraj -- where the Maha Kumbh is taking place where such holding areas have been created and flow of passengers regulated successfulso far.

Vaishnaw also said a separate crowd management manual will be created by merging all

existing provisions, and a Standard Operating Procedure will be developed to handle passenger rush during festivals and special occasions.

"We will have to make a comprehensive manual for crowd management," the railway minister said. Officials say the current crowd management norms are robust and efficient, but they are scattered in various circulars and communications of the Railways, bringing them at one place in a form of manual will help a lot.

According to the minister, raising awareness among passengers not to sit at stairs or at any place that can block the free movement of other travellers can also help in a big way to prevent incidents like the one which occurred at the New

"Sixty stations such as

New Delhi, Patna, Surat,

Bengaluru, Coimbatore

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departure of their trains

so that the station areas

don't get overcrowded."

Delhi Railway Station. "We cannot fine the passengers for sitting on the stairs. The only way is to create awareness is through the media that it can congest the necessary movement of other travellers," Vaishnaw said.

# 'Cong high command will take decision'

### K'taka CM on leadership change

PNS BENGALURU

Amid speculations about leadership change in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said it is for the Congress high command to decide.

There have been talks in the state's political circles, especially in the ruling Congress party, about a chief minister change later this year, under a "rotational chief minister" or "power-sharing" formula.

"It is for the high command to decide," Siddaramaiah told reporters in response to a question on discussions about leadership change.

Deputy Chief Minister Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress president, is a strong chief ministerial aspirant and has made no secret of his ambition to become the CM. There have been time and again attempts by a section of party leaders and workers to project Shivakumar as the next chief

minister. There was stiff competition between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the chief minister's post after the declaration of Assembly election results in May 2023, and the Congress had managed to convince the latter



and made him the Deputy Chief Minister.

There were some reports at the time that a compromise had been reached based on a "rotational chief minister formula," according to which Shivakumar will become CM after two-andhalf years, but they have not been officially confirmed by the party.

A section of party leaders especially ministers considered close to Siddaramaiah, have been pitching for him to complete the full term as chief minister, stating that he was indispensable to the party if it wanted to retain power in the next election.

These activities are notwithstanding Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's warning last month asking his party colleagues to 'shut up' and focus on governance, amid public statements from them on the leadership change issue.

#### PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday reinstated Solan Mayor Usha Sharma in her post for the remainder of her tenure while terming her disqualification a case of "political goondaism".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh made its August 20, 2024 order absolute by which it had stayed her disqualification while terming her removal "a case of

"The interim order of August 20, 2024 is made absolute. Any interference with the order will invite consequences," the

bench said, as it adjourned the matter after a year. When senior advocate Devadatt Kamat, appearing for the respondents, tried to interject, the bench said it does not want to pass any strictures in the order at present, as it is a case of "political goondaism".

Sharma's counsel submitted that her tenure will get completed next year and urged the court to make its interim order of last year absolute.

On August 20, last year, the top court while issuing notice

# SC reinstates Solan's mayor

**Terms her disqualification 'political goondaism'** "Meanwhile, the operation of on the plea of Sharma and former mayor Poonam Grover the order dated June 10, 2024 against the June, 2024 order disqualifying the petitioners of the high court as councilors of ward upholding their disno.12 and ward no.8 of qualification kept in Municipal Corporation, Solan, in abeyance the fresh election for Himachal Pradesh as well as operathe post of the mayor of Solan tion of in Himachal impugned judgment of the high Pradesh, till further court dated June 25, 2024 shall

remain stayed. Resultantly, the first petitioner shall be allowed to continue and perform her duties as mayor of municipal corporation, Solan, Himachal Pradesh till further orders," it had said.

The top court was also critical of the reasoning given by the high court while upholding the notification of June 10, 2024 disqualifying Sharma and Grover, who were councillors of ward nos. 12 and 8 of the civic body, respectively. Both Sharma and Grover

were disqualified by the government under the provisions of the Himachal Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1994 for defying party directions during the election of mayor and deputy mayor held on December 7, 2023.

Elections to the Solan Municipal Corporation established in 2020 are held on party lines.

The civic body has 17 wards and the first election for these wards was held in April 2021. After the election, the mayor and deputy mayor were elected for a period of two and half years as per the provisions of the Act.

# 36,420 women, 8,403 children went missing in Odisha in 5 years: Majhi

PNS BHUBANESWAR

A total of 36,420 women and 8,403 children went missing in Odisha over the past five years, Majhi informed the assembly on Monday.

Majhi said 421 women were trafficked to other states through middlemen, leading to the arrest of 453 people. The police have been

immediately registering cases on the basis of complaints and it has taken action to trace the trafficked women, he said in a written reply to

During 2020-2024, a total of 1,417 women and 1,857 children who had gone missing were traced, the CM said.

Outgoing Chief Election

Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on

Monday stressed the need to

have a totaliser system to ensure

confidentiality in polling sta-

tion-wise voting patterns and

said it is high time that NRIs are

empowered to vote from their

of his retirement on attaining

the age of 65 years, he also said

consensus for remote voting

mechanisms is must to facilitate

In his farewell address ahead

PNS NEW DELHI

locations.



Besides, the state government has also rescued 784 child labourers.

Elaborating on the steps taken to prevent women and child trafficking in Odisha, Majhi said 36 Integrated Anti Human Trafficking Units (IAHTUs) have been created.

IAHTUs have been made contact points to deal with such cases in Bolangir, Nuapada, Bargarh, Kalahandi,

crores of migrant voters.
Biometric authentication at

polling booths should be tried

need to facilitate early decision.

Sambalpur and Jharsuguda, he said. Awareness campaigns to prevent trafficking cases are being organised at the police-station level. Police trolling has also been strengthened in vulnerable areas like bus stands and railway stations, Majhi said.

Special training is also being provided to police personnel to identify, conduct investigation and avoid the recurrence of such incidents.

In another written reply, the chief minister informed that 6,437 cases of kidnapping/abduction of women were registered in different police stations of Odisha during 2024, and 413 people have been arrested in connection with these cases.

#### Chidambaram dubs Pradhan's NEP pitch as arrogance

PNS CHENNAI

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Monday termed as "peak of arrogance," Union Education Minister on Tamil Nadu implementing the three-language policy for release of education funds to the state. Chidambaram

Pradhan's arrogant comment that unless the state government adopts the three-language policy and teaches Hindi, it would not be released funds, showed that he neither knew Tamil Nadu's history nor understood its people's sentiments. Also, the union minister was not aware of the nation's Constitutional history and Tamil Nadu people, by showing unity, should oppose this arrogance, he said.

underlined and asserted that

election management bodies

need to develop capacity to

counter mischievous, baseless

and strategically timed criticism.

# 'Not a flighty idea at all'



PNS PUNE

A 20-year-old student's ingenuity to reach his college in time for an exam by paragliding over a 'ghat' in Maharashtra's Satara district came to the fore after a video of his feat went viral on social media on Monday.

First Year B.Com student Samarth Mahangde said the incident took place on December 15 and was necessitated after he realised late that he had his first-semester exam on Natural Disaster Management in a few minutes time. It helped that he knew paragliding operators in the area, said Mahangde, a resident of Pasarani village. A video showed Mahangde

taking a pilot-operated paragliding ride from Harrison's Folly, a flat plateau located about 5 kilometres before Panchgani on Wai-Panchgani road in Satara, to Kisan Veer College.

"I work at a sugarcane juice centre near Harrison's Folly.

That day, at 2pm I realised I had a paper at 2:15pm. I forgot about it since the exam timings and date had been rescheduled a few times earlier. I knew road was not an option due to Sunday traffic and ongoing work in the ghat section and my college is 12 kilometres away," he said.

"I knew paragliding operators in the area. One of them, Govind Yevale, asked a pilot to fly me to the college," the collegian said.

After wearing all the mandatory safety equipment, he and our pilot managed to land at an open ground near the college in exactly five minutes," Yevale said.

Mahangde said he could answer his exam in time also because his friends had got his hall ticket, identity card and uniform.Kisan Veer College authorities confirmed about the exam and that Mahangde did appear for it.

"But, we cannot confirm if he paraglided here," a college official said.

#### **'NOT PARTY'S VIEWS'**

# Cong distances itself from Pitroda's remarks on China

PNS NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday distanced itself from its leader Sam Pitroda's remarks on China, saying they are not the views of the party and that China remains India's foremost external security and economic challenge.

Pitroda, chairman of Indian Overseas Congress, was reported to have said that he does not understand the threat India faces from China, claiming that it is often blown out of proportion. The views reportedly expressed by Mr. Sam Pitroda on China are most def-



initely NOT the views of the Indian National Congress," AICC general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

"China remains our foremost foreign policy, external security, as well as economic challenge. The INC has repeatedly raised questions on the Modi Govt's approach to China, including the PM's public clean chit to it on June 19, 2020. Our most recent statement on China was on 28th January, 2025," he said.
"It is also extremely regret-

table that Parliament is being denied an opportunity to discuss the situation and express a collective resolve to meet these challenges effectively," Ramesh said.



mandatory for better financial transparency and analytics. On political promises, he Unregulated social media said these must be backed by financial disclosures and courts

High-time NRIs empowered to vote from their locations: CEC



algorithms pose a serious risk to elections worldwide and must be addressed urgently, Kumar Casting doubt on outcomes after active and full participation in the process is undesirable, the outgoing head of the poll authority lamented. "Technology has been a pow-

erful enabler in our electoral processes, helping refine voter rolls, streamline operations, and engage citizens more effective-

# Disposal of waste comes under SC scanner

PNS NEW DELHI

The disposal of hazardous waste of 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, which claimed 5,479 lives, near Indore came under the Supreme Court's scanner on Monday which sought responses from the Centre, Madhya Pradesh and its pollution control board.

The hazardous waste of around 377 tonnes of the now defunct Union Carbide factory was shifted to Pithampur industrial area in Dhar district, 250 km away from Bhopal and around 30 km from Indore. The top court took note of a plea raising the

seminal issue of right to health and the risk to the inhabitants of nearby areas, including the city of Indore. Highly toxic gas methyl isocyanate (MIC) leaked from the Union Carbide factory during the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, eventually killing 5,479 people and maiming more than five lakh others. It is considered to be among the worst industrial disasters in the world.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih agreed to hear a plea challenging the December 3, 2024 and January 6 this year orders of the



Madhya Pradesh High Court. December last year order rebuked the authorities for not clearing the Union Carbide site

in Bhopal despite directions The high court in its from even the Supreme Court and set a four-week deadline to shift the waste, observing that even 40 years after the gas

It had warned the government of contempt proceedings if its directive was not followed.

"state of inertia"

On the night of January 1, the shifting of toxic waste began in 12 sealed container trucks for its

tragedy, authorities were in a

disposal, an official had said. Initially, some of the waste will be burnt at the waste disposal

unit in Pithampur and the residue (ash) will be examined to find whether any harmful elements were left, Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department Director Swatantra Kumar Singh had said.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

# **Heart-wrenching**

The New Delhi Railway Station stampede exposes administrative lapses and highlights the need for better crowd control

t is as heart-wrenching as it is unfortunate. The stampede at New Delhi Railway station has shocked the capital. At least 18 people, including five children, lost their lives, and over a dozen sustained injuries in a horrific stampede at the Station on Saturday night. The tragedy unfolded on the foot-overbridges connecting platforms 14 and 15, as a sudden surge of passengers waiting to board trains for Prayagraj resulted in a deadly crush. The incident raises critical questions about mismanagement, infrastructural inadequacies and lapses in crowd control that led to the catastrophe. The primary trigger of the incident appears to be a confluence of factors, including excessive passenger load, misleading announcements and poor crowd management. The surge of pilgrims traveling to Prayagraj for the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela significantly increased the footfall at the station. Reports indicate that around 1,500 general tickets were being sold every hour. Sources suggest that a wrong

announcement regarding a change of platforms may

have led to confusion among passengers. In the ensuing rush, some individuals slipped while descending the foot-overbridge stairs, triggering widespread panic. Besides, extended waiting periods for departing trains may have resulted in a bottleneck effect. While overcrowding was an expected challenge, poor planning and mismanagement turned it into a disaster. Given the predictable surge of passengers, railway authorities failed to deploy adequate personnel to regulate the movement of people. Despite previous incidents highlighting the risks of overcrowding, no significant upgrades had been made to ensure

smoother pedestrian movement. Moreover, the response from railway officials and security personnel was reportedly delayed. A more robust system to alert and manage surging crowds could have prevented the incident from escalating into a full-fledged disaster. Could this have been prevented? Surely. Deployment of additional railway police and personnel during peak travel periods could have averted the disaster. Besides, real-time monitoring of passenger density using surveillance cameras and Al-based crowd control systems could have definintely help in such a situations. This stampede must jolt the authorities from their deep slumber as this is not for the first time such a tragedy has happened. Expansion and widening of foot-overbridges to accommodate high passenger traffic must be done on priority. Clear and accurate digital signage to minimise confusion is also very important. Besides, there must be a system to cap the number of the general tickets issued per hour, especially during mega events, While accountability is being fixed, the focus must remain on implementing long-term solutions to prevent such tragedies in the future. The railway authorities must ensure that infrastructure, security and operational protocols are robust enough to handle high footfall scenarios safely.

#### PICTAL



A flock of ibis flying over a paddy field, in Nagaon

# Delhi High Court reinstates

# fraud claims against Reliance



The Delhi High Court quashes an international arbitration award that had dismissed government claims of 'insidious fraud' and 'unjust enrichment' against Reliance Industries

he resounding victory of the Central Government's legal team, led by the Attorney General of India A.R. Venkatramani reinforced by the active participation of the eminent jurist and the former Attorney General of India K.K. Venugopal, under the astute administrative guidance of Union Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, in the Delhi High Court verdict against Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), has decisively dismantled allegations of favouritism levelled against the Modi government.

This landmark ruling categorically refutes opposition claims that the government promotes select business houses, reaffirming its commitment to transparency, fairness, and the rule of law in corporate governance and policymaking. In a landmark judgment dated February 14, 2025, the Delhi High Court delivered a decisive verdict in the case of Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), addressing long-standing allegations of crony capitalism and favouritism towards major industrialists by the current government.

This 79-page judgment not only exonerates the government from accusations of bias but also underscores the integrity of India's judicial system and the competence of its political and legal leadership.Background of the CaseThe dispute centres around the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) executed between the Union of India and Reliance Industries Ltd. in 2000, about the exploration and extraction of natural gas in the Krishna-Godavari basin.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas alleged that RIL had engaged in "unjust enrichment" by extracting and selling gas that had purportedly migrated from fields operated by the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to RIL's adjacent block. The government sought compenactions resulted in significant arbitration award dated July 24, financial losses to the state exchequer.Details of JudgementThe Delhi High Court's single judge judgment in Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. examined the allegations of unjust enrich-

ment, contractual breaches, and fraud against RIL, ultimately dismissing them due to a lack of concrete evidence. The court upheld the findings of the international arbitration tribunal, reaffirming that RIL operated within the bounds of the Production Sharing Contract (PSC) and could not be held liable for natural gas migration beyond its control. However, the Division Bench of the Delhi High Court has quashed an arbitral award that had dismissed the Central government's claims against Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and its foreign partners. The government had accused the conglomerate of "insidious fraud" and "unjust enrichment" amounting to over \$1.729 billion by allegedly extracting natural gas from deposits beyond its entitle-

The Bench, comprising Justices Rekha Palli and Saurabh Baneriee, overturned the ruling of a single judge, who had, in May 2022, set aside the Petroleum Ministry's allegations. The court determined that the international 2018, which had favoured the RIL-led consortium, was "contrary to public policy" in India. This decision marks a significant legal setback for RIL, as it reinstates the govern-

**US CRITICISES EUROPEAN LEADERS** 

Madam — At the 61st Munich Security Conference, American Vice President

JD Vance left no stone unturned in rep-



THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS ALLEGED THAT RIL HAD ENGAGED IN **'UNJUST** ENRICHMENT' BY EXTRACTING AND

SELLING GAS THAT

HAD PURPORTEDLY

MIGRATED FROM FIELDS OPERATED BY THE STATE-OWNED OIL AND NATURAL GAS CORPORATION (ONGC) TO RIL'S ADJACENT BLOCK

ment's claims concerning unauthorized gas extraction. The ruling also strengthens the government's position in reg-ulatory disputes within the oil and gas sector. With the arbitral award nullified, the matter may now proceed further in Indian courts, potentially leading to fresh legal battles over financial liabilities and resource allocation in the country's hydrocarbon sector. Beyond the legal nuances, the judgment serves as a crucial precedent for future contracts, emphasizing the importance of precision in drafting and adherence to arbitration mechanisms for dispute resolution. It underscores the independence of the judiciary in adjudicating disputes involving powerful corporate entities and government bodies, dispelling claims of

crony capitalism. The case also highlights the competence of the central government's legal representa-tion, particularly the diligence of Attorney General A.R. Petroleum & Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in defending the government's stance. It further reflects the abysmally woeful performance of the RIL legal team in defending the case. Furthermore, the ruling reassures investors about India's

commitment to the rule of law, ensuring that legal processes remain transparent and evi-

dence-driven. By challenging the political narrative of undue favouritism towards industrialists, the judgment reinforces the integrity of India's governance, corporate regulations, and media responsibility in shap-

ing public discourse. Conclusion

The Delhi High Court's latest judgment in Union of India vs. Reliance Industries Ltd. is a testament to the robustness of India's legal system and its capacity to adjudicate highstakes disputes impartially. It dispels allegations of governmental bias towards prominent industrialists, affirming that decisions are grounded in evidence and legal merit. The ruling also underscores the importance of adhering to contractual obligations and the role of arbitration in resolving intricate commercial conflicts. As India continues to navigate its path towards eco-Venkatramani and Union nomic growth, this judgment reinforces the principles of fairness transn rule of law as cornerstones of

> its democratic ethos. (The writer is a prominent columnist and Public Policy Expert; the views expressed are personal)

# India advances carbon market reforms following COP 29



ATUL AGRAWAL

India, already a leader in renewable energy, reinforced its commitment to climate action by proposing a unified carbon market

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP 29) under the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) concluded in Baku, Azerbaijan, on November 24, 2024. While key expectations regarding climate finance remained unmet, significant progress was achieved in carbon market regulations. A landmark agreement on carbon trading rules was reached, aiming to accelerate climate action by enabling countries to meet their emission reduction goals efficiently and cost-effectively. Under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the country initially aimed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emission intensity by 33-35% from 2005 levels by 2030, later revising this target to 45% in 2022. India has launched multiple initiatives to combat climate change. On the supply side, renewable energy generation helps mitigate carbon footprints, while demand-side initiatives like Perform-Achieve-Trade (PAT), star labeling, energy conservation building codes, and improved lighting solu-



tions further reinforce India's climate commitments. Existing frameworks, including Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) and Energy Saving Certificates (ESCerts), serve as a foundation. These were introduced under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) in 2008 and have been successfully traded on

Indian power exchanges. RECs drive renewable energy adoption by allowing obligated entities to purchase either renewable energy or its certificates. One REC equates to 1 MWh of renewable energy generated from sources like solar, wind, hydro, and biogas. This system benefits both electricity generators and buyers, ensuring environmental compliance.

Similarly, ESCerts promote energy efficiency by enabling regulator and power designated energy-intensive exchanges as trading plat-

industries to either enhance forms, while the Bureau of energy savings or buy corresponding certificates. One ESCert represents a reduction of 1 million tonnes of oil consist of two segments: a equivalent energy. Currently, compliance market and an offset market. The compliincluding aluminum, cement, power distribution, and railways, participate in this program, covering nearly 50% of India's primary energy consumption.Since their inception, RECs and ESCerts have driven significant emissions reductions, saving over 73 million tonnes of CO2 through REC trading and preventing 106 million tonnes of CO2 emissions via ESCerts.Recognizing the need for a unified carbon market, India proposed a comprehensive system merging RECs and ESCerts into a single, internationally aligned framework. The regulatory foundation was set with the amendment of the Energy Conservation Act in January 2023, followed by the notification of the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme, 2023. The scheme designates the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission as the market

Energy Efficiency oversees compliance mechanisms. India's carbon market will ance market will impose emission caps on obligated entities, allowing overachievers to sell surplus carbon credits to underachievers. The offset market will enable voluntary participation by non-obligated entities aiming to reduce their carbon footprints.

Carbon credit certificates will be traded through a regulated bidding process. The transition from existing REC and ESCert markets to a unified carbon trading system is expected to be seamless, given India's well-established power exchanges and transaction mechanisms. With this development, India moves closer to integrating its climate action efforts into global carbon markets, reinforcing its commitment to reducing emissions and achieving longterm sustainability goals.

(The writer works with Indian Institute of Management, Sirmaur; views are personal)

rimanding and threatening the European leaders. He has launched a monstrous attack on Europe, in which he has accused its leaders of failing to give free speech, restricting illegal migration, and living in fear of religious ideology. He has put the biggest threat to Europe's security on the European countries themselves. Along with this, he also said that the European countries do not pay the full price for their security. America will no longer provide security to Europe with closed eyes. This simply means that Donald Trump has indicated that if the NATO organisation has to be run, then it will have to be run

leave that organisation. America has also indicated that it wants to see Russia back in the G-7 countries' organisation. The White House has already announced that it will impose additional tariffs on goods imported from countries around the world. Now the rest of the world, especially the European Union, will have to decide without any delay how they will learn to live without America. Before America leaves NATO, the campaign to expel it will have to be intensified. Also, every possible help will have to be given to Ukraine to save it from the clutches of Russian terrorism. Because Trump is completely determined to hand over the reins of Úkraine to the Kremlin.

on Trump's terms, or else America will

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

#### **HOPES HIGH FOR TROPHY**

Madam— This refers to your caption in Sunday Pioneer, "Rohit, Kohli lead Team India for Champions Trophy'. Indeed, it was a brilliant century from skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli against Bangladesh in the ICC Champions Trophy opener while I occupied the studio box as a special guest from which I was witnessing the

# **Stampede at New Delhi Railway Station**

EEDIT

The stampede incident at New Delhi Railway Station claimed 15 innocent lives, but it also serves as a warning that the time for change has arrived. Chaos, lack of crowd control and failure of security measures led to this tragedy. It is now essential that we learn ing traffic management, deploying adefrom this incident and take steps to prevent such occurrences in the future. This disaster has made it clear that the railway must adopt modern strategies for

match. The entire box was surrounded industry, this moment could be less by the players' family, and I can see all the cheers in Anushka Sharma and Rohit's wife.

The recent rule of restrictions has not permitted the player's family to join them for this tour. When my opinion about Rohit and Virat has been changing while watching them play, there came a strong pat behind my back, which brought me to reality. Oh, it all happened in my dreams that I woke up to my wife's call and went for a quick shower and to get ready to start at my office. Hitman and Kohli thus became the dream object in fans lives, and I am also one among those impacted much by their failures. One hopes that both will come good in the upcoming

Champions Trophy.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

### **MSMES MUST REINVENT TO SHINE**

Madam — The US's push for reciprocal tariffs, framed as a 'fair trade' corrective, has sent shockwaves through global markets-but for India's MSMEs

crowd management and passenger safety. The railway administration should anticipate potential crowds during major events and pilgrimages and make appropriate arrangements in advance. By utilising new technologies, entry and exit points should be better organised to ensure smooth passenger movement. The government has expressed condolences over the incident, and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav has ordered a high-level inquiry. However, beyond this, we must take proactive steps with a positive mindset to prioritise passenger safety. By improvquate police forces and making the information system more effective, we can prevent such incidents. R K Jain | Barwani

about survival and more about reinvention. Critics argue that this move will spark a trade war, hobbling economic growth and benefiting no one. However, for India's MSME sector, this moment could be a catalyst for transformation. By upgrading to world-class standards at affordable costs, Indian MSMEs can tap into vast export markets and become more competitive, resilient and export-

This would require a multi-pronged approach, involving government incentives, technology transfers, and skill development programmes. By doing so, India can turn a potential trade threat into a transformative opportunity, ultimately boosting its economic growth and global trade prospects and proving that even in the midst of tariff wars, MSMEs can shine as stars of innovation and growth.

Shruti Saggar | Pune

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# **FIRST COLUMN**

# **RAISING GEN ALPHA AND GEN BETA**

To ensure their well-being, parents must strike a balance between traditional values and modern approaches



SHAINY SHARMA

he 21st century has introduced new challenges and opportunities in parenting. As we raise Generation Alpha (born 2012-2024) and Generation Beta (born 2025-2039), it is crucial to adapt parenting strategies to their digital upbringing, rapid technological advancements and changing societal norms.

Ensuring these children grow up healthy, happy, and disciplined requires a balance of traditional values and modern approaches. There is no denying that, unlike previous generations, Generation Alpha and Generation Beta are growing up with easy access to technology, which affects their lifestyle habits.

It is of utmost importance that parents/guardians take proactive steps to ensure their children's well-being such as providing balanced nutrition such as a diet rich in proteins, vitamins, and fibres while limiting processed foods and sugary snacks; reducing screen time and promoting physical activities such as cycling, swimming, and team sports to improve fitness and social skills; setting screenfree bedtime routines to ensure quality sleep, which is crucial for the cognitive and emotional development and encouraging children to spend time offline by engaging in hands-on activities like painting, gardening and DIY projects.

Not only these, but in an era of social media influence and fastpaced lifestyles, parents/guardians need to support their children by creating a strong emotional connection; encouraging resilience and a growth mindset; guiding them in reducing digital overload, and engaging them in mindful activities such as yoga, meditation, journaling, or simple relaxation exercises to help them cope with stress. Above all, what matters the most is the art of discipline. With instant gratification becoming a norm in the digital age,



parents/guardians must realise that these generations will grow up in an Al-driven world, requiring skills beyond academics. Parents/Guardians can help prepare them by encouraging critical thinking and creativity and providing problem-solving challenges, STEM activities, and artistic outlets along with proper guidance on responsible internet usage, cybersecurity, and online ethics followed by developing social skills in a hybrid world. Raising healthy, happy, and disciplined Gen Alpha and Gen Beta children requires a thoughtful blend of love, guidance, and adaptability.

Parents/Guardians must embrace new-age parenting by integrating digital awareness with traditional values while fostering emotional resilience and self-discipline. By prioritising wellbeing, education and strong moral foundations, one can ensure these generations grow into responsible, fulfilled, and future-ready individ-

Also, by providing proper nutrition, encouraging physical and mental well-being, fostering social skills, and setting positive examples, parents/guardians can create an environment where children thrive for it is aptly said that a happy and healthy child is not just the result of luck but of consistent efforts, care, and understanding from those who nurture them. By promoting healthy habits, setting strong moral foundations, and nurturing adaptability, parents can equip their children for a fast-evolving world. Ultimately, a happy and well-rounded child is shaped not by chance, but by consistent love, guidance,

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

# Unlocking nature's secrets: A journey through India's forests

Nature is an open book, rich with stories waiting to be uncovered. There are intricate connections between land, life, and time, write BKP Sinha & Arvind Jha

ature, in its boundless complexity, holds countless wonders and mysteries. A walk through the forest offers a unique opportunity to engage deeply with the natural world, observing its intricate details and uncovering its hidden stories. Every tree, rock, and animal track contributes to the landscape's rich history, revealing the dynamic processes that have shaped it over time. The towering trees, with their rings cataloguing centuries of climatic shifts and environmental changes, stand as silent witnesses to the passage of time. A notice-able absence of middle-aged trees, for example, often points to a past forest fire. These fires, while natural and sometimes devastating, selectively eliminate younger trees while leaving behind older, more resilient ones. India, with its diverse ecosystems ranging from coastal regions to mountain valleys, offers a unique opportunity to observe the intricate relationships between flora, fauna, and their environment. Even the soil beneath our feet, a mosaic of organic matter, testifies to the endless cycle of life and decay that sustains the ecosystem. The contours of the land, the steepness of slopes, the presence of valleys and ridges – these are not mere accidents of geography. They are the fingerprints of geological forces, millennia in the making. The Himalayas, Western Ghats, and Vindhya ranges are iconic examples of such geological artistry, showcasing the dynamic processes that have shaped the nation's landscape and influenced its biodiversity. The forest is a timeless classroom, where nature's lessons unfold with every step. But to truly unlock these secrets, requires more than a casual glance; it demands a mindful approach and willingness to slow down and truly engage with our surroundings.
As you walk through the forest, you'll notice the forest floor is covered with a thick layer of leaves, twigs, and decomposing organic matter.

This layer, known as the leaf litter, plays a crucial role in nutrient cycling and provides a habitat for many small creatures. The type and distribution of vegetation provide insights into the region's climate, soil conditions, and water availability. Lush rainforests, like those in the Western Ghats and Northeast India, thrive in areas with abundant rainfall. These verdant ecosystems boast a rich variety of plant species, from towering trees to intricate understory plants, each adapted to thrive in the humid, water-rich environment. This dense vegetation supports a wide range of wildlife, contributing to the region's bio-

diversity and ecological stability. In contrast, the arid deserts of Rajasthan present a landscape where life has remarkably adapted to survive with minimal water. Vegetation here is sparse, but highly specialized, with species like cacti, acacias, and thorny bushes dominating the terrain. These species are equipped with unique adaptations, such as water-storing tissues and deep root systems, allowing them to conserve and access water efficiently and ensuring their survival in such

harsh conditions. The intimate relationship between plants and their environment becomes even more evident when observing specific species in particular areas. For instance, in floodplains, trees such as sycamore, Gular, and ash Gurjan thrive in fertile, wet conditions where water and nutrients



THE

GANGES RIVER, REVERED AS SACRED, FLOWS OVER

NUMEROUS **AQUATIC AND** TERRESTRIAL SPECIES. ITS WATERS IRRIGATE FIELDS THAT FEED MILLIONS,

accumulate. On the other hand, the hardy Casuarina is well-suited to coastal environments, where the salty conditions pose a challenge for many other species, including Karanj (Pongamia). Similarly, along riverbanks, trees like Jamun and Arjun flourish in the constantly wet conditions, highlighting how plant life reflects the local ecosystem. Just as plant life reflects environmental conditions, rock formations provide a window into the geological history and processes that have shaped the land. Sedimentary rocks, often rich in marine fossils such as shells, corals, and fish, indicate that the region was once submerged under-

These rocks may also display ripple marks or mud cracks, further supporting the presence of ancient water bodies. For example, the fos-sil-rich Shivalik Hills provide a glimpse into prehistoric times, showcasing the variety of life forms that once thrived in the area. The Z,500 types of sediment and their layering can also offer insights into past climate conditions, such as periods ACROSS of drought or heavy rainfall. For instance, fine-grained sediments suggest calm, shallow waters, while coarser sediments point to more turbulent conditions. SUPPORTING Igneous rocks, formed from cooled

magma, reveal the area's volcanic history, while metamorphic rocks provide evidence of the intense transformations that occur deep within the Earth. Understanding the geology beneath the surface, which shapes the land, is equally impor-tant, and soil reveals much about this. For example, limestone regions, where rock weathering creates caves and stone pillars, typically have alkaline soils high in calcium. Conversely, granite-dominated areas, where rock breakdown leads to acidic soils, often develop wetlands due to poor drainage.

Soil colour offers further clues: Dark brown soil, rich in organic matter, supports diverse ecosystems; grey soil suggests wetter conditions; vellowish soil may indicate nutrient depletion. Dramatic shifts in soil colour often point to human influence. For example, in Karnataka and

Odisha, vibrant red and ochre hues reflect historical iron ore mining. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, white caps on the soil signal high salt levels from over-irrigation. Physical signs in the landscape—such as fissures or cracks in the soil—can indicate instability, caused by factors like erosion, seismic activity, or human In hilly regions like the Western Ghats or Himalayas, slipping or bending tree bark may signal shift-

ing ground, a clear indicator of potential soil movement. Recognizing these signs is crucial for the safety of campers and hikers. Water bodies, including rivers, lakes, and wetlands, are vital components of India's ecosystems and are deeply intertwined with the land's geology. Major rivers such as Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Godavari are true lifelines for the

The Ganges River, revered as sacred, flows over 2,500 kilometres across northern India, supporting numerous aquatic and terrestrial species. Its waters irrigate fields that feed millions, and it is a critical source of drinking water for countless communities. Similarly, the Brahmaputra River, originating from the Tibetan Himalayas, meanders through Northeast İndia, sustaining rich floodplain ecosystems and supplying water for agriculture and hydropower.

The Godavari, often called the "Dakshin Ganga," flows through central India, nourishing one of the largest river basins in the country and supporting diverse habitats. India's wetlands, such as the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, span the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta and are a haven for Bengal tigers, crocodiles, birds, and other wildlife, while its mangroves protect the coastline from storms and floods. As we explore these natural habitats, subtle signs like paw prints, droppings, and other traces offer glimpses into animals' presence and activities.

Each animal leaves a distinct signature reflecting its unique anatomy and behaviour. For example, cats, with their stealthy grace, leave tracks showcasing the soft pads of their paws, devoid of sharp imprints of their retractable claws, hinting at their elusive nature.

Rabbits, in contrast, leave bounding tracks with hind legs landing ahead of their forelegs, showcasing their hurried movements and vulnerability. Understanding these signs provides deeper insights into wildlife behaviour and habitat preferences. Like us, animals are drawn to places that offer the essentials of life: food, water, and shelter. A patch of trees followed by an open field and a water source, such as a lake or pond, indicates a popular spot for wildlife. However, animals in these areas are often cautious and aware of their surroundings.

They possess an innate ability to detect and avoid human presence long before we notice them, typically only breaking cover to make a quick escape. Birds, in particular, use vocalizations to mark territory and alert others to predators.

For instance, the sudden flight of pigeons on a quiet woodland path can trigger a group warning system, rabbits, and foxes—of a potential threat. Similarly, a chorus of noisy bird calls may indicate a coordinated defence against a predator, such as a crow mobbing an owl. Birds also emit sharp alarm calls, like the high-pitched "seet," specifically designed to warn others of a bird of prey overhead. It is in paying close attention to these subtle cues that we begin to truly understand the richness of the natural world. The next time we find ourselves amidst the whispers of the woods, let us listen closelv.

The forest invites us to unlock its wisdom, learn from its resilience, and contribute to its legacy. By embracing the profound lessons found within the diverse elements of the forest, we not only enrich our own lives but also ensure that this invaluable library remains open for generations to come.

(The writers are former principal chief conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views

# The rise of religious realty: How India's infrastructure push is transforming spiritual tourism

This emerging sector is transforming pilgrimage sites with upscale hospitality and commercial developments, meeting the needs of faith-driven travelers

he Indian economy has witnessed a significant push towards infrastructure, real estate and tourism, especially spiritual tourism especially in the 2025-26 Union Budget. The government's focus on urban redevelopment, affordable housing, and tourism-friendly policies has positioned India as a global hotspot for real estate and hospitality investments. Among the most prominent emerging trends is the rise of religious realty—an intersection of real estate, hospitality, and spiritual tourism, where projects are developed to cater to the growing number of pilgrims and faith-driven trav-

With disposable incomes on



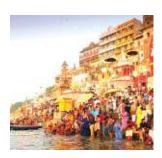
up to Rs 12 lakh under the new tax regime—India's middle class is set to invest more in homeownership and travel. Additionally, the introduction of the Rs 15,000 crore SWAMIH Fund 2 for affordable and mid-income housing will fast-track stalled projects, ensuring homebuyers see the fruition of their investments.

exponential rise, with 50 toptier tourist destinations being developed with state partnerships, reinforcing the nation's status as a must-visit destination for both spiritual and leisure travellers. The Rise of Religious Realty:

A New Era in Development India's spiritual destinations have long been major attractions for domestic and international tourists. However, what was once a fragmented market with limited infrastructure is now being transformed into a sophisticated segment within the hospitality and real estate industries. The religious tourism boom has led to a surge in demand for premium hotels, commercial complexes, and mixed-use the rise due to tax relief mea sures—such as no income tax sures—such as no income tax tality sector is poised for an both pilgrims and high-end Tier II and III Cities

travellers. The Solitaire Group has been at the forefront of this evolution. Recognising the immense potential in religious reality, it has strategically invested in prime pilgrimage destinations such as Ayodhya, Varanasi, Prayagraj, and Haridwar.

Its flagship development in Ayodhya—a luxury Taj hotel in partnership with the Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL)—exemplifies its commitment to redefining spiritual tourism. The 300-key Taj Ayodhya, spanning 7.2 acres, will feature high-end villas, luxury accommodations, wellness facilities, and state-of-theart banqueting spaces to cater to both pilgrims and travellers seeking opulent experiences. Unlocking the Potential of



The narrative of real estate growth in India is no longer limited to metro cities. Government-backed infrastructure projects, improved regional connectivity under the modified UDAN scheme, and growing investor interest are propelling the development of Tier II and III cities.

Cities with religious and cultural significance are seeing an influx of premium residential and commercial projects, as Master List (HML), ensuring

demand for quality real estate easier access to low-cost soars. The Solitaire Group has been a pioneer in this domain. Its developments in Prayagraj, including the city's first and largest township, are a testament to its vision of creating world-class urban spaces beyond metro hubs.

Through strategic land acquisitions and partnerships, the Group aims to bridge the infrastructure gap in smaller cities and deliver projects that enhance both living standards and economic prosperity.

Hospitality Meets Spiritual

India's push for religious and spiritual tourism has been backed by key government initiatives, including hotels in pilgrimage hubs being added to the Infrastructure Harmonised

**Tourism** 

financing, streamlined e-visa services and visa fee waivers for select international tourists to encourage global arrivals, and MUDRA loans for homestays to support budget travel and rural tourism.

This structured approach to hospitality growth has enabled developers like the Solitaire Group to envision and execute projects that cater to a diverse range of travellers. The focus remains on integrating worldclass amenities into heritagerich locations while maintaining the cultural and spiritual

essence of these sites. Building a Legacy of

Excellence Since its inception in 2005, the Solitaire Group has established itself as a leading player in real estate and hospitality. From residential developments in emerging urban centres to luxury hotels in religious destinations, its portfolio reflects its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and excellence.

With the Indian government's ambitious push for infrastructure, tourism, and real estate reforms, the opportunities in religious realty are boundless. Indian leading players would continue this transformative journey, crafting spaces that offer both spiritual fulfilment and contemporary luxury. The focus be on delivering exceptional living experiences and fostering economic growth in the communities that are being served.

(The author is the founder and CEO of Solitaire Group. Views expressed are personal) VIJAYAWADA | TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 18, 2025

# IN BRIEF



### **Sugar production falls** 12 pc so far: ISMA

ndia's sugar production fell 12 per cent to 197 lakh tonnes till February 15 of the current marketing year ending September mainly due to lower output in Maharashtra and Karnataka, according to industry body ISMA data. Sugar marketing year runs from October to September. The data of sugar production is after diversion of sweetener for ethanol making. In a statement on Monday, Indian Sugar and Bio Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) said that sugar production till February 15th, 2025 in the current 2024-25 marketing year reached 197.03 lakh tonnes as against 224.15 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period of the preceding year. Among states, ISMA data showed that sugar production has fallen in Uttar Pradesh to 64.04 lakh tonnes from 67.77 lakh tonnes In Maharashtra, the production has dipped to 68.22 lakh tonnes from 79.45 lakh tonnes, while the output in Karnataka fell to 35.80 lakh tonnes from 43.20 lakh tonnes during the period under review. As per ethanol supplies data up to January 31 ISMA said that sugar diversion towards ethanol is estimated around 14.1 lakh tonnes against a diversion of around 8.3 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period.



### **SBI Card appoints Salila** Pande as MD & CEO

BI Cards and Payment Services on Monday said its board has appointed Salila Pande as the Managing Director & CEO with effect from April 1, 2025. The appointment of Pande, who has been nominated by State Bank of India, will be for a period of two years, SBI Card said in a filing to the BSE. The board has approved the appointment of Pande pursuant to the superannuation of Abhijit Chakravorty from the services of State Bank of India from March 31, 2025, it said. Pande is a Chief General Manager at the State Bank of India. She is a career banker and had joined the SBI in 1995 as a probationary officer, and has been with the country's largest banking group since then. Pande is a post graduate in physics a Certified Financial Risk Manager (FRM by GARP, USA) and a Certified Associate of the Indian Institute of Bankers. Shares of SBI Cards and Payment Services Ltd closed at Rs 853.75, down 0.56 per cent over previous close on the BSE



### **Rupee falls 16 paise to close** at 86.87 against US dollar

he rupee depreciated 16 paise to close at 86.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, weighed down by significant foreign fund outflows and a recovery in the US dollar index from intraday lows. Forex traders said the Indian rupee is trading with a negative bias as foreign banks went on a dollar-buying spree and importers scrambled to secure dollars, as they feared further depreciation amid global uncertainty. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.70 and touched the high of 86.68 against the greenback during intraday. It also touched the low of 86.88 before ending the session at 86.87 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a loss of 16 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee extended its recovery and settled 21 paise higher at 86.71 against the US dollar. "Indian rupee declined today on a weak tone in the domestic markets and a recovery in the US dollar index from intraday lows. However, weak tone in crude oil prices and a decline in US treasury yields cushioned the downside," said Anuj Choudhary – Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

# trade pact soon

India and the US will sit together in the next couple of weeks to decide on the nature of the proposed trade agreement and finalise its broad contours, a senior official said on Monday.

During the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, India

the US announced to more than double the two-way com-merce to USD 500 billion by 2030 and negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025.

'Give us a couple of weeks to decide what is the level of ambition in the first tranche (of the agreement) that we are looking at and what is the nature of the agreement that we will be arriving at. The two sides will need to sit together and try to finalise the broad contours," Additional Secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal told reporters here.

The two countries have also agreed to collaborate to enhance bilateral trade by increasing US exports of industrial goods to India and

Indian exports of labourintensive manufactured products to the US.

The two sides will also work together to increase trade in agricultural goods.

India exports agri goods worth over USD 4 billion to America and that will get a further boost, he said, adding that there is a "tough" timeline for concluding the first tranche



of the trade pact.

"Both sides have agreed to do that in the next 8-9 months. So we need to get going and work on that," Agrawal said.

Briefing media, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said the visit agreed to a roadmap to boost trade ties between the two countries.

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

# India, US to finalise broad contours of trade pact soon Profit booking leading FIIs to sell Indian equities: FM

Seeking to assuage concerns over foreign institutional investors (FII) selling Indian equities lately, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday attributed the action to profit booking.

Speaking to reporters in the financial capital, Sitharaman said the Indian economy is one where the investors are bagging better returns which leads to profit booking.

FIIs also go out when they are able to or in a position to book profits. Indian market today, Indian economy today, has an environment in which investments are also yielding good returns and profit booking is also happening," she said.

It can be noted that FIIs have sold over Rs 1.56 lakh crore of stocks since October last year, including nearly Rs 1 lakh crore in 2025 itself, which has led to a sharp correction on the indices and wiping out investor wealth.

Finance Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said FIIs are not moving from one emerging market to other, and added that in times of global uncertainties like the one being witnessed right now, they tend to go back to the country of origin, which is mostly the US.

He also hinted that these shifts may be temporary, and added that Indian markets are



when they are able to or in a position to book profits. Indian market today. Indian economy today, has an environment in which investments are also yielding good returns and profit booking is also happening," she said

Explaining that apart from demand-supply issues, growth prospects also influence investor behavior, Pandey said India remains the fastest growing large economy and added that the recently announced Budget has a slew of growthoriented measures.

We have faced global headwinds in the past, and will continue to face them. But I think India is in a strong position to handle it," he added.

Ajay Seth, Secretary of the Department of Economic

Affairs, dismissed any idea of a government interference in the market because of the heavy sell-offs, stating that such a move can be carried out only if there is any evidence of market failure, which is not the case at present.

Seth said equities do not function on government policies alone, and added that foreign investors go to developed or bigger markets in periods of uncertainties.

He said that while India has shown resilience when it comes to world events in parts, it is not fully de-coupled either.

To a question on the US osturing on tariffs, Sitharaman said India is working towards becoming more investor friendly and pointed to recent budget announcements on reforms in customs duties.

India has already taken several measures over the last two years on the duties front with the view to protect local indus-try and jobs, she said, adding that the safeguard or antidumping duties are also peri-

# Adani pledges Rs 2,000 cr for setting up schools

PNS NEW DELHI

Adani group on Monday announced Rs 2,000 crore donation for building at least 20 schools across the country as it continued to reveal details of the Rs 10,000 crore charity committed at the wedding of founder Gautam Adani's younger son.

The conglomerate had previously announced Rs 6,000 crore for constructing hospitals and another Rs 2,000 crore for skill development.

The Adani Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Gautam Adani-led group, "has collaborated with GEMS Education, a global leader in private K-12 education, to establish temples of education across the country.

"With an initial donation of INR 2,000 cr from the Adani family, the partnership will prioritize making world-class education and learning infrastructure affordable to people from all strata of society," it said in a statement.

Earlier this month, Adani



had committed to spending Rs 10,000 crore on social causes when his younger son Jeet tied nuptial knots.

with GEMS Education will also give rise to best-in-class research institutions focused on developing teaching competencies supported by innovation and capability development, it said the first 'Adani GEMS School of Excellence' will come up in Lucknow in the academic year 2025-26.

"Over the next three years, at least 20 such schools in the K-12 segment will be rolled

out across India's primary metropolitan cities and, subsequently, also in Tier II to IV cities," the statement said.

seats in CBSE curriculum will be free for under-served and deserving children.

Leveraging the Adani Group's pan-Indian presence and extensive infrastructure capabilities and also GEMS' educational expertise, the partnership plans to develop a scalable, affordable and sustainable model for quality education for students across

#### **SBI MF launches Rs 250 SIP**

PNS MUMBAI

Asset management company SBI Mutual Fund launched a systematic investment plan (SIP) aimed at democratizing access to the product on Monday.

An investor can invest as low as Rs 250 per transaction under the JanNivesh SIP scheme, which was launched in presence of Sebi Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch.

Investors typically put Rs 500 in SIP, which could go down to Rs 100 depending on the scheme in which money is being put. With the aim of deepening the MF reach, the lower SIP of Rs 250 was considered, sachetisation effectively used by consumer goods compa-

"By lowering entry barriers and leveraging digital platforms, we aim to attract first-time investors, small savers, and those in the unorganized sector, with SIP starting at just Rs 250," SBI Mutual Fund's managing director and chief executive Nand Kishore said.

# Exports contracts 2.38 pc; trade deficit widens

PNS NEW DELHI

India's exports declined for the third month in a row in January by 2.38 per cent to USD 37.32 billion due to volatility in petroleum prices and global uncertainties.

The trade deficit widened to USD 222.99 billion as imports rose by 10.28 per cent year-on-year to USD 59.42 billion in January, according to the Commerce

Ministry data. Cumulatively, during April-January this fiscal, month under review. USD 358.91 billion and imports by 7.43 per cent to USD 601.9 billion.

Trade deficit, the difference between imports and exports, during the ten-month period widened to USD 242.99 billion.

While the deficit was USD 21.94 billion in December and USD 16.55 billion in January

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal told reporters that

in the world, India's exports are doing better in both goods and services sectors. He said that sectors like elec-

despite economic uncertainties

tronics, pharma, rice and gems and jewellery are registering health growth rates during the



retaliation around the world, we are doing well," Barthwal said, adding India's goods and services exports would cross USD

It was USD 778 billion in 2023-24.

800 billion in 2025-25.

In January, the country's gold imports rose to USD 2.68 billion from USD 1.9 billion in the same month last year. It was USD 4.7 billion in December

Silver prices also faced selling

pressure and slipped below the

Rs 1 lakh-mark by losing Rs

1,800 to Rs 98,200 per kg on

Traders said fading demand

from jewellers as well as retail-

ers at domestic spot market at

existing levels weighed on the

the MCX, gold contracts for

April delivery climbed Rs 431 to

Rs 234 to Rs 95,820 per kg on

However, in futures trade on

Silver futures also increased

precious metal prices.

Rs 85,118 per 10 grams.

# Sensex, Nifty end 8-day losing run

### Eke out gains in a volatile session

PNS MUMBAI

Stock markets snapped the eight-day losing run in a volatile session on Monday with benchmark Sensex closing higher by 57 points on the back of value buying in blue-chip stocks HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries.

Helped by fag-end buying, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 57.65 points or 0.08 per cent to settle at 75,996.86. During the day, the barometer tanked 644.45 points or 0.84 per cent to 75,294.76.

The NSE Nifty rebounded 30.25 points or 0.13 per cent to 22,959.50.

Reports that the US and India will meet soon to decide on broad contours of a trade agreement for reducing tariffs supported buying in metal, pharma and financial shares, analysts said.

From the 30-share bluechip pack, Bajaj Finserv, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Adani



Ports, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank, Zomato and Tata Motors were among the

Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, ICICI Bank, and ITC were the biggest laggards.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,294.69 crore on Friday, according to exchange

The total outflow by FPIs has reached Rs 99,299 crore near Rs 1 lakh crore -- in 2025 so far, data with the depositories showed.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had soared Rs 1,300 to hit an all-time high of Rs 89,400 per

the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). Comex gold futures for April



# Dhankhar calls for revival of rural economies

PNS CHANDIGARH

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday called for the revitalization of rural economies through micro industries that add value to agricultural and dairy prod-

ucts.
"There must be evolution of a mechanism in a village or in a cluster of villages where you have micro industries at the farm that add value to the agro produce, that add value to the livestock produced, milk produced. This will help evolve a sustainable society and the nutritional food value will cer-

tainly go up.
"What stops us from having entrepreneurial skills to produce ice creams, paneer, sweets, and the like in village clusters? This is very important because it will generate employment and satisfy rural youth,' Dhankhar said.

Dhankhar was the chief guest at the inauguration of Advanced Entrepreneurship Skill Development Program (A-EDSP) on "Functional Foods, Neutraceuticals and their Safety" at National Agri-Food and Biomanufacturing

Institute in Mohali. Emphasising that technolo-



must be integrated into farming practices to improve efficiency and productivity, the vice president said, "startups are there in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. They have to trickle to villages now because

agriculture produce is lifeline of economy, raw material for industry. And when this takes place, close to the farmland in the rural firmament, evolving as a cluster, economy will take a jump, and people will believe Urging farmers to stay informed about advancements in technology and its potential benefits, he said, "A farmer is by and large clinging to his tractor. He wants to use the tractor for as long as it can last, ignorant of the fact that new technology is becoming envi-ronment-friendly, fuel-efficient, multifunctional, and highly subsidized".

He said there has to be an awareness campaign to tell the farmers that you don't need anybody's help. "You only have to know your inner strength to change your economy to a groups, market your product at a price of your choice; you can. "But by and large, I see farm

produce is sold when it is not farmers' market, it is buyers' market. The government provides facilities to hold on to the stock by massive warehousing and cooperative movement. I can tell you the farm policies of the government are so helping the farmer.

"The farmer has to know about it. You (premier institutes like NABI, Mohali) can play a great role because we cannot allow that our farmers get anything but the very best.

# Gold retreats from an all-time high

# Down Rs 1,200 to Rs 88,200 per 10 gm

Monday.

PNS NEW DELHI

Gold prices retreated from alltime level in the national capital on Monday, with the precious metal declining Rs 1,200 to Rs 88,200 per 10 grams due to emergence of fresh selling from stockists and retailers.

10 grams on Friday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity

pulled back from its record level and depreciated Rs 1,200 to Rs 87,800 per 10 grams. It closed at Rs 89,000 per 10 grams in the previous trading

delivery appreciated USD 11.25 per ounce to USD 2,911.95 per ounce in the global markets.



# what's brewing?

# Kriti Sanon begins filming Tere Ishq Mein, promises another powerful performance



# Gajraj Rao and Renuka Shahane team up for *Dupahiya*



Veteran actors Gajraj Rao and Renuka Shahane are set to bring their charm to Prime Video's latest original series, Dupahiya. The show, directed by Sonam Nair and created by Avinash Dwivedi and Chirag Garg, boasts a stellar ensemble cast, including Bhuvan Arora, Sparsh Shrivastava, Shivani Raghuvanshi and Yashpal Sharma.

Set in the fictional village of Dhadakpur, Dupahiya takes viewers on a rollercoaster ride filled with humor, chaos, and heartwarming moments. The village is about to celebrate 25 years of being crime-free when an unexpected theft shatters its peace—a prized Dupahiya (motorbike) goes missing. With an upcoming wedding, the silver jubilee celebration and the village's reputation at stake, the hunt for the missing bike turns into a frantic and hilarious adventure, uniting the villagers in

Announcing the series on Instagram, the makers teased the mystery, writing, "Breaking News: India's only crime-free village reports its first-ever crime. Kaun le gaya iss saiyyan ka dupahiya? Jaante hai, saath mein! #DupahiyaOnPrime, New Series, 7 March 2025."

Director Sonam Nair echoed this sentiment, sharing, 'Bringing Dupahiya to life has been an incredibly fulfilling journey. This series is a celebration of humor, chaos, and the quirks of small-town life and I couldn't be prouder of how it has come together. The incredible ensemble cast has infused Dupahiya with warmth, humor, and energy, making each character truly memorable. I am certain audiences will enjoy every bit of it as much as we did while making it. I cannot wait for March 7, when viewers in India and across the world can experience this wholesome package of joy, laughter, and aspirations of the many eclectic residents of Dhadakpur."

With a mix of lighthearted comedy, engaging storytelling and endearing performances, Dupahiya is shaping up to be a must-watch for audiences of all ages. The series is set to premiere on Prime Video on March 7, 2025.

# LOVE, LOSS, AND 'WHAT IFS':

# **GALATFEHMI** TUGS AT THE HEARTSTRINGS

After the overwhelming response to Ishq Mein, the first romantic track from Ibrahim Ali Khan and Khushi Kanoor's much-anticipated film Nadaaniyan, the makers have now unveiled Galatfehmi—a song that delves deep into the intricacies of love and loss. This poignant track beautifully encapsulates the emotions of heartbreak, lingering misunderstandings, and unspoken words that often define Directed by debutant Shauna Gautam and produced by Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta and Somen Mishra under Dharmatic Entertainment, Nadaaniyan has already sparked widespread curiosity. Adding to

the anticipation, Galatfehmi further amplifies the film's emotional depth, with Ibrahim and Khushi portraying a love story that is both tender and painfully real. Bringing this soulful composition to life is the celebrated musical duo Sachin-Jigar, whose evocative melodies set the perfect tone for this heart-wrenching ballad. The



lyrical genius Amitabh Bhattacharya once again proves his mastery in storytelling, penning verses that resonate with anyone who has ever experienced love slipping away. Complementing this, the stirring vocals of Tushar Joshi and Madhubanti

Bagchi infuse the song with raw, heartfelt intensity. Describing the essence of the track, Sachin-Jigar shared, "We wanted Galatfehmi to be more than just a song; we wanted it to be a feeling. It's a melody that lingers, that compels you to sit with

your emotions a little longer. We're grateful for the love *Isha Mein* received, and we hope this track connects with listeners just

With *Nadaaniyan*, Ibrahim Ali Khan and Khushi Kapoor emerge as Bollywood's freshest on-screen duo and Galatfehmi gives audiences a glimpse of their

crackling chemistry.

Speaking about the song, Ibrahim Ali Khan expressed, "There's something hauntingly beautiful about Galatfehmi. It's a song that stays with you, making you relive moments of love, loss and longing. It's raw, it's real and I can't wait for the audience to experience it." Adding to this, Khushi Kapoor shared her personal connection to the track: 'Galatfehmi is one of my favorite songs from the Nadaaniyan album. It hit me on

a personal level, and I truly believe that audiences will find a piece of themselves in it. It's a song that tugs at the heartstrings, making you feel every note

**Adrien Brody reflects on** The Brutalist as a story of perseverance & excellence

Golden Globe-winning actor Adrien Brody, known for his powerful performances, has shared his deep admiration for the upcoming historical drama The Brutalist. Set to release in theaters on February 28, 2025, The Brutalist is a visually stunning film that explores the immigrant experience, blending soulful performances with a poignant narrative. The film, directed by Brady Corbet and distributed by Warner Bros. Discovery, has already garnered widespread acclaim, earning the Golden Globe for Best Motion Picture - Drama. The Brutalist unfolds the harrowing yet inspiring journey of László, a man who, after surviving the Holocaust, embarks on a new life in America. Separated from his wife Erzsébet (played by Felicity Jones) and their niece, who remain stranded in post-war Eastern Europe, László faces the

formidable task of rebuilding his life in a foreign land. His exceptional architectural talents soon attract the attention of a wealthy industrialist, Harrison Lee Van Buren (played by Guy Pearce), propelling László toward success. But as his career advances, the film explores the personal sacrifices, identity struggles, and moral dilemmas that accompany ambition and legacy. Reflecting on the film, Brody said, "I saw *The Brutalist* as a story of quiet perseverance and the need to strive for excellence—even when the ground has been ripped out from underneath you." He continued, "It's wonderful to have a storytelling approach that allows enough time with a character to see and experience a life in total, which is what Brady and Mona have achieved in *The Brutalist*. Oftentimes, you jump into the action and things happen in a story—but you don't know the person you're on the journey with. This film encompasses a 30-year span of one man's life, which gives the audience a much deeper understanding of his struggles and The Brutalist explores profound themes of resilience, identity, and the

price of success. As László Toth rises to prominence, he finds himself torn between his ambition to create a lasting legacy and the personal toll it takes on his relationships and sense of self. The film's narrative is a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made in the pursuit of greatness.

**Shraddha Kapoor's jewellery** brand palmonas features on Shark Tank India — but where was she?

ollywood actor Shraddha Kapoor, who cofounded the demi-fine jewellery brand Palmonas, has now taken her entrepreneurial venture to Shark Tank India Season 4 However, what caught everyone's attention wasn't just the brand's pitch—it was the absence of the actor herself, which left the sharks surprised and curious. A recent promo for Shark Tank India showcased Palmonas co-founders Pallavi Mohadikar and Amol Patwari presenting their brand to the investors. During the pitch, they introduced their brand, saying, "Welcome to the world of demi-fine jewellery. With our third co-founder, Shraddha Kapoor, we are building India's most loved demifine jewellery brand." However, Shraddha's no-show led to an immediate reaction from the sharks. Aman Gupta, the founder of boAt, questioned, "Shraddha Kapoor didn't come?" In response, co-founder Pallavi Mohadikar explained, "She was very excited to come on the show." This only fueled more curiosity, prompting Aman to ask why she ultimately didn't attend. Pallavi's reply—"I told her, yeh tumhari

#### **ARCHIE**









#### **CALVIN AND HOBBES**



REALITY CHECK

Only gave it two stars as the food is

tired and dry... always the same every The owners have a bit of an attitude... Also, I found a hair in my food



SPEED BUMP

WHAT THE HECK YOU JUST Shoved in Your Mouth-I'm

GIVING AWAY TOOTHPICKS.





expertise nahi hai (this is not your

expertise)"—had the sharks laughing.

pitch sparked a range of reactions from

Shraddha Kapoor's absence from the

fans. While some found it amusing,

others questioned why a celebrity-

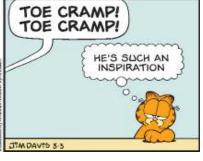
backed brand needed to appear on

Shark Tank India

### GARFIELD















DIFFICULTY RATING: \*\* \*\* \*\* \$25\$

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#### ACROSS

1 Little by little

19 Joy

DOWN

2 Lift up

with 4 Soak up

5 Memorise

- 6 Court case
- Country of the Spanish 9 Second-hand
- 10 A citrus fruit 12 A health professional
- 14 Grow plants in this

3 A toy person for playing

- 17 A horse rider's straps
- 18 Unlocks
- 15 Follows orders
  - 16 Connect together

6 This comes after lightning

8 Use these when knitting

11 Talk a lot about other

people's business

13 Porcelain things



# GINGER MEGGS, ARE IN BED?

**GINGER MEGGS** 







# Tiayawada

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Tuesday February 18, 2025

# 'THERE'S A LOT TO COME': CHUM DARANG HINTS 'BIG' ON HER NEW CHAPTER

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

hum Darang's journey from the quiet corners of the entertainment industry to the bright lights of Bigg Boss 18 has been nothing short of a revelation. Known for her quiet strength and raw authenticity, Chum Darang made an unforgettable mark on the show, captivating audiences with her fierce authenticity and undeniable presence. Born in Arunachal Pradesh, she wasn't just another contestant—Chum's journey was one of transformation, where vulnerability met strength and where every nerability met strength and where every moment in the house revealed a side of her fans couldn't get enough of. From forming lasting bonds to standing up against criticism, she quickly became a fan favourite, leaving a legacy that extended far beyond the Bigg Boss house and into the hearts of viewers everywhere.

While we can just not adore her posts and reels of 'ChumVeer', we had an equally fun chat The Pioneer with her. So, let's take you through our exclusive chat with her.

Reflecting on her Bigg Boss Journey, she

With gratitude and confidence, actress and former Bigg Boss contestant **Chum Darang opened up** about her transformative journey on Bigg Boss 18, her evolving bond with Karanveer Mehra, her emotional struggles in the house and more

describes it as nothing short of fantastic. "It was more than I could ever imagine," she says, her voice filled with gratitude. For someone who describes herself as an introvert, this journey was not just about being a part of a reality show, but also about personal growth. "I'm someone who takes time to open up. But during the course of the show, I've tried to come out

of my shell and become more outspoken. That's been a great change for me."

Before she could make a mark of her-

self in the entertainment industry, She was crowned Miss AAPSU in 2010 and later represented India at Miss Earth India 2016 and Miss Asia World 2017. Later, she made a remarkable performance with her roles, a remarkable performance with her roles, in films like *Badhaai Do* and *Gangubai Kathiawadi*, though relatively brief, has also helped her gain recognition. But it was after her *Bigg Boss* appearance that the love and recognition from fans reached new heights. "Doing Bigg Boss was one of the best decisions I ever made," she reflects. "It gave me visibility and recognition that I never imagined. I'm really grateful for the love that has come my way."

Despite her initial reluctance to join the show, fearing judgment from the public,

show, fearing judgment from the public, she is now thankful for taking that leap. "I was nervous at first, but everything turned out fine and I've gained so much from this experience," she adds.

from this experience," she adds.

Throughout her time in the house, she formed strong bonds, particularly with fellow contestant Karan. There was a lot of talk among fans about the chemistry between the two, with several speculating about a deeper connection. In fact, even post the show, their videos can make us go 'awwww'. Chum also shared a video in which Karan Veer Mehra could be heard confessing his love to her. He said, "Roses are red, violets are blue, I don't care about anybody but I love you." Chum was seen blushing and showing a thumbs-up sign after Karan's confession. In fact, Chum had also captioned her post stating, "Valentine's Day it was. Thank you, you." Chum, however, sets the record straight: "The bond I share with Karan is real. It's not just for the show. What we share is true and it will last beyond Bigg Boss. People will talk, but we know the truth," she says confidently.

Chum also shared a candid moment when she opened up about the emotion-

when she opened up about the emotion-

ally challenging moments in the house. The task with Vivian, which led to an emotional breakdown, was particularly tough for her. "It was one of the worst moments for her. "It was one of the worst moments for me in the house. Both Shrutika and I went through panic attacks, and we cried a lot. It was very tough emotionally," she recalls, her voice growing somber. She appreciates the support she had from close friends like Karan and Shilpa, which helped her cope with the difficult time. Going ahead, she also spoke out about

the recent incident where Elvish Yadav made derogatory and racist remarks about her during a podcast. She stated that disrespecting someone's identity and name is no fun. In a post that she had shared, she went on to emphasise that there is a line between humour and hate, and such behavior must not be tolerated. She also extended her support to the Northeastern

extended her support to the Northeastern community, standing firm against racism.

"I stand with everyone who has faced racism. We all deserve respect, dignity and

equality," she shared with strength. Her response was met with an outpouring of support from her fans, who appreciated her courage in standing up for herself and for others who face discriminates.

Another controversy that Chum faced during her time on the show involved accusations that she played the "woman accusations that she played the "woman card" during some of the tasks. She is quick to dismiss these claims with a laugh. "I find it funny when people say that," Chum says, shaking her head. "I'm not the type of person to play any card. I was just being myself, and I think everyone knows that. People can say what they want, but I've lived those moments, and I know the truth" I know the truth."

Her emotional vulnerability was evident Her emotional vulnerability was evident during her conversations with Vivian, who expressed regret after a task involving the two of them. In the aftermath of the task, Vivian organised a surprise party for Bigg Boss contestants, yet Chum was not invited. Some fans speculated about the reainvited. Some fans speculated about the reasons for her absence, but Chum clarifies, "It was a surprise party for Vivian and it was organized at the last minute. I spoke to Nouran after that, and we cleared things up. Everything is good now."

As for what the future holds, Chum has a lot to look forward to. She shares that she was working on a project before entering the *Bigg Boss* house and is now eager to

the *Bigg Boss* house and is now eager to resume filming. She hints at more exciting things ahead, although she's keeping some details under wraps for now. "There's a lot to come," she teases. "I'm excited about whot's next." what's next."

what's next."

Her journey from the *Bigg Boss* house to her growing fanbase has been a testament to her resilience, strength, and unwavering authenticity. Despite facing personal challenges, online criticism and even racism, she has proven time and time again that she will not be defined by negativity. For her, it's about embracing who she is, celebrating the relationships that matter, and, most importantly, standing up for what's right. "We all deserve respect and equality," she concludes with a smile, "and that's what I'll always fight for."

As Chum embarks on new projects, her

As Chum embarks on new projects, her fans are eagerly waiting to see more of the multi-faceted actress, who continues to inspire with her powerful voice and her fearless approach to life.



WHAT KARAN AND I SHARE IS REAL AND SOMETHING THAT WILL LAST AND WAS NOT JUST FOR THE SHOW. BOTH OF US KNOW ABOUT IT.

# 'A sharp and fearless cop'—now that's the role Tinaa looks to explore!

PNS EXCLUSIVE

inaa Dattaa has always been a force to reckon with in the entertainment industry. From captivating audiences as Ichcha in Uttaran to reinventing herself with bold and unconventional roles, she has consistently defied expectations. Known for her versatility, she has seamlessly transitioned between television, reality shows and now, the ever-evolving digital space.

With every project, she proves that she is not just here

to play safe but to challenge the status quo and explore characters that push her boundaries.

Now, with Personal Trainer, the actress takes on one of the most intriguing roles of her career. Premiered on January 28, 2025, on Hungama OTT, this crime thriller plunges into the dark side of Mumbai's elite gym culture, unraveling

**Known for her** versatility, Tinaa **Dattaa has** effortlessly transitioned from television to OTT, taking on roles that push the boundaries of her craft. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, actress **Tinaa Dattaa** opened up about her passion for portraying strong, unconventional characters that challenge her as an artist

a gripping tale of love, betrayal, and secrets. Dattaa plavs Neha Dharamrajan, a married woman whose life takes unexpected turns, pulling her into a world of suspense and emotional turmoil.

Talking about her character and the series, the *Bigg* Boss fame describes Personal Trainer as an intense and unpredictable thriller. "It's a gripping crime drama filled with suspense, passion and unexpected twists. My character is complex—she is a married woman caught in a web of emotions and secrets. The show keeps you guessing till the very end, and every episode unfolds a new layer of the story. It's intense, intriguing and something I've never done before, which

makes it even more special for me."

For her, this project is more than just another role—it's a reinvention. Over the years, she has proven her ability to mold herself into vastly different characters, from innocent and vulnerable to fierce and rebellious. With Personal Trainer, she steps into a grey-shaded role that defies the conventional boundaries of a protagonist. "This is a character I haven't done before. There's love, betrayal and a lot of suspense surrounding her. She's married, but there's so much more to her than what meets the eye. The story keeps you guessing about why she does what she does and what ulti-

mately happens."

This role also marks a significant shift in her on-screen persona. Sporting a new bob cut and a bold saree look, the Fear Factor star embraces a striking transformation that fans have loved. "Everyone has been telling me that this bold new

look suits me well! It's a very different avatar for me especially with the bob cut and saree combination, something I've never done before," she says. But it wasn't just the look that challenged her; Personal Trainer also featured her first-ever intimate scene on screen. "I honestly thought I wouldn't be able to do it—I kept blushing and laughing and funnily enough, Gulshan was even shyer than me!" she reveals, adding that the director handled it with utmost profession-

alism, making her feel comfortable. Her dedication to stepping out of her comfort zone is evident, not just in her choice of roles but also in her approach to fitness. As someone who strongly believes in discipline, she ensures that fitness remains a core part of her lifestyle. "I actually tell my fitness trainer to be strict with me—I might be the first client ever to say that!" she laughs. "I don't like to over-exhaust myself, but I've noticed that if you start skipping workouts, it becomes a habit. That's why I prefer a trainer who keeps me consistent. Thankfully, my kickboxing

trainer does exactly that, and it helps me stay on track? While her journey has been marked by diverse roles, she sees *Personal Trainer* as a stepping stone to even more unconventional projects. She admires performances that showcase strength and depth, particularly roles like Kangana Ranaut's in *Fashion*. "I'd love to play a strong, feisty, independent woman. Maybe even a sharp and fearless cop—someone who knows exactly what she's doing. That kind of role would be very exciting for me."

Her journey so far has been a testament to her relentless pursuit of artistic growth and with the digital space offering newer, bolder opportunities, she is ready to take them head-on. "OTT platforms give actors the opportunity to explore without being typecast or judged for a role. As an actor, this is my bread and butter—I am always hungry for good characters, whether it's in a series, OTT, or any other format."

On a personal note, Tinaa also reflects on what she values most in life, including relationships. "Respect and good communication are the biggest green flags for me. A guy should be well-spoken—bad tonality is a huge turn-off. Honesty and loyalty matter a lot, too. I believe in going the extra mile to keep my partner happy, but at the same time, it's important to understand each other's perspectives and be vocal. When you discuss things openly, a relationship only grows stronger." With Personal Trainer, Tinaa Dattaa has once again proven that she is an actress who refuses to be boxed into a single image. Whether it's on television, OTT, or any other platform, her willingness to experiment and evolve makes her one of the most exciting performers to watch.



My character in Personal Trainer is something I haven't done before. There's love, betrayal and a lot of suspense surrounding her. She's married, but there's so much more to her than what meets the eye. The story keeps you guessing about why she does what she does and what ultimately happens

# Nurturing kids & empowering teachers to revolutionise education

ducation is a word we hear every day. It's a topic we discuss endlessly, yet how often do we truly pause to reflect on its deeper meaning? Education is much more than imparting facts and figures; it is the foundation upon which societies are built, the key to unlocking our potential, and the roadmap to a brighter future. On this journey, we must rethink the purpose of education, particularly when it comes to nurturing the holistic development of children and empowering our educators.

True education transcends academic success. It's about preparing children to thrive in all aspects of life. Emotional intelligence, critical thinking, physical well-being and social skills are just as essential as math and science. While academic performance certainly matters, it is not the only indicator of future success. What truly matters is helping children become well-rounded individuals—capable of navigating life's challenges with resilience, creativity, and curiosity.

In today's fast-paced interconnected world, we can no longer rely on traditional rote learning methods. These outdated systems, which emphasize memorisation over comprehension, are ill-equipped to prepare children for the complexities of modern life. Today's learner needs more than just facts; they need to be given the freedom to question, explore and create. Inquiry-based learning, where curiosity leads the way, is a vital approach. Schools must foster an environment where students can take risks, learn from failure, and discover their true potential. For this to happen, however, educators must be given the right tools and the freedom to

nurture this type of learning.

Teachers are the architects of the learning experience. They shape the way children think, feel, and interact with the world. But for teachers to have the maximum impact, they, too, must be empowered. Teaching extends far beyond curriculum delivery; it's about emotional intelligence,

adaptability, and the ability to integrate technology meaningfully into the classroom. Teacher training, therefore, must evolve—focusing not only on pedagogy but also on equipping educators with the skills that help them inspire and connect with their students.

At Birla Open Minds Education Pvt Ltd, we believe in holistic education that nurtures both students and educators. Our 'Soul Science' program builds emotional resilience, while LearnLeapempowers teachers with evolving strategies. Through Birla Brainiacs' unique hybrid model, we blend online and offline learning, ensuring real-world experiences that foster academic, emotional and practical growth.

Looking ahead, India's education sys-

tem is at the cusp of transformation. As the country prepares to emerge as a global leader, our education system must evolve to meet the demands of the future. It's time for a paradigm shift—one that pri-oritises flexibility, personalized learning, and skill-based education. The future of education lies in unlocking the full potential of both students and teachers. It's about creating an education system that is dynamic, personalised and inclusive. In the classroom of the future, technology will empower learning, creativity will be nurtured, and emotional and social development will be prioritised just as much as academic success. But to achieve this, we must invest in both students and educators, providing them with the tools, training, and freedom to innovate and lead.

As we look toward this future, we must remember the timeless words of Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."



# Liverpool continues its charge with a 2-1 win against Wolverhampton

iverpool continued its charge toward the Premier League Little with a 2-1 win against Wolverhampton. For Manchester United, it just keeps getting worse after a 1-0 loss at Tottenham.

The fortunes of England's two most successful teams could hardly be more contrasting. Victory for Liverpool saw the club

restore its seven-point lead over Arsenal at the top of the table and move ever closer to equaling Man United's record haul of 20 league

United, meanwhile, lost for the 12th time in the league this season and is 15th in the standings after James Maddison's first-half strike for Spurs.

It is turning out to be another miserable campaign for the club that dominated English soccer under former manager Alex Ferguson. That is a distant memory now, with United's wait to end its title drought set to extend to 12 years this season.

United has not been champion since Ferguson's final campaign in 2013. Ruben Amorim is the sixth permanent coach since then to be charged with the responsibility of restoring its supremacy, but his There could yet be a fourth

early tenure has been fraught with problems.

I am not worried. I understand our fans, what the media think about it. I hate to lose, that feeling is the worst," Amorim said. "I am here to help my players. I understand my situation, my job, I am confident on my work and I just want to win games. The place in the table is my worry, I am not worried about me."

#### **CLASH OF CLUBS IN CRISIS**

This was Amorim's ninth defeat in 21 games in all competitions since taking over in November. He has only overseen four league wins in that time.

He already claimed in January that this could be the worst United team in the club's storied history and there is little sign of improvement.

Against a Spurs team that is also struggling in the wrong half of the table, Maddison's goal in the 13th minute at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium was enough to settle this clash of clubs in crisis. Some Tottenham fans are so dismayed by the state of their club that they staged a pre-match protest against chairman Daniel Levy. But this was the third time their team had

encounter if both teams continue to advance in the Europa League. But the Premier League is Amorim's primary concern right now — even if a relegation fight remains unlikely. Despite being just three places above the drop zone, United is 12 points above the

United eight points off the top

#### NERVOUS LIVERPOOL

Liverpool had to withstand a fightback from Wolves, which included a brilliant long-range goal from Matheus Cunha. First-half strikes from Luis Diaz

That is little to shout about with and Mohamed Salah secured the win for Arne Slot's team, but an unconvincing performance after the break saw the home team fail to register a single shot on target as Wolves dominated the chances. "Obviously 2-0 at halftime, we know that can be one of the most dangerous results in football. We

start well - and we didn't quite do that," said Liverpool defender Andrew Robertson. "When they scored, everyone gets nervous. The players get nervous, the crowd get nervous – of course that's only natural. But it's a massive win for us and another game down."
Diaz bundled the ball over the line

had to come out and we had to

from close range in the 15th minute to give Liverpool the lead. And Salah doubled the advantage from the penalty spot in the 37th after Diaz was brought down.

It was the Egypt international's 28th goal of an outstanding season and extended his current scoring streak to six straight games. But if the home crowd was

anything but. Liverpool conceded a goal in stoppage time to draw 2-2 with Everton on Wednesday and was

pushed again. Cunha's drag-back and curled finish from around 20 yards (meters) in the 67th came after a

sustained period of pressure from the visitors. Before that Marshall Munetsi was denied when through on goal — it took a crucial block in front of goal

from Jarell Quansah to prevent

"In a season where you want to achieve something, you need to have wins like this as well," Slot

him from converting late on.

#### **INJURY CRISIS**

United named eight teenagers on the bench who had never played a senior game for the club following an injury crisis at Old Trafford. Amad Diallo is likely to miss the rest of the season with an ankle

already been ruled out with cruciate ligament damage Amorim was also without Leny Yoro, Kobbie Mainoo, Manuel

injury and Lisandro Martinez has

Ugarte and Toby Collyer through injury or illness at Spurs. It meant the United coach waited

expecting a routine victory against until the first minute of time 17th-placed Wolves, it was added on to make a substitution replacing Casemiro for debutant Chido Obi.

#### FANS PROTEST

Tottenham fans protested outside the stadium before kickoff, calling for chairman Daniel Levy and owner ENIC to go. Giant banners read "Profits before

glory" and "We want our club back" as supporters let their feelings be known.

The protest was organised by a fans' group called "Change for Tottenham".

# Frankfurt beats Kiel 3-1

 $E_{\text{snapped its run of three}}^{\text{intracht}} \xrightarrow{Frankfurt}$ Frankfurt draws and consolidated third place in the Bundesliga with a 3-1 win over relegation-threatened Holstein Kiel.

Hugo Ekitiké saw a penalty saved and had a late goal ruled out for offside, but others stepped up to score the goals that showed Frankfurt can live without Egypt forward Omar Marmoush. Marmoush, Frankfurt's top-

scorer with 15 league goals this season, joined Manchester City for a reported 70 million euros (\$73 million) during the winter transfer period and scored a hat trick for his new team on Saturday.

"We sent an extremely young team onto the field, one that played with confidence, composure and maturity," Frankfurt coach Dino Toppmöller said.

'We've finally won again and now gone seven league games in a row without defeat," he said. "The table looks nice, right way to push away the but there are still many games French forward's penalty. to play. We have to stay Frankfurt was later gifted the and just a point above Kiel. confident."

Toppmöller's team moved five points clear of fourth-placed botched backpass to score his Bremen in the early game.



the 59th.

Leipzig, which occupies the fourth goal of the season in last place for Champions League qualification after 22

deadlock with his knee in the 18th minute, and Brazilian defender Tuta was left free at the back post to score Frankfurt's second in the 37th after Kiel failed to deal with a

Ekitiké had the chance to

of 34 rounds.

Goal gift Hugo Larsson broke the corner.

make it 3-0 before the break but Thomas Dähne dived the

Kiel's Finn Porath scored at the third attempt in the 73rd after Kevin Trapp saved his first two efforts but it wasn't enough to stop Kiel dropping to last place after this round of games. Bochum climbed off the bottom by defeating Borussia Dortmund 2-0 on Saturday.

Kiel could take some solace from Heidenheim's 2-0 loss at home to Mainz in Sunday's late game. Heidenheim stayed on 14 points, ahead of Bochum on goal difference, third goal anyway. Can Uzun Hoffenheim came from gratefully took David Zec's behind to win 3-1 at Werder

# Tejas Dhingra retains | Indian women aims to return Show Jumping title

PNS NEW DELHI

Tejas Dhingra Defends National Championship Title at NEC Show Jumping 2024-25Tejas Dhingra of Beeya's Riding Facility successfully defended his National Championship title at the National Equestrian Championship (Show Jumping) 2024-25, held at Modi Equestrian Academy in Meerut on Sunday. The reigning champion secured victory in the Championship Tour with 16 points, finishing ahead of joint runners-up Amar Sarin from Tarc Equestrian Centre and Ashray Butta of EGC Stables

Meanwhile, Yashaan Zubin Khambatta of Tarc Equestrian Centre achieved Equestrian Centre achieved a remarkable double triumph, dominating both the Novice and Medium Tours. In the Medium Tour, Sehaj Singh Virk and Abhishek Chopra shared second place, while in the Novice Tour, Narayan Singh secured the runner-up position, joining Yashaan on he podium after the latter impressively claimed the top Appreciation Prize.

Saturday to take a one-stroke

lead and set himself up for

the breakthrough victory in

his return to competitive golf

after a long run as a

Leonard has starred at all

levels, winning the 1992 U.S. Amateur and 1994 NCAA

title for Texas to cap his

television analyst.



two spots.

On Saturday, the Preliminary Tour Individual Final saw Avik Bhatia of Modi Equestrian Stables clinch the gold medal with a flawless performance and a time of 31.02 seconds. Major Ritika Dahiya of Team ASC delivered a strong showing to secure second place, while Dushyant Nagar finished while third.

A standout moment of the competition was the performance of 13-year-old Sravya Vohra, the youngest participant. She impressed with her composure and skill, finishing fifth overall. In recognition of her remarkable effort, the Modi Equestrian Academy and the Equestrian Federation of India awarded her a Special

# to winning ways against Spain

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian women's hockey team will be eager Indian women's to get back to winning ways when it faces a confident Spain in the doubleheader

After a promising start with a thrilling 3-2 victory over England in their opener, the India narrowly missed out on a bonus point in their second game, losing 2-1 in a dramatic shootout after the match ended 2-2 in regulation time. Despite showing resilience, India currently sit in eighth place in the standings with four points from two games and will be looking to climb higher in the points table as they face a confident Spanish side on Tuesday and Wednesday.

India's performance against England offered glimpses of their potential, particularly in penalty corner conversions, where they scored twice from three attempts in their opening match. However, they failed to replicate that success in the second game.



three penalty corners. 'Spain is a tricky team, and we know it's going to be a

challenging contest. However, we are ready for the challenge," India captain Salima Tete said. "We've analysed

performances performances against England and identified the areas where we need to improve, especially in converting penalty corners.
We are focused on tightening our defense and making the most of our scoring opportunities." Spain, on the other hand,

arrives on the back of two unable to convert any of their consecutive victories against Wednesday.

Germany in the India leg. They secured back-to-back 2 1 wins over the Germans, boosting their confidence. Despite their strong recent performances, Spain has had a mixed run overall, with just

two wins and one shootout

victory in six games. Currently placed fourth in the points table with eight points, Spain will be looking to further consolidate their position. Patricia Alvarez has been their standout player, scoring twice to lead the team's goal tally.

Match starts 5:15 PM on
Tuesday and 7:30 PM on

# Leonard wins Chubb Classic for first PGA Tour Champions victory

**PTI** NAPLES

Tustin Leonard won the it was good. It was good for Chubb Classic for his first me. Made some changes with PGA Tour Champions victory, overcoming a slow start with a back-nine charge on Tiburon's Black Course. Leonard birdied five of the last seven holes for a 4-under 68 and a four-stroke victory over Billy Andrade. The 52-year-old Texan won in his 45th start on the 50-andover tour, his first victory since the last of his 12 PGA Tour titles in the 2008 St. Jude Championship.

"It's been a long time since I've won, and I tell myself all the time that I have won," Leonard said, fighting back tears on the 18th green. "But it's easy to kind of forget a that I was still in it," Leonard little bit, and say, 'Well, you know, is it going to be?

"I just put a lot of work in... I mean, last year was so bad my golf swing. ... It's just so fun to finally be here because I always felt like I would be. But it's nice to finally get it done."

After a bogey on 10 dropped him to 1 over for the day, Leonard scrambled for a key par on the 11th, then birdied the next three. He scrambled again for par

on the par-3 16th, then got a 30-footer to catch the right edge for birdie on the par-4 17th and got up-and-down from a greenside bunker on the par-5 18th for one last birdie.

said. "I felt like my best golf Leonard finished at 15was ahead of me. I played under 201. He shot 65 on



OK the first 10 holes. Eleven, the end of it was good, but it just wasn't my best golf. I kept telling myself to just own the last seven holes. Once I got a little bit of momentum I felt like I could

amateur career, then taking the 1997 British Open at Royal Troon and making the winning putt in the 1999 Ryder Cup at Brookline. "I didn't think about anything in particular today,

but just knowing I've been there," Leonard said. "Even though it might have been 10, 20, 30 years ago, I've been able to do it before."

Andrade also shot 68. Darren Clarke was third at 10 under, also shooting 68. Fred Couples had a 66 to tie for fourth at 9 under with Richard Green (68), Heath Slocum (70) and Paul Stankowski (71).

Ernie Els, a stroke behind Leonard entering the day, shot a 75 to finish 11th at 7 under. Bernhard Langer closed with a 70 to tie for 12th at 6 under.

# India look to continue winning momentum against German hockey

PTI BHUBANESWAR

Their campaign back on Track after a jittery start, India will look to continue the winning momentum when they take on Paris Olympics silver medallist Germany in their next men's FIH Pro League match on Tuesday. India had a woeful start to their home leg matches of the Pro League, losing 1-3 to Spain in their opener. But the hosts bounced back

strongly to tame Spain 2-0 in the return match on Sunday. With three points from two games, India are currently sitting in eighth place in the standings and will be desperate to climb up the table. After a relatively off day side on Sunday, dominating for most part of the match and scoring two field goals through Mandeep Singh (32nd minute) and Dilpreet Singh (39th) to pocket all three points.

While the strikers shone bright in the second game, India's chief coach Craig Fulton would be a bit concerned about penalty corner conversions.

Despite winning seven penalty corners across their two games, India failed to convert a single chance. In the absence of India

captain Harmanpreet Singh, who was rested for the second match, Hockey India League

on Saturday, the Indians star performer Jugraj Singh looked a completely different cut a sorry figure from set pieces.

The forwardline comprising Dilpreet, Mandeep and Sukhjeet Singh have each netted a goal for India so far in the tournament and will be looking to add to their tally against Germany.

The Indian defence produced

a much-better display in the second game, and were able to absorb pressure from the Spanish strikers.

Germany, who will be playing their first match of the India leg, are placed just above India in seventh place with four points from as many games and will be determined to turn their fortunes around.

# Cricket fever grips Pakistan ahead of Champions

PTI KARACHI

Cricket fever has gripped Pakistan as the Champions Trophy unfolds with fans eagerly waiting for the action to begin here on Wednesday and businesses related to the game too picking he had always admired Kohli up before the tournament opener between hosts Pakistan and New Zealand.

However, many in the country are disappointed that India are not playing their matches in Pakistan.

"It is disappointing because generally there is so much admiration for the Indian team and players, especially Virat Kohli, in our country," shopkeeper Moiz Ahmed said at the famous Zainab Market in the heart of Karachi's

bustling Saddar area. Moiz is surprised at the among the cricket fans along with the Pakistan team.

"Virat Kohli definitely has a big fan following in Pakistan," he said as youngsters mingled in the shop choosing different team shirts.

Kashif, a college student, said as a player and also because of his humility. 'He is so down to earth in his

behaviour from what we see in the media," he said. Shopkeepers in Zainab

market, which is famous for selling original licenses and copies of the team shirts whenever a big cricket or football event happens, are clearly happy that the Champions Trophy is being held in Pakistan.

"I have sold nearly 4 to 5000 shirts in the last three days of Moiz is surprised at the the Pakistan and Indian Pakistan tear demand for the Indian shirts teams," Javed Pakhali, a tournament.

shopkeeper, said.

Even in the enclosures during matches fans are not shy to wear or display pictures of Kohli and wear shirts with his name printed on them.

The Champions Trophy fever is also evident when one visits the match venue, National Stadium, as many fans are moving around the main gate to catch a glimpse of their favourite players as they come and go from the stadium.

On Monday, with the Pakistan team having a practice session at the stadium's high performance centre, fans clamoured to see them in action. Ticket sales online and

through booths have also picked up according to a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official who now just wants the Pakistan team to do well in the



"I am sure if the team keeps on up around the city announcing winning the demand for keep tickets increasing," he said.

The fact that a ICC event is being held in Pakistan with some matches in Karachi is now evident from the colourful banners, posters put

the staging of the event. It is after 29 years that Pakistan is holding a proper multi team event although it hosted some matches of the Asia Cup in 2023 but the excitement didn't reach the levels being witnessed now.

Although the PCB and ICC held a low-key opening ceremony, without the teams at the Lahore Fort on Sunday night, in Karachi clearly the

tempo is growing. Former captain Javed Miandad praised the PCB for bringing the ICC event to Pakistan.

"I think the next few weeks are a celebration of the passion for cricket we have as a nation," Miandad said.

Miandad said that it is after a long time cricket fans will get to see top international players in action in their backyard. PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi also said at the opening ceremony that the tournament was a platform for Pakistan to showcase its hospitality and love for

For 10 years, no top team visited Pakistan after the

cricket.

militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in March 2009.

Pace great Waqar Younis said having the Champions Trophy in the country was a big step forward for Pakistan cricket. "I think it means a lot to everyone that we have shown how resilient we were as a cricket nation and how much our people love cricket even when for 10 years no top team played in Pakistan."

Wagar, also a former captain and who was head coach when Pakistan were their home matches in UAE, said there was a big difference between playing at home and your home series in UAE. 'I think this Champions

Trophy will only increase the cricket passion and talent in the country," he added. Naqvi also said they would be trying to get more ICC events

The

the city.

He said, hopefully, Pakistan would also host the women's World Cup qualifiers later this

security for the

tournament is unprecedented and with Naqvi himself heading the federal interior ministry, no chances are being taken for the visiting teams. Senior police official SSP Muqadas Haider said that the PCB and security agencies had planned things in such a way that visiting players also got a chance to go out and see

Pakistan play New Zealand in the tournament opener and everyone expects a full house despite the ticket prices being on the higher side. The provincial government

has also declared a public holiday on Wednesday for a religious festival.

Vijayawada | Tuesday February 18, 2025

Producer's veiled criticism of Telugu actresses: Is **Baby** actress the target?

sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

n Sunday night, the team of the Tamil film Dragon visited Hyderabad for the release of the Telugu version, titled Return of the Dragon. Pradeep Ranganathan stars as the lead actor, with Anupama Parameswaran and Kayadu Lohar playing the female leads. Ashwath Marimuthu directs the film.

Telugu producer SKN attended the promotional event as one of the chief guests and his controversial comments about Telugu actresses have since gone viral. It seems that the producer's remarks were directed at Baby actress Vaishnavi Chaitanya, who worked with SKN in that film. While the producer did not name anyone specifically, Vaishnavi Chaitanya is the latest Telugu actress to have worked with him. Anupama Parameswaran was absent

from the event, while another female actress, Kayadu Lohar, was present. During his speech, SKN said that after the release of Baby, they received compliments from Pradeep Ranganathan and Ashwath Marimuthu. "We love non-Telugu-speaking girls so much more than Telugu girls. We realised what happens when we encourage Telugu girls in our films, so my director Sai Rajesh and I decided to encourage non-Telugu girls only," said SKN. He further added that Sai Rajesh had delivered a cult film and helped him become a cult producer.

It appears that the producer's remarks were indirectly aimed at Vaishnavi Chaitanya, especially since he referred to a "cult film," which likely refers to *Baby*. The reasons behind SKN's comments remain unclear, but some speculate it may relate

to the fact that after the success of Baby, Sai Rajesh and SKN had announced another project with the same pair— Anand Deverakonda and Vaishnavi Chaitanya. However, that film never materialised and the same pair is now working with another production house, Sithara Entertainments, on a new project. It's possible that this situation led to SKN's comments, as Vaishnavi may not have provided the necessary dates

for his film. The exact reasons remain unknown, but SKN's controversial statements about Telugu actresses have sparked a wide debate. Interestingly, SKN's other film Taxiwala, featuring Vijay Deverakonda, also starred a Telugu actress, Priyanka Jawalkar. Return of the

Dragon is set to release on February 21.



# **Thandel** earns ₹100 crore: True or hype? Industry weighs in

he Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi starrer *Thandel* was released on February 7. Directed by Chandoo Mondeti, the film is produced by Bunny Vas of Geetha Arts and presented by top producer Allu Aravind. The makers released a poster claiming that *Thandel* grossed Rs 100 crore, marking the first time an actor from the Akkineni family has entered the Rs 100 crore club. "We promised, we did it," said Bunny Vas on his social media, sharing the poster celebrating the film's Rs 100 crore milestone. However, this has sparked a heated debate within the industry and trade circles While Thandel is considered a decent hit with good collections in the first three days, its earnings took a significant dip from the fourth day onward, although it is still holding well at the box office. Before the film's release, Bunny Vas promised to deliver Naga Chaitanya's first Rs 100 crore film. As promised he appounced that the film had grossed this amount on Sunday, but some

are inviting unnecessary risk. These statements posted from the official handles of the producer could attract the attention of IT officials," said another producer, who wished to remain anonymous. The film didn't receive rave reviews, with the general consensus being that the talk was average. Some critics felt that the second half of the film dragged on, particularly in the emotional scenes set in the Pakistan jail, where the director failed to deliver the expected emotional depth. The director himself admitted in a latest interview that due to censor issues, he had to remove several scenes, which resulted in less emotional impact. It has become a common practice for filmmakers to add extra crores to the reported collections to create hype around the film and impress the lead actors, said one producer. The announcement of Rs 100 crore collections on the tenth day is seen by trade analysts as premature, further fueling the debate. Sai Pallavi, who is a huge star with a massive fan base in the Telugu states, also contributed to the film's

are inflated. The film has been a major disappointment overseas, yet

the makers have claimed it has

collected worldwide. "By reporting

these inflated figures, the producers

trade analysts arque that the audience, as many fans watched



# Chiranjeevi's Vishwambhara introduction song features Mega Family cameos

hiranjeevi is currently shooting for the introduction song of his film

Vishwambhara, directed by Mallidi Vassishta. The film's shoot is almost complete, with the exception of this introduction song, which is now being filmed in Hyderabad on a specially erected set. In an exciting development, two actors from the Mega family, Sai Dharam Tej and Niharika Konidela, will make cameo appearances in this song.

According to a source, both actors will be

seen dancing alongside Chiranjeevi in the song. The lyrics of the song are reportedly centered around Rama, Lakshmana and Bharath, highlighting their bonding. At a particular moment, Sai Dharam Tej and Niharika will make their entry into the frame,

as per the source.
Niharika, in a recent social media post, subtly mentioned this shooting. Vishwambhara is a fantasybased film, with Mega Star Chiranjeevi playing the lead role. Bollywood actor Kunal Kapoor will appear as the antagonist.

After many years, MM Keeravani is providing the music for a Chiranjeevi film. Trisha plays the female lead and several other actresses will play key roles in the film. Rao Ramesh, the versatile and talented actor, also has an important role. The teaser of the film was released a few months ago but received a lot of criticism for its use of subpar computer graphics.



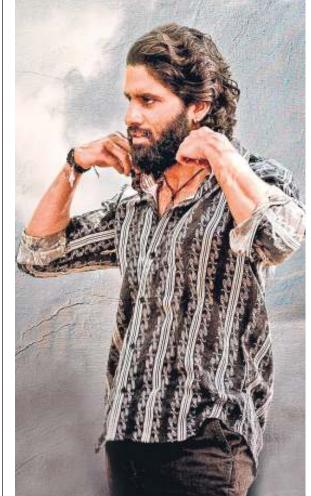
WE LOVE NON-TELUGU-SPEAKING GIRLS SO MUCH MORE THAN TELUGU GIRLS. WE REALIZED WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ENCOURAGE TELUGU GIRLS IN OUR FILMS, SO MY DIRECTOR SAI RAJESH AND I DECIDED TO ENCOURAGE NON-TELUGU GIRLS ONLY



Ram Charan is currently shooting for his film with director Buchi Babu Sana, having already completed two schedules. Janhvi Kapoor is the female lead in this film. After completing this project, Ram Charan will once again collaborate with top director Sukumar. The film was officially launched some time are According to a source Part some time ago. According to a source, Ram Charan is now undergoing a look test for Sukumar's film.

'Though there is still some time before the new film with Sukumar begins, the director wanted some sketches of Ram Charan with a beard, so they are currently conducting the look test," said a source. Mythri Movie Makers is producing the film, which is tentatively titled 7. Sukumar is planning to make this film on a large scale. "The makers are planning to release the film directly in Hollywood, so they are looking to tie up with a production house there," added the source.

Sukumar is riding high after the success of his recent blockbuster *Pushpa 2* and is now aiming for something even bigger with this Ram Charan film, according to the source. The look test is currently underway and another one will be conducted once Charan removes his beard, the source further revealed.



# Ravi Teja teams up with director Kishore Tirumala for new film

Ravi Teja is currently busy shooting for the film Mass Jathara, which is directed by debutant Bhanu Bhogavarapu. The film is set to hit the screens this coming May.

Following this, reports suggest that Ravi Teja has joined hands with director Kalyan Shankar of MAD fame. Now, according to a source, Ravi Teja is also working with director Kishore Tirumala, known for Nenu Sailaja. Kishore's last film was Aadavallu Meeku Joharlu, which was released in 2022. After a long break, Kishore is now collaborating with Ravi Teja for a

new project. The source also revealed that Ravi

Teja initially wanted to work on both films simultaneously, but the Kishore Tirumala film will release first. The producer for this film has not yet been finalised, but the details are expected to be announced in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, Ravi Teja is pinning

his hopes on Mass Jathara, as he is in need of a successful break. His last four films were failures at the box office and the actor is looking for a

He hopes that debut director Bhanu will provide him with that opportunity. Regardless of the outcome of Mass Jathara, Ravi Teja will continue working with directors Kishore Tirumala and Kalyan Shankar for his upcoming projects.

# Bhagyashri Borse continues to shine with major film projects in her kitty



Typically, when a female actress makes her debut in a film that flops, filmmakers tend to overlook her for future projects. However, this is not the case for Bhagyashri Borse, who made her debut in *Mr Bachchan* opposite senior actor Ravi Teja. Directed by Harish Shankar, the film was a huge disaster at the box office, but Bhagyashri's performance garnered significant attention and

Following the film's release, Bhagyashri quickly signed several projects. She is currently starring opposite Vijay Deverakonda in a film directed by Gowtham Tinnanuri. Additionally, she has been paired with Malayalam superstar Dulquer Salmaan in the film Kantha, directed by Selvamani Selvaraj, with Rana

Daggubati producing.
With these exciting projects already in her portfolio, Bhagyashri has now landed another prestigious role. According to sources, she has been signed on to star opposite Tamil superstar Suriya in a film directed by Venky Atluri. Sithara Entertainments is producing the film, which will be released in multiple languages. This marks another significant project for Bhagyashri in her growing career.

The actress is also working on another Telugu film with Ram Pothineni, directed by P Mahesh Babu, known for Miss Shetty Mr Polishetty. The shooting is currently underway near Rajahmundry.

Despite her debut film's failure, Bhagyashri is on a roll with a series of exciting and high-profile projects. It seems she has quickly become one of the most in-demand actresses in the South and it won't be long before she is considered among the top actresses in the industry.