

# sunday pioneer

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**India leading in AI adoption, says Nirmala**



**'Working out scheme to prevent DISTRESS sale of farmers' produce'**



**Trisha: The typhoon of INDIAN cricket**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer

*I have been trying to put the survey on track breaking my head. However, some people are trying to throw stones at me. The Father (KCR), Son and Nephew who did not care about BCs, have become good. Our leaders are going and sitting next to BRS leaders, if they conduct meetings on caste surveys. They are making me a villain even though I conducted a caste survey working hard. Those who oppose caste surveys are villains. Yet you are finding fault with me*

**- Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister P4**

**DON'T MISS...**

**NTR DC reviews MLC poll steps**

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminha has said that comprehensive arrangements have been made for the Krishna-Guntur Graduate Constituency MLC election scheduled for February 27. He informed that around 224 Presiding Officers (POs) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) have been appointed, with training conducted in two phases. On Saturday, Election General Observer V Karuna held a virtual meeting with Collectors and Assistant Returning...

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**'Expedite fake docu case probes'**

Revenue Department Principal Secretary R.P. Sisodia has directed Prakasam district officials to speed up investigations into cases involving fake land documents, forged stamps, and other irregularities. Chairing a review meeting on Saturday with District Collector A. Thameem Ansariya, SP A.R. Damodhar, Joint Collector R. Gopal Krishna, and other officials, Sisodia assessed the progress of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing these cases. He sought details on the number of cases registered, the status of...

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**60 crore devotees have taken holy dip**

The Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday said an unprecedented 60 crore devotees at the Maha Kumbh Mela have taken a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam. The Kumbh Mela which started on January 13 will continue till February 26 on the occasion of Maha Shivratri. Over half of India's 110 crore Sanatan followers have bathed in the holy confluence, and this number is expected to surpass 65 crore by the final 'amrit snan' on February 26, an official statement said. This Maha Kumbh has seen the largest participation in any religious, cultural, or social...

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**Indians feel savings not enough**

More than half of Indians surveyed feel unprepared for their future despite having a detailed financial plan or having done some degree of planning, says a study. The study of individuals in the age group of 35 to 54 years who financially provide for their ageing parents and growing children found that 60 per cent of respondents feel their savings are not enough for future. The respondents agree that 'no matter how much they save or invest, they feel like it's never enough for future', the study by YouGov said. A majority 94 per cent of respondents said they either have a detailed financial plan or have done some degree of planning, the study, which surveyed more than 4,000 people across 12 cities across India, said...

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**OBTUSE ANGLE**



## SLBC TUNNEL COLLAPSES 8 workers trapped, rescue ops on

**PM MODI SPEAKS TO TG CM REVANTH REDDY, NDRF TEAMS DEPLOYED**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A major accident struck the under-construction Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel near Domalapenta in Nagarkurnool district. Eight workers are trapped inside the tunnel after a sudden roof collapse early on Thursday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy over the phone, inquiring about the situation and assuring full support from the Centre, including the immediate deployment of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams for rescue operations. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy briefed the Prime Minister on the incident, stating that Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy and Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao were at the site supervising rescue operations.

The collapse, which occurred at around 8:30 am, was triggered by the sudden caving in of a 10-meter stretch of the tunnel roof, trapping the workers who were operating the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM). The site is 13 km away from the mouth and muck mixed with water spread around 200 to 300 meters in the tunnel.

The missing individuals are Manoj Kumar (Project Engineer) and Sri Niwas (Field Engineer)



- Debris and water spread 200-300 m inside the tunnel, 13 km from the entrance.
- The missing workers include engineers and labourers from UP, J'Khand, J&K, and Punjab.
- Ventilation is intact, ensuring oxygen supply, but communication is completely cut off.
- Rescue teams from NDRF, SDRF, Singareni, and the Army mobilised.
- Four NDRF teams en route, Army engineers from Sec'bad on standby.
- TG State Emergency Operations Centre is coordinating the multi-agency rescue efforts.

from Uttar Pradesh, Sandeep Sahu, Jagta Xess, Santosh Sahu and Anuj Sahu from Jharkhand, Sunny Singh from Jammu & Kashmir, and Gurpreet Singh from Punjab.

Ventilation is functional inside the tunnel, ensuring oxygen supply for the trapped workers. However, communication has been completely cut off and concerns remain about the instability of the collapsed section.

Rescue teams, including experts from NDRF, SDRF, Singareni, and the Army, have been mobilized to reach the trapped workers.

The collapsed section is approximately 13 km from the tunnel entrance, with debris and water spreading up to 300 meters within the structure. Dewatering operations have been initiated, and lighting systems inside the tunnel are being reinforced to aid in the efforts.

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## Secure fair chilli prices, CM Naidu tells officials

**Centre responds positively to AP's appeal for support amid falling prices**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu held a meeting at the Secretariat to address the challenges faced by chilli farmers across the State.

He discussed chilli prices with farmers and exporters, stressing the need for fair pricing. With exports to countries like China, Thailand, and Malaysia on the rise, the Chief Minister directed officials to identify strategies to secure better prices for chilli crops. He also reviewed stock availability at the Guntur market yard.

Special Chief Secretary (Agriculture) Budithi Rajasekhar, Agriculture Director S. Dilli Rao, and officials from the Marketing Department attended the meeting.

- Naidu discusses chilli exports and directs officials to secure better prices for the produce.
- Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan holds a high-level meet.

In response to the Chief Minister's appeal for support to chilli farmers struggling due to falling prices, the Centre has stepped in. Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi held a high-level meeting to discuss possible solutions.

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**APPSC**

**APPSC Group-2 Mains exam today as scheduled**

**Commission asks candidates not to believe in rumours**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) has confirmed that the Group-2 Mains examination will be conducted as scheduled on 23rd February (Sunday). The commission has urged candidates not to believe false rumours circulating on social media regarding the postponement of the exam.

The Group-2 Mains exam will be held in two sessions on 23rd February. Paper-1 will be conducted from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM, while Paper-2 will be held from 3:00 PM to 5:30 PM. Candidates are advised to reach their respective exam centres at least 15 minutes in advance to avoid last-minute issues.

Strict security arrangements have been made by the APPSC to ensure the smooth conduct of the examination. The exam will take place across 175 centres in Andhra Pradesh, with 92,250 candidates expected to appear. Additional security measures have been implemented at sensitive exam centres to prevent malpractice.

The commission has reiterated that candidates must report on time, as late arrivals will not be permitted entry.

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## New QR-code ration cards soon: Manohar

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendra Manohar has announced that new ration cards embedded with advanced QR code technology will be issued from March onwards.

The minister, accompanied by Endowments Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy and MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, participated in various programmes on Saturday. He inspected a rice mill in Sangam village and a multi-purpose godown (stockpoint), where he reviewed the paddy procurement process with the rice mill management.

Addressing a gathering of women, Manohar reiterated the government's commitment to women's welfare and urged them to actively participate in development initiatives for the

state's progress. "The issuance of new ration cards with QR codes will be carried out through village and ward secretariats, ensuring a streamlined process," he stated.

The minister also highlighted the implementation of the Deepam-2 scheme, fulfilling Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's election promise. "Under this scheme, free gas cylinders have been distributed to 4 lakh beneficiaries in Nellore district, while 93.42 lakh families across the state have benefited so far. The government is also preparing to provide new gas connections this year," he said.

Manohar further announced that from May onwards, students in welfare hostels and schools will be served mid-day meals cooked with fine-quality rice.

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## Tight security for Assembly session

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Strict security measures have been implemented for the upcoming Assembly sessions, with stringent regulations on entry and movement within the Assembly premises.

Special entry passes have been issued to ministers, MLAs, MLCs, media personnel, visitors, and police staff, ensuring that only authorised individuals can access the Assembly premises. Different colour-coded passes have been introduced to regulate access to specific areas within the Assembly and Legislative Council. According to official instructions, Gate 1 will be accessible only to the Council Chairman, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Chief Minister, and Deputy Chief Ministers. Gate 2 will be exclusively for ministers, while Gate 4 will be reserved for MLAs and MLCs.

Only authorised personnel will be allowed in corridors used by the Speaker, Council Chairman, and Chief Minister. Security officials have clarified that only designated security personnel will be stationed near Gate 4, except for gunmen. Personal assistants of ministers and members will be permitted only when necessary.

Government employees not associated with legislative affairs will not be allowed inside the premises. Carrying weapons within the Assembly or Legislative Council is strictly prohibited, and any member bringing a weapon must deposit it at the designated "Bell of Arms" inside the premises. Lathis, placards,



Special entry passes have been issued to ministers, MLAs, MLCs, media personnel, visitors, and police staff, ensuring that only authorised individuals can access the Assembly premises. Different colour-coded passes have been introduced to regulate access to specific areas within the Assembly and Legislative Council.

whistles, and other protest materials have been banned within the Legislative Council area.

Personal assistants and personal staff of members have been advised not to accompany them due to security concerns. Press conferences

will be restricted to the designated media point inside the Assembly premises.

These measures have been put in place to ensure the smooth and secure conduct of the Assembly sessions.

## Jagan to attend House

**YSRCP MLAs to be present for Governor's address**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has reportedly decided to attend the upcoming Andhra Pradesh Assembly session, with party MLAs and MLCs set to be present for the Governor's address on Monday.

However, sources indicate that Jagan has not yet decided whether he will participate in the Assembly proceedings from Tuesday onwards. His atten-

dance in the legislative and budget sessions will depend on the prevailing political scenario.

The budget session of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly will commence on February 24, with the Governor addressing both Houses in the morning. The State budget for the 2025-26 financial year is expected to be presented on February 28. While the government is considering holding the session for 15 working days, the final schedule will be decided in the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting on the first day.

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## VPA launches green drive in port city

**GREEN VISAKHA MISSION AIMS TO PLANT ONE MILLION SAPLINGS IN THREE YEARS**

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA) has launched an ambitious plantation drive, dubbed "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam," aiming to plant one million saplings over the next three years. This initiative, a key component of Swachhata Campaign 4.0 and Swachhata Hi Seva 2024, seeks to bolster environmental conservation and foster community involvement.

The VPA's initiative garnered swift support from the Visakhapatnam District Collector, who lauded the effort and pledged full cooperation to expand the program across the district. This collaboration culminated in the launch of the "Green Visakha Mission," a comprehensive afforestation drive that will engage government depart-



ments, non-governmental organizations, schools, and colleges.

To ensure efficient execution, weekly review meetings, chaired by the District Collector, will be held every Thursday at the Collector's

office. These meetings will serve to monitor progress and address any logistical challenges.

The plantation drive will unfold in a phased manner. The initial phase, targeting the distribution of 350,000

**The plantation drive will unfold in a phased manner. The initial phase, targeting the distribution of 350,000 saplings to various organizations, is slated for completion by March 2025. The second phase, spanning 2025-26, will see the distribution of another 350,000 saplings.**

saplings to various organizations, is slated for completion by March 2025. The second phase, spanning 2025-26, will see the distribution of another 350,000 saplings. The remaining saplings will be cultivated and distrib-

uted in 2026-27. The drive prioritises a diverse mix of fruit-bearing and forest species, reflecting a commitment to both ecological balance and community benefit.

The VPA has already demonstrated significant momentum, having planted 21,000 saplings in agency schools and an additional 50,000 in collaboration with local NGOs. With the combined efforts of the VPA and the District Administration, the Green Visakha Mission is poised to significantly enhance the region's environmental health, transforming Visakhapatnam into a greener and more sustainable landscape. This initiative underscores the broader objectives of the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign, promoting cleanliness and environmental stewardship.

# TG Govt's Diary: Cost-Cutting or Carelessness?

The much-anticipated Telangana government diary for 2025 has left many disappointed, with complaints pouring in about its subpar quality. Compared to the 2024 edition, this year's diary is a major downgrade - cheap paper, fewer pages, fewer photographs, and a binding that barely holds together. Some recipients are already joking that it's best kept as a souvenir rather than used for writing. This is the same diary given to Bureaucrats, officers and journalists. The drop in quality has raised eyebrows. Is this a cost-cutting measure, or is there something else at play? A government diary is not just a planner; it's a reflection of the administration's attention to detail. If the binding is coming apart this easily, one can't help but wonder—what else is falling apart behind the scenes?

The BJP's graduate MLC candidate for Karimnagar - Medak - Adilabad - Nizamabad, in exchange for a ticket - went viral. The catch? The newspaper doesn't even exist. Despite being a blatant fabrication, the clipping gained such widespread traction that it nearly reached a majority of voters. Taken aback by its reach, the BJP was forced to step in and counter the narrative, alleging that Congress had orchestrated the misinformation campaign. According to BJP insiders, district Congress presidents down to lower-level cadre were instructed to circulate the fake clipping. If fake news can drive narratives even in a Graduate MLC election, it begs the question - do political strategists believe graduates are that gullible?

emony, with the Chief Minister as the chief guest. However, as Revanth Reddy prepared to inaugurate the petrol bunk, DK Aruna positioned herself opposite Parnika Reddy, creating a visual tug-of-war. When the CM went ahead with the inauguration, standing between the two, Aruna called him forward, prompting laughter among those gathered. The scene became a moment of amusement as the ministers present—Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Jupalli Krishna Rao, and Seethakka—joined in with smiles, watching the aunt-niece duo command the spotlight. While political differences were evident, the family dynamic and public camaraderie between the two rivals became the highlight of the event, momentarily sidelining even the Chief Minister.

## No Space for Cars at Telangana Bhavan

Telangana Bhavan, the nerve centre of BRS, may have the car as its election symbol, but when it comes to actual parking, visitors are left to fend for themselves. For reporters covering the party's activities, this has long been an unavoidable challenge.

## KCR's Selfies Stir Reactions Across Political Circles

BRS chief KCR may be out of power, but his moves still generate buzz - sometimes in unexpected quarters. His recent selfies and casual video appearances with influencers on his birthday have drawn mixed reactions, not just within BRS but also from Congress and BJP circles. For a leader

# REPORTERS' DIARY

of his stature, merely standing in a video while social media influencers talk away didn't sit well with many. A prominent BJP leader remarked that KCR's obliging for such reels felt out of place, given the larger-than-life image he has built over the years. "He has set his bar so high that even his opponents don't want to see him any less," the Congress leader observed. Even Congress functionaries, despite having defeated him, found themselves debating the optics of such social media engagements. Meanwhile, KCR's arrival at the BRS executive committee meeting saw an unexpectedly thin crowd. For a leader who once commanded massive gatherings, this wasn't just a minor detail - it was a statement. A senior journalist at the venue bluntly put it: "This turnout for KCR is not a good sign." The contrast was even starker given that KTR had drawn a significantly larger crowd when he returned from the ACB office in the Formula E probe.

lenge, forcing them to find alternate ways to reach the venue. But when KCR is scheduled to attend, the struggle for space only intensifies. On one such chaotic day, a reporter navigating the narrow approach to Telangana Bhavan fell from their bike and sustained bruises, highlighting just how inconvenient the situation has become. The incident sparked a round of discussion among fellow journalists that day, many of whom shared their own experiences dealing with the lack of parking for the party that proudly carries the car symbol. Some have adapted by switching to cabs or autos, while others prefer taking the metro and somehow managing the last stretch. A few have even mastered the skill of squeezing into whatever little space is available. And if parking is a nightmare, the traffic situation around Telangana Bhavan is even worse - best not even to get started on that.

## APSFL Chairman cracks whip over delays, fires 3 officials

In a decisive move, Andhra Pradesh State FiberNet Limited (APSFL) Chairman GV Reddy has dismissed three senior officials for allegedly delaying crucial orders, causing financial setbacks to the organisation. He expressed serious concern over the deliberate inaction, which he claimed had severely hampered APSFL's operations.

Reddy highlighted that the officials failed to act on termination orders for 410 employees who had been appointed without proper documentation. This oversight resulted in a loss of Rs 1 crore in salaries for December, January, and February. Despite his clear instructions, the orders were ignored, leading to significant financial strain.

Further, Reddy held APSFL Managing Director K Dinesh Kumar accountable for negligence in handling employee terminations, vendor contracts, and key administrative decisions. He criticised the management's failure to inform him about a pending GST bill, which had accumulated a staggering Rs 377 crore fine due to delayed filings. However, timely intervention helped save Rs 9 crore by ensuring the IT returns were filed before the deadline.

Determined to address the lapses, Reddy has decided to escalate the matter to the Chief Secretary and Advocate General, demanding that the MD take full responsibility for the losses incurred.

With APSFL facing critical financial and operational challenges, Reddy's stern action signals a push for greater accountability and efficiency in the organisation.

(Naveena Ghanate, Kolihetty Venkateshwarulu and Pradeep Kumar)

# AP promotes sustainable farming with landmark MoU

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant move to promote sustainable agriculture, the Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) of the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) has signed a landmark tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pegasus Capital Advisors and Producers Trust. The agreement, formalized at the AP Markfed Headquarters in Vijayawada, aims to scale natural farming practices from one million to six million farmers across the state.

The MoU was signed by T. Vijay Kumar, Executive Vice Chairman of RySS; Craig Cogut, Founder and CEO of Pegasus Capital Advisors; and Keith Agoada, Founder and CEO of Producers Trust. This partnership will focus on mobilizing resources, enhancing



post-harvest infrastructure, expanding market access, leveraging AI-driven research, and fostering international collaborations.

Craig Cogut emphasized the initiative's transformative potential, saying, "It's inspiring to see work that positively impacts human health while driving the local economy. Our collaboration will pave the way for the necessary

resources, infrastructure, and technology."

Keith Agoada commended Andhra Pradesh's leadership in natural farming, stating, "It's an honor to see Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu prioritizing certification, traceability, and data to strengthen the expansion of Natural Farming."

Gina McCarthy, an advisor at Pegasus Capital, highlighted the importance of community-

driven efforts and expressed optimism for the partnership's impact: "We look forward to collaborating on strengthening the work of APCNF, which is fostering local commercial enterprises focused on community well-being."

T. Vijay Kumar also emphasized the role of women's self-help groups in the initiative, noting, "This partnership offers a broader platform for these groups to lead the expansion of Natural Farming through established networks and local supply chains."

B. Rajashekar, Special Chief Secretary for Agriculture, highlighted the state's long-term vision, saying, "Our Chief Minister has set a 2047 vision for various sectors, guided by ten principles. In agriculture, our priority is leveraging deep technology, with Natural Farming at the forefront."

## Naidu conspiring to cripple FiberNet, alleges YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former chairman of FiberNet Corporation, Poonuru Gowtham Reddy, has condemned attempts to dismantle the state-run FiberNet, alleging that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is plotting to hand it over to private companies.

He highlighted that during the previous YSRCP government, with the support of former CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, FiberNet services were provided at Rs 190, leading the corporation towards profitability.

Gowtham Reddy alleged large-scale corruption in FiberNet during Chandrababu's tenure (2014-2019), which the CID has confirmed, implicating senior leaders, including Yanamala Ramakrishnu. He also recalled Chandrababu's involvement in the Skill Development Corporation scam, claiming that he is now trying to weaken public institutions like FiberNet to evade legal cases.

"If Chandrababu has the courage, he should face the cases instead of destroying state-run corporations," he asserted.

# Land grabbing complaints galore at TDP's 'Praja Vedika' prog

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

People from various parts of Andhra Pradesh submitted grievances at the Praja Vedika in the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Central Office, raising concerns over land grabbing and seeking action against encroachers. Former minister and senior TDP leader N. Raghuram, along with Kuraba Corporation Chairman Devendrapa, received numerous petitions from distressed citizens on Saturday.

Emmiganur resident L. Jyothiswari complained that Rajesh, a worker at her house, fled with gold, silver, and cash, but the police failed to take action on her complaint. She alleged that since Rajesh is a follower of former MLA Chennakesava Reddy, the police did not act against him. She urged authorities to recover her valuables.

Villagers from Narava in Gantyal Mandal, Vizianagaram district, alleged that the YSRCP village sarpanch had collected approximately Rs 12 lakh from poor families under the pretext of allotting housing plots during the previous government's tenure.

They demanded an investigation and the return of their hard-earned money.



Residents of Kotalapalli village in Prakasam district complained that YSRCP leaders had encroached upon the playground of a local government school and started illegal constructions. The school management committee stated that they approached the court, which halted the construction. However, the YSRCP leaders allegedly ignored the court orders. They sought immediate action to protect the school's playground.

Boya Shakuntala raised concerns about non-functional computers at the Adoni municipal office, particularly in Ward 21. She accused the staff of neglecting public complaints and citing faulty computers as an excuse.

Elderly couple Chakali Ramajaneyulu from G. Kothapalli in Anantapur district and Lalithamma from West Godavari district complained about wrongful land transfers and encroachments affecting their livelihoods. They urged TDP leaders to intervene and safeguard their rights.

Vijayalakshmi from Kalla Mandal, West Godavari district, demanded a survey to remove encroachments from her agricultural land, while Vishwanath from Virupapuram village in Halahravi Mandal sought correction of a wrongful land mutation that took place during the previous YSRCP administration.

TDP leader Raghuram and Kuraba Corporation Chairman Devendrapa assured the complainants that their issues would be taken up with the concerned government departments and officials for resolution.

# Secure fair... YSRCCP pays tribute to Maulana

Continued from Page 1

Key points discussed included procuring chillies under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) and bridging the price gap between market rates and production costs.

The meeting also considered increasing the maximum procurement limit under MIS from 25% to 75%, using the state government's estimated chilli cultivation cost of Rs 11,600 per acre instead of the ICAR estimate, and removing export barriers to facilitate better trade.

Union Minister Rammohan Naidu confirmed that the first three proposals received a positive response from the Union Agriculture Minister.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leaders of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) paid floral tributes to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on his death anniversary at the party headquarters in Tadepalli. Senior party members garlanded his portrait, honouring his contributions as a freedom fighter and India's first Minister of Education.

Speaking on the occasion, the leaders hailed Azad's pivotal role in shaping India's education system, describing him as a great reformer. They reaffirmed their commitment to his vision, highlighting how his policies brought significant reforms in the sector.



They also stated that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and the YSR Congress Party continue to draw inspiration from Azad's ideals and pledged to uphold his legacy.

Among those present were former minister Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani),

MLC Lella Appireddy, former MLAs TJR Sudhakar Babu and Doolam Nageswara Rao, along with YSRCP leaders Sheikh Asif, Dr Mehboob Sheikh, Manohar Reddy, Dadda Anji Reddy, Mastan, Ghouse, and Purushottam. Several other party members also attended the event.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Chaturthi: Feb 15 11:52 PM to Feb 17 02:16 AM

Panchami: Feb 17 02:16 AM to Feb 18 04:53 AM

**Nakshatram:**

Moola: Feb 22 05:40 PM to Feb 23 06:42 PM

Purva Ashadha: Feb 23 06:42 PM to Feb 24 06:58 PM

Rahukalam: 4:50 PM to 6:17 PM

Yamagandam: 12:29 PM to 1:56 PM

Varjyam: 04:25 AM to 06:02 AM

Gulika: 3:23 PM to 4:50 PM

Amritakalam: 12:07 PM to 01:47 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 PM to 12:52 PM

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

Forecast: Sunny

Temp: 34°C

Humidity: 69%

Sunrise: 6:29 AM

Sunset: 6:13 PM

Updated: February 22, 2025 5:00 PM

## New QR-code...

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He praised Kovuru MLA Vemireddy Prashanthi Reddy for her efforts in developing the constituency and urged the public to support the coalition government in its developmental agenda. MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy also addressed the gathering.

Later, the minister held a meeting with rice millers to review the paddy procure-

ment process. He directed them to ensure that farmers receive payments within 24 hours of selling their produce. He reiterated the government's commitment to purchasing paddy directly from farmers, noting that 300 procurement centres have been set up in Nellore district.

The fine-quality rice procured by the government will be supplied to welfare hostels and schools, he added. Endowments Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, Civil Supplies Director Pattabhi Ramireddy, Rice Millers' Association Chairman Rangaiah Naidu, and other officials were present.

# APPSC Group-2 Mains exam today...

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For Paper-1, candidates must arrive by 9:30 AM, and the gates will be closed at 9:45 AM. For Paper-2, candidates must report by 2:30 PM, and the gates will be closed at 2:45 PM.

To maintain the integrity of the examination, Section 144 will be enforced within a 100-metre radius of exam centres. Xerox and internet centres near the venues will remain closed. Candidates are strictly prohibited from carrying mobile phones, electronic watches, or any other electronic gadgets into the

examination hall. The APPSC has also issued a stern warning against those spreading false information about the exam postponement, stating that criminal action will be taken against individuals involved in misinformation campaigns.

# Mangalagiri police crack Rs 5 cr gold robbery case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Mangalagiri rural police in Guntur district have solved a Rs 5 crore gold robbery, revealing it as an inside job masterminded by a trusted employee and relative of a Vijayawada-based jeweller. The accused, Divi Nagaraju (45), conspired with associates to fake the heist.

The arrested individuals include Adapala Bharat (23), Divi Nagaraju (32), Korivi Naveen (26), Velduti Mohan Krishna (23), Varakala Lokesh (24), Potnuri Chandrasekhar (27), and Sikamani Arun Kumar (24). Police are searching for an absconding accused, Shaik Irfan. Two bikes and Rs



2 lakh in cash were seized. According to SP Satish Kumar, on February 15 at 8:50 pm, jeweller Divi Ramu entrusted a bag containing 5 kg of gold ornaments to his employee and relative,

Nagaraju, for safekeeping at his Mangalagiri residence. The gold was to be transported to Nalgonda, Suryapet, and Narakikallu on February 17.

However, at 9:23 pm, Nagaraju called his employer,

claiming that two unidentified men on a bike intercepted him near the Atmakuru underpass and snatched the bag before fleeing. Acting on the complaint, police formed six special teams to analyse CCTV footage and track criminal movements.

Inconsistencies in Nagaraju's statement led investigators to uncover the staged robbery. Further probe revealed that he had orchestrated the crime with Bharat, a fellow employee, former goldsmiths Naveen and Irfan, and their associates Mohan, Lokesh, Chandu, and Arun (Bikshu). After six days of investigation, police arrested the accused and recovered the stolen gold.

# 8 workers trapped, rescue...

Continued from Page 1

The State Emergency Operations Centre is coordinating the response, ensuring a seamless effort between all stakeholders involved in the mission. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy held a high-level review meeting with Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, State Irrigation Advisor Adityanath Das, and CM's Advisor Vem Narendar Reddy.

The Chief Minister asked officials to speed up rescue efforts, stressing that all available resources must be deployed immediately. He also directed medical teams to provide top-notch care for injured individuals and assured the victims' families of full government support.

During the meeting, Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy informed the CM that SDRF and NDRF teams were reaching the site shortly. The Chief Minister also emphasized that safety protocols should be strictly followed to prevent

accidents during the rescue operations.

The incident posed significant challenges due to the sheer depth of the tunnel - approximately 500 feet below ground level. Authorities have reported an earth fracture on the tunnel wall, allowing water to seep in, further complicating the rescue operation.

Geological experts and engineers with experience in tunnel rescues, including those involved in the Uttarakhhand tunnel collapse incident, have been consulted for technical assistance. "This is an unfortunate accident, but we are committed to bringing them out safely. The government is mobilizing all available resources, including experts from across the country, to ensure a successful rescue," Minister Uttam stated. With the rescue operation entering a critical phase, officials are working round the clock, and senior officers from the police, irrigation, and disaster management departments are closely monitoring the situation.

# Jagan to...

Continued from Page 1

This will be the fourth Assembly session since the formation of the TDP-BJP-JSP alliance government. Notably, Jagan attended only the first day of the first session and skipped the second and third sessions entirely. Jagan has been demanding recognition as the Leader of the Opposition, arguing that YSRC's 40 per cent vote share justifies his role. However, Speaker Ch. Ayyanna Prudru rejected his request, citing that the party lacks the required 18 MLAs. In response, Jagan has resorted to press conferences to highlight what he calls the government's failures and unfulfilled promises.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

# Nunna set to be a model village

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Panchayat Officer (DPO) P. Lavanya Kumari has announced that the district administration plans to establish Nunna Gram Panchayat as a model for other panchayats in managing Solid Waste Processing Centres (SWPCs) and implementing sanitation practices. To support this initiative, a district-level training programme will be organised for Mandal Extension Officers, Panchayat Raj & Rural Development (EOPR&RDs), and Gram Panchayat Secretaries to enhance the oversight of SWPCs, she said.

As part of a two-day Special Drive on Sanitation, DPO Lavanya Kumari made an unannounced visit to Nunna on Saturday. During her visit, she observed the collection of both dry and wet waste from local households and assessed the operations at the Solid Waste Processing Centre. She also reviewed the garbage segregation process and the production of vermicomposting fertiliser.



NTR District Panchayat Officer Lavanya Kumari inspecting the collection of dry and wet garbage from households at Nunna in Vijayawada Rural Mandal on Saturday.

During her inspection, DPO Lavanya Kumari instructed Gram Panchayat Secretary D. Srinivas Rao to ensure that all collected waste was transported to the SWPC for processing. She emphasised that waste should not be discarded on roadsides or along the Polavaram Right Main Canal bund. Furthermore, she directed GP officials to take necessary steps to ensure proper disposal by sending the waste to Jindal

Urban Waste Management Private Limited in Guntur. In her comments, she acknowledged the support of NTR District Collector Dr. G. Lakshmitha for this initiative and revealed plans to conduct training sessions at the Nunna SWPC. She highlighted that Nunna Gram Panchayat has effectively maintained its SWPC and generated additional income through the production of vermicomposting

fertiliser, positioning it as a model for other panchayats.

DPO Lavanya Kumari praised the efforts of Gram Panchayat officials and staff in raising public awareness about waste disposal through a public announcement system. She also instructed them to ensure that roads remain clean and free from litter. Additionally, she commended the sanitation staff for their consistent efforts in waste removal management.

On discovering that officials from neighbouring villages in Krishna district were dumping garbage along the Polavaram Right Main Canal bund, she ordered the installation of warning boards to demarcate the boundaries of the NTR district. She also instructed the deployment of sanitation workers to prevent illegal dumping of garbage.

Meanwhile, she granted Nunna GP the authority to impose fines and seize vehicles involved in unauthorised waste disposal. She further directed officials to report any violations from neighbouring Krishna district to her for further action.

# NTR Collector reviews MLC poll arrangements

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G. Lakshmitha has said that comprehensive arrangements have been made for the Krishna-Guntur Graduate Constituency MLC election scheduled for February 27. He informed that around 224 Presiding Officers (POs) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) have been appointed, with training conducted in two phases.

On Saturday, Election General Observer V. Karuna held a virtual meeting with Collectors and Assistant Returning Officers of Krishna, NTR, Guntur, Bapatla, and Palnadu districts.

During the meeting, Dr Lakshmitha briefed on the election arrangements in NTR district. He stated that 112 POs and 112 APOs have been deployed for the 112 polling stations, with two additional presiding officers assigned to each station.

He added that 90 election officials have been kept in



During the meeting, Dr Lakshmitha briefed on the election arrangements in NTR district. He stated that 112 POs and 112 APOs have been deployed for the 112 polling stations, with two additional presiding officers assigned to each station.

reserve under three categories.

Further, he informed that 112 Micro Observers have been appointed, with one for each polling station, while 19 have been kept in reserve. The locations for distribution, reception, and temporary strong rooms have been set up in Vijayawada, Nandigama, and Tiruvuru divisions.

He said 224 ballot boxes are required, while 324, including reserves, are available.

Regarding security, Dr Lakshmitha said that 454 police personnel have been deployed for the smooth conduct of polls. He noted that 24 Flying Squad Teams (FST) are active

in the field, while 22 Static Surveillance Teams (SST) are operating in two shifts across 11 check posts, along with seven Video Surveillance Teams (VST).

He also stated that arrangements are being made for web-casting at all polling stations. Route officers, sector officers, and sector police officers have been appointed as per requirement, and the election expenditure monitoring team is strictly follows the prescribed guidelines.

DRO and Assistant Returning Officer M. Lakshminarasimham took part in the virtual meeting.

# PB Siddhartha runners-up in KRUIC handball tourney

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The PB Siddhartha Arts and Science College Men's Handball Team secured second place in the Krishna University Inter-Collegiate (KRUIC) Handball Tournament held recently at Dr. LHR Degree College, Mylavaram.

Four players from the college have also been selected for the Krishna University team, which will compete in the South Zone Inter-University Handball Tournament for Men.

Siddhartha Academy President Dr. C. Nageswara Rao, Secretary P. Lakshmana Rao, Convener S. Venkateswara Rao, Principal Dr. M. Ramesh, Director V. Babu Rao, and Dean Rajesh C. Jampala congratulated the team for their performance. They also commended Head of the Sports Department Dr. TVB Krishna Reddy for his efforts in motivating and training students.



# CBI probe sought into graft charges in Vijaya Dairy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kavuluru village milk collection centre president, Tadikonda Ramesh Babu, has challenged the management of Krishna Milk Union, stating that if he fails to prove his allegations, he will end his life on the factory premises. He has demanded a CBI inquiry into alleged fraud and irregularities in Vijaya Dairy.

Addressing a press conference at Hanumantharaya Library Hall, Ramesh Babu called for a probe into corruption within the management and sought the removal of

Chairman Chalasani Anjaneyulu. He questioned whether the management was willing to engage in an open debate on the allegations he raised.

He lauded Mandala Janaki Ramayya for his efforts in steering the milk union towards profitability despite challenges but accused the management of misleading the public.

He alleged that during the recent Vajrotsava celebrations, the management falsely claimed to have turned the loss-making union into a profitable entity.

Ramesh Babu further accused the administration of deceiving farmers by not paying them their rightful bonuses. He demanded that instead of 30 paise, farmers should receive a bonus of 52 paise. He also questioned whether both farmers and employees were being exploited under the current administration.

Expressing serious concerns, he alleged that substandard food products were being mixed with Vijaya Dairy products and reiterated his demand for a CBI-led judicial inquiry into the alleged fraudulent activities.

# Krishna Collector calls for promotion of natural farming



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector D.K. Balaji has directed officials to raise farmers' awareness about the benefits of Natural Farming and encourage those practising chemical-based farming to adopt eco-friendly agricultural methods.

As part of the Kharif Action Plan (KAP) 2025, the Department of Agriculture - Rythu Sadhikara Samstha organised a district-level convergence meeting on Saturday at the Krishna Zilla Parishad office in Machilipatnam.

Officials from the Agriculture, Horticulture, DRDA, SERP, and other allied departments participated in the meeting. On the occasion, Collector Balaji released a book highlighting the advantages of Natural Farming.

The Collector stressed the need for structured aware-

ness programmes to educate farmers on Natural Farming. He instructed officials from the Agriculture and Horticulture Departments, along with SERP staff, to conduct Mandal-level meetings with farmers and 'DWCRAs' group members.

Officials were also directed to undertake door-to-door campaigns to explain the benefits of Natural Farming and the drawbacks of chemical fertilisers. He emphasised the role of green manure in improving soil fertility and urged officials to promote its use among farmers.

Andhra Pradesh Natural Farming District Project Manager Pardha Saradhi, Agriculture Officer N. Padmavathi, Horticulture Officer J. Jyothi, Markfed District Manager Bandi Murali Kishore, and other officials attended the meeting.

# Grandeur marks Sarada College Golden Jubilee celebrations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Renowned choreographer and Nandi Award winner Sekhar Master emphasised that with determination and self-confidence, students can achieve success in any field. He was speaking at the grand Golden Jubilee celebrations of Sarada Junior College, held on Saturday evening.

The event featured a vibrant array of cultural performances by students, captivating the audience. As the chief guest and an alumnus of the college, Sekhar Master fondly reminisced about his student days at Sarada Junior College. He lauded the institution's distinguished reputation in Vijayawada and expressed gratitude for the strong educational foundation and guidance provided by the college and its faculty.

Expressing his joy at returning to his alma mater, he encouraged students to strive for excellence and never forget their school, teachers, and parents, regardless of their achievements.



# Police destroy 3,737 kg of ganja seized in 183 cases

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant step towards curbing drug trafficking, Andhra Pradesh police incinerated 3,737 kg of ganja and 4.22 kg of liquid ganja seized in 183 cases across four subdivisions of Krishna district. The contraband was destroyed on Saturday in Palnadu district at a private urban management facility, in the presence of DGP Harish Kumar Gupta.

DGP Gupta termed the event a major milestone in the state's fight against narcotics. He reiterated the government's firm commitment to eradicating the ganja trade and noted that the AP police have intensified their crackdown on

drug peddling through stringent enforcement measures.

To curb the menace, the state government has launched multiple initiatives, including the formation of a specialised unit, the Eagle Organisation, to track and dismantle smuggling networks. Besides targeting those involved in drug transportation, legal action is being taken to seize their assets, effectively crippling the financial base of the narcotics trade, he added.

Efforts are also underway to prevent drug addiction among the youth. Awareness campaigns and educational programmes are being conducted in colleges to highlight the dangers of drug abuse.

# Lanka alleges misuse of employment guarantee funds under YSRCP rule

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Lanka Dinakar, Senior BJP leader and the Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh 20-Point Program Implementation Committee has levelled serious allegations against the previous administration, accusing them of widespread misuse and under-utilisation of employment guarantee funds. Addressing the media on Saturday, he revealed that extensive reviews across 15 districts have uncovered significant financial discrepancies and mismanagement in centrally sponsored schemes.

Dinakar, the committee chairman, specifically targeted the financial management practices of the previous government (2019-2024), focusing on the "Central Procurement" system for material components like cement. "Our reviews have exposed alarming irregularities in the utilization of material component entitlements under the employment guarantee scheme," he stated, promising a thorough investigation across all districts.

The committee is conducting a comprehensive review of centrally sponsored schemes,



expected to be completed by April 30, 2025. Initial assessments in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts, conducted in late December 2024, revealed that approximately Rs

2,000 crores worth of material component entitlements remained unutilized during the previous five-year term. This, Dinakar argued, resulted in substantial financial losses and hindered crucial development projects.

Refuting media reports suggesting a lack of awareness about unspent funds, Dinakar stressed the need for accurate reporting. He clarified that in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram alone, Rs 1,742 crores of material component entitlements went unspent, highlighting severe inefficiencies in fund management.

# YSRCP slams TDP for undermining Disha app

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP spokesperson Putta Shiva Shankar Reddy has criticised the TDP-led government for rendering the Disha app ineffective. He accused the administration of neglecting the rising crimes against women and turning a blind eye to such incidents.

Shiva Shankar highlighted the significant measures taken by the previous YSRCP government under former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, including the launch of the Disha app, which has been downloaded by over 1.5 crore users and provides immediate assistance to women in distress. He questioned the need

for introducing the Suraksha app when the Disha app, along with dedicated police stations and vehicles, is already in place. He urged the government to utilise these existing resources effectively instead of duplicating efforts.

The YSRCP leader also pointed out the contradiction in the stance of Home Minister V. Anita, who had earlier opposed the launch of the Disha app but is now promoting Suraksha.

He further alleged that 18 TDP MLAs and two Janasena MLAs face charges related to crimes against women, raising concerns over how women's safety could be ensured under such leadership.

# MP Sivanath commends Kakinada NCC Group



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath has lauded Colonel Agarwal for his exceptional leadership of the Kakinada

NCC Group, the largest in the country. He acknowledged the NCC's significant contributions to flood relief operations, electoral duties, and national-level events, including the

Special National Integration Camp in Rajamahendravaram, which saw participation from over 300 cadets.

Discussions during the meeting centred on establishing an exclusive NCC Academy and upgrading infrastructure, including swimming pools for disaster preparedness and cadet training. The MP assured that issues related to land and funding for government employees would be prioritised and addressed promptly.

The meeting highlighted the NCC's crucial role in national service, disaster response, and youth leadership.

With continued support and infrastructure development, the Kakinada NCC Group is well-positioned to further train disciplined, capable, and service-oriented cadets contributing to the nation's progress.

**FORMAT C-1**  
**Declaration about criminal cases** (As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP (Civil) No. 536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India & Anr.)  
**Name and address of Candidate :** Alapati Rajendra Prasad, H. No. 17-3-305 (New), 4-5-29/85 (Old), 4th Lane, Vidya Nagar, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, Pin Code-522 007.  
**Name of Political Party :** Telugu Desam  
**Name of Election :** Biennial Elections to Legislative Council of Andhra Pradesh 2025.  
**Name of the Constituency :** Krishna-Guntur Graduates' Constituency  
**I, Alapati Rajendra Prasad (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:**  
**(A) Pending criminal cases**

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

**(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences:**

Sl. No.	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence(s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed
1	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
2	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

**Sd/- Alapati Rajendra Prasad**

# 'Raitu Badi - Agri Show' launched by Minister Savita

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Minister for BC Welfare, EWS Welfare, Handlooms and Textiles, S. Savita, emphasised the role of technology in agriculture while inaugurating the Raitu Badi - Agri Show in Raptadu. She stated that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is committed to leveraging technological advancements to improve farmers' livelihoods.

Highlighting the TDP's efforts in bringing Krishna waters to Rayalaseema, Minister Savita expressed confidence that better irrigation facilities would transform the region's agricultural landscape. The two-day event saw the participation of MLAs Paritala Sunitha, Kalwa Srinivasulu, Amilineni Surendra Babu, and TDP leader Paritala Sriraam.

Addressing the gathering, she underscored the importance of modern technology in tackling labour shortages in



agriculture. She mentioned the use of drones and the availability of drip irrigation equipment at a 90% subsidy for farmers. She also instructed agricultural and horticulture officials to create awareness among farmers about these technological advancements.

Reiterating the government's commitment to providing irrigation to every acre in

Royalaseema, Minister Savita highlighted the TDP's success in securing Krishna waters for the region. She also noted that construction on the long-pending Handri-Neeva Sujala Sravanti project had resumed, ensuring better irrigation and drinking water supply across Royalaseema.

The minister lauded TDP leader Paritala Sriraam for

organising the Agri Show, which aims to educate farmers about modern agricultural tools.

She encouraged the youth to consider agriculture as a viable career and look up to Sriraam as a role model.

The event was attended by several TDP leaders, public representatives, agricultural officials, and farmers from across the region. Before the programme, Minister Savita visited stalls showcasing advanced farming equipment, including drones and tractors.

Later, at a press conference, Minister Savita launched a sharp attack on former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, challenging him to compare the agricultural initiatives taken during the TDP and YSRCP regimes. Calling Jagan a "betrayer of farmers," she criticised his five-year rule for negatively impacting the agricultural sector and farmers' welfare.



Minister Durgesh meets actor Ram Pothineni on 'Rapo 22' sets

PNS ■ KOVVURU

Cinematography Minister Kandukuri Durgesh visited the set of Rapo 22 (#RAPO22) in Kumaradevam village near Kovvur, East Godavari district, on Saturday. Actor Ram Pothineni, director P. Mahesh Babu, and the film crew extended a warm welcome to the minister.

During the visit, Minister Durgesh inquired about the film's progress and expressed confidence that Rapo 22 would be a milestone in Ram Pothineni's career. He remarked that films shot in the scenic Godavari river basin often achieve great success and conveyed his best wishes to the team.

# Officials directed to curb industrial pollution

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Rajahmundry District Collector P. Prashanthi has directed officials to take stringent measures to prevent industrial effluents from polluting water and air in the district. Chairing a meeting with the Industries Promotion Committee on Saturday, she emphasised the need for strict monitoring of chemical and other industries.

The Collector instructed the Industries Safety Committee members to conduct regular inspections and ensure compliance with environmental norms. She stressed that effluents and gases released by factories must be periodically assessed, and necessary safety measures strictly enforced. Officials were asked to submit reports on the safety protocols implemented by chemical



industries.

She noted that nodal teams are already active in the district and reiterated that industries must operate strictly in line with government guidelines.

To promote industrial growth, Collector Prashanthi stated that permissions are being granted through a single-window system, with applications being processed promptly. She also directed the Electricity Department to expedite power supply to newly established industries.

Additionally, she urged the Industries and Skill Development Department to collaborate with the Handloom and Textile Department to provide training in organic dyeing and sewing techniques for the production of cartoon fabrics.

The Collector also advised officials to facilitate online marketing platforms to promote tribal products at national and international levels.

Reviewing the MSME door-to-door survey, she pointed out that only 42,949 of the 92,980 units in the district had been surveyed so far and instructed officials to complete the remaining surveys at the earliest.

Among those present at the meeting were District Industries Officer Vanidhasr, AD Pradip, and Electricity SE K. Thilak Kumar.

# APERC vindicates YSRCP's stand on SECI pact: Kakani

PNS ■ NELLORE

The YSRCP has asserted that its stand on the SECI agreement has been vindicated, stating that the TDP and its allied media have been exposed for spreading baseless allegations against Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and his governance.

Addressing the media on Saturday, former minister Kakani Goverdhan Reddy said the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC) has approved the SECI solar power purchase agreement made during the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government. He termed this a setback for the TDP and its media, which had continuously levelled false allegations.

He pointed out that DISCOMs had never entered into such an agreement before, and it was YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's initiative that has



brought an estimated benefit of Rs 1.10 lakh crore to the State. In contrast, he said, Chandrababu Naidu falsely claimed that the agreement with SECI would cause a loss of Rs 87,500 crore.

"There were several attempts to discredit YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to cover up Chandrababu Naidu's misdeeds, but APERC's statement has set the record straight," he said.

Goverdhan Reddy emphasised that the SECI agreement was made with farmers' inter-

ests in mind. By securing power at Rs 2.49 per unit, the State stands to benefit by Rs 1.10 lakh crore, contributing to wealth creation, he added.

APERC has approved the 7,000 MW power purchase agreement, confirming that it aligns with the Aggregate Revenue Requirement (ARR) guidelines. He also noted that DISCOMs have sought permission to procure 4,000 MW of solar power for 2025-26.

"This makes the issue clear—our stand is vindicated, while Chandrababu and his associates have lost face," he asserted.

He further alleged that Chandrababu Naidu had previously purchased power at a higher rate, burdening the State with over Rs 87,500 crore in losses. He accused the TDP of making false claims about transmission losses, bribes, and other alleged irregularities through its media.

# Collector encourages students to face exams with confidence

PNS ■ PARVATIPURAM

District Collector A Shyam Prasad urged students to adopt a determined yet stress-free approach to their upcoming 10th standard examinations during a visit to the municipal DV MM High School on Saturday. He emphasized the crucial role of these examinations in shaping their future academic and professional paths.

During an interactive session, Collector Shyam Prasad referenced Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Pariksha Pe Charcha" (PPC), highlighting the importance of a positive mindset for achieving success. He stressed that setting and achieving academic goals, overcoming self-doubt, and seeking clarity on subject-related queries are key to academic satisfaction. "True satisfaction arises from setting and achieving academic goals, overcoming self-doubt, and gaining clarity in subject-related queries," he told the students, encouraging their consistent dedication to their studies.

The Collector also engaged



with parents, discussing their children's academic progress. He reinforced the importance of combining effective study strategies with hard work, and encouraged students to hone their intellectual abilities. He further advised teachers to prioritize student well-being alongside academic achievement, advocating for participation in sports for holistic development. To incentivize high performance, Collector Shyam Prasad announced personal incentives for students achieving outstanding results.

Following his school visit, the Collector conducted a sur-

prise inspection of the ward knowledge centre on Church Street. He interacted with aspirants preparing for Group 2 and other competitive examinations, assessing the available facilities and study materials. He stressed the need for effective time management and persistent hard work to elevate educational standards.

"Develop extensive knowledge essential for achieving your career goals," he advised the aspirants. He also suggested displaying job advertisements on the centre's notice board to assist unemployed individuals in finding opportunities.

# Eluru Collector monitors training for poll staff

PNS ■ ELURU

Preparations for the MLC Graduates' Constituency election, scheduled for February 27, are progressing at a brisk pace. On Saturday, training sessions were conducted for election staff under the supervision of District Collector and Election Returning Officer K Vetri Selvi. Presiding Officers (POs), Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs), and other polling personnel attended the training, where senior officials briefed them on election procedures. The Collector also addressed their queries regarding the election process.

Polling for the MLC Graduates' election will take place from 8 am to 4 pm on February 27 across the erstwhile West Godavari and East Godavari districts.

The Collector emphasised the need for election staff to have a thorough understanding of polling procedures. She clarified that ballot papers would be used for voting and instructed officials on the proper way to fold and deposit them in the ballot boxes.



# Man killed as car hits auto

PNS ■ NELLORE

A man was killed when a speeding car collided with an auto rickshaw on the national highway at Koduru Satram in Manubolu mandal on Saturday.

According to the police, the auto-rickshaw was heading towards Manubolu when a car travelling to Chennai rammed into it, killing Kondupaka Seenaiah (49) on the spot.

## FAKE DOCUMENT CASES

# Sisodia directs officials to expedite investigations

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Revenue Department Principal Secretary R.P. Sisodia has directed Prakasam district officials to speed up investigations into cases involving fake land documents, forged stamps, and other irregularities.

Chairing a review meeting on Saturday with District Collector A. Thameem Ansariya, SP A.R. Damodhar, Joint Collector R. Gopal Krishna, and other officials, Sisodia assessed the progress of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing these cases. He sought details on the number of cases registered, the status of investigations, and the filing of charge sheets.

He instructed officials to thoroughly examine site registrations, agricultural land documents, and related records to



identify genuine landowners. Officials were also directed to gather evidence against those involved in creating fake documents. Sisodia emphasised the need for coordinated efforts among the Revenue, Police, Municipal, and Panchayat Raj departments. He further directed that cases not under SIT's jurisdiction should be dropped, while investigations into the

remaining cases should be expedited.

Collector Thameem Ansariya assured that a special review meeting with concerned officials would be held within 15 days.

Among those present at the meeting were Registration DIG Pushpalatha, District Registrar A. Balanjaneyulu, RDO Lakshmi Prasanna, and DSP R. Srinivasa Rao.

# I am portrayed as a villain for conducting caste survey: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy criticised politicians who spoke against the caste survey.

"I have been trying to put the caste survey back on track breaking my head. However, some people are trying to throw stones on me. The person who did not order a caste survey is enjoying in a farmhouse and trying to portray himself as a good person. The father, son and nephew, who did not care about BCs, have become good now. Our leaders are going and sitting beside BRS leaders when they conduct meetings on caste surveys. They are making me a villain even though I conducted the caste survey. Those who are opposing caste surveys are the villains. However, you are criticising me also. Who will suffer in the end," the CM said.

He asked leaders present at the meeting held on caste survey and 42 per cent BC reser-



ervations how the caste survey can go forward if you do not stand by me.

"The BC leaders of the Congress have the responsibility of taking the caste survey to the people. It is not proper to throw all responsibility on me. Congress activists should answer opposition leaders who are criticising the caste survey details. My responsibility will be over after providing legality to BC details. It is up to you as to how you will take these details to the people," he said.

The CM asked Congress BC leaders to organise caste-wise meetings and seminars in universities with intellectuals.

## SRIKAKULAM JOB FRAUD

# 350+ cheated with fake European job promises

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

A massive job scam, mirroring similar fraudulent schemes in Italy, has rocked Srikakulam district, leaving over 350 individuals financially devastated and desperately seeking justice. Fraudsters lured unemployed youth with promises of lucrative jobs in Europe, particularly Italy, without requiring high qualifications, instead exploiting their dreams of overseas employment.

The scammers targeted vulnerable job seekers in Parvathipuram Manyam district and Telukunchi village of Ichchapuram mandal, promising monthly salaries ranging from Rs. 1.20 lakh to Rs. 1.60 lakh. They offered a month-long training program in welding and fire safety, providing fake certificates



Defrauded youths who spent lakhs seeking high-paid jobs in Italy

claiming a year-long course completion. Victims were charged lakhs of rupees, with additional fees for higher positions, and assured that all visa arrangements would be handled.

Speaking to The Pioneer, a victim from Parvathipuram Manyam district, who wished to remain anonymous, said, "They told us that high qualifications weren't necessary—only a will-

ingness to work hard. They promised to take care of everything, from training to visas." To build credibility, the scammers conducted month-long "training programs" in welding and fire safety, issuing fake certificates that claimed a year's worth of training. Interviews were held in a lodge in Ichchapuram, further solidifying the illusion of legitimate employment. One scammer

expressed, "We need the police to take action. We need justice." Desperate for help, the victims are now appealing to Minister Kinjarapu Atchannaaidu and the Superintendent of Police for intervention. The scam highlights the growing trend of job frauds in the Uddanam region of Srikakulam district, where locals are particularly vulnerable to promises of overseas employment.

"These fraudsters are preying on the hopes and dreams of our people," a local community leader said. "They are exploiting their desperation."

The proliferation of unapproved training institutes, charging exorbitant fees for fake overseas job promises, has exacerbated the problem.

## FORMAT C-2

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

### Declaration about criminal antecedents of candidates set up by the party

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

Name of Political Party : **Telugu Desam Party**  
 Name of Election : **Biennial Elections to Legislative Council**  
 Name of State/ UT : **Andhra Pradesh**

Sl. No.	Name of constituency	Name of candidate	(A) Pending criminal cases		(B) Details about cases of conviction for criminal offences		
			Name of Court, case No. & status of the case(s)	Section of the Acts concerned & brief description of offence(s)	Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)	Description of offence (s) & punishment imposed	Maximum Punishment Imposed.
1	Krishna-Guntur Graduates' Constituency	Alapati Rajendra Prasad	1. 9/2020 Tenali Rural PS 2. 924/2021 Tadepalli PS	U/s 143, 188, 341 r/w 149 IPC  Unlawful assembly, disobedience to a public servant's order, wrongful restraint.  U/s 143, 341, 188, 269, 270 r/w 149 IPC  Unlawful assembly, wrongful restraint / obstruction, disobedience to a public servant's order, spread a disease that is dangerous to life.	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

ACROSS THE STATES

# India leading in AI adoption, shaping how it is governed: Nirmala

PNS ■ KOTTAYAM (KERALA)

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said India was not just leading in the adoption of artificial intelligence, but also shaping how AI is governed.

Speaking at the 6th convocation of the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Kottayam, Sitharaman said that India was not just ready for AI, but the demand for AI-driven solutions was also high in the country.

She said this was evident from the fact that the country recorded 3 billion AI-related app downloads in 2024, while the US and China had only 1.5 billion and 1.3 billion downloads, respectively.

The Finance Minister also said that India being made the co-chair at the recent AI Action Summit in Paris was a recognition of the country's global position in the sector.

She noted that at the summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had emphasised that AI was not just a matter of nation-



**She said this was evident from the fact that the country recorded 3 billion AI-related app downloads in 2024, while the US and China had only 1.5 billion and 1.3 billion downloads, respectively**

al significance but a global responsibility.

"What he (Modi) said gives us a very big message—use AI, but use it responsibly. Do not misuse it, do not use it unethically.

"So, it is very important for us to have AI that is ethical, inclusive, and trustworthy," she said. Sitharaman also outlined the steps taken by the central government in the field of AI, starting with the India AI

mission, which was announced with a budget outlay of Rs 10,300 crore for building computing infrastructure, developing indigenous AI capabilities, attracting AI talent from around the world, and financing AI startups.

"India is not just experimenting with AI. We are not just talking about AI or researching it. We are actually implementing it at scale and across various sectors," Sitharaman said, adding that this has been recognised by Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella.

During her speech, Sitharaman also referred to India's achievements in the field of innovation and patenting. She said that India's ranking in the Global Innovation Index had improved to 39 out of 133 countries in 2024, up from 81 in 2015.

Sitharaman also highlighted that India's patents-to-GDP ratio—which measures the economic impact of patent activity—had risen to 381 in 2023 from 144 in 2013, indicating significant progress in innovation and patenting.

# People gave clear verdict on genuine Sena, says Shah

PNS ■ PUNE

The people of Maharashtra have given a clear verdict on which is the genuine Shiv Sena and NCP by ensuring a massive victory for the Mahayuti in the assembly polls, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Saturday. The Shiv Sena and Nationalist Congress Party split in June 2022 and July 2023, respectively, with a faction of each of the two parties joining the BJP-led Mahayuti and the Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi.

The Mahayuti won 230 of the 288 Maharashtra assembly seats in the polls held in November, while the Sena and NCP factions led by Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar, respectively, fared poorly.

Speaking at an event where sanction letters were allotted to 20 lakh beneficiaries and first instalment was disbursed to 10 lakh beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Shah said he was deeply grateful to the people of Maharashtra for the stellar support in the assembly polls.



## Latur girl fights off tears, takes SSC exam after father's death

Latur, Feb 22 (PTI) Even as her father's funeral pyre burned, Disha Nagnath Ubale wrote her Marathi paper in the SSC exam, refusing to be overwhelmed by her loss. The Class 10 student's father, who had been battling an illness, passed away on Thursday evening. His funeral was scheduled at their Bhada village for Friday. Disha, a student of Zilla Parishad Girls' School in Bhada, said she was unsure if she would appear for her Secondary School Certificate (SSC) paper on Friday. That's when her teacher Shivaling Nagapure stepped in. Nagapure said he reached out to Sudhakar Telang, chairman of the Latur Divisional Board, who spoke with Disha and encouraged her not to give up.



## Four killed in Nashik highway accidents

Nashik, Feb 22 (PTI) At least four persons were killed and seven others were seriously injured in separate accidents on the Mumbai-Agra national highway in Nashik district, police said on Saturday. A container truck coming from the wrong side overturned and crushed an auto-rickshaw near Dargaon village in Malegaon taluka at 11 AM on Saturday, killing three persons and injuring two others. The deceased included the rickshaw driver and two female passengers. The injured persons were rushed to a hospital, a police official said. Separately, a woman was killed and five others were seriously injured after a truck crashed into vehicles in the Rahud ghat section of the national highway near Chandwad on Friday night, police said.



## CBI books 3 railway officials on bribery charges

The CBI has registered an FIR against three railway officials for allegedly manipulating a recruitment examination to ensure a job for a person in the railways in return for Rs 15 lakh, officials said on Saturday. The federal agency acted on a reference from the vigilance department of the Central Railway, they said. The FIR has named Goods Train Manager Rajendra Kumar Meena, Assistant TRD Helper Sapna Meena, Tech-II Chetram Meena -- all posted at the Kota division in the West Central Railway and a private person, Lakshmi Meena, who allegedly acted as an imposter and appeared in the examination.

# First session of Delhi Assembly to begin tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The first session of the eighth Legislative Assembly of Delhi will begin on Monday with newly elected members taking oath at 11 am, said a bulletin issued by the House secretariat.

The three-day session will see the election of the House speaker and deputy speaker as well as the tabling of the 14 pending CAG reports on the performance of the previous AAP government.

BJP leaders said the party has nominated senior MLAs Vijender Gupta and Mohan Singh Bisht for the election of the speaker and deputy speaker, respectively.



Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will move the motion for Gupta to be chosen as speaker and minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa will second it on February 24, said Assembly's list of business.

Both Gupta and Bisht would get elected to the posts as the

# Cong cannot wait for people to get tired of BJP: Sachin Pilot

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Saturday said the party cannot wait for the people to get tired of the BJP but must reach out to the people, and it has been working on it.

Speaking at a media event here, he denied allegations that the Grand Old Party does not accommodate its allies, while also appearing to blame the Aam Aadmi Party for the results in the Haryana elections. "We are in opposition for the last 11 years. I think we need to, and we must work to increase our vote share. For that the party needs to do an outreach and cannot wait for the people to get tired (of the BJP) and come to us. We, leaders and party workers, need to go to



them. We are working on it," Pilot said at the ABP Network's 'Ideas of India Summit 2025' here. The party has a roadmap, and aims to strengthen the organisation in 2025, the Congress general secretary added. Calling the Congress' defeat in the Haryana assembly elections unexpected, Pilot pointed out that the AAP contested all 90 seats on its own, and the difference in the vote shares of the Congress and the BJP was just 0.2 or 0.3 per cent.



## Won't implement NEP even if Rs 10,000 cr offered to TN

PNS ■ A CUDDALORE (TAMILNADU)

Continuing his tirade against the Centre over the National Education Policy, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Saturday said he would not agree to implement it even if the Centre offered to provide Rs 10,000 crore in funds to the state.

The opposition to the NEP was not merely due to the attempt to impose Hindi but also because of various other factors that would have serious consequences for the future of students and the social justice system, he claimed.

Apart from encouraging a screening test for admissions to even arts and science colleges, similar to the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical courses, the NEP would allow students to discontinue their studies.

# India, Bhutan enjoy exemplary ties of friendship: MEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bhutan enjoy "exemplary ties" of friendship and cooperation, based on trust, goodwill and mutual understanding at all levels, and the visit of Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay was in keeping with the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between the two countries, the MEA said on Saturday.

Tobgay paid an official visit to India from February 20 to February 21 to participate in the inaugural leadership conclave of the School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL), which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

During the visit, Tobgay had a meeting with Modi, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

Minister of Railways, Information and Broadcasting, and Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnav, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju, Minister of State for External



**"The visit of the Prime Minister of Bhutan is in keeping with the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between India and Bhutan, a hallmark of the special partnership," it added**

Affairs Pabitra Margherita and other senior officials of the government of India called on the prime minister of Bhutan during his visit, it said.

"India and Bhutan enjoy exemplary ties of friendship and cooperation, based on trust, goodwill and mutual

understanding at all levels," the MEA said.

"The visit of the Prime Minister of Bhutan is in keeping with the tradition of regular high-level exchanges between India and Bhutan, a hallmark of the special partnership," it added.

In his keynote address at the SOUL conclave here on Friday, the Bhutanese prime minister described Modi as his "elder brother" and "mentor", and sought his guidance to help him contribute in transforming public service in the neighbouring country.

## MLAS SUSPENSION

### Cong legislators to continue 'dharma'

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Congress legislators continued their sit-in protest inside the Assembly while the party held protests at all district headquarters on Saturday against the suspension of six party MLAs. Leader of

Opposition Tikaram Jyoti said that the MLAs spent Friday night in the assembly and the dharma will continue. He said that three ministers held talks with the senior MLAs last night but it remained inconclusive and the 'dharma'.

# 60 cr devotees have taken holy dip at Sangam

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday said an unprecedented 60 crore devotees at the Maha Kumbh Mela have taken a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam.

The Kumbh Mela which started on January 13 will continue till February 26 on the occasion of Maha Shivratri.

Over half of India's 110 crore Sanatan followers have bathed in the holy confluence, and this number is expected to surpass 65 crore by the final 'amrit snan' on February 26, an official statement said.

This Maha Kumbh has seen the largest participation in any religious, cultural, or social event, it said.



According to the World Population Review, Pew Research, India's population is approximately 143 crore (1.43 billion), with 110 crore (1.10 billion) followers of Sanatan Dharma, the statement said.

This means that over 55 per cent of the Indian population has taken part in the Maha Kumbh, it said.

On a global scale, according

to Pew Research 2024, the number of Sanatan followers stands at 1.2 billion (120 crore), meaning that over 50 per cent of the Sanatanis worldwide have immersed themselves in the Sangam, it said.

Diplomats from 73 countries, including Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, along with many international guests have taken

**On a global scale, according to Pew Research 2024, the number of Sanatan followers stands at 1.2 billion (120 crore), meaning that over 50 per cent of the Sanatanis worldwide have immersed themselves in the Sangam, it said**

a dip at the Sangam, it said.

According to the UP government statement, more than 50 lakh people from Nepal, the maternal home of Maa Janaki (Goddess Sita), have bathed in the Triveni Sangam.

Ahead of the Maha Kumbh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had predicted that this grand event would break records in the number of devotees, fore-

casting an initial count of 45 crore people.

By February 18, the number had exceeded 55 crore and reached 60 crore on Saturday as the grand event nears conclusion, the statement said.

The upcoming Maha Shivratri Snan is expected to further push this number beyond 650 million (65 crore), it said.

# Illegal immigrants now meddling in India's electoral process: Dhankhar

PNS ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday claimed that illegal immigrants are interfering in the country's electoral process, and there should be awareness about this.

In apparent reference to the recent deportation of illegal immigrants by the United States government, he said every Indian should ask when this process would begin in our country. Dhankhar was speaking at the 65th convocation ceremony of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University here.

"Crores of people who have no right to live in India are liv-



ing here...They are making their livelihood here.

They are making demands on our resources. On our education, health sector, housing sector. Now things have gone further. They are intervening in our electoral process," said the vice president. "It is the duty

of all of us that we spread a mentality ('manasikta') in the country, create such an atmosphere...that every Indian becomes alert to this," he said.

Without referring to the United States, he said some countries recently deported Indian nationals who had been "taken there through deception." "A question should occur to every Indian -- when would we start doing this?" Dhankhar said. The youth should act as a powerful pressure group and ask the public representatives and government if they are doing their job, the vice president said. "Nationalism is our religion and topmost priority," the vice president said.

Experience Lucknow's legendary flavours with live cooking, rich kebabs, aromatic biryanis and decadent desserts, says SAKSHI PRIYA



# The Royal Taste of Awadh

Lucknow is a city where history and flavour walk hand in hand. Known for its tehzeeb, rich culinary traditions, and slow-cooked delicacies, every bite tells a story of Nawabs and royal kitchens. The aroma of saffron and kebabs fills its streets, the sound of clinking glasses and quiet conversations adding to its charm.

Now, this experience finds a new home in Noida at *Chica Loca* by Sunny Leone. A space where every detail reflects a love for food and culture. The atmosphere feels personal, as though the restaurant itself is telling you a secret. Here, *Zaika-e-Lucknow* is an experience that unfolds before your eyes.

### A Feast for the Senses

There's something mesmerising about watching food being prepared right in front of you. The sizzle, the aroma, the way each ingredient is carefully added. At *Chica Loca* by *Zaika-e-Lucknow* is an experience.

Every dish carries the heart of Lucknow's legendary cuisine, steeped in history and rich in flavour. The chefs perform, turning centuries-old recipes into moments worth savouring.



### The Chaat Experience

At the chaat counter, the experience begins with a flourish. A delicate kataifi basket is placed before you, crisp and golden.

A freshly fried aloo tikki is placed inside, followed by a drizzle of thick tamarind and jaggery sauce, its deep sweetness balanced by the tang of yoghurt. A spoonful of *Arala Galka* chutney, deep green, fragrant, bursting with spice, is added, the final flourish to a masterpiece of textures and tastes.

This chaat is layers of flavour, a balance of crisp, soft, sweet, and spicy. The first bite is a revelation, crunchy, creamy, tangy and warming, all at once. It's street food elevated to an art form.

### Gulati Kebab & Katal Delight

On the live grill, the *Gulati Kebab* sizzles gently, its rich aroma of ghee, saffron, and warming spices filling the air. A delicate blend of khoya, lentils and paneer, infused with cashew paste and *Lazzat-e-Taam* masala, makes it irresistibly soft. Served with saffron-infused Sheermal and bold panch-phoron chutney, it melts on the tongue, releasing layers of spice and smoke.

Never thought of *Katal* as something this indulgent but here it was, stealing the spotlight. Slow-cooked in Lucknowi spices, the raw jackfruit transformed into a rich meaty delight. Paired with warm *Rumali Roti*, it absorbed the deep smokiness of cloves, cardamom and ghee, each bite a revelation.

### The Non-Veg Secrets

For those who crave the richness of Lucknow's meat dishes, the live kitchen offers a spectacle of its own. The legendary *Chowk Ke Galawati Kebab*, soft, smoky, spiced to perfection, is prepared right before your eyes, each portion hand-minced with precision. Beside it, a pot of *Abu Bakar Ki Biryani* is gently stirred, the fragrance of saffron and rose water rising with the steam. The *Rann Mussallam*, slow-cooked to perfection with rich Lucknowi spices, makes a grand entrance, the meat tender, falling off the bone.

### Pan-Asian Flair

While the heart of *Zaika-e-Lucknow* lies in its heritage, there's an unexpected twist, a live Pan-Asian station. The contrast is striking. Here, the preparation is fast, dynamic. Flames leap as a chef tosses fresh vegetables in a hot wok, the aroma of basil and soy hitting the air.

A dish of *Sticky Rice* with Vegetables in *Basil Sauce* comes together in mere minutes. The chef glances up, asking, "More spice?" A nod, and in goes a handful of

fresh chilli, the deep red cutting through the glossy sauce. Spice is adjusted on request. The final dish is bold and full of character, every grain of rice coated in a rich, aromatic sauce. It's a theatrical contrast to the slow, deliberate artistry of Lucknow's kebabs and chaats, yet equally hypnotic to watch.

### A Sweet Mystery

Khushnuma Begum Ki Kulfi, what a name for a dessert. The story goes that a young chef once found an old spoon engraved with "Khushnuma" in the bustling barta bazaar, and it changed his fate forever. This dessert carries that same magic. A saffron and almond kulfi, layered with falooda and dry fruits, served with a paan-infused rabri blended with betel leaf and gulkand. Each bite is a journey through Lucknow's rich culinary history, a perfect ending to an unforgettable meal.

Dining at *Chica Loca* is about feeling connected, to the past, to the craft, to the very moment when something beautiful is created. Watching the hands that shape the food, hearing the stories behind the dishes, inhaling the scents that fill the air, it all makes each bite more meaningful. At *Zaika-e-Lucknow*, tradition is alive, food is theatre and every meal is a story waiting to be told.

### FACT SHEET

**Restaurant:** Chica Loca by sunny leone  
**Venue:** 4th Floor, Plot Number-C3, One29, E1, Noida-Greater Noida Expy, above Gulshan, Sector 129, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201301  
**Price:** 2500 + for two (without alcohol)

### COCKTAILS & MORE

The drinks here deserve a moment of their own. *Ishq*, what a name. A smooth rum-based drink with almond milk, cream, cinnamon, honey and egg white. Velvety and rich, it felt like a warm embrace. Then came *Suroor-e-Raan*, a vodka cocktail with betel leaf, cloves, honey and lime, served alongside a fragrant meetha paan. An unexpected yet perfect pairing. Finally, *Mehfi*, a mocktail inspired by qawwali, blended rose water, pomegranate, lime and honey. Refreshing, floral, and full of life, just like the city itself.

## Taste of Purani Dilli in Every Bite

*Zaika-e-Dilli* returns with a love letter to flavours with iconic street flavours, says GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Ever dreamt of old times when you wanted to have lip smacking street food you headed to the walled city of Delhi and savoured everything that was sinful yet tasted like heaven - chole bhature, parathas of paratha wali gali, and maggi, papri chaat, Daulat ki chaat and what have you. Times have changed Delhi is far more crowded than it used to be but Delhi Street food is same. And the good news is you can have the same taste in same ambiance in *Crowne Plaza Mayur Vihar* which is celebrating *Zaika-e-Dilli* till March 2. And here you get to taste not only the old Delhi street food from Lajpat Nagar but also get a feel of Majnu ka Tila.

*Crowne Plaza New Delhi Mayur Vihar's* signature dining destination, Infinity, has curated street food of Delhi for lovers on a flavourful journey through 'Zaika-e-Dilli' - a food festival that brings the essence of the capital's legendary street food to life. This year's theme, *Khat - A Culinary Love Letter to Dilwalo Ki Dilli*, is an ode to the city's deep-rooted love affair with its vibrant food culture, where every dish is a cherished memory, and every flavour a story waiting to be relished.

This year's edition of *Zaika-e-Dilli* takes an immersive approach to authenticity. *Executive Chef Roushan Sharma* and his team, in collaboration with *Namaste Culture*, embarked on a culinary treasure hunt across Delhi's bustling streets-from Jama Masjid's lanes to Daryaganj's historic eateries and Connaught Place's timeless food hubs. This meticulous exploration led them to the soul of Delhi's food scene-Lotan Ke Chole Kulche, *Sanjay Kumar's* Daulat Ki Chaat, *Aslam's Butter Chicken*, *Kuremal's Kulfi*, *Jain Fruit Sandwich*, and many more. To recreate these flavours with precision,



the team observed, tasted, and learned firsthand from the masters behind these legendary dishes.

"Food in Delhi is more than sustenance-it is an emotion, a tradition, and an inseparable part of the city's identity," shares *Executive Chef Roushan Sharma*. To add an authentic touch, original vendors will prepare signature delights, ensuring that guests experience these dishes exactly as they were meant to be savoured.

*Dahleej-e-Dilli* festival's atmosphere will transport you to the bustling streets of Chandni Chowk, writes ABHI SINGHAL



*Tumse milna purani Dilli mein.....* this always reminds me of Old Delhi and the flavourful food that one can eat while being there. To experience the same, all at a single restaurant, *Crowne Plaza Today New Delhi Okhla* hosted the 15th edition of its signature food festival - *Dilli 6 - Dahleej-e-Dilli* till 5th March, bringing the spirit of Purani Dilli to life. This food festival, which takes place every year, offers a genuine taste of Old Delhi's rich flavours and ageless customs while re-creating the ambience of its lively streets with desi decors.

A variety of classic delicacies that embody the essence of Dilli were available for the guests. Every mouthful reveals a tale, from the rich and creamy *Paneer Changezi Paratha* from the Parathe Vaali Gali to the tart joy of *Matar Kulche*, one could feel the flavour. From the making of *Chana Jor Garam* and ambience of love, shayari songs gave the feeling of spending time at Purani Dilli.

While those who prefer sweets could not pass up the *Shafiz Ki Phirni* and the smooth *Kulfi*, meat lovers could savour the slow-cooked excellence of *Mutton Nihari* and the hearty warmth of *Haleem*. Every element of the setup was homage to Dilli 6, from installations with a nod to heritage and the smells of sizzling kebabs.



**ICONIC FOODS**  
Guests at *Zaika-e-Dilli* will indulge in over 100 of Delhi's most iconic dishes, served through a rotating menu featuring the capital's best street food. The culinary lineup includes Chandni Chowk's famous parathas, Connaught Place's comforting Rajma Chawal, Lajpat Nagar's crispy Ram Ladoo, and Jama Masjid's irresistible Chicken Changezi. Majnu Ka Tila's Momos, Rajouri Garden's Chole Bhature, and Karol Bagh's succulent kebabs will also take the center stage, alongside live hawkers crafting refreshing Bunta.

“THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING IN THE WORLD IS, OF COURSE, THE WORLD ITSELF”  
— WALLACE STEVENS



# VHAH: What a festival!

The Vedaaranya Heritage and Healing Festival (VHAH FEST 2025) breathes new life into the historic town of Ramgarh Shekhawati. Every winter, this once-forgotten town transforms into a vibrant cultural hub, drawing visitors from around the world to revel in its artistic splendor, architectural grandeur and deep-rooted traditions, says **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

**F**or five days, the quiet, dusty town of Ramgarh Shekhawati transformed into a vibrant spectacle of music, dance, colors, and captivating performances that left audiences enthralled. Welcome to VHAH FEST 2025—a celebration that goes beyond mere entertainment. VHAH is a dedicated effort to rekindle tourism in Ramgarh Shekhawati, serving a greater purpose: reviving the town's rich heritage. This eagerly awaited event every year promises an immersive journey into the rich tapestry of heritage, music, dance, wellness, and artistic splendor, all set against the breathtaking backdrop of Rajasthan's architectural grandeur.

But how do these two elements – A cultural festival and Heritage conservation – come together? A silent yet a profound revolution is taking shape in a small town in Rajasthan' Sikar district – Ramgarh Shekhawati. Known for its exquisitely carved havelis and frescos, it is now one of the finest examples of how to protect and conserve the heritage. And more than money you need passion and dedication to do so; money follows. What began as an effort to restore an ancestral haveli by Shruti Poddar, now the convener of INTACH Shekhawati chapter, has grown into a full-blown revival of the town and an effort to put it on the world map of tourism. Indeed, it has been a long and arduous journey but is worth the pain and the



effort. Shruti tells us that when she returned from the UK, searching for her roots, she was amazed to see the heritage her ancestors left and was in tears that her own folk had abandoned such a rich heritage to settle in big towns.

She began brick by brick reviving the haveli that belonged to her. She lived with bats and bare minimum basics. Her dedication inspired people around and they gradually started taking interest in the revival of more havelis. Most of these havelis are over two hundred years and done in limestone, bricks and stones, carved with exquisite designs and painted with frescos on their facades with wet colours on limestone plaster.

But then for everything you need money, people with deep pockets need to be interested in visiting it so that money pours into once the richest place on the planet in terms of per capita income. Ruiyas, Khetans, Khemkas Poddars—the big Marwari business families have their genesis in Ramgarh and it shows. It is writ large in the Havelis they lived; Frescos done in gold, Belgium glasses on the wall and silk smooth flooring done in limestone and seashells—all tell you what the town is all about.

For the VHAH Festival 2025, the guests came from across the world. They came to be part of this immersive experience, a rare treat. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister for Culture and Tourism spent a day to understand the town and what it would take to revive it. He promised government support to provide infrastructure, like airport link and train halt of fast trains at Ramgarh station

The festival has grown bigger in size, both in terms of numbers and scope and has been adding newer elements to it. This year's theme was love – *Shringar rasa*. One major highlight of VHAH FEST 2025 was a heartfelt tribute to the legendary filmmaker Guru Dutt on his 100th birth anniversary. This special commemoration also brought together film enthusiasts and scholars for screenings, discussions, and live performances celebrating his unparalleled contributions to Indian cinema. Among the notable events was an exploration of Guru Dutt's cinematic journey, led by Nasreen Munnai Kabir and Shruti Poddar. Additionally, Amrisha Mishra directed grand musical concert dedicated to Guru Dutt's timeless melodies. The Moonlight Mehfil on February 14 featured a live performance of classic Guru Dutt film songs, presented by Anuraag Poddar over an intimate dinner setting.

Adding to the festival's allure was the launch of "The Grand Archway" at MOHAR Haveli, an exclusive Museum Art Gallery. This inaugural exhibition presented rare oleographs by Raja Ravi Varma and M V Dhurandhar, offering a rare glimpse into the artistic heritage of India. The exhibition was inaugurated by Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, alongside Prince Rama Varma, a descendant of Raja Ravi Varma, further enriching the festival's cultural offerings.

Evenings at VHAH FEST 2025 were dedicated to the evocative essence of *Shringar Rasa*, celebrating beauty, love, and romance through spellbinding music and dance performances. The classical performances by Geeta Chandran celebrated the theme of Sringara and took it to the next level.

A tap dance performance by Irish dancer Jason Donnelly was mesmerising and so was the performance by the Rajasthani Kalbelia dancers. Odissi maestro Vidushi Sujata Mohapatra's interpretation of Jayadeva's "Gita Govinda" on February 15 left the audience spell bound.

The divine love of Radha-Krishna was brought to life through a soulful jugalbandi by Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami and Padmashri Geeta Chandran, while Prince Rama Varma's musical concert, set against the backdrop of Raja Ravi Varma's paintings added another layer of artistic enchantment.

Beyond performances and exhibitions, VHAH FEST 2025 engaged the participants on hands-on learning through an array of workshops and healing experiences. As the sun set over the Shekhawati sand dunes and the echoes of music and laughter fill the air, Ramgarh is indeed showing the country how our cultural heritage can be preserved and restored. VHAH FEST is an effort to make Ramgarh Shekhawati shine on the world tourist map. India has a treasure trove we must preserve before it is lost forever.

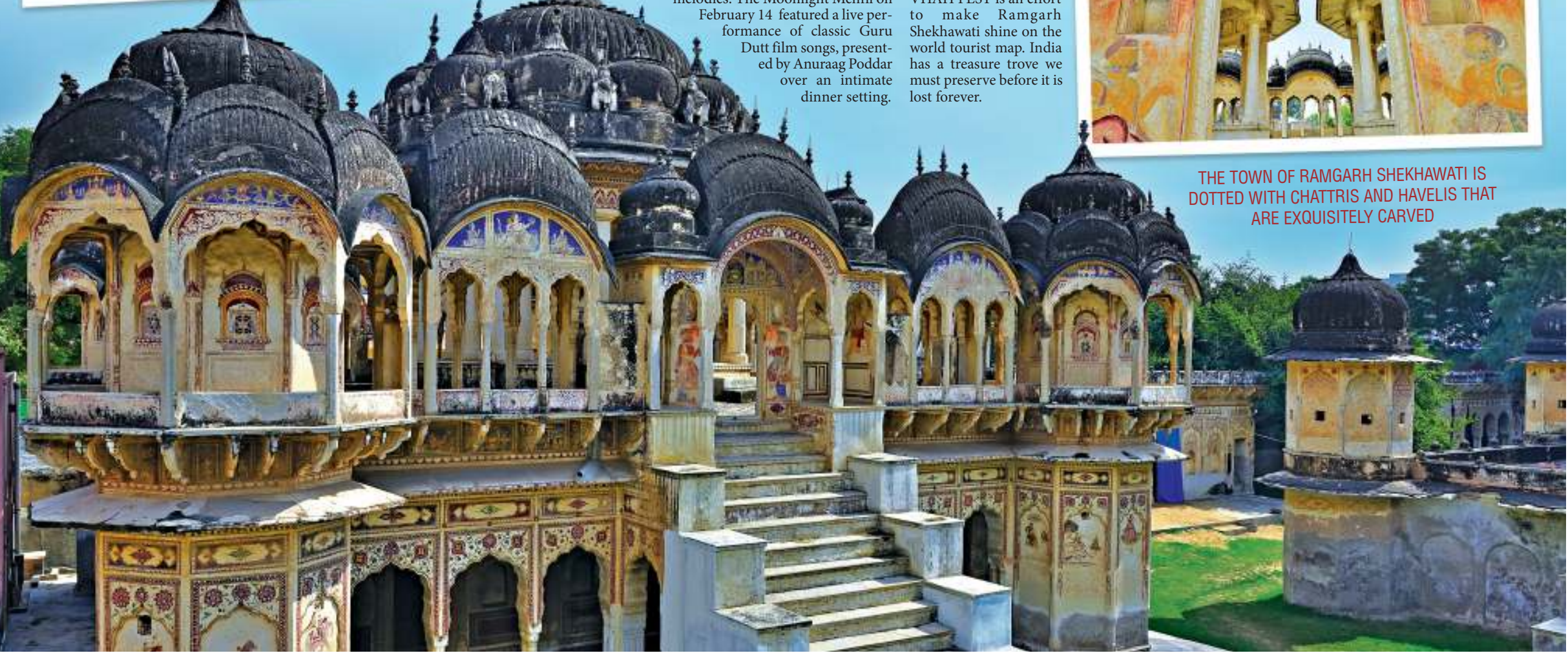


## UNVEILING SHEKHAWATI

For those eager to explore the architectural wonders of Shekhawati, the festival offered a Heritage Walk, allowing visitors to discover the intricate frescoes, havelis, temples, and chhatris that define the region's historical landscape. festival provides an opportunity to witness and partake in the preservation of age-old crafts.



THE TOWN OF RAMGARH SHEKHAWATI IS DOTTED WITH CHATTRIS AND HAVELIS THAT ARE EXQUISITELY CARVED



IN BRIEF



Kerala gets EoIs for Rs 1.53 lakh crore investments

Kerala received Expressions of Interest (EoIs) for investments worth Rs 1.53 lakh crore at the two-day investor summit that ended on Saturday. Industries Minister P Rajeev said EoIs have been received from more than 370 companies during the summit. "It is a new beginning of a united Kerala to transform Kerala into an investment friendly state," Rajeev said, adding that the summit saw more than 5,000 delegates. Announcing about EoIs worth Rs 1,52,905.67 crore at the valedictory session, the minister asserted that the state is looking only for realistic investment proposals. For the EoIs, there will be a dashboard-based fast-track mechanism and follow-up of the proposals. A dedicated toll-free investment number and email address will be notified, the minister said. The two-day Invest Kerala Global Summit (IKGS) also saw the participation of Union ministers, Opposition leaders of the state, foreign ministers and industrialists, among others.



Sebi slaps Rs 10 lakh penalty on Axis Securities

Capital markets regulator Sebi has imposed a penalty of Rs 10 lakh on Axis Securities for flouting stock brokers rules as well as other regulatory norms. The penalty has to be paid by the brokerage firm within 45 days, the regulator said in an order on Friday. In an 82-page order, Sebi found that Axis Securities failed to follow regulatory procedures in several areas, including reporting discrepancies and improper handling of client funds. The market regulator found that Axis Securities had inconsistencies in its enhanced supervision reporting to stock exchanges and in stock statements compared to actual holdings in depository accounts. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) also observed that Axis Securities also did not settle clients' funds and securities as per preference obtained from the clients and also failed to provide retention statements with account details. Additionally, the brokerage firm passed on penalties imposed by stock exchanges on it for short collection of upfront/non upfront margin to its clients, Sebi said.



Schneider Electric plans to open 3 more plants

Energy management and automation major Schneider Electric on Saturday announced plans to open three more manufacturing plants in India. Speaking at the inaugural session of Elecrama 2025, Schneider Electric CEO Olivier Blum said that the company plans to make regular investments in India. The company currently has 31 manufacturing plants in the country. The three new plants will come up at Kolkata, Hyderabad and Ahmednagar, he said at the event organised by industry body IEEMA in Greater Noida. "India's focus on digitalization, sustainability, energy transition, and infrastructure modernization presents unparalleled opportunities for growth," Blum said. "We are leveraging AI and digitalization to accelerate growth in the Indian energy sector. We believe that advanced technologies like digital grids, IoT-enabled distributed energy resources, microgrids, smart buildings, and smart cities will reduce emissions by 75% over the next 25 years," he added.

'Working out scheme to prevent distress sale of farmers' produce'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday said the government is working out measures to ensure that farmers do not have to sell their produce, especially fruits and vegetables, at throwaway prices. Speaking after inaugurating the 'Pusa Krishi Vigyan Mela' 2025 -- being held in the national capital from February 22-24 -- he emphasised the need to take new seeds varieties and farm technologies from labs to agriculture filed at the earliest.



Chouhan said the government is holding discussions with farmers directly as well as through their organisations to understand the problems and then making schemes to address the issues. "Jahan-Jahan takleefin dekh rahe hain, hum yojana bana rahe hain (wherever we are seeing problems, we are making schemes to address those)", the minister said, listing out steps taken by the government in the last few years to protect the interest of farmers. Chouhan said the government has removed exports restrictions on rice and onions

while raising import duties on edible oils. He said the Centre has taken steps to help tomato farmers in view of price crash and will take measures for red chilli farmers of Andhra Pradesh as well. "I want to assure our farming community, we will take all important decisions that are required for the welfare of farmers. Do not worry," he said, while asserting that the government is committed to this.

"There are some issues which are under consideration. Prices are low at farm gate level and consumers are paying high rates. Who takes the profit in middle? Profit margins should reduce. The difference between the farm gate price and consumer price for fruits and vegetables should come down," he said. The minister added, "We are working out (a way) to ensure that farmers do not have to sell their produce at throwaway prices."

Lauding efforts of scientists at Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for its efforts in making India self-sufficient in foodgrains production, Chouhan said there is a need to take new seed varieties and technology to the field quickly so that farmers can benefit.

"Availability of good varieties of seeds is important. Farmers require it. ICAR is developing them... We need to ensure these seeds reach farmers quickly," he said.

The minister also asked the ICAR to handle 'Modern Agriculture Chaupal' programme where scientists will tell farmers about recent technological breakthrough, besides solving their problems. The programme will be telecast across India.

Chouhan said he does not sit in Krishi Bhawan in Delhi and rather go to fields to understand farmers' problems. He asked officers in his ministry and ICAR scientists to do the same. The minister reiterated that the government is focusing on increasing farm production through yield improvements, reducing cost of production and ensuring that farmers get the right price for their produce.

Chouhan said the government is purchasing wheat and paddy at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and assured farmers that it will purchase the entire quantity of masoor, urad and tur dals as part of its efforts to encourage farmers to grow more pulses.

Power minister urges industry to work on innovative solutions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Power Minister Manohar Lal on Saturday urged industry stakeholders to work on manufacturing innovative solutions to strengthen domestic and international delegates and investors. Bharat.

India's ambitious target of 500 GW of renewable energy target by 2030 provides various opportunities, the minister said, while addressing the Elecrama 2025 event organised by industry body IEEMA in Greater Noida.

The power sector is playing an important role in the country's journey towards becoming Viksit Bharat, the minister said, adding that industry stakeholders must work to make the sector a growth engine for India. "The future of power in India is good... in this journey we need to increase production in an innovative way... advance power electronics, efficient transformer, power converters, smart grid solutions are needed to be developed to take benefit of renewable energy (RE)," he told participants, which included domestic and international delegates and investors.

Lal further noted that the sector makes a significant contribution to the country's economy, and said the government is working to enhance its share. The industry can work on developing higher-efficiency transmission, distribution equipment GIS sub station, which will modernise the grid, he said.

EV charging infrastructure is need of the hour to reduce emissions, Lal said. e-mobility is a very big opportunity, the minister said, adding that there is a need to develop battery-swapping stations, fast chargers, vehicle-to-grid systems.

'IEEMA aims to more than double electronics exports in 5 yrs'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electrical and electronics manufacturers look to more than double the sector's exports to USD 25 billion in the next five years, an industry official said on Saturday.

"We are committed to enhancing market access across the globe for our members. Our export today is about 12 billion US dollars and we are committed to make it 25 billion US dollars in the next 5 years," Indian Electrical & Electronics Manufacturers' Association (IEEMA) President Sunil Singhvi said on Saturday.

Addressing a session at Elecrama 2025 in Greater Noida, Singhvi said IEEMA's vision is to make India a global hub for electronics and electrical manufacturing.

With a shift in the global supply chain, the world is looking towards India as a trusted partner in the energy solution, he said.

However to increase exports, it is important that "we actively participate in international standard bodies...advocating policy, that is standard exports, financing, new business model and competitiveness", he said. IEEMA is working with all stakeholders to strengthen quality standards and testing infrastructure in the country because lot of QCOs (quality control orders) are coming and there is a need for enhancement of testing infrastructure.



Singhvi also urged the industry members to invest in innovation, skilling, adoption of new-age technologies as it will make made-in-India products match international parameters.

Ex-RBI governor Das appointed 2nd principal secretary to PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former governor of Reserve Bank of India Shaktikanta Das was on Saturday appointed the second Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

P K Mishra, a retired IAS officer of the Gujarat cadre, is currently serving as the Principal Secretary to the prime minister.

According to an official order, the tenure of Das, a retired IAS officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, will be "co-terminus" with the term of the prime minister or until further orders, whichever is earlier. "The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Shri Shaktikanta Das, IAS (Retired), as Principal Secretary-2 to Prime Minister with effect from the date he assumes the office. His appointment will be co-terminus with the term of the Prime Minister or until further orders, whichever is earlier," the order read.

Siemens looks to increase factory capacity under Make in India: Official

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Siemens looks to increase its factory capacity in the country under the Make in India initiative to meet both local and global demand, Matthias Rebellius, Member of the Managing Board of Siemens AG and CEO of Smart Infrastructure said.

The global technology company looks to address both local and global needs for power generation, transmission, distribution, and rail transportation, Rebellius said in his address at the Elecrama 2025 event organised by IEEMA in Greater Noida.

Siemens has shown a strong commitment to India by investing over Rs 9,000 crore since 2015, with an additional Rs 1,100 crore announced in November 2023, he said.

"We aim to enhance our factory capacities under the Make in India initiative, addressing both local and global needs for power generation, transmission, distribution, and rail transportation," Rebellius said. With over 34,000 employees



and 32 factories in India, Siemens recognises the country's ambitious economic goals and role as an innovation powerhouse, the official said.

He said there are a lot of opportunities in various sectors in India. The government is focusing on digitalization to enhance energy efficiency and grid management while aiming to establish the country as a global manufacturing hub. To meet rising energy demands, especially for clean energy, India plans to modernize its power transmission and distribution networks.

He said Infrastructure-related ministries are encouraged to come up with a 3-year pipeline of projects for investment through public-private partnerships.

"Siemens is already a reliable partner for those investments and in the Government of India's efforts towards Viksit Bharat 2047," he said. The company's product portfolio also includes locally developed solutions for low-voltage power distribution that are not only powering the future of India's electrification but are also exported to other countries.

Centre assures swift action on EPS-95 pensioners' demands

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pensioners' body EPS-95 Agitation Committee on Saturday said that Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has assured swift action on its demands.

Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has taken a positive stance on the long-pending demands of 78 lakh EPS-95 pensioners across the country, a statement by the pensioners body said.

According to the statement, these demands include an increase in the minimum pension, provision of free medical facilities for pensioners and their spouses, and rectification of errors in



applications for higher pension benefits.

The minister assured the delegation of a swift resolution to these issues, it said. Commander Ashok Raut,

National President of the EPS-95 National Agitation Committee (NAC), which has been advocating for pensioners' rights for several years, revealed that recent

discussions with both the Labour Minister and the Finance Minister provided assurances of an imminent increase in the minimum pension.

However, the absence of any such announcement in the Union Budget 2025-26 has led to widespread disappointment among pensioners.

In light of this, a crucial meeting between the Labour Minister and a delegation from the NAC was held on Friday. During the discussions, Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya reaffirmed the government's commitment to addressing pensioners' concerns.

Rich in cash, Japan automaker Toyota builds city to test futuristic mobility

PNS ■ SUSONO (JAPAN)

Woven City near Mount Fuji is where Japanese automaker Toyota plans to test everyday living with robotics, artificial intelligence and autonomous zero-emissions transportation.

Daisuke Toyoda, an executive in charge of the project from the automaker's founding family, stressed it's not "a smart city."

"We're making a test course for mobility so that's a little bit different. We're not a real estate developer," he said Saturday during a tour of the facility, where the first phase of construction was completed. The Associated Press was the first foreign media to get a preview of the USD 10 billion Woven City.

The first phase spans 47,000 square metres, roughly the size of about five baseball fields. When completed, it will be 2,94,000 square metres. Built on the grounds of a shuttered Toyota Motor Corp auto plant, it's meant to be a place where researchers and startups come together to share ideas, according to Toyoda.

Ambitious plans for futuristic cities have sputtered or are unfinished, including one proposed by Google's parent company Alphabet in Toronto; "Neom" in Saudi Arabia; a project near San Francisco,

spearheaded by a former Goldman Sachs trader, and Masdar City next to Abu Dhabi's airport.

Woven City's construction began in 2021. All the buildings are connected by underground passageways, where autonomous vehicles will scuttle around collecting garbage and making deliveries.

No one is living there yet.



The first residents will total just 100 people.

Called "weavers," they're workers at Toyota and partner companies, including instant noodle maker Nissin and Daikin, which manufactures air-conditioners. Coffee maker UCC was serving hot drinks from an autonomous-drive bus, parked in a square surrounded by still-empty apartment complexes.

The city's name honours Toyota's beginnings as a maker of automatic textile looms. Sakichi Toyoda, Daisuke Toyoda's great-great-grandfather, just wanted to make life easier for his mother, who toiled on a manual loom.

Majority of Indians feel savings not enough for future: Study

PNS ■ MUMBAI

More than half of Indians surveyed feel unprepared for their future despite having a detailed financial plan or having done some degree of planning, says a study.

The study of individuals in the age group of 35 to 54 years who financially provide for their ageing parents and growing children found that 60 per cent of respondents feel their savings are not enough for future.

The respondents agree that "no matter how much they save or invest, they feel like it's never enough for future", the study by YouGov said.

A majority 94 per cent of respondents said they either have a detailed financial plan or have done some degree of planning, the study, which surveyed more than 4,000 people across 12 cities across India, said.

The study of aspirations, attitudes and financial preparedness of individuals in the 35-54 years age group stated that more than 50 per cent worry about running out of money, always feeling behind and not doing well enough despite efforts.

"They show high reliance on credit and also seem to be exhausting savings as well as income. 64 per cent fund



"They show high reliance on credit and also seem to be exhausting savings as well as income. 64 per cent fund their short-term aspirations via credit, 49 per cent savings, and 47 per cent regular future income," the study by YouGov and Edelweiss Life Insurance said

their short-term aspirations via credit, 49 per cent savings, and 47 per cent regular future income," the study by YouGov

and Edelweiss Life Insurance said.

They have also accessed all forms of credit to meet critical

needs like healthcare, education, etc. and also wants like vacation, home renovation, etc, it added.



**UNWIND, CONNECT & KEEP THE GOOD TIMES FLOWING**

MindSPACE SOCIAL is all set to make your gatherings even better! With its latest offering, guests can enjoy three hours of uninterrupted pours for just Rs 1499, making it the perfect way to catch up with friends, celebrate a moment, or simply unwind without a rush. Designed for those who love to settle in and take their time, this experience brings together a mix of classic favorites and signature SOCIAL serves. Whether it's a spontaneous plan or a long-overdue meet-up, this offering ensures the glasses keep clinking and the stories keep flowing. With no fixed hours, guests can start their session at their convenience, making it a truly flexible way to enjoy SOCIAL's signature energy. From refreshing citrus blends like The Famous Social Margarita to bold, smoky pours like Old Smoke, the menu brings a little something for every mood. For those who enjoy playful, unexpected flavors, Trip on the Drip and Vantablackare just a few of the SOCIAL specials waiting to be explored.

**When:** Available every day – 11 AM to 7 PM

**Where:** MindSPACE SOCIAL, Upper level, K. LTD, Raheja IT Park, Survey No.64, Ground plus, near, MindSPACE Junction Flyover, Hyderabad, Telangana 500081

# TOAST TO LOVE!

February is widely celebrated as the month of love, a time when hearts are filled with warmth, romance and the joy of togetherness. From heartfelt gestures to grand celebrations, love takes center stage throughout the month. And what's a celebration without a cocktail in hand? Whether it's a cozy date night, a lively gathering with friends, or a toast to self-love, the perfect cocktail adds a touch of magic to every moment. A well-crafted drink not only elevates the mood but also becomes a symbol of shared laughter, deep conversations, and cherished memories. So, as love fills the air this February, let's raise a glass to passion, companionship, and the little indulgences that make life truly special!

Curated by Diageo's Brand Ambassador, Hemali Bendre, these recipes feature a delightful mix of flavours, from rich and indulgent to light and refreshing—ensuring there's something for every palate. Cheers to love, laughter and unforgettable moments!

## TIRA-MISS-YOU!

**INGREDIENTS**

- 50 ml Johnnie Walker Blonde
- 20 ml tiramisu syrup
- 30 ml espresso

**METHOD**

- Shake all the ingredients well
- Glassware
- Coup
- Garnish
- mascarpone cream cheese foam, cocoa dust



## LOVESTRUCK SOUR

**INGREDIENTS**

- 50 ml Black Dog
- 25 ml fresh lime juice
- 20 ml rose syrup
- 2 dashes angostura bitters
- 30 ml cranberry juice?
- 3 dashes vegan foamer

**METHOD**

- Shake all the ingredients
- Glassware
- Old Fashioned
- Garnish
- rose dust in heart shape using stencil, ice cubes



## CRIMSON SUNSET

**INGREDIENTS**

- 50 ml Johnnie Walker Black Label
- 15 ml Fresh Lime Juice
- 20 ml Raspberry Puree
- 10 ml Grenadine
- 60 ml Ginger Ale

**METHOD**

- Shake all ingredients and top up with Ginger Ale
- Glassware:** Highball
- Garnish:** Fresh Raspberries
- Ice:** Cubes

## GREEN FOREST

**INGREDIENTS**

- 30 ml Smirnoff no 21
- 15 ml mint liqueur
- 15 ml cucumber syrup
- 15 ml fresh lime juice
- 80 ml sparkling wine

**METHOD**

- Build Up
- Glassware
- Wine Glass
- Garnish
- English cucumber slice
- Ice Cubes



## STOLE MY HEART

**INGREDIENTS**

- 50 ml Black & White
- 25 ml Sweet Vermouth
- 7.5 ml Cherry Syrup
- 2 dashes Angostura Bitters

**METHOD**

- Stir all the ingredients
- Glassware:** Nick & Nora
- Garnish:** Maraschino Cherry
- Ice:** None

**WHAT'S NEW**



### LEATHER METALLIC BUCKLE BELT

This belt by Uspoloass.in features an adjustable buckle, making it a versatile gift that pairs effortlessly with both casual and formal looks.

Price: INR 2199

### ARIANA GRANDE X SWAROVSKI STUD EARRINGS

Two hearts become one in this joyful pair of Swarovski pierced studs. Each rhodium plated piece features a heart-shaped crystal, which is surrounded by a glittering halo of clear pavé. Pair them with the matching pendant for a radiant gift of love.

Price: INR 10,900/-



### GLOW PLAY CUSHIONY BLUSH

A bouncy, buildable blush by MAC Cosmetics that provides glowy colour in a lightweight formula with skin-conditioning ingredients.

Price: INR 3800



### KARL LAGERFELD AT THE COLLECTIVE

Black in colour, this K/Signature bag exudes edgy vibes with its striking python print and KARL Signature hardware on the flap. Its spacious interior provides plenty of room for your essentials, while the top handle and detachable shoulder strap offer versatile styling options. Style it with any casual outfit

Price: INR 53,250

### LIVON PROFESSIONAL RANGE

The Livon Professional range strengthens hair 10x stronger\* while offering versatile care. Use it as a pre-shampoo treatment, overnight spa, heat protectant, or hairstyling primer—perfect for all hair types, including chemically treated hair and it helps effortlessly detangles, tames frizz and enhances your hair without weighing it down.

Price: INR 495



### POWER KISS MATTE: INTENSE COLOR, ALL-DAY COMFORT!

Power Kiss Matte Lip Color Combines high-impact pigment with a lightweight, hydrating formula. Available in 12 stunning shades, from classic reds and pinks to versatile nudes and browns, this lipstick ensures your lips stay kiss-ready all day. Enriched with Vitamin E and Avocado Oil, it keeps lips soft, moisturised, and irresistibly smooth while offering a sheer matte finish that feels as good as it looks.

PRICE: INR 799

## HOROSCOPE



### ARIES

Tread carefully in new ventures. Your efforts will yield results, but don't get complacent. Resolve sibling issues quickly. A productive week awaits-stay adaptable to surprises.



### TAURUS

Career growth thrives on wit and reasoning. Tackle financial stress and self-doubt with optimism. A nurturing attitude will bring positive outcomes.



### GEMINI

Embrace attraction despite hurdles. Enjoy laughter and aesthetics. Friends will help achieve goals. Avoid living through others. Rekindle romance.



### CANCER

Consider a career shift for better prospects. Address financial worries and self-worth. Self-reflection brings joy. Show kindness but avoid exhaustion.



### LEO

Patience and dedication will help solve personal and shared challenges. Balance growth, relationships and responsibilities. Cherish family support.



### VIRGO

Siblings uplift aspirations. Handle financial stress wisely. Stand out with confidence. Independent efforts lead to success. Loyalty strengthens bonds.



### LIBRA

Restlessness may disrupt harmony. Sibling support is valuable. Overcome quirks through persistence. Keep going even without immediate backing.



### SCORPIO

Pursue beauty and generosity. Seek self-growth with help from others. Guard against negativity. Overfocus on money stifles creativity. Be cautious with commitments.



### SAGITTARIUS

Fast career progress comes from charm and logic. Control temper and impatience. A feminine energy attracts relationships. Meditation clears illusions. Self-care is key.



### CAPRICORN

Persevere through obstacles. Family stands by your efforts. Hold off on new ventures. Seek guidance for clarity. Prevent miscommunications. Stay practical.



### AQUARIUS

Move forward with long-awaited plans as the stars align. Address quirks with counselling. Expect an active and restless week. Build trust in love.



### PISCES

Attend key meetings for career growth. Your energy draws others in. Make time for family. Seek support for success. Stay active-avoid laziness.

# the pioneer agenda

"Culture is the arts elevated to a set of beliefs"  
— THOMAS WOLFE



## Worlds Within the Fair

At Surajkund International Crafts Mela, every colour, every texture and every melody told a story of heritage and passion, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

The first thing that catches your senses is the smell, fresh jalebis sizzling in hot oil, the tangy aroma of bhel puri mixed with the sweetness of roasted nuts. People walk past, their hands full of colourful bags, carefully wrapped souvenirs and steaming cups of chai. A group of school children rushes by, laughing as they hold up the masks they just bought. Nearby, an elderly couple stands at a saree stall, running their fingers over the soft silk as they decide which one to take home.

The 38th Surajkund International Crafts Mela, taking place in Faridabad, Haryana, at Surajkund Mela Grounds, is a grand celebration of art, culture and heritage, featuring over 1,000 stalls, vibrant performances and a special Rajasthan-themed showcase. Every corner of the mela offers a glimpse into the past. It is a place where cultures converge, creativity flourishes and every turn unveils a new treasure waiting to be explored.

### HANDCRAFTED TREASURES

Walking through the fair feels like stepping into a marketplace where every item has a story. The Department of Archaeology and Museum, Haryana, showcases artefacts from different periods of history. Odisha's stall is lined with handloom textiles, intricate Sambalpuri sarees and delicate silver jewellery. Banaras displays its famous silk sarees, their golden threads catching the light. Madhya Pradesh presents handcrafted lamps and umbrellas embroidered with elephant designs. Each stall holds something unique, drawing visitors eager to take home a piece of heritage.

"I have been coming here for years," says an artist from Madhya Pradesh. "People appreciate handmade crafts here and that gives us hope that our work will live on."

People walk around holding boards with messages spread across the mela. Among the many stalls, Bhutan's artisans display handcrafted meditation items. "These are used for meditation," says a vendor as a visitor calls their partner over to take a look. A wooden birdhouse sits at another stall, a symbol of the sustainable crafts that continue to be passed down through generations.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR



### VINTAGE SIPS

The crockery section at Surajkund Mela is a visual delight, showcasing exquisite vintage and aesthetic tea sets from Iran and different parts of the world. Delicate porcelain, hand-painted kettles, and intricately designed cups transport visitors to another era. The Iranian sets, adorned with fine patterns and gold accents, stand out for their elegance. Each stall feels like a time capsule, drawing people in as they admire the charm of old-world tea traditions.

### DANCE AND MUSIC

The sound of dhols leads the crowd towards the Odisha dance performance. Dancers dressed in traditional attire move with grace, their anklets jingling in sync. A group of visitors stands around them, making videos, clicking photos and cheering. Children try to copy the steps, laughing as they stumble.

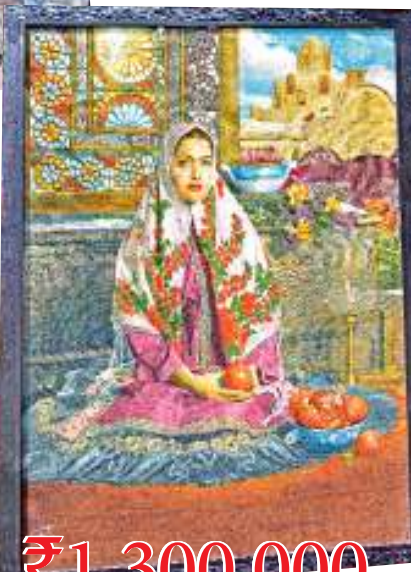
PERFORMERS FROM MOZAMBIQUE TAKE THE STAGE. THE EXCITEMENT SPREADS AND VISITORS CANNOT RESIST JOINING IN. FACES LIGHT UP AS PEOPLE DANCE TOGETHER, SHARING IN THE JOY OF THE MOMENT



### GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

Surajkund brings together artisans from around the world. The Grand Bazaar of Istanbul showcases fine textiles and jewellery while Madagascar's stall offers handcrafted vegan bags. Lebanon's stall is filled with intricately designed hookah pots, Iran displays fragrant ittar and woven mats and Syria's section holds paintings, lamps and table décor.

A shopkeeper from Afghanistan carefully unrolls a handmade carpet. "This one costs ₹2,00,000," he says, running his fingers over the fabric. "A deep artist worked on this for an entire year. It may look like a mat but it is a painting in itself."



₹1,300,000

In 2024, 1.3 million visitors attended the Surajkund Mela

### CHALLENGES OF ARTISANS

While the fair is filled with colour and excitement, it also highlights the struggles of artisans. Many crafts that have been passed down through generations now face the threat of being forgotten. "It's not easy to make a living from this," says a block print artist from Rajasthan. "Handmade work takes time but people now prefer cheaper machine-made products. Events like this give us a chance to show the beauty of our craft." Despite the challenges, there is hope.

### A CULTURAL MELTING POT

Surajkund is a place where cultures meet, where an artist from Tunisia can sit next to a designer from Bangladesh and exchange ideas. It is where a student can witness centuries-old crafting techniques and imagine a future in design. It is where a photographer captures the joy of a child dancing to a tune she has never heard before.

"This place has everything," says a vlogger recording the event. "If you love art, culture, photography or just good food, there's no place better than this."

From authentic crafts and mesmerising folk performances to global flavours, every moment is a celebration of colours, creativity, and culture. Visitors can engage with craftsmen, learn their traditions, and witness the beauty of handcrafted heritage. Performing arts take centre stage with cultural troupes showcasing folk dances and music at the open-air theatre, Natyashala. From ghazals and classical thumri to soul-stirring ragas, the cultural evenings add magic to the event.

This year, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha shine this year with Gond paintings, Maheshwari sarees, Dhokra figurines, Pattachitra art, Sambalpuri weaves, and Gotpua dance. BIMSTEC nations add cultural richness, while Apna Ghar showcases Haryana's heritage. Today is the last chance to experience it all!



# 'Antagonists have layers beyond monotony, that's what makes them fascinating'



TEJAL SINHA  
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

In the glamorous world of Bollywood, where perceptions often shape reality, Neil Nitin Mukesh has steadily carved a distinct niche for himself as an actor of remarkable versatility. While many may have initially pegged him as a serious and intense figure based on his past roles, a candid conversation with the actor reveals a different side. He speaks with enthusiasm, warmth and a passion for cinema that goes far beyond what meets the eye. Neil's latest project, *Hisaab Barabar* streaming on Zee5, introduces him as Mickey Mehta, a cunning business tycoon whose empire thrives on manipulation and deceit. While Mickey is undoubtedly an antagonist, Neil emphasises that such roles provide actors with a unique opportunity to delve into emotional depth and complexity. "With antagonist characters, like you mentioned earlier, you get a lot more layers than just the one

monotone of a certain rank," he explains, reflecting on the enriching experience of playing a character with such intricate motivations. In *Hisaab Barabar*, the narrative provides an exciting blend of entertainment and a strong social message. "The topic of the film was really exciting. The film carries a very big message that aims to spread awareness to a larger audience, reminding them to slow down a bit in this fast-paced world we live in. It's a message that asks people to pause and reflect. While the film is highly entertaining, it's also about not losing the soul of the story." Neil's character is a banker with billions under his belt, a man who justifies his actions in a way that makes the audience stop and think. "Mickey is a scheming monster, but his ideology is what makes him interesting. It's rare to get a role like this." The *Lafangey Parindey* star was deeply passionate when he spoke about the emotional depth of his characters, especially when playing antagonists or antiheroes. "I am so happy and proud of you for asking this question," he stated, smiling. "Because up until now, there's always been this perception that an

From his breakthrough in *Johnny Gaddaar* to his latest performance in *Hisaab Barabar*, actor Neil Nitin Mukesh's passion for evolving as an actor shines through as he eagerly anticipates the future of storytelling in cinema. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, he brings out a different side of an antagonist and the emotions

antagonist is heartless. They just show up, create chaos, and either get killed or defeated in the end. But for me, my first question to the director is always, 'What is the emotional arc of this character?'" He recalled his experience working on *Johnny Gaddaar* with director Sriram Raghavan, where he discovered the complexity of playing an antagonist. "My character didn't want to be an antagonist. He became one because of a lie, because of his need to cover up something. That's what shaped him. Similarly, in *7 Khoon Maaf*, my character ended up being an antagonist in someone's life, not because he was evil, but because of his own psychological complexities—he was paranoid, believing his wife was having an affair." Neil emphasised the importance of emotional grounding, not just for the character but for the audience's connection to them. "It's crucial because, as an audience, you want to understand why the character is doing what they're doing. You don't need to condone it, but understanding their pain or their confusion makes the character more relatable," he explained. The *Shortcut Romeo* fame reflected

on his character Mickey Mehta in *Hisaab Barabar* and how one specific scene made him realise the importance of emotional depth. "When I first read the scene where Mickey is exposed and brought to justice, I had concerns. My director said, 'We're going to dunk your face in cow dung,' and I was like, 'You want me to do what?' But my director had such conviction in his vision and I knew I had to trust him. I agreed right away. But I had one request: I wanted Mickey to be desperate, not just angry. I wanted to show that he was frantic and looking for his lost money, that he wasn't just a villain who didn't care." Neil stressed that even the most seemingly heartless antagonist has psychological motivations. "Every character, even the villain, has their own backstory, their own pain. That's what makes them interesting. It's about understanding the 'why' behind their actions," said the *Prem Ratan Dhan Payo* star. When asked about his preparation for Mickey Mehta, he shared a surprising insight: "For Mickey, I had to unprepare myself. As actors, we often subconsciously prepare for an antagonist in a specific way, but when I arrived on set, I realised I needed to forget everything I thought I knew and start fresh. It was challenging, especially when my first scene was a confrontation with Radhe Mohan outside the courtroom." He continued, explaining that it wasn't about relying on physical gestures or

dramatic actions, but rather on the raw emotional delivery. "It was one of the toughest scenes in my career. I couldn't rely on body language or typical antagonist moves. It was all about trusting the director and delivering the scene with emotional restraint." For the *Kavacham* actor, the scene was more than just an acting challenge. "I was lucky to work with such a talented director, who pushed me to be present in the moment. Often, as actors, we want to insert our own emotions or try to get the audience to sympathise with our character. But with Mickey, we didn't do that. We had to show the character's journey without manipulating the emotions of the audience. It was a big lesson in being open and flexible as an actor, learning to unlearn and trusting the process," he explained. Neil acknowledges the pivotal role of director Ashwini Dhir in helping him shape the character. "I had to unprepare myself for Mickey Mehta. As an actor, you often have a certain preconceived idea of how to play an antagonist, but Ashwini made me realize that I needed to throw that away. The first day of shoot was my toughest. The scene where Mickey and Radhe Mohan meet for the first time was physically demanding, but it was also about relying solely on the power of delivery. It's not about physical gestures or histrionics; it's about staying true to the essence of the character." He adds, "Ashwini's clarity and conviction helped me understand the importance of not overdoing anything. As actors, we sometimes have the urge to put in our own 'flair,' but his approach was all about staying true to the character's tone. It's something I've started carrying with me into every role now." Neil is excited for what lies ahead. "My next project is a web show, a musical, with Jacqueline Fernandez, Shazahn Padamsee, Sumeet, Sidharth Nigam and others. It's something I've never done before on screen. The show is still untitled, but it's set to release in April," Neil shares. "We're working with an amazing director, Abhishek Sharma, and the show will be available on Jio's new platform after the merger with Hotstar." In addition to that, Neil has another theatrical project slated for release in June, where he collaborates with a national filmmaker he greatly admires. "It's a very exciting year ahead and I can't wait for everyone to see what's coming." For an actor whose career has been marked by such versatility and depth, Neil Nitin Mukesh's journey is still unfolding. With each project, he continues to challenge himself and break boundaries, proving that his passion for cinema and his craft only grows with time.



**AS ACTORS, WE OFTEN SUBCONSCIOUSLY PREPARE FOR AN ANTAGONIST IN A SPECIFIC WAY, BUT WHEN I ARRIVED ON SET, I REALISED I NEEDED TO FORGET EVERYTHING I THOUGHT I KNEW AND START FRESH. IT WAS CHALLENGING, ESPECIALLY WHEN MY FIRST SCENE IN HISAAB BARABAR**

## TRENDING

### PERSON REKHA GUPTA



Rekha Gupta was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Delhi on Thursday, making history as the only woman CM in all saffron and NDA-ruled states. Marking the BJP's return to power in the national capital, the grand oath-taking ceremony took place at the iconic Ramlika Maidan, attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior party leaders.

### VIDEO KIIT NEPALI EXODUS

A viral video has surfaced showing the management of KIIT University allegedly forcing over 500 Nepali students to leave the campus in Bhubaneswar following the alleged suicide of a Nepali girl student on February 17, 2025. The video, widely shared on social media, has intensified discussions around the university's handling of the situation and the treatment of international students.

### MOVIE L2 EMPURAN

Actor Mohanlal has unveiled a stellar lineup of renowned actors for his upcoming film *L2: Empuraan*. The highly anticipated sequel boasts a powerhouse cast, raising expectations for an intense cinematic experience.

### SONG GALATFEHMIYAN



The song *Galatfehmiyan* from Ibrahim Ali Khan and Khushi Kapoor's film *Nadania* is going viral for its sizzling chemistry and captivating visuals. Set against a sprawling stadium and vibrant backdrops, the track beautifully portrays the duo navigating misunderstandings.

### PICTURE HUGE CROWD AT PATNA RAILWAY STATION

Patna railway station witnessed massive rush and chaos as thousands of devotees thronged the platforms following the conclusion of Mahakumbh. With overcrowded trains and long queues, passengers struggled to find space, highlighting the sheer scale of the pilgrimage's return journey.

## RARE NERVE DISORDER ON THE RISE

# IS YOUR DIET PUTTING YOU AT RISK?

**The Pioneer brings to you an in-depth look at the alarming rise of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) across Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. As medical experts investigate the link between infections, dietary habits, and environmental factors, this report uncovers the potential triggers behind the surge in cases. From early symptoms to treatment options and preventive measures, we provide crucial insights to help you stay informed and protect your health**

PNSJ EXCLUSIVE

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS), a rare but serious autoimmune disorder affecting the nervous system, is seeing a worrying surge in cases across Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The rise in cases has become a growing concern for the medical community, as researchers work to uncover both known and lesser-known triggers of the disease.

GBS occurs when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks the peripheral nerves, leading to muscle weakness, numbness and, in severe cases, paralysis. The condition is often linked to infections, particularly respiratory illnesses and gastrointestinal diseases, with symptoms typically appearing within two to six weeks after an infection.

### Why are GBS cases on the rise?

The sudden increase in GBS cases has raised urgent questions about its underlying causes. While bacterial infections like *Campylobacter jejuni*—commonly found in contaminated water and undercooked poultry—are already recognised as major triggers, researchers are now investigating other possible factors.

"In rare cases, Guillain-Barré Syndrome follows an infection; however, the emerging trends suggest that environmental and dietary factors might be amplifying the risk," says Dr. Animesh Gupta, Senior Consultant, Neurology, Apollo Spectra Hospital,

Kanpur. "The sudden rise in the number of cases is concerning, and we need to identify the common factors responsible for it."

One of the leading causes of GBS is bacterial contamination in food and water. *Campylobacter jejuni*, a pathogen linked to over 30% of GBS cases worldwide, is commonly found in undercooked poultry, unpasteurized dairy and polluted water sources. In addition, viral infections that spread post-rainfall, leading to flu-like symptoms and stomach infections, may also trigger an immune overreaction. "Bacterial infections have long been recognised as a trigger for GBS, but we are also exploring whether post-viral immune responses or even toxin exposure could be playing a role in these recent cases," explains Dr. Nikhil B. Consultant Neurology, SPARSH Hospital, Bangalore. "There is a need for detailed studies on various other factors that could possibly trigger severe immune responses."

Another suspected factor is environmental pollution, particularly the presence of heavy metals in food and water. Exposure to these toxins can alter immune responses, making individuals more susceptible to autoimmune disorders like GBS.

### Who is at risk?

GBS can affect anyone, but certain groups are more vulnerable:

- Children and infants, especially those exposed to contaminated food and water. Parents should watch for symptoms such as muscle weakness,



difficulty walking, or loss of reflexes.

- Elderly individuals, whose immune systems may react differently to infections and who often experience more severe complications. Recovery in older adults can be prolonged due to existing health conditions.

- People with weakened immune systems, including those with diabetes or individuals undergoing treatments like chemotherapy, are at a higher risk of developing complications from infections that may lead to GBS.

### Diagnosis and treatment

Early detection is critical for managing GBS. Once diagnosed, patients are typically treated with:

- Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIG) therapy, which helps neu-

tralise the immune system's attack on the nerves.

- Plasmapheresis, a procedure that removes harmful antibodies from the blood.

Following initial treatment, physiotherapy plays a crucial role in helping patients regain mobility and strength. The recovery period varies depending on the severity of nerve damage, ranging from weeks to months.

"Just like any other disease, early diagnosis, timely treatment and rehabilitation play a vital role in recovery," says Dr. Vivek Tomar, Consultant Neurosurgeon, Chatrapati Shivaji Subharti Hospital, Meerut. "Depending on the severity, some patients regain full mobility in a few months, while others struggle with

long-term nerve damage."

The recent spike in GBS cases highlights the need for better sanitation, stricter food safety regulations and extensive research into its lesser-known triggers.

### Preventive measures: How to reduce your risk

Since infections are a major trigger of GBS, maintaining proper hygiene and a strong immune system is essential.

- **For children:** Ensure they consume purified water, wash their hands frequently and avoid unpasteurized dairy and undercooked meat. Parents should also monitor vaccinations like flu shots, as rare cases of GBS have been linked to certain vaccines.
- **For the elderly:** A well-balanced diet rich in magnesium, vitamins B6 and B12 and omega-3 fatty acids is beneficial. Regular health check-ups and prompt treatment of infections can prevent immune overreactions.
- **For everyone:** Eat home-cooked meals and avoid consuming food from unhygienic sources.
- Ensure poultry and meat are thoroughly cooked.
- Stay vigilant for symptoms like weakness, tingling sensations, or difficulty walking, and seek immediate medical attention if they appear.

"Prevention is the key to such rare diseases," emphasises Dr. Vivek Tomar. "Simple lifestyle changes—such as choosing home-cooked meals over street food, drinking clean water and ensuring proper hygiene—can

have a big impact. People often overlook how minor infections can trigger serious immune reactions that lead to conditions like GBS."

### The role of food habits in GBS prevention

A strong link exists between dietary habits and the risk of developing GBS. Contaminated and undercooked food can introduce harmful bacteria into the body, sometimes leading to autoimmune responses that trigger the condition. Risk factors include:

- Consuming undercooked poultry or raw meat, which may contain *Campylobacter jejuni*.
- Drinking unpasteurised milk, which can harbor harmful microbes.
- Eating street food from unhygienic places or drinking unfiltered water, increasing exposure to infections.
- Ignoring early signs of food poisoning, such as vomiting or diarrhea, which may indicate bacterial contamination.

Even processed and pre-packaged foods should be stored and cooked properly to prevent bacterial growth.

### Need for more research and awareness

Ongoing studies are analyzing patient histories, food habits, and environmental influences to pinpoint the causes behind the rising number of GBS cases. Awareness campaigns by health authorities are being launched to educate the public on food safety and hygiene practices.

# TRISHA: THE TYPHOON OF INDIAN CRICKET



Gongadi Trisha etched her name in history by becoming the first player to score a century in the U-19 T20 Women's World Cup, leading India to a remarkable victory. She was named both Player of the Match and Player of the Series after scoring 110 runs off just 59 balls and taking three crucial wickets against Scotland. With 309 runs in the tournament, she emerged as the highest run scorer of the series. Amid the reels going viral and becoming a sensation in one night, cricket lovers watching this girl playing, hitting over the covers, Gongadi Trisha, has made India and Telangana proud. It is all my parents' dream. I was told by my friends that my father was emotional. I have never seen my father ever in tears, says Gongadi Trisha, in an interview with *The Pioneer's* Deepika Pasham



## DREAM NURTURED BY PARENTS

My father, Rami Reddy, a farmer and fitness trainer, and my mother, Madhavi, a homemaker, have given their all for their only child — me. Cricket has always been their dream. I don't remember when it all started as a kid, but I do remember holding a bat when I was just two-and-a-half years old, and I never put it down since. My father has always been my biggest inspiration when it comes to playing cricket. Initially, he was also my bowler. He was always there for my practice, and every ball I faced was delivered by him. If I've learned to bat, it's because of his bowling.

## ROOTS IN BHADRACHALAM

My parents owned agricultural land and maintained it in Purushothapatnam (now in Andhra Pradesh), near Bhadrachalam. Later, the first half of my family, including my grandparents, moved to Hyderabad for better coaching, as my parents were focused on farming. In Bhadrachalam, I trained on the junior college grounds at 5 a.m. Eventually, my father and mother also moved to Hyderabad. My father left his job as a private fitness trainer to support me in my cricket journey.

## MENSTRUATION DIDN'T HOLD BACK CENTURY

Menstruation is undoubtedly painful for women, and as cricketers, we can't escape it. The experience varies from woman to woman. I remember having severe cramps at times, but my focus remained on performing at my best. There's a myth that women cricketers don't play during their periods, but we are all comfortable playing cricket even when on our periods. The key is to maintain hygiene. As athletes, some may take prescribed medications, but I personally do not consume anything. I find that natural food helps on some days.

**NO PLAN B**  
There are sportswomen who may have a second option in mind, but for me, it has always been cricket—just cricket. I've never thought about anything else. If I weren't a cricketer, I honestly wouldn't know what I'd be doing. The journey has been tough, but I know I have much more to achieve. With the Under-19 T20 Women's World Cup behind me, I have my eyes set on the Senior Cricket World Cup. My goal is to play more matches, win the Women's Cricket World Cup, and keep pushing forward.

**COACHING IS EXPENSIVE**  
Our primary reason for moving to Hyderabad was to enroll in the best coaching camp. My father visited numerous camps to gather information and eventually found St. John's Cricket Academy. At the age of eight, I joined the academy under the guidance of my first coach, Srinivas. Cricket requires significant financial investment, and players often rely on sponsors to support their journey in the sport. Currently, I am training with Coach Beyond, and my coach is R. Sridhar.



## ARK FOUNDATION; FUELING MY AMBITION

It has been six years since I joined the Ark Foundation, and it feels like family to me because they have always been there for us. I am deeply grateful to the Ark Group for believing in me, supporting me, and empowering my journey. I am especially thankful to Gummi Ram Reddy Sir, who has motivated me tremendously over the years through numerous meetings. This recognition fuels my drive to work even harder and make my country proud.

## BOWLING TO MY IDOL, MITHALI

As a kid, I had no clear idea about cricket. I just picked up a bat and started hitting my father's bowling. But as I grew older and continued practicing, I started reading about Mithali Raj, and she became my inspiration. She would visit coaching centers and practice with us. I clearly remember bowling to my idol, Mithali Raj. She always encouraged us to stay focused, have fun, and enjoy the game while playing.



## RAISING SPORTSPERSON BEYOND GENDERS

My parents never considered gender. Whether a girl or a boy, they always wished to make me a sportsperson. I was fortunate to receive the best training they could afford. Although they may have heard opinions from outsiders about encouraging me, they remained supportive throughout.

## FATHER MISSED FIRST WORLD CUP

As part of the women's cricket team, it's not always necessary for us to travel with our parents. However, if they wish, they can come and watch our matches. My father does attend my games, though he missed my first World Cup. This time, during the World Cup, he was there to witness me score a century.

## ALWAYS CRAVING FOR AMMA'S FOOD

The longing for home-cooked food never fades. As I mentioned, I eat home food very rarely, but if given the chance, I would choose my amma's handmade food any day. I enjoy both vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes.

**PEEK INTO MY DAILY LIFE**  
I wake up at 5 a.m. and freshen up. My first class starts at 5:30 a.m., and it usually continues until around 11 a.m. The schedule is divided into parts, with a total of six to seven hours of practice. I also follow a diet plan as guided by our experts to maintain strength and health. Cheat days are rare and usually occur on Sundays or occasionally after tournaments, when we get back home for one or two days.

## RARE SCHOOL DAYS

I had very little school life and, honestly, I don't remember any friends because I attended school rarely. I was in Bhadrachalam until Class 4, and later, I attended Class 6 and 7 in Hyderabad. My education mostly consisted of tuitions and last-minute studying for the exams. I completed my Intermediate with the CEC group and will take admission for my Degree to finish it as well.

## JERSEY NUMBER TWISTS

Initially, my jersey number was 5, but later someone else chose it. I was asked to pick another number. I called my father, telling him that all the numbers were taken. He suggested I take 99, and that's how I ended up with it. Now, I feel it's my lucky number.

## KEEPING IT REAL, NOT MIMICING

We usually don't spend much time analyzing the techniques of other cricketers because we believe in sticking to what comes naturally to us. Instead, we have random discussions and stay active on social media. My favorite shot is over the covers, and I've been interacting with my best friends, Niki Prasad and Mithila, for the past six to seven years.

## TALE OF TWO GENERATIONS

For the first few months, I stayed with my grandparents. My grandmother would prepare my breakfast, and my grandfather would handle the drop-off and pick-up schedule, even though we had rented a house near my coaching location. Later, when my father moved, it became his responsibility.

## RAPID FIRE

**Favourite destination:** Hyderabad  
**Favourite hobby:** I watch cinema, do painting  
**Favourite food:** Biryani, pizza **Favourite cricketer:** Mithali Raj  
**Favourite colour:** Blue and black  
**Favourite hero:** It depends on movies

