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Those with a slave mentality keep attacking our faith: PM

**INDIA, UK**  
TO RESUME TALKS ON TRADE AGREEMENT FROM TODAY

Lakshmi Manchu: Reveals how Sridevi changed her view on beauty  
**SECRETS**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**



**Why aren't you arresting KCR's family despite obtaining evidence in corruption cases? Is KCR getting carried away by his dealings with the Congress in New Delhi? Will he make a deal with the Congress to crush the BJP? The BJP is the only party fighting on public issues. The BJP has a history of fighting for teachers, the unemployed and farmers and going to jail**

— Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs

P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**Traffic curbs for Srisailem fete**

Extensive traffic management arrangements are in place at the famous hill shrine of Srisailem for Maha Shivaratri on February 26. Additional SP M. Yugandhar Babu said on Sunday that over 800 police personnel will be deployed to regulate traffic from the Srisailem temple to key locations, including Sakshi Ganapathi, Hatakeswaram, and Ramaiah Turning tollgate centres. Traffic control measures will also be enforced at Sunnipenta, Lingalagattu, and the Telangana border to prevent congestion. To ensure smooth traffic...

—PAGE: 4

**Atishi becomes first woman to be LoP**

Former Delhi chief minister and MLA from Kalkaji constituency Atishi was chosen as the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly at a meeting of AAP MLAs here on Sunday. With this, Atishi becomes the first woman to hold the post. AAP supreme Arvind Kejriwal was also part of the meeting of the party's 22 MLAs where Atishi was picked. In a press conference, AAP's Delhi unit convener Gopal Rai said by consensus all AAP MLAs have chosen Atishi as the Leader of Opposition (LoP). MLA from Burari...

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**'IT sector may see cautious salary'**

Salary increments in India's USD 250 billion IT services sector are projected to be moderate in fiscal year 2025, as companies navigate a complex landscape of global economic uncertainties, evolving skill demands, and the increasing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), according to experts. Industry experts predict an average wage increase of 4-8.5 per cent, a notable step down from previous years, signalling a shift towards more pragmatic compensation strategies. The outlook for salary hikes this year is...

—PAGE: 8

**India face Dutch in FIH League match**

A faltering India would look to halt the slide when they take on reigning champions the Netherlands in their women's FIH Pro League match here on Monday. India's home leg so far hasn't gone according to script with the team currently placed seventh in the standings with seven points from six games. They had opened their campaign with a thrilling 3-2 win over England but lost the second game against the same opponents in the shoot-out. Against Spain, the hosts came agonisingly close...

—SPORTS

## AP woos EV maker Tesla

STATE FACES TOUGH COMPETITION FROM MAHARASHTRA, GUJ & TN

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government is actively working to attract American electric vehicle (EV) giant Tesla to set up a manufacturing facility in the state. This initiative aligns with Tesla's plans to produce affordable EVs for the Indian market.

A team from Tesla recently surveyed potential land parcels in the combined Nellore district and parts of Rayalaseema, signalling the company's serious interest in the region.

**Strategic advantages**

Andhra Pradesh holds a competitive edge with its vast land resources. The state has already secured around 15,000 acres in the Nellore and Tirupati districts as part of the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor.

This pre-acquired land could expedite the setup process, making AP a favourable choice for Tesla's manufacturing needs. The state also offers logistical benefits, with proximity to Krishnapatnam Port, the upcoming Ramayapatnam Port, and the planned Dagadarthi airport, all of which enhance supply chain efficiency—an essential factor for Tesla.

**Tough competition**

However, Andhra Pradesh faces stiff competition from Maharashtra,

- A team from Tesla recently surveyed land parcels in Nellore and Rayalaseema, indicating serious interest
- The State has around 15,000 acres of pre-acquired land in the Nellore and Tirupati districts under the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor
- Proximity to Krishnapatnam Port, the upcoming Ramayapatnam Port, and the planned Dagadarthi airport adds to AP's appeal



● Maharashtra is pushing for the unit in Pune, where Tesla India Motors and Energy Private Limited is headquartered

● Gujarat has a strong industrial base, while Tamil Nadu houses several major automobile manufacturers

- The state government has been in talks with Tesla through virtual meetings and written communications
- Tesla aims to lower EV costs in India by setting up local manufacturing to avoid the 110% import duty
- If successful, Tesla's investment would bring jobs, boost industrial growth, and strengthen Andhra Pradesh's role in the global EV sector

Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu. Maharashtra is pushing for the plant in Pune, where Tesla India Motors and Energy Private Limited is headquartered. Gujarat, with its strong industrial base, and Tamil Nadu, home to several major automobile manufacturers, are also in the race.

**Government outreach**

The Andhra Pradesh government has stepped up efforts to secure the investment. During a

recent visit to the United States, Minister Nara Lokesh held discussions with Tesla representatives in Texas, formally inviting them to invest in the state. The government has also initiated virtual meetings and written communications to highlight potential incentives.

**Boost to local manufacturing**

Setting up a Tesla unit in India would help the company lower EV costs by avoiding the steep

110% import duty on imported vehicles.

This move would not only boost Tesla's presence in India's growing EV market but also bring significant investments and job opportunities to Andhra Pradesh.

If the state succeeds in securing Tesla's investment, it could strengthen its position as a key player in the global EV sector and attract further investments in green energy and electric mobility.

## SLBC TUNNEL MISHAP

No breakthrough yet

Huge pile of debris, muck affect rescue ops

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

Despite relentless efforts by the Indian Army, NDRF, and other agencies, no breakthrough was achieved on Sunday in the rescue operations to extricate eight persons who have remained trapped for over 30 hours inside a tunnel after a section of it collapsed in the SLBC project, with prayers on for their well-being. Videos released by the state government showed rescuers navigating through thick muck, tangled iron rods, and cement blocks.

The final 200 meters stretch of the collapsed section of the tunnel has been filled with water and silt, the Minister said, indicating the difficulty that the rescue teams are faced with to reach the spot. The teams that managed to wade up to the 13th kilometer, where the tunnel had collapsed, called out the names of the trapped individuals, but there was no response, sources said.

The trapped persons have been identified as Manoj Kumar and Sri Niwas from Uttar Pradesh, Sunny Singh (J&K), Gurpreet Singh (Punjab) and Sandeep Sahu, Jegta Xess, Santosh Sahu and Anuj Sahu, all from Jharkhand.

Of the eight, two are engineers, two are operators and four labourers. Nagarkurnool District Collector B Santhosh, who is supervising the rescue operation, said four NDRF teams-



one from Hyderabad and three from Vijayawada, comprising 138 members, 24 personnel of the army, personnel of SDRF, besides 23 members from SCCL along with equipment besides members of the infra firm are engaged in the rescue operation.

"As of now, we don't have communication with them (those trapped)," the collector said on Sunday afternoon. An NDRF official said that a team had last night went inside the tunnel. There is a lot of debris and the TBM is also damaged and its parts are scattered inside. "There is water logging 2 km just before the 13.5 km point. It is a challenging task and due to this our heavy equipment is not able to reach till the last point and hence dewatering has to be completed which will enable the equipment to reach ahead."

Continued on Page 2

## AP Assembly Budget session from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Speaker Ayyanna Patrudu held a crucial meeting on Sunday with Chief Secretary K.S. Jawahar Reddy and Director General of Police Harish Kumar Gupta to review arrangements for the 47th Legislative Council session and the third session of the 16th Legislative Assembly.

Key decisions taken at the meeting include the mandatory presence of all members in the Assembly by 9:30 AM on the day of the Governor's address. Passes for personal assistants (PAs) of MLAs and officials will not be issued during the budget session to limit access to the Assembly premises. Members have been urged to cooperate with this directive.

Visitors and delegates seeking to

**Speaker reviews arrangements**



meet the Chief Minister will not be permitted inside the Assembly premises and are advised to arrange meetings at his office instead. The Speaker stressed the need for strict security measures during the sessions and directed officials to imple-

ment stringent protocols, urging all parties to cooperate with the police department.

Following the meeting, Speaker Patrudu personally inspected the media point and the newly constructed canteen.



**Raise public issues in House: Pawan to JSP MLAs**

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief and Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan has directed his party MLAs to raise public issues effectively in the Assembly. He held a meeting with JSP MLAs, MLCs, and other leaders at the party's state office in Mangalagiri on Sunday.

Addressing the gathering, Pawan Kalyan urged the legislators to be the voice of the common man during the Assembly Budget Sessions. "Every MLA and MLC representing the party should actively participate in discussions to ensure that people's problems, aspirations, and welfare concerns are highlighted in the legislature," he stated. He also advised them to uphold dignity and maintain the decorum of the Assembly while presenting public grievances.

Continued on Page 2

**Two teenagers drown while fishing**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a tragic incident, two teenage cousins drowned while fishing in the Polavaram left canal near Veeravalli village, Bapulapadu mandal, Krishna district, on Sunday. The victims, identified as Shaik Nagoor Basha and Shaik Sahreef, were retrieved after a rescue operation and sent to Gannavaram hospital for a post-mortem before being handed over to their families.

Continued on Page 2

**Naidu let down youth, govt staff: Jagan**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former chief minister and YSRCP president Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has criticised Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for deceiving unemployed youth, government employees, and various sections of society.

Taking to X, Jagan accused Naidu of

betraying Group-2 candidates by creating confusion before the exams.

He alleged that despite weeks of assurances, their concerns were ignored, and just two days before the exam, Education Minister Nara Lokesh made

false promises. He also condemned the use of police force against protesting candidates and termed holding exams in such chaos as unfair.

Continued on Page 2



**Kohli's ton powers India to 6-wicket win over Pak**

PNS ■ DUBAI

Virat Kohli showcased his penchant to lord over Pakistan in ICC tournaments once more as the batting icon's glittering unbeaten 100 helped India claim an authoritative six-wicket win over their traditional rivals and all but seal a semi-

final spot in the Champions Trophy here on Sunday.

The victory should be enough for India, who are now on top of Group A with four points, to make the last four. However, Pakistan are staring at early elimination from the eight-team event after their second successive loss.

Continued on Page 2

## Pulivendula bananas hot cakes in Gulf

PNS ■ KADAPA

Bananas grown in the Pulivendula constituency have gained immense popularity, with soaring demand in Gulf countries and North India.

Wholesale traders say that 'A' grade bananas are fetching Rs 30,000 per tonne, bringing substantial profits to farmers. Those cultivating bananas in Pulivendula are witnessing record earnings.

Banana cultivation spans over 30,000 acres in the constituency, with more than 7 lakh tonnes exported to Delhi annually, according to farmer Ramana Reddy. Traders are keen to procure Pulivendula bananas due to their superior quality and taste. Farmers employ drip irrigation and tissue culture techniques, effectively minimising pest infestations, particularly green pests. A dedicated goods train from Kadapa is being operated

to transport bananas and other horticultural produce.

Farmer Venkata Reddy stated that most of the bananas from Pulivendula are exported to Gulf nations, including Dubai and Kuwait, as well as to Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. With rising demand in international and North

Indian markets, banana farmers are earning significant profits for the first time.

A trader noted that 'A' grade bananas are sold at Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000 per tonne, while 'B' grade varieties fetch Rs 22,000 to Rs 26,000. A banana farmer invests around Rs 3 lakh per acre and yields 20 to 25

tonnes of produce in six months, generating an income of about Rs 8 lakh and a net profit of Rs 5 lakh per acre. Encouraged by the high demand, more farmers in Pulivendula and nearby areas are taking up banana cultivation. Additionally, the pest menace is minimal in the region.

Continuous water supply through

the Pulivendula branch canal, sourced from the D. Kota project to Paidipalem and Chitravati reservoirs, is aiding banana cultivation. Farmers are even cultivating bananas in rocky and upland areas, anticipating high returns.

Many wholesale traders purchase entire orchards from farmers and handle harvesting, while others procure bananas on a per-tonne basis. Every day, over 150 lorries line up in Pulivendula and surrounding areas to transport bananas to Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi, and Pune.

The Railways have allocated 10 rakes in a dedicated goods train to transport bananas to Mumbai, from where they are exported to Gulf countries.

Due to the widening gap between demand and supply, Pulivendula banana prices are surging, a horticulture official said.



**A trader noted that 'A' grade bananas are sold at Rs 25,000 to Rs 30,000 per tonne, while 'B' grade varieties fetch Rs 22,000 to Rs 26,000. A banana farmer invests around Rs 3 lakh per acre and yields 20 to 25 tonnes of produce in six months, generating an income of about Rs 8 lakh and a net profit of Rs 5 lakh per acre.**

# Monday Mirchi

## KTR'S SUPPORT FOR BUREAUCRATS EXPOSES HYPOCRISY

KTR's recent tweet defending civil servants has raised some serious questions, especially considering the hypocrisy it highlights. KTR stated that CM has destroyed the image of the bureaucratic system. However, this sudden defence of bureaucrats by KTR comes off as more than a bit ironic. His entire social media machinery was branding Sircilla Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha as "psycho". A month ago, Ex CM KCR's PRO was actively defending KTR by writing articles shifting blame onto bureaucrats regarding the Formula E race issues. KCR's own camp made sure the officers took the heat to shield his son. Bureaucrats themselves have pointed out the hypocrisy. A senior bureaucrat said that when KTR's father was in power, it was the rule of men, now it's the rule of law. Whispers are that KTR's support for bureaucrats isn't driven by any sense of fairness, but simply because Revanth's comments hit too close to home. The corridors of power are buzzing with irony - KTR's tweet is a classic case of selective outrage and political convenience, exposing the contradictions within the family's stance on bureaucracy.

## N SRIDHAR'S SPEEDY PRESSER LEAVES MEDIA STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP

N Sridhar, Secretary of Mines, made his rare appearance before the camera in a press meet that left the media scrambling. It was clear he hadn't been in front of the press for quite some time and he was forced to do a press meet. Instead of the usual back-and-forth of questions, Sridhar took a few questions and hurriedly wrapped up his responses. The media, eager to get a word with him post-meet, tried to catch up but couldn't match his pace as he rushed off. Journalists couldn't help but chat amongst themselves, amused by how quickly he moved out, leaving them behind.

## YADADRI COLLECTOR HANUMANTH RAO'S 5 AM INSPECTIONS STIR UP BUZZ

Yadadri Collector Hanumant Rao is becoming the talk of the town with his early morning surprise inspections. The man seems to be up and about before dawn, leaving no stone unturned in his quest to improve the district. One morning, at the crack of 5 AM, he was seen checking if Class X students had already woken up for the day—talk about setting standards early! The next day, it was a temple visit, where he made sure the premises were clean and well-maintained. Then he was up around 4 am for Giri Pradakshina. Hanumant Rao is trying to

inject fresh energy into the district, with a keen eye on every detail. His early morning hustle has set the tone for his leadership, and the word on the street is that he's determined to implement as many initiatives as possible to make a visible impact. He wanted this posting and wants to make sure, that no aspect of the district is being overlooked in his drive for improvement.

## ABHILASHA BISHT'S KUMBH DIP COULDN'T SAVE HER FROM TELANGANA EXIT

Abhilasha Bisht, the Director of the Dr. RBVRR Telangana State Police Academy, has been sent packing to Andhra Pradesh. A little bird told us that she just returned from Maha Kumbh and tad came orders. It seems that even a spiritual dip at the Maha Kumbh couldn't work the magic she hoped for. Despite her hopes of staying in Telangana, she's now being relieved from her post and moving across state lines. While another DG Anjani Kumar has less than a year of service was sent to Andhra Pradesh, Abhilash Bisht has 2 years of service. Meanwhile, Abhishek Mohanty CP Karimnagar was asked to return Andhra, but it is on hold as there is a model code of conduct due to MLC elections. Former CS Somesh Kumar might be having the last laugh as Mohanty fought tooth and nail to stay in Telangana but now has to go.

## KRISHNA TEJA'S HEARTWARMING ACHIEVEMENT AMID ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES

Even amid his demanding administrative responsibilities, IAS officer Krishna Teja finds time to fulfil promises close to his heart. Currently serving as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) / Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Teja was brought to Andhra Pradesh on deputation for his strong administrative acumen.

Recently, he took to social media to share a deeply personal milestone—one that has been nearly two years in the making. Back in March 2022, when he was the District Collector of Alleppey, Teja had pledged to provide homes for children who lost their parents to COVID-19. True to his word, the final six houses have now been handed over, ensuring that all 292 COVID orphans under the initiative have not just a roof over their heads but also access to education.

His heartfelt post, expressing gratitude to all who supported the cause, quickly went viral, earning widespread appreciation. While Teja may be making headlines for his administrative prowess in Andhra Pradesh, it's gestures like these that truly set him apart. --Yours truly



## Lokesh and son Devansh cheer India in tie with Pak

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

For cricket enthusiasts, an India-Pakistan match is more than just a game—it's an emotion. The high-voltage encounter at the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday was no exception, drawing passionate supporters from across the globe. Among them was Nara Lokesh, Andhra Pradesh's Minister for Human Resources and IT and the National General Secretary of the TDP, who was seen soaking in the electrifying atmosphere alongside his young son, Nara Devansh.

Sporting Team India jerseys and waving the tricolour, Lokesh and Devansh stood out among the sea of supporters, cheering every boundary and wicket with infectious enthusiasm. Their presence at the stadium highlighted the deep connection between cricket and politics in India, where leaders often share the fervour of the sport with the masses.

Accompanying them were notable figures from Andhra Pradesh's cricketing and political circles. Vijayawada MP and Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) President Kesineni Sivannath (Chinni) and ACA

Secretary Sana Satish, who is also a Rajya Sabha MP, were present, reflecting ACA's engagement with international cricket events. Renowned filmmaker Sukumar also joined the delegation, adding a cinematic touch to the cricketing spectacle. Beyond the thrill of the match, Lokesh found an opportunity to engage in a meaningful discussion with Jay Shah, Chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC) and a key figure in the Indian cricket administration. Their conversation revolved around enhancing cricket infrastructure in Andhra Pradesh, a topic of growing importance as the state aims to bolster its sporting facilities. Lokesh later took to social media, expressing satisfaction over Jay Shah's keen interest in supporting cricket development in the region.

Adding a star-studded presence to the evening, megastar Chiranjeevi was also spotted at the stadium, exuding charm in formal attire. As fans revelled in the game, the presence of these eminent personalities underscored how cricket continues to unite people across different spheres, transcending the boundaries of profession and politics.

# US team explores natural farming in Guntur district

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A high-profile delegation from the United States, led by Keith Agoda, CEO of Producers Trust, and Patrick Struebi, a noted entrepreneur in agricultural development, visited community-managed natural farming fields in Davulurupalem village, Kollipara Mandal, Guntur district. The visit, organised by Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS), an initiative of the Andhra Pradesh government, showcased the state's progress in sustainable agriculture.

The delegation's tour began at the District Project Management (DPM) office, where officials provided an insight into the journey of Andhra Pradesh Community-Managed Natural Farming (APCNF). DPM K. Raj Kumari explained the nine universal principles of natural farming, which received high praise from the visitors, who described the approach as "remarkable and inspiring."

The team then witnessed demonstrations of natural farming techniques such as B e e j a m r u t h a m , G h a n a j e e v a m r u t h a m ,



Dravajeevamrutham, and Seed Pelleting. A major highlight was their visit to an A-grade banana farm managed by Vasantha Kumari, an SC tenant farmer practising intercropping. Comparing different farming methods, including natural farming by Kannaiah and C. Rama Rao, and chemical-based farming by T. Babu, the delegation observed a stark contrast in soil quality. "The soil texture in natural farming is visibly healthier and more vibrant," they noted.

At a turmeric farm implementing the Any Time Money (ATM) model, Agoda and Struebi were captivated by the rich aroma of the produce, describing it as "exceptionally fresh and delightful." The visit

continued with interactions with banana farmers practising natural farming, resilience farmers, and Self-Help Group (SHG) members engaged in food basket initiatives under the Adi Lakshmi SHG of Abyudhya Village Organisation.

The delegation concluded their visit at a Nutri Garden maintained by SHG leader Sri Lakshmi, appreciating the grassroots efforts in promoting nutritional security and sustainable farming practices.

Dr C.B. Harinath Reddy, Additional Director of Horticulture, along with RySS staff, accompanied the delegation, underscoring the state's commitment to natural farming and its potential to transform agricultural landscapes.

## Two teenagers...

Continued from Page 1

According to Veeravalli Sub-Inspector Srinivas, Basha was a first-year intermediate student at a private college, while Sahreef was pursuing a diploma course.

The boys had accompanied Basha's father, Subhani, to the canal for fishing, making use of the Sunday holiday.

While Subhani fished at a distance, the teenagers sat on the bank.

When Sahreef's fishing hook got stuck, he waded into the water to free it but was suddenly pulled under by quicksand.

Basha rushed in to save him, but both were dragged underwater and disappeared.

Subhani tried desperately to rescue them but was unable to reach them in time. The police were alerted, and a rescue operation was launched.

After nearly two hours, their bodies were recovered.

A case has been registered, and further investigation is underway.

# Naidu deceiving people again: YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP leader Pothina Mahesh has accused Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu of repeatedly deceiving the people, including unemployed youth, government employees, and now Group-2 aspirants. He alleged that the government misled candidates for weeks with false assurances, only to betray them in the end.

Mahesh criticised the lack of coordination in the administration, pointing to contradictory statements from Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Nara Lokesh on the Group-2 issue. He also recalled that cases were filed against media channels reporting on the exam postponement. Demanding immediate action, he urged the government to convene an emergency meeting to provide clarity, asserting that conducting exams amid such uncertainty was unacceptable.

Condemning the police lathi-charge on protesting aspirants, Mahesh demanded the unconditional release of



those detained.

He criticised the coalition government for scrapping the previous DSC recruitment while failing to deliver on its Mega DSC promise. Instead of creating 20 lakh jobs as pledged, the government was eliminating existing positions, he alleged.

Targeting Lokesh, Mahesh questioned the delay in releasing the job calendar and slammed staff reductions in village and ward secretariats, AP Beverages Corporation, AP FiberNet, AP EDC, and the health department. He reiterated that the YSRCP would stand firmly with Group-2 aspirants until justice was served.

## Naidu let...

Continued from Page 1

Jagan listed other alleged failures of the TDP government, including the unfulfilled Mega DSC recruitment, non-implementation of the Job Calendar, and the removal of 2.6 lakh village and ward volunteers. He also criticised staff reductions in secretariats and the failure to provide the Rs 3,000 unemployment allowance.

He further alleged that many employees lost jobs in AP Beverages Corporation, FiberNet, AP EDC, and the Health Department, while government staff faced salary delays, pending DA hikes, and halted reimbursements. He accused the government of misusing GLI and GPF contributions and failing to provide the promised Interim Relief.

Jagan said Naidu's governance was marked by betrayal and injustice and assured his support for public protests against the government's failures.

# Equitable distribution of resources key to SCoR Zone's success

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Just as equitable division of assets ensures stability in family separations, a balanced distribution of resources is crucial for successfully establishing the South Coast Railway Zone (SCoR), headquartered in Visakhapatnam. However, mounting concerns regarding the fair allocation of personnel are surfacing, with urgent calls for action to safeguard regional interests. The zone envisioned as a catalyst for growth in the region, is grappling with an imbalanced transfer of staff, threatening its operational efficiency and sparking anxieties amongst employees and unions alike.

The SCoR, comprising the Waltair, Vijayawada, Guntakal, and Guntur divisions, was created by detaching these divisions from the East Coast Zone (ECoR) in Bhubaneswar and the South-Central Zone (SCR) in Secunderabad. However, the intended pro-rata transfer of staff from these parent zones to SCoR is reportedly falling short of expectations, raising fears of an imbalanced distribution. Reports indicate that approxi-



mately 200 posts from the Waltair division have already been transferred to the Khurda and Sambalpur divisions under ECOR. Further exacerbating the issue, the recent formation of the Rayagada division, which absorbed portions of Waltair, poses a risk of additional post-transfers.

To ensure SCoR's operational efficiency, a fair distribution of personnel from both Bhubaneswar and Secunderabad is imperative. Moreover, measures must be taken to prevent further transfers of employees from Waltair, Vijayawada, Guntur, and Guntakal to other zones. This necessitates a structured approach to creating new posts and reallocating existing ones. Concerns stem from the

current decision-making process, overseen by the General Managers of Bhubaneswar and Secunderabad, who are perceived to prioritize their respective zones, potentially disadvantaging the nascent SCoR.

Railway unions, notably the All India Railway Employees' Federation (AIRF) and the National Railway Employees' Federation (NREF), are now being urged to champion fair practices. Their role in overseeing resource allocation, employee transfers, and the creation of new posts is deemed critical to protecting the region's interests.

Former AIRF Vice President Chalasani Gandhi emphasized the historical role of unions in safeguarding employee interests, citing past successes in

wage revisions, bonuses, allowances, welfare programs, and workload reduction. He urged unions to unite and act decisively during this crucial period. "Now is the right time to act. We must ensure that staff and resources are allocated fairly to support the growth and efficiency of the new railway zone centered in Visakhapatnam," stated Gandhi. He continued, "Unions have a proven track record of fighting for the rights of railway employees. We need that same dedication now to ensure the SCoR gets the resources it needs to thrive."

The current system, where the parent zones dictate the transfer process, is raising questions about fairness. "The General Managers of Bhubaneswar and Secunderabad, while doing their jobs, are naturally inclined to protect their existing zones. This leaves SCoR vulnerable," an anonymous source close to the situation explained. As SCoR progresses, a collaborative effort involving employees, railway unions, and policymakers is essential to ensure a just and balanced distribution of resources, paving the way for the zone's successful development.

Chasing a tricky 242, India rode on Kohli's 51st ODI ton, Shreyas Iyer's classy 67-ball 56 and Shubman Gill's brilliant start of 46 off 52 balls to overhaul the target with more than seven overs to spare.

Kohli rebelled against his own modest recent form and a dangerous opposition to peel off a memorable knock that took 111 balls and was punctuated with seven fours.

Pakistan, on the other hand, are on their way out of the tournament of which they are the hosts.

Once again, they ran into their old nemesis — Kohli. The 36-year-old had several demons of his own to tame — a lean run, recurring form of dismissals and struggles against spin.

But he slayed each one of

them, in a manner befitting a batter who also became the quickest to 14,000 ODI runs during the course of the knock. Pakistan might have hoped to hustle him a bit through pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf.

But Kohli drove them on the up with elan or pulled them with audacity as Pakistan's premier pacers transformed into dejected figures after the early high of Afridi casting Rohit Sharma (20 off 15 balls) with a peach of a yorker.

Perhaps, the biggest hope Pakistan harboured against Kohli would have been leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed, considering the Indian's recent travails against England's Adil Rashid.

Kohli did have a couple of tough moments against Ahmed but none big enough to put him in distress. He largely dealt with

him in singles, cutting down risks.

But the Pakistan quicks offered him enough chances to free his arms.

At the other end, Iyer flowed with a variety of shots but a 103 metre six off spinner Salman Agha was the standout hit during his tenure, in which he assisted Kohli to raise 114 runs for the third wicket.

Iyer had to walk back to the hut after Imam-ul-Haq pulled off a stunner at covers off spinner Khushdil Shah although replays suggested that the ball might have been grounded.

But by then, India had already shut the door on Pakistan. A large chunk of credit for this win can also be rightfully claimed by Indian bowlers, who were stunningly accurate while limiting Pakistan to 241.

That total was made possible

by Saud Shakeel's polished fifty and Khushdil's cameo.

Shakeel (62, 76b, 5x4) was largely untroubled and added 104 runs for the third wicket with skipper Mohammad Rizwan (46), but Pakistan never really managed to break the shackles after opting to bat.

The pitch expectedly grew slow once the match entered the middle passage, and the precision of Indian bowlers made run-making a laboured task with left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav leading the way (3/40).

There was a period in Pakistan innings when both Rizwan and Shakeel failed to find the boundary rope for 55 consecutive deliveries.

They were forced to traverse a cautious path because of the early departure of Babar Azam (23) and Imam (10).

# No breakthrough...

Continued from Page 1

Then only the removal of debris can start. Additional motors have been used to speed up the dewatering process," he said. The team after reaching 13.5 km called them trapped, but did not get any reply from them, he said. After this point there is still a 200 meter patch and it is only after reaching near them would their condition be known, he added.

The Engineer Task Force (ETF) of the Bison Division of Indian Army from Secunderabad has been deployed in the rescue operations, a defence release said.

"The Indian Army is working closely with all stakeholders to expedite the rescue efforts. Indian Army's priority remains the swift and safe extraction of those trapped inside," the release said. Governor Jishnu Dev Varma spoke to Nagarkurnool District Collector Santhosh over phone and enquired about the ongoing rescue operations. Meanwhile, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren urged Revanth Reddy to ensure all possible assistance for the rescue of the trapped as four of them hail from that state. As per the preliminary information, the four workers from Jharkhand who are trapped in the tunnel belong to Gumla district in Jharkhand, an official said.

# Kohli's ton powers India to...

Continued from Page 1

him in singles, cutting down risks.

But the Pakistan quicks offered him enough chances to free his arms.

At the other end, Iyer flowed with a variety of shots but a 103 metre six off spinner Salman Agha was the standout hit during his tenure, in which he assisted Kohli to raise 114 runs for the third wicket.

Iyer had to walk back to the hut after Imam-ul-Haq pulled off a stunner at covers off spinner Khushdil Shah although replays suggested that the ball might have been grounded.

But by then, India had already shut the door on Pakistan. A large chunk of credit for this win can also be rightfully claimed by Indian bowlers, who were stunningly accurate while limiting Pakistan to 241.

That total was made possible

**TODAY**  
**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha  
Tithi: Ekadashi: Feb 23 01:56 PM to Feb 24 01:45 PM  
Dwadashi: Feb 24 01:45 PM to Feb 25 12:47 PM  
Nakshatram: Purva Ashadha: Feb 23 06:42 PM to Feb 24 06:58 PM  
Uttara Ashadha: Feb 24 06:58 PM to Feb 25 06:30 PM  
Rahukalam: 8:08 AM to 9:35 AM  
Yamagandam: 11:02 AM to 12:29 PM  
Varjyam: 02:49 AM to 04:23 AM  
Gulika: 1:56 PM to 3:23 PM  
Amritkalam: 02:07 PM to 03:44 PM  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 PM to 12:52 PM  
**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**  
Forecast: Sunny  
Temp: 34°  
Humidity: 70%  
Sunrise: 6:28 AM  
Sunset: 6:13 PM  
Updated: February 23, 2025 5:00 PM

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# APPSC Group-2 Mains exam concludes peacefully



Students attending APPSC Group-2 Mains exams in Vijayawada on Sunday (Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar)

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) Group-2 Mains examination was successfully conducted in NTR district on Sunday. As many as 8,792 candidates had registered to appear for the test across 19

examination centres in Vijayawada. Paper-1 (Morning Session) was attended by 7,376 candidates (83.89 per cent turnout), while Paper-2 (Afternoon Session) was attended by 7,352 candidates (83.62 per cent). During the examinations,

no untoward incidents were reported in the district. NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha personally supervised the examination process and later issued a statement appreciating the coordinating officers, custodians, route and liaison officers for ensuring a smooth

and transparent examination. Additionally, he extended his congratulations to Revenue, Police, Medical & Health, Electricity, and Public Transport departments for their efforts in facilitating a seamless exam experience without any disruptions.

## CPR saves life: Kudos to police

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a world where heart attacks can strike anyone at any time, many lives are tragically lost unexpectedly. Individuals of all ages, from middle-aged adults to young children, have collapsed and died in front of others. In light of such incidents, governments and police have been raising awareness about the importance of CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) in emergency situations. Recently, in Nandigama of NTR district, local police demonstrated quick thinking by administering CPR and saving a life.

In Nandigama, an RTC driver named Ramesh collapsed while on his way to work. As he was walking on the road, he suddenly lost consciousness and fell to the ground. Upon receiving a call to emergency services, the police promptly arrived at the scene. Constables Santhosh and Pullarao quickly responded to the situation and began administering CPR to the unconscious Ramesh. After stabilising him, they rushed him to the Nandigama Government Hospital for further treatment.

# 372 stolen mobile phones worth Rs.60 lakh recovered

Cybercrime police have recovered a total of 2,205 mobiles in three phases



NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu handing over recovered mobile phones to the owners, at a press conference in Vijayawada on Sunday (Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar)

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR district police have recovered 372 stolen mobile phones, worth Rs.60 lakh, and returned them to the owners. In the latest mobile phone recovery drive, they used the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) and chatbot portals. Police Commissioner SV Raja Sekhara Babu handed over the phones to their original owners at the Command Control Centre in Vijayawada on Sunday.

At a press conference organised at the Command Control Room in this connection, CP Rajasekhara Babu said the cybercrime police wing has so far recovered a total of 2,205 stolen mobiles in three phases. The recently recovered phones were recovered from Telangana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and other States, he said. Explaining the process, he said the cybercrime police enter the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) and address proof details of the

complainants into the CEIR portal.

"After entering the details, the complainant will receive an acknowledgement number, following which the telecom service provider will block the IMEI number and provide details of the current user. The Telecom Service Provider (TSP) blocked the IMEI number and provided the information about who was using the particular mobile. The phone will then be recovered from the current user, after which the IMEI number will be unblocked, and the mobile phone will be handed over to the original owner," the CP explained.

The Commissioner said that if anybody loses their mobile phone, they should immediately inform the police. "We try to locate them with technical support. Mobile phones are now an integral part of people's lives. While phones are used for bank transactions, various identity cards are also linked with mobile numbers,"

he added.

However, he said that the police are yet to recover many missing mobile phones and will locate them soon. The department has created awareness among citizens. He also appealed to the public to dial the toll-free number 1930 to lodge complaints against cybercrimes. Also, he explained the efforts to prevent cybercrimes in the district.

CP Rajasekhara Babu told the public that everyone should practise a safety culture. He praised the Suraksha Committees for their efforts in the district. The Vijayawada police have installed around 1,260 CC cameras across the city, he said. He also asked the public to wear helmets while riding two-wheelers.

DCP Goutami Shali, K Tirumaleswar Reddy, KGV Saritha, ABTS Udaya Rani, M Krishnamurthy Naidu, SVD Prasad, ADCP G Rama Krishna, and cybercrime police officers were present.

# CM attends wedding of Narasimha Yadav's son

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu attended the wedding ceremony of the son of Yadav Corporation Chairman Narasimha Yadav at ARPR Kalyana Mandapam near Tukkiyakam. After blessing the newlyweds, he departed for Nellore via Renigunta Airport.

The Chief Minister received a warm farewell from notable figures including DIG Shimoshi Bajpai, District Collector Dr Venkateshwar S, Tirupati SP Harshavardhan Raju, Tirupati Municipal Commissioner



Maurya, Joint Collector Shubham Bansal, TTD Additional EO Venkayya Chaudhari, Trainee SP B Hemant and local MLAs Amarnath Reddy and Pulivarthi Venkata Muni Prasad (Nani), as well as other public representatives and officials.

Before the ceremony, the Chief Minister was given a grand welcome by Narasimha Yadav and his family at the Kalyana Mandapam. He warmly greeted attendees and blessed the newlyweds with rice grains. Following this, he unveiled the Tirupati Press Club Diary 2025.

# Chandrababu, Lokesh pay tributes to Yerranna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Kinjarapu Yerranna, Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu extended his tributes, highlighting Yerranna's steadfast commitment, honesty, and sincerity in public service. The CM took to social media to remember his close friend, recognising Yerranna's outstanding political legacy that spanned over three decades.

In a heartfelt tribute, Chandrababu praised Yerranna as a people-friendly leader known for his commitment to public service, integrity, and warmth. He emphasised the leader's illustrious political career spanning over three



decades, highlighting his spotless legacy within the political landscape.

Chandrababu called upon the public to remember and celebrate Yerranna's significant contributions to society. Through social media, he shared

a personal photo with the esteemed leader, further reflecting on their bond.

Minister for Education, Electronics, RTGS and IT Nara Lokesh also paid homage to Yerranna, calling him a true public leader who never forgot his roots, regardless of his rise in political stature. Lokesh noted that Yerranna's responsiveness to public issues and his relentless fight against complex challenges serve as a model for today's youth. He recalled how Yerranna's strong determination to deliver justice for the State and its people left an indelible mark on the political landscape of Delhi, highlighting that language should never be a barrier when the commitment to serve the people is strong.

# Run to create awareness on child safety, prevention of abuse

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 1,700 participated in the Sankalp Suraksha Run to raise awareness on child safety and abuse prevention. Sankalp, a registered NGO, successfully organised the event at Gachibowli Stadium on Sunday.

This event responded to alarming data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which reported a 96% rise in child sexual abuse from 2016 to 2022. In 2022 alone, 1,62,000 cases were recorded, highlight-

ing the urgent need for action. Founder and president of Sankalp, Hemalatha Vijayaraghavan said that the idea for this run came from our work with vulnerable children. "Education and safety go together. A safe child can dream big and achieve great things," she said.

Chief guest D Joel Davis, Joint Commissioner of Police, stressed the importance of making child safety a top priority. The event was held in partnership with the Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC), aiming for

zero tolerance for child abuse by 2030.

Sankalp has been working for child safety and education since 2007, benefiting over 1,00,000 children. Their future plans include educating 2,00,000 children on life skills and setting up child safety cells in 500 schools across Telangana. General Secretary of SCSC, Ramesh Kaza said that the safety of children is a shared responsibility. "Together, we can create a future where every child feels safe and empowered," he added.



# Minister urges support for Alapati

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kolla Ravindra, Minister for Mines, Geology and Excise, stressed the need for a decisive victory for Alapati Rajendra Prasad during a meeting held in Penamaluru constituency on Sunday.

"It is time to connect with all voters at least twice," Ravindra stated. He called for the establishment of polling agents and urged for the identification of voters within polling station limits to be prioritised. He also highlighted the importance of

reviewing voter lists in rural areas to ensure participation in the elections.

Ravindra affirmed that the State government is taking steps toward development and welfare. He criticised Opposition leaders, saying, "Those who have exploited the resources of the poor are now making baseless accusations."

He cautioned that the days of unchecked corruption and exploitation are over, referencing the infamous remark by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy about only attending the Assembly if

given Opposition status. "He is rushing back now that he fears losing his seat," Ravindra stated, stressing that the mismanagement during Jagan's five years in power will be highlighted.

Ravindra assured that the government stands by honest officials and employees, while those who have acted wrongfully will not be spared. He addressed concerns regarding nominated positions, assuring that the CM will take responsibility for appointing deserving individuals.

# Minister unveils diary



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Revenue, Registration, and Stamps Minister Anagani Sathya Prasad attended a joint meeting of the Andhra Pradesh Sub-Registrars Association and the Registration and Stamps Department Employees Union, where he unveiled a new diary.

During the meeting, the employees expressed their appreciation to the government for the cancellation of registrations in secretariats and the repeal of the Land Title Act.

Minister Sathya Prasad emphasised the importance of connecting with the public, urging employees to provide

excellent services to enhance the government's reputation. He assured them that a clear policy would be implemented regarding the arrests of employees by police authorities.

Furthermore, the Minister said he was committed to expediting the construction of new buildings for the Registration Department and pledged to address staffing shortages by filling vacant positions with personnel from the secretariat.

The meeting highlighted the government's dedication to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Registration Department while fostering a positive relationship with its employees.

# Kumbh Mela: APSRTC's non-AC sleeper bus service today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The APSRTC Vijayawada Depot will offer a non-AC sleeper bus service equipped with 29 berths for pilgrims attending the Maha Kumbh Mela on February 24. The bus is set to depart from Vijayawada at 2 PM, travelling through Hyderabad and Nagpur, with an anticipated reach at the Kumbh Mela on February 25.

According to a press release from APSRTC officials, after the sacred bath in River Ganges, the bus will travel to Ayodhya on

February 26, enabling passengers to visit the Srirama temple. The authorities indicated that darshan at the Srirama temple would be arranged for February 27.

Additionally, the bus will head to Kasi, arriving there on February 28. Following a two-day stay in Kasi, the return journey will commence on March 1, with the bus expected to reach Vijayawada via Hyderabad on March 3. The fare for this sleeper bus service is fixed at Rs.11,000, and passengers are advised that any additional expenses will be their responsibility.



# Jagan blesses newlyweds

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A grand wedding ceremony was held on Sunday at the S.S. Convention Centre in Labbipet, Vijayawada, for Lakshmi Chandrika, the second daughter of former MLA Malladi Vishnu and Venkata Subrahmanya Sai Kiran. Former Chief Minister YS Jagan

Mohan Reddy attended the event to bless the newlyweds.

Notable attendees included YSR Congress State coordinator Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, former TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy, former ministers Ambati Rambabu, Perni Nani and Velampalli Srinivas, former MP Kesineni Srinivas and MLCs Talasila Raghuram and

MD Ruhulla. Other dignitaries present were YSR Congress NTR district president Deveneni Avinash, Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi, former MLA Mondithoka Jagan Mohan Rao, Deputy Mayors Avuthu Sreeshaikala Reddy and Bellam Durga, along with various prominent figures from different fields.

# MP Balashowry seeks report on road development

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Machilipatnam MP Vallabhaneni Balashowry has directed officials to submit a report on road construction projects in the district.

The MP held a meeting with the National Highway authorities here on Sunday to discuss key infrastructure projects. He stated that he had recently met Union Minister Nitin Gadkari in Delhi and highlighted the need for funds to develop roads connecting the soon-to-be-completed Bandar Port. According to the MP, the Union Minister responded positively to his request for road projects and financial assistance.

Balashowry urged NH authorities to take necessary steps to develop a 4-lane green-field road from Machilipatnam Port to Machavaram Rice Mill Centre, covering a distance of 3.7 km. He also sought the widening of the existing 2-lane road into a 4-lane road from Machavaram Rice Mill Centre to the underpass at National Highway 65, spanning 4 km.



Additionally, the MP asked officials to prepare reports for upgrading the Manginapudi Beach Road to Machilipatnam stretch into a 4-lane road over a length of 8 km. He also directed them to include proposals for the construction of rail overbridges (ROBs) at key locations along these roads. Highlighting the increasing

passenger traffic on another critical route in Gudivada town, Balashowry instructed officials to submit proposals for a 4-lane road of about 3.2 km from the under-construction ROB to the 216-H National Highway. He emphasised the need for dividers, central lighting, and proper drainage facilities. The meeting also discussed

the Gudivada-Hanuman Junction-Nuzvid-Lakshimpuram road project. The MP urged NH officials to prepare proposals for a 4-lane road from Pedana to Nuzvid, covering approximately 78 km, and a 2-lane road from Nuzvid to Lakshimpuram near Tiruvuru, spanning 42 km, totalling around 120 km.



# Complete arrangements for Inter exams, Collector tells officials

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector A Thameem Ansariya has directed officials to complete the arrangements for the Intermediate examinations at the earliest.

A training programme was organised on Sunday at the AKVK Degree College campus for Chief Superintendents, department officials, custodians, Additional Chief Superintendents, and squads. Addressing the officials, the Collector emphasised their crucial role in ensuring the smooth conduct of the exam-

inations. She instructed the Chief Superintendents to have a thorough understanding of their respective examination centres and oversee all necessary arrangements to prevent any issues. She stressed that conducting the examinations should not be taken lightly, as it is an annual responsibility that must be carried out diligently. Students should be allowed into the examination centres only after thorough checks, and mobile phones or other electronic devices should be strictly prohibited. She directed officials to

ensure foolproof arrangements for inspections while treating students appropriately. The Collector made it clear that Chief Superintendents are responsible for maintaining a peaceful and orderly atmosphere at the examination centres. Staff deployed at sensitive centres must remain vigilant, and any negligence that brings disrepute to the district administration would invite strict action, she warned. She also instructed officials to visit the examination centres in advance for better preparedness. She clarified that there is

no requirement for the college principal's signature on students' hall tickets. Further, she warned private college managements against pressuring students to clear pending college or mess fee payments to obtain hall tickets. Students can also download their hall tickets free of cost through WhatsApp, she informed. Intermediate Examinations Special Officer I. Srinivasa Rao and Control Officer V.V. Subba Rao were among those present at the training programme.

# HMRL MD inspects Future City Metro Corridor



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Managing Director of Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL) NVS Reddy conducted a field inspection of the Future City Metro Corridor on Sunday. He stated that the project aligns with Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's vision to develop the Future City as the fourth major city after Hyderabad, Secunderabad, and Cyberabad. The goal is to make it a pollution-free, green city of global standards. Hyderabad Airport Metro Ltd (HAML) is preparing a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for this Metro

Corridor. NVS Reddy inspected the DPR survey from the airport to Skill University at Meerkanpet. Due to the lack of roads beyond Kongara Kalan, the team trekked through rough terrain for the inspection. The Metro route, approximately 40 km long, will begin at Shamshabad Airport, follow the airport boundary for 5 km along Mansanpally Road and reach Pedda Golconda ORR Exit. Two Metro stations are planned at Bahadurguda and Pedda Golconda to develop 1,500 acres of government land into a world-class hub.

# Massive arrangements to regulate traffic at Srisailem on Maha Sivaratri

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Extensive traffic management arrangements are in place at the famous hill shrine of Srisailem for Maha Sivaratri on February 26.

Additional SP M. Yugandhar Babu said on Sunday that over 800 police personnel will be deployed to regulate traffic from the Srisailem temple to key locations, including Sakshi Ganapathi, Hatakeswaram, and Ramaiah Turning toll-gate centres. Traffic control measures will also be enforced at Sunnipenta, Lingalagattu, and the Telangana border to prevent congestion.

To ensure smooth traffic flow from the Srisailem peak point to surrounding areas and the Telangana border, authorities are deploying eight Rakhshak vehicles, around 20 Blue Coat vehicles, and 40 police personnel for round-the-clock patrolling.



Additionally, eight drone cameras will monitor traffic movement and help prevent untoward incidents. Police pickets will also be set up at key intersections. As the route from Dornala to Srisailem passes through

ghat roads, devotees are advised to bring experienced drivers. Heavy goods vehicles will not be allowed towards Srisailem. Dedicated parking spaces for buses and other vehicles arriving from Andhra Pradesh,

Telangana, and Karnataka have been arranged at the Outer Ring Road, Yagnasela, and other designated areas. Pilgrims are urged to use these facilities and avoid parking on roadsides, the Additional SP stated.



# Group-2 exams held smoothly in Eluru district

PNS ■ ELURU

The Group-2 examinations were conducted peacefully across six centres in the district on Sunday.

District Collector K. Vetri Selvi informed the media that out of 4,415 registered candidates, 3,881 appeared for the exam, while 534 were absent. She stated that the examinations were conducted without any untoward incidents. The Collector inspected the examination process at CR Reddy Engineering College, CR Reddy Mahila College, and Eluru Engineering College.

In the second session, 3,878 candidates appeared for the examination. Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) Achyut Ambarish accompanied the Collector during the inspections, while Joint Collector P. Dhatri Reddy served as the examination coordinator. Superintendent of Police K. Pratap Shiva Kishore personally inspected the examination centre at CR Reddy Engineering College. He instructed officials to ensure impartiality in their duties and provide necessary support to the candidates.

# Three thieves arrested, Rs 4.75 lakh booty recovered

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Police arrested three notorious thieves and recovered stolen property worth Rs 4.75 lakh in Akividu town. Additional SP Bhima Rao told the media on Sunday that following a series of thefts, a special team was formed under CI Jagadishwara Rao and SI Md. Nasirullah.

The police arrested A. Krishnavamshi, Dokku Sai Kiran, and N. Haribabu while they were moving suspiciously. They recovered three stolen motorcycles, 27 grams of gold jewellery, a mobile phone, and Rs 30,000 in cash from them. Krishnavamshi was involved in multiple criminal cases in Bhimavaram I Town, II Town, Bhimavaram Rural,

Mudinepalli, Mandavalli, and Kaikaluru police station limits. Sai Kiran had past cases related to ganja peddling and theft in Undi and Palakoderu police station limits, while Haribabu was identified as the receiver of stolen goods. Additional SP Bhima Rao appreciated the police personnel for arresting the culprits.



# 40 YRS OF DECCAN COLLEGE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES 'Nothing can be achieved without political will'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"Without political power, we would not have reached this milestone of serving with educational institutions," said AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi, while addressing the Quadragenarian 2025 - 40 years celebrations of Deccan College of Medical Sciences at Owaisi Medical and Research Campus. "Leaders are remembered for their work after their passing. I urge every leader to focus on meaningful contributions rather than indulging in criticising us," he added. He emphasised the importance of political unity and leadership, stating, "We have given you citizen rights and not merely treated you as voters who show up only on the election day."

The event marked Deccan College of Medical Sciences' 40-year anniversary, paying tribute to Salar-e-Millat Alhaj Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi for his vision and contributions. "It is God and my parents who have given me this life," Owaisi acknowledged. Members of the Darussalam Educational Trust reminisced about the relentless efforts that went into establishing

the Deccan College of Medical Sciences. "Over 5,000 doctors have graduated from this institution, with many serving in medical camps across North America, Europe and Bangladesh," the members noted. Owaisi recounted the challenges faced by Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi, in setting up educational institutions. "People mocked him, saying he was uneducated and incapable of running a school or college. They claimed they would take over. But he stood firm and said, 'Let's see what happens. It was sheer hard work that brought the medical college into existence.'" Encouraging continued commitment to education, he urged, "As part of history, it is our responsibility to keep educating more students. Hardships will always arise, but our goals will keep pushing us forward." He concluded by highlighting a significant achievement: "Our Educational Trust, my brother Akbaruddin Owaisi, and I faced immense challenges. But we won with efforts to make Osmania General Hospital not leave the limits of the Old City."

# CM must explain why he is not arresting KCR family: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has lost his guts and spirit. During the MLC election campaign in Chennai in Mancherla district, Sanjay asked, "Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, have you lost your guts? Do you not have any spirit left? On the day of your child's wedding, didn't you say that the KCR government illegally arrested you and put you in jail? Didn't you declare that you would take revenge? Now, you are the Chief Minister. You claimed that there is evidence of KCR's family's involvement in the Kaleshwaram, phone tapping, drugs and Formula E race scams. Why haven't you arrested anyone even after 14 months? Is it because you've truly lost your guts? Or did KCR strike a deal with the Congress high command in Delhi to weaken the BJP in Telangana by secretly collaborating with the BRS and diluting the cases?" During a meeting held at the Ketan Palli MNR Garden in Chennai with BJP in-charges

of Mancherla district, Bandi Sanjay Kumar guided BJP MLA Venkataramana Reddy, BJP-backed graduate candidate Anji Reddy, former MLA Chintala Ramachandra Reddy, and local leaders on the election strategies to ensure the victory of the BJP MLC candidate. "Why aren't you arresting KCR's family despite evidence in corruption cases? Is KCR getting carried away by his dealings with the Congress in Delhi? Will he make a deal with Congress to crush the BJP? The BJP is the only party fighting on public issues. The BJP has a history of fighting for teachers, unemployed people and farmers and going to jail," he said. "Under Congress rule, farmers, employees, graduates and teachers are suffering. The six guarantees have not been

implemented. Fee reimbursement dues were not cleared, forcing college administrations to the brink of closure. Tomorrow, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is visiting Mancherla district. I am requesting the release of fee reimbursement dues. If this is not done, it is shameful that local MLAs are threatening people not to attend the CM's meeting," he added. The Congress is facing a shortage of candidates, which is evident from the fact that they had to bring in an outsider as their graduate candidate. For the other two constituencies, they couldn't even find candidates. The BRS is staying out of the race to help the Congress win. This is because the BRS wants to avoid arrests in scam cases by striking a secret deal with the Congress. Although Revanth Reddy himself claimed that there is strong evidence of BRS leaders' involvement in Kaleshwaram, farmhouse drugs, phone tapping, and Formula E race scams, he is protecting them by not making any arrests. Even KCR's visit to Delhi to negotiate with the Congress high command has led to the dilution of these cases, he said.

# Aster Ramesh Hospitals launches new facility in Ongole

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Aster Ramesh Hospitals launched a new facility in Ongole, expanding its capacity to meet the growing healthcare demands of the community. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Minister Dola Sri Bala Veeranjanya Swamy, MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, District Collector

Thameem Ansaria, and several other dignitaries. Managing Director Dr Ramesh Babu emphasised the hospital's mission of Vasudhaiva Kutumbam, showcasing a dedicated team of over 3,000 healthcare professionals committed to selfless service. The hospital, which has successfully operated the Sanghamitra Hospital for the past eight years, has increased

its bed count from 150 to 250, said Dr Pothineni Ramesh Babu. Dr Ramesh Babu reflected on his 36-year journey in healthcare, starting with the establishment of the first cardiac centre in Vijayawada in 1988. His commitment to advancing medical services in the region has led to the importation of sophisticated diagnostic equipment and the

training of medical professionals. To address the historically low public awareness of heart diseases, Aster Ramesh Hospitals launched the "Golden Hour for Heart Attack" campaign. This initiative provides affordable ECG tests, CPR training, and education on first-aid measures through various media platforms. With the introduction

of advanced diagnostic tests like Calcium Score and CT Angiograms, the hospital can now detect coronary artery blockages early, enhancing preventive care. Aster Ramesh Hospitals adheres to national and international quality standards, including JCI, NABH, and NABL. The implementation of Electronic Medical Records (EMR) has improved trans-

parency and efficiency in healthcare services. Additionally, the hospital has integrated Artificial Intelligence and advanced technologies such as Telemedicine and Tele ICU to enhance patient care. The hospital is a leader in medical education, health tourism, and Tele ICU services besides focusing on Aarogyasri patients.



ACROSS THE STATES



Ambassadors of 61 countries to visit Assam

Over 60 heads of missions of different countries will be on a trip to Assam from Sunday during which they will visit the Kaziranga National Park, witness a mega Jhumur dance performance and attend a business summit in an endeavour by the state government to showcase its potential. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is leading the delegation of ambassadors for the trip during which the focus of the state government will be to highlight the peaceful atmosphere here so that the countries which have negative travel advisory regarding the state are convinced to withdraw it. Sarma added. Addressing a press conference at Guwahati, the chief minister said, "External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, along with heads of missions of 61 countries and families of about 22 of them, will reach Jorhat today. They will spend the night there and visit Kaziranga National Park on Monday morning, undertaking elephant and jeep safaris."



Six Bangladeshis nabbed for entering India illegally

Six Bangladeshis, some of whom worked in Mumbai as masons earlier, have been apprehended by the BSF personnel in Meghalaya, officials said on Sunday. The incident happened on Saturday after they crossed over from Bangladesh to Meghalaya once more to go to Mumbai again in search of employment. Acting on a tip-off, the BSF personnel apprehended the six Bangladeshi nationals, four from the West Jaintia Hills district and two from the South Garo Hills district, in well-coordinated operations, they said. Among those apprehended by the BSF also included a woman who had planned a visit to Mumbai for the medical treatment of her husband, a BSF spokesperson said. All the six were handed over to the respective district police authorities where they were arrested, a senior police officer said. Meghalaya has a 443 km-long international border with Bangladesh, about 20 per cent of which is left unenclosed due to difficult terrain, land acquisition and other issues.



'7-day time enough to surrender weapons'

Manipur Chief Secretary PK Singh on Sunday said the seven-day time given for voluntarily surrendering looted and illegally held weapons is enough if one wants to give up arms, and asserted that the forces will take action after the expiry of the period to recover such guns. Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla had on February 20 urged the people of the strife-torn state to voluntarily surrender looted and illegally held weapons within seven days, assuring no punitive action would be initiated against those giving up arms during this period. "The seven-day period is good enough. If one decides to give up arms, it can be done in a day. After that (period), we will go and take such weapons from them," Singh told reporters on the sidelines of an event. He said the administration has been working on multiple fronts and there has to be peace and normalcy. "Weapons should not be at the hands of the public. That is a dangerous situation. Weapons at the hands of those who are not authorised to use it is a dangerous situation...Looted weapons or any other weapons pose a threat to the society."

Don't underestimate trial practice: SC judge

Supreme Court judge Justice A S Oka on Sunday advised law students not to underestimate the significance of trial practice and called it one of the most crucial aspects of their legal career. The top court judge was speaking at the conclusion of a moot court competition hosted by the Campus Law Centre of the Delhi University in honour of late senior advocate K K Luthra, according to a statement. Held on the theme of the

legality of the use of artificial intelligence tools in policing, the 21st-anniversary edition of the K K Luthra Memorial Moot Court Competition was won by Sastra (Deemed to be University), Thanjavur while the Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University emerged as the first runner-up team. Justice Oka was the chief guest at the competition while Delhi High Court judges, Justices Amit Bansal, Mini Pushkarna and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar were the guests of honour.

Those with a slave mentality keep attacking our faith: PM

TERMS MAHA KUMBH AS MAHA KUMBH OF UNITY

PNS ■ CHATTARPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday slammed a section of leaders over their critical remarks on Maha Kumbh, saying those with "slave mentality" keep attacking the country's religious and cultural traditions with the backing of foreign powers.

Modi termed the ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj as the "Maha Kumbh of Unity" after laying the foundation stone for Shree Bageshwar Medical Sciences And Research Institute, which will include a cancer hospital, at Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh.

Bageshwar Dham is a prominent religious site associated with Lord Hanuman frequented by thousands of people. "These days we see that there is a group of leaders who mock and ridicule our religion. They are bent upon breaking the unit and are engaged in dividing people. "Many times, foreign powers too are seen trying to weaken the country and religion by supporting these people," Modi said. Modi's remarks come amid



"Many times, foreign powers too are seen trying to weaken the country and religion by supporting these people," Modi said. Modi's remarks come amid a row over West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee dubbing Maha Kumbh as "Mrityu Kumbh" citing mismanagement and incidents of stampede.

a row over West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee dubbing Maha Kumbh as "Mrityu Kumbh" citing mismanagement and incidents of stampede. She had also accused the authorities of suppressing the death toll. Modi said the haters of Hindu faith have been living in different disguises for centuries. "These people with slave mentality attack our beliefs, temples, saints, culture and traditions. These people abuse our festivals, traditions, and beliefs," he said. Modi further said the agenda

of this section was to break the society and unity of the country. "They have the audacity of throwing slush at our religion and culture which is intrinsically progressive," he added.

Modi underlined the religious significance of Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj which is taking place after 144 years.

He praised 'safai karmis' (sanitation workers) and police personnel for doing a great job in making the Maha Kumbh a successful event.

"This is the great Kumbh of

unity where thousands of doctors and volunteers work with dedication and the spirit of service. People visiting the great Kumbh of unity appreciate these efforts," he said. Modi also praised services rendered by ophthalmologists to the needy people at the mega religious congregation attended by crores.

Highlighting efforts made by his government in fighting cancer, Modi said cancer day care centres will be opened in all districts of the country in the next three years.

PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION ACT

'Preliminary inquiry not mandatory in every case'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has said conducting a preliminary inquiry is not mandatory in every case lodged under the Prevention of Corruption Act and it is not a vested right of the accused.

The court has said while a preliminary inquiry is desirable in certain categories of cases, including those lodged under the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, it is not a mandatory pre-requisite for the registration of a criminal case.

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Sandeep Mehta has said the purpose of a preliminary inquiry is not to verify the veracity of the information received, but merely to ascertain whether the said information revealed the commission of a cognisable offence.

"The preliminary inquiry is not

mandatory in every case under the PC Act," the bench said in its verdict delivered on February 17.

"If a superior officer is in seisin of a source information report, which is both detailed and well-reasoned and such that any reasonable person would be of the view that it prima facie discloses the commission of a cognisable offence, the preliminary inquiry may be avoided," it said.

The top court delivered its verdict on an appeal filed by the Karnataka government, challenging a March 2024 judgment of the state high court.

The high court had quashed an FIR lodged by the Karnataka police station against a public servant for alleged offences under the PC Act.

The public servant was accused of acquiring assets that were disproportionate to his known sources of income.

"If a superior officer is in seisin of a source information report, which is both detailed and well-reasoned and such that any reasonable person would be of the view that it prima facie discloses the commission of a cognisable offence, the preliminary inquiry may be avoided."



Congress to hold AICC session in Ahmedabad on April 8-9

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday announced that it will hold its AICC session in Gujarat's Ahmedabad on April 8 and 9 to deliberate on the challenges posed by the BJP's "anti-people" policies and its alleged attack on the Constitution, as well as on charting the party's future road map.

In a statement, Congress general secretary, in-charge organisation, K C Venugopal said the upcoming session will serve not only as a platform for crucial deliberations but also as a reaffirmation of the party's collective resolve to address the concerns of common people and present a strong alternative vision for the nation.

"This significant gathering will bring together AICC delegates from across the nation to deliberate on the challenges posed by the anti-people policies and the relentless attack on the Constitution and its values by the BJP, while charting the party's



future course of action," Venugopal said.

The session will commence on April 8 with an extended Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, followed by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) Delegates' meeting on April 9, he said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge will preside over both the meetings, which will be attended by Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, all chief ministers of the Congress-ruled states, national office bearers, senior party leaders, and other AICC delegates, Venugopal said.

Atishi becomes first woman to be LoP in Delhi assembly

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Delhi chief minister and MLA from Kalkaji constituency Atishi was chosen as the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly at a meeting of AAP MLAs here on Sunday.

With this, Atishi becomes the first woman to hold the post. AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal was also part of the meeting of the party's 22 MLAs where Atishi was picked. In a press conference, AAP's Delhi unit convenor Gopal Rai said by consensus all AAP MLAs have chosen Atishi as the Leader of Opposition (LoP). MLA from Burari, Sanjeev Jha, proposed Atishi's name as LoP

and all MLAs supported the proposal, said Rai, who is also the MLA from Babarpur.

Speaking at the press conference, Atishi thanked the party chief Kejriwal and all the MLAs.

"AAP will show what a strong opposition's role is in the House and will raise all issues with full force. AAP will ensure that the BJP fulfils all its promises as the party in power. Specifically, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise to provide Rs 2,500 crore to women in the city by March 8. We promise that we will make the Rekha Gupta-led BJP government fulfil this promise."

The first session of the Delhi



Assembly will begin on February 24. In the three-day session, the ruling BJP government has said that pending CAG reports against the performance of the previous AAP government will be tabled in

the House. On the expected tabling of CAG reports, Atishi said it is a routine procedure and that she had sent these reports to the House as CM. Kejriwal, in a post on X, said, "I congratulate Atishi ji for being elected as Leader of AAP in the House. AAP will play the role of constructive opposition in the interest of the people of Delhi."

Atishi also posted on X and said, "The people of Delhi have entrusted us with the role of opposition, and as a strong opposition we will ensure that the BJP government fulfils all its promises made to the people of Delhi."

Lankan Navy arrests 32 Indian fishermen

PNS ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lankan Navy said on Sunday that it arrested 32 Indian fishermen and seized their five fishing boats for allegedly venturing into the territorial waters of the island nation.

In a statement, the Sri Lankan Navy said the arrests occurred during a special operation in the sea area north of Mannar in the wee hours of Sunday.

Political temperatures soar in Bihar ahead of PM's tour

PNS ■ PATNA

Political temperatures soared in Bihar on Sunday, a day ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tour of Bhagalpur, from where he will disburse close to Rs 23,000 crore to nearly 100 million beneficiaries of Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana.

To oversee preparations for the PM's visit, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan arrived in the state a day in advance and interacted with farmers cultivating foxnuts, to draw a plan for the much talked about "Makhana board" announced in the recent budget.

"We took a decision that the Makhana board must be set up in consultation with farmers, who are the real stakeholders. We were not in favour of a diktat being issued from Krishi Bhavan at Delhi," Chouhan told reporters on the sidelines of the 'Makhana Panchayat' held in Darbhanga.

He also disclosed that the PM's function on Monday will have an impact on the entire country as 9.80 crore farmers will be getting Rs 22,700 crore as yet another instalment of Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana.

The former Madhya Pradesh chief minister rubbished the allegation of RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav that the PM had chosen Bihar for

"We took a decision that the Makhana board must be set up in consultation with farmers, who are the real stakeholders. We were not in favour of a diktat being issued from Krishi Bhavan at Delhi."

the function with an eye on assembly polls which are due in a few months.

"Tejashwi should know that Modi today visited Madhya Pradesh where there are no elections. Tomorrow, after Bihar, he is scheduled to go to Assam where no polls are to be held. Our prime minister prefers being among the people to enjoying the comforts of his bungalow."

Incidentally, the charge that the PM's tour was motivated by elections has also come from Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor, a former political strategist who had handled Modi's campaign in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

Talking to reporters in Patna, Kishor said, "Now that polls are due in Bihar, it is quite obvious that the PM will set his eyes on the state."

Earlier, he was busy with Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Haryana."

India to host 2-day conference on women peacekeepers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will host a two-day conference beginning Monday on women peacekeepers at UN missions to highlight their contributions.

The conference will bring together women peacekeepers from 35 Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) from the Global South.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will deliver the keynote address.

The conference is being organised by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in collaboration with the defence ministry and the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK).

"The first-ever Conference for Women Peacekeepers on the theme 'Women in Peacekeeping: A Global South Perspective' will take place in New Delhi on February 24 and 25," the MEA said.

The United Nations will be represented by Under-Secretary-General, Department of Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix and UN Special Coordinator Christian Saunders.

They will join other stakeholders pertaining to the peacekeeping domain, the MEA said in a statement.

HOMEMAKERS TO CHANGEMAKERS

Women entrepreneurs help empower rural Bihar

PNS ■ MUZZAFFARPUR (BIHAR)

In the heart of rural Bihar, where groundwater depletion, extreme heat and erratic weather have caused havoc for farmers, a quiet transformation is underway.

A group of women, once confined to their homes despite their education, have emerged as agri-entrepreneurs, transforming not only their own lives but also helping their communities adapt to the growing threats of climate change. Each agri-entrepreneur (AE) works

with at least 150-200 small and marginal farmers, who are hit the most by these worsening climate challenges. They provide solutions to farmers on irrigation, provide climate-resilient seeds, help out with crop diversification, and act as a helpdesk for digital work—essentially a one-stop centre for all problems they may encounter.

Their remuneration is proportional to the range of services they provide farmers within a panchayat.

Soni Kumari from Hajipur, for instance, began her journey

as an agri-entrepreneur last year by registering a farmer for a farmer card. She then prepared a detailed business proposal based on the farmer's pro-



file—his social indicators, finances and cropping patterns. She then entered the farmer's requirements into a Management Information

System, creating a database of her customers to understand demand and create a business plan for her enterprise.

Once a homemaker, Soni who is a science graduate said she never imagined she would one day be at the forefront of promoting sustainable farming practices. "I opened a shop with a micro-financing loan, where I stock everything from climate-resilient seeds to organic manure and fertilisers. We even have a drone for irrigation," Soni said.

The drone technology Soni

uses has been a game-changer for her, she added.

It sprays water evenly across fields, ensuring efficient water use and reducing labour costs. "We can irrigate one acre of land in just 5-7 minutes at Rs 300-500. Without the drone, this task would take 3-4 hours and labour costs would have been much higher," she said.

But drones are a big investment for the community as the battery lasts only 10-15 minutes per charge and replacing a battery would cost around Rs 90,000, she added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Rise of the Right

Giorgia Meloni's recent speech struck a chord with the Right, yet it also exposed its inherent contradictions

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni recently made headlines with her fiery remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in the US. Speaking via video link, she claimed that the global Right is unfairly branded as a threat to democracy, while the Left enjoys undeserved legitimacy. In her speech, she drew a parallel between figures like Donald Trump, Argentina's Javier Milei and India's Narendra Modi, arguing that when the Left created a global network in the 1990s, it was celebrated, whereas today's Right is vilified for doing the same. While Meloni's argument taps into the grievances of conservative movements worldwide, it is riddled with logical gaps and selective reasoning. Meloni paints a picture of right-wing leaders as persecuted underdogs fighting against an entrenched leftist establishment. However, the reality is more complex. The rise of leaders like Trump, Milei and Modi demonstrates that conservative politics is not an underdog movement but a dominant force in many parts of the world.



Trump served as the President of the United States, Narendra Modi is in his third term as India's Prime Minister and Milei recently won the Argentine presidency. If anything, the Right has been steadily gaining power rather than being systematically oppressed. Moreover, Meloni's assertion that the world no longer believes in the Left's "lies" is an oversimplification. The political landscape remains deeply divided, with both right-wing and left-wing parties winning elections in different parts of the world.

While conservative movements have gained momentum, liberal and progressive politics continue to hold substantial influence. The notion that people have

wholesale rejected the Left is misleading and fails to acknowledge the electoral victories of left-leaning leaders in countries like Brazil, Germany and Spain. Trump's tenure was marked by an unprecedented number of falsehoods, ranging from his claims about election fraud to downplaying the COVID-19 pandemic. If the global Right is positioning itself as a movement rooted in truth, aligning with a figure like Trump severely undermines that claim. The argument that the Right is unfairly labelled as a threat to democracy also ignores the legitimate concerns surrounding authoritarian tendencies within conservative movements. Trump's refusal to accept the results of the 2020 US election and the subsequent Capitol riot were direct attacks on democratic institutions. Similarly, Modi's government has faced criticism for suppressing dissent and Milei has made inflammatory remarks about eliminating key government institutions. Indeed, Meloni's speech captures the defiant spirit of the modern Right, but it also exposes its selective reasoning and internal contradictions. While it is true that right-wing movements have gained traction, it does not follow that concerns about the Right's democratic integrity are unfounded. Yes, the world may be more right than left at the moment—but that does not mean all is right with the Right.

### PICTALK



A worker paints the statue of Lord Shiva ahead of the Maha Shivaratri festival, in Chikmagalur

# Prakriti Lamsal tragic death: A wake-up call

Prakriti Lamsal's tragic fate calls for urgent reflection on education diplomacy, bilateral trust and the necessity of systemic reforms



NAVITA SRIKANT

Armed Forces personnel often narrate stories of valour and courage of Nepali Gorkha soldiers. They say their sacrifice for India's security is unparalleled. The unique tradition of Honorary General Rank to each other's Chief of Army Staff is a jewel in bilateral relations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier noted, "I salute the Nepali braves who have laid down their lives for India" during his address to the Constituent Assembly of Nepal (August 3, 2014).

In bilateral relations such as these, a private university's administration acted inhumanely and irresponsibly to the grievance of harassment – the outcome – a 20-year-old Nepali female student Prakriti Lamsal committed suicide (under investigation) on February 16, 2025, at KIIT Bhubaneswar. Other resident Nepali students, shocked by the alleged suicide, protested against the harassment of Lamsal. Nepali students were abused, asked to leave and forcibly evicted. Hundreds of Nepali students rushed back to Nepal with bare survival means. Nepali students in trauma due to the death of Lamsal and the ordeal they underwent seek answers. So, "What did we miss?"

It has been alleged that Lamsal complained to the college authorities of harassment by her batchmate but no action was taken. Did willful neglect and cruelty lead to Lamsal committing suicide? Access to emergency medical services and safeguarding evidence after being declared dead did not seem to function as one would expect. Undoubtedly, the basic compliances to safeguard students failed. Several key questions are unanswered to day as the state investigation is under progress and justice is yet to be served. The case is no longer about justice for a deceased Nepali student but leaves a question mark on the capability of India as a nation to assure wellbeing and justice to a foreign student. The authorities did not stop at mere oral refusal of information but abused, used fear and forced eviction of hundreds of Nepali students risking



their lives. No doubt that KIIT's conduct should be a template of 'what not to do' for every public or private institution in India dealing with foreign students.

There has to be zero tolerance for actions against the law of the land, the ethos of the nation and the civilisational legacy that India and Nepal take pride in. Every Indian condemned the action of the KIIT Administration and expressed unequivocal solidarity with Nepali Students. It is at this juncture, recollecting PM Modi's Address to the Constituent Assembly of Nepal in August 2014 "When an adverse wind blows in Nepal, India too feels cold."

"How can India be happy if Nepal is unhappy?" One wonders why the Prime Minister has not addressed the people of India and Nepal assuring Nepali Students' safety, security and wellbeing as high priority. Reiterating these words to Nepali parents and students would strengthen relations for times immemorial. Undoubtedly, the Government of India managed the situation diligently, however, it is PM Modi whose personal connection with Nepal reinforces trust among Nepali people. PM Modi has spoken for the rights of Palestinians, Afghans and Bangladeshi minorities. It is even more important that he is seen assuring Nepali Students' concerns.



THE CASE IS NO LONGER ABOUT JUSTICE FOR A DECEASED NEPALI STUDENT BUT LEAVES A QUESTION MARK ON THE CAPABILITY OF INDIA AS A NATION TO ASSURE WELLBEING AND JUSTICE TO A FOREIGN STUDENT

The Vishwamitra vision of India's foreign policy begins at home. To recalibrate the India-Nepal friendship and heal the wounds inflicted by the ill deeds of KIIT, India must be consciously seen as Vishwa Bandhu of Nepal. It is necessary to walk the extra mile towards the safety and wellbeing of foreign students, bring culprits to justice and regain the trust of Nepali Parents as "India First" for educational pursuits.

The education system in Nepal is flawed. On average, about five lakh students appear for grade X every year, and less than 50 per cent pass the exam. Frustrated with ghost colleges and universities, students want to leave Nepal for even Grade X and two levels. If 70 per cent of eligible higher secondary pass-out students are leaving for abroad, then where does the accountability lie for the state of despair among youth?

If the National Lawmakers do not respect the youth's future, where and how the youth will garner respect abroad? The lawmakers roar for a while in Parliament, make powerful nationalistic statements, victim's family reconciles eventually and Nepali lawmakers diseased with short memory move on abandoning pending education reforms.

There has been no news so far if the Nepali government constituted any high-level com-

mittee to review education reforms and migration-related safeguards.

How many of these 70 per cent of students traveling abroad are registered with Nepali missions, and receive any cultural or crisis-handling counselling? When Lamsal did not get counselling support against harassment, why did she not reach out to local law enforcement authorities or the Nepali Embassy?

There have been unfortunate incidents in earlier years with Nepali students studying abroad, as in the case of Pramod Bhattarai found dead in the USA, Shristi Bhandari in Australia and John Lama in Japan. Wake up Nepal!! Invest in your demographic dividend, Nepali youth, impart technical education, skill and empower them with cognitive and socio-emotional skills for holistic development. This is not the first and certainly not the last unpleasant event in global disruptive times.

It is high time that sustainable lessons are learned at all levels. If education diplomacy between the two open border states fails, the repercussions are far-reaching. India and Nepal boasting of timeless relations and open border cultural ties should invest in its youth, their aspirations and importantly grievances.

(The author is a financial, geopolitical and security analyst; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CORRUPTION CONTINUES TO RISE

Madam — Recently, Transparency International, a global organisation, released its Corruption Perceptions Index for 2024, ranking India 96th out of 180 countries. In 2023, India was ranked 93rd, indicating that corruption has increased. Even today, corruption scandals involving politicians, government employees and high-ranking officials continue to surface in every state across the country. Despite the widespread use of digital technology, the level of corruption has not decreased, as evidenced by this report. We often talk about India's glorious past and the ideals of 'Ram Rajya', but honesty, integrity and transparency are rarely reflected in our actions.

There is a clear disconnect between what we preach and what we practice. Moreover, corruption has gained social acceptance, allowing individuals to amass wealth through dishonest means because they know that society primarily respects and honours the wealthy. Honest government employees, leaders and self-employed individuals do not receive the same social recognition. This is why corruption, like the mythical demon 'Bhasmasura', continues to grow day by day. To eradicate corruption, the citizens of the country must become aware and stop giving social respect to corrupt individuals. Additionally, the government must strictly enforce stringent laws against corruption to set an example. Only then can corruption be truly eradicated.

Jitesh Mori | Kutch

### WELFARE SCHEMES FOR DELHIITES

Madam — Newspapers are abuzz with the news about the new BJP government in Delhi under the new CM Rekha Gupta. Now Delhi enters political tranquillity after a decade of turmoil. All the welfare schemes, including Ayushman Bharat, will now be implemented for Delhiites. It also ends an era of confrontation with the Union Government. This is perhaps the first time that the environmental

## New bat virus identified



A recent study has identified a new bat coronavirus in China that has the potential to infect humans, raising concerns about future zoonotic outbreaks. Bats have long been recognised as natural reservoirs for coronaviruses and this discovery underscores the ongoing risk of spillover events where viruses jump from animals to humans. Scientists emphasise

the importance of monitoring such viruses closely, as past outbreaks like SARS and COVID-19 originated from similar sources.

While there is no immediate evidence of human-to-human transmission, the genetic makeup of this new virus suggests it could adapt over time. Factors such as habitat destruction, illegal wildlife trade and increased human-animal interactions contribute to the growing emergence of such diseases. The key takeaway from this finding is the need for proactive research and global collaboration in tracking and containing potential threats. With advancements in virus surveillance and vaccine technology, early detection could prevent future pandemics.

Anushka Bohra | Ujjain

### EDUCATION NEEDS REFORM

Madam — Attention must be drawn to the alarming findings of India's Graduate Skill Index 2025 by Mercer-Mettl. The report reveals that only 42.6 per cent of Indian graduates are employable, reflecting a decline from 44.3 per cent in 2023. This downward trend highlights a growing mismatch between academic training and industry requirements. Bridging this gap requires urgent intervention. Academic institutions must align their programmes with industry demands, incorporating skill-based training, internships and technology-driven learning.

Additionally, collaboration between policymakers, educators and businesses is essential to reform the education system and enhance career readiness. The employability crisis, if left unaddressed, will hinder India's economic growth and global competitiveness.

Akash Kumar | Jagraon

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Steep hike in passport & visa services abroad: A big blow to blue-collar workers

This sharp price hike could impose severe financial strain on most vulnerable citizens, who work under harsh conditions to support their families back home

For millions of Indian workers abroad, securing and renewing essential documents like passports and visas is already a challenging process. However, a newly revised Request for Proposal (RFP) by the Government of India threatens to make it even more difficult by drastically increasing service fees. This move, which could raise costs by 15 to 20 times, is set to impose a significant financial burden on blue-collar workers—individuals who work tirelessly overseas to support their families and contribute to India's economy through remittances.



It is a fact that drastic fee hike threatens millions of Indian workers abroad. The Government of India has introduced a revised Request for Proposal (RFP) for outsourcing Passport, Visa, and Consular (CPV) services across 23 Indian Missions/Posts worldwide. There is genuine concern that this new fee structure could increase service costs by 15 to 20 times and that could impose a heavy financial burden on those blue-collar workers who is considered the backbone of India's global

diplomacy. A mandatory bundled service cannot be justified at an exorbitant price! The proposed model enforces a "Service Fee per application" that requires applicants to pay for a bundled package, including document digitization, fingerprint and facial biometric capture, and four additional services—photocopying, photography, form filling, and courier services. Crucially, this fee is mandatory, even if the applicant does not require all these services. As a result, a simple service that currently costs \$5-\$7 could surge to an alarming \$90-\$100. This hike disproportionately affects Indian workers in Gulf countries, the UK, and beyond, many of whom struggle to make ends

meet. It is also well-known that Indian blue-collar workers abroad face several unseen struggles. They form the backbone of industries such as construction, hospitality, and domestic labour across the Gulf, the UK, and Southeast Asia. Most come from humble backgrounds, often taking loans to secure jobs abroad. Their primary goal is to support their families back home, sending every possible rupee as remittance to cover household expenses, children's education, and medical needs. Despite enduring harsh working conditions, low wages, and exploitative contracts, these workers persevere for a better future. However, the government's latest fee hike threatens their already fragile financial stability. It is easy to understand how this fee hike will harm Indian workers. Earning as little as Rs 20,000- Rs 30,000 per month, many blue-collar workers barely manage to save. A sudden jump in service fees from \$5-\$7 to \$90-\$100 means they will have to cut down on basic necessities. Many may even struggle to renew passports or access essential documentation,

jeopardizing their employment abroad. Many of these workers rely on loans to finance their overseas employment. Higher service fees add financial strain, potentially pushing them into debt or forcing them to return home jobless because they cannot afford visa renewals or work permits. Furthermore, the hike will be a direct hit to India's foreign remittances. India received over \$100 billion in remittances in 2023, much of it from blue-collar workers. If rising service costs force many to return home, the country could see a significant drop in remittances, affecting millions of dependent families and impacting the national economy. The question remains—will India's policymakers stand by their overseas workers, or will they burden them further with unnecessary and exploitative service costs? The government must reconsider this fee structure to prevent further hardship for millions of Indian workers who contribute not only to their families but also to the nation's economy.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)



B K JHA



## FIRST COLUMN

## A KASHMIRI AT MAHA KUMBH

Maha Kumbh is a deeply immersive experience, a transformative journey like no other



JEHANZEB ALLAQABAND

As a Kashmiri Muslim, I, Jehanzeb Allaqaband, had heard of the Maha Kumbh Mela but never imagined experiencing it. In 2025, my friend Yuvraj Srivastava invited me to witness the event in Prayagraj, and what was meant to be a two-day visit turned into an unforgettable week. The spiritual energy and unity of the gathering left me deeply moved, and I didn't want to leave, though prior commitments forced me to return home. The Kumbh Mela was a unique blend of ancient rituals and modern technology. The event attracted millions of pilgrims and was especially significant due to a rare cosmic alignment. It was more than just a religious event; it was an experience of learning, connection and respect for all cultures. I was struck by the seamless combination of tradition and innovation, such as AI being used to manage crowds and sustainability efforts. The efforts of the Uttar Pradesh government under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were impressive. The cleanliness, security and hospitality were top-notch. I was particularly moved by the creation of a temporary city for the pilgrims, with 150,000 tents, medical camps and free healthcare. When I fell ill, I received prompt treatment without charge. One remarkable initiative was the "Vidya Kumbh" project, which provided free education to the children of 15,000 sanitation workers. This showed the administration's commitment to both the event and the well-being of the workers' families. As a Kashmiri Muslim, I was warmly welcomed by the pilgrims, and the sense of unity and brotherhood was palpable.

The experience left a lasting impression on me, strengthening my belief in the power of faith and unity. My time at the Maha Kumbh Mela was a life-changing experience. As a social activist, I am com-



mitted to applying the lessons of spirituality, unity, and service to humanity within my community. The event's success under Yogi Adityanath's leadership is a model of effective public administration, showing how large-scale gatherings can honour tradition while embracing progress.

Indeed, Maha Kumbh is not just a religious congregation; it is a symbol of unity, inclusivity and spiritual awakening. Held once every twelve years, this grand event draws millions of people from across the world, transcending barriers of caste, creed, nationality and social status. From ascetics and spiritual seekers to scholars, pilgrims, and tourists, everyone comes together in pursuit of divine blessings, wisdom, and self-discovery.

At its core, Maha Kumbh embodies the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—"the world is one family." It fosters an environment where people from diverse backgrounds coexist in harmony, sharing prayers, knowledge and experiences. The sacred rivers become the melting pot of traditions, where faith unites humanity beyond differences. It is a place where the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlettered, stand side by side, immersed in devotion and introspection. Beyond its spiritual significance, Maha Kumbh serves as a cultural confluence, bringing together art, philosophy, and age-old traditions. It is a global event where seekers of truth and wisdom are welcomed with open arms. Maha Kumbh is for all—an enduring testament to inclusivity, faith, and the boundless spirit of togetherness that defines humanity.

(The writer is an activist; views are personal)

# Agarwood: The golden green tree revives Tripura's economy



V K BAHUGUNA

As Tripura emerges as India's Agarwood hub, farmers across the country are eyeing its cultivation. However, unlocking its full potential requires streamlining regulatory policies



The Agar tree known scientifically as *Aquilaria malaccensis* in India is found primarily in the North-Eastern states of Assam, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. The capital city of Agartala was once full of Agarwood trees and hence named after it by the Tripura Royal family. Myanmar, Sumatra, Laos, Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, Borneo and the Philippines. It is a critically endangered tree species due to its heavy demand and illegal trade and is on the Red list of the International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN). There are 15 crore Agarwood trees in India and the tree species are making a ripple in Tripura due to proactive actions taken by the state government on its promotion and value addition and providing a platform for its conservation and promotion on private lands. Now farmers from other states are taking seedlings from Tripura and North-East and this species is poised to grow in other suitable localities. I visited Tripura in the second week of this month to study the economic and ecological potential of Agar trees in Tripura and as such for the farmers of the country. The Architecture of Agar tree management especially in Tripura has undergone a sea change for the last eight to ten years and the Dharmanagar area in North Tripura is now becoming an epicentre of Agar tree propagation and value addition. Earlier the distillation units were raided and destroyed by the forest department now being promoted along with the big push for plantation on farmers' land considering its immense potential for increasing the income of farmers manifold. Considering the demand for Agarwood oil and chips in the international market especially in Middle Eastern countries there is huge scope for its propagation in a big way. The Agarwood market was initially monopolised by a single family of Assam as it thrived also from illegal cutting of trees from Tripura and Assam but now after a major policy thrust by the government and involvement of farmers and traders, Tripura is driving not only the conservation of Agarwood tree but leading the nation in its innovative value addition.



THE FOREST DEPARTMENT DURING THE LAST SEVEN YEARS HAS WORKED ON ALL FRONTS OF AGAR FROM PROPAGATION TO MARKETING TO VALUE ADDITION AND SOON IT WILL BE GROWN IN EVERY HOMESTEAD MAKING ITS CONSERVATION EASY AND VALUE ADDITION PERFECT FOR THE FARMERS TO EARN BIG MONEY

Thanks to policy support from the state government the forest department during the last seven years has worked on all fronts of Agar from propagation to marketing to value addition and soon it will be grown in every homestead making its conservation easy and value addition perfect for the farmers to earn big money. Let us discuss the economics of growing Agarwood trees and the steps needed to be further taken by the government of India and the States. Each tree if inoculated artificially or naturally attacked by fungi like *Fusarium*, *Lasiodiplodia*, *Penicillium*, and *Aspergillus* after around seven years of age or more will yield resin in the next 5 to 6 years and the tree shall be felled to extract the resin which then can be distilled to produce around 20 to 25 ml of Agar oil worth Rs 20,000 and worth Rs 80,000 wood chips in the international and national market according to Mr Parvin Agrawal IFS officers who as head of Agar project oversaw the Agarwood revolution in Tripura. The sale price of one litre of Agar oil in the international market is 10 lakhs per litre and of the chips is 1 lakh per kg. A farmer can earn anything between 15 to 20 lakh per year from around 500 trees in one hectare of Agarwood plantation and thus 2 crores in ten to fifteen years. Agar, therefore, is a Golden Green Tree and a wonderful gift of nature that needs to be promoted on a large scale in India through trials along with a policy push that helps farmers adopt it on a large scale. During my visit, I spoke with Mr Mamon Ali proprietor of Momin Enterprise distillery in Kadamtala in North Tripura and visited his plantations and distillery. He is having a turnover of more than one crore every year. The government of Tripura has also

promoted its diversification in perfume making from the oil of Agar resin. In Middle Eastern countries Agar oil is used directly but a few value addition units for perfume and Agarbatti production had been set up by a few entrepreneurs in Tripura and the quality of the perfume is very pleasing. In yet another example, the forest department had through a public-private partnership initiated a project to artificially inoculate agar plantation near Agartala through chemicals under which nine inoculation supplier firms are participating. The initial results are encouraging after burning the chips for perfume. The chips are sold for religious purposes to Buddhists and other religious groups and for that, the smoke yields a good fragrance. During my visit to Tripura, I met a senior Priest of Mahakaal Jyotirlinga Ujjain in Agartala on February 11 who is going to invest 5 crore to help farmers grow Agar trees in collaboration with the forest department to produce Agarwood dust for the Mahakaal temple of Ujjain. The Royal family of Baroda had funded him for this investment. Now the question is what needs to be done at the national level to promote income generation for the farmers. Agar tree is under the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species (CITES) of wild flora and fauna. Therefore, Agar product sales and exports are regulated as per international protocols. For every state, a quota is fixed and recently the Government of India had increased the quota from states. However, if we want to make Agar Tree a household tree the government needs to emulate the example of one trader Mr Habib Chaudhury from Assam. He took his Agar business from Assam to Laos and settled there and is now a very rich and big trader because he

found the Laos government had created a very trader and farmer-friendly quick system of approval for export within a few days. In India, it is still a big bureaucratic process and involves a lot of paperwork at every stage which discourages the farmers and entrepreneurs. The government apart from promoting Agar plantation trials in suitable agro-climatic zones of the country must first create a customer-friendly business environment. Like in Laos, the DFO office should issue the clearance online and it must have online access with govt of India and the CITES office simultaneously so that clearance is given to traders quickly. With a suitable infrastructure and a friendly regulatory policy framework, the Agarwood business profile has the potential of touching 15,000 to 20,000 crores in the next ten to twelve years. The tea export of 250.7 million kg during the fiscal year 2023-24 with a value of US\$ 776 million corresponding to around 7,000 crores Rupees. I have been writing to create an Agarwood and Red Sanders Board at the government of India level to promote these two species at the international level and to double the farmer's income as desired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and discussed with PCCF and Principal Secretary RK Samal who is keen on leapfrogging the Agarwood policy framework. It is, therefore, high time that both Centre and States sit together and chalk out a policy framework for this by creating a National Board for Agarwood and Red Sanders to be housed in the Commerce Ministry. (The writer is former Director-General of ICFRE and Chancellor FRI Deemed University, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change; views are personal)

## The footwear industry takes a step towards sustainability and social empowerment

With the footwear sector projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of nearly 12.39 per cent, the emphasis on sustainable growth has never been more crucial

The Indian footwear industry has evolved significantly in the 21st century, blending tradition with innovation. Once solely focused on fashion and quality, the industry now embraces sustainability, fairness and social empowerment. Of late the industry is aggressively pursuing its corporate social responsibility as it is in direct touch with the people on the lower rung of the society. With the footwear sector projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nearly 12.39 per cent from 2025 to 2032 (as per Statista), the emphasis on sustainable growth has never been more crucial. **Embracing CSR as a Core Strategy** The journey towards sustain-



SUNIL BATRA

ability begins with a clear vision that prioritises human welfare alongside business growth. As the Indian footwear industry rapidly expands, it is adapting to meet the expectations of socially conscious consumers. Companies are integrating CSR efforts with government schemes to focus on environmental conservation, education and healthcare.

For instance, Relaxo's CSR initiatives stem from a deep-seated commitment to uplifting underserved communities and making a tangible difference in their lives. **Transformative Projects** One of the most compelling examples of CSR in action is seen in Rajasthan's Alwar district, where water scarcity has long been a pressing issue. In response, check dams have been constructed along the Ruparel River under the 'Mukhya Mantri Jal Sanchay Yojana'. These reservoirs, with a total storage capacity of 146,000 cubic meters, have transformed local agriculture by recharging 455 hectares of irrigated land, benefiting nearly 1,000 families. This initiative highlights the power of

responsible water management in enhancing rural livelihoods. Another impactful initiative is a large-scale afforestation project near the Sariska Tiger Reserve. By planting 50,000 saplings, including 25-30 per cent fruit-bearing trees, this project not only restores biodiversity but also provides sustainable income opportunities for local communities. By involving villagers directly in conservation efforts, such projects promote environmental awareness and reduce human-wildlife conflicts. **Education and Skill Development:** Beyond environmental initiatives, the Indian footwear industry is actively driving change in education and skill development. Recognising the



importance of quality education, companies like Relaxo have taken significant steps to improve school infrastructure. The Parivartan Model School Project, for instance, has revitalised over 100 government schools in Haridwar district, particularly in the Khanpur and Laksar blocks. With 77 schools already renovated, the

project has upgraded classrooms, built protective boundaries, and improved sanitation and mid-day meal facilities. These enhancements have significantly boosted student enrollment and retention, particularly among girls, creating a more inclusive learning environment. Equally transformative are vocational training programs that equip young people with marketable skills. Collaborations with NGOs such as GMRFV and Teamlease Foundation have facilitated training for nearly 400 youths annually in fields like customer service, front office management, banking, and financial services. With a job placement rate of around 80 per cent, these programmes are empowering young indi-

viduals with skills that ensure long-term career stability. Healthcare is another area where CSR initiatives are making a significant impact. Relaxo's "Nayan Avoidable Blindness Project" is a shining example. This initiative provides high-quality eye care services to 194 villages in Rajasthan's Tijara Block. Since its inception in 2018, the project has established two advanced vision centers staffed by certified ophthalmic professionals. Utilising state-of-the-art technology, these centers offer comprehensive eye exams and vision correction services. The project also prioritises training local youth, particularly women, in eye care professions, thereby fostering economic independence. By 2026,

the initiative aims to screen nearly 60,000 students across 281 government schools, improving both health outcomes and quality of life in marginalised communities. **Sustainable Business Growth:** The future of India's footwear industry is bright, fueled by robust market growth and a strong commitment to CSR. As consumer awareness grows, leading companies like Relaxo are proving that profitability and social responsibility can go hand in hand. By prioritising people and sustainability, the Indian footwear sector is setting a global example—demonstrating that businesses can thrive while making a lasting positive impact on society. (The writer is ED & CFO, Relaxo; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

# India, UK to resume talks on trade agreement from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After a gap of over eight months, India and the UK will resume negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) here from February 24, an official said.

UK's Secretary of State for Business and Trade Jonathan Reynolds will be here for resumption of the talks. He will hold a bilateral meeting with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, the official added.

The India-UK FTA negotiations were launched on January 13, 2022.

Total 13 rounds of negotiations have been held till December 2023. The 14th round, which began on January 10, 2024, was underway when negotiations were paused by the UK side in May 2024 due to elections in that country.

The talks would resume the discussions from the progress achieved previously and seek to bridge the gaps for expeditiously closing the trade deal, the official added.

The agreement is aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investments.

In such pacts, two countries either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on maximum goods traded between them. They also ease norms for promoting trade in services and bilateral investments.



The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty.

On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items.

Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services, including banking and insurance.

The talks for the agreement may get an impetus as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that foreign direct investment (FDI) limit for the insurance sector will be raised from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

Presenting Union Budget 2025-26, the Finance Minister had said that foreign direct investment (FDI) limit for the insurance sector will be raised from 74 per cent to 100 per cent. The two countries are also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT).

There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which includes

goods, services, investments and intellectual property rights.

The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from USD 20.36 billion in 2022-23. The average duty on goods imported from India into the UK is 4.2 per cent.

According to economic think tank GTRI, items including textiles, apparel (shirts, trousers, women's dresses, bed linen), footwear, carpets, cars, marine products, grapes, and mangoes would be benefited from the pact as these products face relatively low to moderate tariffs in the UK.



## USAID funded 7 projects in India in FY24

Not related to 'voter turnout': Finance Ministry report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a raging political controversy over USAID's alleged role in influencing Indian elections, the latest annual report of the finance ministry has disclosed that the agency funded seven projects worth USD 750 million in 2023-24.

"Currently, seven projects worth a total budget of USD 750 million (approx.) are being implemented by USAID in partnership with Government of India," as per the Finance Ministry annual report for 2023-24.

For the financial year 2023-24, an obligation of a total of USD 97 million (about Rs 825 crore) has been made by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) under the seven projects, it said.

The Department of Economic Affairs under the Finance Ministry which is the

nodal department for bilateral funding arrangements has also shared the details of projects funded in 2023-24 in the report.

During the year, no funding was made for enhancing voter turnout but to projects related to agriculture & food security programme; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); Renewable Energy; disaster management and health.

Besides, it said, funds were committed for Sustainable Forests and Climate Adaptation Program and Energy Efficiency Technology Commercialization and Innovation Project.

The United States of America's bilateral development assistance to India started in 1951 and it is mainly administered through USAID. Since its commencement, USAID has provided economic assistance of over USD 17 billion to India in various sectors for over 555 projects.



## Delta Electronics to expand presence in India

Taiwan-based Delta Electronics is investing USD 500 million, announced in 2015, under the government's Make in India initiative to expand its presence in the domestic market, a top company official said. The company, through its Indian arm has made significant investments since its entry into the domestic market in 2003, Benjamin Lin, President of Delta Electronics India said in a press conference at "Elecrama 2025", organised by IEEMA in Greater Noida. "India is a key market for Delta, and we are committed to driving its industrial and energy transformation with our advanced solutions. Our strategic investment in the Krishnagiri facility underscores our dedication to local innovation, manufacturing excellence, and sustainability," he told reporters. The company is in process of investing USD 500 million in India which also includes expansion of the Krishnagiri facility, according to a presentation made by Lin. "Through this investment, we aim to strengthen India's self-reliance in smart manufacturing and energy infrastructure while contributing to global industry standards," he said adding the company aims to make part of that expansion operational by 2025-end.



## India's coal imports flat at 201 MT

India's coal imports remained flat at 201.30 million tonnes (MT) in the April-December period of the ongoing financial year. The country's coal import was 201.52 MT in the year-ago period, according to the data compiled by Mjunction services, a leading name in the e-auction space. Coal import in December declined to 19.28 MT over 23.35 MT in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal year. "Imports in December 2024 stood around 19.28 million tonnes as against 23.35 MT imported in December 2023," it said. During April-December 2024, non-coking coal imports were at 128.85 MT, lower than 133.46 MT imported during the same period in the previous year. Coking coal imports were at 40.64 MT during April-December 2024, down from 42.81 MT reported for April-December 2023. "The high stock position in the domestic market, coupled with lower-than-expected demand, has led to a drop in import volumes. We expect the demand scenario to remain unchanged in the coming weeks," Mjunction MD & CEO Vinaya Varma said. Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy recently said reducing coal imports and increasing domestic production is the focus of the government.

## 'IT sector may see cautious salary hikes amid economic headwinds'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Salary increments in India's USD 250 billion IT services sector are projected to be moderate in fiscal year 2025, as companies navigate a complex landscape of global economic uncertainties, evolving skill demands, and the increasing adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), according to experts.

Industry experts predict an average wage increase of 4-8.5 per cent, a notable step down from previous years, signalling a shift towards more pragmatic compensation strategies.

"The outlook for salary hikes this year is quite cautious," noted Krishna Vij, VP, TeamLease Digital. "Industry players are looking at increments in the 4 per cent to 8.5 per cent



range, which is lower than what we've seen in previous years. This slowdown is largely due to global economic challenges, reduced discretionary spending, and shifting business priorities."

Companies are being more conservative with their salary budgets, and many have even pushed their appraisal cycles beyond the usual April-June period, she said, which has made salary revisions less predictable in the current scenario. "Organisations are shifting

to skills-based pay, leveraging Tier II hiring for cost efficiency. Instead of salary hikes, retention bonuses, ESOPs, and project-based incentives are being implemented as compensation strategies," Vij said.

Reed & Willow CEO Janoo Motiani also gave a similar expected hike range, pegging it between 5-8.5 per cent.

"The days of double-digit hikes seem behind us—at least for now. The industry is settling into a more pragmatic rhythm, with average hikes expected to hover between 5 per cent and 8.5 per cent. This aligns with the cautious optimism seen across the sector. TCS has taken the lead, announcing hikes ranging from 4-8 per cent effective April 2025, setting the tone for the rest of the industry."

## FPIs withdraw Rs 23,710 cr from equity markets

Total outflow at Rs 1 lakh cr in 2025

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pulled out over Rs 23,710 crore from the Indian equity markets so far this month, pushing total outflows past Rs 1 lakh crore in 2025 amid rising global trade tensions.

Going forward, V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, believes that revival of FPI investment in India will happen when economic growth and corporate earnings revive. Indications of that are likely to happen in two to three months.

According to the data with the depositories, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)



offloaded shares worth Rs 23,710 crore from Indian equities so far this month (till February 21). This came following a net outflow of Rs 78,027 crore in January. With these, the total outflow by FPIs has reached Rs 1,01,737 crore in 2025 so far, data with the depositories showed.

This massive selling has resulted in the Nifty yielding negative returns of 4 per cent year-to-date.

## BoM slashes interest rate on retail loan by 25 bps

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) has cut interest rate by 25 basis points on retail loans, including home and car loans in line with reduction in repo rate by RBI.

After a gap of 5 years, RBI reduced the repo rate, the rate at which banks borrow from the central bank, by 25 basis points to 6.25 per cent on February 7.

Following this, the benchmark rate for home loan has been reduced to 8.10 per cent, one of the lowest in the banking industry, BoM said in a statement on Sunday.

At the same time, it said, car loan came down to 8.45 per cent per annum.



## Marico expects double-digit revenue growth

Home-grown FMCG major Marico expects to deliver a double-digit revenue growth in FY25 helped by sequential improvement with price hike and better volume, its MD & CEO Saugata Gupta said. However, he also mentioned that as far as profitability is concerned there is inflationary pressure on the material inputs in the second half of FY25 and the operating margin should be in the "broad region of 20 per cent" helped by a strong and institutionalised cost management system. "If you look at the volume growth trajectory every quarter, we have sequentially improved. I think the way we look at it is that we should be able to deliver double-digit revenue growth. Our aspiration is to deliver top quartile volume growth," Gupta told PTI. The "diversification journey" of Marico, where it is increasing its play in the food segment, continues to gather momentum and is doing very well, he added. "For example, food in the last two quarters hit an annual recurring revenue (ARR) of Rs 1,000 crore. We have a digital business, and two of our digital brands have scaled. Digital businesses put together have a very low cash burn," he said.

## Markets to track global cues, FII trading activity: Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global trends, trading activity of foreign investors and news flow on tariffs are expected to influence movement in the equity market in a holiday-shortened week ahead, analysts said.

Equity markets would remain closed on Wednesday for Mahashivratri.

"This week, we expect Nifty to remain in consolidation mode; tracking the mixed global market cues, US trade policy announcements and geopolitical developments with regards to the Russia-Ukraine war," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee-dollar trend would also dictate market trends this week.

"Investors are keeping a close eye on upcoming pivotal indicators, such as the US Core PCE Price Index and India's GDP growth rate. The



market's mood remains cautious, with pessimistic sentiments likely to linger until there is a marked improvement in corporate earnings and a conducive environment with easy global liquidity and stabilised currency," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Last week, the BSE benchmark declined 628.15 points, or 0.82 per cent, and the NSE Nifty went lower by 133.35 points, or 0.58 per cent.

"Reciprocal tariff concerns continued to dominate the global and the Indian equity markets," Shrikant Chouhan, Head-Equity Research, Kotak Securities, said.

Chouhan added that news flow on tariffs is expected to influence equity markets in the near term.

## Sebi mulls expanding investors pool for angel funds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi is looking to expand the definition of qualified institutional buyers (QIB) and remove the 200-investor cap, allowing angel funds to access a broader pool of accredited investors.

This move will enable more wealthy investors to participate, boosting funding for startups. It ensures that only financially strong investors take on high-risk investments, helping Angel Funds raise more capital and support early-stage companies.

Angel Funds, a type of venture capital fund, mobilize money from investors to support startups.

However, concerns have been raised about inadequate verification of investors' risk appetite, the onboarding of numerous investors without strong financial backing, and

potential conflicts with private placement regulations under the Companies Act, 2013.

To address these concerns, Sebi previously proposed that only Accredited Investors (AIs) should be allowed to invest in Angel Funds.

Now, the regulator is seeking feedback on amending the definition of QIBs to include accredited investors, specifically for offering investment opportunities and allocating investments through angel funds.

Additionally, Sebi has proposed removing the 200-investor cap for Angel Funds.

Under the Companies Act, private placements cannot be offered to more than 200 investors unless they are QIBs.

Currently, Angel Funds provide investment opportunities to a large number of investors, even though actual investments per company are limited to 200.

# 'Robust infra makes TN key investment hub'

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Various factors including business friendly environment, strategic location, robust infrastructure has led Tamil Nadu's emergence as a key investment hub, a report by real estate consulting firm CBRE South Asia Pvt Ltd has revealed.

The report jointly prepared by CBRE South Asia in association with Confederation of Indian Industry Tamil Nadu recently said the industry specific policies

released by the Tamil Nadu government have also played a major role in attracting investments and generating employment, significantly.

The policies rolled out by the government offer subsidies and incentives thereby driving growth in key sectors like electronics, automobiles, information technology and IT enabled services, data centres among others.

"The government is developing industrial and defence corridors to enhance the industrial



ecosystem further promoting balanced growth across all districts," the report said on Sunday.

On the real estate front, the report said the office space in Chennai was likely to cross 100 million sq ft by end of 2026 with

total commercial space currently at 89 million sq ft. "The private equity investments made in the Chennai office assets touched USD 1.19 billion in 2022-24," it said.

The influx of capital and entry of prominent developers have facilitated the construction of high-quality office buildings, providing various space options for occupiers, it said. The Chennai office space which was once dominated by technology is currently witnessing a shift towards

companies engaged in banking, financial services and insurance industry (BFSI). "Chennai is also positioning itself as a major hub for Global Capability Centres and it is ranked third in GCC leasing after Bengaluru and Hyderabad. GCC leasing in Chennai stood at 2.9 million sq ft in 2024," the study said. With its strong talent pool, corporate ecosystem and abundant quality office space, the state has solidified its position as a preferred destination for Global Capability Centres.

"Tamil Nadu's strategic vision of becoming a USD 1 trillion economy by 2030 is driven by its robust industrial and services sectors. The continued attractiveness of the state as an investment destination in India, particularly for global, domestic manufacturing players, is expected to further push it to the forefront of innovation and technological evolution. CBRE Chairman and CEO India, Southeast Asia, Middle East and Africa, Anshuman Magazine said.

## Adani Group pays Rs 58,104 cr tax in FY24

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ports-to-power conglomerate Adani Group on Sunday said group companies paid Rs 58,104 crore in taxes in 2023-24, up from Rs 46,610 crore in the previous financial year.

The taxes paid include direct contributions like global taxes, duties and other charges borne by Adani portfolio of companies, indirect taxes contributions and duties collected and paid on behalf of other stakeholders, and other levies such as social security contributed for the benefit of the employees. The conglomerate helmed by billionaire Gautam Adani released its Tax Transparency Reports for financial year 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024). "For financial year 2023-24,

Adani Group's total global tax and other contributions to the exchequer amounted to Rs 58,104.4 crore, showcasing a significant increase from the previous year's Rs 46,610.2 crore through its portfolio of listed entities," it said in a statement. The details are covered in the independent reports published by seven of the group's listed entities - Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, Adani Green Energy, Adani Energy Solutions, Adani Power, Adani Total Gas, and Ambuja Cements.







## 'I made Sanya's character a bit like me—little milder, putting herself out there'



TEJAL SINHA  
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

**A**rati Kadav, known for her distinctive storytelling and emotionally charged narratives, is currently basking in the success of her latest film, *Mrs.* The film, an adaptation of the critically acclaimed Malayalam movie *The Great Indian Kitchen*, has resonated deeply with audiences, sparking conversations about gender roles, marriage and self-discovery. As the film continues to engage viewers, Kadav reflects on her creative journey of adapting the original work, the motivations behind her choices and her experience working with lead actress Sanya Malhotra.

"I'm really happy with the conversation and dialogue," says Kadav with a tone of genuine gratitude in this exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*. "It's just nice to see that people are responding and connecting to the film so much." She elaborates on her initial feelings about adapting the original Malayalam film for a North Indian audience, admitting that while she was excited, she also felt apprehensive. "Initially, when we were planning to adapt this for North India, I was apprehensive because I'm a huge fan of the original. But I felt it needed to be slightly more accessible," she explains. "My mother, for instance, is a typical audience for a story like this, and I knew she would connect with it."

The desire to broaden the film's appeal, especially to younger viewers, also influenced her casting decisions. "I just felt that we could go wider with it. We could cast someone whom young girls really relate to. For example, Sanya Malhotra—she's someone many young girls see themselves in. That was the idea behind adapting it." By blending universal truths with her personal voice, she has created a film that resonates with audiences on a profound level, demonstrating her unique gift as a filmmaker.

For Kadav, *Mrs.* was deeply personal. Having seen similar experiences unfold in North India, she felt compelled to tell this story from her own perspective. "North India has a lot of these small, small things that I've seen firsthand. I felt it was important to tell this story from my perspective," she explains. "This is a very burning, very urgent story. I wanted my mother to watch it and I wanted other women, who may not be open to watching a Malayali film, to be able to connect with it."

Adapting a beloved film with such a dedicated fan base was not without its challenges. Kadav acknowledges that audiences, particularly those who engage with films online, often have strong emotional attachments to the original.



"When you remake a film that people have a strong relationship with, it's always a bigger challenge," she notes. "The question was, how do we break that challenge?" To overcome this, Kadav and her team focused on maintaining a high standard of technical quality while also staying true to the core honesty of the story.

"I made it with a lot of honesty, sincerity and love," she explains. "I'm telling the story of my aunts, my cousins, my Didi—people I admire. I've met young girls, whom I never thought would go through something like this, but they are. I wanted to tell their stories with the honesty they deserve."

She also reflected on the responsibility she felt toward the women who shared their experiences during the research phase of the film. "For the sacredness of the relationship I had with these girls who were honest enough to open up to me, I thought I should also be honest with my work when I make it for them," she says, emphasizing the deep sense of duty she felt toward those whose stories she was telling.

Speaking of her collaboration with Sanya Malhotra, Kadav couldn't help but praise the actress for her dedication and emotional range. "Sanya is a director's dream. She prepares so hard, brings so much sincerity and depth to her character. She had diary entries for every scene and met many women to truly empathise with them," Kadav shares. "Her empathy was so high that she was crying along with them, listening to their stories. She brought that empathy into this role."

Kadav also spoke about the physically and emotionally demanding nature of the role for Sanya. "It was a very intense role, not just emotionally, but in terms of the shoot itself. I was shooting it like a theater piece, making them do big, big scenes in one go. I would take multiple retakes until I got the right vibe of the scene," she reveals. "There's one scene where Sanya is eating cassata ice cream. We did five or six takes for that, so she must have eaten three or four ice creams for that scene alone. In every take, the ice cream became worse and worse and we channeled that into the scene."

Kadav also highlighted Sanya's authenticity, noting that the actress doesn't rely on tricks like glycerin to evoke tears. "She doesn't pretend to be sad—she actually feels it. As we progressed, Sanya became deeply affected by the role. She had to detach herself sometimes and remind herself it's just a role, but she was so emotionally invested that she felt it deeply. She would say, 'I can't believe this happens to real girls.'"

The adaptation also brought with it some narrative shifts. While the original film revolves around the Sabarimala Temple ruling, Kadav made a deliberate choice to shift the focus toward a dance troupe and YouTube channel. "For me, the whole story had a stronger POV of this girl who's enthusiastic about her own passion," Kadav explains. "We really wanted to bring her passion to the forefront—just like how she keeps going back to cooking, we wanted her to keep going back to her passion for dancing and making videos."

Kadav further reflected on the emotional core of the film, particularly a pivotal moment where Sanya's character is asked to erase her videos. "When someone asked her to delete the videos, it felt like asking her to erase her complete identity," she says adding, "In *Mrs.*, we didn't adapt the Sabarimala plotline, as it didn't resonate with North Indian audiences. However, we touched on Karva Chauth, a festival that symbolises patriarchy and subtly questioned its underlying norms without going too extreme."

As the film progresses, Kadav's personal voice continues to influence the narrative. She reflects on how her own perspective shaped certain key moments, particularly scenes that felt particularly personal. "There were a lot of elements that I thought were very unique to the adaptation. Especially in the scenes where Sanya is looking at herself in the mirror or trying to dance—those moments felt very personal to me."

She also shared that the excitement, sweetness and vulnerability of Sanya's character were reflective of her own experiences. "The whole point of view—the excitement, the sweetness, the way she's still seeking validation—was very much a part of my personality too. I made Sanya a bit like me, just a little milder. She's trying to impress, she's understanding, and she's putting herself out there."

Among Kadav's favourite scenes is one where Sanya visits a friend's house, gets drunk and laughs uncontrollably. "That was a uniquely personal moment. It felt like it was our own—it truly reflected both the character and my own connection to her."

When asked about a scene every man in India should watch, Kadav offered a simple yet profound perspective: "Just one day in the life of that character," she said. "It could be any day because so often, we don't see what women do. A lot of their work is invisible. Men go to the office, their work is visible. But women—especially those we label as housewives—are doing so much. In *Mrs.*, the scene where Sanya is upset but continues working encapsulates this. Men often take a break when they're upset, but women don't have that luxury—they have to keep going."

Looking ahead, Kadav revealed that she is working on several new projects, including a few science fiction scripts that maintain a deep emotional connection. "I'm working on a few scripts right now. Some in the science fiction genre, but with a very deep emotional connect. You'll hear about them soon."

With *Mrs.*, Kadav has once again proven her exceptional ability to craft narratives that are not only engaging and deeply poignant but also grounded in real-life experiences.



**I'm telling the story of my aunts, my cousins, my Didi—people I admire. I've met young girls, whom I never thought would go through something like this, but they are. I wanted to tell their stories with the honesty they deserve**

## Innovations driving sustainable luxury

The world is changing every single day in 2025 in the direction of a more sustainable and greener future. In a world that is rapidly changing, sustainability is now a need rather than an option. As environmental issues get more attention, hotels, resorts and other lodging establishments are trying to combine comfort and elegance with an understanding of their environmental responsibilities. Consumer expectations, technology developments, and the urgent need to slow down climate change are the main drivers of this transition.

### Renewable energy utilisation

One of the best strategies to increase the sustainability of the hospitality industry is to use renewable energy sources. To lessen their need for fossil fuels, several hotels are making investments in geothermal, wind and solar energy. Solar panels, for instance, may power anything from water heating systems to lights, thereby reducing emissions and electricity costs. In order to guarantee that renewable energy sources power their operations, several properties are also collaborating with green energy providers.

### Waste reduction strategies

Amrita Gupta, Director of Manglam Group and Founder President of CREDAI Rajasthan Women's Wing shares with us that the conservation of water is the cornerstone of environmental sustainability. She adds, "It's important to use less water and find newer ways to save more every day. Hotels are implementing comprehensive recycling programs, composting organic waste and exploring waste-to-energy technologies. Meanwhile, food waste is also a significant concern, and many establishments now partner with food banks or adopt smart inventory management systems to reduce excess. Additionally, some hotels are repurposing wastewater for irrigation or cooling systems, thereby conserving water."

### Eco-friendly guest practices

It's critical to motivate visitors to take part in environmental initiatives. Significant environmental advantages may result from this practice. Reusable toiletry dispensers, computerised check-ins to cut down on paper waste, and towel and linen reuse programs are all being promoted by hotels. Another method hotels are using is offering rewards, such as loyalty points or discounts, to encourage eco-friendly behaviour.

### Growing demand for sustainable Travel

The demand for green hospitality is largely driven by environmentally conscious travellers. "Hotels that demonstrate their commitment to sustainability through certifications like LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) or EarthCheck often attract eco-con-



scious travellers. Additionally, many booking platforms now offer filters that allow travellers to choose eco-friendly accommodations, further reinforcing the importance of green hospitality," shares Amrita.

### Sustainable hospitality practices

Sustainability in hospitality is not limited to energy conservation and waste management. The industry's green transformation also extends to design, sourcing and guest engagement.

### Sustainable hotel design and construction

Green building practices are shaping the future of hospitality. Hotels are increasingly constructed using sustainable materials, such as recycled wood, reclaimed metal and locally sourced stone. Additionally, modern designs incorporate natural lighting, efficient insulation, and ventilation systems that reduce energy consumption. These efforts not only lower the hotel's carbon footprint but also create aesthetically pleasing, healthier environments for guests.

### Locally sourced and organic food options

One of the most impactful ways hospitality businesses can promote sustainability is through food sourcing. Supporting local farmers and producers reduces transportation emissions and strengthens regional economies. Farm-to-table dining experiences, where restaurants use ingredients grown in their gardens, are becoming popular among eco-conscious travellers. Seasonal and organic menu options further enhance sustainability efforts while offering guests fresh, high-quality meals.

### Eco-friendly transportation solutions

Many luxury resorts and hotels are taking steps to provide sustainable transportation options for guests. Electric vehicle (EV) charging stations,

bicycle rentals, and shuttle services using hybrid or electric vehicles are now common in green hospitality. Encouraging guests to explore destinations through walking or cycling not only reduces emissions but also enriches their travel experience.

### Business benefits of sustainable hospitality

While sustainability is often perceived as a moral obligation, it also presents significant business advantages. Adopting green initiatives can lead to cost savings in energy and water consumption, reduce waste disposal expenses and enhance brand reputation. Hotels that prioritise sustainability often attract a loyal customer base, particularly among younger travellers who value ethical business practices.

Additionally, government regulations and incentives in many regions encourage businesses to adopt environmentally friendly operations. Tax benefits, grants and subsidies for implementing green technologies make it financially viable for hotels to transition towards sustainable practices.

Tourists can fully observe how hotels and resorts have been adopting green practices to reduce carbon footprint. This not only enhances the experience of the guests but shows their commitment towards protecting the environment. As we move further into the 21st century, sustainable hospitality will become an industry standard rather than a niche approach. Technological advancements, such as AI-powered energy management systems and smart room controls, will further enhance sustainability efforts. Moreover, as consumers become more environmentally conscious, the demand for eco-friendly accommodations will continue to grow. Businesses that are embracing sustainability are not only contributing to a greener planet but are also securing their place in a future where responsible tourism is the norm.

## Nikita Dutta reveals fitness regime beyond workout

In an era where instant gratification often extends to our eating habits, actress Nikita Dutta stands as an inspiration for disciplined and mindful living. A strong advocate for fitness, she has maintained an unwavering commitment to health for over a decade. Known for her passion for running, Nikita has been participating in marathons for the past ten years, with an impressive six-year streak at the prestigious Bombay Marathon.

At a recent event, Nikita proudly shared her long-standing commitment to avoiding processed foods. She revealed:

"I've actually been following this for the last 13 years of my life since I adopted a healthier lifestyle and I swear by it. I'm very proud to say that I have not touched instant noodles in the last 13 years—no Maggi, no Ramen, none of that. I have not touched any biscuits, you know, the classic ones you get in a packet. I've also avoided farsan, and my entire theory is that no matter how healthy they claim to be, they will have preservatives. Anything that comes in a packet for six months, a year, or two years is not part of my diet."

Her strict stance on processed foods highlights her belief in consuming fresh, unprocessed ingredients, a lifestyle choice that has helped her maintain peak fitness.

Beyond her disciplined diet, Nikita's fitness journey is inspiring. She actively engages in high-intensity workouts, strength training and endurance-building activities. Her dedication to running, especially her consistent participation in marathons, showcases her deep-rooted passion for physical well-being.

At a time when many people seek shortcuts to fitness, Nikita's philosophy is refreshingly authentic. Rather than resorting to fad diets or trendy health hacks, she believes in long-term consistency, clean eating, and an active lifestyle.

*Ganpati*, a film that received critical acclaim and praise for her performance.

Looking ahead, she is set to share screen space with Saif Ali Khan and Jaideep Ahlawat in *Jewel*

*Thief* and *The Walking of a Nation*, directed by the acclaimed Ram Madhvani. With such an exciting lineup of projects, she is poised to continue her impressive career trajectory.



# Babar conspicuously absent from Pakistan nets

PTI ■ DUBAI

Pakistan's star batter Babar Azam was conspicuous by his absence from the team's training and there was no clarity on his availability for the Champions Trophy (CT) clash against India here on Sunday even as the country's cricket board chief Mohsin Naqvi urged the side to win "at any cost".

Speculation is rife that he may be not be considered for the match after he was not seen at the practice session on Saturday evening. The practice was attended by PCB chief Naqvi and Azam was the only player who chose to take the day off.

Azam copped a lot of criticism for a 94-ball 64 in the 60-run loss to New Zealand in the opening match. He was lambasted for failing to accelerate while the asking rate crept up in the chase of 320 runs in Karachi. Interim head coach Aqib Javed, who addressed the media after practice, did not give any specific reason for



Azam's absence, saying that the former captain chose to rest.

Last night, Naqvi met the Pakistan cricket team at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium, and urged them to win Sunday's crucial match against India "at any cost" to silence critics. Pakistan

would be knocked out of the tournament if they lose this game.

The team was scheduled to practice for about two hours but the proceedings were halted within an hour as Naqvi took "stock of things", met captain Mohammad Rizwan and head coach

Aqeeb Javed and discussed cricketing matters with them. PTI has learnt through reliable sources that he urged the captain, coach and players to give it their best shot against India and win the match to "silence their critics, including himself."

He was seen having a long

chat with pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf. Naqvi, who was reportedly unhappy with the selection of the team, made it a point to meet each and every player, coach and support staff.

Later, Naqvi told media-persons that the Pakistani team was ready to face India and do well against them.

"It would be a great game and our team is fully prepared and in my opinion, they are in form. We are with our team, whether they win or lose," he said.

When asked about Pakistan having to play India here despite being the hosts of Champions trophy, he quipped: "You should ask this to Indians if the same would have happened to them, then how they would have felt?"

India had refused to travel to Pakistan citing security concerns and are playing their share of Champions Trophy matches in Dubai. Even the final of the tournament will be held in Dubai if India go the distance.

# India face Dutch in Women's FIH Pro League match

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

A faltering India would look to halt the slide when they take on reigning champions the Netherlands in their women's FIH Pro League match here on Monday.

India's home leg so far hasn't gone according to script with the team currently placed seventh in the standings with seven points from six games.

They had opened their campaign with a thrilling 3-2 win over England but lost the second game against the same opponents in the shoot-out.

Against Spain, the hosts came agonisingly close but suffered back-to-back defeats, first losing 3-4 and then being edged out 0-1 in a tightly-fought match.

Against Germany, India endured a 0-4 defeat in the first leg but bounced back by securing a 1-0 win in the second leg.

The team would look to forget the dismal run and just carry forward the momentum of defeating Germany in the



previous match and hope the Dutch are not at their menacing best.

The Dutch are in dominant form, having comprehensively defeated England 5-1 and 6-0 in their last two matches. They have recorded five wins and just one loss in their six matches, placing them second in the table with 15 points.

They will be eager to maintain their momentum and continue their impressive run in the competition.

India captain Salima Tete acknowledged that getting past the Dutch would be easier said than done, though she added her team was motivated as they

wanted to end the home leg on a high.

"The Netherlands are one of the strongest teams in the world, and we know it's going to be a tough match. But we are motivated to give it our best shot and finish the India leg of the tournament on a high. Our win against Germany gave us a lot of confidence, and we have worked on improving our weaknesses," said Salima.

India and the Netherlands have faced each other seven times since 2013, with the European powerhouse winning five of those matches, while India have secured just one win.

# Inter Milan beats Genoa 1-0

PTI ■ ROME

Lautaro Martinez scored late and Inter Milan beat Genoa 1-0 to take the provisional lead in Serie A on Saturday.

Lautaro met a corner with a header that deflected off a defender's chest before going in to break a deadlock at the San Siro.

The Argentina striker then climbed up on a security fence to celebrate with Inter's fans on the other side.

Inter moved one point ahead of Antonio Conte's Napoli, which can reclaim the lead with a win at Como on Sunday.

Next weekend, Inter visits Napoli. AC Milan falls further into crisis after Champions League exit

Four days after getting eliminated from the Champions League, AC Milan dropped further into crisis with an error-strewn 2-1 loss at Torino.

The mistakes started with an own goal from Malick Thiaw five minutes in when a clearance from Milan



goalkeeper Mike Maignan ricocheted off his own defender into the net.

United States international Christian Pulisic then failed to convert a penalty for the first time in his career when Torino goalkeeper Sergej Milinkovic-Savic lunged to his right to push away the American's low spot kick.

Milinkovic-Savic has saved four of the five penalties he's faced this season.

After a shot from Milan's Joao Felix hit the post, the Rossoneri equalized with a shot from Tijjani Reijnders in the 74th. But Torino

reclaimed the lead two minutes later with a quick shot from Gvidas Gineitis following a free kick that seemed to surprise Milan.

Milan remained seventh while Torino moved up to 11th.

On Tuesday, Milan was eliminated from the Champions League by Feyenoord on 2-1 aggregate.

Earlier, Parma coach Cristian Chivu had a successful debut with a 2-0 win over regional rival Bologna; and fourth-place Lazio was held to a 0-0 draw at relegation-threatened Venezia.

# UP Warriorz to face challenge from Mandhana

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's sturdy middle-order, in-form skipper Smriti Mandhana and a partisan home crowd will be the major challenges UP Warriorz will have to face when the two teams clash in their Women's Premier League match here on Monday.

India vice-captain Mandhana has been in red-hot form, smashing five half-centuries and a ton in the last 10 matches she has played for the country and her franchise.

But the top-order batter would not like to take Deepti Sharma's side, who just picked their maiden win of the season, lightly, knowing well that Australia pace all-rounder Tahlia McGrath's power-hitting could turn tables around anytime in the contest.

However, after having made a confident start with back-to-back victories, and chasing down a 200-plus score against Gujarat Giants with plenty of deliveries to spare, Mandhana



would have oodles of confidence in her side going into the contest.

Though RCB suffered a setback in their previous outing against Harmanpreet Kaur's side Mumbai Indians, it was more on account of the Bengaluru team's middle-order having an off day, though Elyse Perry stood rock-solid with a fine 81.

Overall RCB have performed remarkably well so far this season, one of the reasons they are leading the table with four points from three games and maintaining a healthy net

run rate (NRR) of +0.835.

UP Warriorz, on the other hand, have not enjoyed a great start which is evident as they are placed fourth with two points from three games in the five-team league.

It's partly because of the team dishing out below-par performance despite having ace India spinner Deepti McGrath and England stalwart Sophie Ecclestone in the side.

After consecutive losses to Gujarat Giants and Delhi Capitals, they did manage to defeat the Delhi franchise in

the return match at Bengaluru but it was more on account of individual efforts from the young right-arm pacer Kranti Goud (4/25) and Australian veteran spinner Grace Harris (4/15).

A team like RCB might prove to be a difficult customer for them.

Teams (From)

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Smriti Mandhana (c), Kanika Ahuja, Ekta Bisht, Charlie Dean, Kim Garth, Richa Ghosh (wk), Heather Graham, VJ Joshiha, Sabbhineni Meghana, Nzhat Parween, Jagravi Pawar, Ellyse Perry, Raghuvi Bist, Sneha Rana, Prema Rawat, Renuka Singh, Georgia Wareham, Danni Wyatt-Hodge.

UP Warriorz: Deepti Sharma (c), Anjali Sarvani, Chamari Athapaththu, Uma Chetry, Sophie Ecclestone, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Arushi Goel, Kranti Goud, Grace Harris, Chinelle Henry, Poonam Khemnar, Alana King, Tahlia McGrath, Kiran Navgire, Shweta Sehrawat, Gouher Sultana, Saima Thakor, Dinesh Vrinda.

# Arsenal loses to West Ham

PTI ■ LONDON

A prolific striker might have cost the team the chance to win the Premier League title. Frequently collecting red cards hasn't helped, either.

Second-place Arsenal was unexpectedly beaten 1-0 at home by West Ham on Saturday to dent its title challenge, just when it seemed Liverpool was starting to look vulnerable.

The result left Liverpool with an eight-point lead, having played the same number of games as Arsenal, and that advantage could grow when the Reds play Manchester City away on Sunday.

Jarrod Bowen's 44th-minute header secured a win for West Ham, which arrived at Emirates Stadium with just one victory in its last eight games. There was worse to come for Arsenal, with left back Myles Lewis-Skelly handed a red card in the 73rd following a video review for his foul on Mohammed Kudus as the last man.

It was Arsenal's fifth red card of the campaign — two more than any other team — and its disciplinary record under Arteta is understandably coming under scrutiny, given it has contributed to valuable dropped points this season.

Maybe a bigger annoyance to fans is the club's decision to not sign a proven out-and-out striker either last offseason or in the winter transfer window.

With forwards Kai Havertz, Bukayo Saka, Gabriel Martinelli and Gabriel Jesus all out injured, Arsenal had only two shots on target against West Ham. "I am very disappointed, and obviously very angry as well," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "Even though we had 20 shots, I never felt that we were at the standard and the level that we needed."

"We have to be (angry), and I hope we are because we didn't hit the levels today, and I am very much responsible for that so I am very, very angry."

# Guirassy scores 4 goals for Dortmund

PTI ■ DORTMUND

Serhou Guirassy became the first player since Erling Haaland to score four goals for Borussia Dortmund in a 6-0 rout of Union Berlin on Saturday in the Bundesliga.

"Four goals, victory, amazing fans," Guirassy told broadcaster Sky after the game. "The first time in my life, I think. Four goals is such a great thing. I'm happy of course, but always, the most important is the team and the victory."

Haaland scored his four in a 5-2 win at Hertha Berlin in November 2020.

"World class," Dortmund coach Niko Kovac said of Guirassy's performance. "There's nothing else to say."

Kovac also praised midfielder Pascal Gross for setting up four goals.



Guirassy had only scored nine in 19 league games prior to Union's visit, far from reaching the 28 goals he scored in 28 Bundesliga appearances for Stuttgart last season.

Altogether he scored 44 goals in 58 games over two seasons at Stuttgart after joining the German club from French team Rennes in 2022.

The Guinea star was the second

player after Germany defender Waldemar Anton to join Dortmund from Bundesliga runner-up Stuttgart last summer, but both struggled to impress as Dortmund made a faltering start to the season.

The club finally fired Nuri Sahin as coach in January, appointing Kovac, the former Eintracht Frankfurt and Bayern Munich coach, in his place. But

Kovac also labored to get the team going as Dortmund lost both of his first two Bundesliga games in charge.

Performances in the Champions League suggested the team was capable of more.

Dortmund won 3-0 at Sporting Lisbon, then drew 0-0 against the Portuguese team on Wednesday to seal progress to the last 16.

Guirassy scored one goal and set up another in Lisbon. He has 10 goals and five assists in the Champions League this season.

At Stuttgart, Guirassy thrived in a strike partnership with Germany forward Deniz Undav. At Dortmund he has been more isolated.

He benefited from Gio Reyna being given a rare start on Saturday as Kovac gave the young American just his second league start this season.

# New Zealand aim for semifinal spot, Bangladesh fight for survival

PTI ■ RAWALPINDI

A confident New Zealand side will be eager to seal their semifinal spot when they take on Bangladesh, who will be fighting for survival, in their Champions Trophy (CT) Group A match here on Monday.

The Black Caps started their campaign in dominant fashion, defeating hosts Pakistan by 60 runs. This emphatic victory placed them at the top of Group A with a healthy net run rate of 1.200.

A win on Monday will put them within touching distance of a semifinal berth.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, suffered a six-wicket loss

to India and currently sit third in the group with a net run rate of -0.408. They must secure a victory to stay in contention for the knockout stage.

New Zealand looked clinical in their opening match, and their recent triumph in the tri-series has further helped them adapt to the conditions in Pakistan.

However, they now face a selection dilemma with the potential return of Rachin Ravindra from a head injury.

In his absence, Devon Conway and Will Young opened the innings. Initially, Young was expected to make way for Ravindra, but the right-hander's century against Pakistan has complicated the

decision — in a positive way.

Moreover, Young has consistently proven his ability to handle spin bowling effectively. Dropping him would also disrupt the left-hand-right-hand combination at the top, which could be crucial for New Zealand's batting strategy.

Meanwhile, Conway appears to be regaining his best form.

Apart from this selection call, New Zealand look well-settled and are unlikely to make further changes to their playing XI.

Bangladesh, however, face an uphill task and must regroup quickly after their disappointing defeat against neighbours India.

# Chappell calls curtains on his five-decade-long journalistic career

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Legendary cricketer Ian Chappell's insightful writings, critical reviews and anecdotes from his playing days will be missed after the Australian icon called curtains on his more than five-decade-long journalistic career, penning his last piece on Sunday.

The 81-year-old fondly recalled some of the best moments he has written about, including the legendary battle between Sachin Tendulkar and the late spin wizard Shane Warne in the 1998 Chennai Test, as well as VVS Laxman's iconic 281 against Australia in Kolkata, in his last column for 'ESPNcricinfo'.

"There have been many pleasures from writing, notably Sachin Tendulkar combating Shane Warne in Chennai. Other highlights included writing about the genius of Brian Lara, Ricky

Ponting's aggression, and VVS Laxman's classic 281 in Kolkata," Chappell wrote.

However, he felt the time was right for him to "put down the pen and pack away the computer", adding that retirement from journalism was as emotional as stepping away from cricket.

"I have been writing for more than 50 years, but the time has come and this will be my last column. Retirement from journalism is similar to cricket - I knew the time was right," said the former top-order batter, who played 75 Tests, scoring 5,345 runs.

"In my playing days I asked former Australia captain Richie Benaud if retirement was a difficult decision. 'No Ian,' Benaud replied wisely, 'It's easy. You'll know the right time.'"

Chappell said he would miss writing columns and shared an anecdote about how alcohol cannot enhance the quality of a piece, giving his



example as a test case. Chappell added his columns has a "substantial influence" of American sports writer Walter Wellesley "Red" Smith. "The influence of Pulitzer-winning writer 'Red' Smith

was substantial. He always strove for the right descriptive word, and in the days of the typewriter stated, 'You have not got a column until you are knee deep in opening pars.' Smith also added, 'No column is enhanced by alcohol.'"

"I observed that rule almost exclusively, but having just retired from cricket, I forgot it once in my early days of journalism. I met a few mates in the bar as the game was interrupted by rain. After having a few beers I suddenly realised the game might be called off but I still had to file a column."

"With a copy-taker exhorting me to hurry, I finally finished the column despite my fingers missing the correct key a number of times. I read it the next morning and it was absolute codswallop, so I decided never to drink again before finishing my column," Chappell wrote.

The Australian said he was a

stickler for deadlines and despite coming close to busting them a few times, he managed to avoid the embarrassment.

"Despite that stumble, I never missed a deadline - came close a couple of times, but was never late. My wife Barbara-Ann has been a positive influence both as an excellent sub-editor and also by telling me."

"However, the time has come to close the writing section of my computer. I wish each and every one who has helped and befriended me along the way all the best in their future endeavours."

"I will miss filing a column, as writing has been a favoured task. A writing career spanning more than 50 years means I surpassed my journey both as a cricketer and a broadcaster. A justifiable part of writing is, it's all your own work -- it might be rubbish but at least it's your rubbish."

# LAKSHMI MANCHU REVEALS HOW SRIDEVI CHANGED HER VIEW ON BEAUTY SECRETS



Actress Lakshmi Manchu in the latest episode of her popular show *Beauty With Lakshmi* welcomed Maheep Kapoor as a guest, where the two discussed various important topics surrounding self-care and women's health. The episode focused on issues like perimenopause, the significance of a good diet and sleep, and the need for women to prioritize their well-being for a healthier life.

In the course of the conversation, Lakshmi Manchu shared a heartwarming and amusing anecdote about her encounter with the legendary actress Sridevi. Recalling a moment from her gym experience, Lakshmi revealed how she once saw Sridevi on a treadmill with her hair oiled up, an image that left a lasting impression on her.

Lakshmi shared, "I remember being at a gym once when she was there and I couldn't enter because she had put this oil in her hair and was on the treadmill. This was in Hyderabad and then I realized that Sridevi ji was on the treadmill

with her hair fully oiled." The anecdote was a personal reflection on how Lakshmi, as a South Indian, had grown up with the practice of oiling hair, which she once found cumbersome. However, witnessing Sridevi's natural beauty and confidence while performing this traditional ritual made Lakshmi rethink her views.

She went on to say, "Growing up, oil was a special part of South Indians and earlier, I used to hate it. But that one moment just shifted it for me. I realised that if the legendary Sridevi is doing it, it has to be incredible because she is all natural."

The heartwarming story highlighted not just the influence Sridevi had on those around her, but also the significance of embracing cultural traditions in modern times. Lakshmi's personal revelation resonated with viewers, offering a glimpse into the admiration she had for the late actress while also sharing a relatable moment from her own life.



## Aditya Om's *Bandi* takes on climate change

Aditya Om's highly anticipated film *Bandi*, which addresses the urgent issue of climate change, is scheduled to release in theatres on February 28.

Directed by Raghu Tirumala and produced by Gully Cinema, the film has already attracted global attention, earning several prestigious accolades at film festivals worldwide.

*Bandi* is being hailed as India's first environment-themed thriller. The story follows Aditya Om's character, who struggles to survive in an unpredictable and rapidly changing environment. With breathtaking visuals captured across various forests both in India and abroad, the film beautifully portrays the awe-inspiring yet perilous nature of the world's ecosystems. The stunning cinematography and gripping narrative have generated excitement, especially among environmental advocates and

moviegoers alike. Aditya Om, known for his dedication to authenticity, took on all his own stunts in *Bandi*, venturing into remote and difficult terrains to ensure a realistic portrayal of survival in nature.

The film will follow an innovative distribution strategy, beginning with a limited number of screenings, with plans for expansion based on audience reception. Producers Venkateshwar Rao Dattu and Raghu Tirumala have also teamed up with various NGOs and social organisations to ensure that the film reaches its target audience. The teaser and the recently released trailer have already been well-received, further fueling excitement ahead of the film's release.

*Bandi* marks Aditya Om's first film of 2025 and he is optimistic that it will not only enhance his acting career but also create a lasting impact on Indian cinema and raise awareness about environmental issues.

## Malavika Mohanan describes *Hridayapoorvam* as her most important career milestone so far

Actress Malavika Mohanan recently shared a heartfelt glimpse into her experience on the sets of her upcoming Malayalam film *Hridayapoorvam*, expressing her excitement at collaborating with two of Malayalam cinema's most iconic figures, Mohanlal and Sathyan Anthikad. The actress took to Instagram to share images from the set, describing it as a "dream come true" moment for her.

In her post, Malavika reflected on how significant the experience was in her career. "I would definitely call this day one of the most important days of my career so far," she wrote. "To join hands with these two icons of Malayalam cinema, Sathyan Anthikad sir and Mohanlal sir, is nothing short of a dream come true." She added that growing up watching their films, which she described as cult classics of Malayalam cinema, shaped her perspective on cinema and the craft of acting.

Malavika also offered a glimpse into the plot of *Hridayapoorvam*, describing it as a "slice of life story." She explained that the film tells the story of two strangers whose lives intersect in a unique and intriguing way, a genre she's always been eager to explore. "As I embark on the beautiful journey of *Hridayapoorvam*, I cannot wait to see how this journey unfolds, all the wonderful things it's going to teach me, and most importantly, all the memories I'm going to make."

Expressing her gratitude for her co-stars and the film's team, she shared how she felt a sense of camaraderie and friendship from the very start. "PS. Thank you for being such lovely pillars of support @anoop.sathyan @akhilsathyan. I feel like I found such good friends in both of you even before we actually met and that's such a rare thing in today's world."

Alongside *Hridayapoorvam*, Malavika is also preparing for the release of *The Raja Saab* with Prabhas and *Sardar 2* with Karthi,



further solidifying her rising status as a Pan-Indian actress with a diverse range of upcoming projects.

Notably, Sathyan Anthikad and Mohanlal were last seen collaborating in the 2015 film *Ennum Eppozhum*, making their reunion in *Hridayapoorvam* a highly anticipated event for fans of Malayalam cinema.

## Dil Raju unveils the mass folk anthem *Reddy Mama* from *Barabar Premistha*

Attitude Star Chandra Hass is gearing up for the release of his upcoming rustic love and action entertainer *Barabar Premistha*, directed by Sampath Rudra and produced by Geda Chandu, Gayatri Chinni and AVR under the banners of CC Creations and AVR Movie Wonders. The film, which also features Megna Mukherjee, a Miss India finalist, in the lead role and Arjun Mahi as the antagonist, recently launched its first single, the high-energy folk anthem *Reddy Mama*.

Star Producer Dil Raju had the honour of unveiling the track, adding to the

excitement surrounding the film's musical journey.

The song, composed by RR Druvan, is a lively and energetic folk anthem that blends tradition with an infectious rhythm, making it a must-listen for all music lovers. With vibrant vocals from Nakash Aziz and Sahiti Chaganti, *Reddy Mama* is sure to get listeners on their feet, singing and dancing along. The earthy lyrics penned by Suresh Gangula perfectly complement the dynamic energy of the composition, giving the song a true mass appeal.

Chandra Hass and Megna Mukherjee

deliver a captivating performance with their energetic and dynamic dance moves, bringing the song to life. Shot on vibrant and visually stunning sets, the entire sequence radiates high-energy vibes from start to finish, making it a treat for both music and dance enthusiasts.

With its catchy tune and dynamic visuals, *Reddy Mama* is expected to dominate music charts and become a major hit. The movie's makers are planning for an upcoming theatrical release, adding to the anticipation for *Barabar Premistha*.



## Ajith survives two crashes in a month, remains safe

Ajith Kumar, known for his love for racing as much as his acting, encountered a frightening car crash during a racing event in Valencia, Spain. This marks his second accident in just a month, leaving his fans both concerned and relieved after hearing the update on his condition.



In a video shared by his manager, fans were shown the heart-stopping moment when Ajith's car crashed and flipped multiple times before coming to a halt at the sidelines of the track. Despite the severity of the crash, the actor emerged unharmed, giving his fans a sigh of relief.

Ajith had participated in Round 5 of the racing event, where he secured an impressive 14th place and received praise for his performance. However, Round 6 took a turn for the worse as Ajith's car was involved in two crashes, both caused by other vehicles. The manager clarified that Ajith was not at fault for either accident. In the video shared, Ajith can be seen continuing his race after the first crash, showing his resilience and determination. Unfortunately, the second crash saw his car topple twice, but once again, Ajith came out unscathed.

"Despite the first crash, he got back into the pit and was doing well. When the second crash happened and his car toppled twice, his perseverance was stronger than ever. Thanks for all the prayers and concern; Ajith Kumar is all right," his manager shared in an update.

Earlier this month, Ajith had faced a similar situation in Estoril, Portugal, where he had an accident while training for a race. Fortunately, that crash didn't result in any injuries, though it left his car severely damaged.

## Trisha Krishnan's *Good Bad Ugly* character first look drops

In an exciting update for her fans, actor Trisha Krishnan has officially joined the cast of the much-anticipated film *Good Bad Ugly*, produced by Mythri Movie Makers. The production house took to X (formerly Twitter) on Saturday to reveal the first look of Trisha's character, Ramya, in the film.

In a 17-second video clip, Trisha is seen inside a house, with her expression shifting from surprise to joy as she spots someone approaching. Clad in a casual green top and denims, the actor exudes charm, teasing what is sure to be a pivotal role in the film. The teaser video was shared with the caption: "The ever charming @trishkrashers as #Ramya from the world of #GoodBadUgly."

Directed by Adhik Ravichandran, *Good Bad Ugly* also stars Ajith Kumar in the lead role. The film is set to hit theatres on April 10, 2025. Ajith completed filming for the movie in December last year and fans are now eagerly awaiting what promises to be an action-packed cinematic experience.

Trisha is truly a force to be reckoned with in Indian cinema and her fans have plenty to look forward to. Apart from *Good Bad Ugly*, the actor will also appear in *Vidaamuyarchi*, starring opposite Ajith. Directed by Magizh Thirumeni, the action thriller was initially scheduled for a Pongal 2025 release, though its date has since been postponed.

Additionally, Trisha will be seen alongside Suriya in his next movie, which will be helmed by RJ Balaji. The film promises an intriguing storyline and features music composed by Sai Abhyankkar and cinematography by G K Vishnu.

The versatile actress is also set to star in *Identity* alongside Tovino Thomas, as well as in Mani Ratnam's eagerly awaited project *Thug Life*. This star-studded film includes Kamal Haasan, Ali Fazal, Abhirami, Nasser, Joju George, Sanya Malhotra, Rohit Saraf and Aishwarya Lekshmi. *Thug Life* is slated for release in theatres on June 5, 2025.



## Sundeep Kishan's *Mazaka* trailer teases fun-filled family entertainment

Sundeep Kishan, one of the most promising actors in the South Indian film industry, is all set to entertain audiences with his upcoming action comedy film, *Mazaka*. Directed by Trinadha Rao Nakkina, the movie promises to bring a fun-filled ride with a perfect mix of action and comedy.

Since its announcement, *Mazaka* has garnered significant attention from fans across the country. The makers released the trailer for the film, giving fans a glimpse into what's in store. The 2-minute 20-second trailer introduces the plot and the lead characters, setting the stage for an exciting cinematic experience.

The trailer reveals that Sundeep Kishan plays the role of a young man in his 20s who falls in love with a girl, portrayed by Ritu Varma. Meanwhile, Sundeep's character's father, played by the versatile Rao Ramesh, also embarks on a romantic journey

and is looking to settle down. As the story unfolds, it is clear that the father-son duo finds themselves in a series of amusing and chaotic situations. While the trailer does not delve into specific details, it hints at plenty of comedy, action and family-friendly fun.

*Mazaka* marks the first collaboration between actor Sundeep Kishan and director Trinadha Rao Nakkina, known for his successful track record of making engaging entertainers. The film also features an ensemble cast that includes the talents of Murali Sharma, Ajay, Anshu, Srinivas Reddy and others. The combination of this talented team adds further anticipation for the film's release.

With its action-packed sequences and comedic storyline, *Mazaka* is expected to be a hit among fans of family-oriented entertainment. The film is all set to hit the big screens on February 26.



## Teja Sajja dons the role of super yodha in *Mirai*

Superstar Teja Sajja, who has captured the hearts of audiences with his stellar performance in *Hanu-Man*, is gearing up for another grand cinematic journey. His upcoming film *Mirai*, a pan-India action-adventure, promises to be a game-changer in the superhero genre. Directed by Karthik Ghattamaneni and produced by TG Vishwa Prasad and Kriti Prasad under the banner of People Media Factory, *Mirai* is set to captivate viewers with its larger-than-life storytelling and visual extravaganza. The much-awaited film will release worldwide on August 1, 2025, in eight different languages and both

2D and 3D formats. With the Raksha Bandhan and Independence Day holidays around the corner, *Mirai* is strategically positioned to draw massive crowds, riding on the festive spirit. The release date poster for *Mirai* has already captured attention, featuring Teja Sajja standing amidst snow-covered mountain peaks, holding a staff and gazing intently into the distance. The grandeur of the film is evident in this striking image, setting the stage for a thrilling cinematic experience. *Mirai* boasts a talented ensemble cast, with Teja Sajja in the lead role of a Super Yodha. His portrayal

of this larger-than-life character is expected to elevate the superhero genre in Indian cinema. The film also stars Rocking Star Manoj Manchu as the antagonist, a role that promises to be as menacing as it is unforgettable. Ritika Nayak plays the female lead, starring opposite Teja Sajja, adding more depth to the film's ensemble. *Mirai* is shaping up to be a cinematic experience like no other. Under the expert direction of Karthik Ghattamaneni, the film's visuals are set to impress, with the director also handling cinematography and writing the screenplay.