

# the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY  
The pioneer

Revanth Reddy has set up a six-member extortion gang which is wreaking havoc in the state. This "Ali Baba and his half a dozen thieves," consisting of Tirupathi Reddy, Kondal Reddy, Vem Narendra Reddy, Ronin Reddy, Faheem Qureshi and AV Reddy

is involved in blackmail, extortion, land grabbing and other illegal activities. Congress leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi must answer their silence regarding Revanth's extortion activities

- KTR, BRS MLA

P2

**MHA: Modi govt determined to end Naxalism**

**'EVERY BITE OF BIRYANI TELLS THE STORY OF HYDERABAD'S DIVERSE CULTURE'**

**Sukumar's daughter Sukriti shaves her head for the FILM**

**DON'T MISS...**

**72 kids placed for adoption in Hyd**

In all, 72 children were placed for adoption in Hyderabad, according to Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty, as he calls for stringent measures to protect children's rights. Speaking at a district-level convergence meeting on Operation Smile XI, organised by the Women and Child Welfare department at the Collectorate conference hall, he revealed that Hyderabad district has been divided into 28 zones under Operation Smile and Operation Muskan for effective implementation. Currently, 2,224 children are being ...

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**'Rs 2,500 monthly aid to women**

The BJP on Friday released the first part of its manifesto for the February 5 Delhi polls, keeping women at the centre of its poll pitch by promising Rs 2,500 monthly aid for them, Rs 21,000 for every pregnant woman, LPG cylinders at Rs 500 and also Rs 2,500 pension for senior citizens. BJP president J P Naada unveiled the 'Sankalp Patra' at a press conference here, and asserted the manifesto - which reflects a direct attempt by the BJP to rival AAP's welfare-focused governance model - would serve as...

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**Economic growth poised to rebound**

India's economic growth is poised to rebound as domestic demand regains strength, though the stickiness in food inflation warrants careful monitoring, the latest RBI Bulletin released on Friday said. An article in the 'State of the Economy' published in the January Bulletin also noted that the economic outlook for 2025 is divergent across countries with some loss of speed in the US; weak-to-moderate recoveries in Europe and Japan; more moderate growth profiles in emerging and developing countries...

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**Dream is still alive to play for India**

After a prolonged wait on the sidelines and a melancholic social media post nearly three years back, Karun Nair has made a sensational reunion with cricket, scoring five hundreds in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy and he is now cautiously optimistic about wearing the Indian jersey after eight years. Karun, who has scored 752 runs at a mind-blowing average of 752 for Vidarbha, now looks hungry for runs, and is a far cry from the forlorn player who scribbled: "Dear Cricket, please give..."

-SPORTS



CM Revanth and Minister Sridharbabu at Singapore's Institute of Technical Education (ITE) on Friday

**SKILL UNIVERSITY**

**TG signs MoU with ITE**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Government of Telangana signed a MoU with Singapore's Institute of Technical Education (ITE) to strengthen TG's skill development initiatives.

The Telangana delegation, led by the Chief Minister, included IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu, Industries Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, TSIC MD Vishnu Vardhan, CM's Special Secretary Ajit Reddy and Young India Skill University Vice-Chancellor VLV Subbarao.

On the first day, the Telangana Rising team visited ITE's campus in Singapore to explore its state-of-the-art skill development programmes and training facilities.

and training facilities. The delegation interacted with experts in 20 domains, gaining insights into the programmes that have positioned ITE as a leader in technical education.

During the discussions, Revanth highlighted the TG government's commitment to skilling Telangana's youth and invited ITE to collaborate with the Young India Skill University, being established in Hyderabad's Fourth City.

IT Minister Sridhar Babu outlined the need for market-aligned training programmes and proposed partnerships in technical education.

After the discussions, a MoU was signed to **Continued on Page 2**

**UNION CABINET'S HISTORIC DECISION**

**AP's steel pursuit bears fruit**

Center announces Rs 11,440 crore for RINL revival

- ◆ Rs 10,300 crore is equity infusion, and Rs 1,140 crore is loan conversion.
- ◆ Package resolves operational issues and restarts blast furnaces.
- ◆ Full production targets are set for January and August 2025.
- ◆ RINL's Visakhapatnam Steel Plant has a 7.3 Mtpa capacity.
- ◆ Plan safeguards steel market stability and employee livelihoods.
- ◆ RINL faced financial distress, defaults, and borrowing limits.



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has approved a Rs 11,440 crore revival plan for debt-laden Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), according to a statement released on Friday.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the revival plan for RINL for Rs 11,440 crore, it added.

The infusion includes Rs 10,300 crore as equity capital into RINL and conversion of Rs 1,140 crore working capital loan as 7 per cent non-cumulative preference share capital redeemable after 10 years to keep RINL as a going concern, the offi-

cial statement said. With this revival package, many of the legacy problems that RINL used to face will be resolved,

crore into RINL will help it overcome the operational problems related to raising working capital and start blast furnace operations most

productively, the statement said. The revival package would allow the company to gradually reach its full production capacity, which is critical and is in the national interest to have stability in the Indian steel market by augmenting steel production and also save the livelihoods of employees (regular and contractual) and those dependent on the operations of the steel plant.

The revival plan envisages that RINI will start full production with two blast furnaces in January 2025 and with three blast furnaces by August 2025. Under the Ministry of Steel, RINL operates the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), the only offshore steel plant in Andhra Pradesh. It has an installed capacity of 7.3 Mtpa of liquid steel.

**The infusion includes Rs 10,300 crore as equity capital into RINL and conversion of Rs 1,140 crore working capital loan as 7 per cent non-cumulative preference share capital redeemable after 10 years to keep RINL as a going concern, the official statement said**

Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. The equity infusion of Rs 10,300

productively, the statement said. The revival package would allow the company to gradually reach its

**Budget session likely between January 31 and April 4**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The first part of Parliament's Budget Session is likely to be held between January 31 and February 13, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman set to table her eighth straight budget on February 1.



In line with the convention, the session will start with President Droupadi Murmu's address to a joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on January 31, followed by the tabling of the economic survey.

Following the recess, sources said the second part of the session will be held between the second week of March and first week of April. The tentative period is from March 10 to April 4.

The first part of the session is marked by a debate in both Houses on the Motion of Thanks on the president's address and ends with the prime minister's reply in the two chambers of Parliament.

**LAND-GRABBING**

**Two high-profile persons claim same land**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A landowner Y Swarna Latha Reddy, wife of YV Subha Reddy of YSRCP, in Kondapur has filed a formal complaint with the Gachibowli Police, alleging trespassing and attempted land grabbing by A Anil Reddy and his associates.

Anil Reddy is said to be the relative of a Congress Minister.

The disputed land, measuring 2.08 acres in Survey No. 87/2, Serilingampally mandal, has been under the complainant's possession since its purchase in 2006.

According to the complaint, the

land remained vacant until 2022, after a lease with Larsen and Toubro Limited ended. During the complainant's absence in late December 2024, Anil Reddy and his henchmen allegedly trespassed, erected a board bearing his name and contact details, and attempted to claim the land. On January 2, 2025, when the complainant and their associates confronted the accused, they were met with threats and an alleged attack using stones and sharp objects.

The situation worsened when the board with Anil Reddy's name was replaced by **Continued on Page 2**

**Will appointment village revenue officials, surveyors soon: Ponguleti**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The appointment of surveyors and village revenue officials will be done soon, Revenue, Housing and Information and Public Relations (I & PR) Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy said.

He said that at present there are 450 surveyors in the state and there is a need for another 1,000. Officials have been told to chalk out a plan to hire surveyors and to make the selection process transparent, he added. "Regarding the village revenue



Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy in a review meeting with officials on Friday at Secretariat

system, we will appoint a revenue officer for each revenue village. For this purpose, those eligible should be selected from VROs and VRAs to conduct the examination. Its procedures should be drafted immediately and arrangements must be

made for conducting the examination," he said.

Ponguleti conducted a review at the Secretariat on Friday regarding the appointment of surveyors, restoring the revenue system in villages and **Continued on Page 2**

**All BRS MLAs will resign if any TG village got 100% loan waiver: KTR**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) launched an attack on the Congress Government during a farmers' protest held in Shabad and accused Chief Minister Revanth Reddy of failing to fulfil promises made to the state's farmers.

He claimed that the Congress Government owes Rs 17,500 per acre to every farmer in Telangana and demanded immediate action to clear these dues. He was welcomed by bulldozers showering petals.

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) made a bold challenge to



BRS MLA KTR at a huge rally held on Friday at Chevella

the Congress government, stating that if any village in Telangana has received 100% loan waiver as promised by

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the entire BRS is ready to resign. **Continued on Page 2**

**'No changes in existing ration cards'**

New cards to be issued from Jan 26: Ponnam

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

The Minister for Transport and BC Welfare, Ponnam Prabhakar, announced that the process of issuing new ration cards will commence from January 26 across Telangana.

Addressing the media at Indurthi in the Chiguru Mamidi mandal of Karimnagar district, he clarified that surveys are underway in villages to identify eligible beneficiaries who have been waiting for ration cards.

He stated that Telangana already has 90 lakh ration cards covering 2.81 crore people. The focus now is on issuing new ration cards to those who have been left out in the

last 10 years—newly married couples, families without cards and those who meet the eligibility criteria. "This is a piece of good news for those waiting for ration cards," he said.

Ponnam assured the public that the existing 90 lakh ration cards would remain intact and that no old cards are being cancelled. He urged people not to believe misinformation or rumours spread by the opposition for political mileage. "If anyone eligible has not received a ration card, they can submit representations to concerned officials or public representatives," he added. **Continued on Page 2**

**TG: Funds should be spent as per SC, ST Sub-Plan**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government emphasized that all departments must spend funds as per the SC, ST Sub-Plan within the stipulated time frame. During a review meeting held at the Secretariat by the Finance Department on Friday, senior officials of various departments discussed the implementation of the Sub-Plan.

The government asked officials to disclose the department-wise expenditure as per the Sub-Plan Act every month. It also emphasized the need to use available funds effectively to ensure benefits for the respective communities. Plans should be formulated to ensure that the funds result in an increase in income for these communities and the creation of assets, the Deputy CM told the officials.

The departments were told to present full details regarding the spending of Sub-Plan funds and the benefits accrued during the next meeting scheduled for January 23.

Departments that fell short of spending the allocated funds were asked to explain their plans to meet targets in the remaining two months of the financial year.

During the meeting, officials presented a CESS report on the implementation of the SC, ST Sub-Plan over the last eight years. The government reviewed the issues highlighted by the CESS report and evaluated the actions taken by departments in response.

It was decided that CESS officers would now submit their reports to the Finance and Planning departments and hold regular meetings to track progress. **Continued on Page 2**

**BRS, Congress clash over credit for Krishna water allocation**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A war of words erupted between the BRS and the Congress over credit for the interim orders issued by the Brijesh Kumar Tribunal on Krishna River water allocations. Both parties are claiming to have played key roles in ensuring justice for Telangana in the dispute. Congress leader Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy launched an attack on the BRS, accusing it of negligence and betrayal during its decade-long rule.

He said the BRS Government compromised Telangana's water rights by signing a secret agreement with Andhra Pradesh in 2015, allowing it to dominate the sharing of Krishna waters.

"From the beginning, the Congress has fought for a fair distribution based on Telangana's geographical catchment area and ayacut. The BRS, on the other hand, repeatedly signed temporary allocations, enabling Andhra Pradesh to exploit the waters unchecked," Uttam said. He pointed out that projects like Pothreddypadu and the



Royalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme were expanded during BRS rule, while farmers in erstwhile Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda and Ranga Reddy districts suffered.

**"From the beginning, the Congress has fought for a fair distribution based on Telangana's geographical catchment area and ayacut. The BRS, on the other hand, repeatedly signed temporary allocations, enabling Andhra Pradesh to exploit the waters unchecked," Uttam said**

He also accused the BRS of failing to secure Telangana's rightful share of water. "If the BRS had genuinely fought for Telangana's rights, we would have got at least 90 TMCs more. Instead, they remained silent as Andhra Pradesh grabbed water through 'illegal' projects," he said. BRS MLA Harish Rao defended the BRS's policies, calling the tribunal's interim orders a victory for KCR's relentless fight. Harish credited KCR for consistently demanding allocations under Section 3 of the

Interstate River Water Disputes Act, 1956.

"This is a result of KCR's decade-long fight for Telangana's rights. It was his leadership that ensured Telangana's case reached the tribunal, starting with the letter to the Centre in July 2014," Harish said. He criticized the Congress for attempting to claim credit, pointing out that issues arose from provisions like Section 89 in the AP Reorganisation Act which the Congress had introduced.

# Omar's change in stance signals sea change in J&K

For decades, the people of Jammu and Kashmir suffered cross-border terrorism, religious extremism and communal atrocities. Consequently, the people of J&K paid a heavy price with their lives and livelihoods. Not only did India's internal security, economy and social fabric suffer damage, but the situation in J&K also became a strong lever for nations who wanted to throttle India's rise.

Since Independence, J&K have been victims of the Congress's muddled thinking, beginning with Jawaharlal Nehru's. Two disastrous ideas dominated this thinking. Nehru's irrational ideological moorings formed the basis for the first. It was the idea that Indian Muslims were somehow different from the rest of the Indians. So, a Muslim-majority state needed special treatment, resulting in Nehru,

an avowed secularist, bringing in Article 370 and a separate Constitution for J&K.

Of course, Pakistan was quick to grasp the significance of this blunder and projected India's positioning of J&K among Indian states as India's acknowledgement of its disputed status. It used terrorism and falsely projected the resultant death and mayhem as the consequence of a struggle against India and the Indian State's violent put-down of the same. International platforms, from the United Nations (UN) to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), became forums for Pakistan to raise the J&K 'dispute', forcing India to play defence and spend considerable diplomatic energies to maintain the status quo.

The second dominant aspect of the muddled thinking was the lack of strategic depth

**Luckily for India, the same level of thinking that created, escalated and perpetuated the J&K issue did not burden Modi. His actions since then and the change we see today in J&K prove Einstein's words, "We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them," as accurate**

when it came to reading the intentions and nature of our neighbours. Consequently, India had to fight multiple wars on two fronts and lost territory. In more recent decades, the same lack of imagination in strategic thinking led to Pakistan succeeding in portraying J&K as a dispute between two nuclear-armed rivals and warning the world of a nuclear war if India retaliated against its proxy war. Pakistan could

plan, sponsor and direct the 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attacks, among many and get away scot-free with mass murder as the then Congress-led government stood stupefied.

On the one hand, Pakistan succeeded in convincing many Islamic countries - despite India being a secular country with the second-largest Muslim population in the world - as an Islamic issue and concern. On the other hand,



KISHORE POREDDY

regional parties, who recognised the advantage Article 370 provided to perpetuate their power and enrich themselves, made it a mission to build a false narrative projecting Article 370 as the saviour of J&K Muslim's interests. With Congress and their so-called 'secular' allies supporting the

not burden Modi. His actions since then and the change we see today in J&K prove Einstein's words, "We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them," as accurate.

Modi's next level of thinking becomes clear when we go through the timeline of his actions vis-a-vis J&K. His first move was to invite Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to his swearing-in ceremony in 2014. He followed that with a surprise visit to Pakistan and a birthday greeting for Sharif, earning global goodwill. Yet, when Pakistan, true to its nature, sponsored militant attacks on an Indian army base in Uri, he followed it up with surgical strikes across the Line of Control (LoC), calling Pakistan's nuclear bluff.

With Pakistan's "ultimate" threat defanged, he revoked J&K's special status under

Article 370 in a meticulously planned swift move soon after coming to power in 2019, to the utter shock of the entire opposition, which believed he couldn't do it even if he became the Prime Minister for 10 terms. He separated Ladakh from J&K and made them Union Territories, to supervise a smooth transition into a new, peaceful J&K.

Omar Abdullah, the leader of the National Conference and the newly elected Chief Minister of J&K, said during the Z-Morh tunnel inauguration in Sonamarg this week that J&K trusts Modi and that he has kept his promise to eliminate the 'Dil and Dilli ki doori'. This indicates a positive sea change and a new, peaceful era in J&K - the change India hoped for decades - a cause for celebration for all Indians.

*(The author is BJP TS spokesperson)*

The Congress is merely using schemes like Rythu Bharosa to fool people," KTR said.

Highlighting BRS's contributions to Telangana, KTR said, "Under KCR's leadership, schemes like Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bima and irrigation initiatives have revolutionized the agricultural sector. No other government in the country has done so much for farmers."

KTR threw a direct challenge to Revanth, daring him to undergo a live lie detector test to prove his innocence.

"If Revanth has the guts, let him face the people and agree to a live debate and lie detector test. Why is he wasting public money on frivolous cases?" KTR asked.

Criticising the Congress Government for allegedly misusing state agencies like the ACB to target political opponents, KTR said, "The government has spent Rs 10 crore just to harass us. That money could have been used to support hundreds of farmers or senior citizens."

## FILLING OF GOVT AND PARTY POSTS

### Congress leaders' Delhi visit creates tension among hopefuls

**KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU**  
venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com  
■ HYDERABAD

The recent New Delhi visit of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, TPCC chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud and Ministers Bhatti Vikramarka, N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and others have been creating tension among those who are in the run for nominated posts in the government and party posts.

TPCC chief Mahesh has already stated that the party will fill party posts and the

government will fill nominated posts by January-end.

After this statement, the leaders started attempts to get the posts and started lobbying in all possible manners. Many Congress leaders went to Delhi for lobbying.

Mahila Congress leaders held a press conference at the Gandhi Bhavan and requested the party brass to allot some posts to women leaders too. The women leaders warned that they would stage dharnas on the steps of Gandhi Bhavan if the party and the government did not give them posts.

TPCC chief Mahesh said

the party will give posts to leaders who have worked hard for the party and that the party will do justice to all its earnest activists.

However, one senior leader said on condition of anonymity that the party should do justice to its sincere and committed workers. The party had already given posts to some leaders who happen to be close to the leadership instead of going by their services to the party and the people. The party should do justice to activists who have been working for the party for decades, he added.



### Future of mobility belongs to India, says PM Modi

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said future of mobility belongs to India that saw an unprecedented sale of 2.5 crore vehicles a year, and attracted USD 36 billion foreign direct investment in just four years.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 at Bharat Mandapam here, the prime minister also emphasised that India stands as an outstanding destination for every investor looking to shape one's future in the mobility sector. The five-day expo which is being held across three venues -- Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi in the national capital and India Expo Center and Mart, Greater Noida -- is expected to witness over 100 new launches across automobiles, component products and technologies.

India's largest auto expo, scheduled from January 17-22, will bring the entire value chain of the mobility ecosystem --

from automobile manufacturers to components, electronics parts, tyre and energy storage makers, and automotive software firms and material recyclers -- under a single umbrella. Modi said the automotive industry was driven by innovation and technology and stressed that the future belongs to the East, Asia, and India.

"India is an excellent destination for every investor looking to see their future in mobility," he said while reassuring everyone that the government is fully supportive and encouraged everyone to continue advancing with the mantra of 'Make in India, Make for the World'. Modi said the 'Make in India' initiative has played an important role in unleashing the growth potential of India's auto industry.

The performance linked incentive (PLI) schemes, he said, have given new momentum to the 'Make in India' campaign, aiding sales of over Rs 2.25 lakh crore and creation of more than 1.5 lakh direct jobs in the sector.

### Police arrest BJP MP Raghunandan at Velimela Thanda

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The police arrested the BJP's Medak MP, M. Raghunandan Rao, for staging a dharna along with tribal people at the Velimela Thanda on Friday demanding that the state government do justice to tribals in the Bilaa Dhakhala land issue.

After the arrest of Raghunandan tension gripped the area for some time after the police and tribals jostled with each other when they tried to block Raghunandan's arrest. However, the police arrested



Medak MP M. Raghunandan Rao addressing the media at Velimela Thanda on Friday

government do justice to them.

Meanwhile, Raghunandan who supported the tribals on Thursday at a press conference held at the state BJP office demanded that the government should stop encroachments on Bilaa Dhakhala land by K. Nithyananda Reddy, Kommireddy Vikram Kumar Reddy and a Minister as the tribals had been cultivating the land for three generations.

On Friday, Raghunandan went to the spot along with BJP leaders and tribals and staged a dharna along with them.

### 'No changes ...

*Continued from page 1*

The new ration cards are being issued based on the caste survey data and submitted applications. Indurthi mandal has already received 71 new ration cards, and the minister confirmed that all eligible persons would receive their card soon.

Highlighting other welfare measures, Ponnampalli mentioned that the state government has waived loans of up to Rs 2 lakh for farmers and is providing Rs 12,000 under Rythu Bharosa for every acre of agricultural land. He also said that agricultural labourers without land are being given Rs 12,000 annually. Regarding local development, he said that proposals for Indurthi mandal have been submitted and assured that it will be formally established when new mandals are formed in the state.

### BC intellectuals seek 42% quota in local bodies

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The BC intellectuals' conference held in Hyderabad on Friday urged the state government to file a review petition in the Supreme Court to implement 42% reservations for Backward Classes (BCs) in local body elections. The

demand was supported by data from the state-conducted caste survey, which underscores the feasibility of such reservations.

The conference, chaired by G. Satyam, Vice President of the National BC Welfare Association, emphasised that reservations should be implemented through the sub-categorization of BC

communities. Prominent figures, including Rajya Sabha MP and National BC Welfare Association President R. Krishnaiah, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Sirikonda Madhusudana Chari, and former BC Commission Chairman Dr. Vakulabharanam Krishna Mohan Rao, led the call for action.

### Aruna counters CM's comments in Delhi

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Countering Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's comments in Delhi that Delhi people should vote for the Congress after seeing the governance of the Telangana Congress government, BJP vice-President Mahabubnagar MP DK Aruna exuded confidence that the BJP will win the Delhi elections.

Addressing the media at the BJP office here on Friday, Aruna said that the people of Delhi are not in a position to believe CM Revanth Reddy's



Mahabubnagar MP DK Aruna addressing the media at State BJP office on Friday

BJP would grab power in Delhi even if any number of conspiracies hatched. "What did the Congress Government do in Telangana? Whether it is implemented as the Loan Waiver Scheme fully? Whether the Congress GB Rythu Bharosa, unemployment allowance, Rs 2500 for women? With what face the CM was speaking lies in Delhi?" he asked.

Aruna said that the people of Telangana voted for the Congress due to the opposition's connections with BRS chief KCR.

### Two high-profile ...

*Continued from page 1*

another bearing the name Narsimha Reddy and a non-functional phone number said complainant.

The complainant alleged that Anil Reddy, with political connections, is attempting to avoid direct association with the land-grabbing attempts by using accomplices.

In another complaint the site supervisor, Shaik Jameel, detailed additional incidents, including a mob of 20 individuals using a JCB to demolish the land's gate, boundary wall, and a room on January 8, 2025. CCTV cameras and electrical connections were also destroyed, causing damages estimated at Rs 15 lakh. The complainant has requested urgent police intervention to investigate the trespass, provide protection, and prevent further encroachment attempts.

### TG: Funds ...

*Continued from page 1*

The government highlighted the importance of using solar power pump sets on forest lands and integrating them with bamboo, avocado, palm oil, and other inter-crops.

It suggested linking Employment Guarantee Scheme works to these initiatives to protect forests while increasing incomes for Adivasi and tribal farmers.

Special attention was given to SC and ST women displaced by the Musi Rejuvenation Project. The government asked officials to identify these women, enrol them in Self-Help Groups, provide interest-free loans and support their entrepreneurial efforts.

It was also suggested that self-employment schemes should be widely accessible to SCs and STs in urban areas, with provisions for transport vehicles and cleaning machines in municipal and GHMC limits.

Additionally, financial assistance should be extended to SC and ST farmers, and repair of lift irrigation schemes should be expedited under the Indira Jala Prabha program.

The government directed the Principal Secretaries of SC and ST Welfare departments to collaborate with other departments and formulate strategies to utilise Sub-Plan funds effectively.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Panchami: Jan 18 05:30 AM to Jan 19 07:31 AM

**Nakshatram:** Purva Phalguni: Jan 17 12:44 PM to Jan 18 02:51 PM  
Uttara Phalguni: Jan 18 02:51 PM to Jan 19 05:30 PM

**Rahukalam:** 9:40 AM to 11:03 AM  
**Yamagandam:** 1:49 PM to 3:13 PM  
**Varjyam:** 10:51 PM to 12:37 AM  
**Gulika:** 6:53 AM to 8:16 AM  
**Amritakalam:** 07:53 AM to 09:38 AM  
**Abhijit Muhurtham:** 12:04 PM to 12:48 PM

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**

Forecast: Partly Cloudy  
Temp: 32°  
Humidity: 54%  
Sunrise: 6:39 AM  
Sunset: 5:56 PM  
Updated: January 17, 2025 5:00 PM

### Will appointment ...

*Continued from page 1*

the Indiramma housing scheme. The Minister held the review with Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari, Revenue Department Principal Secretary Naveen Mittal, Housing Secretary Jyoti Buddha Prakash, Housing Corporation MD VP Gautham, GHMC Commissioner Ilambarathi, CMRO Director Makarand and others.

Ponguleti clarified that the construction of Indiramma houses is a continuous process and it is the responsibility of the government to build Indiramma houses for everyone who is eligible. He said that in the first phase of the scheme a Indiramma house will be built for those who have a house site and in the second phase a house site will be provided to build a house.

During the meeting, there was a lengthy discussion on getting the

help of the engineering department for constructing Indiramma houses and the appointment of revenue officers and surveyors for all revenue villages.

Ponguleti said the list of applicants of Indiramma houses who are eligible and the list of those who do not have residential land should be placed in gram sabhas. "We are taking up the construction of Indiramma houses step by step," he said.

Officials brought to the attention of the Minister that there are only 274 engineers in the Housing Corporation and 400 more engineers are needed for the construction and supervision of Indiramma houses. Ponguleti asked the CS to look into how the services of engineers of other departments can be used for this.

The officials were told to prepare a separate action plan for the construction of houses within GHMC limits.

### TG signs ...

*Continued from page 1*

formalise the collaboration, aimed at sharing expertise and resources. The MoU was signed by Vice-Chancellor Subbarao and ITE's Deputy Director for Academic and Administrative Services Parvender Singh in the presence of ITE's Deputy Director for IT Education Services Fabian Chiang. An ITE delegation is expected to visit Hyderabad soon to take the partnership ahead. Earlier in the day, Revanth and his delegation held extensive talks with Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan. The discussions spanned several areas like infrastructure development, river rejuvenation, water resource management, green energy, tourism, education and IT park expansion.

The Chief Minister emphasized the importance of long-term partnerships in these sectors to accelerate Telangana's development.

The Chief Minister's arrival in Singapore was met with enthusiasm by the Telangana diaspora. Expatriates gathered in large numbers to greet the delegation extending their wishes. The delegation's itinerary includes a three-day visit to Singapore, followed by participation in the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos.

### All BRS MLAs ...

*Continued from page 1*

KTR stressed that during the election campaign, Revanth promised Rs 15,000 under the Rythu Bandhu scheme per acre, but farmers have only received Rs 12,000.

He demanded that from January 26 onwards, the government must increase the amount to Rs 15,000 and extend the scheme to include 22 lakh tenant farmers as well.

Criticizing the Congress government, KTR alleged that it has betrayed all sections in Telangana. "Revanth and Rahul Gandhi have cheated people with false guarantees. Congress's six guarantees have not even been half-fulfilled, yet they boast of their achievements in Delhi," KTR remarked.

He accused Revanth of making hollow promises, including the loan waivers for farmers.

"If Revanth can prove 100% loan waivers in his constituency or his village Kondareddipalli, I am ready to quit politics alongside him,"

KTR challenged.

KTR announced that the farmers' agitation will intensify, with a massive protest planned in Nalgonda on January 21, followed by similar protests across all districts. He accused the Congress government of using farmers only for votes and abandoning them afterwards. "When KCR was the CM, farmers received timely assistance, but now, under Congress, even Rythu Bandhu payments are delayed," he added.

He urged farmers to confront Congress leaders seeking votes in local body elections and demand their Rs 17,500 crore dues.

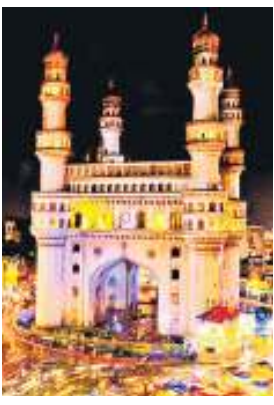
Highlighting Congress's failure to deliver on promises made to women, KTR stated, "Revanth promised Rs 2,000 per month to women but owes Rs 30,000 to every woman in the past year. He also owes a gold 'thulam' to 5 lakh women who got married after the Congress came to power."

# City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | JANUARY 18, 2025

03



## CITY EVENTS

### 50 Years of JKA India National Karate Championship

1st Invitational International Karate Camp and Tournament  
Guest of Honour  
B Mahesh Kumar Goud  
TPCC president & Telangana Sports Karate DO Association President

#### Venue

Gachibowli Indoor Stadium  
January 18 to 22 (8 am)

### Bayan-E-Ghalib

A cultural tribute to legendary Urdu poet Mirza Ghazali  
Organised by Maanaviya Kalyan Trust

#### Venue

Shilpakala Vedika, Madhapur  
January 18, (7pm)

### Shoban Babu Jayanthi Celebrations

By Shoban Babu Seva Samithi

#### Venue

Ravindra Bharathi  
January 18, (9 am to 10 pm)

### Nadira Babbar's Footnotes Of Life

A play By Sifar

#### Venue

Lamakaan  
January 18 (11 am)

### Traditional Kathak Performance

By Mangala Bhatt's students

#### Venue

Lamakaan  
January 18, (6 pm)

### Talk On Talat Mahmood

Songs by Sahar Zaman

#### Venue

Lamakaan  
January 18, (11 am)

## 94% teachers & 69% parents believe EdTech bridging geographical divide

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 94% teachers and 69% parents believe that EdTech is bridging the geographical divide in education, according to a report from the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Grant Thornton Bharat. The study, titled 'Impact Study of EdTech in India: Driving innovation & creating opportunities', highlights how EdTech platforms are making quality education accessible to millions, especially in remote areas. The report emphasises that EdTech provides resources like video lectures, interactive modules and virtual classrooms, helping students access learning materials that may not be available locally. The study also shows that 94% students and 84% teachers find EdTech content engaging and 85% students report improved learning outcomes. The report also notes that EdTech plays a significant role in enhancing employability by aligning academic knowledge with industry needs. It has been particularly beneficial in rural and underserved areas, where it has increased student participation.

## 3,053 applications received at Prajavani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 3,053 grievance applications were submitted during Prajavani on Friday at the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan, after it was postponed from January 14 due to the Sankranti festival holiday.

Officials reported the highest number of applications for the Indiramma Housing Scheme, with 2,691 submissions. Other applications included 111 for the Panchayati Raj and Rural Development department, 100 for the Electricity department, 55 for revenue-related issues and 96 for various other departments.

Vice-president of the State Planning Commission Dr G Chinnareddy received the applications at the Praja Bhavan.



Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty addressing a meeting on Operation Smile XI on Friday

## OPERATION SMILE XI

# 72 kids placed for adoption in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 72 children were placed for adoption in Hyderabad, according to Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty, as he calls for stringent measures to protect children's rights.

Speaking at a district-level convergence meeting on Operation Smile XI, organised by the Women and Child Welfare department at the Collectorate

conference hall, he revealed that Hyderabad district has been divided into 28 zones under Operation Smile and Operation Muskaan for effective implementation.

Currently, 2,224 children are being cared for by 42 voluntary organisations and six government homes in the district. He has directed officials to prioritise children's welfare and take strict measures to safeguard their rights

under Operation Smile XI. He emphasised the need to set Hyderabad as a model district for other cities.

He directed to conduct awareness programmes for street vendors and parents on children's rights and the laws protecting them.

Patrolling hotspot areas have to identify street children and collect essential documents such as Aadhaar for their rehabilitation.

Preventing child marriages and rescuing children aged between 14 and 18 from hazardous labour, registering cases against offenders and providing compensation to victims are the other measures to be undertaken.

Ensuring the enrollment of rescued children in residential schools for quality education and providing nutritious food to them was emphasised.

## Fire at Shaikpet building sparks panic; 3 rescued

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A fire broke out early Friday morning at a commercial building in Shaikpet, originating from the second floor, which houses a branch of Aakash Institute, a coaching centre. The incident occurred at approximately 5:20 am at Dukes Avenue, near DMart.

The multi-storey structure consists of two cellars, a ground floor and four upper floors. Reliance Trends occupies the ground and first floors, the coaching centre is on the second floor and a fertility centre is located on the third. Two offices operate on the fourth and fifth floors.

Three individuals trapped on the second floor were rescued by firefighters, who broke windows to release thick smoke and improve ventilation. The fire, which engulfed

furniture and electrical equipment, including computers, caused significant panic among local residents.

The blaze was brought under control, but the cause and extent of property damage are still under investigation, said the District Fire Officer.

After the fire was extinguished, Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Commissioner AV Ranganath inspected the site. He directed building owners to establish advanced alert systems to detect and notify fire incidents promptly.

Ranganath emphasised integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) for early fire detection. "A system to send real-time fire alerts to the DRF and fire departments can significantly reduce such incidents," he stated.

## AI-based prediction model to detect obesity risk developed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Researchers at Hyderabad's Woxsen University, including Dr Shahid Mohammad Ganie, Dr Hemachandran Kannan and student Bobba Bharath Reddy, collaborated with US scientist Prof. Manjeet Rege to create an AI-based model for predicting obesity risk. Their study, published in Decision Analytics Journal, explores how machine learning can analyse lifestyle data to assess obesity risk effectively.

The research used ensemble learning techniques, combining multiple algorithms to improve prediction accuracy. The dataset included diverse populations from Colombia, Peru and Mexico, analysing factors like diet, physical activity, mental health and sleep habits.

The team highlighted the limitations of BMI, noting it overlooks variables like fat



Hyderabad's Woxsen University researchers Dr Shahid Mohammad Ganie, Dr Hemachandran Kannan and student Bobba Bharath Reddy, along with US scientist Prof Manjeet Rege.

distribution and muscle mass, which are critical for precise obesity risk assessment.

Prof. Rege, a global AI expert, emphasised early detection as a motivator for healthier choices, enabling timely interventions.

The study also pointed out how urbanisation and processed food consumption drive obesity-related illnesses

like diabetes and heart disease.

The researchers aim to help healthcare providers design targeted interventions and propose future studies using deep learning for enhanced predictions.

This project reflects Woxsen University's dedication to solving real-world problems through global collaborations and technological innovation.



## Hyd Metro creates green corridor for heart transplant

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a remarkable act of efficiency and coordination, Hyderabad Metro Rail facilitated a dedicated Green Corridor on the night of January 17, 2025, ensuring the swift transportation of a donor heart from LB Nagar's Kamineni Hospitals to Geneagles Global Hospital at Lakdi-ka-Pul. The critical mission covered a distance of 13 kilometers across 13 stations in just 13 minutes, saving invaluable time for the life-saving transplant. The seamless operation

was executed with meticulous planning and coordination between Hyderabad Metro Rail, medical professionals, and hospital authorities under the supervision of attending doctors. The effort highlighted the Metro Rail's capability to serve not just as a transportation system but also as a vital enabler for emergency services.

L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Limited (L&TMRHL) reaffirmed its commitment to contributing to the welfare of society by leveraging its infrastructure for such emergencies.

## Two drug peddlers transporting heroin in LPG valves held

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Rachakonda Police, in a joint operation by the Special Operations Team (SOT), LB Nagar Zone and Neredmet Police, apprehended two interstate drug peddlers involved in smuggling heroin hidden in LPG gas cylinder valves. The operation led to the seizure of 190 grams of heroin, vehicles and other items valued at Rs 23 lakh.

Rachakonda Commissioner of Police G Sudheer Babu remarked, "Look at what individuals are ordering repeatedly," highlighting the growing sophistication of drug networks in disguising illegal activities.

The accused are identified as Mahesh Sarem (28), a gas repair worker from Jodhpur, Rajasthan, residing in Neredmet, Hyderabad and Mahipal (19), a gas mechanic from Jodhpur, residing in Neredmet, Hyderabad.

Both individuals were allegedly procuring heroin from Samsuddin, a drug peddler based in Rajasthan, and selling it in Hyderabad using ride-hailing services like Rapido, Ola, and Porter to transport parcels discreetly. Payments were received via digital platforms such as PhonePe.

"We have already interacted with the transport services but will once again conduct a

meeting with them to create awareness on these drugs peddling," said CP Sudheer Babu.

The duo sourced heroin from Rajasthan for Rs 1 lakh and transported it to Hyderabad via train. Staying at Mahipal's residence, they distributed the drugs to local customers using ride-hailing services to evade detection. Parcels were delivered to locations far from their actual residence.

The police are actively investigating their network, including consumers and the absconding main supplier. Efforts are also underway to identify connections to other peddlers and suppliers in Rajasthan.

## Junior doctors urge timely stipend and salary payment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Junior Doctors Association (T-JUDA) has urged the Health department to ensure timely disbursement of stipends and salaries. Members of T-JUDA met with Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha on Friday to discuss their concerns and submitted a representation detailing their demands.

Dr M Vamshi Krishna, Vice-President of T-JUDA, highlighted the unpredictability of stipend payments.

"Every month, we do not know when the stipend will be credited. Despite completing attendance and billing procedures, payments are delayed,"

The association also raised concerns over scholarship reimbursement, stating that students who applied for financial aid are often asked to pay fees upfront, which defeats the purpose of the scholarship. Additionally, they discussed delays in salary payment for Contract Assistant and Associate Professors and requested a stipend hike.

The Health Minister assured the delegation that the issues would be addressed promptly. He also agreed to forward the stipend hike proposal to the Health Secretary, explore tax exemptions on stipends and investigate irregularities in scholarship disbursements.

## MJPBCWREIS, PURE ink MoU to provide edn for BCs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Telangana Backward Classes Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (MJPBCWREIS) signed an MoU with PURE (People for Urban and Rural Education) on Friday at its headquarters in Hyderabad to provide better educational opportunities to BC students. The agreement was

formalised by MJPBCWREIS Secretary B. Saidulu, IFS, and PURE CEO Dr Shaila Talluri.

The MoU aims to foster technical skills, leadership qualities, holistic development and hygiene among students through advanced technical and soft skills training, setting up digital labs and training centres, and launching PURE Youth Clubs to promote leadership, team

work and social responsibility.

The partnership will also introduce mentorship programmes, industry visits and career guidance sessions to familiarise students with professional environments. Specialized training programmes tailored to address developmental needs will be implemented, with particular emphasis on menstrual hygiene awareness for female

students and providing resources.

Workshops and campaigns on environmental sustainability, gender equality and civic responsibility will also be conducted.

Speaking on the occasion, B. Saidulu, said, "This partnership with PURE is a milestone in providing our students with advanced educational programmes and empowering them to com-

pete globally. It will bring changes to the lives of thousands of students."

Dr Shaila Talluri, the CEO of PURE, expressed her commitment to bridging educational gaps.

"PURE is dedicated to empowering students and educators by leveraging our resources and expertise. This partnership plays a vital role in achieving our shared goals," she said.



Badminton legend Srikanth Kidambi, along with Director of Hundred India Vishal Jain, at the partnership event in Hyderabad on Friday

## TO EMPOWER PLAYERS

# Brand Hundred ties up with Srikanth Kidambi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the second most popular sport among Gen Z, global performance-focused sports brand, Hundred India partners with badminton legend Srikanth Kidambi to empower players with coaching programmes.

At a press conference here on Friday, Director of Hundred India, Vishal Jain said badminton has become the second most popular sport among Gen Z in India. He announced plans to inspire and support the next generation of badminton players by working with Srikanth Kidambi through coaching programmes starting in April 2025, along with Hyderabad. Jain emphasised that all Brand Hundred products are made in India and offered at affordable prices. He also highlighted the

company's rapid growth, achieving a ten-fold increase in just two years.

Speaking about the partnership, Srikanth Kidambi said he was drawn to Hundred's commitment to developing the sports industry through innovative technology and R&D. He expressed his determination to return to the sport, saying, "I strongly believe I have four more years in me. I want to work hard, compete in tournaments and leave the court with no regrets."

The partnership includes exclusive product launches designed to badminton professionals and enthusiasts. These high-performance products, designed with cutting-edge technology, will debut globally, reinforcing Hundred's status as a preferred brand for top athletes.

## High alert sounded on the Telangana-Chhattisgarh border

PNS ■ WARANGAL/MULUGU

The Telangana Police have heightened vigil following an encounter in the Mulugu, Bhadrachari Kothagudem, and Bijapur districts.

A high alert has been issued at the Telangana-Chhattisgarh border. Gunfire erupted between Maoists and security forces in the forests near the Telangana border. Intelligence reports suggest that Maoists may retaliate, and as a result, extensive search operations are underway.

A major encounter took place in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh, where security forces clashed with Maoists in the forests.

Seventeen Maoists were reported dead in the incident, and the death toll is expected to rise. The joint operation was carried out by the DRG, Cobra, and CRPF forces from Bijapur, Sukma, and Dantewada districts. A search operation is continuing in the area surrounding the encounter site.

Around 15 kilometres from the Telangana border, gunfire was heard in the forests in Chhattisgarh. In an operation conducted by around 1,000 personnel from the DRG and Cobra forces, the Maoists, who were spotted, were pursued

### Extensive search operations for Maoists



For representation purpose only

and shot dead after a two-kilometre chase.

According to police, the Maoists had gathered in the forests in Bijapur district.

On Thursday morning, about 1,000 DRG and Cobra forces began a combing operation. At around 9 am, the forces encountered the Maoists, and a gunfight ensued.

The exchange of fire lasted until about 3 pm. At one point, realising they were suffering losses, the Maoists fled into the forest, but the forces chased them for two kilometres. The police confirmed the recovery of the bodies of 17 Maoists, along with a huge cache of weapons and explosives. Identification of the deceased is yet to be established, and it is suspected that some of them might be from Telangana. Further details are expected to be revealed on Friday.

As of now, 20 Maoists have been reported dead in encounters this year, according to the Bastar Range IG office.

Meanwhile, Kamaldas Usendi, who had been serving as the technical team commander in the Maoist party, surrendered to the police in the Kondagaon district of Chhattisgarh on Thursday.

He had been involved in the movement for 27 years and had also served as a militia member.

He has a reward of Rs 25 lakh on his head, and the police promised he would be provided with a government package. The surrender of the top leader has further weakened the movement, it is believed.



Raja Rajeshwara Swami Temple

### ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES IN VEMULAWADA TEMPLE

## ACB likely to recommend departmental action against several employees

PNS ■ VEMULAWADA

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), following its inspection of Raja Rajeshwara Swami Temple on August 22 last year, identified several irregularities in various departments, raising concerns among temple employees. Based on the findings, senior officials of the ACB on Friday asked the temple officials to furnish the details of the employees suspected to have been responsible for irregularities.

It is well-known that the ACB officials conducted a surprise inspection at the temple on August 22 last year. Now, nearly six months later, the ACB requested details of employees from the relevant departments, leading to anxiety among the temple staff.

Following the inspection, ACB officials identified irregularities in several departments. These included discrepancies in the warehouse, such as differences in the stock of cashews and ghee, purchases made at old tender rates, and the handling of tenders worth up to Rs 5 lakh, which were purchased at reduced amounts.

Additionally, issues were raised regarding the cash collected from devotees offering and similar matters. With the ACB now requesting the service records of the employees concerned, there is growing anxiety among the employees of the temple. The ACB officials are expected to recommend departmental action against the authorities concerned. The Endowments Department based on the identified irregularities, is also now investigating into the episode.

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## Dead snake in toddy bottle sparks outrage

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

A shocking incident unfolded at a local toddy shop at Lattupally village under Bijinepally mandal, Nagarkurnool on Thursday night when a customer found a tiny snake floating inside a bottle of toddy. After taking a few sips, the customer noticed the small snake and alerted other patrons, leading to a tense confrontation with the shop owner. The situation quickly escalated as customers, fearing for their safety, damaged furniture and bottles in the shop.

The snake, which was later identified as dead. In a panic, the customer who had consumed the toddy threw up the toddy, fearing it may harm him. Despite their concerns, the shop owner insisted that the object inside the bottle was simply a blade of grass, an explanation that only angered the villagers further.

A video with dead snake inside the toddy bottle quickly went viral on social media.

The incident has sparked widespread



Dead snake in toddy bottle

outrage in the community, with many demanding accountability and a thorough investigation into the matter.

Although the matter was reported to the Excise Police, they did not respond adequately. As a result, local youths began protesting, demanding an end to the sale of liquor. After village elders intervened and convinced them, the protest was called off.

## Mystery shrouds disappearance of man from in-laws' house

PNS ■ PALKURTHI

Mystery shrouds the disappearance of a man from his in-laws' house at Bommera village under Palkurthi mandal in the district on Wednesday. The missing man has been identified as N Ravikumar, who hails from Kothapet in Hyderabad. His wife, Jayanti, complained to the police.

Ravi Kumar came to his in-laws' place from Hyderabad for the Sankranti festival. He married Jayanti from Bommera village on December 26. On the day of the festival, Ravikumar arrived at his in-laws' house around noon. Later, in the evening around 4:30 pm, Ravikumar, along with his wife Jayanti, went to witness Jatara in Yellamagadda Thanda on the outskirts of Bommera vil-



N Ravikumar

lage and they returned home by 6:30 pm.

At 7:30 pm, Ravikumar told his wife that he would be talking to his friends on the phone and would return shortly. At 8:30 pm, when Jayanti called him, Ravikumar told her that he would be dropped off at

their house by his friends and would leave from there. After that, his phone was switched off.

Jayanti and her family members tried to call Ravikumar's friends and relatives, but there was no information. Jayanti filed a complaint at the Palkurthi Police Station on Thursday afternoon. Based on her complaint, a case was registered, and Palkurthi Circle Inspector Mahender Reddy and Sub-Inspector Doolam Pavan Kumar are investigating the matter.

The police are trying to obtain his call records to find out whom he spoke to on that day and are examining the case from all angles. As it has been more than 42 hours since Ravikumar went missing, his wife Jayanti and relatives are extremely worried.

## 'Velugumatla Urban Park will be developed into tourist spot'

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, on Friday urged everyone to cooperate in developing Velugumatla Urban Park as a tourist spot.

The Minister, along with District Collector Muzammil Khan, visited the Velugumatla Urban Park. The Minister reviewed the park's development plan and, along with the Collector and officials, inspected the entire park.

During the visit, Minister Nageswara Rao stated that the Velugumatla Urban Park should be developed as a tourist spot before the upcoming monsoon season. He suggested that the park be named in an attractive way, keeping in mind Khammam's historical background. He also mentioned that efforts are being made to develop urban parks in Khammam, Kothagudem, and Sathupalli areas. The Minister emphasised that



Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, along with District Collector Muzammil Khan, visiting Velugumatla Urban Park in Khammam on Friday

natural forests are a part of the district's heritage and that the District Collector and DFO are working on good initiatives to move forward. He urged elected representatives to cooperate and ensure that development activities are completed quickly when dedicated officers are involved.

## Action plan will be chalked out to make Nalgonda drug-free district'

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Nalgonda District Collector Ila Tripathi emphasised the need for coordinated efforts among all departments to make Nalgonda into a drug-free district. Speaking at the District-level Narcotics Coordination Committee meeting held on Friday at the Collector's chamber, she urged officials to identify and take strict action against those selling and using narcotics across the district.

The Collector stressed the importance of conducting awareness programmes in all schools and colleges about the dangers of drugs and marijuana. She directed the officials and police to report any cases of students using marijuana or other drugs immediately to the District Education Officer (DEO).

The Collector also suggested



District Collector Ila Tripathi addressing the district-level Narcotics Coordination Committee meeting in Nalgonda on Friday.

organising competitive examinations for students to raise awareness about the harmful effects of drug use. Furthermore, she instructed that officials to identify those cultivating marijuana, and stringent measures, such as suspending benefits like Rythu Bharosa. She called for intensified surveillance and directed police officers to take immediate action to curb the cultivation and sale of marijuana and other narcotics.

## Police sports and games meet inaugurated

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Despite work pressure, police personnel have been excelling in sports and it should serve as an inspiration to athletes, said Warangal Police Commissioner Ambar Kishore Jha. He inaugurated the 3rd Sports and Games Meet 2025 at the Warangal Police Commissionerate on Friday.

The event, which began on Friday, will continue for three days at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Hanmakonda.

During the opening ceremony, the Police Commissioner attended as the chief guest and started the sports events. On this occasion, a march-past was performed by the police athletes, and the Police Commissioner hoisted the sports flag at the venue. Additionally, doves and balloons were released into the sky, and the police athletes



Warangal Police Commissioner Ambar Kishore Jha, along with others, at the inaugural function of Police Sports and Games meet in Warangal on Friday

handed over the sports torch to the Police Commissioner.

The Police Commissioner also inaugurated 800-meter race events for men and women and volleyball competitions.

Later, the Police Commissioner congratulated the athletes who participated enthusiastically in the games, as well as the event organiz-

ers. The event was attended by Deputy Commissioners of Police Ravinder, Rajamahendranayak, Additional Deputy Commissioners of Police Ravi, Suresh Kumar, and Jangaon ASP Pandari Chetan Nithin, along with other police officers such as ACPs, Inspectors, RIs, RSIs, and SI officers, who actively participated in the event.

## MLA Shankar commended for efforts to improve edn system

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA Veerapalli Shankar received accolades from Professor Haragopal for his efforts in developing the Government Junior College and addressing issues in government schools. The professor described the construction of the college as "the first step to success" and urged the MLA to focus on resolving the challenges faced by government schools across the constituency.

Professor Haragopal visited Shadnagar on Thursday to invite MLA Shankar to the 150-year anniversary celebrations of the Farooqnagar Mandal Mogilgidda Village Government High School. He also sought the MLA's cooperation in inviting Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to the event. During the meeting at the MLA's camp office, MLA Shankar warmly welcomed Professor Haragopal, felicitating him with a shawl. The two leaders also paid tributes to a former Union Minister on his birth anniversary.



Prof. Haragopal, along with MLA Veerapalli Shankar visiting newly constructed junior college in Shadnagar on Friday

Following their discussions, MLA Shankar took Professor Haragopal to the newly constructed Government Junior College. Speaking on the occasion, the professor commended the MLA for his determination to revive the institution, which has been instrumental in producing

many scholars and educated individuals. He advised MLA Shankar to address problems in other government schools across the constituency and assured his full support for efforts to improve the education sector. Professor Haragopal lauded MLA Shankar for his approach,

contrasting him with other politicians who often focus on self-serving goals. He praised the MLA's dedication to reconstructing the college he had studied in, emphasizing that such initiatives would cement his legacy in the constituency. In response, MLA Shankar explained that he had conducted review meetings with education officials to assess the condition of schools in the area. He acknowledged that many institutions faced various issues and pledged to address them comprehensively, aiming to elevate government schools to the standard of private institutions.

The MLA also highlighted the decline in the education system during the 10-year BRS rule.

The event was attended by several prominent individuals, including Palamuru Praja Vedika Convenor Raghavulu, Market Committee Vice Chairman Mohammad Ali Khan Babar, and other local leaders such as Agunuru Vishwam, Challa Srikanth Reddy, Konkalla Chennaiah, and Syed Qadir.

## Youth slits woman's throat over payment of loan

PNS ■ NIRMAL

A youngster inflicted a severe injury on a 28-year-old woman on Friday after she demanded repayment of personal loan, according to police.

The victim, identified as Divya, is a nurse employed at a private hospital and is currently receiving treatment. Her condition is stable.

Authorities indicated that Battu Santosh owed Divya a sum of Rs 16 lakh and became agitated when she insisted on the repayment. As she continued to press for the repayment of loan, Santosh seized an opportunity to attack her while she was returning home from the hospital.

He allegedly used a blade in the assault. The police said that the nurse suffered a deep cut to her neck, and when she raised alarm, local residents gathered, prompting Santosh to flee the scene.

A case has been filed against Santosh under Section 324 of the Indian Penal Code for causing injuries.

### GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, HYDERABAD FORM-F

Notification by the Collector (L.A.), H.A.M.L. (See rule 7 (c))  
File No.: C&T/2025-244-244 Dated: 17-01-2025  
Whereas the following Notifications were issued and published in the Gazette for acquisition of the land under Extension of Metro Rail Project, Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MOBS to Chandrayyagutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Shree-E, Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District for the Public purpose.

S.NO.	NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE	GAZETTE NO. & DATE
1.	No. C&T/198/2024 - R/S (226 to 225)	H.A.M.L. No. 30, dated 28-11-2024

S.No./P.N. No.	Name and address	Sketch No.	Previous No.	Extent in Sq. yds.
1	1) Sri Mir Masood Ali S/o Mir Masood Ali R/o 23-2-538 Hari Bowli Channarayana, Hyderabad-500023.	R/S-211	23-2-537 AC06	21.10

S.NO.	NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE	GAZETTE NO. & DATE
1.	No. C&T/198/2024 - L/S (226 to 250)	H.A.M.L. No. 30, dated 28-11-2024

S.No./P.N. No.	Name and address	Sketch No.	Previous No.	Extent in Sq. yds.
10	Sri Mohammed Abdul Gaseger S/o Late M.A. Sattar R/o 23-2-546, Hari Bowli Channarayana, Hyderabad-500023.	R/S-226	23-2-546	72.75
25	Sri M. Mujeeb Ullah Khan S/o Mohd Inayatullah Khan R/o H.No 23-2-5515 Hari Bowli Channarayana, Hyderabad-500025.	R/S-250	23-2-5515	81.98
36	Sri M. Mujeeb Ullah Khan S/o Mohd Inayatullah Khan R/o H.No 23-2-5515 Hari Bowli Channarayana, Hyderabad-500025.	R/S-251	23-2-5515	26.47

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District/Special Deputy Collector, L.A., H.A.M.L., Raosapeta, Hyderabad within the Seven days of publication of this Notification, by 24-01-2025.

Date: 17-01-2025  
Sd/- Special Deputy Collector, L.A., H.A.M.L., Raosapeta, Hyderabad

### KARIMNAGAR SMART CITY CORPORATION LIMITED DIST: KARIMNAGAR, TELANGANA

TENDER NOTICE  
REF.NIT. No. KSCCL/2024-25 dated 16.01.2025.  
KSCCL intends to receive quotations for various items for 1) "Integrated Solid Waste Management in Karimnagar under Smart City Mission", 2) Electrical Panel, Entrance arch, Escalator, School Building Wall & Sculptures at NPS Park, 3) Play Equipments & Gazebos for Rajaw Park in Karimnagar under Smart City Mission, 4) Electrical Panels, Name Board & Logos for Integrated Market at Bull Serman center in Karimnagar under Smart City Mission. The details can be downloaded from the website: <https://karimnagarcorporation.telangana.gov.in>, (or) Notice Board of this office. Contact By EE: 9649907521. 1) Specifications & BOQ Download start date: 18.01.2025, 5.00 PM. 2) Last date for submission: 25.01.2025 @ 5.00 PM. R.O.No: 9154-PP/LA/DT/11/2024-25, Dte: 17-01-2025 Sd/- Managing Director, KSCCL

### GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION TENDER NOTICE

Quotation Notice No. Enrgg - 92/GHMC/PTC- RCF-C-22/2024-25, Dated: 16-01-2025  
Quotations Details: Supply and Fixing of clay roof tiles of size 16 CM X 10 CM set over base coat of Cement Mortar (1:8) 12mm thick over CC bed already laid or RCC roof slab, including neat cement slurry of honey like consistency spread @ 3.3kgs per Sqm & jointed neatly with cement paste mixed with pigment of matching shade to full depth, including seigniorage charges and the cost of convenience of all materials etc., complete. Submission of Quotations Start Date: 17-01-2025 @ 10.30 A.M. onwards. Last Date of Quotations Received Date: 24-01-2025 @ 3.00 P.M. Opening of Quotations Date: 24-01-2025 @ 3.30 P.M. Sd/- Executive Engineer R.O.No: 9187-PP/LA/DT/11/2024-25, D. 17.01.2025 Patancheru Circle-22, Slip Zone, GHMC.

ACROSS THE STATES



Curbs revoked in Delhi-NCR amid dip in pollution

The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR's air quality on Friday revoked curbs under stage 3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) amid a dip in pollution due to favourable meteorological conditions, according to an official order. Calm winds, low temperatures and foggy conditions had allowed accumulation of pollutants in the region earlier this week, prompting the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to implement strictest curbs under stage 3 and 4 of GRAP. The panel decided to revoke stage 4 curbs on Thursday amid a dip in pollution levels following a spell of rain in the region. On Friday, air pollution level declined further amid strong winds, leading to revocation of stage 3 curbs. GRAP Stage 3 entails a ban on non-essential construction work. Classes up to grade 5 are required to shift to hybrid mode under Stage 3. Parents and students have the option to choose online education wherever available.



NCP fields 30 candidates for Delhi Assembly polls

Upset at being ignored by ally BJP, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) on Friday fielded 30 candidates for the Delhi Assembly elections. The NCP leaders are learnt to be upset at the BJP giving a cold shoulder to its key ally in Maharashtra, while granting a seat each to the Janata Dal (United) and LJP (Ram Vilas) -- the NDA partners from Bihar. Of the 30 candidates fielded by Ajit Pawar-led NCP, 13 belong to the minority community. "We believe these 30 candidates will represent the best of our values and are committed to the development and prosperity of Delhi," said NCP spokesperson Brijmohan Shrivastav. The NCP has fielded Vishwanath Agarwal from the New Delhi seat from where Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal is seeking re-election. The BJP has fielded former Lok Sabha MP Parvesh Verma from this seat, while Sandeep Dikshit is the Congress candidate.



No contradiction in position: MEA

There is no contradiction of position on the situation along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) asserted on Friday, days after Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi said a "degree" of standoff exists between Indian and Chinese militaries in the region. "We do not see any contradiction between what the Army Chief has said and the position we have taken," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. Following an understanding reached on October 21, the Indian and Chinese militaries sides completed the disengagement of troops at the two remaining friction points of Demchok and Dapsang. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks on the margins of the BRICS Summit in Russia on October 23 and agreed to revive various bilateral dialogue mechanisms, signalling an intention to normalise the relations. Last month, NSA Ajit Doval travelled to Beijing and held Special Representatives talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the boundary dispute.

'Modi govt duped youngsters with false claims'

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge accused the BJP-led Centre on Friday of duping the country's youngsters on employment generation by making false claims and coming up with false data on jobs. He alleged that the government has only given paper leaks to youngsters and snatched their jobs with its bad policies. "False claims, falsification of data and covering up the truth of declining jobs have become a habit of the Modi government. 82 per cent youth are looking for a job this year, 55 per cent said it became difficult to find a job last year. 37 per cent say they have given up hope of finding a new job in 2025," Kharge claimed in a post on X. He further claimed that according to a separate survey, 69 per cent of Indian human resources (HR) professionals feel that finding qualified talent for a role has become more challenging now. "Without conducting a census, by estimating and extrapolating old surveys using government data, the Modi government is misleading crores of youth in the name of generating employ-

SAIF ATTACK CASE  
Min rules out underworld link

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Police are questioning a carpenter in connection with the knife attack on

Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan at his apartment in Mumbai's Bandra, while a Maharashtra minister on Friday ruled out underworld link to the stabbing incident.

The 54-year-old filmstar is recovering well at Lilavati Hospital, where he was taken after the brutal attack by an intruder in the early hours of Thursday that left him with multiple wounds, and is expected to be discharged in two to three days, doctors treating him said.

According to an official, the carpenter, identified as Waris Ali Salmani, was picked up and taken to the Bandra police station for questioning after he resembled the intruder who stabbed Khan in his 12th floor apartment during a robbery attempt.

The attacker's face was clearly captured in CCTV footage which surfaced on Thursday. The video showed the assailant, wearing a red scarf and carrying a backpack, scurrying down the stairs from the sixth floor of the 'Satguru Sharan' building, where Khan lives, at around 2.30 am.

Salmani had worked at the actor's flat two days before the incident and was informed about the attack by the contractor who had hired him for the carpentry assignment, the official said.

Hours after questioning, police took him to an undis-



Mumbai cops question carpenter

closed location, he said.

A second official, speaking on condition of anonymity, however, said the man brought to the police station for questioning was not related to the attack on Khan.

No one has been arrested yet, he said, adding more than 30 teams have been formed to track down and nab the attacker, who is said to be aged between 35 and 40 years.

Maharashtra Minister of State for Home (Urban) Yogesh Kadam said robbery was the motive behind the incident and clarified no underworld gang was involved in the knife attack.

The actor, who suffered multiple stab injuries, including in his neck, underwent an emergency surgery at Lilavati Hospital, where he was rushed in an autorickshaw.

"We are observing his

progress and he is doing excellently well according to our expectations. As per his progress, we have advised him bed rest and if he is comfortable, then in two to three days we will discharge him," said Dr Nitin Dange, neurosurgeon at Lilavati Hospital.

He said a team of doctors checked on him and made him walk.

The actor is fit to be moved out of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and "we are shifting him to a special room," informed the neurosurgeon, who led the team of doctors who operated on Khan.

"Khan had three injuries, two on the hand and one on the right side of the neck. And the major part was at the back, which was in the spine, thoracic spine we call. A sharp object was lodged inside, which has gone very

deep, touching the dura and the spinal cord, but it has not damaged the spinal cord," Dr Dange said.

Doctors have removed the sharp object and done repairing of the spinal injury, he explained. An image of the sharp object, a knife blade, went viral on social media.

"He is very lucky. We repaired the leaking spinal fluid and the dura which was there. We had to do a repair, which was successful," Dr Dange added.

"Today when we made him walk, he was completely okay to walk. He is on a regular diet and that's why we have taken a decision to shift him from the ICU to a normal special room. He has been advised bed rest in view of the deeper injury to the spine. Today we will be restricting visitors as we want Khan to rest," he maintained.



MHA: Modi govt determined to end Naxalism

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Naxalism is the biggest enemy of democracy and the Narendra Modi government is determined to end it, Union Home Ministry said on Friday.

The comments came after 12 Maoists were neutralised in a fierce encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Thursday.

"Naxalism is the biggest enemy of democracy and the Modi government is determined to end it. Yesterday, a joint team of central security forces and state police

launched an operation in Bijapur (Chhattisgarh) and achieved great success against Naxalites. The Modi government is moving forward towards making 'Naxal Mukta Bharat' and the country will be Naxal-free by 31 March 2026," Union Home Minister Amit Shah's office wrote on X in Hindi.

The 12 were killed in the encounter with security forces in the dense forest of the Pamed-Basaguda-Usoor axis of Bijapur district.

Besides the bodies, weapons were also recovered from the site, police said.



'Rs 2,500 monthly aid to women, Rs 21K to expecting mothers'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday released the first part of its manifesto for the February 5 Delhi polls, keeping women at the centre of its poll pitch by promising Rs 2,500 monthly aid for them, Rs 21,000 for every pregnant woman, LPG cylinders at Rs 500 and also Rs 2,500 pension for senior citizens.

BJP president J P Nadda unveiled the 'Sankalp Patra' at a press conference here, and asserted the manifesto -- which reflects a direct attempt by the BJP to rival AAP's welfare-focused governance model -- would serve as the foundation for a "developed Delhi". He also assured that all exist-

ing public welfare schemes in Delhi will continue if the BJP is voted to power.

"The BJP's resolution for a developed Delhi prioritises the empowerment of women and the welfare of senior citizens," he said.

Hitting out at the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party, he said all corruption charges in the public welfare schemes being run by his party's government will be investigated.

He promised that a BJP-led Delhi government will approve the implementation of the 'Ayushman Bharat' in the city in its first Cabinet meeting, and also give additional health cover of Rs 5 lakh. Nadda announced several

Promises BJP first part of Delhi manifesto



pro-women measures including Rs 2,500 monthly aid for

them under 'Mahila Samridhi Yojana', surpassing the AAP's

poll promise of Rs 2,100.

Additionally, the party promised LPG cylinders at Rs 500 for the poor section, with one free cylinder to be provided on Holi and Diwali. The party also promised a financial assistance of Rs 21,000 and six nutrition kits for every pregnant woman.

The BJP president promised Rs 2,500 pension for senior citizens between the age of 60-70 and Rs 3,000 for those older than 70, widows, and persons with disabilities.

The national capital will vote on February 5 and the results will be announced on February 8.

The BJP, which has been out of power since 1998, has been

making all-out efforts to dethrone the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party in the national capital.

The AAP-led Delhi government has implemented several welfare schemes including free electricity of up to 200 units, free bus travel for women, free water and free pilgrimage for senior citizens among others.

Hitting out at the BJP soon after its 'Sankalp Patra' was released, Kejriwal said the saffron party has "copied" the AAP and announced several 'revris' in its Delhi poll manifesto but Prime Minister Narendra Modi won't approve of the "freebies" promised by his party.

Guv as chancellor has major role in appointing VCs: UGC chief

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Emphasising the role of governors in appointing vice-chancellors of state varsities, University Grants Commission Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar has said states should adhere to UGC's recent draft notification that gives the governor a bigger role in appointing VCs.

Kumar's remarks gain significance in the wake of the TMC government's row with West Bengal Governor C V Ananda Bose over the appointment of VCs of 34 state universities.

The governor is the ex-officio chancellor of state universities.

"Since Independence, or even before that, it was the chancellor of universities who had the prerogative to appoint the VC. Hence, there is no new change in the draft regulation in which the issue of appointing VCs is spelt out," Kumar said.

The UGC chief was talking to



reporters here after attending the convocation of St Xavier's College on Thursday.

Kumar said the 2010 UGC regulation had already accorded the chancellor the crucial role in appointing VCs.

About claims by West Bengal on the state having more role in the appointment of VCs than the chancellor, he said the representative of the state has a say in the selection committee, which forwards four-five names to the chancellor and he chooses one among them.

"Among the various proposals in the draft, one pertains to

the chancellor's role in the appointment of VCs and that is relevant for both central and state universities," Kumar said.

"Whatever regulations are announced by the UGC, the sole objective is to make our universities globally competitive. It is our responsibility to work together to provide high-quality education," he said.

Bengal Education Minister Bratya Basu had earlier alleged in the assembly that the governor was "sitting" over appointments of VCs, ignoring the recommendations of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on the issue.

"The governor has to sign on the names recommended by the chief minister. But, he is not abiding by the Supreme Court order for appointing VCs in 34 universities. He is prolonging uncertainties, and not performing his constitutional role," Basu had said.

'Optimistic about India-US ties continuing on positive trajectory'



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days ahead of Donald Trump's swearing-in as the 47th president of the United States, some foreign policy experts said they were optimistic that the ties between both sides will continue on a "positive trajectory". They, however, underlined the aspect of "unpredictability" associated with Trump, who will take the top office in Washington for the second time, and said they expected "certain challenges" as one goes into the new administration, dubbed popularly as Trump 2.0.

Mukesh Aghi, the president and CEO of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), expressed an optimistic note regarding the bilateral ties but cautioned that the "H1B visa issue" is going to get "a little more explosive" in Trump's second term.

Aghi put forth his views at an online conference titled "The Trump Card: India's Choices & Strategy" hosted by a think-tank.

Trump would be sworn-in as the US president on January 20 along with J D Vance as the

vice president.

The 78-year-old Republican will replace outgoing President Joe Biden.

"We have an administration coming in which is focused on how to 'Make America Great Again'... Now, what we have is a scenario where you will see a lot of glass being broken, norms being challenged and a sense of unpredictability in an environment which is already very, very turbulent. So, we do expect certain challenges as we go into the new administration," said Aghi, who joined the conference from the US capital.

With regards to India and the US, you have the two countries where the trade is around USD 200 billion. But more importantly, geopolitically, they are "very much aligned" in every aspect, vis-a-vis especially in the Indo-Pacific, and especially towards China, the foreign policy expert said.

And, what is more important is that there are "roughly 5 million Indian-Americans, which make around 1.5 per cent of the population, but they are generating roughly around 6 per cent of the GDP", he asserted.



BJP, AAP indulge in vote-bank politics: Vinesh Phogat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader and Haryana MLA Vinesh Phogat accused the BJP and AAP on Friday of indulging in "vote-bank" politics, and said only the country's oldest political party fulfils its promises made to people.

Addressing a press conference here, Phogat said former Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit was the first to implement the Jat OBC reservation in the capital.

"The Congress has always stood with every section of the society. When the BJP brought three central farm laws, (AAP supreme and former Delhi chief minister) Arvind Kejriwal was the first to give his nod to those. They are against farmers, Jats and Dalits. They only indulge in vote-bank politics," the wrestler-turned politician said.

In Haryana, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had promised to give Rs 2,100 per month to women, but it has been three months since the Assembly polls were held and the amount is yet to be paid, Phogat said.

Similarly, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had promised to give Rs 1,000 per month to every woman in Punjab, but the promise has not been honoured even after three years of the party coming to power in the state, she added.



"False claims, falsification of data and covering up the truth of declining jobs have become a habit of the Modi government. 82 per cent youth are looking for a job this year, 55 per cent said it became difficult to find a job last year. 37 per cent say they have given up hope of finding a new job in 2025," Kharge claimed in a post on X.

ment. By converting unpaid labour into jobs and counting even one-hour work per week

as jobs, it is deceiving the country.

"The Modi government has



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Bonanza before budget

The Cabinet has greenlit the 8th Pay Commission, setting the stage for a revision of salaries of central govt employees

The Union Cabinet's approval of the 8th Pay Commission ahead of the budget marks a significant step toward revising the salary and pension structure for over 49 lakh central government employees and nearly 65 lakh pensioners. Chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the decision emphasises improving quality of life and stimulating economic activity through enhanced consumption. The 8th Pay Commission will be tasked with revising salaries, allowances and pensions for central government employees and pensioners. Consultations will be held with central and state governments and other stakeholders before finalising its recommendations. The Commission's chairman and two members are to be appointed shortly, and its findings will replace the existing 7th Pay Commission framework, whose term ends in 2026. Historically, pay commissions are constituted every decade to address inflation, economic growth and employees' changing financial needs.



Prime Minister Modi underscored that the revised pay structure will boost consumption by increasing disposable incomes. Higher salaries and pensions are expected to lead to increased spending on goods and services, driving demand in sectors such as retail, real estate, and automobiles. This consumption surge could further stimulate production and employment, creating a positive feedback loop in the economy. The Commission's recommendations are expected to address the rising cost of living and improve the financial wellbeing of central government employees and pensioners. While the revisions will inject liquidity into the economy, they will also impose a significant financial burden on the exchequer. Increased salary outlays may necessitate budgetary adjustments, potentially impacting allocations for other sectors like infrastructure and welfare. Although PSU and state government employees are outside the direct purview of central pay commissions, the 8th Pay Commission's recommendations often set a benchmark. Many state governments and PSUs align their pay scales with central government standards, amplifying the financial impact across the broader public sector. This could also have adverse effect on the economy. Higher disposable incomes could lead to demand-pull inflation, particularly in essential goods and services. Managing inflation will require a balanced monetary policy. Besides, the exclusion of PSU employees and 'gramin dak sevaks' from central pay commission benefits may intensify demands for similar revisions, potentially leading to unrest and political pressure. Increased spending on salaries and pensions may constrain the government's ability to invest in capital-intensive projects, potentially slowing long-term economic growth. Despite challenges, it can serve as a catalyst for the economy by generating demand and boosting production.

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### PICTALK



Tourists at Mall Road amid snowfall, in Manali

## The silent struggles of a daughter-in-law: A call to change

Allowing a daughter-in-law to flourish in her own right doesn't diminish the family's unity—it strengthens it

Living in a joint family is rarely simple, but for a daughter-in-law, it may be a delicate balancing act filled with judgement and criticism. In many households, the role of a daughter-in-law is laden with unspoken expectations, leaving little room for her individuality. It's time we acknowledge these silent struggles and push for a more inclusive and empathetic family dynamic. A daughter-in-law often steps into a household as an outsider, expected to adapt seamlessly to a new way of life. From changing her surname to understanding the intricacies of family traditions, she embarks on a journey of transformation. Yet, the term "in-law" itself can feel like a trap—a constant reminder of her peripheral status in the family. For many, this word symbolises the invisible cage of societal expectations and sacrifices that are seldom reciprocated. "It feels as though I'm constantly being watched," shares Anonymus, 37, who recently relocated to live with her in-laws following her marriage. "It can be exhausting to sense scrutiny at every corner,



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

whether it's about your outfit or your manner of speaking." These tales are not one of a kind. Across the nation, countless women grapple with the challenge of fulfilling the expectations of others while striving to maintain their sense of self. Some of my friends and cousins have admitted to bending the truth just to carve out a little time for themselves—a brief coffee catch-up or a quick getaway to relax with friends. Some even refer to it as a means of 'escaping' the steadfast pressures of family life. But why should it come to this? Why must a daughter-in-law justify her need for a breather?

ple for future generations, teaching them to prioritise respect over rigid roles. Transformation begins with dialogue. It is essential for families to recognise the contributions a daughter-in-law makes and to foster open communication regarding shared responsibilities. Partners also hold a crucial position in connecting their spouses with their families, making certain that everyone feels appreciated and heard. At its core, a family is about mutual love, respect, and support. Let's replace the stifling word "in-law" with something more inclusive—perhaps "in-love," symbolising acceptance and belonging. After all, isn't that what a family should truly be about? For daughters-in-law across the world, the message is clear: You are not alone in your struggle. For families, the challenge is to listen, adapt, and foster a space where everyone, regardless of their title, feels at home. It's not just about rewriting roles—it's about rewriting the narrative for a more equitable tomorrow. (The writer is a freelance writer; views are personal)

## A spectacle of faith, unity and cosmic significance

The Kumbh Mela highlights the blend of tradition and modernity. It links cosmic phenomena with earthly rituals while fostering community feeling



RAJDEEP PATHAK

The grand Maha Kumbh Mela, one of the most magnificent spiritual gatherings in the world, is here. The Uttar Pradesh government has meticulously prepared to host this sacred festival – happening once every 12 years – with Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally monitoring the developments. Began on January 13, 2025, the Maha Kumbh is anticipated to draw an awe-inspiring congregation of over 45 crores – a footfall of around 450 million pilgrims, saints, ascetics and tourists – devotees.

At the heart of this divine celebration, is the (coming together) 'Sangam' – the sacred confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mystical Saraswati rivers. Millions of devotees will come together to take a holy dip, seeking spiritual cleansing and blessings. The Maha Kumbh is a timeless testament to faith, unity, and the eternal connection between humanity and the divine, that owes its origins to mythology and history. Devotees believe that a dip during the auspicious planetary alignments cleanses sins and paves the way for Moksha (liberation). Swami Sivananda, the Yoga Guru, and a proponent of Vedanta, rightly pointed out that "The holy dip at the Kumbh Mela is not just a ritual; it is a profound surrender to the divine." Mythologically connected, the legend of 'Samudra Manthan', or the Churning of the Ocean, is the cornerstone of its mythological significance. According to ancient scriptures, gods and demons churned the ocean to obtain the nectar of immortality (Amrit). As the Gods carried away the nectar, a few drops fell at four locations – Haridwar, Prayagraj, Nashik and Ujjain – and these places became sacred. Thus began the tradition of the Kumbh Mela. Scholar Diana Eck, professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies at Harvard University notes that "The Kumbh Mela reflects the Indian ethos of integrating mythology with geography, turning the mundane into the sacred." References to Kumbha appear in Vedic texts like the Rigveda,



Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda. It is also linked to the zodiac sign Aquarius, an astrological interpretation influenced by Greek ideas in the late 1st millennium CE. 'Mela' means "assembly" or "gathering" and signifies fairs or communal celebrations, as found in ancient Hindu texts. Together, Kumbha Mela refers to a "gathering centered around water or the nectar of immortality." Historically, the first recorded mention of the Kumbh Mela can be traced back to the writings of the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang in the 7th century CE. Hiuen Tsang documented several key events during Harsha's (Harshavardhana ruled over much of northern India from 606 to 647 AD and his reign is regarded as one of relative peace and prosperity) reign. Tsang also documented the Kumbh Mela festival in Prayag which Harsha attended. Over centuries, the festival evolved from a modest gathering of ascetics to a colossal event that attracts millions. The historical transformation of the Kumbh Mela underscores its resilience and adaptability, blending spiritual fervour with societal changes. A defining feature of the Kumbh Mela is the presence of saints, seers, and spiritual leaders



REFERENCES TO KUMBH APPEAR IN VEDIC TEXTS LIKE THE RIGVEDA, YAJURVEDA, SAMAVEDA, AND ATHARVAVEDA. IT IS ALSO LINKED TO THE ZODIAC SIGN AQUARIUS, AN ASTROLOGICAL INTERPRETATION INFLUENCED BY GREEK IDEAS IN THE LATE 1ST MILLENNIUM CE

who guide the masses. Various 'Akharas' (monastic orders) play a pivotal role in preserving and propagating Sanatan Dharma. The ascetics, often clad in saffron robes or ash, symbolise the renunciation of worldly desires. The ritual bath in the rivers further holds deep symbolic meaning. It signifies the washing away of one's ego and sins, allowing a fresh spiritual beginning. Historian William Dalrymple observes, "The saints at the Kumbh Mela are the custodians of India's timeless spiritual heritage." The Kumbh Mela beautifully embodies the fusion of religion and science. Its timing, rooted in precise astronomical calculations, reflects the profound significance of Hindu cosmology. When Jupiter enters Aquarius and the Sun moves into Aries, planetary alignments create an auspicious period for spiritual connection. This sacred festival links cosmic phenomena with earthly rituals, highlighting the deep interconnection between the universe and human spirituality. Aryabhata's pioneering work in celestial phenomena, including planetary motion and eclipses, continues to influence the Kumbh's timing. The Kumbh Mela is also a melting pot of cultures,

philosophies, and humanity. Participants range from reclusive ascetics to common people and even international visitors. This diversity underscores the universality of the quest for spiritual enlightenment. Sociologist Sudhir Kakar once wrote that the "Kumbh Mela is not merely a religious event but a grand celebration of human interconnectedness." The exchange of ideas, rituals, and philosophies at the Mela fosters a unique sense of global unity. Hosting millions of pilgrims at the Kumbh Mela demands meticulous planning, leveraging cutting-edge technologies like AI-powered crowd management systems, drone surveillance for security, and mobile health clinics to handle medical emergencies. Mobile apps and live-streaming services ensured smooth communication and global accessibility for devotees. The 2025 Kumbh will span an expanded area of 800 hectares, featuring 1.8 lakh tents and 101 smart parking facilities for five lakh vehicles daily. Despite the challenges, the event seamlessly blends tradition and modernity. (The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### ISRO'S DOCKING MISSION SUCCESSFUL

Madam — ISRO docking two fast-moving spacecraft in space is a highly complex operation with numerous benefits. Docking enables the assembly of modular space stations, telescopes, or other large structures in orbit that cannot be launched in one piece. Example: Docking was essential in constructing the International Space Station (ISS). Docking allows for the transfer of astronauts and cargo between spacecraft or from a spacecraft to a space station. This supports long-term missions, resupply and the exchange of crew. This extends the operational life of expensive assets like communication or scientific satellites. Docking technology allows spacecraft to refuel in space, enabling longer missions or supporting reusable spacecraft. This is crucial for deep space exploration missions. Docking is a critical step for assembling spacecraft or transferring crew for missions to the Moon, Mars, or beyond. Modular spacecraft for such missions often require multiple launches and dockings to combine their components. Docking facilitates international cooperation, as different countries can launch modules or experiments that dock with a shared platform, like a space station. Docking provides a means for evacuation or rescue in case of emergencies aboard a spacecraft or space station. Spacecraft like crew capsules (e.g., SpaceX Dragon, ISRO's Gaganyaan) rely on docking to connect with orbital stations, making them reusable and cost-effective. Successfully executing docking operations demonstrates technological prowess, boosts national pride, and establishes the country as a leader in space exploration. Docking operations are a cornerstone of space exploration and mission sustainability, enabling long-term presence and work in space. This achievement has placed India in the exclusive and elite league of the US, Russia, and China! This docking was successful on January 16, 2025!

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

#### India strengthens its naval fleet



Wednesday. It is for the first time that all three frontline platforms have been indigenously developed in the country. The simultaneous commissioning of these vessels is a shot in the arm for the Indian Navy, which is preparing itself to challenge China's hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region. Equipped with the advanced technology, all three vessels have boosted the Indian Navy's capabilities to respond to various maritime challenges more effectively. In fact, public sector shipyards such as GRSE Kolkata, MDL Mazgaon, CSL Kochi, GSL Goa and HSL Vizag Besides immense contributions to defence preparation, the Indian Navy has contributed immensely to boosting operational preparedness of the Indian Navy by completing various shipbuilding projects in a very efficient and time-bound manner.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

#### ACTOR SAIF ALI KHAN ATTACKED

Madam — Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was stabbed six times after confronting an intruder, who had a confrontation with Khan's maid before the actor intervened, resulting in a physical struggle, in his Bandra residence early Thursday morning. The intruder fled after a violent altercation, and Khan was rushed to Lilavati Hospital by his son, Ibrahim and a caretaker, where he has successfully emerged from surgery and is now out of danger. The actor is currently recovering, with doctors closely monitoring his condition. People wonder how an intruder can enter the building and reach the 11th floor in a high-profile building that is well guarded and then escape also. Moreover, all in Bandra. An area that has the highest concentration of celebrities, which is supposed to have adequate security. No doubt 54-year-old Saif is a fit person, so he could face the intruder. Wishing Saif Ali Khan a speedy recovery, trusting that the law will take its course and those responsible will be held accountable.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

#### HAMAS-ISRAEL TRUCE DECLARED

Madam — The ceasefire accord emerged after mediation by Qatar, Egypt and the US to stop the war that began with deadly Hamas attacks on Israel and saw Israeli forces kill tens of thousands of Palestinians and devastate Gaza. It is a welcome move. As per the deal, Israel and Hamas have agreed to halt the war in Gaza and see the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners. It is the most significant breakthrough in 15 months of war that began in October 2023. Firstly, hostages in Gaza and Palestinian prisoners in Israel would be freed, and Gazans who have been displaced would be allowed to start returning home. During this period, Israeli troops would pull out of all populated areas in Gaza while the Palestinians would also return to their neighbourhoods in all the areas of Gaza. The second stage would be a permanent end to the war, according to Biden.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### OUR ACTIONS SHAPE OUR LIVES

Karmaphalas—the results of our actions—are an undeniable force shaping our lives



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all should know about karmaphalas. These are the results of both good and bad karma (acts) done by us in the past with our minds, words and bodies. I have mentioned minds separately from bodies because karmas done by the mind are subtle. And they can be quite lethal. What is a mental disease? You have guessed right; it is caused by our minds.

Similarly, words are no less dangerous. Yes, words can be very deadly, as experienced by all of us, when we choose to speak foolishly. And these bad karmaphalas can manifest at any age but they hurt the most in old age when we are weak and not left with many options.

This is when a person laments about his bad luck and there are not many sympathisers. Aren't we written off as we age? This article describes what we can do about it. We are not so helpless after all. The first step is to stop doing all bad acts right from this moment. And we know what these are. Goodness has to increase in us by doing all acts of goodness.

We must speak pleasantly; we should see goodness programmes; we should stick to foods in goodness; and so on. What this will do is protect us from the ill effects of our present acts, to begin with. Controller mental must be curbed; one must become realistic because there is only one controller and that is God. If it wasn't so we will obtain whatever we desire, which hardly even hap-



pens. The ego must be curbed because there is only one superior entity, which is God. All our lives we try to prove our superiority and what happens? We become very unpopular with others, especially with our family members, whom we desperately need in our old age. Spiritual practices must be started in the right earnest. They will make a lot of sense if we realise that we are souls, parts of God.

Shouldn't parts be dependent on the whole? Should we not be respectful towards God, just like a son is supposed to be towards his father? Don't we thank others when they do us some favour? God is forever doing us many favours. To begin with, He has provided all essentials free like the light of the sun, water, air containing oxygen, etc. God has to help ultimately because fate cannot be changed by anyone else. He also doesn't, but helps to deal with bad karmaphalas; we won't end up badly. (9.31) This is a very big 'kripa' but more important is His mercy in protecting us from our good karmaphalas, when we are most likely to hurt ourselves badly. Because it is hard to tolerate good times. And God and only God can help in improving our nature, which is also part of our fate. Doesn't our nature let us down time and again? We see people destroying themselves by angry acts, lusty behaviour, envious attitudes, etc. God protects us from foolish acts, if we remain in His shelter. I am very scared about the prospect of ill fate in my old age when I am already weak. God has to protect me.

I am not taking any chances; I have taken God's shelter. Only God is the one who can help, being the owner and controller. God can intervene and God does for His devotees. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 18.58) Wouldn't this make us peaceful? It has made me gradually as my connection with God is getting strengthened by my spiritual practices. Please don't take chances.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

# Reverse brain drain: A game-changer for growth



WASEEM JAVED

By harnessing the knowledge, networks and expertise of these returnees, India is laying the foundation for a resilient and competitive economy

India has witnessed a mass exodus of talent for decades, as highly skilled professionals and students left the country in search of better opportunities abroad. This phenomenon, known as 'brain drain', has historically deprived the country of its brightest minds. However, the tide is reversing, with individuals returning to their home country, as seen in the recent past. With acquired skills and rich experience, the 'reverse brain drain' is increasingly becoming a powerful force in India's economic growth and development. This comes against the backdrop of India's fast-paced economic growth, combined with government initiatives and an evolving entrepreneurial ecosystem that has made the country an attractive destination for global talent, including those who once left its shores. This shift is not about just people coming back; it's about knowledge transfer, innovation, and global networks essential to building a competitive and resilient economy.

### Economic and Entrepreneurial Opportunities Driving Return

In most cases, what has caused this reverse brain drain is the prospect of available opportunities in India. The growth pattern of India as a country with an upward economic trajectory brings with it demand for science, technology, and innovation skills from professionals in their fields.

Returnees easily get absorbed in suitable roles since their international experience puts them on top of the sought-after candidates at startups, large multinational companies, and research centres. Government initiatives like Make in India, Startup India, and Atmanirbhar Bharat have further made India more attractive. These initiatives encourage entrepreneurship, self-reliance, and innovation by offering financial incentives, regulatory support, and access to infrastructure. Thus, many Indian professionals who had earlier worked in global hubs such as Silicon Valley are returning to start their startups or take up leadership roles in Indian enterprises.

For example, several Indian entrepreneurs who have returned from the United States or the United Kingdom are at the helm of billion-dollar startups in India today.

They cut across fintech, e-commerce, health tech, and renewable energy among other sectors that create jobs and spur economic growth. Their global networks and access to venture capital give them a competitive edge that will allow them to scale their businesses quickly and effectively.

### The Role of Overseas Education in Shaping Talent

Education in foreign lands serves as the core of the reverse brain drain. In 2024, more than 13.35 lakh students from India pursued education abroad, of which the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, and Germany were among the top destinations. In general, courses in engineering, business management, medicine, and technology attract Indian students with promising career avenues. This international education equips students with advanced knowledge, technical skills, and a global perspective. Many also gain valuable work experience abroad before deciding to return to India.

A key facilitator in this journey has been the rise of AI-powered consultancy plat-



GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES LIKE MAKE IN INDIA, STARTUP INDIA, AND ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT HAVE FURTHER MADE INDIA MORE ATTRACTIVE. THESE INITIATIVES ENCOURAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, SELF-RELIANCE, AND INNOVATION BY OFFERING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES, REGULATORY SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO INFRASTRUCTURE

forms that streamline the process of studying abroad. These platforms help students identify the best courses, universities, and countries based on their aspirations and career goals.

They also help with visa processes, and education loans, and even offer post-admission help, so everything goes off smoothly. These consultancies not only empower students in terms of succeeding abroad but also lay the groundwork for their potential contributions upon returning to India while bridging the gap between students and global education systems.

### Benefits of Reverse Brain Drain for India

The reverse brain drain is an economy-changing force for India, bringing skilled professionals back to drive progress across sectors. In the case of technology, returnees provide cutting-edge expertise in areas like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and clean energy, which ensure that India is not left behind globally.

The knowledge that these returnees provide creates technological advances that benefit both industries and society. Entrepreneurship and innovation also pick up pace as returnees start new ventures, create jobs, and develop innovative products and services that address local and global challenges. This not only increases employment but also makes India a creative solutions hub.

Furthermore, these professionals enhance scientific collaboration by connecting Indian institutions with international research networks, thereby facilitating the exchange of ideas and resources in areas such as healthcare and renewable energy. The economic impact is equally strong as the

reverse brain drain strengthens productivity, draws in foreign investment, and propels GDP growth.

### Key Challenges and the Way Forward

Although reverse brain drain promises to boost Indian growth immensely, bureaucratic red tape, infrastructural inadequacies, and differing work environments in India versus the developed world will still prevent most professionals from coming back. This will only come true when registration procedures, tax regimes, and the regime for intellectual property become more simplified, paving the way for returnees to establish enterprises or meaningfully contribute to organizations.

To tap into returning talent effectively, India must improve its infrastructure: world-class research facilities, modern educational institutions, and strong health care. More competitive incentives to attract international talent include tax breaks, grants for research, and easier access to funding. Only then will the reverse brain drain convert into practical input toward the nation's economic growth and innovation.

### Government Initiatives and Policy Support

The Indian government has been proactively capitalising on reverse brain drain. By setting up innovation hubs, funding startup companies, and collaborating with world-class research institutes, the country is attracting much-needed talent as well as fostering innovation. Many countries have implemented policies and incentives to encourage skilled professionals to return to their home countries. For example, Taiwan created the Hsinchu Science Park and offered tax cuts to encourage the development of high-tech industries. Such poli-

cies not only encourage the return of skilled professionals but also provide them with a platform to flourish.

### The Global Context and Its Implications

Interestingly, reverse brain drain is not an Indian phenomenon alone. Developed countries like the United States and the United Kingdom are losing talent due to restrictive immigration policies and limited opportunities for career advancement. For example, America's flawed immigration policies have inadvertently driven away skilled professionals who are now contributing to India's growth.

This shift points to a wider paradigm wherein developing countries are transformational centres of innovation and economic activity. It could also help India emerge as a global leader in sectors ranging from technology to healthcare.

### A Bright Future for Reverse Brain Drain

The reverse brain drain represents a new paradigm in India's journey to become a global economic superpower. In this new scenario, talent can be an asset to the country by nurturing innovation and fostering collaboration. With government support, private sector participation, and an emphasis on developing world-class infrastructure, the country is poised to turn reverse brain drain into a sustained growth driver.

In doing so, this movement is not only for India but reshapes the global talent landscape with a new reality of importance— inclusive and dynamic economies in a more integrated and interconnected world.

(The writer is the founder and CEO of EduVib; views are personal)

# Andhra Pradesh's journey towards zero hunger and inclusive education

The Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal scheme is a testament to the State's commitment to inclusivity and reforming the education system

Since Independence, food security has been a significant concern in India. Despite notable progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger, India still grapples with the challenge of undernutrition. According to a United Nations report, the country accounts for nearly 195 million undernourished individuals, with children constituting 43 per cent of this population. Various initiatives, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the PM Poshan Mid-Day Meal scheme, have been implemented to address this pressing issue.

### Historical Roots of Mid-Day Meal Schemes

The origins of the Mid-Day Meal scheme in India can be traced back to the colonial era. In 1925, the Madras Presidency proposed the first-ever Mid-Day Meal initiative for underprivileged children. Tamil Nadu became the first state to implement this idea, with Sourashtra Boys Higher Secondary School in Madurai serving meals to children in 1955. By the 1980s, this programme gained widespread acceptance, particularly with the introduction of the "Nutritious Noon-Meal Scheme" by Tamil Nadu's then Chief Minister, M G Ramachandran. This initiative aimed to provide food to 6.8 million malnourished children in the state. Over the years, the programme has demonstrated the strong correlation between nutritious meals and improved educa-

tion. For children in tribal and socio-economically disadvantaged communities, the scheme has proven to be a lifeline. Many of these children, previously engaged in household activities or income generation due to food insecurity, could now attend school and pursue their right to education. The programme also had a transformative impact on children from Socio-



T V KATTIMANI

Economic Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs), including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, De-notified Tribes, Nomadic Tribes, and girl children. **Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal Scheme** In a significant step forward, the Andhra Pradesh government recently launched the "Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal Scheme." This initiative, named after Dokka Seethamma—revered as Aparna Annapurna—provides free meals to students in junior colleges across the state. Seethamma, born in 1841 in Mandapet village, was renowned for her compassion and dedication to serving the needy. Despite limited formal education, she imbibed strong moral values through

stories and songs from her childhood. Along with her husband, Dokka Joganna, she provided food and shelter to travelers and disaster-stricken communities near the Godavari River. Her legacy of humanitarian service remains a beacon of inclusivity and maternal love. The Dokka Seethamma scheme is the first of its kind in India, targeting intermediate students. Benefiting 148,419 students across 475 government junior colleges in Andhra Pradesh, the pro-

gramme aims to reduce dropout rates, enhance academic focus, and improve overall student health. By lessening the financial burden on low-income families, the initiative also promotes greater equity in education. It sets a model for other states to emulate, addressing hunger while fostering a nurturing environment for academic and personal growth.

### Complementary Initiatives for Inclusivity

In addition to the Dokka Seethamma scheme, Andhra Pradesh has revived the "Anna Canteens" initiative. This program offers wholesome meals at just Rs 5 to economically disadvantaged individuals, significantly alleviating hunger and improving living standards. By ensuring affordable



access to food, the state aims to bridge socioeconomic disparities and support marginalised communities. For tribal students, particularly girls, the Dokka Seethamma scheme has been a game-changer. Tribal communities often face acute food insecurity due to geographical remoteness and limited resources. Free nutritious meals enable tribal children to focus on their education instead of household chores or income generation. The scheme also addresses educational inequity by encouraging families to prioritise their children's schooling. For tribal girls, the program has a transformative impact. Social and financial pressures often force girls to leave school prematurely, but free meals reduce fam-

ily burdens and promote their continued education.

### A Vision for a Better Future

The Mid-Day Meal scheme and similar initiatives signify more than just food distribution—they represent a commitment to empowering the marginalised and uplifting the underprivileged. These programs not only ensure access to nutritious meals but also encourage higher education, better living standards, and healthier lifestyles. By fostering cooperation among teachers, students, and staff, the scheme revives the ancient "Gurukula" system of holistic education, emphasising both mental and physical wellbeing.

(The writer is Vice Chancellor of Central Tribal University of Andhra Pradesh; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Sembcorp to set up green hydrogen facility in Odisha

Sembcorp Industries on Friday signed two non-binding memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with the Government of Odisha to explore setting up of green hydrogen production facility in the state. Sembcorp's wholly-owned subsidiaries Sembcorp Green Hydrogen India Pvt Ltd (SGHIPL) and Sembcorp Development Ltd signed the MOUs in the presence of Singapore's Minister for Transport and Second Minister for Finance Chee Hong Tat and Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Mahi, the company said in a statement. "Under the MOU signed with Industrial Promotion & Investment Corporation of Odisha Limited, SGHIPL will explore the development of a production facility for green hydrogen and its derivatives, with an anticipated production capacity of 720,000 tonnes per annum. The facility, to be strategically located in Odisha, is expected to generate over 2,000 employment opportunities during its operational phase," it said. Sembcorp Development Ltd has also signed a non-binding MOU with Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation to assess the potential for the development of an industrial park in Odisha, India.



'Govt considering KIOCL-NMDC merger'

The government is considering merging pellet maker KIOCL with iron ore major NMDC. Union Steel Minister HD Kumaraswamy said that KIOCL is in critical condition. "The process is on to consider merging KIOCL and NMDC. KIOCL has also reported losses," he said on the sidelines of a press meet here to announce a revival package of Rs 11,440 crore for Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL). The minister said the situation has occurred due to non-cooperation of the state (Karnataka) government. KIOCL Ltd, under the Ministry of Steel, operates a 3.5 million tonne per annum (MTPA) iron-oxide pellet plant and a blast furnace unit to manufacture 2.16 lakh tonne per annum pig iron at Mangaluru, Karnataka. NMDC is also an entity operating under the Steel Ministry. It caters to India's 20 per cent of iron ore demand.



BMW India launches first locally produced EV at Rs 49 lakh

German luxury car maker BMW India on Friday launched its first locally-produced electric vehicle priced at Rs 49 lakh (ex-showroom all India). The premium SUV was launched at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. The BMW X1 Long Wheelbase All Electric is locally produced at BMW Group plant in Chennai. BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah said, "It is the perfect premium SUV for the rising aspirations of new Bharat. As the first 'Make in India' EV from BMW, the X1 Long Wheelbase beacons a new era of innovation and excellence." He further said that BMW India is offering a comprehensive solution complemented by small financial plans, a widespread EV ecosystem with new services like destination charging, smart e-routing, charging concierge and much more. The car can be booked at BMW dealerships across the country from Friday onwards.

Growth in India slowed more than expected: IMF

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Led by a sharper-than-expected deceleration in industrial activity, economic growth in India slowed more than anticipated and is projected to remain at 6.5 per cent till 2026, the International Monetary Fund said on Friday. "Growth in India slowed more than expected, led by a sharper-than-expected deceleration in industrial activity," the IMF said in its latest update of the World Economic Outlook, according to which the global economy is holding steady. In 2023, India's growth rate was 8.2 per cent, which dropped to 6.5 per cent in 2024.

cent in 2026, converging back to target earlier in advanced economies than in emerging markets and developing economies, it added.

According to IMF WEO, global growth is expected to remain stable, albeit lacklustre. In the US, underlying demand remains robust,



The global growth is projected at 3.3 per cent in 2025 and 2026, below the historical (2000-19) average of 3.7 per cent. The forecast for 2025 is broadly unchanged from that in the October 2024 WEO, primarily on account of an upward revision in the US offsetting downward revisions in other major economies. Global headline inflation is expected to decline to 4.2 per cent in 2025 and to 3.5 per

reflecting strong wealth effects, a less restrictive monetary policy stance, and supportive financial conditions. The growth is projected to be at 2.7 per cent in 2025, the report said.

"In India, the growth is projected to be solid at 6.5 per cent in 2025 and 2026, as projected in October and in line with potential," the IMF said.

In 2023, India's growth rate was 8.2 per cent, which dropped to 6.5 per cent in 2024. It is expected to remain the same in 2025 and 2026, it said.

Economic growth poised to rebound, says RBI Bulletin

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's economic growth is poised to rebound as domestic demand regains strength, though the stickiness in food inflation warrants careful monitoring, the latest RBI Bulletin released on Friday said.

An article on the 'State of the Economy' published in the January Bulletin also noted that the economic outlook for 2025 is divergent across countries with some loss of speed in the US; weak-to-modest recoveries in Europe and Japan; more moderate growth profiles in emerging and developing countries alongside a more gradual disinflation relative to advanced economies.

"In India, there is a conducive quickening of high-frequency indicators of economic activity in the second half of 2024-25, bearing out the implicit pick-up in real GDP growth for this period in the annual first advance estimates of the NSO," it said.

It further said, the headline inflation eased for the second successive month in December, although the stickiness in food inflation warrants careful monitoring of second order effects.

The article has been authored by a team lead by Michael Patra, who demitted the office of RBI Deputy



"In India, there is a conducive quickening of high-frequency indicators of economic activity in the second half of 2024-25, bearing out the implicit pick-up in real GDP growth for this period in the annual first advance estimates of the NSO," it said

Governor earlier this month.

"India's economic growth is poised to rebound as domestic demand regains strength. Rural demand continues to gain momentum, reflecting a resilience in consumption, supported by brighter agricultural prospects," the article said.

A revival in public capex on infrastructure is likely to stimulate growth in key sectors.

It also noted that rising input cost pressures in the manufacturing sector, coupled with weather-related exigencies and global headwinds could, however, pose risks to this outlook.

The central bank, however, said the views expressed in the Bulletin are of the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India.

India's gem, jewellery exports fall \$1,968 mn: GJEPC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The overall gems and jewellery exports declined 10.29 per cent year-on-year to USD 1,967.98 million (Rs 16,719.460 crore) due to geopolitical tensions and a slowdown in demand in China, GJEPC said on Friday.

Gems and jewellery exports stood at USD 2,193.82 million (Rs 18,269.7 crore) in December 2023, according to data from industry apex body Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC).

"The geopolitical tensions continue to affect the overall demand. The slowdown in demand in key export destinations, including China, has also impacted the shipments," GJEPC chairman Vipul Shah said.

The overall export of Cut and Polished diamonds (CPD) declined 10.36 per cent to USD 773.1 million (Rs 6,569.7 crores) in December compared to USD 862.48 million (Rs 7,182.53 crores) in the same period of 2023.

Exports of Polished Lab Grown Diamonds fell 5.48 per cent to USD 78.93 million (in Rs 670.77 crore) against USD 83.51 million (Rs 695.48 crore) a year ago, according to provisional data by GJEPC.

Gold jumps Rs 700 to Rs 82K per 10 gms; nears record high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rising for the third consecutive day, gold prices on Friday surged Rs 700 to trade near a record high at Rs 82,000 per 10 grams in the national capital due to persistent buying in the local markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal had settled at Rs 81,300 per 10 grams on Thursday. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity continued to shine for the third straight day by jumping Rs 700 to Rs 81,600 per 10 grams against Rs 80,900 per 10 grams in the previous close.

However, silver prices declined Rs 500 to Rs 93,500 per kg on Friday. The metal had ended at Rs 94,000 per kg in the previous trading session.

On October 31 last year, gold of 99.9 per cent purity and 99.5 per cent purity hit a record high of Rs 82,400 and



Rs 82,000 per 10 grams, respectively, in the local markets.

Despite a weak trend in the international markets, the precious metal gained in the domestic market, mainly due to higher demand from jewellers, traders said.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for February delivery declined Rs 424 or 0.54 per cent to Rs 78,802 per 10 grams. "Gold witnessed minor profit booking from higher zones on MCX, retreating towards Rs 78,800," Jateen

Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

The decline comes as white flags emerge in the Middle East, signalling easing tensions, and the recent positive data from the US, including CPI, retail sales, and the Federal Reserve's dovish outlook, appear to have been largely priced in, Trivedi added. Silver contracts for March delivery plummeted Rs 1,093 or 1.18 per cent to Rs 91,710 per kg on the MCX on Friday.

Globally, Comex gold futures fell USD 21.10 per ounce or 0.77 per cent to USD 2,729.80 per ounce. "Gold dipped slightly below USD 2,750 per ounce ahead of upcoming US housing and industrial production data," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP of Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said.

Fed Governor Christopher Waller on Thursday said if economic data continues to weaken, the central bank might implement three or four rate cuts this year further stoking the optimism for rate cut expectations which lent support to the metal.

Additionally, Comex silver futures quoted 1.47 per cent lower in the Asian market hours at USD 31.26 per ounce. Further, uncertainties surrounding US President-elect Donald Trump's trade policies and tariff plans should contribute to limiting losses for the safe-haven asset, according to commodities experts.

Centre says closely monitoring food prices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The central government on Friday said it is closely monitoring the prices and availability of essential food commodities to ensure affordability to consumers and maintain a stable price regime. Measures like incentivising domestic production and import and export policies to ensure the overall availability and affordability of essential food commodities are being taken up.

"The Centre is taking pre-emptive and timely decisions to maintain price stability in the interest of consumers and farmers," according to a statement issued by the Food Ministry.

The production of pulses and onion in the 2024-25 crop year (July- June) is estimated to increase over the last year due to good monsoon rains and favourable weather conditions.

The tur production is estimated to be 35.02 lakh tonne in 2024-25, 2.5 per cent higher than the previous year's production of 34.17 lakh tonne. The agriculture ministry has issued sanctions for the procurement of tur. Kharif and late Kharif onion production has been estimated to be good on account of higher sowing.

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Unabated foreign fund outflows and elevated crude prices in international markets also played spoilsport for the bourses. In a volatile session, the 30-share benchmark declined 423.49 points or 0.55 per cent to settle at 76,619.33. During the day, it tumbled 779.53 points or 1 per cent to 76,263.29.

"The markets remained volatile for yet another session, slipping half a per cent after three consecutive days of gains. Early weakness, driven by IT and banking heavyweights reacting to earnings, pulled the benchmark indices lower. However, resilience in key players like Reliance, ITC, and LT helped limit the decline.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty dropped 108.60 points or 0.47 per cent to 23,203.20.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark tanked 759.58 points or 0.98 per cent, and the Nifty declined 228.3 points or 0.97 per cent.

Forex reserves drop by USD 8.714 bln to USD 625.871 bln

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 8.714 billion to USD 625.871 billion in the week ended January 10, the RBI said on Friday.

Earlier, the overall kitty dropped by USD 5.693 billion to USD 634.585 billion in the week ended January 3, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The reserves have been on a declining trend for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to



an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September.

For the week ended January 10, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 9.469 billion to USD 536.011 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by USD 792 million to USD 67.883 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 33 million to USD 17.781 billion, the apex bank said.

India's reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 4 million to USD 4.195 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

'Maha is now leading state in startups'

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Maharashtra has surpassed Bengaluru in Karnataka and has become the startup capital of the country both in terms of numbers as well as value in the last one year, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said on Friday. Addressing a gathering at tech exhibition COMP-EX 2025 here, he also expressed the need to adapt to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and asserted that his government was promoting startups in this field.

"With over 90 crore smartphone users in the country, the Sanchar Saathi Mobile app aims to ensure that every individual has access to these vital services with just a few taps on their smartphone," an official release said.

The second initiative -- National Broadband Mission (NBM) 2.0 -- aims to position India strongly in the new era of digital transformation through high-speed broadband and meaningful connectivity for all.

Other features include blocking, tracing and recovery of lost or stolen mobile handsets, as well as the ability to verify the authenticity of mobile handsets, thus ensuring that users buy genuine devices.

Unveiling the initiatives, Scindia said the Sanchar Saathi initiative provides "a safe and secure environment where privacy and security of each customer are safeguarded".

CRACKDOWN ON FRAUD COMMUNICATIONS

DoT launches Sanchar Saathi mobile app

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The telecom department on Friday launched the Sanchar Saathi mobile app to make it easier to report any suspected fraud communications by allowing the public to flag such incidents directly from their mobile phone call logs.

Announcing this, telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia also launched two other initiatives of the DoT -- Vision for National Broadband Mission 2.0 and Intra circle roaming at

'Digital Bharat Nidhi' funded 4G mobile sites.

The DoT's Sanchar Saathi portal, launched in 2023, has been an effective mechanism in the crackdown against fraud calls, and the new app will double down on these efforts by ensuring a secure environment for subscribers.

Unveiling the initiatives, Scindia said the Sanchar Saathi initiative provides "a safe and secure environment where privacy and security of each customer are safeguarded".



The new app - available for Android and iOS platforms - allows users to report suspected calls and SMS directly from phone logs. Users will also be able to identify and manage all mobile connections issued in their name, so there is no unauthorised usage.

Other features include blocking, tracing and recovery of lost or stolen mobile handsets, as well as the ability to verify the authenticity of mobile handsets, thus ensuring that users buy genuine devices.

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**SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED**  
Tender Notice No. 14/2024-25  
Sealed tenders are invited from eligible contractors having relevant experience for (1) B/E of K/Bagh CH Fdr & (2) 11KV NM Guda CH Fdr Ajpur (3) Lay 11KV UG Cbl from Marjili kaman to Marjili Haveli CBD-3(4) SHT 100KVA Naik Nivas Ngr, Pnam(5) Ene 160KVA Naveded PT in Ch/Guta(6) Ene 100KVA at VIP City Ch/Guta(7) Interlink Thban & Kpatr fdr by lay UG cbl from Bilal Medical to Megha Tea CBD-3(8) Ene 160KVA M/Rw S/Ngr (9) Ext of HT sply to The GM PDR for a CMD 650KVA HT C&H Kwarin(10) Interlink ChNaka & Police Q/hrs fdr CBD-3(11) Ene 160KVA M/Rw-1 at Abzal Ngr in Sim Ngr. Sd/- Superintending Engineer R.O. No: 3248-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 17-01-2025 Operation, South Circle, Hyderabad.

**NPD SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED**  
CIN No. U49109TG2000SGC034119  
PROCUREMENT: SHORT TENDER NOTICE No. 22/2024-25 OF (4) PROJECTS/ TGNPDC, WARANGAL  
Bid No. 11-120/2024-25/CE/PROJECTS/TGNPDC/LWARANGAL  
Name of the work: AMC of Hardware and System software items for SAP HANA servers at TGNPDC for a period of two years from 14.02.2025 to 13.02.2027. For further details visit: tender.telangana.gov, www.tgnpdc.com  
Sd/- Chief Engineer(Projects) TGNPDC, Warangal.  
R.O. No: 3248-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 17-01-2025

**SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED**  
Tender Notification No. 10/24-25  
Bids are invited from eligible Bidders: 1) E/s for 4 No's Damaged Poles and 450 No's Ph Insulators on 33KV PDML Fdr in PDML, 2) E/s for 2 No's AGL to Sri. Homi Nalk at Mallawati (B.oad), 3) E/s for 5 No's AEL to Sri. G. Sridhar at Venkateswally( B.ortazepet), 4) E/s for Renovation of 12 No's DTR Earthing at Velasa Localities in Tandur Town, 5) E/s for modification of 4 No's damaged Poles at Various Locations in TND (T), 6) E/s for 4 No's B/Ms inter. Poles on 11KV Rampur Fdr Kotapally(M), 7) E/s for 44 No's B/Ms inter. Poles on 11KV Karanapur Fdr Kotapally(M), 8) E/s for 1-025 KV Add DTR to avoid over Load near Nageswally Vp in Kotapally. www.tgscethepower.com, Phone No: 8331019369 or 7991093668, Email: dotciv@tdc@gmail.com Sd/- Superintending Engineer R.O. No: 3248-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 17-01-2025 Operation, TGNPDC, Vikarabad Circle

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
NOTICE FOR OBTAINING QUOTATIONS  
Notice No. 32/E3-2025/20HMC/2024-2025 Dated: 17-01-2025  
Sealed Quotations are invited from professional painters Authorized dealers/Agencies etc. for the below mentioned items: Engage Super Long Reach Hiab for desludging of existing measure rates in Bousha Nager/Ward-146, in Secunderabad Circle-29, S&Z, GHMC. Bid Document Download Start Date & Time / Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: 18-01-2025 @ 12.00 P.M. / 25.01.2025 @ 12.00 P.M. Name & Address of the Call No: Sealed quotation can be submitted in the Call No. E.E., Circle-29, GHMC, Secbad on or before 25.01.2025 12.00 P.M. Call No. 6309620991. Further Details can be obtained from GHMC Website http://ghmc.gov.in/ Sd/- Executive Engineer, Circle-29, Secbad, GHMC. R.O. No: 3248-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 17-01-2025



## 'EVERY BITE OF BIRYANI TELLS THE STORY OF HYDERABAD'S DIVERSE CULTURE'

**IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT WITH THE PIONEER, RUBIN CHERIAN, THE GENERAL MANAGER OF NOVOTEL HYDERABAD CONVENTION CENTRE AND HYDERABAD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, OPENS UP ABOUT HIS TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY IN THE DYNAMIC CITY OF HYDERABAD**

**TEJAL SINHA**  
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Hyderabad, a city famed for its rich culinary heritage, particularly the iconic Hyderabadi biryani, offers a harmonious blend of ancient traditions and contemporary innovation. This vibrant metropolis is a melting pot of diverse cultures, languages, and cuisines, where old-world charm meets modern progress, reflecting India's dynamic growth while preserving its historical roots. This week for our special segment of Hyderabad, Rubin Cheria, the General Manager of Novotel Hyderabad Convention Centre and Hyderabad International Convention Centre, offers a unique perspective on how Hyderabad's fusion of heritage and modernity has not only shaped his professional trajectory but also enriched his personal life in profound ways.

"Hyderabad has been a truly transformative chapter in my professional and personal journey," Cheria

begins. Recalling his first step into the vibrant metropolis, he shares how he took on the challenge of pre-opening the ibis hotel. "It was not just about building a business," he says. "It was about connecting with the heart of the city itself." Over the years, Cheria has witnessed Hyderabad's exponential growth, from its historic lanes surrounding the Charminar to its bustling tech hubs and skyscrapers. For him, Hyderabad is more than a place of work; it is where tradition meets innovation, and every day feels like a new adventure.

Reflecting on his association with Hyderabad, he notes how the city has consistently exceeded his expectations. Initially, he arrived with apprehensions, wondering how he would adapt to a city so different from the

cosmopolitan places he had lived in before. However, he was quickly won over by Hyderabad's unique charm. "Hyderabad has a way of making people feel welcome," he remarks. "The city encourages you to let go of preconceived notions and dive into its world of possibilities." What initially seemed like challenges soon became cherished aspects of his experience, from the harmonious blend of

modern conveniences and traditional values to the city's open-heartedness and vibrant cultural fabric. Comparing Hyderabad to his hometown of Nagpur, he highlights the contrasting rhythms of the two cities. "While Nagpur is known for its tranquility and simplicity, Hyderabad pulses with energy," he explains.

"Hyderabad is the perfect blend of old and new. It's a city where centuries-old history walks hand-in-hand with futuristic innovation." The juxtaposition of bustling tech parks and rich cultural heritage has inspired and challenged him in equal measure, making Hyderabad an integral part of his journey.

When asked about what defines Hyderabad in a single word, his response was immediate: Biryani. He sees it as more than just a dish; it is a symbol of the city's soul. "Every bite tells the story of Hyderabad's rich history and its vibrant, diverse culture," he says. The experience of sharing Biryani, whether in the bustling streets of the Old City or a sophisticated restaurant, reflects Hyderabad's ability to unite people from all walks of life. "It's a reflection of Hyderabad itself - a city that celebrates diversity and invites you to savor its heritage while embracing its modern spirit," he adds.

Among Cheria's fondest memories in Hyderabad are the challenging days of the pandemic. He recalls the resilience and solidarity displayed by his team and the unwavering support of their guests. "In the midst of fear and chaos, what stood out most was the incredible strength of our team and the empathy

of our guests," he shares. These moments, he says, revealed the true spirit of Hyderabad: strength, compassion, and hope.

Professionally, Hyderabad has been pivotal for him, providing an environment that fosters growth and innovation. As the leader of the Hyderabad International Convention Centre (HICC), he has had the privilege of showcasing Hyderabad's strengths as a global business destination. "HICC plays a vital role in representing Hyderabad and India on global platforms," he says. The opportunities to connect with global leaders and foster international collaborations have been among the most fulfilling aspects of his career. Despite the city's many virtues, he admits that the intense summer heat can be a challenge. However, he is quick to add that Hyderabad always finds ways to offer comfort, whether it's through a cool evening breeze or a refreshing Irani chai. "That's Hyderabad," he says with a smile. "A city that never fails to charm, even in the heat."

For Cheria, Hyderabad is not just a city; it is home. "Hyderabad has a way of welcoming you and making you feel like part of its story," he reflects. It has shaped his professional and personal growth, offering a blend of history, progress, and warmth that continues to inspire him every day. "Hyderabad is where I've learned, evolved, and found a sense of belonging. It is not just where I live; it is where I've truly come to call home," he concludes.



## Pacing woes aside, Paatal Lok 2 is a genre-defining sequel

PNS ■ HYDERABAD  
**PLOT**

The second season picks up with Inspector Hathi Ram Chaudhary, portrayed by Jaideep Ahlawat, facing new challenges in his professional and personal life. Now subordinate to Imran Ansari (Ishwak Singh), Hathi Ram navigates a labyrinth of crime and corruption that tests his principles and resilience. The narrative intricately weaves through various socio-political issues, reflecting the underbelly of contemporary India.

**ANALYSIS**

"Paatal Lok" Season 2 maintains the show's signature gritty realism, offering a nuanced portrayal of societal structures and individual dilemmas. The storytelling is layered, with each episode unraveling new facets of the characters and the world they inhabit. The series adeptly balances suspense with social commentary, making it both engaging and thought-provoking.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Paatal Lok Season 2 captivates with its gritty narrative that dives deeper into the dark and complex world of crime, politics, and morality. The plot intricately weaves themes of systemic corruption, communal discord, and class struggles, offering a stark reflection of contemporary societal issues. The storytelling is layered and unrelenting, blending action, tension, and moments of introspection, keeping the audience engaged throughout. The series also masterfully balances its intense pacing with moments of emotional depth, making its exploration of human nature and moral ambiguity both gripping and thought-provoking.

**DRAWBACKS**

While Paatal Lok Season 2 largely lives up to its predecessor, it does falter in certain areas. The intricate plot, while compelling, occasionally becomes overly convoluted, requiring meticulous attention to detail that might overwhelm casual viewers. Some subplots, though intriguing, feel underdeveloped or unnecessary, detracting from the overall cohesion of the narrative. The pacing in the midsection drags slightly, with a few episodes leaning too heavily on exposition rather than action or character development. Additionally, certain new characters, while

**"PAATAL LOK" SEASON 2, RELEASED ON JANUARY 17, 2025, ON AMAZON PRIME VIDEO, CONTINUES THE GRIPPING NARRATIVE ESTABLISHED IN ITS INAUGURAL SEASON. THE SERIES, CREATED BY SUDIP SHARMA AND DIRECTED BY AVINASH ARUN DHAWARE, DELVES DEEPER INTO THE COMPLEXITIES OF INDIAN SOCIETY THROUGH THE LENS OF CRIME AND MORALITY**



mands attention with his understated menace and layered vulnerability, proving why his character remains unforgettable. Neeraj Kabi, Swastika Mukherjee, and Gul Panag add depth to their roles, elevating the series with their compelling performances. The supporting cast, including the ensemble of antagonists and morally ambiguous characters, excels in adding realism and complexity to the narrative. Every actor, regardless of screen time, contributes significantly, creating a seamless ensemble effort that breathes life into the show's intense and multi-dimensional world.

**TECHNICAL ASPECTS**

Paatal Lok Season 2 is a testament to exceptional craftsmanship in its technical execution. The cinematography by Avinash Arun and Saurabh Goswami is a standout, seamlessly capturing the gritty realism of urban decay and the haunting landscapes of rural India. The use of lighting and color grading creates a foreboding atmosphere that perfectly aligns with the show's dark and intense tone. The editing is sharp, maintaining suspense and ensuring that the nonlinear storytelling doesn't lose its coherence. The background score, composed by Naren Chandavarkar and Benedict Taylor, heightens the tension with its understated yet impactful compositions, adding emotional depth to critical scenes. The sound design deserves special mention, immersing viewers in the chaotic world of Paatal Lok with precision and clarity. The production design authentically recreates diverse environments, from urban underbellies to political corridors, adding layers of authenticity to the narrative. Overall, the technical brilliance significantly amplifies the storytelling, ensuring the visuals and sound resonate powerfully with the audience.

**CREATED BY :** Sudip Sharma  
**DIRECTED BY :** Avinash Arun Dhaware

**CAST :** Jaideep Ahlawat, Ishwak Singh, Tillotama Shome, Gul Panag, Nagesh Kukunoor and Jahnvi Barua

**STREAMING ON :** Amazon Prime Video

**STREAMING ON :** Zee5

**RATING :** 3.5/5

**PERFORMANCE**

The performances in Paatal Lok Season 2 are nothing short of extraordinary, with Jaideep Ahlawat leading the charge as the indomitable Hathi Ram Chaudhary. Ahlawat delivers a nuanced portrayal of a man grappling with his inner demons while navigating the murky waters of systemic corruption and personal loss. His transformation from a disillusioned cop to a relentless pursuer of justice is both gripping and heartfelt. Abhishek Banerjee as Hathoda Tyagi once again com-

promising, fail to leave a lasting impact due to limited screen time or insufficient backstory. For fans of the first season, the heightened drama may also feel a bit excessive, edging closer to sensationalism in some moments. These minor missteps, however, don't overshadow the show's overall impact but could have been refined for a tighter, more focused narrative.

## Preventive healthcare: Your best bet against heart disease

Cardiovascular diseases are one of the leading causes of mortality worldwide. Among them, coronary artery disease hits the list.

Recently there has been an increase in number of heart attacks among young people, especially in the age group 25-40 and around 25 percent of this heart attacks occur in less than 40 years of age. Contrary to the myth that heart attacks occur among older individuals with risk factors like diabetes and hypertension, the fact is that the younger population is equally affected and that is a reality. This is a cause of concern as in the last few years we've even seen heart attacks occurring in people in their 20's.

There are several factors contributing to this situation. Important ones include increased stress levels in younger people, higher incidence of smoking and lack of adequate physical activity. Adding to that is the large number of people diagnosed with diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol levels at a very young age. This plays an important role in the development of coronary artery disease. A large section of the Indian population is genetically predisposed to cardiovascular disease. This genetic transmission is most commonly observed to be transmitted through the paternal side and affects the younger generation probably 5-10 years earlier than their previous generation.

It is aptly said that "Prevention is better than cure" and most important thing to prevent a heart attack is to take care of risk enhancers. If you are a diabetic, you should be extremely concerned about sugar control. Acceptable levels in India are fasting sugar level less than 130 with HbA1c less than 7.0. Younger people with hypertension should keep their blood pressure well controlled and preferably below 130/90 most of the times. High cholesterol levels are a concern and more so if you have a family history of the same. In such cases one should get a yearly lipid check-up done and consult your physician at regular intervals. However, if you are healthy and do not have the above issues, regular physical activity 30-45 minutes a day for at least five days a week is recommended. Exercises such as cycling, running and swimming are good for heart. Smoking should be stopped completely. One may develop a heart attack on consuming even one cigarette per day. One should be extremely careful about mental health and avoid excess stress. Including a good proportion of vegetables and fruits in your diet and use of unsaturated fatty acids in food and oil remains a good practice. At the same time keep a tab on salt intake and avoid sugary beverages like soft drinks. Do consult your physician



if you have issues to chart out a good exercise routine.

Preventive healthcare should be the focus for everyone.

Long working hours are known to be responsible for about one-third of the total estimated work-related burden of disease and is established as the risk factor with the largest occupational disease burden. According to data published by WHO and ILO, working 55 or more hours per week is associated with an estimated 35% higher risk of a stroke and a 17% higher risk of dying from ischemic heart disease, compared to working 35-40 hours a week. So, is the "work intensification" new normal for many?

A possible explanation is that persons who have long working hours are more stressed and high concentrations of stress hormones can raise the risk of clogged arteries and the development of blood clots which can cause strokes and heart attacks.

**HARMFUL EFFECTS OF LONG WORKING HOURS**

Apart from the stress, there are many other ways by which working too much can impact your health.

1. You are not getting adequate sleeping time of 8 hours a day
2. Either you are not eating food properly or having unhealthy food habits
3. You are not exercising
4. You are neglecting relationships
5. Indulging in habits like smoking

and alcoholism

6. You are predisposed to other risk factors like high blood pressure, diabetes, overweight, high cholesterol and sedentary lifestyle activity
7. Ignoring the warning signs leading to delay in treatment

**HOW TO MANAGE WORK STRESS AND EXCESS WORKING HOURS**

One should always watch for signs of burnout or unhealthy work-life balance which includes self-neglect, not focusing on mental health, unmeaningful work, constant worry of job performance, difficult balancing between work and family life and developing loneliness.

It's important to have a work-life balance that will make you not only productive but overall healthier. It is important to set boundaries and make a routine. At the same time giving some hours of the day to activities like walking, cycling, swimming or yoga and meditation will be grateful to remove the work stress and keep the mind diverted. One should get out of the guilt of clocking out of the office when everyone else is at the workplace. No amount of guilt is larger than your wife, parents or child. At the same time, the government should regulate the working hours.

(The author, Dr M Sudhakar Rao, is a Consultant in cardiology, at Manipal Hospital Sarjapur)



# what's brewing?



Nruthyamala Natyakala Welfare Society and Sri Arts academy jointly organising On Sankrathi Puraskar, 2025 at Ravindra Bharathi, Hyderabad. Organisor M. Veeresh Yadav

PARTY  
Photos by- SV Chary



Art gallery exhibition committee Convenor Samala Venu welcomed the gathering at the inauguration function on Friday by the S. Chandra Shekhar Reddy, I.G. This art exhibition is there till 15th February, at exhibition Ground, Nampally



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



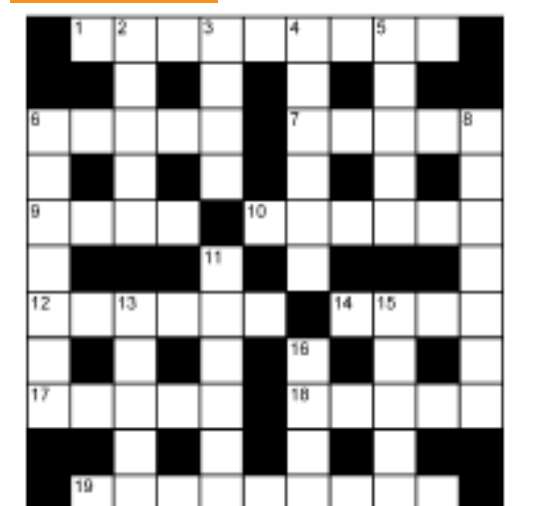
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

	7	2		9	
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		3		4 5	
				5	
	3 6			7 4	
	8				
	6 4		2		
8 9		4 3		2	
	7		5	8	

Yesterday's solution

9	1	8	7	6	2	5	3	4
6	7	3	8	4	5	9	1	2
2	4	5	3	1	9	6	8	7
3	8	4	9	7	6	1	2	5
5	9	1	2	8	4	7	6	3
7	6	2	5	3	1	8	4	9
8	3	6	4	9	7	2	5	1
4	2	9	1	5	8	3	7	6
1	5	7	6	2	3	4	9	8

Rules  
 • Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.  
 • The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

### ACROSS

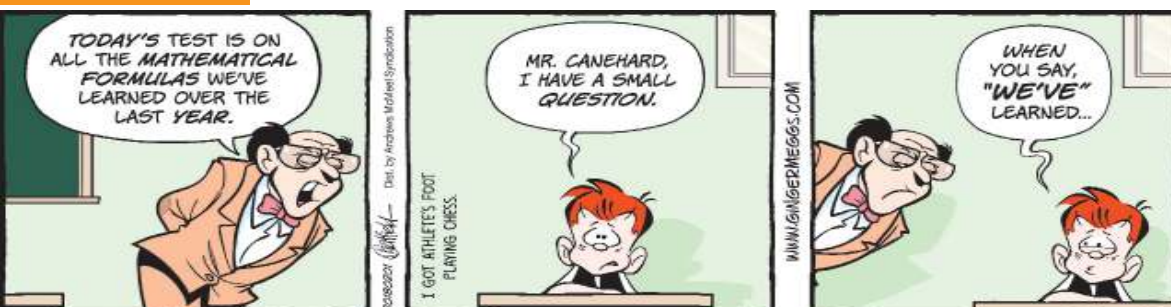
- People in jail
- The centre of your eye
- Have a quarrel
- Things to play with
- Flat dishes
- Mistakes
- The part along the side or end of something
- A boat with sails
- Flour is made from this
- Scientific study of the sun, moon, planets and stars
- Mugs and other things made of baked clay
- The least difficult
- Author
- Speed competitions
- Something you imagine while asleep
- A brother or sister the same age as you

### DOWN

- Answer
- A fine glossy fabric
- Almost
- Correct



### GINGER MEGGS



# SUKUMAR'S DAUGHTER SUKRITI SHAVES HER HEAD FOR THE FILM

Director Sukumar praises his daughter for her performance in her upcoming film *Gandhi Tatha Chettu*. Sukumar's wife Tabitha gets emotional seeing her acting in this film



SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
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Top director Sukumar is a very proud father today. It is not that he delivered a blockbuster hit 'Pushpa 2', but it is about his daughter Sukriti. Sukumar and his wife Tabitha got emotional on Thursday evening at the promotion of the film 'Gandhi Tatha Chettu'. Sukriti plays the main lead in this film as the story revolves around a tree, grandfather and Gandhi played by Sukriti.

"Though I did many films, but when my daughter is calling someone as amma and anna, I was a bit emotional," said Sukumar about his daughter Sukriti. The director said that he never took his children to the shooting of his films. "Because, if they come, I can't concentrate on the shoot. So they never come. My daughter Sukriti wanted to be a

singer and she is learning music. She never discussed acting. But when I saw this film, I was shocked to see her performance. Even though she didn't say anything about the film, her performance in this film is amazing," praised Sukumar about his daughter.

Padmavati Malladi is the director of this film, while Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings are producing it. Sukumar praises the director for coming up with a story that gets everyone emotional. "When Padmavati messaged me about her story and wanted to take Sukriti as the lead, I told my daughter about it. She initially said 'no', but later she wanted to talk to Padmavati. I don't know what she told my daughter, but she agreed to do this film," said Sukumar.

The director said that he spent months to rope in artists. "For 'Rangasthalam' I took nearly eight months to get the artists and for

'Pushpa 2' also the same. I expect my artistes to be versatile, but Sukriti surprised me with her performance in this film," said Sukumar.

"I have always believed that those who are good at narration can execute good films without fail," said Sukumar about director Padmavati. He added that she narrated the story in a very good way. He also gave an example of his own experience. "When I narrated 'Arya' script to Chiranjeevi, Allu Aravind asked him if an inexperienced person like me would be able to execute the project. Chiranjeevi told him that I will direct it efficiently because my narration was effective," recalls Sukumar.

Sukumar said that he provides entertainment and that is his message. "But if entertainment is matched with a message, it's a bonus. That's why I am jealous of those who have made 'Gandhi Tatha Chettu'," he said. He added that this film should do well for two people and those are

producer Sindhu and director Padmavati.

Sukumar's wife Tabitha Sukumar said that she is also not confident about her daughter's acting skills. She said director Padmavati believes in her daughter Sukriti's acting skills. Tabitha turned emotional talking about her daughter's journey as she shaved her head for this film. "Generally teens didn't accept to shave their head and my daughter did it when she was thirteen," said an emotional Tabitha. Actually, the director auditioned hundreds of kids for this role, but no one agreed to shave their head. But when they approached Sukriti, she agreed to do it.

The film has already been screened at several international film festivals, winning multiple awards. Sukriti Veni also received the Best Child Artiste award for her performance. The film is releasing on January 24.

## Pawan Kalyan's song is trending!

The song, which Pawan Kalyan sang, in the film 'Hari Hara Veera Mallu' is out now. After joining politics, the actor is busy doing his duty as Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and in between allocated dates to complete 'Hari Hara Veera Mallu'. Now, the makers started promoting this song which Pawan Kalyan has sung. They also released a video where they showed Pawan Kalyan and some other artistes in it.

The song begins with Pawan Kalyan in his element, delivering heartfelt lines in the Telangana dialect, 'Vinaali, Veeramallu Maata Chepithe Vinaali'. The song's core

message revolves around the importance of listening to good words and the wisdom that comes from them.

The visuals are set in a forest backdrop, featuring a group of Veeramallu's followers gathered around a wildfire. Pawan Kalyan's simple yet graceful dance steps are bound to become a sensation on social media. MM Keeravaani provided the music, while the lyrics are penned by Penchal Das for Telugu. The song is released in other languages too, but different singers and lyric writers. The movie is in its final stages of shooting and post-production, gearing up for a grand worldwide release on March 28, 2025.



## Ajith Kumar is in the news again!

Actor Ajith Kumar is in the news as his racing car met with an accident when he was practicing in Dubai. Later, in the original race, his team stood in the third position, which was greeted by many celebrities and Indians. Ajith is popular as an actor, but at the same time he shows his passion towards racing. Now, on the professional front, his upcoming film 'Pattudala' is all set to release on February 6. It is a Tamil film titled 'Vidaamuyarchi' and directed by Magizh Thirumeni, while top production house Lyca Productions is producing it. The makers wanted to release the film initially during Sankranti festival, but now they are coming on February 6. The film has been creating curiosity since its announcement and the excitement has only intensified with the release of its theatrical trailer. In this trailer it shows Ajith Kumar in a high-octane action role, portraying a determined man on a relentless mission. The trailer showcases Ajith performing breathtaking stunts, which are going to deliver an exhilarating experience to the audience in theatres.

Trisha is playing the female lead opposite Ajith after a long time and so is Arjun Sarja. The trio is set to enthrall audiences once again with their performances in this movie. Regina Cassandra is also there in an important role, while Anirudh Ravichander is the music director.

## Annapurna Studios completes 50 years!

Akkineni Nagarjuna is happy to say that his Annapurna Studios has completed 50 years. The actor said that the studio provided life for many new technicians, artistes and directors. "I still didn't understand how my father built a big studio here when there were no proper roads," said Nagarjuna about the studio.

The actor said that his father is an inspiration for many people. "For every man's success, there is a woman behind and for my father's success, my mother Annapurna is there. That's the reason my father named this studio as Annapurna Studios," said Nagarjuna.

The actor said that the studio started during Sankranti festival and for every Sankranti, his parents used to come to the studio and have breakfast with studio employees. "I call them Annapurna Warriors and they are our family members. The tradition of having breakfast with Annapurna employees continues even now," said the actor. He thanked the employees and their strong support because the studio is running successfully till now.

The actor said his father is a big inspiration for him and his



children. "Not only for my family, but many other people also. When I go outside, many people talk positively about my father and tell many inspirational stories," said Nagarjuna.

## Vijay Sethupathi as Bold Kannan in 'Ace'

Last year, versatile actor Vijay Sethupathi delivered a big hit 'Maharaja'. Interestingly, that was his 50th film and it was successful both in Tamil and Telugu. After a long time, he gets a break with 'Maharaja' as lead actor. Another film of his 'Viduthala' part two is also released, but it is not up to the expectations. Now, the actor is coming up with a romantic crime comedy film titled 'Ace'. He is playing Bold Kannan in this one, directed by Arumugakumar. Rukmini Vasanth is playing the female lead, while top Tamil comedian Yogi Babu is also playing an important role. Produced by Arumugakumar, the film has been made with a massive budget and promises an engaging cinematic experience. The teaser for the film's title created a buzz, garnering millions of views and setting records. Now, on the occasion of Vijay Sethupathi's birthday, the team has unveiled the glimpse of the actor from the film. He is playing Bold Kannan, wearing traditional attire, confidently walking through an airport in Malaysia. Known for his distinctive acting prowess, Vijay has not only captured the hearts of Indian audiences but also garnered a massive fan base in China and beyond.



## Vishwak Sen is interesting as Laila



The teaser of Vishwak Sen's upcoming film 'Laila' was released on Friday. Directed by Ram Narayan, the film is produced by Sahu Garapati. The film is all set to release on February 14, the Valentine's Day. The makers started the promos and released the teaser and it shows Vishwak Sen's two avatars in the film. They reveal the character of Sonu as Vishwak Sen and on the other side he plays a female Laila. His female get-up is interesting as he perfectly fits into the role in this trailer.

It seems, the director has come up with an entertainer with 'Laila', as the teaser shows action and fun. Akanksha Sharma is playing the female lead, while music is by Leon James. Vishwak Sen's last films 'Mechanic Rocky' and 'Gangs of Godavari' didn't do well at the box-office and he hopes on 'Laila' for a break. The actor is coming up with different stories, but it seems, somehow they need some good emotions or entertainment.



## Pragyajaiswal gets a good break after a long time!

Pragyajaiswal is popular with her debut Telugu film 'Kanche' where she delivered an intense performance in that period drama. Varun Tej played the lead actor, while Krish is the director. The film was released in 2015, but the actress didn't get another break till 2011 with 'Akhanda'. She played collector in this Boyapati and Balakrishna combination film and she tasted success after a long time.

Now, the actress is again paired opposite Balakrishna in the recently released 'Daaku Maharaja'. It is a coincidence that the film was released on January 12,

which is also Pragyajaiswal's birthday. "I never expected that my birthday gift would be like this, and I should thank the Telugu audience for making my birthday more memorable as they made the film a great success," said Pragyajaiswal. The actress tasted her first success in this New Year. "Balakrishna is my lucky mascot as I got a good break with 'Akhanda' and now with 'Daaku Maharaja'," said the actress.

The actress is also pairing with Balakrishna once again in an upcoming film 'Akhanda 2' and the shooting of this film just started. She is also playing an important role in "Tyson Naidu" that stars Bellamkonda Sai Srinivas.

# Australian Open: Naomi Osaka stops playing because of injury against Belinda Bencic

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka stopped playing because of a strained abdominal muscle after dropping the opening set of her third-round match against Belinda Bencic on Friday.

"I kind of have a history of it, since I was a teenager. At least once a year, I'd get an ab strain. For me, I want to say it's more the way my serve is — it's quite explosive," Osaka said, explaining that she got hurt at a tournament in Beijing, where she retired from a match against Coco Gauff on Oct. 1. "Unfortunately, it carried on over to the beginning of this season."

This was Osaka's first run to the third round at a major tournament since 2022. She missed time in recent

seasons because of mental-health breaks, then was off the tour while pregnant. Her daughter, Shai, was born in July 2023.

Osaka began 2025 by making it to the final of a tournament at Auckland, New Zealand, on Jan. 5, but she stopped playing in the title match there because of the abdominal injury.

Then, she said, the problem got "way worse" after her second-round win in Melbourne on Wednesday against 2023 French Open finalist Karolina Muchova.

"It was, I guess, a little inevitable, but I think the competitor in me just wanted to see it through to the end," Osaka said. "I just hope that I can figure it out and figure out how to get healthy in time" before the tour heads to events at Indian Wells and Miami in March, she added.



On Friday, Osaka — a former No. 1-ranked player who owns a total of four Grand Slam titles — was visited by a trainer during the changeover while she led 6-5. The trainer examined Osaka's abdominal area and gave her a pill to take, and play resumed.

Just before the tiebreaker began, Osaka went over to her court-side coaches' box and chatted briefly with Patrick Mouratoglou.

After Bencic claimed that set in a tiebreaker by a 7-6 (3) score, taking four of the last five points via unforced errors by Osaka, the chair umpire announced that the match was over after 57 minutes, "due to injury."

The two players hugged on the sideline, and Osaka left the court. She won the Australian Open in 2019 and 2021, and the U.S. Open in 2018 and 2020.

"Hopefully she'll be fine soon and be able to play the rest of the season," said Bencic, who won a singles gold medal for Switzerland at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. Bencic, who is also a mother, drew a heart on the lens of a court-side TV camera and wrote: "Get well soon Mama."

Next for Bencic will be a fourth-round matchup against 2023 U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff or 2021 U.S. Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez, who were scheduled to face each other on Friday night.

"I'll watch a bit, if I can," Bencic said, "but I think I'll do my cooldown and try to focus on my recovery."

Bencic, who returned to action last October after having her first baby, has never been past the fourth round in 11 past appearances at Melbourne Park.



# Ranji Trophy: Kohli named in 22-member provisional squad for Delhi's next game

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star batter Virat Kohli has been named in Delhi's 22-member provisional squad for their next Ranji Trophy game against Saurashtra in Rajkot but doubts remain about his participation after it came to light that he is nursing a niggle.

It is learnt that Kohli has intimidated the Delhi and Districts Cricket Association (DDCA) top brass that he has a neck niggle that he sustained in Sydney during the final Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test against Australia.

He was treated by the physio there and as of now, there is no clarity on availability for the Ranji match starting January 23.

Whether he will play or just fly down to Rajkot for a couple of days' training will be clear only after he details



his position to DDCA president Rohan Jain. Kohli had last played a red-ball game for Delhi back in 2012 against Uttar Pradesh in Ghaziabad. A year after that, the legendary Sachin Tendulkar played his last Ranji Trophy match against Haryana at Lohi.

Talismanic wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant will feature in a Ranji Trophy game after nearly seven years although it has been learnt that he has declined captaincy, which means Ayush Badoni will continue in the role.

"Rishabh felt the existing captain (Badoni) should continue to lead the side. He feels that since he is not available consistently, one shouldn't tinker with leadership," a member of the DDCA apex council told PTI on conditions of anonymity. "When he was offered captaincy, he said that he is

# D Gukesh to take on Anish Giri in Tata Steel opener

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE

World champion D Gukesh will take on local star Anish Giri in the opening round of the 87th Tata Steel Chess tournament here on Saturday, marking his first competitive outing since claiming the coveted crown last month. Giri, the 2023 winner, holds the reputation of being a tough cookie thanks to his impeccable theoretical knowledge and research that has been the Dutchman's forte for many years now.

However, 18-year-old Gukesh, who likes to go with a no-draw approach in every game he plays, is in great form and can look forward to a solid campaign after the World Championship triumph over Chinese Ding Liren in Singapore.

Gukesh received India's highest sporting honour, the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna, in Delhi this morning from President Droupadi Murmu and left for the Dutch city immediately after the ceremony.

The five-player Indian contingent will see an all-Indian duel as early as round one as Arjun Erigaisi will face last-minute-replacement Pentala Harikrishna in the opener.

Arjun, known for his ability to complicate any position, will have an arduous task against Harikrishna who is super-solid with white pieces. Interestingly, Harikrishna came in the mix of things as another Indian Vidit Gujrathi withdrew due to personal reasons.

The most interesting battle of the first round is likely to be between R Praggnanandhaa who takes on Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan. Praggnanandhaa did not have a great 2024 and would like to make amends by starting the year on a positive note.

The fifth Indian in the fray made it to the elite group after winning the challengers in 2024. Leon Luke Mendonca may not have the credentials of other four compatriots in fray but the youngster is certainly the dark horse, who can put anyone in a difficult position on his day.

# Dream is still alive to play for India: Karun Nair

PTI ■ BENGALURU

After a prolonged wait on the sidelines and a melancholic social media post nearly three years back, Karun Nair has made a sensational reunion with cricket, scoring five hundreds in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy and he is now cautiously optimistic about wearing the Indian jersey after eight years.

Karun, who has scored 752 runs at a mind-blowing average of 75.2 for Vidarbha, now looks hungry for runs, and is a far cry from the forlorn player who scribbled: "Dear Cricket, please give me another chance."

Will that opportunity come his way when the selectors announce India's ODI squads for the home one-dayers against England and the ICC Champions Trophy? Only time will tell, but he has good reasons to "dream."

"The dream is always to play for the country. So, yes, the dream is still alive. That's the reason we play this game, to play for your country. So, the one and only goal was to play for the country," Karun told PTI.

But as someone who has endured massive setbacks and near-misses in his career, Karun does not want to think too far ahead.

"I think this is my third comeback (laughs). And I need to keep doing what I am doing at the moment. Keep scoring runs whenever I can in every single game that I play. That's the most that I can do. Everything else is not in my control. "But till it (selection)

happens, it's just a dream. It's still not there yet. But again, like I said, I would like to focus on one innings at a time," the 33-year-old said.

So, what has he done differently from the past to get back to his run-making ways?

"I've not done anything differently. There is no secret. I think it's just years of hard work and persistence, you know, the coming together of all of it. And probably you can say, taking each day as a new one and making sure that I respect every single innings that I play."

But there were days when the 33-year-old was apprehensive about his cricketing future, when runs totally dried up in domestic matches and in the IPL.

"I will be lying if I say I was not afraid. I think anyone would have those feelings. But I never had the thought that my career would end. I just had the thought of where it is going? What am I doing? How has this happened?"

"It takes a while for you to come out of that phase and to understand what is happening and then what you are supposed to do. So, I told myself that I need to start from zero again."

"And give myself a few years and see where it goes. And then I can decide what to do. So, that was my thought process," he explained.

But the tough passage made him more aware about himself and his game.

"It was a tough situation to be in. Emotionally, mentally. But yeah, it really taught me

a lot of things about myself as a person and about my cricket. So, I am really grateful for those learnings. Without that, I don't think I would be in this situation at the moment."

**Shifting to Vidarbha was a good move**

The first hint of change in his fortunes came along with a shift to Vidarbha from Karnataka ahead of the 2023-24 season.

"I am really grateful that I got this opportunity from Vidarbha Cricket Association to play First-Class cricket. First of all, without which, you know, I wouldn't be here. And for the platform they have provided and the environment they have created to, you know, welcome me."

"They treat me as a family and make me feel like I have been playing with them for many years."

"And I never got the feeling that I am a professional or an outsider. So, it was really comfortable. And very humble people. So, they all helped me get through each and every game with a smile and a positive environment," he said.

The right-handed batter also thanked former India pacer Abey Kuruvilla for facilitating his entry into Vidarbha squad.

"Abey Kuruvilla was the person I spoke to first. I just spoke to him saying that I just need a team to play. And he is the one who spoke to Vidarbha Cricket Association and put me in touch with them," he added.

Since then the runs began to steadily increase.

# Bengaluru FC aim to revive campaign against bottom-placed Hyderabad FC

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Slipped to third on the table, former Champions Bengaluru FC will look to reignite their campaign when they meet bottom-placed Hyderabad FC in the ISL here on Saturday.

After a blistering start to the season, Bengaluru FC have faltered recently, suffering two consecutive losses, including a 0-1 defeat to debutants Mohammedan SC.

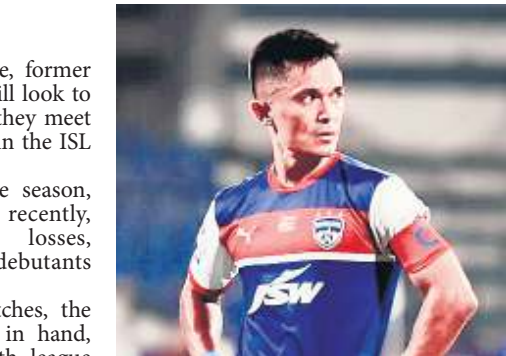
With 27 points from 15 matches, the Blues, who have nine games in hand, need a win to keep pace with league leaders Mohun Bagan and stay in contention for the Winners Shield.

Languishing at the bottom with nine points from 15 matches, the Nizams have struggled to score and defend consistently.

However, they will aim to leverage their home advantage, having remained unbeaten in their last three encounters here against Bengaluru FC.

Bengaluru went scoreless in their last match, which was a 0-1 loss to Mohammedan SC.

The previous time they went consecutive games without finding the back of the net were the last two matches before Gerard Zaragoza took over as the head coach in



meetings.

They'll need to sharpen their attack to exploit Bengaluru's recent struggles on the road.

Four of Hyderabad FC's 11 goals this season have come in their last five matches, where they have drawn twice and lost thrice.

A victory here will see Hyderabad FC extend their unbeaten home stretch against the Blues to four matches.

Bengaluru FC, on the other hand, are looking to avoid a third consecutive loss, in order to sustain pressure at their opponents in the upper half of the points table.

Veteran striker Sunil Chhetri with nine goals this season, will be eyeing double digits. He has a stellar record against Hyderabad, including two goals in the reverse fixture.

Despite not scoring, Hyderabad's Abdul Raheem has created 13 goal-scoring chances and dominated opposition boxes, highlighting his influence.

Hyderabad's interim coach Shameel Chembakath urged his team to focus on their own game rather than the opponents, while Bengaluru FC's Zaragoza emphasised playing entertaining football to delight their supporters.

# Para-athletes take centre stage as President Murmu gives away National Sports Awards

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Manu Bhaker and D Gukesh provided a sprinkling of stardust but it was India's perseverant para-athletes who walked away with the most boisterous applause when President Droupadi Murmu bestowed the National Sports Awards in a regal ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here on Friday.

Double Olympic-medallist Bhaker, 18-year-old chess world champion Gukesh, men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and Paralympic gold-winning high jumper Praveen Kumar were presented the country's highest sporting honour — the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna.

The 22-year-old Bhaker became independent India's first athlete to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics with her bronze-winning show in the 10m air pistol individual and 10m air pistol mixed team events in

August last year. "Slow and steady wins the race, and I firmly believe that. Khel Ratna is one of the most prestigious awards in our country. I am grateful to everyone who supported me," Bhaker said after the ceremony.

Harmanpreet was a part of the national sides that won bronze medals in the Tokyo as well as Paris Olympics. Praveen, on the other hand, upgraded his silver at the Japanese capital to a gold in Paris. He was born with a short left leg.

The 18-year-old Gukesh was crowned the youngest ever chess world champion after he beat China's Ding Liren last month. He is only the second Indian after the great Viswanathan Anand to achieve this title.

He was also a crucial factor in India winning the men's gold in the Chess Olympiad in September last.

Thirty-two athletes were honoured with the Arjuna

Award out of which an unprecedented 17 were para-athletes.

The athletes selected for the Arjuna award included Paris Olympics bronze medal-winning group of wrestler Aman Sehrawat, shooters Swapnil Kusale and Sarabjot Singh (Bhaker's partner in the 10m air pistol mixed competition of Olympics) and the men's hockey team players Jarmanpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Sanjay and Abhishek.

The para-athletes outnumbered the able-bodied ones in the list this time due to the magnificent Paris Paralympics performance in which they returned with 29 medals, including seven gold and nine silver.

President Murmu repeatedly broke from tradition to receive some wheelchair-bound athletes such as Pranav Soorma, who got the Arjuna for his Paralympic silver in club throw.

Petkar draws loudest applause



The most heartwarming moment of the ceremony was when India's first Paralympic gold-medallist Murlikant Petkar walked up to the President on crutches to receive the Arjuna award (lifetime).

Murmu met the 80-year-old war hero half way to present him the award.

Petkar was disabled waist down due to bullet wounds sustained during the 1965

battle against Pakistan. He was originally a boxer but turned to para-swimming due to the multiple injuries.

He fought the adversity to win a historic gold medal in the 1972 Paralympics in Heidelberg.

The veteran was welcomed with a rapturous applause that did not stop till he was seated back after collecting the award from the President.

One among those clapping for

him at the Durbar Hall was actor Kartik Aryan, who played Petkar in a recent biopic titled 'Chandu Champion'.

Dignitaries, including sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya, parliamentary and minority affairs minister Kiren Rijju, sports secretary Sujata Chaturvedi, were among those who attended the ceremony that lasted a little over an hour.

While the Khel Ratna comes with a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh, the Arjuna and Dronacharya awards include a cash prize of Rs 15 lakh.

Among the most prominent Dronacharya winners this year was shooting coach Deepali Deshpande, who mentored Kusale, and former national football manager Armando Colaco.

The Arjuna Awards are given to sportspersons who have demonstrated good performance over the past four years and have shown qualities of leadership, sportsmanship, and discipline.

The annual honours are decided by a points system in which the maximum emphasis is on performances delivered at the Olympics and the World Championships.

The award-winners: Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award: D Gukesh (Chess), Harmanpreet Singh (Hockey), Praveen Kumar (Para-Athletics), Manu Bhaker (Shooting).

Arjuna Awards: Jyothi Yarraji (Athletics), Annu Rani (Athletics), Nitu (Boxing), Saweety (Boxing), Vantika Agrawal (Chess), Salima Tete (Hockey), Abhishek (Hockey), Sanjay (Hockey), Jarmanpreet Singh (Hockey), Sukhjeet Singh (Hockey), Rakesh Kumar (Para-Archery), Preeti Pal (Para-Athletics), Jeevanji Deepthi (Para-Athletics), Ajeet Singh (Para-Athletics), Sachin Sarjearo Khilari (Para-Athletics), Dharambir (Para-Athletics), Pranav Soorma (Para-Athletics), H Hokato Sema (Para-Athletics), Simran

(Para-Athletics), Navdeep (Para-Athletics), Nitesh Kumar (Para-Badminton), Thulasimathi Murugesan (Para-Badminton), Nithya Sre Sumathy Sivan (Para-Badminton), Manisha Ramadass (Para-Badminton), Kapil Parmar (Para-Judo), Mona Agarwal (Para-Shooting), Rubina Francis (Para-Shooting), Swapnil Suresh Kusale (Shooting), Sarabjot Singh (Shooting), Abhay Singh (Squash), Sajan Prakash (Swimming), Aman (Wrestling).

Arjuna Awards (Lifetime): Sucha Singh (Athletics), Murlikant Rajaram Petkar (Para-Swimming).

Dronacharya Award: Subhash Rana (Para-Shooting), Deepali Deshpande (Shooting), Sandeep Sangwan (Hockey), S Muralidharan (Badminton), Armando Agnelo Colaco (Football), Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar: Physical Education Foundation of India