

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
 The pioneer  
 Harish Rao is making baseless, malicious remarks. While the BRS deceived people during its rule, they now oppose every welfare scheme we launch. During their rule, KCR and Harish signed documents approving an allocation of 298 TMCs of water as per the Krishna Tribunal order, which led to severe injustice against Telangana. They turned a blind eye to things like the Pothreddy Padu and Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation projects  
 - Uttam Kumar Reddy, Irrigation Minister

**NCC cadets should contribute to 'Viksit Bharat' dream:**  
**Rajnath**

**INDIA-OMAN**  
 FREE TRADE PACT LIKELY DURING GOYAL'S MUSCAT VISIT

**I want to show non-violence thru my film: Padmavathi**  
**MALLADI**

**DON'T MISS...**  
**89 complaints on lake encroachments**  
 Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has received 89 complaints on water bodies in permits of Outer Ring Road (ORR) in a Prajvani conducted on Monday. The complainants reported on lakes in Ameenpur Municipality and asked for a full-scale survey to address encroachments. Secondly Medchal District's Medikunta Lake spanning 45 acres has shrunk due to systematic encroachments. Elderly residents submitted a petition urging for boundary demarcation and ...  
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**Withdraw draft UGC regulations**  
 Several provisions in the draft UGC regulations were "in conflict with the state's educational system and policies," Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin claimed on Monday and urged Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to withdraw the said regulations. The state believed that many provisions in the draft regulations might pose serious challenges to the academic integrity, autonomy, and inclusive development of state universities, he said. "We therefore request that the Ministry of Education may withdraw the draft..."  
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**India at forefront of tech evolution**  
 In an era defined by technological evolution, India stands at the forefront as one of the world's fastest-growing economies and a global hub for startups and digital innovation, the World Economic Forum said on Monday. The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) India, liaison office of World Economic Forum (WEF) in India, launches its 6-year impact journey report on the inaugural day of the WEF Annual meeting 2025 here. The WEF said its partnership with India dates back more than 40 years...  
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**TG team lands in Zurich, to attend WEF conference**  
**CM Revanth meets AP CM Babu at airport**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The Telangana Rising delegation led by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy landed at Zurich in Switzerland on Monday. The Telangana diaspora accorded a warm welcome to the CM's delegation at the Zurich Airport. The delegation will attend the World Economic Forum annual conference at Davos. The CM is accompanied by IT and Industries Minister D. Sridhar Babu and senior Industries Department officials.



The AP delegation led by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu also reached the airport at the time when Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's team landed. The two

CMs and Ministers were seen engrossed in a brief interaction and also took pics. "A meeting with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu at the Zurich airport waiting lounge on Monday had us discuss the future of our two states. In a brief but mutually respectful discussion, we both shared our visions for our respective states," the CM said. "Two States, One Spirit. The Telugu community must shine globally. It was a pleasure to meet you," the Andhra Pradesh CM said.

**TG focuses on alternative energies and disruptive tech at Davos**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The World Economic Forum's annual summit kicked off on a grand note with the inauguration of the India Pavilion, a celebration of India's federal spirit and its hopes for global leadership. Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary, Telangana Industries Minister Sridhar Babu and several other state leaders, officials and dignitaries attended the event. Speaking at the India Pavilion, Sridhar emphasised the collective strength of India's federal structure. "Bringing all states under a single banner showcases our unity in diversity. Together, we hope to make India a superpower, elevating humanity to the highest level," he stated. Sridhar highlighted Telangana's achievements under Chief Minister



Revanth Reddy's leadership, noting the state's remarkable strides in technology, biotech, agro-processing and skill development. "Last year, our new government successfully attracted substantial investments, reflecting Telangana's image as a hub for cutting-edge technologies," he said. The Minister added that TG now focuses on emerging sectors like alternative energy and disruptive

technologies. Telangana's contributions to the nation's progress were stressed during his speech. "Telangana produces 33% of the world's vaccines and ranks among the top in agro-processing," the Minister stated. He highlighted the TG government's efforts to make Telangana a leader in technology, employment and skill-building while striving to create a robust foundation for India's future. Sridhar also shared the state's ambitious vision of becoming a one-trillion-US Dollar economy under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's leadership. "With Telangana already ranked number one in per capita income, we aim to drive India's growth story by inviting global investors to participate in our journey," he said. The event provided a significant opportunity for Telangana to showcase its strengths and commitment to innovation. "We welcome everyone to join hands with Telangana in building a vibrant and progressive India," the Minister concluded. The grand inauguration of the India Pavilion set a strong tone for the summit, with leaders and industry representatives from across the country and the world coming together to chart a course for global collaboration and sustainable development.



**Trump promises 'golden age of America'**  
**Becomes 47th President of USA**

**PNS ■ WASHINGTON**  
 Donald Trump, who overcame impeachments, criminal indictments and a pair of assassination attempts to win another term in the White House, will be sworn in Monday as the 47th US president taking charge as Republicans claim unified control of Washington and set out to reshape the country's institutions. Trump's swearing-in ceremony, moved indoors due to intense cold, and began at noon ET. Festivities started earlier when the incoming president arrived for service at St. John's Episcopal Church. **HERE'S THE LATEST:** Not-so-record inflation Trump vowed to "defeat what was record inflation." Inflation peaked at 9.1 per cent in June 2022 after rising steadily in the first 17 months of Biden's presidency from a low of 0.1 per cent in May 2020. The most recent data shows that as of December it had fallen to 2.9 per cent.

**Modi congratulates 'dear friend'**  
**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
 Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday congratulated Donald Trump on his historic inauguration as the 47th US president and said he looks forward to working closely together once again, to benefit both the countries as well as to shape a better future for the world. Modi said in a post on X, "Congratulations my dear friend President Donald Trump on your historic inauguration as the 47th president of the United States!" But other historical periods have seen higher inflation, such as a more than 14 per cent rate in 1980, according to the Federal Reserve.  
 Continued on Page 2

**More police cases will make better leaders: KTR**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 KTR urged the BRS Labour Wing to intensify its moves to hold the Congress Government accountable. Those who have more police cases and annoy Revanth Reddy more will become leaders, KTR said. "You must remind the people of Congress' 40 unfulfilled promises, and relentlessly expose their failures over the next four years," he said. Promising full legal and organisational support from the party, KTR encouraged the wing to elect dynamic leaders who can challenge Revanth Reddy and the Congress leadership effectively. In an address at the BRS Labour Wing Diary Launch event held at the Telangana Bhavan, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) hailed Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu (KCR) as a pro-labour leader, while launching a scathing attack on the Congress government for its alleged failures in governance and anti-labour policies. KTR highlighted the achievements of the KCR-led government in uplifting the working class, particularly pointing out the significant strides made in ensuring welfare and rights for labourers across the state. "From addressing hamalis (manual labourers) concerns within the first 15 days of assuming office to increasing their wages from Rs 8 to Rs 26, KCR's governance has been unmatched in its focus on labour welfare," he stated.  
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**Locate KRMB office in Vijayawada, say Andhra leaders**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The Andhra Pradesh State Irrigation Water Users Association Federation, under the leadership of Aalla Venkata Gopalakrishna Rao, has urged Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) Chairman Atul Jain to establish the Board's office in Vijayawada, citing logistical and operational benefits for Krishna basin stakeholders. During a meeting held at Hyderabad's Jalasoudha, Federation representatives submitted a detailed memorandum emphasizing the significance of locating the KRMB headquarters within the Krishna basin. Gopalakrishna Rao, a former member of the State Apex Water Resources Committee, said that Vijayawada's central location in the Krishna basin, with rail, road and air connectivity, makes it ideal for...  
 Continued on Page 2

**'No going back on Rythu Bharosa'**  
**Minister Tummala reviews implementation**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao conducted a review meeting on Monday with district agriculture officials to assess the progress of the Rythu Bharosa scheme implementation and the ongoing survey. He emphasised ensuring that all eligible farmers benefit from the scheme without any lapses. The Minister instructed officials to identify non-cultivable lands as per government orders and present the details during the upcoming village sabhas. He also directed Assistant Agriculture Officers (AEOs) to update bank details of new patta



holders, while Mandal Agriculture Officers (MAOs) must verify and upload the details promptly. Agriculture Secretary Raghunandan Rao highlighted the importance of addressing any technical issues arising during the survey process. He stated that the Rythu Bharosa scheme will be implemented from January 26, and officials must upload survey data regularly, taking responsibility for accurate monitoring. Agriculture Commissioner Gopi, along with state-level officials, district agriculture officers and assistant directors participated in this video conference. Deputy Mayor Srilatha Shobhan Reddy, Minister Ponnamm Prabhakar held a meeting with GHMC  
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**Committed to ration cards and Indiramma houses to eligible: Ponnamm**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The Telangana Government has reiterated its commitment to issuing ration cards and Indiramma houses to all eligible beneficiaries, with the process being continuous to ensure no deserving person is left out. Transport Minister



**Health services under Aarogyasri to be restored**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 United Breweries Limited (UBL) announced its decision to resume the supply of beer to the Telangana Beverages Corporation Limited (TGBCL) with immediate effect. The development follows constructive discussions between the two entities, addressing key issues regarding pricing and outstanding payments. In compliance with Regulation 30 of the SEBI Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements, 2015, UBL communicated this decision to the National Stock Exchange and BSE Limited. The company stated that TGBCL assured them of timely resolutions to their concerns. As an interim measure in the interests of consumers, workers, and stakeholders, UBL has decided to restart supplies while continuing engagements with the TGBCL to solidify their collaboration. The company also emphasised its commitment to ensuring smooth operations during this period.



**KOLKATA DOCTOR RAPE-MURDER VERDICT**

**Sanjay Roy gets life term till death**

**PNS ■ KOLKATA**  
 A Kolkata court on Monday sentenced Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment until death after he was convicted of raping and murdering an on-duty doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, rejecting demands for the death penalty saying it was not a "rarest of the rare" crime. Additional District and Sessions Judge in Sealdah, Anirban Das, had on Saturday found Roy guilty of committing the crime against the postgraduate trainee doctor on August 9 last year. The heinous crime triggered nationwide outrage and prolonged protests in West Bengal. The court also ordered Roy to pay a Rs 50,000 fine and directed the state government to pay compensa-



tion of Rs 17 lakh to the family of the deceased doctor. Judge Das stated that the crime did not fall under the "rarest of the rare" category, which justified the decision to not give the death penalty to the convict.  
 Continued on Page 2

**BRS condemns Haragopal's arrest, demands immediate release**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 BRS MLA Harish Rao has strongly condemned the arrest of civil rights leader Prof. Haragopal, calling it an inhumane act and a blatant example of the Congress Government's oppressive rule. Professor Haragopal was arrested for supporting villagers protesting against illegal mining in the Mylara village of Nagarkurnool district. Harish criticised the Revanth Reddy Government and accused it of suppressing voices fighting for people's rights. "This is not governance; it is repression. The government, which claimed that it would restore democracy, is now choking the voices of activists and imposing restrictions reminiscent of the emergency era," he said.

Harish questioned the Chief Minister's promises of democratic governance, stating, "Is this the so-called 'people's governance' you spoke of? Your rule, filled with barricades, restrictions and arrests reminds us of dictatorship." Highlighting the plight of villagers in Mylara, Harish said the government has ignored their protests against illegal mining. "When villagers are protesting against illegal mining, why is the government silent? Instead of addressing their grievances, it has resorted to silencing their supporters," he remarked. He demanded the immediate release of Prof Haragopal and other arrested activists, urging the government to respect the rights of citizens and listen to their concerns. "The oppressive policies of this government cannot suppress the spirit of democracy," Harish concluded.



# The unrelenting taskmasters of Telugu states

The enormity of any task eases if you are determined and unrelenting. It is true of individuals and more so for those wielding power. These qualities determine a person's or for that matter, a leader's strong will and the willingness to go to any length for the good of the people and society in general. The Telugu states have such determined personalities as heads of governments with enormous tasks.

Any government's success lies in correctly assessing and showcasing its potential development prospects and the availability of resources, apart from positive policy initiatives that propel progress. Ever since the

Congress assumed power in Telangana and the NDA took over in Andhra Pradesh, the Chief Ministers of the Telugu states, N. Chandrababu Naidu and Revanth Reddy, have been trying to develop their respective states in every conceivable manner and are leaving no stone unturned to achieve their goals.

During his one-year rule, Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy did everything he could to take the financially struggling Telangana forward and set things right. The Chief Minister has the right opportunities in the state, to establish a pro-business and industry-friendly atmosphere and commensurate policy plans. All of

**Any government's success lies in correctly assessing and showcasing its potential development prospects and the availability of resources, apart from positive policy initiatives that propel progress.**

them took Telangana forward on the path of development. Development doesn't mean getting huge investments alone. Its proper utilisation matters a lot. During his first trip abroad, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy was successful and now he is on a tour of foreign countries to bag the maximum possible investments with renewed policy strengths and expertise.

Last year, Telangana saw welfare-oriented development and the government ensured that in the clamour for social welfare development should not suffer. The HYDRAA and MUSI rejuvenation plans have

become part of welfare-oriented development initiatives. This time the Chief Minister's



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become part of welfare-oriented development initiatives. This time the Chief Minister's

foreign tour, it is hoped, would fetch the state the needed multinational investment. As expected Team Telangana has been successful in bagging huge investments.

The first year of Revanth Reddy's Congress Government in Telangana has achieved more than what was expected from it, given the financial problems and the burden of social welfare schemes announced during the elections. The speed of government programmes may pick up in the second year of Revanth's rule as more promises are expected to be fulfilled. Mobilising resources is a key factor now for the government and the Chief

Minister is on the job. And now coming to Andhra Pradesh, we have a Chief Minister who is known for his administrative excellence and political acumen. Known as an able leader and a taskmaster, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Nara Chandrababu Naidu, proved his administrative mettle in many ways during the first six months of NDA rule by bringing to light huge projects like the capital city of Amaravathi and the multi-purpose Polavaram Project. The latest feather on the Chief Minister's cap is the revival package for the Vizag Steel Plant. Dispelling rumours that VSP would be privatised, the Centre

announced a revival package valued at around Rs 11,000 crore.

If Mr Chandrababu had not been at the helm, it would not have been possible to streamline the three vital projects crucial for Andhra Pradesh's development. While the experience of Chandrababu is an asset for Andhra Pradesh, the drive of Revanth Reddy is an important factor in the growth of Telangana. Both are unrelenting taskmasters who never give up until they get what they want. A good sign of political leadership for any state if it has to progress.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

## Uttam slams BRS on Krishna water allocation & ration cards

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy launched a scathing attack on the former BRS government over its handling of Krishna water allocations and the distribution of ration cards. The Minister accused the opposition of spreading false propaganda while asserting the Congress government's commitment to ensuring justice for Telangana.

On the contentious Krishna water issue, Uttam criticised former chief minister KCR and BRS leader Harish Rao for their alleged negligence. "During their tenure, KCR and Harish Rao signed documents approving 298 TMC feet water allocation under Krishna Tribunal, which led to severe injustice to Telangana. They turned a blind eye to critical issues such as the Pothireddypadu and Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation projects," he said. Uttam termed Harish Rao's remarks

as 'petty politics' and alleged that the former leaders' inaction compromised Telangana's rightful share of Krishna waters.

The Minister addressed concerns about ration card distribution, stating that the Congress government is working tirelessly to ensure that every eligible household receives benefits. "We are issuing ration cards to all eligible families. The process is continuous and new applicants can apply through Prajavani and Gram Sabhas," Uttam said. He highlighted the Congress party's legacy, stating that it was the Congress that introduced the Food Security Act and ensured food for millions.

Taking a dig at the BRS, Uttam said, "During their ten-year rule, BRS issued only 60,000 ration cards. In contrast, we aim to ensure ration benefits for an additional 40 lakh people once the new and old processes are completed. Every individual will receive 6 kilos of fine rice, adding a

financial burden of Rs 11,000 crore on the government, which we are willing to bear for the people's welfare."

Responding to allegations from Harish Rao, Uttam said, "Harish Rao is resorting to baseless and malicious remarks. While the BRS deceived people during its rule, they now oppose every welfare initiative we undertake. Telangana's people know the truth, and we remain committed to their welfare."

The Minister also assured that all pending ration card applications received through public grievance platforms and local meetings would be processed transparently. He urged the public to apply through official channels if their names are not listed.

The Minister's remarks have reignited the debate on Telangana's water rights and the contentious handling of welfare schemes during the previous regime, setting the stage for further political confrontations.

## Govt seeks Odisha's help to establish thermal plant

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has formally requested the Odisha Government to facilitate land allocation for establishing a 2x800 MW Thermal Power Plant (TPP) near the Naini Coal Mine in the Angul district of Odisha.

In a letter addressed to Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Mahji, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka stressed the strategic benefits of setting up the pithead power plant.

The Naini Coal Mine, established with support from the Odisha Government, is set to commence production in March 2025. The coal extracted from this mine is intended for the Singareni Thermal Power Plant (STPP) at Jaipur in Telangana. However, logistical challenges posed by the 1,000-km distance between the mine and the power plant made the SCCL to propose setting up the TPP near the mine.

"Establishing a pithead power plant would minimise transportation costs, ensure a

steady fuel supply and reduce the environmental impact," Bhatti said.

The project is in accordance with the findings of the 20th Electric Power Survey (EPS), which predicted a high demand for thermal power over the next three decades.

A team of SCCL and Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO) officials has already conducted site visits to Jarpada/Tukuda and Handappa/Baninali for land identification. Bhatti said the project would bring substantial benefits to both the states like employment generation and infrastructure development.

He urged the Odisha government to speed up the land allocation process to ensure the timely execution of this project. "This project represents a win-win opportunity for both Telangana and Odisha," he said, expressing confidence in the cooperation and support of the Odisha Government.

## Speed up approvals, financial aid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government urged the Centre to speed up approvals and financial assistance for its schemes costing around Rs 1.63 lakh crore.

In a detailed letter addressed to Union Minister for Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka cited projects requiring immediate support from the Centre.

One of the main proposals is the Regional Ring Road (RRR), a vital infrastructure project aimed at decongesting Hyderabad and boosting connectivity to Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Despite being announced in 2016 and reaffirmed in 2022, the project still awaits financial approval.

Bhatti pointed out that the TG government has already agreed to meet 50% of the land acquisition costs and stressed the urgency of approving the northern and southern corridors simultaneously to prevent

## TG government asks Centre

REGIONAL RING ROAD (RRR)



cost escalation.

He also proposed the development of 10 radial roads connecting the Outer Ring Road to the RRR. Estimated to cost Rs. 45,000 crore, this project aims to expand Hyderabad's growth beyond the ORR by building residential, industrial and thematic hubs.

The Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase-II also figures promi-

nently in the letter, with five new corridors planned extending around 76.4 km at an estimated cost of Rs 24,269 crore. Bhatti requested the Centre to consider Metro expansion as a joint venture with equal financial outlays.

Bhatti also detailed the Musi Riverfront Development Project, emphasizing the need to prevent sewage from polluting the river.

## Trump ...

Continued from page 1

Trump's promised Day 1 executive orders

Here are a few of the executive orders Trump says he plans to issue on his first day

- Several on immigration, including declaring a national emergency at southern border, reinstating the "remain in Mexico" policy and sending troops to the southern border.
- Seeking a broad government effort to reduce inflation and reduce prices.
- Declaring a "national energy emergency" and allowing for more energy production.
- Ending what he has called an "electric vehicle mandate."

Trump repeats unfounded immigration claim at the crux of his campaign In his inaugural address, Trump repeated a line he usually brought up during his campaign, saying that immigrants arriving in the country illegally come from prisons and mental institutions.

There is no evidence countries are sending their criminals or mentally ill across the border.

Trump's inauguration address echoes his rally speeches

## Harish slams gov't for not paying Women's Commission Members' salaries

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao criticised the Revanth-led Congress Government for failing to deliver on its promises of timely salary payments, stating that the repeated claims of paying salaries on the first day of every month have proven to be hollow.

Addressing the issue, Harish said that members of the Telangana Women's Commission have not been paid their salaries last year.

"It has come to my notice that despite the government's grand claims of protecting women's rights, even Women's Commission members, who are meant to safeguard those rights, have been left without pay," he said.

Highlighting the budget allocation, Harish pointed out that while Rs 2.42 crore was earmarked for the Women's Commission in the current financial year, only Rs 20 lakh has been released so far.

"If the government cannot pay the salaries of Women's Commission members, who are treated on par with judicial officers, how can it ensure the rights of ordinary women?" he asked. Calling for immediate action, Harish demanded that pending dues of the Women's Commission members should be cleared fast. He also urged the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister to ensure that salaries are paid on the first day of every month.

## Kishan stresses on sustainable mining, self-reliance

PNS ■ KONARK

The Union Minister for Coal and Mines, G. Kishan Reddy, outlined a comprehensive vision for India's coal and mining sector at the National Conference of State Coal and Mines Ministers held in Konark, Odisha.

Highlighting the sector's contribution to India's GDP and its pivotal role in industrial development, he emphasized the need for transparency, sustainability and cooperation to achieve self-reliance in critical minerals.

The Minister noted that 72% of India's power generation currently relies on coal, underscoring its indispensability to the nation's economic activities. He revealed that coal production in 2024 reached 997 million tonnes, marking a 76% increase since 2014.

The government aims to achieve 1.5 billion tonnes of coal production by 2030, requiring robust state collaboration.

Kishan highlighted the significant reforms introduced over the past decade under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, including amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR).

These reforms have enhanced transparency and accountability in the mining sector, particularly through the auction system. So far, 442 mineral blocks have been auctioned, generating an additional Rs 2.69 lakh crore for state governments since 2015.

Addressing the growing demand for critical minerals like lithium, cobalt and copper, the Minister announced plans to auction 48 critical mineral blocks, 24 of which have already been successfully allocated.

## TG Jagruthi plans seminar on Constitution's legacy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Constitution, the Telangana Jagruthi Student Federation is organising a seminar titled 'Ganatantra Bharat, Jaagrutha Bharat' on January 26 at the Telangana Saraswatha Parishath in Hyderabad.

BRS MLC Kavitha will deliver the keynote address, focusing on the challenges, implementation and contemporary relevance of the Constitution. The event aims to spark dialogue among research schol-

ars, students and leaders from diverse fields on the Constitution's role in shaping modern India.

Unveiling the seminar poster earlier on Monday, Telangana Jagruthi leaders stressed the importance of revisiting the Constitution's foundational principles. They emphasised the need for collective efforts to ensure equitable access to constitutional rights, particularly for marginalised groups.

The seminar will explore topics like the judiciary's role in upholding constitutional values, challenges in

implementing constitutional rights, struggles of women and minorities in accessing rights, strengthening democracy and transparency through reforms, caste enumeration and its implications.

"This event is an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come and the work that remains in fulfilling the Constitution's promise of equality and justice," the Telangana Jagruthi said.

Students, research scholars, and constitutional experts are invited to participate in this event.

## Trump 2.0: A maverick returns to world centre stage

PNS ■ NEW YORK

In the weeks between his phenomenal electoral victory and swearing-in as the 47th president of the US, the world got a preview of what a second Donald Trump presidency will entail - both for itself and America. Trump talked about making Canada the 51st state of the US, suggested taking control of Greenland and the Panama Canal, and floated the idea of changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America - all this before he took oath as American President on Monday.

Trump, the oldest person in US history to be elected president, has gone from being a businessman, real estate tycoon and reality TV star to becoming the first former US President to be declared a convicted felon.

And after surviving two assassination bids during his 2024 campaign, the 78-year-old remained unstoppable with American voters giving him a second term. In the process, he shattered the dream of the Democratic Party, as well as that of millions of Kamala Harris supporters, to finally have the first woman President in the White House.

## TG team ...

Continued from page 1

The CM is scheduled to meet several industrialists on the first day of the Davos Conference. The CM's delegation focused on the Davos visit with a specific plan to project Telangana to the world as an international investment destination.

As part of that, the Chief Minister's team will hold discussions with representatives of global companies and will also invite them to make investments in Telangana.

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	Jan 21 09:58 AM
Saptami:	Jan 21 12:40 PM
Ashtami:	Jan 21 12:40 PM
	Jan 22 03:18 PM
Nakshatram:	
Chitra:	Jan 20 08:30 PM
	Jan 21 11:36 PM
Swati:	Jan 21 11:36 PM
	Jan 23 02:34 AM
Rahukalam:	3:14 PM to 4:38 PM
Yamagandam:	9:40 AM to 11:04 AM
Variyam:	05:54 AM to 07:41 AM
Gulika:	12:27 PM to 1:51 PM
Amritakalam:	04:22 PM to 06:11 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	12:05 PM to 12:49 PM

### HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny  
Temp: 31°  
Humidity: 36%  
Sunrise: 6:50 AM  
Sunset: 6:05 PM  
Updated: January 20, 2025 5:00 PM

## Locate KRMB ...

Continued from page 1

addressing the problems of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana water users. He criticised the YSRC Government's decision to propose Visakhapatnam, located far from the basin, as the location of the KRMB office, citing administrative convenience.

The memorandum detailed past communications between the Andhra Pradesh Government and the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, emphasizing resolutions from the 2020 Apex Council meeting that supported Vijayawada as the location. The representatives reiterated their demand for a reconsideration of earlier proposals to ensure fair and accessible governance for all stakeholders in the basin.

The delegation also pointed out that Andhra Pradesh farmers are facing water scarcity due to inadequate releases from Nagarjuna Sagar. Despite orders to release 12 TMCs for the third zone, only 2.9 TMC has been received so far, putting rabi crops like mango, tobacco, jowar, cotton and chillies at risk. The KRMB was urged to enforce the rightful allocation of 512 TMCs to Andhra Pradesh as per the Bachawat Tribunal Award and ensure a transparent calculation of evaporation losses during releases from Nagarjuna Sagar.

The leaders also requested that the head regulator of the Right Canal, currently managed by Telangana, be handed over to Andhra Pradesh to ensure smooth operations.

## Committed to ...

Continued from page 1

Commissioner Ilambarthi, Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty and other senior officials at the GHMC headquarters.

The review aimed to evaluate the implementation of these welfare schemes and provide directions for expediting the process.

During the meeting, the minister assured citizens that there was no need for concern regarding ration cards or Indiramma houses. "All eligible beneficiaries will receive ration cards. Efforts are underway to provide Indiramma houses to both those with land and landless applicants," he stated.

He urged residents who have not yet applied for ration cards to submit applications at ward-level meetings, where all received applications will be duly processed. The minister emphasized that applications previously submitted through Praja Seva Kendras and Prajavani will also be considered to ensure transparency and inclusivity.

Minister Prabhakar directed officials to work collaboratively as a team to enhance the government's image. He stressed that the application process for ration cards will remain open indefinitely, ensuring that every eligible individual is reached. Field-level officers were asked to increase public awareness of the schemes and their benefits.

## More police ...

Continued from page 1

He emphasized KCR's contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic, terming him the only Chief Minister in India who assisted 35 lakh migrant workers with financial aid of Rs. 1,000 each, meals, and special trains to return to their homes. "Even though these workers were not from Telangana and couldn't vote for him, KCR stood by them as a leader with a heart," KTR added.

He also highlighted KCR's efforts to extend PRC benefits to contract and outsourcing employees, a step unparalleled in India. "No other government, including the Congress, dared to implement such progressive policies," KTR asserted.

KTR criticized Congress leaders, accusing them of mismanagement and hypocrisy. He said, "When Congress handed over the state in 2014, Telangana had Rs. 72,000 crore in debts and limited infrastructure. Today, under KCR's leadership, Telangana boasts a per capita income of Rs. 3.56 lakh and a budget surplus."

He accused the current Congress government of borrowing Rs. 1.4 lakh crore in a year without initiating any significant welfare programs. "What has Revanth Reddy achieved with this debt? No new infrastructure, no farmer welfare, no benefits for women or workers," he asked, urging the public to question the misappropriation of funds.

## Sanjay Roy ...

Continued from page 1

"The CBI prayed for the death penalty. The defence lawyer prayed that a jail term be given instead of the death penalty... This crime does not fall under the rarest of the rare category," the judge said. "I am sentencing you to life imprisonment, meaning till the last day of your life, for causing injury during the act of committing rape on the victim that led to her death..." he told Roy.

Roy, a former civic volunteer with the Kolkata Police, was found guilty under Sections 64 (rape), 66 (punishment for causing death), and 103(1) (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The judge stated that under Section 64, life imprisonment is being given, along with a fine of Rs 50,000. An additional five months of imprisonment will be imposed upon non-payment of the fine, he added.

Under Section 103(1), Roy has been sentenced to life imprisonment with a Rs 50,000 fine, and another five months in jail if the fine remains unpaid. Additionally, under Section 66, he has been sentenced to life imprisonment till death, the judge said.

All the sentences will run concurrently, the judge said. "Since the victim died while on duty in the hospital, her place of work, it is the responsibility of the state to pay compensation to the family of the doctor - Rs 10 lakh for the death and Rs 7 lakh for the rape," Das said.



# City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | JANUARY 21, 2025

03



## CITY EVENTS

### Classical Dance

By Lasyanjali

#### Venue

Ravindra Bharathi  
January 21, (9 am to 1 pm)  
Ravindra Bharathi  
January 21,  
(9 am to 1 pm)

### Sangeem Reddy Satyanarayana Jayanthi

By Telangana Kranthidal

#### Venue

Ravindra Bharathi  
January 21,  
(1:30 pm to 10 pm)

### Cultural Programme

By Sri Vasu

#### Venue

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha  
January 21, (5:30 pm)

### Rotary Club of Moinabad donates 40 LPG-powered iron boxes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Rotary Club of Lake District Moinabad announced its support for district 3150's sustainability initiative benefiting over 10,000 street ironers in Hyderabad. This includes donating 40 LPG-powered iron boxes to improve livelihoods and reduce environmental impact.

The event, held on Monday at Municipal Park, Amberpet, was attended by key community leaders, including Rtn Chiranjeev Saluja (president), Rtn Uday Pilani (district governor nominee), and Rtn Dimple Agarwal (secretary).

The key impacts are economic growth: The project is expected to increase the community's annual income by Rs 60 crore. Environmental Benefits: LPG irons will replace coal, cutting 72 lakh kgs of coal use yearly and reducing carbon emissions. Health Benefits: Over 10,000 families will avoid coal fumes, improving health.

President, Rtn Chiranjeev Saluja said, "This initiative reflects Rotary's commitment to sustainability and community empowerment." Meanwhile, Rtn Uday Pilani added, "It is a perfect example of addressing social and environmental issues together."

## Three arrested for ATM cards theft

DEEPIKA PASHAM  
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com  
■ HYDERABAD

An inter-state gang has been targeting individuals near ATM centres, diverting their attention to swap their original cards with duplicates.

The Commissioner's Task Force, South Zone Team, Hyderabad, in collaboration with Bahadurpura Police, busted the gang involved in creating duplicate ATM cards and using them to withdraw money from various ATM centres across Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Karnataka. The gang primarily



ly targeted senior citizens, women and illiterate people.

The arrested suspects are Vakil Ali (45) from Haryana, Farman (23) from Uttar Pradesh, and Obaid Arif (30). The absconding members are Islam from Haryana and Gullu

from Uttar Pradesh.

The police seized Rs 7.60 lakh, 105 different ATM cards and other items. A total of 18 cases have been detected - 10 in Telangana, two in Andhra Pradesh, four in Odisha and two in Karnataka.

Vakil Ali and Islam, both natives of Haryana and relatives, migrated to Hyderabad. Islam started a clothing business in the Charminar area. They later befriended Gullu, Farhan and Obaid Arif, who were dissatisfied with their earnings and sought easy money through scams targeting ATM users.

The accused would first collect ATM cards through various methods, then target illiterate, senior or vulnerable individuals at ATM centres. They would offer assistance for withdrawing money, while one of the gang members secretly observes the ATM PIN.

## HYDRAA gets 89 complaints on encroaching water bodies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has received 89 complaints on water bodies in permits of Outer Ring Road (ORR) in a Prajavani conducted on Monday.

The complainants reported on lakes in Ameenpur Municipality and asked for a full-scale survey to address encroachments.

Secondly Medchal District's Medikunta Lake spanning 45 acres has shrunk due to systematic encroachments. Elderly residents submitted a petition urging for boundary demarcation and buffer zone development for public use.

Defence Colony, Malkajgiri residents accused a local public representative of encroaching on 1,000 square yards of land reserved for public amenities.

Anjaneya Nagar, Moosapet residents have said that the 2,000-square-yard park site has been encroached upon, with locals reporting threats and assaults



The Prajavani programme at HYDRAA office on Monday

when opposing the land grab. Despite government-sanctioned Rs 50 lakh for park development and a foundation stone being laid, encroachers have obstructed GHMC's efforts to construct a boundary wall.

HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath emphasised the importance of preserving public spaces and warned that strict action, including demolitions, would be taken against illegal encroachments.

### GHMC Prajavani receives 163 grievances from public

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner Ilambarthi has directed officials to prioritise grievances received through the Prajavani programme and ensure their timely resolution.

During the Prajavani programme held on Monday at the GHMC head office, Commissioner Ilambarthi, along with Deputy Mayor Mothe Sripatha Sobhan Reddy, personally received grievances from citizens seeking solution to various issues across

the city. Addressing the officials, the Commissioner emphasised the need for immediate action on complaints and advised informing the complainants once their issues are resolved.

Deputy Mayor Mothe Sripatha Sobhan Reddy also encouraged officials to actively address citizen grievances and take special initiatives to ensure their resolution swiftly. During the session, three grievances were received through the phone-in

programme and were forwarded to the departments concerned for immediate action. At the GHMC head office, 55 grievances were registered, with 30 related to the Town Planning department, five to the Tax department, four to the Finance and Accounts department, three to Urban Biodiversity, and two each to Engineering (Maintenance), Sanitation, Health, Veterinary and Estates. One grievance each was directed to Land Acquisition, Vigilance and Administration.

## Maha Kumbh Punya Kshetra Yatra train starts in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 27th trip of the Bharat Gaurav Train, focusing on the First Maha Kumbh Punya Kshetra Yatra, began on Monday from Secunderabad railway station. The Bharat Gaurav initiative by Indian Railways promotes India's cultural and spiritual heritage, drawing significant interest from travellers.

Flagged off by a senior citizen and IRCTC officials, the train will visit Varanasi, Prayagraj and Ayodhya. Passengers from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh can board and disembark at various stations, including Secunderabad, Vijayawada and Vizag.

This 7-night, 8-day journey offers comprehensive facilities like rail and road transport, accommodation, meals, onboard security with CCTV cameras, travel insurance and



A senior citizen and IRCTC officials inaugurating the Maha Kumbh Bharat Gaurav train at Secunderabad railway station on Monday

IRCTC tour managers for assistance. Pilgrims will visit the Triveni Sangam, Kashi Vishwanath temple and Shri Ram Janma Bhoomi.

Another trip is scheduled from February 15 to 21, 2025. Ticket costs range from Rs 23,035 (sleeper) to Rs 38,300 (IIAC).

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, SCR, expressed hap-

piness at the good response received from the passengers for the Bharat Gaurav Tourist train from SCR.

He appealed rail users to utilise the opportunity to visit culturally prominent and historical places. Bharat Gaurav trains continue to boost spiritual tourism, with passengers appreciating this initiative.

## Coordination meet held with delivery and bike taxi platforms

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Traffic Police (CTP) held a meeting with online food delivery and bike taxi platforms at the Cyberabad CP office on Monday. Chaired by Joint Commissioner of Police, Traffic, D Joel Davis, the meeting addressed traffic violations by delivery personnel in the Cyberabad jurisdiction.

Delivery workers often break rules, like riding without helmets, rash or wrong-way driving, drunken driving and illegal parking to meet deadlines. These actions have led to accidents, some fatal.

CP Joel Davis stressed the importance of regular road safety sessions by delivery platforms and promised Traffic Safety Training Workshops by the police.

Key points discussed were, Monitoring Violations: Platforms will track and act on riders breaking rules. Alcohol Checks: Mandatory checks at shift start and end. Penalties and Rewards: Violators face penalties; safe riders get incentives. Resolving Violations: Platforms will collaborate with authorities.

Recommendations included GPS speed monitoring, AI alerts and citizen reporting apps to ensure road safety.

The meeting was attended by Madhapur Traffic DCP Sai Manohar; Cyberabad Traffic Administrators BNS Reddy and G Guruviah; and in-charges from various online delivery platforms and bike taxi services.

## Hyd property registrations rise 7%; Luxury homes see 58% surge

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's property registrations rose by 7% year-on-year (YoY) in 2024, according to Knight Frank India. The total transaction value increased by 23% YoY, with December recording 5,805 property registrations, saw a 5% month-on-month (MoM) increase but a 20% YoY decline. The December transaction value stood at Rs 3,590 crore.

Luxury homes led the market growth, with properties priced above Rs1 crore accounting for 14% of total registrations in 2024, up from 10% in 2023, a 58% YoY surge. Properties under Rs 50 lakh, though still a majority, dropped to 60% of registrations from 68% in 2023.

Most registered homes were between 1,000 and 2,000 sq ft, representing 69% of transactions. Medchal-Malkajgiri and Rangareddy districts dominated registrations, contributing 42% and 41%, respectively.

Developers are focusing on upscale projects, reflecting buyer demand for premium living. Knight Frank Chairman Shishir Bajjal noted this trend highlights Hyderabad's economic strength and its growing status as a hub for luxury real estate.



## Mayor instructs officials to remove encroachments

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Mayor G a d w a l Vijayalakshmi instructed Town Planning officials to remove encroachments near a public park at Jubilee Hills on Monday.

She expressed strong displeasure over the encroachment of a park site owned by the GHMC on Road No. 36, Jubilee Hills. On Monday, the Mayor, accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Prashanthi and other officials, inspected the encroached park site.

During the inspection, it was revealed that a private individual had removed the GHMC signboard installed at the

site, concealed it, and laid a pipeline to cultivate vegetables on the park land. Additionally, it was observed that the owner of an adjacent flat had constructed a high boundary wall along his property and was using a ladder to access the park area to grow vegetables.

Taking a serious note of the encroachment, the Mayor directed the Town Planning officials to immediately survey the area and remove the illegal compound wall and vegetable plants. She also instructed them to reinstall the GHMC signboard at the original location.

The encroached land spans approximately 1,500 square yards, which Mayor Vijayalakshmi has reclaimed for public use.

## TG govt, DPS Nacharam launch first traffic park

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Delhi Public School Nacharam, in collaboration with the Telangana government, launched a pilot programme to raise student awareness about traffic safety and responsible road behavior.

The city's first-ever Traffic Park was inaugurated at Nacharam by chief guest Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, along with Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar, Special Chief Secretary Vikas Raj, and DPS administrators, including Chairman Malka Komaraiah, Director Pallavi and Senior Principal Sunitha Rao. The event began at 3pm on Monday, with DPS students showcasing traffic park activities through a live demonstration.

The programme included a guard of honour by the ATT Team, a lighting ceremony (Deepaprajwalana), and visits to the Route Lab, Art Gallery,



Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, along with Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar, inaugurating a student awareness programme and Traffic Park at Delhi Public School, Nacharam on Monday

Recording Station and auditorium. Governor Jishnu Dev Varma emphasised road safety and responsibility, encouraging schools to conduct such programmes to save lives.

Meanwhile, Transport Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar urged students to spread road safety awareness within their families. Senior Principal Sunitha Rao highlighted the school's achievements over 20

years, while Chairman Komaraiah shared the institution's future plans.

The event also launched the Research and Resource Department to promote academic excellence. As part of their annual "Joy of Giving" tradition, students donated essentials to NGOs. The programme ended with the National Anthem, driving hope for a safer future.

## CID warns of rising pyramid, MLM scams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Crime Investigation Department of Telangana has issued a warning about the surge in pyramid and multi-level marketing (MLM) scams targeting innocent investors across districts.

Fraudsters entice victims with promises of high returns, daily income, or commissions for recruiting members under the guise of selling cryptocurrencies or products like agro, garments and household items. These Ponzi schemes rely on new investments to pay older participants, benefiting only the top-tier members while most investors suffer financial losses.

Some masterminds operate internationally, raising concerns about the potential misuse of funds for illegal or anti-national activities. Authorities urge citizens to remain cautious of unrealistic promises, avoid chain-based schemes and verify the legitimacy of companies and investment opportunities through official regulatory bodies like SEBI or MCA. Victims or witnesses of such scams should immediately report them via the 1930 helpline or cybercrime.gov.in.

## 594 applications received for Guv's Awards for Excellence

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 594 applications were received for the Governor's Awards for Excellence 2025, instituted by Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma. These awards honour outstanding contributions in four areas: Environment Protection, Divyagyan Welfare, Sports & Games and Culture.

In November 2024, nominations were invited from individuals and organisations through online and offline modes. The response was remarkable, with applicants ranging in age from 16 to 89 years. Among the 594 entries,

331 were from urban areas like GHMC, while 263 came from rural Telangana. Gender representation included 356 male, 96 female and one transgender applicant, reflecting inclusivity.

The nominees include environmentalists, sustainability advocates, para-athletes and cultural icons. A selection committee led by K Padmanabhaiah, IAS (Retd.), and other distinguished experts will evaluate the entries.

Each award includes Rs 2,00,000 and a citation. Winners will be honoured by the Governor in a special ceremony on January 26, 2025.

## Health services under Aarogyasri to be restored

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health services under the Aarogyasri scheme will continue as usual in the state, said Telangana Aarogyasri Network Hospitals Association (TANHA) after a brief interaction with Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha on Monday. Several hospitals had suspended Aarogyasri services (non-emergency) from January 10 citing long-pending issues that have remained unresolved for nearly a decade. In response, Health Minister Damodar Rajanarasimha held a meeting with TANHA and promised to pay the dues within four to five months. The attendees were

Christina Z Chongthu, Health Secretary, President of Telangana Aarogyasri Network Hospitals Association Dr V Rakesh, General Secretary Hari Prakash, Dr Soujanya and Harish Reddy, among others. The Association representatives appealed to the Minister to resolve the issues that have been pending for a decade. They requested revisions to the empanelment MoU, a review of Aarogyasri package rates, and the clearance of outstanding dues. Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha stated, "Under the leadership of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, we are allocating funds for education and health care without any political bias."

## AIG launches NeuroCath Lab with stroke specialists

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIG Hospitals has unveiled its NeuroCath Lab, featuring the advanced Philips Azurion 2.2 Biplane system, a dedicated NeuroICU, and 24/7 availability of stroke specialists.

This ground-breaking facility is designed to revolutionize the treatment of neurovascular emergencies, particularly strokes, which remain a leading cause of death and disability in India, with an estimated 1.8 million cases annually. The facility was inaugurated

by Dr G Chandrashekar Reddy, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister of Telangana. Equipped with cutting-edge 2D and 3D imaging technology, flexible X-ray detector positioning and features like automatic beam rotation, the NeuroCath Lab enables minimally invasive neuro interventions.

These advancements aim to enhance the accuracy, speed, and efficiency of treatments for conditions such as ischemic stroke, brain aneurysms and congenital vascular abnormalities, ultimately



(L to R) Dr GV Rao, PVS Raju, Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Dr Chandrashekar Reddy, Dr VK Chaitanya Koduri, Dr Afshan Jabeen and Dr Vivek Lanka at the launch of NeuroCath Lab

mately improving patient outcomes and reducing costs.

Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman of AIG Hospitals, emphasised the importance of timely care during strokes. "Every minute counts in a stroke emergency.

Our NeuroCath Lab allows us to provide world-class, timely interventions to save lives and preserve quality of life.

This is part of our ongoing commitment to bringing advanced healthcare technologies and expertise to our patients," he said.







ACROSS THE STATES



**EC to conduct meeting of global poll bodies**

The Election Commission is organising a conference of international poll management bodies here ahead of its 76th year of establishment. The two-day conference on 'Global Election Year 2024: Reiteration of Democratic Spaces; Takeaway for EMBs' comes after more than 70 countries with nearly half the world's population went to the polls last year. The conference aims to reflect on key areas of contemporary poll management and a prospective view of elections while drawing key learnings, the Election Commission (EC) said on Monday. Nearly 30 representatives from the election management bodies (EMBs) of 13 countries -- Bhutan, Georgia, Namibia, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Ireland, Mauritius, Philippines, Russian Federation, Tunisia and Nepal -- will participate in the conference on January 23-24. The conference will commence with a keynote address from Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar and include sessions on various aspects of election management. The EC came into being on January 25, 1950, a day before India became a republic.



**J-K LG Sinha registers himself for organ donation**

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha pledged for organ donation by registering himself with the Ayushman Bharat Organ Donation Registry (ABODR) on Monday. Representatives from the State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (SOTTO), led by its nodal officer Dr Elias Sharma, visited Raj Bhawan and presented the organ donation pledge certificate to the Lieutenant Governor. The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, registered himself with the Ayushman Bharat Organ Donation Registry (ABODR) of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, said a spokesperson from Raj Bhawan. The Lieutenant Governor expressed his willingness for organ donation during a programme organised by the Bharatiya Jain Sansthan on Sunday. Sandeep Jain, president of Bharatiya Jain Sangathan, was also present.



**5,000 artistes to perform during R-Day parade**

Showcasing India's vibrant colors and cultural diversity, an ensemble of more than 5,000 artists representing over 45 dance forms will perform during the Republic Day celebrations here on January 26. Titled 'Jayati Jai Mamah Bharatam', the program has been conceived by the Ministry of Culture and the Sangeet Natak Akademi and will be presented during the Republic Day parade at Kartavya Path, officials said. "This remarkable performance will feature over 5,000 artists representing more than 45 traditional and folk dance forms from across India," the official said. The dance forms that are planned to be showcased include Jhijhiya (Bihar), Mayur Ras (Uttar Pradesh), Dangri (Gujarat), Lambadi (Telangana), and Purulia Chau (West Bengal), among others. Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who attended its rehearsals a few days ago, had earlier said, "This is a glimpse of India's fame through its cultural wealth."

**NCC cadets should contribute to 'Viksit Bharat' dream: Rajnath**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an ex-cadet of the NCC, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday exhorted cadets to contribute to PM Modi's dream of making India a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Addressing a gathering of cadets and officers during his visit to the ongoing Republic Day National Cadet Corps (NCC) camp at Delhi Cantonment, Singh also said that he sees an image of India in NCC cadets. A total of 2,361 NCC cadets from across the country are taking part in the month-long camp, which began on December 30, and will culminate with the PM rally on January 27.

The annual event is also witnessing the participation of 917 girl cadets, the largest contingent so far.

Appreciating the unity and discipline shown by cadets at the NCC camp, the defence minister said, "India has many bodies but one soul, many branches but one root, many rays but one light".

In his address, Singh also recalled



that before foraying into politics, he himself was "a student, a cadet of NCC, and a physics teacher".

The energy and enthusiasm of the cadets reflect that India has and will have a bright future, NCC ingrains in youth leadership quality and discipline, he added.

Singh also spoke of the 'Viksit Bharat' vision of the government and the role the cadets can play in realising the ambitious vision that seeks to make India a developed nation by the time it completes 100 years since its Independence in 1947.

"Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, himself an ex-cadet of the NCC, has given the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. So, its current cadets have a responsibility to contribute to his 'Viksit Bharat' dream," Singh said.

However, he emphasised that 'Viksit Bharat' does not mean mere physical development on land, but a holistic growth of entire society.

Praising the NCC's role in inculcating discipline and leadership qualities among cadets when they

are young, the defence minister said there is a "spark within" the cadets that forges a way of life for them in such a way that irrespective of the profession they will choose later, they will all contribute to nation-building.

Singh also recalled his visit to Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai, a place, he said, also reminds one of the deadly 26/11 terror attacks in that city in 2008.

He also mentioned the last words spoken by Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan before he laid down his life while battling the terrorists in the attack.

"That was his (Maj Unnikrishnan's) leadership quality (shown during the combat)," the defence minister told the cadets, exhorting them to become leaders in life.

Singh also exhorted them to "think big" and never get disheartened in life, nor have a narrow-minded thinking.

"A person becomes significant in life not by virtue of the big posts one holds, but by the human qualities they have," he said.



**Saif attacker panicked, planned to flee to Bangla: Police**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bangladeshi national arrested for allegedly stabbing actor Saif Ali Khan had panicked upon seeing his image on TV channels and was planning to flee to his native country when he was nabbed, police officials said on Monday.

Police also said the 30-year-old attacker asked his brother in Bangladesh to send documents which helped cops to ascertain his identity as a resident of the neighbouring country.

The accused, identified as Shariful Islam Shehzad Mohammad Rohilla Amin Fakir who changed his name to Vijay Das, was arrested on Sunday after an extensive examination of CCTV footage, which showed him riding a motorcycle on January 9, a week before the violent attack.

Khan was repeatedly stabbed by the intruder inside his upscale Bandra apartment on Thursday, necessitating surgery.

The shocking nature of the attack raised serious concerns regarding security at the 'Satguru Sharan' building where Khan lives with his family and about the motive for targeting the Bollywood star.

As the investigations progressed, teams of Mumbai Police combed through hours of footage from different areas of the city to gather evidence.

Initially, police faced challenges in tracing the lone assailant.

Fakir, a native of Jhalokathi district in Bangladesh, had been residing in Mumbai for over five months, working odd jobs and associated with a housekeeping agency, police said.

Mumbai police identified the intruder from CCTV grab and ascertained that he was riding a motorcycle at a crossing in suburban Andheri on January 9, officials said.

The motorcycle owner informed police that he was Fakir's former employer. This led helped police obtain the suspect's phone number, which was placed under surveillance, the officials said.

In a breakthrough on Saturday night, police tracked a digital payment made by the suspect at a food stall near Century Mills in Worli, where he ordered Bhurji Pav (popular scrambled egg dish made with eggs, onions, tomatoes, and spices) and a bottle of water.

**'Decline in sittings of legislatures a matter of concern'**

PNS ■ PATNA

Birla's remarks at the inaugural function of the 85th All India Presiding Officers Conference (AIPOC) here came amid reports that the Delhi Assembly held a mere 74 sittings in its entire five-year tenure.

According to a study by PRS Legislative, the outgoing Delhi Assembly held 74 sittings during its five-year term, an average of 15 days a year. On the days it met, the assembly sat for an average of three hours. The House passed only 14 bills during its term, the lowest number for any previous full-term assembly.

The Lok Sabha speaker also flagged concerns over disruption of House proceedings in a planned manner and urged presiding officers to talk to leaders of political parties to ensure smooth functioning of the state legislative assemblies and councils.

Birla also urged the political parties to formulate a code of conduct for its lawmakers to uphold the dignity of the legislative assemblies.

"We have to make efforts by reaching out to political parties to minimise disruptions during House proceedings. All political parties should co-operate to uphold the dignity of the House," Birla said. He said agreement and disagreement were the strength of any democracy and encouraged presiding officers to nurture such traditions to empower their respective assemblies and councils.

The 85th AIPOC was attended by Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh, Bihar Assembly Speaker Nand Kishore Yadav, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary and presiding officers of state legislative bodies from across the country.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Birla at the Raj Bhawan on Monday morning but was conspicuous by his absence at the two-day conference -- '75th Anniversary of Constitution: Contribution of Parliament and State Legislative Bodies in Strengthening Constitutional Values'.

Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly Tejashwi Yadav, who was scheduled to speak at the conference, also skipped the event.

"The dignity of any House is directly linked to its member. The more the members are responsible in their conduct, the more it will enhance the dignity of the House. This will also strengthen democracy as we will be able to hold elected governments accountable in an effective manner," Birla said.

He also favoured increasing the role of parliamentary standing committees to ensure accountability of elected governments.

"Standing committees are mini-Parliaments and there is a need to strengthen their functioning. More effective standing committees will lead to greater accountability in governance and transparency in administration," he said.



**We have to make efforts by reaching out to political parties to minimise disruptions during House proceedings. All political parties should co-operate to uphold the dignity of the House**



**'Resolve humanitarian crisis outside AIIMS'**

● Rahul writes to Nadda, Delhi CM over plight of patients

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has written to Union Health Minister J P Nadda and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, flagging the plight of hundreds of patients and their family members huddled on the footpath and subway outside AIIMS here and sought concrete steps to resolve this "humanitarian crisis".

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha also urged the central government to take concrete steps to strengthen the public healthcare system in the upcoming budget and increase the necessary resources for it.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi

said, "I have written letters to the Chief Minister of Delhi and the Union Health Minister to provide better facilities to the patients and their families coming to Delhi AIIMS from all over the country."

"Recently I saw that in freezing cold these people are forced to sleep in the subway under the metro station, where there is no provision of drinking water or a toilet. There are heaps of garbage lying around. The arrival of such a large number of patients to Delhi AIIMS also shows that people are not getting affordable and good quality health facilities where they live," Gandhi said.

"I hope that taking cognizance of my letter, the Chief Minister of

**STALIN TO CENTRE**

**Withdraw draft UGC regulations**

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Several provisions in the draft UGC regulations were 'in conflict with the state's educational system and policies,' Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin claimed on Monday and urged Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan to withdraw the said regulations. The state believed that many provisions in the draft regulations might pose serious challenges to the academic integrity, autonomy, and inclusive development of state universities, he said.

"We therefore request that the Ministry of Education may withdraw the draft Bills under discussion and review the concerns to better align with the needs of the



diverse higher education landscape in India," Stalin said in a letter addressed to Pradhan.

Also, in separate letters addressed to the chief ministers of the non-BJP ruled states, Stalin asked his counterparts to consider passing a resolution in their respective Assemblies on lines similar to the Tamil Nadu

Assembly resolution seeking the withdrawal of the draft UGC regulations 2025. "The recently issued UGC guidelines restrict the role of state governments in the appointment of Vice-Chancellors and certain administrative admission procedures, including the introduction of entrance exams for UG and PG courses in Universities," he said.

These guidelines were "a clear infringement" on the rights of state governments and will have far-reaching consequences on the autonomy of state universities, he said in the letter addressed to the chief ministers of New Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Telangana and West Bengal.

**Public trust in science second highest in India: Survey**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Public trust in science is the second highest in India, following Egypt, with a moderately high level overall worldwide, according to a survey spanning 68 countries, including under-researched ones in the Global South.

Australia ranked fifth and Bangladesh sixth, while New Zealand ranked ninth and the US twelfth for public trust in scientists. The analysis, published in the journal Nature Human Behaviour, found no evidence for the oft-repeated claim of a crisis of trust in science, researchers said.

"Our results show that most people in most countries have a relatively high level of trust in scientists and want them to play an active role in society and politics," lead researcher Viktoria Cologne, from ETH Zurich, Switzerland,

said. The survey, the first in a post-pandemic world, included nearly 72,000 people.

The majority of the participants also perceived scientists as qualified (78 per cent), honest (57 per cent) and concerned about people's well-being (56 per cent), the authors found.

However, significant differences between countries were noticed -- in particular, people with right-wing political views in Western countries tend to have less trust in scientists than those with left-wing views.

Further, 83 per cent of the survey respondents believed that scientists should communicate with the public about science, and 52 per cent that scientists should be more involved in the policy-making process, the researchers found.

The participants also gave high priority to research related to improving public health, solving



energy problems, and reducing poverty.

While research related to developing defence and military technology was given a lower priority

overall, people in African and Asian countries often demand high priority for developing defence and military technology, the authors said.

"Our results also show that many

people in many countries feel that the priorities of science are not always well aligned with their own priorities. We recommend that scientists take these results seriously and find ways to be more receptive to feedback and open to dialogue with the public," co-author Niels G. Mede, from the University of Zurich, said.

"Our 68-country survey challenges the idea that there is a widespread lack of public trust in scientists. In most countries, scientists and scientific methods are trusted," the authors wrote.

The study provides global, representative survey data on the populations and regions in which researchers are perceived to be most trustworthy, the extent to which they should engage with the public, and whether science is prioritising important research issues, the team said.

**Bangla national held for illegal stay in India**

PNS ■ KOCHI

Kerala police arrested a Bangladeshi national, Hossain Belor (29), on Monday for illegally staying in India. A resident of Jessore, Bangladesh, Hossain, was taken into custody by the Angamaly police.

A team led by District Police Chief Vaibhav Saxena apprehended him from his residence in Kochi and recovered an expired Bangladeshi passport, police said.

Hossain had arrived in Kerala three months ago, according to police. His arrest follows the apprehension of a 28-year-old Bangladeshi woman, Thaslima Begum, last week. She was detained in Bengal Colony, Perumbavoor, along with her

boyfriend, a native of Bihar. The duo reportedly crossed the Bangladesh-India border, traveled to several locations, and eventually reached Angamaly before coming to Kerala. Fake Aadhaar and PAN cards were recovered from the woman, police said.

Further investigation into the case led to Hossain's arrest. He briefly stayed in Shalimar, took a train to Aluva, and eventually reached Angamaly, where he worked in construction, police added. He had visited India twice before and paid Rs 5,000 to an agent for two Aadhaar cards in his name, which he used to pose as an Indian citizen, police said. District Police Chief Vaibhav Saxena interrogated Hossain, and those who assisted him locally are under surveillance.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A giant leap in space

ISRO'S space docking underscores the nation's technical prowess and sets the stage for future space explorations

India's space programme, spearheaded by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has achieved yet another landmark with its first successful space docking experiment. This milestone represents a pivotal moment in the nation's space exploration journey, further cementing ISRO's reputation as a key player in global space technology. Space docking is the process of two spacecraft connecting in orbit, enabling the transfer of crew, equipment, or fuel. It is a critical technology for advanced space missions, including the construction of space stations, in-orbit servicing and interplanetary travel. The ability to dock spacecraft is a benchmark for spacefaring nations, signifying their capability to perform complex operations in space. ISRO's docking experiment involved two small, indigenously developed spacecraft launched into orbit. The mission demonstrated autonomous manoeuvring, where the spacecraft approached each other, aligned precisely, and successfully docked while orbiting Earth at high speeds.



The operation required intricate planning and the development of cutting-edge technologies such as precision navigation, control systems, and robotic mechanisms.

This docking experiment lays the groundwork for India's ambition to develop its own modular space station, a project slated for the next decade. Space docking technology is critical for future missions to the Moon and Mars. It facilitates the assembly of larger spacecraft in orbit and supports refueling and crew transfer, essential for long-duration missions. Mastery of docking technology positions India as a potential partner for international projects, such as the Lunar Gateway or other collaborative space station endeavours. The success underscores ISRO's ability to innovate and develop sophisticated technologies domestically, reducing reliance on external support. Executing a docking manoeuvre is no small feat. ISRO had to address multiple challenges, including developing highly accurate navigation and control systems capable of autonomous decision-making. Ensuring synchronisation of two spacecraft traveling at speeds exceeding 28,000 km/h. ISRO's successful space docking marks a critical step forward in India's space aspirations. It aligns with the organisation's vision to expand its presence in low Earth orbit and beyond. The achievement also inspires confidence in India's space capabilities as the nation eyes ambitious goals such as the Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission, lunar exploration, and interplanetary ventures. The international space community has lauded ISRO's accomplishment, recognising it as a significant technical breakthrough. It reaffirms India's position as a rising space power, capable of undertaking challenging and high-stakes missions. As the nation continues to push the boundaries of what's possible, this milestone serves as a foundation for even greater achievements in the years to come. With every new stride, India moves closer to its dream of being a leader in the final frontier.

Gateways to other collaborative space station endeavours. The success underscores ISRO's ability to innovate and develop sophisticated technologies domestically, reducing reliance on external support. Executing a docking manoeuvre is no small feat. ISRO had to address multiple challenges, including developing highly accurate navigation and control systems capable of autonomous decision-making. Ensuring synchronisation of two spacecraft traveling at speeds exceeding 28,000 km/h. ISRO's successful space docking marks a critical step forward in India's space aspirations. It aligns with the organisation's vision to expand its presence in low Earth orbit and beyond. The achievement also inspires confidence in India's space capabilities as the nation eyes ambitious goals such as the Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission, lunar exploration, and interplanetary ventures. The international space community has lauded ISRO's accomplishment, recognising it as a significant technical breakthrough. It reaffirms India's position as a rising space power, capable of undertaking challenging and high-stakes missions. As the nation continues to push the boundaries of what's possible, this milestone serves as a foundation for even greater achievements in the years to come. With every new stride, India moves closer to its dream of being a leader in the final frontier.

### PICTALK



School students perform during Kokborok Day celebrations, in Agartala

## Sparking smile: Lessons from a children's elocution competition

From innovative tech-based ideas to timeless acts of kindness, the young participants presented thoughtful solutions that left me inspired about what truly makes us happy

Last week, I had the privilege of being on the panel of judges for an elocution competition for students, with the topic 'The Perfect Solution to Make People Smile More'. It was an intriguing subject—one very close to my heart—because I am the kind of person who smiles a lot. A lot more than people sometimes care to respond to or reciprocate. On the street, in the metro, in the building gallery, during my walk—almost anyone I can get eye contact with, whether stranger or friend, gets a smile. It is the most inexpensive gift I can offer, regardless of whether it is valued or not. It's a heart-felt gesture that could be the very thing someone needs to make their day. The children who participated came up with some remarkable ideas—everything from making a smile a commodity that fetches monetary rewards or other tangible benefits to evoking emotional points that deeply resonated with the empathy in me. Given that the contest was called 'Pitch Perfect,' the students brought forth many innovative concepts to make people smile, many of which



ASHA IYER KUMAR

smiles through simple acts of kindness, rather than relying solely on innovations. I was deeply moved by what some of the children shared. When I asked one young participant what act of kindness he had done that day to make someone smile or brighten their day, his answer was simple yet profound: "I told my mother how yummy the breakfast was, and it made her very happy." My takeaway from the experience was this: the new generation is competitive, full of energy to beat the odds and rise to the top in life. But it is also brimming with humanness and rationality, qualities nurtured by the guidance of teachers, parents, and mentors. As they navigate the pressures of becoming super achievers, they still understand that the roots of happiness and peace lie in kindness and compassion. As is my habit, I often ask my students if they enjoy going to school and, if so, why. The answer I invariably hear is they like school not because of what they learn in class, but because of their friends. This sometimes makes me question my belief that schools

and universities should be temples of learning—platforms for young minds to ignite and soar. Their answer also makes me wonder if there's more to be desired in how we mould our students. Have we focused too much on academic excellence at the cost of soul-nurturing education? Perhaps we need to spend less time teaching children skills to thrive in a competitive world and more time preparing them to be compassionate, kind-hearted individuals who bring joy to those around them. This competition, with all its innovation and spirited energy, reminded me that the most profound solutions to making people smile often lie in the simplest of acts: a word of appreciation, a compliment, a smile shared. As we look toward a future increasingly driven by technology, let's not lose sight of what makes us truly human. It's the little things that have the power to make the world a little brighter. (The author is a Dubai-based columnist and children's writing coach. She has published six books. Views are personal)



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## Mahakumbh: Spiritual fervour meets economic revival

This edition of Mahakumbh is not only the world's largest religious congregation but also a showcase of Uttar Pradesh's evolving economic prowess and cultural magnificence



NAND GOPAL GUPTA NANDI

Over 3 crore devotees, both national and international, taking a holy dip on the debut day of Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, has just validated what we have been saying for the past several months. In terms of scale and grandeur, this edition of Mahakumbh would not only be the largest religious congregation on the planet. But it would also remain unmatched for a very long time. We estimate that it will eventually have around 400 million visitors (more than double the previous edition). But won't be surprised if the actual number exceeds our expectations, by a modest margin. Elaborate arrangements would be an understatement.

A more apt term would be epic-scale preparations. Yes, this is what went into this grand event which we would like to be remembered forever. The UP government had sanctioned more than 540 projects to create world-class amenities at an estimated expenditure in the vicinity of Rs 7,000 crore. You go to the site and you will notice a sprawling new city (covering 4,000 hectares) has been set up which has over 1.5 lakh tents and all basic amenities including advanced medical centres and distinct pockets for businesses.

There is hardly any name (big or small) in the consumer-facing business that you will find missing in action at the holy site serving the devotees with their offerings. On a cumulative basis, we are expecting a generation of economic activities worth Rs 2 lakh crore or over \$24 billion which is simply staggering. The security architecture created for this mega event is powered by artificial intelligence (AI), which is an added feature. Our objective has been simple. We wanted to create a site that would be the best possible amalgamation of religious fervour of the highest order and modern amenities of the best class. And from the initial response of the visitors, we seem to have succeeded to a large extent. It would be no exaggeration to say that we have spared no effort in ensuring that this grand religious event assumes an unmatched character. This was



our core focus right from day one of the planning stage as we knew that Mahakumbh this time would also be leaving a host of critical messages for the world. In symbolic terms, at a time when the geo-political turbulence is quite evident and religious intolerance is raising its head in many corners of the world, the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj is yet another occasion to prove the richness of our Sanatani heritage which is rooted in the philosophy of co-existence and welfare of the humanity. With thousands of foreign devotees (not only NRIs but devotees from other nationalities and religions too) expected to arrive at the holy site and experience the magnificence of Bharat's religious strength, the show has to also offer them a glimpse of the world's ancient society being in a serious resurgent mode. The event has to intrinsically validate our subtle claim of global leadership in several spheres. There is one more critical message that we wish to emanate from Mahakumbh this time. And that pertains to the growing economic prowess of Uttar Pradesh. From being in the disparaging 'Bimaru' state club till the recent decade, the turnaround in the state's economic fortune would be



OUR OBJECTIVE HAS BEEN SIMPLE. WE WANTED TO CREATE A SITE THAT WOULD BE THE BEST POSSIBLE AMALGAMATION OF RELIGIOUS FERVOUR OF THE HIGHEST ORDER AND MODERN AMENITIES OF THE BEST CLASS

quite evident at the site for which we have left no stone unturned. That millions of visitors should carry the impression of a modern and thriving economy is indeed an objective. We have been working quite hard in reviving the state's economy since 2017 trying to put it in the leader's club (among states) in the country. There has been a slew of policy and regulatory interventions which have delivered positive results. We are the third largest economy (state-wise) which has an impressive share of over 8 per cent in the national GDP. The annual growth of the state's economy in the last seven-eight years has been to the tune of 11 per cent, among the highest in the country. Despite being a landlocked state, we have a share of around 5 per cent in the national exports which has facilitated our defining Marketing Development Assistance scheme. This year, we will be announcing a new export policy that will take into consideration the new business opportunities (for the next five years) emerging from a far superior infrastructural base. We today have the largest rail network in the country, 38 per cent expressways' share of the national

kitty, four international and nine domestic airports. Further, seven new airports are under construction including the world-class Jewar Airport which will be unveiled soon. To energise grassroots economies, one of our major initiatives has been: the one-district-one-product scheme. Launched in 2018, this scheme seeks to identify the specific USP product of 75 districts and help the local stakeholders take that business to the next level with all-round support (training to marketing) from government agencies. Since the inception of the scheme, we have supported over 1,33,472 artisans across the state. The efforts to give a decisive rejig to the state economy have considerably paid off, propelling us to commit to further pushing our growth momentum and becoming a \$1 trillion economy in the not-so-distant future. This is the core objective of our economic salvation route, which we have been pursuing for quite some time. And I am quite confident, that the visitors to Mahakumbh this time, will also have a sufficient glimpse of it.

(The writer is Minister for Industrial Development & Export Promotion, Uttar Pradesh; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### GOVERNOR VS STATE GOVERNMENT

Madam — The dispute between the Tamil Nadu government and Governor Dr RN Ravi over vice-chancellor appointments has reached the Supreme Court. On January 17, 2025, a bench led by Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan intervened, stating that the matter would be resolved by the next hearing unless the parties reached an agreement. The Tamil Nadu Government has filed writ petitions accusing the Governor of delays and non-compliance with constitutional duties. The court has scheduled the next hearing for next Wednesday, signalling its readiness to resolve the deadlock. This conflict echoes previous legal cases on gubernatorial powers in university appointments. In The Chancellor, University of Kerala vs Governor of Kerala (2017), the Supreme Court affirmed that while the Governor holds discretionary powers in such appointments, consultation with the state government is crucial. Similarly, the 2019 West Bengal VC appointment case emphasised state autonomy in these matters, reinforcing the need for cooperation between the state and the governor. External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, in his Nani Palkhivala Memorial Lecture, highlighted the importance of constitutional morality and the role of advisors in governance. His remarks, though not directly related to the Tamil Nadu case, underscore the significance of upholding constitutional norms. The Supreme Court's involvement could clarify the limits of gubernatorial power, setting a precedent for future state-governor conflicts. This case tests the balance between state autonomy and the governor's constitutional duties, with far-reaching implications for governance.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

#### STRICTER RULES FOR MIGRANTS

Madam — Many Indians move to Gulf countries to earn money within a short period. They live there for a few years, earn a substantial income and manage to survive under tough conditions. Even if the work is as labourers, the monetary com-

#### Indian women win Kho kho World Cup



The Indian women's team claimed the title of the first Kho Kho World Cup 2025 with their exceptional skills, invincible strategy, and incredible agility. On Sunday evening at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, India secured their victory by defeating Nepal with a massive margin of 78-40 in a historic match.

Dressed in blue jerseys, the Indian players dominated the game right from the start. Captain Priyanka Ingale delivered an extraordinary performance, scoring several crucial touch points, which helped the team maintain a consistent lead. Under her leadership, the team built a 34-point advantage and eliminated every possibility of a dream run for Nepal.

This victory stands as a living testament to Indian women's power and their growing influence in the world of sports. This historic achievement has not only brought glory to the nation but also inspired women athletes across the country. It symbolises the triumph of teamwork, determination, and relentless effort.

R K Jain | Barwani

#### FIRE BROKE OUT AT MAHAKUMBH

Madam — A fire broke out in the Maha Kumbh area in Prayagraj, leading to the burning of several tents. Two cylinders exploded in Sector 19 of the Maha Kumbh Mela, causing a massive fire in the camps. Firefighters are trying to douse the blaze. Although the police and administration team reached the spot, and the fire had been doused. But the issue has raised several questions on the safety of the devotees that have come from far areas to visit the spiritual atmosphere of the holy confluence and take a dip at the Triveni Sangam. The government and administration express sorrow over the incident and pray for the safety of all devotees. It is the government's responsibility to ensure security, control the fire, and prevent such incidents in the future. Instead of paying deep consideration for the advertisement, authorities should develop focus on the safety and security of the lives of devotees.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur Nagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com







## FIRST COLUMN THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Educators serve as mentors and guide, empowering students to become responsible citizens



SAKSHI SETHI

Education is not merely the transfer of knowledge. It is the shaping of minds, the fostering of growth and even more the cultivation of potential. As educators, the role extends far beyond delivering lectures or grading assignments. It encompasses mentoring, inspiring and empowering individuals to become critical thinkers and responsible citizens. Reflecting on our roles allows us to embrace our responsibilities more consciously and adapt to the evolving needs of learners and society. In contemporary education, the role of the educator has shifted from being the sole source of knowledge to a facilitator of learning.

This transition underscores the importance of guiding students to explore, question, and construct their understanding. It is about creating an environment where students feel safe to express their thoughts, make mistakes and grow from them. The role of an educator becomes especially significant when working with board students. When talking about them, the educator's primary responsibility is to ensure a strong understanding of the curriculum, including breaking down complex concepts, identifying and addressing knowledge gaps and providing effective study strategies.

Beyond teaching content, educators must help students develop time management and exam techniques to perform confidently under pressure. The role demands subject expertise and a keen awareness of the examination format and trends. Today, the modern educational landscape for board students includes challenges such as increasing competition, societal expectations, and the rapid integration of technology in learning. Educators need to stay adaptable, leveraging digital tools



to make learning engaging and accessible by recognising diverse learning styles employing strategies to meet those needs, and ensuring that every student feels included and valued. Additionally, acknowledging the diverse learning needs of students and personalising instruction whenever possible is also crucial for ensuring their success. There is no denying that students are at a critical juncture in their academic journey, preparing for examinations that often determine their future educational and career paths. Reflecting on our roles as educators in this context reveals the need for a balanced approach that combines academic rigour, emotional support, and life-skill development.

One of the most vital roles of an educator is to be a lifelong learner. Education is a dynamic field, and staying updated with pedagogical advancements, cultural shifts, and technological innovations is essential. This commitment to personal growth will not only enhance teaching effectiveness but will also model the value of continuous learning for students. Teaching values such as critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability prepare students for challenges beyond the examination hall. It is essential to emphasise that education is about equipping them with skills for life, not just marks on a report card. Reflecting on our roles as educators highlights the immense responsibility and opportunity, we have in shaping young lives. It requires academic expertise, emotional intelligence, and unwavering dedication. By nurturing not just the intellect but also the spirit of our students, we as educators can guide them toward success in their exams and, more importantly, in life. By embracing our multifaceted roles with passion and purpose, we can create transformative experiences for our students and leave an enduring legacy of knowledge and wisdom.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

# How skill-based degrees are redefining India's future



DINESH SOOD

By aligning with industry needs and empowering individuals with practical expertise, the nation is paving the way for a more inclusive and dynamic workforce



India's education system is undergoing a quiet revolution. As the global job market evolves, the emphasis on traditional degrees gives way to skill-focused education tailored to the demands of a dynamic economy. A prime example is the introduction of degree courses in salons, spas, beauty parlours, and other vocational domains. These courses signify a paradigm shift in how we perceive education, employment, and entrepreneurship in 'Viksit Bharat'. This development addresses critical challenges. It aligns with the growing aspirations of India's youth, caters to burgeoning private sector industries, and equips individuals with skills for self-employment, entrepreneurship and opportunities abroad.

### Growing Demand for Vocational Expertise

The global wellness industry, valued at over \$4 trillion, continues to expand, with India emerging as a key player.

The beauty and wellness sector alone is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18 per cent over the next five years. The personal grooming industry demands nearly 1.3 million professionals annually, significantly surpassing the 3-4 lakh jobs the software industry adds yearly. This boom has created immense demand for skilled professionals, from hairstylists and spa therapists to salon managers and beauty wellness consultants. Recognising this, regulatory bodies like the UGC and AICTE have integrated skills courses into the education system. Indian universities now collaborate with training institutes to offer structured programmes like the Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Beauty and Wellness. These programmes cover skincare, makeup artistry and salon management.

Other universities offer diplomas and degree programmes in wellness and hospitality sectors, designed with industry leaders. Globally, institutions such as the London College of Beauty Therapy (UK) and the Australian Academy of Beauty Dermal and Laser offer world-class programmes. These courses adhere to international standards, providing globally recognised certifications that enhance employability abroad.



THE BEAUTY AND WELLNESS SECTOR ALONE IS PROJECTED TO GROW AT A COMPOUND ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (CAGR) OF 18 PER CENT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

### Parity Between B Voc and BSc Degrees

An essential aspect of this transformation is recognising the equivalence of Bachelor of Vocation (B Voc) and Bachelor of Science (BSc) degrees. While BSc focuses on academic learning, B Voc emphasises hands-on, industry-relevant training. Recent policy reforms place these degrees on par, ensuring vocational education is no longer seen as secondary but as an equally credible academic pathway. This parity allows B Voc graduates to access the same opportunities as BSc graduates in employment, higher education, or competitive exams. It underscores the value of skills and practical expertise in driving economic growth.

### Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and National Credit Framework

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) further strengthens this integration. RPL allows individuals to earn formal recognition for previous informal training or work experiences. When aligned with the National Credit Framework, credits earned in schools, vocational training institutions, or universities become seamlessly transferable across sectors. This fosters flexibility in education, empowering individuals to personalise their learning journeys and reduce redundancy. By integrating RPL with skill-based programmes, India's education system becomes more inclusive and adaptable. Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities Skill-based degree programmes unlock diverse career pathways:

- 1. Private Sector Jobs:** Luxury wellness brands, fitness chains, and beauty franchises seek trained professionals. Graduates can secure jobs in high-end spas, salons, and wellness centres with lucrative salaries and career growth.
- 2. Self-Employment and Freelancing:** These courses

empower entrepreneurial individuals to establish businesses. Graduates can run boutique salons or offer personalised wellness services, catering to niche markets.

**3. Government Jobs:** Recognising vocational degrees has expanded opportunities in government roles. Graduates are eligible for positions in wellness centres and initiatives under schemes like Skill India and PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana).

**4. Global Opportunities:** Programmes often include internationally recognised certifications, enhancing employability abroad. For instance, graduates from LCBT in the UK find opportunities in European markets, while Australian academy-trained professionals thrive in Asia-Pacific regions.

### Breaking Stigmas Around Vocational Careers

Vocational careers have long been viewed as secondary options. Introducing structured degree programs challenges these stereotypes. Formal education in salons, spas, and beauty parlours combines technical skills, business acumen, and industry exposure, positioning these professions as aspirational.

This shift is especially empowering for women, who form a significant portion of the workforce in these fields and now gain access to recognised qualifications that enhance professional credibility.

### Challenges in Implementation

India's higher education system, often criticised for being theory-heavy, struggles to improve practical skill sets. Initiatives like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and platforms like SWAYAM aim to modernise education, but challenges remain:

- 1. Quality Assurance:** Maintaining high standards and industry relevance requires collaboration with established industry players.
- 2. Awareness:** Many students and parents remain unaware of these

opportunities, favouring traditional careers. Awareness campaigns are crucial.

**3. Infrastructure and Faculty:** Vocational education requires specialised infrastructure and trained faculty. Institutions must invest in state-of-the-art facilities and continuous professional development for educators.

**4. Recognition and Accreditation:** Further integration into academia and government recruitment processes will enhance vocational degrees' credibility.

### Vision for the Future

Skill-based degree programmes signify societal reform, recognising youth aspirations and aligning education with market realities. By formalising careers through structured courses, India creates a skilled and confident workforce. These reforms reflect a commitment to inclusivity, providing pathways for diverse socio-economic backgrounds to pursue rewarding careers.

India is on the brink of an educational revolution. Skill-based degrees in fields like salons, spas, and beauty parlours redefine education. These programmes bridge the gap between aspiration and opportunity, equipping students with skills to thrive globally. As these initiatives gain momentum, scaling them, ensuring quality, and destigmatising vocational careers are imperative. With parity between B Voc and BSc degrees and the integration of RPL into the National Credit Framework, India's education system is transforming into a flexible and robust framework.

These changes will meet today's demands and shape a prosperous future for the nation. (The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of GoI. The views expressed are personal)

# Balancing rights and order: Innovations in protest management

Protests are the lifeblood of democracy. For law enforcement, it must carefully balance between public safety and democratic freedoms

Thousands of people gather, holding banners and chanting slogans, their voices echoing through the streets. For law enforcement, these aren't merely demonstrations but skill, strategy, and restraint tests. Managing protests today demands more than enforcing law and order; it requires innovation, preparation, and trust.



OP SINGH

Reflecting on this evolving role, a senior officer once remarked, "Our goal isn't to silence dissent but to ensure it unfolds safely for everyone involved. Effective protest management is about enabling expression while maintaining peace." This philosophy increasingly shapes how law enforcement approaches public demonstrations globally

and in India. **Dialogue Policing:** Dialogue policing, extensively practised in Sweden and Norway, prioritises proactive communication between police and protest organisers. Liaison officers meet organisers before demonstrations to discuss routes, safety measures, and mutual expectations. This approach fosters trust and de-escalates tensions

before they arise. Indian police have applied similar strategies during political rallies and cultural events, engaging community leaders to ensure peaceful outcomes.

### Leveraging Technology:

Technology is transforming protest management globally. In countries like Singapore and South Korea, drones with high-resolution cameras monitor crowd density and movement, while artificial intelligence (AI) tools analyse data to predict potential flashpoints. This enables law enforcement to allocate resources proactively and prevent crises. Indian police are increasingly adopting these tools. Drones were deployed during the farmers' protests and other large-scale events, offering real-time monitoring of crowd dynamics.

Social media monitoring cells track misinformation and narratives, enabling swift corrective measures. Law enforcement enhances its situational awareness and credibility by integrating technology with traditional methods.

### Non-Lethal Methods:

Germany sets a global benchmark for using non-lethal tools like water cannons, sound devices, and barricades to manage large gatherings. Officers trained in crowd psychology focus on isolating disruptive elements while respecting the rights of peaceful protesters. In India, non-lethal methods have been employed during sensitive protests, such as barricading roads to control crowds or using water cannons to disperse tense gatherings. The



focus remains on proportionality—ensuring responses are measured, harm is minimised, and democratic freedoms are respected.

### Transparency and Accountability

Transparency is crucial for public trust. In New Zealand, body-worn cameras document police actions during protests, ensuring accountability and protecting officers from false accusations. Oversight bodies review

footage to ensure compliance with established protocols. In India, body-worn cameras have been introduced in several states, particularly during sensitive operations.

### Multi-agency coordination for Large Protests

Managing large-scale demonstrations often requires multi-agency collaboration. In the United States, unified command centres integrate local police, state law enforcement, and federal agencies for cohesive responses. These centres streamline resource sharing and operational alignment, which is critical for complex events. India's law enforcement regularly employs similar coordination during significant events, such as farmers' protests, political rallies, and national festivals. Central para-

military forces often supplement state police, ensuring adequate workforce and resources. Clear protocols and seamless coordination are the backbone of these efforts.

### Comprehensive Training:

Training is a cornerstone of effective protest management. Canadian police emphasise de-escalation, cultural sensitivity, and conflict resolution, with officers undergoing practical simulations to prepare for high-pressure scenarios. In India, the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has introduced advanced modules covering non-lethal tools, technology integration, and crowd psychology.

### Ethical Policing:

Ethical considerations are central to managing protests.

Globally, technologies like drones and AI are governed by protocols that protect privacy and civil liberties. Similarly, the principle of proportionality—using the minimum force necessary—guides actions to ensure demonstrators' rights are respected. In India, police increasingly emphasise ethical practices. Engaging community leaders, addressing grievances, and prioritising dialogue reflect a commitment to balancing public safety with democratic freedoms. The shift towards a restrained, people-centric approach underscores the evolving role of law enforcement in a modern democracy.

(The writer is Director General of Police and Head of the Haryana State Narcotics Bureau; views are personal)



IN BRIEF



Zomato Q3 profit declines 57.2 pc to Rs 59 cr

Food tech unicorn Zomato on Monday reported a 57.2 per cent drop in consolidated net profit for the December quarter to Rs 59 crore, with its margins facing pressure due to aggressive store expansion to meet orders from its quick-commerce platform Blinkit. The company had earned a net profit of Rs 138 crore in the year-ago period. Notably, Zomato witnessed a 2 per cent quarter-on-quarter and 17 per cent year-on-year growth in food delivery, driven by a broad-based 'demand slowdown', it said in a letter to shareholders. The company's consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 5,405 crore, as against Rs 3,288 crore in the December quarter of the previous financial year. However, during the quarter under review, Zomato's total expenses also shot up to Rs 5,533 crore, from Rs 3,383 crore in the corresponding period of 2023-24. The revenue-reporting segments for the group include India food ordering and delivery; hyperpure supplies (B2B business); quick commerce; Going out; and All other segments (residual). The combined gross order value for the company's consumer-facing (B2C) businesses, including the food delivery, quick commerce and going out segments, registered a 57 per cent year-on-year growth and stood at Rs 20,206 crore during the reporting quarter.



EKI to cut 42 pc greenhouse gas emissions

EKI Energy Services (EKI) on Monday announced its commitment to reduce 42 per cent greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The company has also joined hands with the UK-based Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) to meet its targets. Under SBTi's standards EKI has committed to a 42 per cent reduction in its Scope 1 and Scope 2 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030, using 2023 as its base year, the company said. Its Co2 reduction plan has also got approval from the global climate action body, EKI said. "Our alignment with SBTi's rigorous standards signifies a defining moment in our journey towards a low-carbon future. We are...helping both our organisation and our clients drive positive environmental impact and build resilience against climate change," EKI GMD Manish Dabkara said. UK-based SBTi is a collaboration between the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), the United Nations Global Compact, the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).



Fitch upgrades Vedanta Resources' ratings

Fitch has upgraded Vedanta Resources Ltd's (VRL) long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating following a 'significant reduction' in the company's refinancing risks. The rating agency upgraded VRL's senior unsecured rating to 'B+' from 'B-' and also changed the outlook to stable, according to a statement. Besides, it has upgraded 'the ratings on the USD 300 million June 2028 bonds and USD 500 million December 2031 bonds, issued by VRL's subsidiary Vedanta Resources Finance II Plc (VRF2), and unconditionally and irrevocably guaranteed by VRL, to 'B+' from 'B-' with Recovery Rating of 'RR4', the statement said. The upgrade follows a significant reduction in VRL's refinancing risks, after it raised USD 1.1 billion in new bonds and received bank commitments for loans worth USD 350 million at the holding company, formed by VRL and other offshore investment holding companies owned by VRL, in January 2025, the statement said.

Budget should focus on mix of fiscal consolidation roadmap: Ind-Ra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) on Monday said the FY26 Budget should focus on a mix of fiscal consolidation roadmap, while boosting consumption demand, and capex spending.

The Centre in the FY22 Union Budget had provided a fiscal consolidation glide path till FY26 according to which the fiscal deficit will be brought down to 4.5 per cent of the GDP.

"By adhering to the outlined targets, it builds up fiscal credibility which is important for various stakeholders especially investors in gauging the fiscal health of the economy. It also helps in curtailing inflation which has been sticky during FY24-FY25."

"This is one of the reasons for weak consumption demand in the economy which has kept private investments in wait-and-watch mode. Thus, measures to stimulate consumption demand in the economy through income tax relief may be announced in the forthcoming budget," Ind-Ra said.

Against the backdrop of the past three quarters of growth slowdown, Ind-Ra expects the FY26 Union Budget to focus on a mix of the following short-

and long-term agendas -- a fiscal consolidation roadmap, a revised fiscal roadmap, boost to consumption demand, and boost to infrastructure and manufacturing capex, it said in a statement.

After FY22, the Union government has been focusing on the infrastructure sector to help correct supply-side constraints.



Ind-Ra expects this to remain so in the 2025-26 Budget, which will be unveiled on February 1.

A revised fiscal consolidation roadmap starting FY27 is crucial as high deficit and debt levels would remain a highlight of Indian public finances. "Notwithstanding the growth slowdown in FY25 and the likely minor growth improvement in FY26, Ind-Ra expects the government to adhere to its fiscal consolidation roadmap provided in the medium-term fiscal policy-cum-fiscal strategy statement," it said in a statement.



INDIA AT DAVOS

States join hands with Centre to present united colours

PNS ■ DAVOS

Putting aside their party affiliations, the Centre and states have come together in this skiing resort town, at least in terms of the space for their respective pavilions.

Two India pavilions, just a few blocks apart on the same side of the famous Promenade street, together house all lounges and meeting rooms for the union ministers, central government departments and state governments.

One has got pavilions of Kerala, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh. Apart from the delegation from these states, the second one has pavilions of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Both pavilions will also host five union ministers at

different times, while the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and Invest India are also present -- the two agencies handling most of the country's presence here.

Industry body CII is also present with a large delegation of CEOs and other business leaders.

Among states, Kerala is

ruled by the Left Front, Telangana by Congress, Uttar Pradesh by BJP, Andhra Pradesh by NDA with TDP leader N Chandrababu Naidu as the chief minister, Maharashtra by BJP-led Mahayuti and Tamil Nadu by DMK-led UPA alliance.

Union ministers attending the WEF Annual Meeting also come from different parties. Ashwini Vaishnav and CR Patil come from BJP, Chirag Paswan from LJP (Ram Vilas), Jayant Chaudhary from RLD and K Ram Mohan Naidu from TDP.

Indian companies present here include Tata group's TCS, describing itself as a 'perpetually adaptive enterprise', as well as Wipro, Infosys and Tech Mahindra.

Gold trades flat at Rs 82,000 per 10gm; silver slides Rs 500

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices remained flat at Rs 82,000 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Traders waited for US President-elect Donald Trump's inaugural address later on Monday before placing any directional bets, marketmen said.

On Friday, the precious metal surged Rs 700 to settle near a record high at Rs 82,000 per 10 grams. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity traded flat at Rs 81,600 per 10 grams on Monday. 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.

However, silver prices decreased by Rs 500 to Rs 93,000 per kg from the previous close of Rs 93,500 per kg on Friday.

In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery slipped Rs 62 or 0.08 per cent to Rs 78,961 per 10 grams.

Silver contracts for March delivery depreciated Rs 202 or 0.22 per cent to Rs 91,400 per kg in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) on Monday.

'Glass industry's role key in India's economic growth'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Union minister Jitendra Singh on Monday praised the significance of the glass industry in driving India's future economic growth, while highlighting the need for enhanced collaboration and awareness among academics, R&D centres, and the private sector.

Addressing the International Congress on Glass organised by CSIR-Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute, the union minister of state for science and Technology and earth sciences stressed the growing importance of the recycling industry alongside manufacturing for sustainability.

Glass is one sector which has a very high recyclability. The minister advocated for a "one institute one theme" approach to achieve better coordination and results.

Singh also pushed for a campaign to raise public awareness about the glass industry's contributions to society.

He further emphasised the

need for greater collaboration between academic institutions, startups, and industry stakeholders to foster growth and innovation.

Referring to the newly established CSIR Innovation Complex in Mumbai, Singh said it comes at a pivotal moment in India's start-up



journey.

"India is the third-largest start-up ecosystem in the world, with over 100 Unicorns that stand as testaments to India's entrepreneurial spirit," he added.

The Innovation Complex will provide high-end scientific infrastructure, expertise, and regulatory support to stakeholders, including CSIR labs, start-ups, MSMEs, and industry.

India-Oman free trade pact likely during Goyal's Muscat visit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Issues pertaining to the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between India and Oman are expected to figure during the visit of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal to Muscat next week, an official said.

Though the negotiations for the proposed agreement were concluded, Oman has sought revision of its market access offers on some products.

On January 14, India and Oman held the fifth round of talks for the agreement, which is aimed at boosting bilateral economic ties.

The negotiations for the agreement, officially dubbed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), formally began in November 2023. In such agreements, two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on a maximum number



of goods traded between them.

They also ease norms to promote trade in services and attract investments.

The official said the Union minister is visiting the West Asian nation for the eleventh session of the India-Oman Joint Commission Meeting (JCM). The two-day meetings will start on January 27.

The tenth meeting was held here in May 2022.

Ways to promote bilateral trade and the proposed FTA may figure in the meetings,

the official said.

Oman is the third largest export destination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for India. India already has a similar agreement with another GCC member UAE which came into effect in May 2022.

The bilateral trade has declined to USD 8.94 billion (exports USD 4.42 billion and imports USD 4.5 billion) in 2023-24 from USD 12.39 billion (exports USD 4.47 billion and imports USD 7.91 billion) in 2022-23.

India's key imports are petroleum products and urea. These account for over 70 per cent of imports. Other key products are propylene and ethylene polymers, pet coke, gypsum, chemicals, and iron and steel.

According to the think tank GTRI (Global Trade Research Institute), Indian goods worth USD 3.7 billion like gasoline, iron and steel, electronics, and machinery may get a significant boost in Oman, once both sides reach a comprehensive free trade agreement. These goods at present face a 5 per cent import duty in Oman.

Oman's import duty ranges from 0 to 100 per cent along with the existence of specific duties. A duty of 100 per cent is applicable on specific meats, wines and tobacco products.

Reduction in import duties under the CEPA will allow Indian products to enter the Omani market at competitive prices.

TVS Motor drives in electric 3 wheeler Aims to be prominent player in segment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

TVS Motor Company on Monday forayed into the electric three-wheeler segment with plans to enhance the product range during the year.

The company, which introduced the King EV MAX model to cater to the passenger electric three-wheeler segment, is priced at Rs 2.95 lakh (ex-showroom) with a certified driving range of 179 km on a single charge.

TVS, which has a sizeable presence in two and three-wheeler segments across domestic and international markets, expects the segment to transition to full electric by



2030.

"This is going to be the starting point of our EV journey in three-wheelers...we want to be a prominent player in the EV segment," TVS Motor Company Director and CEO KN Radhakrishnan said.

On product range expansion, he noted: "We have started with the passenger version. Now, we will definitely look at a cargo version, and then we will look at what else can be done using this platform".

Radhakrishnan said the company would also look at exporting the King EV MAX model to international markets.

He noted that the company invested close to Rs 125 crore in the development of King EV MAX. TVS Motor Company Head Commercial Mobility Business Rajat Gupta said the electric three-wheeler passenger segment witnessed a CAGR of 80 per cent last year.

IRFC profit rises to Rs 1,631 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Railway Finance Corporation Ltd (IRFC) on Monday reported a 2 per cent increase in net profit to Rs 1,631 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024. The NBFC, under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways, had earned a net profit of Rs 1,599 crore in the year-ago period. The total income of the company rose to Rs 6,766 crore in the October-December period from Rs 6,740 crore in the year-ago period, IRFC said in a regulatory filing.

The total expenses of the Mini-Ratna company during the period under review fell marginally to Rs 5,136 crore from Rs 5,141 crore.

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PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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The total expenses of the Mini-Ratna company during the period under review fell marginally to Rs 5,136 crore from Rs 5,141 crore.

India at forefront of age defined by tech evolution: WEF

PNS ■ DAVOS

In an era defined by technological evolution, India stands at the forefront as one of the world's fastest-growing economies and a global hub for startups and digital innovation, the World Economic Forum said on Monday.

The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) India, liaison office of World Economic Forum (WEF) in India, launches its 6-year impact journey report on the inaugural day of the WEF Annual meeting 2025 here.

The WEF said its partner-

ship with India dates back more than 40 years.

Over the past four decades, this relationship has developed into a strong, multifaceted and meaningful collaboration with the national government, several state governments, business leaders across key industries and other important stakeholders, including civil society and leading experts, resulting in several impactful initiatives that have advanced shared priorities.

India's advocacy for and pursuit of developmental templates where technology serves



as a bridge rather than a barrier are highly relevant and the Forum is proud to act as its partner in shaping a more human-centric, planet-friendly and resilient future, the

foreword of the report said. The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) India was launched in 2018 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a statement of the

country's commitment to harnessing emerging technologies responsibly and inclusively for societal good.

Today, C4IR India is not just a hub for innovation; it is a flagship centre of the World Economic Forum, exemplifying a vision for technology-driven development with impactful, on-the-ground results, the Forum said.

As C4IR India enters the next phase of its journey, the new report highlighted key milestones and emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in scaling technologies to address com-

plex developmental challenges.

C4IR India said its accomplishments include AI-driven agricultural programs that boost farmers' incomes, healthcare solutions that provide access to life-saving services, and sustainable urban development frameworks that improve the quality of life in cities.

These initiatives have been made possible through strong partnerships across the public and private sectors, academia, and civil society, with a focus on creating practical solutions grounded in responsible governance, it added.

**SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED**  
e-procurement Extension-II Tender Spec No. eM2-1224-25 & eM2-1224-25  
Tender Notice No. 17/24-25 (Paper Notification)  
Tenders are invited from the eligible agencies for extension of e-tender for the work of a) Bifurcation of 11kV Chaitanya feeder emanating from 33/11 KV Falaknama SS and 11 KV Gopalguda feeder emanating from 33/11 KV Panjasta SS Hyd South Circle under General Category, b) Bifurcation of 11kV Vase Laxa feeder & 11 KV Shikaripet feeder emanating from 33/11KV Madhupur SS in Madhupur Section of Bargara Hills Circle under T&D Improvement works under General Category. Any further information in this regard can be viewed from the website of www.tender.telangana.gov.in and www.tpsouthernpower.org Sd/- Chief Engineer, Operation, Metro Zone, Hyderabad  
R.O. No: 8259-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 28-01-2025

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA COMMERCIAL TAXES DEPARTMENT**  
RC.VTC/4/2024-25 AUCTION NOTICE Dated: 17-01-2025  
It is hereby informed to all that the Auction of Sagar Pan Masala total 21000Kgs will be held on 30th January 2025 at about 3.30 PM. Date of submission of BID in sealed cover is on 20-01-2025 to 30-01-2025. Venue: New Bijnani Parcel Services, Jumerath Bazar Road, Nayapul, Hyderabad, T.G. Phone: 9492001111. Sd/- Assistant Commissioner (ST), Khairatabad, Somajiguda Circle-II  
R.O.No: 8259-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 18-01-2025

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT**  
TENDER NOTICE  
Tender is invited for the following Work: 1. Mahatma Gandhi Kalyanpur LT Irrigation Scheme (MGLIS)- Operation and Maintenance MGLIS Stage-II Pumping station Consists of 5 No's of units with 30MW capacity and 690houses discharge each at Guppalpally Gate, near Goundripally (V), Rivally (M) Warangal District for the period of 36 Months from 19.02.2025 to 18.02.2027 for e-procurement Notice No. 07ISEN/1/NGAL/2024-25. Dated: 30.12.2024. Last date and time for receipt of bids 04.02.2025 up to 3.30 PM. ECW: Rs.4.70 Crores. Note: for further details visit www.tender.telangana.gov.in (Or) www.eprocurement.gov.in. Ph: 9920277771. Sd/- Dt: 20.01.2025  
R.O.No: 9365-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 28-01-2025  
Superintending Engineer, ISCADS, Irrigation Circle No. 1, Nagarkurnool District.

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**  
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE  
NIT No: 48/EE-26/SBZ/GHMC/2024-25 Date: 28-01-2025  
Name of the Work: Maintenance Works, Others: 01, Estimate amount: Rs. 24.00 Lakhs, Bid Submission Start date & Time / Bid Submission of Closing Date & Time: 21-01-2025 @ 10.30 AM / 28-01-2025 @ 10.30 AM, Name & Address of officer Cell No.: Executive Engineer, 9154796465. For further details can be sent to e-procurement @ http://www.tender.telangana.gov.in  
Sd/- Executive Engineer, Division No. 28, GHMC.  
R.O.No: 8279-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 28-01-2025

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA FOREST DEPARTMENT CORRIGENDUM**  
The News Paper on 11.01.2025 has been printed in Velugu, Pioneer and Rahnuma e Deccan paper for Third Party Evaluation of works carried out under CAMPA Scheme from 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. The pre bidding meeting date has been printed as 20.01.2025 instead of 23.01.2025 kindly notice the date.  
Sd/- District Forest Officer, Hyderabad.  
R.O.No: 8279-PPCLADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 18-01-2025



## 'I'm very particular about leaving my character behind once the camera stops rolling'

Known for her fearless approach to storytelling, Nyrra M Banerji, delves into her latest gripping project, *Checkmate*, her creative process and the lessons she's learned along the way in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*. With an exciting array of roles under her belt and more in the pipeline, she continues to redefine what it means to be a multifaceted artist in today's dynamic world of entertainment

TEJAL SINHA  
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Nyrra M Banerji is a force to reckon with in the world of entertainment, blending beauty, talent and an undeniable spark that sets her apart. From her beginnings in South Indian cinema to her impactful roles on television and gripping performances in web series, she has fearlessly explored every facet of storytelling. Her career is a testament to her versatility and bold choices, effortlessly stepping into roles that challenge conventions and captivate audiences. She has once again mesmerised viewers with her thrilling new series *Checkmate*.

In an engaging conversation with *The Pioneer*, she opens up about her journey, her approach to acting and the intriguing projects on the horizon. Reflecting on her evolution as an artist, Nyrra credits her diverse experiences for shaping her both personally and professionally. "Transitioning from films to television and reality shows has opened up my creative horizons. It has helped me explore new facets of my personality," she shares. Interestingly, reality shows, particularly *Bigg Boss*, marked an important yet challenging chapter in her career. "I've never been part of a reality show before, and honestly, it tested me in ways I didn't expect. As the daughter of a naval officer, I have an analytical mindset. I study patterns, look for facts and present my arguments with precision. This analytical nature made it hard for me to adapt to the unpredictable and chaotic

environment of a show like *Bigg Boss*." Although her journey on *Bigg Boss* was short-lived, it left a lasting impact. "It gave me the strength to be constantly alert and self-aware. Now, apart from analyzing others, I focus on self-analysis-how I'm feeling, thinking, and reacting. That level of internalization has become part of my daily routine."

From starting her career in South Indian films to Bollywood, web series, and television, the Khatron Ke Khiladi fame has created a strong and diverse fan base. "Each medium has its own unique style of working and preparation. Exploring them has not only given me immense confidence but also taught me to adapt and evolve as an actor," she notes.

After taking a two-year sabbatical following personal losses, she ventured into television, which further solidified her presence. "It allowed me to reach a wider audience, from South Indian cinema enthusiasts to web series fans and television viewers," she says.

Nyrra is currently gearing up for her new web series, *Checkmate*, produced by Shavuntan Telefilms. "I share a special bond with the production house, and I trust their creative vision completely. Whenever they approach me with a project, I know it's going to be remarkable," she says.

Speaking about the show, she reveals, "*Checkmate* follows the journey of a simple girl who grows up in a toxic, unloving family environment. After enduring years of abuse, she snaps and transforms into a serial killer. Despite her dark path, the story beautifully explores her emotional struggles, her desire for love, and how life keeps bringing her back to square one."

The character's complexity intrigued Nyrra. "She's not

entirely a hero or a villain. She has a nurturing, feminine side, especially in her love for children, which is her safe space. But life's circumstances push her into actions she doesn't wish to take."

Nyrra's preparation for *Checkmate* involved immersing herself completely in the character's emotional world. "I didn't do specific homework for the role. Instead, I read the script repeatedly until I started feeling the character's emotions as my own. Only when you genuinely feel the character can you bring it to life on screen," she explains.

As an actor with significant experience, Nyrra also contributed her ideas to enhance her role. "The creative team and I share a great rapport. We're usually on the same page when it comes to

the vision for the character. That synergy allows us to collaborate seamlessly. There were many moments during the shoot where I improvised, and the team loved it. Those spontaneous additions often brought out the best in the scenes," she shares enthusiastically. Despite the intensity of the role, she made sure to disconnect from the character after the shoot. "I'm very particular about leaving my character behind once the camera stops rolling. It's important to maintain that balance and not let the emotions spill over into real life."

While *Checkmate* delves into the darker aspects of human emotions, Nyrra found it relatable in some ways. "We all have moments when life feels unfair, and we face betrayal from people or circumstances. I tapped into those personal feelings to portray my character's emotional journey," she says.

However, she also emphasizes that she didn't need to draw directly from her life. "It wasn't about mimicking my experiences but channeling the emotional essence of those moments. That's the beauty of acting - you use your feelings as a medium to tell someone else's story."

With an impressive body of work, Nyrra

admits to being selective about her projects. "I'm very particular about the roles I choose. I strive to avoid repetition and ensure that each character I portray brings something unique to the table. Most of my roles have been vibrant, bubbly, and chirpy, but *Checkmate* is a significant departure from that," she explains. The actress also shared her excitement about an upcoming Netflix series. "It's entirely different from anything I've done before. I'm in a completely deglamorized look, with no makeup and a very natural appearance. I can't reveal much right now, but I can promise it's something to look forward to."

Looking ahead, Nyrra is eager to strike a balance between different types of roles. "I want to alternate between playing simple, grounded characters - like a doctor or a lawyer - and more glamorous, positive lead roles. I think it's important to explore both sides of my personality as an actor. While I'm often approached for glamorous roles, I also want to showcase my genuine, unfiltered self on screen," she reveals.

Beyond her acting career, Nyrra's journey is a testament to her resilience, adaptability, and creative spirit. As she continues to explore diverse roles and mediums, her dedication to storytelling remains unwavering. With *Checkmate* set to premiere and exciting projects in the pipeline, Nyrra is undoubtedly a name to watch out for. As she puts it, "I'm here to create, to inspire, and to keep evolving - not just as an actor but as a person." Her words and work reflect the true essence of a multifaceted artist, and her fans can eagerly anticipate what's next in her ever-evolving career.

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## NUSHRRATT BHARUCCHA HAD HER ULTIMATE 'FAN-GIRL' MOMENT WITH KUMAR SANU

Bollywood actress Nushratt Bharuccha recently lived out a cherished dream when legendary playback singer Kumar Sanu gave her a shoutout during an event. The moment turned into an unforgettable memory for the actress, who has always been a fan of the iconic singer. As Kumar Sanu called her on stage, the excitement and joy on Nushratt's face were evident, making it a moment to cherish for her.

The veteran singer called her on the stage and the duo rocked the stage as together they groove on the iconic songs of yesteryear by Kumar Sanu.

Known for her roles in films like *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweeti* and *Dream Girl*, Nushratt has time and again shared her admiration for Kumar Sanu.

The actress is gearing up for the release of the much-anticipated *Chhorii 2*, directed by Vishal Furia. A sequel to the critically acclaimed thriller *Chhorii*, the upcoming film promises to delve deeper into the spine-chilling world created in the first installment. The film will be streamed on Amazon Prime video later this year.



## WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

# The tech-driven revolution in India's waste disposal

Around 2.01 billion tonnes of municipal waste is generated annually across the world. In India alone, an estimated 277 million tonnes of municipal solid waste is produced each year. Of this, 77% is disposed of in open dumps, 18% undergoes composting, and only 5% is recycled.

India's growing waste challenge has also brought it to the forefront of global discussions, including the recent United Nations-led Global Plastic Treaty negotiations in Busan, South Korea, where India called for leveraging technology to tackle waste management effectively. These international forums, coupled with domestic policy initiatives, highlight how technology-driven solutions are transforming India's waste management practices by addressing inefficiencies, promoting collaboration, and ensuring compliance with sustainability goals.

### Enhanced Efficiency in Waste Management

Automating waste management is a key to improving efficiency. It eliminates manual errors, delays, and resource waste. The traditional waste collection and disposal system is often inefficient and causes cost overruns.



Modern technologies have revolutionized waste collection scheduling and route optimization. Recent efforts, such as India's push for digitization through Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0, focus on using real-time data for smarter waste collection and processing. Automated platforms streamline entire workflows, from waste collection and segregation to transportation and disposal, significantly reducing resource wastage. Automated platforms that cover the entire waste management process have simplified key tasks such as waste collection and transport. These platforms allow for real-time data exchange between stakeholders. It reduces delays and ensures that waste is collected on time. Technology allows for better handling of industrial waste through pre-approved logistic contracts and automated workflows. It also reduces the need for manual intervention.

### Transparency through Blockchain

Producers, Importers, and Brand Owners (PIBOs) can comply with EPR requirements by purchasing certificates from Plastic Waste Processors (PWP). These EPR certificates are generated by PWPs by uploading procurement and sales invoices. The latest guidelines from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) state that all the GST invoices are mapped with Government of India's GST portal, thereby improving the audit process and reducing the number of fake EPR certificates generated against underpriced and irrelevant sales invoices. This GST portal integration with CPCB portal will help push genuine certificates and obviously have an impact on EPR certificate pricing.

Blockchain integration for data transparency and traceability is one of the most important contributions technology has made to waste management. The traditional systems lack reliable mechanisms to track waste from its origins all the way through to its final disposal. This lack of accountability leads to inefficiency, fraud, and non-compliance. Blockchain technology solves this problem by creating tamper-proof records of waste management. The data is immutable, and all parties can access it. QR codes that are linked to blockchain records enhance traceability and allow real-time compliance verification.

Blockchain can be used to provide valuable insights into India's e-waste management sector. Between 2010 and 2022, India experienced a 163% surge in electronic waste generation from screens, computers, and small IT and telecommunication equipment (SCSIT), the highest growth globally, according to a United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report. Blockchain-based systems can further enhance compliance with India's EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility) framework by tracking materials across their lifecycle.

### Scalability for Large-Scale Waste Management

India's diverse waste production patterns and vast geography require scalable solutions that can handle operations in both urban and rural areas. For instance, metro cities like Delhi and Mumbai generate thousands of tonnes of waste every day. It requires technology that is able to efficiently manage large-scale operations without compromising environmental compliance.

Scalable platforms are already making inroads, with features like geospatial analytics enabling more efficient resource allocation in cities. In rural regions, mobile-enabled platforms bridge the gap by connecting communities with logistics providers and waste management services. The Plastic Waste Management Rules 2022 have also highlighted the need for scalable solutions to address the 24 million tonnes of plastic packaging introduced annually into India. Of this, only 9.8 million tonnes can be mechanically recycled. Scaling up recycling infrastructure and adopting advanced technologies are critical to meeting the demands of this regulation.

### Empowering stakeholders through collaboration

Technology has turned waste management into an effort of collaboration by connecting stakeholders via digital platforms. Advanced tools allow for seamless interaction and partnership between producers, recyclers, industries, and regulatory agencies. Digital marketplaces for waste commodities have been one of the most significant advancements. These platforms link buyers and sellers, ensuring waste is reused instead of thrown away. Real-time notifications of matching leads for buy and sell and secure transaction systems enable stakeholders to make quick decisions. India's advocacy for international collaboration at the Global Plastic Treaty negotiations also reflects its stance on waste management as a shared responsibility. The country has called for a global effort to transfer technology and financial support to developing nations, emphasizing that only collective action can address the scale of the plastic waste problem.

### Drive compliance and sustainability.

Several industries are required to meet their obligations in waste management following strict environmental regulations such as the EPR. The technology simplifies compliance through the automation of critical processes and transparent records that can be audited and reported. It requires producers to take responsibility for the end-of-life disposal of their product and ensure that it is recycled or reused responsibly. Technology is not only about compliance but also promotes sustainability through the circular economy. Digital solutions are aligned with sustainability goals by encouraging the reuse and recycling of waste materials, as well as reducing dependence on virgin resources.

(The author, Nimit Aggarwal, is the Founder and Managing Director of Eco.Ex.)





Socialite Alekhya Reddy formally Inaugurated A 10-day D sons patola art Exhibition at Labels Pop-up space, Road no1, opp : Taj Krishna, Banjara Hills. The expo offers a range of varieties including Patan Patola, Banarasi, Zari kota, Chanderi, Kashmiri, Maheshwari, Venkatagiri Pattu, Kanchi Pattu, Lucknowi saris, dress materials and many more.



PARTY



Actor Shruti Haasan stunned in pieces from Raw Mango's recently launched collection, Garland - Festive 2024, showcasing the brand's unique fusion of tradition and modernity. Shruti wore the Apsara kurta in dark green silk satin, featuring cascading zardozi embroidery that reimagines the garlanded statues of the Mauryan empire. She paired it with the Nivriti odhani in silk organza, adorned with a linear pattern of hand embroidery along the border, reminiscent of the jhol of the three-string garlands. Completing the look, Shruti wore the matching Varga pant, making a bold and sophisticated statement.



Bala Bhakta Raju and Srilaxmi



Jangaiah Polepogu

Photos by- SV Chary



Dr. Saroj Bajaj, President, Mahila Dakshata Samithi said, the Lamp Lighting Ceremony is a significant milestone in the journey of the nursing students, symbolizing the light of knowledge, compassion, and service that they will carry forward as healthcare professionals. It is also an occasion to honour the dedication and hard work of the 8th batch of B.Sc Nursing students as they embark on their professional careers.



Maredu Ramu

Painting exhibition "Innovative Hands" by a group of 25 senior artists. Exhibition will be inaugurated by Anju Poddar, Art connoisseur and Author in the presence of artists at State Gallery of Art, Madhapur, Hyderabad



Anju Poddar



The grand launch of Hetafu Diamonds (Candy) took place at Daspalla Hotel, Hyderabad. The event was attended by the Dr. Dilip Bhanushali (President, Indian Medical Association), Padma Shri, Dr. Manjula Anagani, a renowned gynaecologist, Dr. Satish Kumar Reddy, Dr G. Narasimhulu, and author Yandamuri Veerendranath, and many other dignitaries from different industries.



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



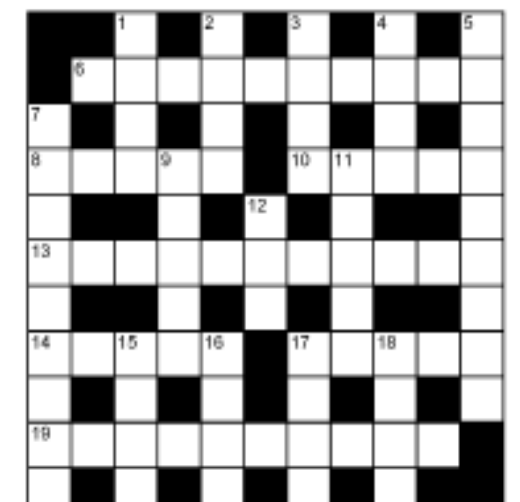
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU



**Yesterday's solution**

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

**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

- A railway engine
- Wear these on fingers
- An orchestra conductor's stick
- Glass buildings for growing plants
- Small cities
- Nairobi is the capital of this country in Africa
- In the middle of lots of people

### DOWN

- A day of the week
- Opposite of dulcet
- The colour of grass
- Make smile or laugh
- Timid
- This lives in soil
- Cold winter flakes
- He wears a crown
- Require



### GINGER MEGGS





# I want to show non-violence thru my film: Padmavathi Malladi

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
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Popular director Sukumar's daughter Sukriti Bandreddi is making her debut as an actress with the film *Gandhi Thatha Chettu*. Padmavathi Malladi is also making her debut as a director with this film which is releasing on January 24. The director talks about this project and how she roped in Sukriti. Now big production house Mythri Movie Makers is releasing this film.

Padmavathi was born and brought up in Hyderabad, completed her BSc in Bio-Technology, MBA and also did her PG Diploma in Quality Control. "I used to write short stories and also some poems. My friend showed one of my stories to *Jil* director Radhakrishna and he introduced me to Chandrasekhar Yeleti," said Padmavathi. That's how she joined films for the first time by writing for the film *Manamantha* with Chandrasekhar. "I learnt a lot when I worked with him," she said. She next worked for the film *Radhe Shyam* with director Radhakrishna. "At the same time I got a chance to work with director Nag Ashwin for *Mahanati*," she said.

Padmavathi's mother is a film lover and used to watch all films on the first day. "That's how I get interested in films," she said. Then she wrote dialogues for 'Choosi Choodangane' (2020) which her friend Sesa Sindhu directed. Then she wrote dialogues for 'Ammu' (2022) and also worked in 'Brinda' web series.

One of her friends thought of a small love story between a tree and a boy and Padmavathi connected to that point. "I like greenery and trees, so I want to tell the present generation about non-violence. So, I developed a story about a girl, her grandfather and a tree. How a girl saved a village tree through non-violence is the basic story. There are a lot of emotions and a message is also there, but it is not an art film, it is a commercial cinema," she said. Her friend and director Sindhu Rao heard the story and she liked it very much. She collected money through some crowd-funding and also from others. "We planned with a limited



**AFTER WORKING AS WRITER FOR FILMS LIKE MAHANATI, MANAMANTHA AND RADHE SHYAM, PADMAVATHI MALLADI IS NOW MAKING HER DEBUT AS DIRECTOR WITH GANDHI TATHA CHETTU. SUKUMAR'S DAUGHTER SUKRITI PLAYS THE MAIN PROTAGONIST IN THIS ONE AND PADMAVATHI TALKS ABOUT THE PROJECT AND HOW SHE GETS SUPPORT FROM A BIG PRODUCTION HOUSE FOR HER SMALL FILM.**

budget and we went according to our plan," she said.

After writing the story she is searching for a thirteen year-old girl to play the main role in her film. "I auditioned hundreds of girls, but some of them didn't agree to shave their head. Though some agreed, their acting was poor. At that time, my friend Sindhu had seen

Sukumar's daughter Sukriti at a film premiere and sent her photos to me. After seeing her photo, I fixed her as my girl," said Padmavathi. She then messaged Sukumar and approached Sukriti.

"We did nearly two months' workshop with her in acting, dialogue delivery and body language. Location is a big task for us as we

search in many places and finally zeroed in Rangampet near Nizamabad and we found a tree also," she said. When asked why can't go for make-up instead of shaving her head? "Yes, we can use prosthetics, but it takes so much time and is also very costly. In my film, the girl is very strong and she doesn't care about these things, so

Sukriti accepted it and did it very well," she added.

Padmavathi says that music is one of the important ones for her film. "If you close your eyes and listen to the music of my film, you can understand the story. It has come out very well." "Sukumar's wife Tabitha was there on the sets throughout the shoot. On the second day I asked Tabitha, 'can you please present this film?' and she accepted immediately," said Padmavathi.

They completed the film within their budget with Sindhu Rao as producer. Once the film was over, Sukumar had seen it and did he give any advice or changes to it? "No, he told me 'this is not my genre, so whatever you think you go with that and I believe in you'. So, he completely supported me," she said. It is Sukumar's advice to send this film for Film Festivals. "It won many awards at the International Film Festival and earned so much respect. Now, it should earn audience applause after its release here and I am eagerly waiting for the result." She added that though the film won many awards, it is not an art film; it is a commercial film with a message of non-violence. "I wanted to tell through the film that non-violence is important not only for human beings but also for nature," she said.

Padmavathi worked as a writer for a few films, but she never watched shooting on the sets. "I mostly interacted with actors with my dialogues. So, here I have a bond with senior director Singeetham Srinivasa Rao and when I told him about my directorial debut, he gave me a two-day crash course, which I followed as it is," said Padmavathi. "It really helped me and I implemented whatever he told me," she said.

The other interesting thing about this film is she didn't take any junior artistes for this film. "The local villagers acted in the film and they did very natural acting," she said. She also mentioned that Anand Chakrapani as grandfather and Rag Mayur as villain gave a stunning performance in the film. Thanikella Bharani gave voiceover for the tree.

About her future project, she said she has a few stories, but at present is waiting for this film's release. "I will decide what genre I should take after this film's release," she said.



## Actor Vijay Rangaraju is no more

Telugu actor Vijay Rangaraju passed away on Monday. The actor joined a private hospital in Chennai last week and on Monday he suffered from cardiac arrest and breathed his last. According to reports, the actor was injured in shooting of a film a few days back in Hyderabad and then he went to Chennai and joined a private hospital.

Vijay Rangaraju is his screen name and his original name is Raj Kumar. He played villain and character roles in many Telugu and Malayalam films. He is popular with the film 'Bhairava Dweepam' that stars Nandamuri Balakrishna and directed by Singeetham Srinivasa Rao. Rangaraju alias Raj Kumar made his debut with a Malayalam film opposite Malayalam superstar Mohan Lal. The film ran nearly 150 days and then he got an offer for the Telugu film 'Bhairava Dweepam'.

When he signed the Telugu film, there was already an actor

named Raj Kumar. So the producers Vijaya Production house changed his name to Vijay Rangaraju. They took their production house name Vijaya, the character is like SV Ranga Rao in 'Pathalabhairavi'. So from his name Ranga and then 'Raj' from his original name, was christened as Vijay Rangaraju.

Though the Telugu film was a big success, Rangaraju didn't get many chances. EVV Satyanarayana gave him a role in his character roles in a few Telugu films, he left for London for a few years. After his comeback, he did films like 'Uri' and also acted as the main villain in 'Yajnam' film opposite Gopichand. He acted in some popular films like 'State Rowdy', 'Ashok Chakravarthy' and 'Vijay'.

Apart from films, Vijay Rangaraju is passionate about weightlifting and bodybuilding. Vijay Rangaraju is survived by two daughters Deekshita and Padmini.

## RGV'S CONFESSION AFTER WATCHING SATYA AGAIN!

Ram Gopal Varma changed Telugu cinema with his 'Shiva' into new heights. People talk about before and after 'Shiva', as it marks a trendsetter in Telugu and Indian cinema. Later, he made some good films like 'Satya', 'Anaganaka Oka Roju', 'Kshana Kshanam', 'Rangela', 'Sarkar' and many more. But in recent years, he is known for his controversial remarks and is in the news for wrong reasons. He started making satirical films with a political backdrop, but none of them made any impact. Recently, RGV has seen his old film 'Satya' with the actors who acted in that film in Mumbai. After watching the film, the director made a confession that from now onwards, he is going to make good films. RGV is known for his brilliance, but he lost his touch completely in recent years. The director posted a long note after watching 'Satya' a few days back and what he wanted to do in the coming days. "I obviously can't make any amends now for what I already did, but I promised myself two nights back while wiping away my tears, that every film I make from now onwards will be made with a reverence towards why I wanted to become a director in the first place," said RGV in his post. The director also confessed that his recent films are not made with honesty and integrity which was there in 'Satya'. "Some of my later films might have been successful but I do not believe that any of them had the same honesty and integrity which SATYA had," added the director. The director confessed that he wanted to make sincere films in the coming days. "Finally now I took a vow that whatever little of my life is left, I want to spend it sincerely and create something as worthy as SATYA and this truth I swear on SATYA," said the director.



## Wanted to write more woman-centric stories: Sri Vidya Basava

Another female director Sri Vidya Basava is coming up with a thriller 'Hatya' this time. She made her debut with 'Madha', but she said that she didn't enjoy the success of that film because of the pandemic. "I struggled a lot to release my first film 'Madha'. I have shown the film to many people and requested them to release it, but when it comes to this 'Hatya', I didn't ask anyone," said director Sri Vidya.

She added that after the release of the trailer, many approached the filmmakers to release it. "It happened because of producer

Prashanth," said the director. "Though I struggled a bit to complete 'Hatya', I learnt from those mistakes and completed it."

She said that she felt proud after completing the film. "I wanted to make a profitable venture of 'Hatya' and the film has come out very nicely. Our unit people have also seen the film and appreciated it a lot," said Sri Vidya. Dhanya Balakrishnan and Pooja Ramachandran played important roles along with Ravi Varma in this thriller. She added that as a woman director she wanted to do more women-centric films and create

more characters. "Dhanya prepared her role and then came to the sets and her performance was definitely one of the highlights. Ravi Varma's role definitely connected to everyone," said the director. She also mentioned Pooja Ramachandran's performance in the film.

Dhanya Balachandran said that she wanted to do action films like Vijayashanthi and Malasri and now her wish has come true with this one. "It's an investigative thriller and I should thank director Vidya for giving me this opportunity," said Dhanya.

## Akshay Kumar as Lord Shiva from Kannappa

The promotions for the much-awaited film 'Kannappa' is now going aggressively. Vishnu Manchu, playing the protagonist of Kannappa and is also producer of the film, recently started promotions in Bengaluru and Chennai. Now, it's Monday, so the makers unveiled another look from the film, and this time it is none other than the Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar, who is playing the role of Lord Shiva in it.

In 'Kannappa', Lord Shiva emerges as a divine force, embodying strength, serenity and with a deep sense of devotion. He is depicted as the supreme deity who governs the three realms, surrendering himself to the purest form of devotion.

The first look poster features Akshay Kumar

in the iconic Shiva Thandavam posture, holding a Trishul in one hand and a Damarukam in the other. His intense expression and commanding presence exude the divine energy of Lord Shiva, further amplifying the film's mystic and powerful aura.

With such a captivating portrayal of Lord Shiva, Kannappa promises to be an unforgettable cinematic experience. Apart from Manchu Vishnu and Akshay Kumar, some of the icons like Mohan Babu, Prabhas, Mohanlal, Sarath Kumar are also there. Kajal Aggarwal plays the role of Parvathi, while Preity Mukundhan is Kannappa's love interest. Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh and produced by Mohan Babu Manchu, Kannappa is poised to deliver a high-octane, visually stunning epic, complete with breathtaking action and effects. The film is releasing on April 25, 2025.



## 'Bhairavam is a strong story-based film'

Bellamkonda Sai Sreenivas, Manchu Manoj and Nara Rohit are playing lead roles in the film 'Bhairavam'. Vijay Kanakamedala is the director, while Radha Mohan is producing it. The film's teaser was unveiled on Monday at a multiplex in Hyderabad. On this occasion, Sreenivas talks highly about the film. "Bhairavam" is one of the strong story-based films and I am confident that this film is going to be a great success," said Sreenivas. After 'Jaya Janaki Nayaka', he wanted to do a good film and director Vijay worked very hard for it. "I am sure Vijay is going to be in the list of top directors with this one," said Sreenivas. He added that it is a blessing to him to work with Manoj Manchu and Nara Rohit. "Rohit accepting this film is one happy moment. He and Manoj can only do the



characters in this film and it was a blessing for me to work with them," said Sreenivas. Manoj praises director Vijay and says he is a dedicated person. "I have seen the film and Sai's performance is top notch. Rohit is my childhood friend and he gave voiceover for my film a few years back, again for this film, I was happy that I shared screen space with him," said Manoj. Rohit said that he became closer with Manoj with this film. "It's a wonderful journey working with Sai and we enjoyed a lot while shooting this film. This is one of the most memorable films for me and I hope it is going to be a great success and director Vijay is going to direct big films," said Rohit.



# Mbappé puts on a show again with two goals as Real Madrid beats Las Palmas

PTI ■ MADRID

With Kylian Mbappé putting on a show again, Real Madrid returned to the top of the Spanish league. Mbappé continued his scoring streak with a brace as Madrid routed 10-man Las Palmas 4-1 on Sunday, prompting a big ovation at Santiago Bernabeu stadium for the France star who has struggled at times in his first season with the Spanish powerhouse. "It's always a dream to get a standing ovation at this stadium," Mbappé said. "I'm really happy, I've adapted to the team and I can play the way I want to. Everyone enjoys the team's game. All the Real Madrid players are leaders because it's the best team in the world. We have to be united because we have to win a lot of things. You always have to win at Real Madrid." Mbappé now has scored four goals in his last four matches with Madrid.

Brahim Díaz and Rodrygo also scored for Madrid as it overtook Atletico Madrid to begin the second half of the league season. Madrid is two points ahead of city rival Atletico, which on Saturday saw its record 15-game winning streak end in a 1-0 loss to Leganes. Madrid opened a seven-point lead over third-placed Barcelona, which drew 1-1 at Getafe on Saturday. "It was an important match for us," Mbappé said. "We knew what happened yesterday with Atletico's defeat and Barcelona's draw and we wanted to get the win. We started badly because we conceded an early goal, but the team's reaction was outstanding. We looked for space and played fast and with quality." It was the second straight victory for Madrid after an embarrassing 5-2 loss to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia on Jan. 12. After Rodrygo was fouled,



Mbappé converted an 18th-minute penalty kick on Sunday after the visitors had taken the lead through Fábio Silva one minute into the match at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium. Díaz put Madrid ahead in the 33rd and Mbappé added his second goal in the 36th after an assist by Rodrygo. Rodrygo scored his third goal in three matches in the 57th. Mbappé thought he had scored a hat trick near the end of the first half but his goal was disallowed for offside. He also hit the woodwork in first-half stoppage time. Jude Bellingham had a goal disallowed after video review in the second half. "Mbappé's great form is helping us a lot," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "Our work today was very good. We managed to get the right balance to handle the good moments and the difficult ones." Las Palmas, sitting in 14th place

and enduring a three-game losing streak across all competitions, had Benito Ramirez sent off for a high kick in the 64th. He initially was shown a yellow card but video review determined he deserved a red card. Defender David Alaba made his return to action after a long knee-injury layoff in the 77th. He hadn't played since December 2023. Madrid was without forward Vinicius Júnior because of a suspension. **President Pérez** As the only candidate, Florentino Pérez was reelected Madrid president on Sunday, securing his control of the club until 2029. **Other results** Earlier Sunday, fourth-place Athletic Bilbao won 2-1 at 13th-place Celta Vigo, while ninth-place Rayo Vallecano drew 1-1 at 10th-place Osasuna. Valencia moved out of last place by beating Real Sociedad 1-0 at home for its first league win since November.



## Elena Svitolina rallies to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals for third time

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Elena Svitolina was 4-1 down before she went on a roll and took 11 of the next 12 games in a 6-4 6-1 victory over Veronika Kudermetova on Monday to reach the Australian Open quarterfinals for the third time. The 30-year-old Ukrainian is into the last eight at a Grand Slam for the 12th time and will next play No. 19 Madison Keys, who had a 6-3 1-6 6-3 win over Elena Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion and 2023 Australian Open runner-up. Keys has twice reached the semifinals in Australia, in 2015 and 2022, and entered the season's first major with a title in Adelaide earlier this month. Svitolina is back in the quarterfinals in Australia for the first time since 2019. "Feels like a lifetime ago," Svitolina said. Since then, she has married French player Gael Monfils in 2021 and the pair had a daughter, Skai, in 2022. "Many things happened and I'm really pleased with the performance throughout the tournament. Really enjoying this win today." After dropping two early service games to Kudermetova, she said her only goal "was just trying to fight." "It's the only thing I can do when things are not going your way, put your head down and get back to work," she said. "Really happy I could come (back) into the match and then win in straight sets." In a message written on a TV camera lens after the match,

the No. 28-seeded Svitolina wrote "The Spirit of Ukraine" and drew a heart shape. Svitolina, the No. 28 seed, wore a red dress, red shoes and a red cap for the match. People in the crowd waved the yellow and blue Ukraine flag. Kudermetova took a medical timeout for on-court treatment on her abdomen after falling behind 5-4 the first set. She left the court for treatment after losing the first set. Kudermetova saved a breakpoint and held for 1-1 in the second set, following up a forehand winner down the line with a loud roar. That was the end of her celebrating. It wasn't just power and pace from Svitolina that was the difference between the pair. After bringing Kudermetova to the net with a drop shot and then lobbing over her to start the next game, Svitolina punched the air. There was no handshake at the net with Kudermetova, a 27-year-old from Russia, but no animosity, either. Svitolina's husband, Monfils, was playing later Monday against No. 21 seed Ben Shelton on Margaret Court Arena. The 38-year-old Frenchman reached the fourth round with an upset over fourth-seeded Taylor Fritz, the US Open runner-up last year. Other quarterfinalists will be decided when defending champion Jannik Sinner and No. 13 seed Holger Rune meet in an afternoon match and five-time major winner Iga Swiatek takes on Eva Lys, the lucky loser from qualifying, in a night match.

## Rishabh Pant named captain of Lucknow Super Giants for upcoming IPL 2025

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Dynamic keeper-batter Rishabh Pant was on Monday named the captain of Lucknow Super Giants for the upcoming IPL, and he vowed to give his "200 percent" to win the team's maiden title. Pant was picked at the mega auction for an IPL record Rs 27 crore by the franchise owner Sanjiv Goenka. "I will give my 200 percent. That's my commitment to you. I will try whatever is there in my power to repay the faith. I am really excited and looking forward to new beginning and new energy. And have a blast out there with lot of fun," Pant told mediapersons after being unveiled as the new skipper. "We started with new hope and aspirations. And most importantly, new confidence. I wanted to introduce you all to our new captain Rishabh Pant," Goenka said. This is Pant's second stint as a



leader in the IPL. At his former franchise Delhi Capitals, the captaincy became a point of contention, leading the 27-year-old Pant to opt out of DC's retention plans after unsuccessful negotiations. Pant beat Nicholas Pooran to secure the top job after Rahul didn't feature in the list of LSG's retained players. LSG had retained Pooran, Mayank Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi, and Ayush Badoni before the auctions.

Right after the auction, Goenka made a cryptic remark that the franchise wanted to keep players who put the team first ahead of their personal goals and milestones, which was construed as a dig at Rahul who often struggled to score at a brisk pace. Asked about his new team going the distance in the IPL, Pant sounded optimistic. "Definitely happy with the team. We have a mix of youth and experienced players. We

have not been where we wanted to be... That's the journey how we can take this franchise to newer heights. Despite DC's interest in keeping him, they were not fully committed to him leading the side, prompting Pant to re-enter the auction. At the auction, they pipped Sunrisers Hyderabad, LSG to get Pant for Rs 20.75 crore, eventually they had to raise their price to Rs 27 crore to outbid Delhi Capitals' right-to-match card. "I know it's a new beginning for me, new franchise, new owner. The ideology of captaining the side doesn't change. We will add a lot of things which we will discuss with the management and will see how we would take this forward in a better way." Speaking about his captaincy mantra, "I've learnt from a lot of captains, seniors. You don't only learn from captains, a lot of senior players are also there.



## Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi named in Mumbai squad for next Ranji game

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India captain Rohit Sharma will show up in a Ranji Trophy match for the first time in almost a decade after he and rising star Yashasvi Jaiswal were named in Mumbai's squad for their fixture against Jammu and Kashmir, starting January 23 at MCA-BKC Ground here. The team will continue to be led by the seasoned Ajinkya Rahane, the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) said while announcing the squad on Monday. Rohit had confirmed his participation for the next round of the Ranji Trophy match on Saturday during a press conference to announce India's squads for limited-overs series against England and the Champions Trophy next month. When asked if he would play in the next domestic game for his state team, Rohit replied, "I will." Of late there have been questions over Rohit's form in the longest format after his forgettable outing in his last eight Tests, including against New Zealand at home and against Australia Down Under. The India skipper had showed up for a training session for Mumbai on January 15 as it became clear after the team's disastrous tour of Australia that the BCCI has made it mandatory for the players to feature in domestic circuit. Soon after, Jaiswal too joined the Mumbai camp which trained at the BKC ground as he had a few batting sessions

with his domestic team. The BCCI recently made it mandatory for all contracted India players to participate in domestic cricket except when there are fitness issues. Rohit had cited a busy schedule with the national team among reasons for not playing domestic cricket. "(In) the last 6-7 years, I can at least tell about what has happened with me since I've started playing Test cricket regularly, which is from 2019, you hardly have any time (in hand)," he told media. "And then, when you play so much international cricket through the year, you need some time off as well as a cricketer just to refresh, get your mind right, just to be ready for the upcoming season." "But we have addressed it now and nobody takes it for granted or anything like that. It is just based on looking at how one has gone through the season, how much rest he needs." "Based on all of that, we decide what is going to happen with certain players. Now it's been made mandatory that if there is time, you have to play domestic cricket," he said. Mumbai squad: Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ayush Mhatre, Shreyas Iyer, Siddhesh Lad, Shivam Dube, Hardik Tamore (wk), Akash Anand (wk), Tanush Kotian, Shams Mulani, Himanshu Singh, Shardul Thakur, Mohit Awasthi, Sylvester Dsouza, Royston Dias, Karsh Kothari.

## Yes, transition phase is coming but I don't need to prove anything to anyone: Axar Patel

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A contender to take veteran Ravindra Jadeja's place permanently at some point, spin-bowling all-rounder Axar Patel is aware of the possibilities that may arise during India's big Test transition but he doesn't feel the need to prove "anything to anyone" to make his case. Axar, who turned 31 on Monday, has been Jadeja's under-study for the past decade with same skill-sets but with a bit of less finesse than his fellow senior Gujarati. In his 11-year-international career, Axar has taken 184 wickets across three formats and 55 of them have come in 14 Tests, two of which were in Bangladesh when Jadeja was unfit. Talk about Indian cricket's transition and whether he stands to gain, India's T20 vice-captain's offered a matter of fact response. "Yes, a transition phase is coming, and ultimately, it's the selectors' and captain's call. I don't feel the need to prove anything to anyone," Axar gave an uncomplicated answer. "My approach is to focus on fulfilling the role assigned to me and continuously improving myself. If I perform well, my



place in the team will take care of itself automatically." In his mind, he is an all-format player and that belief is unshakable. "I just keep telling myself that I have played all three formats be it Tests, ODIs, or T20s. My focus is on doing well whenever I get an opportunity, rather than feeling the need to prove anything to anyone, whether I'm picked or not. "I don't take the pressure of thinking that I deserve a spot. It is always about the team combination and whether there is any room for me." He wasn't disappointed when he didn't make the cut for Border-Gavaskar

Trophy as it was not meant to be. Instead, he concentrated on a T20I series in South Africa where he played all the games. "When it comes to selection or the Australia series, I think more about where I can get opportunities rather than whether I deserve a place. "It's all part of a cricketer's journey -- only 15 players can be in the squad and you can't take your place for granted. I don't think in those terms." There has been a lot of chatter about communication between the Gautam Gambhir-led support staff and the players during the series Down Under. When asked about it, Axar carefully sidestepped the issue but did say that in a fast-paced format like T20, it is more about specific strategic inputs and roles. In that regard, he felt that "communication is pretty clear." "I was not with the team for last two and half months so I do not have much idea what was going on in Australia. But it's the same support staff, we just have the inputs that is required from bowling coach and the batting coach. "T20 is a fast-paced format, so it's about making correct decisions, so we discuss that only. What role do I have to play?"

# Champions League makes January debut with high-stakes clash of PSG and Manchester City

PTI ■ GENEVA

The first Champions League games to be played in January include one with shocking possible consequences in an unpredictable debut season for the 36-team format. Paris Saint-Germain vs Manchester City on Wednesday is a clash of super-wealthy state-backed teams currently a barely believable 25th and 22nd in the standings. If the 2020 beaten finalist and 2023 champion play to a draw at Parc des Princes, both could start the 18-game final round on January 29 outside the top-24 places that qualify for the knockout stage. The new format that replaced the traditional groups -- now with eight games instead of six, facing eight different opponents, and two in January -- is unknown territory even for UEFA, whose preseason prediction that eight points should ensure advancing likely

will fall short. However, few imagined what would play out in the first six rounds. Man City and PSG have struggled, Real Madrid has lost half its games in 20th place despite adding Kylian Mbappé to a title-winning team, and lowest-ranked debutant Brest has cruised to four wins and seventh in the standings, just ahead of Lille. "It would have been impossible to list these eight clubs as being in the top eight positions," Giorgio Marchetti, the UEFA deputy general secretary, told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "There is a lot of new fresh air." "I think the format has an impact," Marchetti said, pointing to comments by Inter Milan coach Simone Inzaghi that it is more difficult to prepare for eight different opponents instead of three. "It is more of a challenge." Which positions are teams playing for? The top eight in the standings



on January 29 advance directly to the round of 16 that starts in March. They will likely include current leader Liverpool and second-place Barcelona which are the only two teams already certain to finish in the top 24. Liverpool is the only team to

win all six games. Teams placed from ninth to 24th go into the new knockout playoffs round. Nos. 9-16 will be seeded in the draw on January 31 and will play the second leg at home. Teams placing 17 to 24 host the first

legs. Nos. 25-36 in the standings are eliminated and do not transfer to the Europa League. Already out are Leipzig, Slovan Bratislava and Young Boys which each lost all six games. Tuesday games

Liverpool hosts Lille and Barcelona is at 15th-place Benfica. Atletico Madrid in 11th place can rise above visiting Bayer Leverkusen, which is in fourth place with just one point more. Aston Villa, the 1982

European Cup winner, can qualify for the round of 16 with a win at 16th-place Monaco. Stuttgart, in 26th place, is favored to win at Slovan and move to 10 points, which would put pressure on PSG and Man City. Wednesday games Real Madrid hosts struggling Salzburg, and third-place Arsenal can secure its round of 16 entry -- and do Man City a favor -- by winning at home against 24th-place Dinamo Zagreb. Sixth-place Inter Milan goes to Sparta Prague, and Bayern Munich, in a surprising 10th place with 12 points, travels to Feyenoord which is 18th with 10 points. Brest goes to Schalke's stadium in neutral Germany to face Shakhtar Donetsk, which has four points and likely must win to stay in contention. Why is the Champions League playing in January? For the money, mostly. The

most influential clubs wanted a bigger and more lucrative Champions League and got two extra midweek matches for all. The congested calendar for soccer left few options. Historically, European club competitions took a midwinter break until March. Then February was occupied in 2001 by the Champions League when a new format with a second group stage started. February stayed on the calendar when the round of 16 started in 2004, and for the next two decades. So when UEFA decided in 2022 on this eight-game league phase, January was needed even though some leagues in Nordic countries do not start until March, and others are still on midwinter breaks. Austrian champion Sturm Graz, which plays at Atalanta on Tuesday, has not played a domestic game since December 7 and will not resume until February 1.