





# City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | JANUARY 23, 2025

03



Kazipet railway station which is undergoing redevelopment at a cost of Rs 24.45 crore under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, according to SCR press release from Hyderabad headquarters

## CITY EVENTS

**Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Jayanthi**

**Venue**  
Ravindra Bharathi  
January 23,  
(1:30 pm to 10 pm)

**Birthday celebrations of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose**

**Venue**  
Lamakaan  
January 23, (11 am)

**Bayaz E Yaad**

A Tribute to poetry of Aslam Farshori  
**Venue**  
Lamakaan  
January 23, (7 pm)

**Talk on Marxism and Feminism**

By Shivani Kaul  
**Venue**  
Lamakaan  
January 23, (7 pm)

## Demolitions stalled as MLA Danam intervenes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A demolition drive in Chintal Basthi of Khairatabad was stalled after MLA Danam Nagender intervened on Wednesday.

"Do it after CM Revanth Reddy's arrival from Davos. I will speak to him and then permit you for the demolitions," he said. He further questioned why outsiders are intimidating the local MLA who has been representing them for last 30 years.

Hyderabad traffic cops and Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Town Planning officials claimed that there are illegal semi-permanent structures that have blocked pedestrian roads. It is supposedly Operation Rope and the officers were doing their duty as it was inconvenient for the pedestrians.

There is a procedure of a complaint and then investigating before going on for demolition. Along with the JCB machine there were officials, the senior officer told The Pioneer.

The MLA, who angrily marched to the spot, demanded the authorities to stop the ongoing demolitions. Nagender was also furious with the officials saying how the demolitions were taken up without his knowledge as he was the local elected representative.

## Mayor warns against insanitary conditions in food godowns

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi has issued a strong warning against compromising public health for profit, stating that any actions endangering people's well-being will not be tolerated. The Mayor conducted a surprise inspection of several food preparation centres in Suraram area of the Quthbullapur Circle in Kukatpally zone on Wednesday.

During the inspections, the Mayor observed the preparation of substandard food items and noted insanitary conditions in the production of various food products such as flour-based snacks and sweets. She pointed out that these food items lacked basic quality standards, with no



Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi inspecting the food godowns in Kukatpally zone on Wednesday

manufacturing or expiry dates on ingredients like flour and pulses.

Additionally, improper

storage practices were found, violating hygiene regulations. She instructed the authorities concerned to take immediate

action regarding these violations.

Speaking to the media, Mayor Vijayalakshmi empha-

sized that the health of the public is the city's top priority. She expressed concern that children and adults consuming such low-quality food are at risk of food poisoning and other health issues.

She urged everyone to be mindful when purchasing food from outside and reiterated that the GHMC would take strict action against the sale of substandard products.

The Mayor also warned that any non-compliance with food safety regulations would lead to severe consequences.

She assured that these surprise inspections would continue to prevent the sale of harmful food products and protect public health. She specifically called on parents to be cautious, as children are more vulnerable to health risks from contaminated food.

## NIMS plans exclusive pediatric facilities, new branches

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) is gearing up to establish exclusive branches catering to pediatric health-care, including a dedicated Craniofacial branch and a Pediatric Epilepsy centre, announced Director Dr Bheerappa Nagari. Speaking to The Pioneer, Dr Nagari

revealed, "We have been witnessing an increasing number of child patients in various departments. To address their specific needs, we plan to introduce specialized pediatric branches."

The Craniofacial branch is set to be inaugurated soon, with plans already in motion. Meanwhile, a Pediatric Epilepsy centre worth Rs 2 crore, is expected to

commence operations by March.

"These branches, including Pediatric Dermatology, will have separate wards and facilities. Each branch will initially be equipped with 20 beds and dedicated infrastructure. This will streamline the process for young patients, allowing them to directly access specialized care," Dr Nagari added.

## 6.015 kgs of ganja seized, two arrested in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Excise Department officials in Musheerabad seized 6.015 kilograms of ganja and arrested two individuals near gate 3 of NTR Stadium, Domalguda on Wednesday.

The accused, Guddu Kumar and Chetu Kumar Yadav originally from Jharkhand had come to Hyderabad for work. Struggling to earn sufficient income through daily labour and auto-driving, they turned to selling ganja for financial gain.

The ganja was reportedly transported from Odisha and was being taken for sale in the Musheerabad area when the Excise team, led by CI Ramakrishna and SIS Prasanna Reddy and Sravan, intercepted the auto.

Along with the contraband, one mobile phone was also confiscated.



## Surgeries performed successfully at NIMS with US expertise

DEEPIKA PASHAM  
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com  
■ HYDERABAD

Two young patients, including a vibrant Instagram content creator and a talkative 7-year-old boy, successfully underwent craniostomosis surgeries at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS), assisted by visiting faculty from the US.

Ten-year-old Naram Nikshayanti, an avid dancer and social media enthusiast, was diagnosed with craniostomosis after a series of consultations.

Her parents revealed, "We started with an eye check-up at Lions Club, which led us to LV Prasad Institute, and eventually to neurosurgeons and plastic surgeons at NIMS." She underwent a craniofacial procedure costing Rs 7 lakh, partially Rs three lakh reimbursed by the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

Seven-year-old Koushal born with a deformed skull, faced severe breathing issues due to obstructive sleep apnea and abnormal midface growth. Despite multiple soft tissue surgeries, his condition worsened.

His parents sought help at NIMS,



NIMS Director Dr Bheerappa Nagari with parents and their children who underwent successful surgeries

where they were introduced to advanced craniofacial procedures.

On January 7, Dr David A Staffenberg, a visiting craniofacial surgeon from NYU, performed a breakthrough internal distraction osteogenesis surgery.

Remarkably, Koushal was able to sleep supine without a CPAP machine immediately after the surgery. The distraction process, advancing facial bones at a rate of 1mm per day, is ongoing, and he will undergo a follow-up procedure to remove the device.

Dr R Parvathi, HOD of Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, said that causes varies for Craniostomosis. Fewer times the skull bones stop growing when the baby is in mother's womb and sometimes is a genetic transmission.

Dr Bheerappa Nagari, Director of NIMS, highlighted the significance of such surgeries, stating, "Every year, US faculty visit to perform and assist with complex craniofacial procedures. Last year, we successfully operated on four complicated cases."

## Consumer personal style preference shifts for diamonds in jewellery

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Consumer preferences for diamond jewellery are shifting, with a 28% increase in overall diamond jewellery sales. This growth shows jewellery brands focusing on

high-quality, elegant designs and promoting natural diamonds with the Natural Diamond Council (NDC).

Consumers now prefer premium, durable and versatile jewellery. Higher incomes and changing views on dia-



monds as symbols of style and sophistication have boosted demand for items like engagement rings, wedding bands and diamond necklaces.

By working with NDC, brands build trust, raise

awareness and increase the appeal of natural diamonds. This success shows the jewellery brand's ability to adapt to changing tastes by offering exceptional designs and promoting the value of natural diamonds.

## 16 Indra Mahila Shakti Bhavans to be completed by Sept: CS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari held a high-level meeting on Wednesday at the Secretariat to review the progress of several key infrastructure and development projects, including the construction of the High Court buildings, Telangana Bhavan, Osmania General Hospital, the Northern Regional Ring Road, Indra Mahila Shakti Bhavans, and Young India Integrated Residential Schools.

Discussing the Osmania General Hospital redevelopment, the Chief Secretary examined plans for new academic blocks and residential zones. She directed the Hyderabad District Collector to conduct a joint inspection with the Revenue, Civil Supplies, and Police Departments to remove petrol



bunks in the hospital vicinity for smooth execution of the project.

Shanti Kumari stated that the construction of 16 Indra Mahila Shakti Bhavans has already begun and work on six additional buildings will commence within a week. All these structures are expected to be completed by the end of September.

Regarding Young India Integrated Residential Schools, the Chief Secretary instructed

the Education Secretary to draft operational and academic frameworks for the initiative. She also emphasised the need to strengthen the engineering division of the Telangana Education Welfare Infrastructure Development Corporation (TEWIDC) and requested officials to submit proposals.

The review also covered land acquisition updates for the Regional Ring Road and progress on the Telangana Bhavan construction.

The meeting was attended by Vikas Raj, Special Chief Secretary of Roads and Buildings; Srinivas Raju, Government Advisor; Naveen Mittal, Principal Secretary of Revenue; Christina Zongthu, Principal Secretary of Health; Yogita Rana, Secretary of Education, and other senior officials.

## Two habitual offenders arrested, property worth Rs 4.6 lakh seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a commendable operation, the Bowenpally Police apprehended two habitual offenders involved in a series of house burglaries and recovered stolen property worth Rs 4.6 lakh. The arrests were made following an extensive investigation into cases registered under Cr. Nos. 23/2025 and 29/2025.

The accused, identified as Gjen alias Nagapalla Kishore Kumar (21), a driver from Shapur Nagar, Hyderabad, and originally from Anantapur, and Chithari Bharath alias Baathu (21), a labourer from Hasmanthpet,

Old Bowenpally, were known for targeting locked houses in isolated areas. They broke into homes at night, stealing valuables such as silver ornaments, watches, mobile phones and electronic equipment.



Silver ornaments, two Titan watches, one Provogue watch, two mobile phones, two Canon cameras with lenses and a Honda Activa were recovered from them.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad is the only city to see a 9% decline in average flat sizes in 2024, according to Anarock data. Despite rising housing prices across cities, homebuyers are still seeking larger living spaces. In 2024, the average flat size in the top seven cities grew by 8%, from 1,420 sq. ft. in 2023 to 1,540 sq. ft. This is a 34% increase compared to 2019, when the average was 1,145 sq. ft.

National Capital Region (NCR) saw the highest growth, with flat sizes rising 29% from 1,890 sq. ft. in 2023 to 2,435 sq. ft. in 2024. This surge is due to the growing supply of luxury housing in the region. The luxury segment accounted for 70% of new units launched in 2024, up from 40% in 2023.



Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) had the lowest growth in average flat sizes, reaching 849 sq. ft. in 2024, a modest 8% increase from 2019.

Hyderabad's average flat size increased by 24% over six years but saw a decrease in 2024. Other cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, and Pune

saw steady growth in flat sizes.

Chairman of Anarock Group Anuj Puri said that demand for larger flats, especially luxury ones, is growing despite higher prices. This increase is mainly due to more new luxury housing projects introduced in the region over the past year.



ACROSS THE STATES



Mock drill conducted for Uttarakhand UCC Portal

The Uttarakhand government's Information Technology Development Agency (ITDA) conducted a mock drill for the state's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) portal to test the website's operational readiness ahead of its official rollout sometime this month.



HC dismisses EPS' petition against lower court order

The Madras High Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition filed by AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, against a lower court order directing a police probe into allegations of providing false information in his election affidavit.



Man found dead in home, FIR against wife

A 35-year-old software engineer was found dead in his house in Ashok Vihar Phase-2 prompting police to lodge a case against his wife and brother-in-law, officials said on Wednesday.

Two Maoists killed in Bokaro

Two Maoists, including a woman, were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Jharkhand's Bokaro district on Wednesday, police said.

Multiple depts of forensic lab to examine evidence

Multiple departments under the Forensic Science Laboratory at Kalina in Mumbai will examine key pieces of evidence seized by the police investigating actor Saif Ali Khan knife attack case, officials said on Wednesday.

Alcohol is available in Delhi but not water: Modi

URGES BJP TO TARGET WINNING MORE THAN 50 SEATS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged Delhi BJP members to target winning over 50 per cent booths in the assembly polls, and said people are openly expressing anger with the AAP government and reminding it of its promises.

In an online interaction with Delhi BJP members, Modi said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which he slammed as 'aapda' (disaster), has been exposed.

The 'aapda' is making new announcements everyday as it is daily receiving information of losing ground in various parts of Delhi, he said.

He accused the AAP of conspiring to push people from 'purvanchal' out from the national capital, alleging the party is full of hate for them.

This party engaged in lies and deceit, and between it and the Congress they have betrayed people massively over the last 25 years, he added.



"The 'aapda' did not fulfil any of its responsibility," he said, asking BJP members to carry videos and pictures of poor roads, drainage conditions and garbage among other woes facing people to expose the AAP.

years or those who are in the 35-40 year age group have seen nothing but destruction, he said, adding they have lost hope and are in despair.

Calling for defeating the Arvind Kejriwal-led party, he said it will pave the way for fulfilling the resolve of making Delhi the developed capital of a developed India.

Targeting the city government for 'failing' to fulfil basic needs like water to people, he said while interacting with a BJP member that 'liquor is available but water is not'.

campaign to ensure that drinking water reaches everyone once it is elected to power here, he said.

"The 'aapda' did not fulfil any of its responsibility," he said, asking BJP members to carry videos and pictures of poor roads, drainage conditions and garbage among other woes facing people to expose the AAP.

He also charged the city government with being responsible for a rise in people's electricity bills.

Slamming Kejriwal, he said "sheeshmahal" is a live example of the AAP's deceit and lies.

Kejriwal unveils 7-point 'manifesto' for middle class

NEW DELHI: AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday announced a seven-point "manifesto" for the country's middle class, saying they have been neglected by successive governments and are a victim of "tax terrorism".

India on track to meet SDG health targets: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday reviewed the progress under the National Health Mission (NHM) over the last three years and was informed that with significant progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India is on track to meet its health targets well ahead of the 2030 deadline.

The NHM has contributed to improving India's public health outcomes through its relentless efforts in expanding human resources, addressing critical health issues, and fostering an integrated response to health emergencies, the Cabinet was informed.

Over the last three years, the NHM has driven substantial progress in multiple areas, including maternal and child health, disease elimination, and healthcare infrastructure, an official statement said.

The Cabinet also gave its nod to continue the mission for the next two years for achievements of the targets under SDG.

"With significant progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), India is on track to meet its health targets well ahead of the 2030 deadline," the statement said, adding "The ongoing efforts of NHM have successfully led to a dramatic transformation in India's healthcare landscape."

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India's development needs to be inclusive: Rajnath

PNS ■ PATHANAMTHITTA (KERALA)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said that India's development needs to be inclusive, equitable, ecologically sustainable and morally desirable and that the Centre remains committed to a climate resilient future.

Singh said the country was fast developing and therefore, its consumption "should be need-based and not greed-based" and for this our behaviours need to change to ensure sustainability. There is a need to do away with the "use-and-dispose economy", he said.

The Defence Minister was speaking after inaugurating the closing ceremony of poet, environmentalist and human rights activist Sugathakumari's 90th birth anniversary celebrations in Pathanamthitta district of the state.

Speaking at the event, he said, "India is a fast-developing country, but its development needs to be inclusive, equitable, ecologically sustainable and morally desirable without compromising the planet's health."

Talk on 'next chief minister' refuses to die down in K'taka

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Despite the party high command's strict instructions, the talk about the 'next chief minister' refuses to die down in the ruling Congress in Karnataka.

In a show of strength, Congress leader Parashuram Pujari of Hire Bagewadi and his supporters performed special pooja at Sigandru Chowdeshwari Devi temple in Belagavi on Wednesday to see his leader and state Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi as the next chief minister. They performed pooja, holding posters which had Jarkiholi's picture and the message 'Satish Jarkiholi, the next Chief Minister'.

On Tuesday, the supporters of Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar raised the CM issue during the 'Gandhi Bharat' event in Belagavi.

Holding a photograph of Shivakumar, who is also the Congress Karnataka unit president, the supporters raised slogans - "Shivakumar should be made the next Chief Minister".

"Today I am making this prediction that Shivakumar will become the next chief minister," the monk announced before a huge crowd at Varur in Dharwad district on Tuesday evening.

A Digambar Jain monk, Gunadhara Nandi, along with 18 other senior monks of the Jain order blessed Shivakumar of becoming the next CM.

"Today I am making this prediction that Shivakumar will become the next chief minister," the monk announced before a huge crowd at Varur in Dharwad district on Tuesday evening.

Scientists discover 23 species of blood-sucking flies

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) researchers have identified 23 species of blood-sucking flies in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, including 13 species previously unreported in India, ZSI director Dhriti Banerjee said.

The study, recently published in the journal 'Parasites and Vectors', is the first comprehensive survey of these insects in the region.

Locally called 'Bhusi flies,' these insects belong to the Culicoides genus and are similar to mosquitoes in their feeding habits. They primarily feed on the blood of livestock like sheep, goats, and cattle, as well as wild animals such as deer.

The study highlights five species that can transmit the Blue Tongue Disease virus, a condition that can be fatal to livestock and cause significant economic losses in animal husbandry.



and control measures, especially given the region's importance as a major tourist destination. "The presence of these Culicoides species, particularly those responsible for Blue Tongue virus transmission, needs attention," she said.

Conducted in 2022 and 2023, the study found that 17 of the 23 species identified also bite humans, though no human disease transmission has been reported so far.

Officer-in-charge of ZSI's Diptera section, Dr. Atanu Naskar, said a systematic survey of the entire archipelago is needed to understand the role of these insects in disease transmission.

Banerjee emphasised the need for regular surveillance

Nadda lauds milestones of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister J P Nadda on Wednesday lauded the BJP-led central dispensation's work in bringing about a continuous improvement in the women's health markers ever since it came to power in 2014.

The minister was speaking at the 10th-anniversary celebrations of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign here.



our women. BBBP was not just a campaign to save and educate the girl child, but a broader vision to bring women into the mainstream," Nadda said. He claimed the initiative has led to significant improvements in India's sex ratio at birth.

"We have moved from 898 to 930, and the day is not far when the sex ratio will reach equality. But this requires us to work together with a focus on education and health," he said.

According to a central government release, India's sex ratio in 2014-16 was 898.

Haryana, often in the spotlight for its skewed sex ratio, implemented strict monitoring of ultrasound clinics to curb illegal sex-selective practices, Nadda said.

illegal sex-selective practices, Nadda said. Its 'Selfie with Daughter' initiative brought global attention to the cause, promoting awareness about gender equality through community participation.

Madhya Pradesh introduced a novel approach with its 'Lado Abhiyaan', focusing on delaying the age of marriage and increasing access to education for girls and encouraging parents to educate girls in rural areas, Nadda said.



Kailash Satyarthi calls for 'Globalisation of Compassion' from Indian soil

PNS ■ MATHURA

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Kailash Satyarthi on Monday called for "globalisation of compassion" to allay tensions and breakout of violence worldwide.

Satyarthi, a social activist known for his work on child rights, child labour, and sexual exploitation, was speaking at the inauguration of the Kalyanam Karoti Eye Institute in Mathura.

"We have globalised information, trade, markets, consumer goods, and production. But now, it is time to

globalise 'Karuna' (compassion) from Indian soil," Satyarthi said. He also informed reporters about the launch of the 'Satyarthi Movement for Global Compassion,' a campaign supported by several world leaders, former heads of states, and fellow Nobel laureates.

On the rise of artificial intelligence, he said, "AI is undoubtedly becoming a dominant force, but its dangers are also growing. We must address these risks proactively. To counter AI, we must focus on 'Compassion Intelligence.'"



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A Boost for Indian Professionals

H-1B visa reforms by Trump will go a long way in addressing the anomalies in the visa system and help Indian professionals

The H-1B visa has long been a critical pathway for skilled foreign workers, particularly Indians, to contribute to the US economy. With Indians accounting for over 72 per cent of H-1B visa recipients in 2023, any reform in this programme significantly impacts the Indian professional community. In his second term, President Donald Trump introduced groundbreaking reforms to the H-1B visa programme, shifting the selection process from a lottery-based system to a salary-based model. These changes, effective from January 17, 2025, aim to prioritise highly skilled professionals and streamline the visa process. The H-1B visa programme was established in 1990 to allow US companies to hire foreign workers with specialised skills. It has been a cornerstone of the tech and engineering sectors, enabling companies to bridge skill gaps. In 2023 alone, 386,000 H-1B visas were issued, with nearly three-quarters going to Indian nationals. This programme not only benefits the US economy by



addressing skill shortages but also strengthens India-US ties through the exchange of talent and innovation. The most notable change is the replacement of the lottery system with a salary-based selection process. This reform ensures that highly skilled professionals with competitive salaries are prioritised, making the programme more meritocratic. Besides, now the Indian professionals living in the US will be able to renew their H-1B visas domestically, eliminating the need for costly and time-consuming international travel. Another good news for the Students studying in the US on F-1 visas can now transition to H-1B visas more efficiently, fostering smoother

career progression. Now on, research-oriented institutions are exempt from the annual visa cap, encouraging academic and scientific innovation. These reforms are poised to significantly benefit Indian professionals and students. With salary as the primary criterion, skilled Indian workers in high-demand sectors like technology, engineering and healthcare are likely to secure visas more easily. The streamlined process and in-country renewals will reduce uncertainties for professionals and their families. By retaining top talent, these changes will further strengthen the economic and technological collaboration between the US and India. President Trump's reforms reflect a strategic approach to talent acquisition and economic growth. By aligning visa policies with the needs of US businesses and rewarding merit, these changes demonstrate a commitment to fostering innovation and efficiency. While these reforms are a step in the right direction, they would require stricter scrutiny of visa holders and employers. This measure ensures transparency but might pose challenges for smaller companies offering competitive but lower salaries. Moreover, the shift in focus could pressure Indian professionals to align their career trajectories with higher-paying roles, potentially impacting sectors like academia and non-profits.

# The legacy and survival of the Fourth Estate



SANTHOSH MATHEW

## Initiatives promoting media literacy, particularly among youth, can help bridge the gap between traditional journalism and contemporary audiences

In 1780, James Augustus Hicky published India's first printed newspaper, 'Hicky's Bengal Gazette', also known as the Calcutta General Advertiser, normative power of print media. It was the printing press that propelled humanity into a new era of knowledge dissemination. In India, newspapers have become an essential pillar of democracy, freedom of expression, and public discourse. The celebration of Indian Newspaper Day reminds us of the transfer of a potent tool in the freedom struggle, awakening the masses to issues of injustice and fostering a collective national consciousness. The legacy of stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi, who wielded publications like Young India and Harijan as instruments of change, underscores the unparalleled influence of newspapers in shaping society. Historically, the press has been a mirror reflecting societal truths, a watchdog ensuring accountability, and a platform amplifying diverse voices. Newspapers have been central to the articulation of ideas, the dissemination of information, and the fostering of debate and dialogue. The printed word has held power, credibility, and a permanence unmatched by fleeting digital narratives. Yet, the world of print media today faces an existential crisis. In an era dominated by smartphones, the internet, and instant news apps, the relevance of traditional newspapers is being questioned. Circulation and readership have declined sharply.



Advertisements, which once constituted the backbone of newspaper revenue, have shifted to digital platforms. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this decline, as lockdowns disrupted distribution networks and readers turned to online alternatives. The Fourth Estate, embodied by traditional media, has paved the way for the Fifth Estate, represented by social media, as youth increasingly gravitate toward digital platforms for their news and engagement. India, despite its rich newspaper history, has not been immune to these global trends. While the country boasts a vibrant linguistic diversity in its

press—with publications in Hindi, English and regional languages—even stalwarts like *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Malayala Manorama* are grappling with reduced readership. Legacy newspapers such as *Deepika*, India's oldest surviving Malayalam publication, and *Mumbai Samachar*, the nation's longest-running newspaper, now struggle to adapt to the digital age. The shift is not merely technological but also cultural. The younger generation's preference for quick, digestible content over in-depth reporting signals a change in information consumption patterns. Traditional newspapers, with their rich investigative journalism and nuanced storytelling, are increasingly viewed as slow and outdated.

The immediacy of apps like *Daily Hunt* and platforms offering free e-papers has made paying for physical newspapers seem redundant. This decline, however, should not overshadow the irreplaceable value of print media. Unlike digital platforms prone to misinformation and algorithmic biases, newspapers have long been trusted for their credibility and editorial rigour. They offer a depth of coverage that ensures stories are not just told but examined and contextualised. Newspapers are archives of history, recording

events with an accuracy and permanence that digital platforms, with their ephemeral nature, cannot replicate. Japan provides a remarkable case study in media literacy and the enduring power of print. Despite being at the forefront of technological innovation, Japan boasts the world's largest-circulated dailies, such as *Yomiuri Shimbun* with a circulation nearing 10 million and *Asahi Shimbun* not far behind. High literacy rates and a culture of respect for well-researched journalism have enabled newspapers to thrive even in a digital age. This example underscores the potential for print media to coexist with digital platforms when supported by an informed and engaged readership.

Indian Newspaper Day is a reminder to recognise and preserve this legacy. While print media must innovate to survive, readers, too, bear a responsibility to support credible journalism. The rise of e-papers and hybrid models—combining print and digital—offers hope for the industry's evolution rather than extinction. Newspapers continue to play a vital role in fostering democracy. They provide a platform for marginalised voices, hold power to account, and offer citizens the information they

need to make informed decisions. At a time when digital echo chambers threaten the very fabric of public discourse, newspapers serve as a counterbalance, offering diverse perspectives and challenging groupthink. The theme of survival is intrinsic to the narrative of Indian newspapers. Just as Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* persevered despite colonial censorship and competition, today's publications must navigate the challenges of the digital age. The story of newspapers is one of resilience and adaptation. From the handwritten *Acta Diurna* of Julius Caesar's Rome to Gutenberg's printing revolution, and from Hickey's modest four-pager to modern broadsheets like *The Times of India*, the medium has continually evolved to meet the needs of its time. As we celebrate Indian Newspaper Day 2025, it is an opportunity to reflect on the enduring significance of the printed word. While the medium may change, the principles of journalism—truth, accountability, and the public good—remain timeless. It is up to readers, journalists, and policymakers to ensure that these principles continue to thrive in an age of rapid technological change. *(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)*



HIGH LITERACY RATES AND A CULTURE OF RESPECT FOR WELL-RESEARCHED JOURNALISM HAVE ENABLED NEWSPAPERS TO THRIVE EVEN IN A DIGITAL AGE

### PICTALK



A woman prepares yarn to make the tricolour ahead of Republic Day 2025, in Nadia

PTI

## Breaking the cycle of violence: Lessons from personal trauma



SANJAY CHANDRA

Violence against the weak manifests in countless forms—child abuse, bullying, ragging, molestation and domestic violence—leaving deep and often irreparable scars

Violence against the weak is a timeless and universal phenomenon. Child abuse, bullying, ragging, eve-teasing, molestation and domestic violence are only a few that can result in irretrievable damage to the psyche or can even have tragic consequences. I joined the hostel for the first time as a 12-year-old adolescent. I was out in the world, away from the shelter of my parental love, trying to overcome my insecurities. One time a senior shouted at me to fetch a packet of cigarettes from the dormitory. I still remember my tears as I was roughly reprimanded for being tardy. I was scared of the hostel life. Three years later, I joined the college hostel. Ragging had not yet been banned and was openly indulged in by seniors. It was supposed to be a harmless fun activity to initiate the newly joined youngsters into college life. It had degenerated into something completely different. One Sunday, we were forced to sit above the wardrobe and hurl choice profanities at each other. I mouthed words



from my limited vocabulary. We were so traumatised that we started returning home over the weekends. When our parents questioned us, we started bicycling into the desert on the weekends when ragging was at its peak. We slept in remote towns before returning to the campus at the start of the week. We even spent a night in the waiting room of a railway station. We were particularly wary of one young man called the 'ragging king'. In time, after the freshers had been welcomed, I settled down. I forgot my earlier

trauma and looked forward to the next year when I would be bestowed the dreaded title by the new arrivals. One incident changed my outlook. I was ragging a fresher, who was terrified and not responding to my questions. Frustrated, I barked at him to jump into a nearby well. Much to our horror, he turned around and ran towards it. Momentarily stunned, I must have run the fastest race of my life and managed to stop him in the nick of time. I was a changed person. The government stepped in to ban the practice. Sadly, it continues. A recent news report mentioned ragging in several medical colleges where male seniors force fresh entrants to memorise and read aloud from booklets filled with profanities and promoting sexual violence against women, specifically against classmates and nurses. The booklet also teaches freshers to look at women of all ages, including those in the 0-15 years age bracket, as sex objects. Many of us may have been at the receiving end of the local or the school

bully. It exists even at the workplace, sometimes in the guise of the rude superior who would not think twice before throwing the file back at you, or the one preying upon the junior female colleague. Women do not have a pleasant experience travelling on public transport. They are afraid to step out after sunset. Every day we read of brutal assaults and deaths. The list is endless. Many are unable to bear the trauma and give up on life. I am not a psychologist. The reasons might be more complex than blaming it on not inculcating the right values in the children. But, that can be a starting point.

We can teach our young what English author Brian Jacques wrote in one of the *Redwall* series of fantasy novels for children, "Defend the weak, protect both young and old, never desert your friends. Give justice to all, be fearless in battle, and always ready to defend the right." *(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### US EXITS FROM PARIS AGREEMENT

Madam — American President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Monday, pulling the US out of the Paris climate agreement. The Paris Agreement provides a durable framework guiding the global effort for decades to come, marking the beginning of a shift towards net-zero emissions. Thus, at a time when the whole world prepares to celebrate the International Day of Clean Energy on January 26, Trump's decision to exit is a severe blow to worldwide efforts to combat global warming.

The way Donald Trump signed an order to withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement for a second time reflects his party's hawkish stance on the agreement. In fact, the track record of the Republican Party shows its reluctance to make any commitment on an action plan on climate change. Even in the case of the Kyoto Protocol, President George W Bush had withdrawn the signature of the Democrat Vice President Al Gore, who had signed the Protocol on behalf of the US. The Republicans want any future American involvement in climate change agreements to be matched by equivalent commitments by developing country parties. Will recent severe natural disasters due to climate change, ranging from floods in Florida to wildfires in California, open the eyes of the Republicans?

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

### LACK OF SKILLED WORKERS

Madam — When the issue of the growing threat of unemployed youth came to the fore, a few industrialists expressed the fact that they were facing difficulty in getting skilled and employable youth to recruit in their firms. It was then the Union government came with the apprenticeship scheme under which willing unemployed youth are allotted firms to take training with a monthly incentive to trainees as well as the firm. Though 500 firms were to be identified to engage under this scheme, the number could not

### Ban criminals from contesting election



The Supreme Court observation barring criminals from contesting elections should be taken into cognisance by the government, the Elections Commission and the political parties. The SC should have passed the order incorporating such observation in the interim bail order, thus binding the EC, the government, and the parties. How can a criminal, violating laws, killing people, illegally possessing properties,

confiscating others' lands and buildings, extorting, and rioting, serve as a public representative in the Parliament, assemblies, and local municipal bodies? Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are glaring examples of such billionaire mafia dons whose crime list knew no bounds. Both states suffered in development, education and growth for decades. Fielding the criminals and convicted killers in the elections is the antithesis of democracy and the Constitution. Money and muscle power win elections for them even if in jails. Such a list is quite exhaustive across all political parties. If 25-30 per cent of elected representatives have a criminal background, people are also to be blamed for their own decline and eclipsed future. Some political parties prominently field criminals and extremists in elections and depend on the cadre of criminal backgrounds.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

### SENIOR CITIZEN DEMAND CONCESSIONS

Madam — The Union Budget 2025-26 is going to be presented in Parliament on the first of February. One of the pressing demands on the minds of many senior citizens is whether the Indian Railways will bring back concessions on train fares for senior citizens. The issue holds significant importance as it directly impacts about 15 crore senior citizens across the nation. The Indian Railways had, in March 2020, decided to withdraw the concessions providing a 50 per cent discount to female senior citizens and a 40 per cent discount to males on train fares. According to Railways norms, males and females aged 60 and above and females aged 58 and above, are treated as senior citizens. It represents a pivotal opportunity for the government to demonstrate its commitment to elder care, social equity, and responsive governance by restoring concessions to senior citizens in the ensuing budget.

S K Koshta | Chandigarh

be achieved because of a lack of clarity and inbuilt lacuna in the scheme. The firms enrolled in the scheme do not have the scope to absorb all the trainees with employment. In some firms, in order to take the trainees, some experienced workers were to be dispensed away with its impact on production. Above all, the possibilities of employing all those trained are not guaranteed. The point to be noted here is why those who are carrying certificates, diplomas, and degrees are rejected for want of employable skills. Education is given to the private players who are using it as a mere commodity meant for making huge profits with the least concern for the quality and the level of knowledge they part with to the students. The government lacks the moral courage and political will, for whatever reason, to put the private players on the track. The pro-rich policies of the ruling dispensation may also be a reason, as growing unemployment helps the employers exploit more work at lesser cost.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)



FIRST COLUMN

SHUN THE VIOLENCE, EMBRACE PEACE

True transformation lies not in vengeance but in reconnecting with the divine qualities of love and peace



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Today we are living in a world where violence has become our culture. It may be seen in the hundreds of wars going on in different parts of the world or it may be seen through innumerable violent incidents that occur every day in cities and homes across the universe.



ingly dangerous to live in for its occupants. It's a known fact that today violence has become the means to seek political and social justice. Men kill men in the name of the almighty and later on, these killings are then justified as dhama by the custodians of religion when it is used for a righteous purpose.

Well!!!! To conquer dhama we need to first understand the true dhama of the self. We all must realise that good or evil are the traits of the human soul and even after death these traits or sanskar are carried on to the next birth.

(The writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist, views are personal)

Renuka Ji Dam: Addressing Delhi's water woes



K S TOMAR

Conceived over half a century ago on Giri River in Himachal Pradesh, the Renuka Ji Dam is finally set to redefine water and energy security across six Indian states



The visionary Renuka Ji Dam project, conceived 58 years ago on Himachal Pradesh's serene Giri River, is finally transcending decades of delays to emerge as a game-changer.



RENUKAJI, NESTLED IN HIMACHAL'S SIRMAUR DISTRICT, IS IDEAL FOR THE DAM DUE TO ITS GEOGRAPHICAL AND HYDROLOGICAL ADVANTAGES. THE GIRI RIVER, A YAMUNA TRIBUTARY, ENSURES A STEADY WATER FLOW

For Delhiites, the dam symbolises the realisation of a 58-year-old aspiration. The stored water will be routed to Delhi-NCR, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana through the Hathnikund Barrage, further reaching the Wazirabad and Okhla Barrages.

could expedite design approvals and tendering. Local tensions remain high. The Jan Sangharsh Samiti criticised project authorities for inadequate rehabilitation efforts, including compensation gaps for displaced families.

in 2015, costs have ballooned. A significant milestone was achieved in January 2019, when a MoU among the six beneficiary states, brokered by then Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, resolved water-sharing disputes.

ed affected communities. The project's escalating cost was another sticking point. Initially pegged at Rs 3,600 crore, delays ballooned the budget to Rs 6,946 crore by 2021.

Empowering panchayats: The key to achieving Viksit Bharat 2047 through community actions

India must transition from top-down governance to a model where community leadership is the driving force behind sustainable development

India's development trajectory has been shaped by significant contributions from the office of Prime Minister (PM), Chief Minister (CM) and District Magistrate (DM). To achieve the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 empowering Panchayat leadership, headed by Village Mukhiya (VM) is a critical strategy.



MANMOHAN SINGH

of allocated funds or prioritising local infrastructural projects decided by either the district or state. Addressing these challenges is crucial for India to meet its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and improve its Human Development Index (HDI) ranking. It requires building

the capacity of GPs to adeptly identify, plan, and implement projects that align with the needs established through Gram Sabha. The Panchayat Raj System established panchayats as the foundation of decentralised power, emphasising that sustainable development must begin with our smallest unit of democracy: the Panchayat, led by the VM (Sarpanch).

SDGs (SDGs) by Panchayats. GPs across India, are tasked with creating Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) that align with LSDG priorities. However, a survey of 800 panchayats revealed that only 7 per cent of Sarpanches independently chose their LSDG themes using the Gram Panchayat Planning Facilitation Tool (GPPFT), while 34 per cent of themes were decided by Block officials, 22 per cent by Sarpanches or Sachivs, and 16 per cent were directed by the state, reflecting a need for strengthening planning at the panchayat level.



extends beyond the education department, requiring collaborative efforts across health, social welfare, and community development. A central coordinating body at the village level, led by the VM can drive such convergence. For instance, Anita Devi, Village Mukhiya of Bhetaura Panchayat in Gaya, Bihar has

embraced the 'Healthy Panchayat' LSDG theme. Collaborating with ASHAs, Anganwadi Didis, and Gandhi Fellows to achieve 'Zero Home Delivery' eventually boosting institutional delivery rates from 25 per cent to nearly 90 per cent in just one year.

that focuses on capacity building for elected VM and Ward Members. For example, Jyoti Behar Devi, Mukhiya in Gumla, Jharkhand, banned alcohol in her panchayat, focused on livelihood opportunities and also started the "Siti Bajo aur School Aao" campaign to boost school attendance, effectively transforming her community.

Development has taken some initiatives which need further integration with planning and execution at the panchayat level. Revitalise Village Committees Village-level committees such as School Management Committees, Village Health and Sanitation Committees, Jan Arogya Samitis, and Village Water and Sanitation Committees, play a pivotal role in fostering decentralised governance and community participation in development efforts. To achieve Viksit Bharat, these committees need to align to avoid duplication of efforts and promote community ownership.

(The writer is Co-Founder and CEO Aspirational Bharat Collaborative; views are personal)





## TEACHING BEYOND TEXTBOOKS

# The Teacher App's uplifting educators & students

TEJAL SINHA  
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Education in India presents a tale of contrasts. Urban areas enjoy access to well-equipped schools with quality teaching, while rural regions face persistent challenges in delivering basic education. Recognizing this disparity, the Bharti Airtel Foundation, under the leadership of its visionary founder, has committed itself to bridging this gap by focusing on grassroots education. In this exclusive conversation, Mamta Saikia, the founder sheds light on the Foundation's efforts, their pioneering approaches, and the launch of the transformative Teachers App. The journey of the Bharti Airtel Foundation began with a mission to address the challenges faced by rural schools. "We've been working in education for over 24 years now," Mamta Saikia, the founder of the foundation shared. "When we talk about quality education, you'll find excellent schools in big cities. However, the real work - if we are serious about equitable education - needs to happen in villages where resources are limited." Punjab served as the Foundation's testing ground for impactful, scalable models. "In rural schools, even the teachers are from local villages. While they have potential, they lack structured training. That's where we came in, developing programmes to help these teachers enhance their classroom practices," she explained. The Foundation's efforts led to the introduction of academic mentors, a key initiative designed to create lasting improvements. These mentors regularly visit schools, working closely with teachers, principals and even students to address their unique needs. "We didn't just focus on teachers," the founder elaborated. "We also created student leaders. They are the most powerful agents of change. By fostering leadership among students, principals and teachers alike, we've created schools where children want to learn and teachers are motivated to teach." This vision materialized through the Quality Support Programme, initially launched in just eight schools but now reaching thousands. "We engage with schools for five years under this programme to ensure that the changes we introduce are sustainable. It's not about quick fixes - it's about fostering growth across the entire school ecosystem." A key element of the Foundation's model has been the introduction of clubs and houses in schools, bringing a vibrant energy to these institutions. "These activities

are more than extracurricular - they help students develop critical life skills such as communication, leadership, and stress management," she said. These efforts have equipped students with abilities that go beyond academics. "Leadership, confidence, and communication skills are essential for success in any field, and these activities provide a platform for students to build those skills." The impact of these programmes quickly caught the attention of progressive block and district education officers. "Many government officers recognized the potential of our model and invited us to collaborate on scaling it across their regions." To sustain this growth, the Foundation began training resource personnel at district and State levels. "This ensures that even when our direct engagement with schools ends, the practices we've introduced continue to benefit future generations." In its mission to revolutionize education in India, the Bharti Airtel Foundation has launched TheTeacherApp, a comprehensive platform designed to uplift schools by empowering teachers, school leaders, and educationists. At its core, the platform believes in creating happy and energized schools where teachers, students, and parents are actively engaged in the process of school transformation. The app seeks to bridge gaps in education by equipping teachers with high-quality, engaging content and tools that enable them to build better learning environments. The Foundation firmly believes that transformative education starts with empowered educators who can inspire and guide their students effectively. The Teachers App marks a new chapter in the Foundation's mission. Designed to empower educators, this digital platform provides curated resources tailored to their specific needs. "The app offers subject-focused content for teachers of classes eight and nine, but its scope goes beyond academics. It includes materials for principals

With a focus on grassroots impact and sustainable change, the Bharti Airtel Foundation is paving the way for a future where every child has access to quality education and every teacher is equipped to inspire. We have the Chief Executive Officer of the foundation, Mamta Saikia discussing it's innovative programmes, transforming schools into vibrant hubs of learning and more

and senior faculty to deepen their understanding of effective pedagogy," she explained. One of the app's standout features is the Green School initiative, which fosters an environmentally conscious mindset among teachers and students. "This program goes beyond planting trees. It's about equipping schools to integrate sustainability into their daily operations and educational practices." The app also addresses practical challenges faced by teachers, such as exam preparation and the need for innovative classroom strategies. "Every teacher, whether in private or government schools, needs a mentor. The Teachers App provides that mentorship, ensuring teachers are better equipped to nurture their students." Through the app, the foundation is not only addressing existing challenges in education but also laying the groundwork for a brighter, more inclusive future. By empowering teachers to reimagine their schools and instilling a renewed sense of purpose within the teaching community, the platform is driving the transformation of education in India - one classroom at a time. Concluding the conversation, the founder reflected on the broader goals of the Foundation. "Our ultimate aim is to build future citizens by strengthening the pillars of education. The fact that state governments are reaching out to us for support shows that we are on the right path," they remarked. Mamta emphasised that education reform isn't just about improving content delivery. "It's about creating schools where children love to learn, teachers enjoy teaching, and communities take pride in their institutions. By focusing on grassroots initiatives and leveraging technology like the Teachers App, we can ensure a brighter future for our country." These initiatives demonstrate how targeted, holistic efforts can address systemic challenges in education. With the Teachers App, the Quality Support Programme and their commitment to working with local communities, the Foundation is paving the way for meaningful, long-lasting change in the lives of India's students and educators.



## UNLOCKING THE FUTURE OF HEALTH WHY GENETIC TESTING MATTERS

In a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, precision medicine is no longer a distant dream—it's a present-day reality. At the core of this transformation lies genetic testing, a revolutionary tool that has the potential to unlock personalized healthcare for everyone. Whether you aim to manage chronic conditions, plan your family's future, or better understand your body, genetic testing offers actionable insights tailored to your unique biology. Our DNA is the blueprint of life, holding instructions that shape everything about us—from physical traits like eye color and height to our predisposition to specific diseases. Genetic testing dives deep into this blueprint, identifying variations in our genes that could impact our health. This knowledge empowers individuals and healthcare providers to make informed, personalized decisions, far beyond the limitations of generic recommendations.

### THE KEY BENEFITS OF GENETIC TESTING :

#### 1. Early Detection and Prevention

Genetic testing helps identify risks for conditions like cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. Early detection enables proactive measures that can save lives and improve outcomes.

#### 2. Precision Medicine

No two individuals are alike, so why should their treatments be? Genetic testing helps tailor medication plans to each person, minimizing side effects and optimizing effectiveness.

#### 3. Informed Family Health Decisions

For families, genetic testing provides invaluable insights into hereditary risks, empowering them to make better health and planning decisions.

#### 4. Lifestyle Tailored to

### Your Genes

Beyond medical applications, genetic testing can guide lifestyle choices, such as the most effective diet or exercise regimen for your unique genetic makeup. While the benefits of genetic testing are undeniable, it's natural to have concerns. Issues like privacy, the emotional toll of results, and cost are valid considerations. Fortunately, advancements in technology have made genetic testing more accessible, affordable, and secure. Genetic counseling further ensures individuals understand their results and can make informed decisions. Healthcare is shifting from treating illnesses to preventing them, and genetic testing is a cornerstone of this transition. It empowers individuals to take control of their health with knowledge rather than guesswork. At CianaHealth, we recognize the transformative potential of genetic testing in delivering personalized, evidence-based care. Our platform integrates genetic insights with a 360-degree view of patient health, offering tools like automated documentation, specialty workflows, and drug interaction checks. By harnessing the power of genetic testing, we help patients and providers create tailored wellness programs and manage hereditary risks with precision. As we embrace this new era of precision medicine, genetic testing should not just be an option—it should be an integral part of your healthcare strategy. The unique story written in your DNA holds the key to better health, not just for you, but for future generations. The future of healthcare is personal, proactive, and empowered by genetic insights. Let genetic testing be your first step toward unlocking it.

(The author, Dr. Geethika Nutakki, is the VP Business Development and Health Tech at CianaHealth.)

# GLAMPING WITH AN ECO-TWIST

PNS| HYDERABAD

Still etched in your memory is the breathtaking tent gala hosted by the Ambanis? It's time to elevate your expectations, as we introduce you to an unparalleled luxury experience - an exclusive tent city nestled in the heart of Maharashtra. This is where the majesty of the great outdoors converges with unparalleled opulence, redefining the art of wilderness escapades! As locals marvel at this splendor, they can't help but exclaim, "This is no ordinary tent city, but a luxury tenting experience that surpasses all expectations!" The buzz is palpable, the excitement is contagious and the allure is irresistible.

We see a tagline that reads "eco-glamping"—an amazing adventure that skillfully combines the splendour of nature with the comforts of upscale living! In the

realm of outdoor adventures, glamping has revolutionised the game. This is also true of Maharashtra Eco Glamping, which has suddenly swept the luxury vacation market. Picture exchanging primitive roughing-it for opulent comforts, where you may live under starry skies in luxurious suites that resemble safari tents. This type of glamping was inviting tourists to fully experience the beauty of nature without compromising their comfort level, as the boundaries between wilderness and wellness were becoming increasingly hazy. A memorable journey is promised by the glamping revolution, which included everything from yoga to riverbank experiences and gourmet meals to recycled linens.

The tranquil beauty of riverside experiences served as a reminder that a retreat can successfully blend the allure of outdoor activity. Indeed, adventures! A cycle tour around the pods, water sports and the luxury cruise experience and the

sunset's purple hues are just a few of the adventures that will leave you speechless in Gangapura Dam. Well, let's go on.

It would have been impossible to overlook the wine tasting at this eco-glamping experience, which is located in what the nation refers to as the capital of vineyards. Therefore, one of the things that they refer to as adventures is a wine-tasting trip at the top winery. We became more convinced that a dining experience could be as gourmet as this even in a local setting after taking part in indigenous cooking workshops in the middle of vineyards with a touch of that local Maharashtrian masalas: the Kara Dosa, Kolhapuri Misal Ki Sabzi, authentic Chicken Curry, Bajre Chi Bhakri and everything garnished with the poha, which is the signature ingredient of downtown Maharashtra. Similar to this, we had an agro-tourism workshop experience that gave us a fresh viewpoint on the industry while also touching the site's senses. The retreat's class on farming, gardening, picking your own veggies and other leisure pursuits will undoubtedly satisfy the goal of sustainability, which is what this glamping experience is ultimately intended to achieve.

Sustainability, indeed! There is one aspect of this entire event that cannot be ignored. It does nourish the world and the psyche when it is infused with a little sustainability.

"Sustainable vacations," as we like to call them, encourage us to walk lightly, give back generously and establish a close connection with nature. Every element, from carbon-neutral excursions to eco-lodges made from recycled linens, is intended to protect the delicate ecosystem's equilibrium. You will learn that the most lasting memories are those created with a clear conscience and a gentle footprint as you stroll through the pristine landscape at Girnare village, the canopy of trees that you can see from the other side of the river and how they are helping local communities by setting up these awesome workshops.

A bamboo cane entryway, a sustainable-looking shack housing those art and naturopathy courses and numerous other sustainable accents—how can we not call this a really eco-friendly experience?

Should we discuss the cultural aspect of it a bit? Oh, we adore the way this confluence of luxury, sustainability and culture is happening. The air of the Godavari was filled with the beautiful aroma of incense, the delicate chanting of mantras and the gentle lap of the river's waves as

evening fell upon the revered Panchvati ghats. The lake was awashed with flames as the priests lifted their diyas to the sky. The ghat's neighbouring temples gave us the impression that it was all more than a ceremony. You will feel the moments' celestial vitality. From there, you might consider going to the most well-known Jyotirlinga Trimbakeswar! You will be confronted by those strands of tradition and faith. As part of a cultural experience, we also need to visit the Pandavleni Caves, which are the ancient nooks and crannies of a bygone era. You may also

give Maharashtra tourism some credit for making these experiences come to life with the retreat and preserving the traditional legacy even when visitors are looking for a luxurious vacation. That's the way to go!

This memoir comes to a spectacular conclusion when the dholkars' deft hands brought the "nagadas" of Nashik's famous Dhol experience to life. Uff, there was an electrifying energy pulsing through the air. Visions of traditional Maharashtra culture were evoked with each Dhol. The stresses of the outside

world will melt away as you enjoy the glamping festival as it is renowned to be. According to the observation, it was about immersion rather than only accommodations. It was about enjoying the good things in life while integrating with the natural world.

For those who appreciate the outdoors or adventure, eco-glamping offers the conveniences of a luxurious lifestyle while allowing for constant reconnection. You may refer to it as a festival or a retreat, but one thing is certain: it is a tent city that is a magnificent wonder.



# what's brewing?



Famous Fashion Designer Harish Akkisetty recently launched Harishakisetty label New Collection at India Fashion Week London show produced by Manny Singh, the CEO and founder of Platinum Group.



PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary



Swathi Surpur



Hyderabad Insta Meet-2025 is attracting around 150 influencers, content creators, and thought leaders across various fields like food, lifestyle, fashion, travel, and technology. The event, led by popular food blogger Mohammad Zubair Ali of Hyderabad Food Diaries, took place at Quake Arena and was attended by Savyasachi Ghosh, Special Chief Secretary of Telangana Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development & Fisheries. Zubair highlighted the rise of new restaurants, pubs, and lounges in Hyderabad.



Jasmine



Iba Khan



Reeta



Chhaya



Mahek

Quality Thought, a renowned software training institute in Hyderabad, has announced a Generative AI Scholarship Test scheduled for February 2, 2025. This initiative aims to empower degree and B.Tech students, as well as IT professionals, by offering them a chance to enroll in a prestigious Generative AI course valued at one lakh rupees at no cost. The one-hour online or offline test will provide selected candidates with an intensive three-month training programme, including career guidance, certification preparation, and interview coaching. Quality Thought ensures comprehensive placement assistance.



Wipro Launches MyWiproVerse Hyderabad. Transforming Workspaces with Smart Lighting and Ergonomics Anuj Dhir, Senior Vice President & Business Head, Commercial & Institutional Business, Wipro Consumer Care & Lighting, said, "Modern workspaces are hubs for collaboration, innovation, and creativity. At Wipro, we are reimagining these spaces with the right balance of advanced technology and thoughtful design."

## FUN

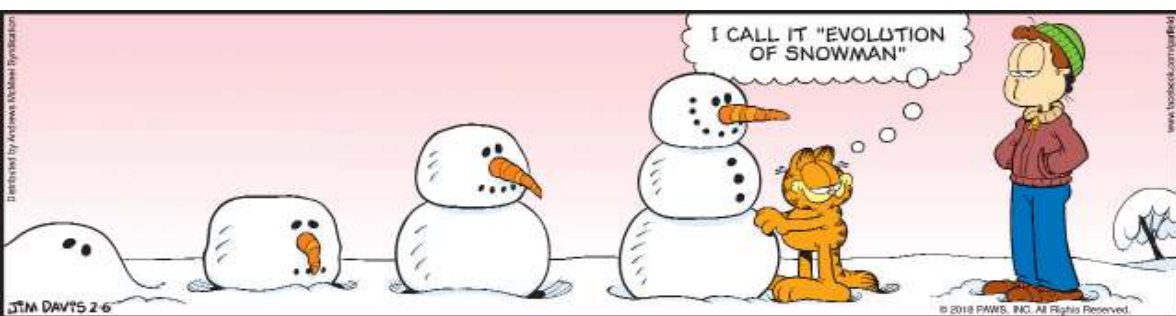
### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



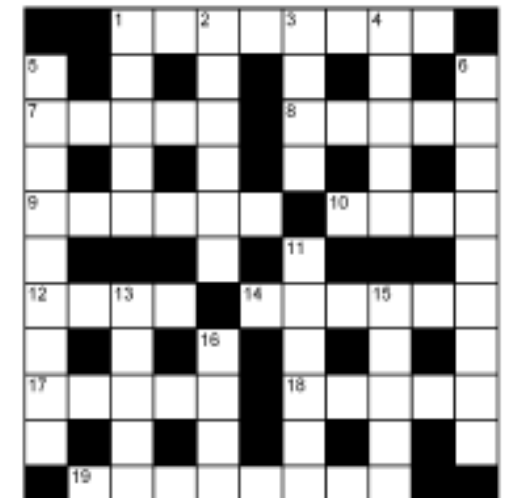
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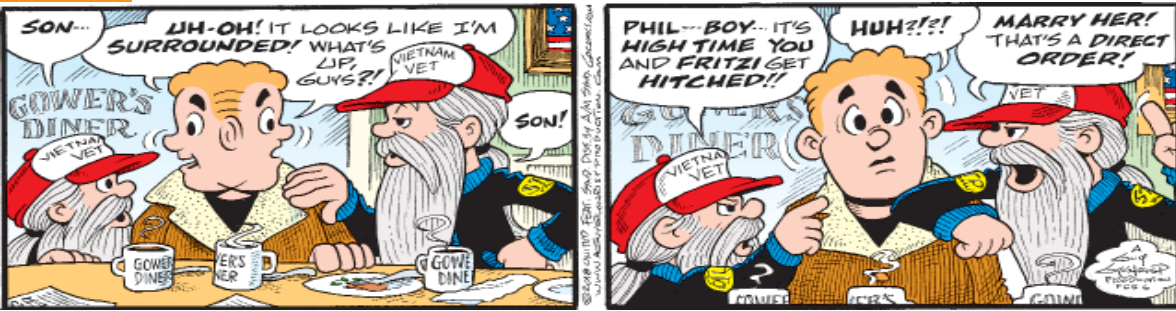
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- ACROSS**
- Stir a cup of coffee with this
  - Opposite of south
  - A very crowded country
  - The finish of a story
  - To snatch something
  - The sound a pig makes
  - Someone who helps sick people
  - The planet we live on
  - A singer's instrument
  - People who repair teeth
  - Letters are put in these
  - A takeaway food item
  - Blocks of bread
  - A tiny body part that carries messages to the brain
  - Opposite of heads on coins
  - Closed
- DOWN**
- Weary
  - Throbbing with pain
  - Two matching things
  - A command
- SOLUTION**
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### GINGER MEGGS



# Sankranthiki Vasthunnam is a case study for me: Director Anil Ravipudi

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
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Anil Ravipudi completed 10 years as director in the Telugu Film Industry (TFI) with his debut film 'Pataas' released on January 23, 2015. In these 10 years, he made eight films and all of them are hits. "From my debut film to now, I am getting appreciation and also bigger hits one after another," said Anil. "All my films done very well and I didn't see any low point except the two years pandemic, which is low for everyone," said the director.

His latest 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam' is heading towards a huge blockbuster and surprised many with its huge collections. Venkatesh played the lead actor, while Meenakshi Chaudhary and Aishwarya Rajesh are the female leads. "It is not an ordinary success; this film is now history, particularly when you see the revenue of the film. It also gave me a big relief, because somewhere a few people criticizing and with this film, that also cleared," said Anil.

When asked about a small kid uttering adult dialogues, he supported it. "There is so much impact on kids these days, because of the OTT. I wanted to tell through my kid character that if you watch some web series in OTT, they definitely spoil. So, I have to make the kid utter those dialogues."

For another question, he said, his dream was to become a director. "Yes, I wanted to be a director and my wish came true with my debut film 'Pataas'. All these films are a bonus," he said. "I give full credit to Nandamuri Kalyan Ram, who produced, acted and gave chance to me with 'Pataas'," said Anil. He added that his aim is not to disappoint audiences. "I always try to do something different from my earlier film. I don't want to repeat the characters or genre in my next film. I also took care that there is no resemblance of any character from my earlier film in my next film. After 'Bhagavanth Kesari', I did 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam', both are quite different genres. Also the success of my earlier film

gives confidence to do better in my next film."

The director said that family entertainers with comedy backdrop are always successful. "If you see films like 'Aa Okkati Adakku', 'Appula Apparao' and many others, which were successful in our earlier times, audience came to the theatre to get some laughs and I feel that I am providing it to them. If they laugh and enjoy watching my films, that's a big success for me," he said.

Talking about his films which are mostly entertainers, he said, "My strength is to provide entertainment. So, I can go with this kind of genre even in future also. But after the success of a couple of films, I can go for experiment," he said.

When asked about some people criticizing his films of being 'Jabardasth' skits and he was good at it, he reacted very angrily, saying, "Where did I write a 'Jabardasth' skit? All these years a few people are criticizing and I want to answer them with my films. Take my latest film which is getting humorous response and it is creating history in collections, audience watching it and enjoying it. What proof you need than this? I don't want to answer that kind of a question, audience will reply for it."

When he made 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam', his thought was that audience who likes his earlier 'F2' may come and watch this one too. "But it reached beyond my expectations and its shocking and surprising," he said. He added that people are eager to watch entertainment movies.

The director said that he couldn't sleep the night before his film's release. "When the shooting was

happening and then promotions, I was normal. But when it's come to release, I couldn't sleep the night before, because I was a bit scared about it," he said. "I pray God that the film is a success on the first day," he added.

The director said he didn't change much from his debut film till now in these 10 years. "Now, I am a matured person and like earlier, I am not responding to any small criticism or for any small thing. That's the only thing I learnt.

**DIRECTOR ANIL RAVIPUDI COMPLETED 10 YEARS AS DIRECTOR IN THE TFI. HE TALKS ABOUT HIS JOURNEY, HIS LATEST FILM, HIS UPCOMING FILM WITH CHIRANJEEVI AND MORE...**

Otherwise, I am the same person," said Anil. He added that actors like Ravi Teja, Mahesh Babu and Venkatesh perfectly match his comedy timing. "Other actors also did, but their strengths are different. But these three actors perfectly catch my comedy punches and dialogues," said

the director with his experience.

For another question, he said he will watch all movies

releasing on every Friday. "I watch all the movies and I feel that it is part of a learning process," he said. For characters in his films, he is inspired from real ones. "I always observe my surroundings, people around me, observe the society, when I meet some people, I observe them and get inspiration for all my characters. I always get inspired by real people to portray my characters," said Anil.

After the successful 'F2', Anil made the sequel to it 'F3', but the sequel was not much of a success. "If I continue the film where the 'F2' ends, like Venkatesh and Tamannah having kids and their problems started with them, it is going to be more success than the first one. But with an overconfidence, I made a different story. If I follow like 'DJ Tillu' and then 'Tillu Square', 'F3' could be done better," said Anil, about his sequel.

The director generally takes senior actor Rajendra Prasad in his films, but in this film he missed him. "Initially, I wanted to rope in for the Chief Minister's role, but I wanted to work with Naresh. So, I planned a surprising role for Rajendra Prasad in the second half, but somehow missed him in this film," said Anil.

Talking about 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam's' result, he said, he couldn't imagine. "Particularly this film's success, I can't imagine, because it went to roots and it's surprising to everyone and also to me. I didn't understand why this film became that much success. The final revenue definitely shocks everyone. This film is a case study for me and I have to sit and analyze it," said the director.

Anil's next film is with Megastar Chiranjeevi and asked about it, he said, "It's too early to talk about the film as we are still doing our homework about the genre and the story. I want to come up with a different story which he didn't do till now". Anil said that he is happy as a director and doesn't want to produce films. "I am happy as director and want to provide entertainment," said Anil.

He said he will work on the script for three to four months and then for the shoot of his film five to six months. "One film a year is good," he said.



## Has Rajamouli started shooting Mahesh's film?

This is the question doing rounds everywhere around Film Nagar. Generally, Rajamouli will hold a media conference before going to his film shoot and explain about his film. He did this for all his films till now. But when it comes to his upcoming film with Superstar Mahesh Babu, he is tight-lipped. He launched the film with utmost secrecy, without a picture coming out from it. Though some of the unit people attended the launch along with the lead actor, director and producer's families, not a single glimpse from it has come out. He has taken utmost care about it and even now, he is shooting the film with utmost secrecy, said a source.

Unofficially, a unit source confirmed that Priyanka Chopra is the leading lady in his film opposite Mahesh, and the actress is in town recently. She visited Chilkur Balaji temple and shared the pictures in her social media. But she didn't put any word about Rajamouli's film or Mahesh Babu in her post. She said there is a 'new chapter' in her life, but she didn't mention what is new. She thanked Upasana Kamineni Konidela in her post. Maybe, her new chapter means that she is working in a Telugu film, some people assume.

It seems, Rajamouli started the shooting first with the lead pair and then went abroad for further shooting of his film. "Maybe, he is taking some workshops with the lead pair which he usually does. So, she landed in the city for it," said another source.

As he announced earlier, this film is an adventurous one like 'Indiana Jones'. So, it needs lot of action scenes and for that he may be training the lead pair, opines a source from the industry. Whatever it may be, director Rajamouli chose not to reveal anything about his upcoming



## After a long time, Naga Shaurya's film announcement

Actor Naga Shaurya is maintaining a complete low profile these days. The actor's last film 'Rangabali' was released in the year 2023 and it has not done well. From then onwards, there was no news from the actor and now, on the occasion of his birthday, a look from his upcoming film was unveiled.

The actor is working with a debutant Raam Desina for his upcoming titled 'Bad Boy Karthik', which is produced by Srinivasa Rao Chintalapudi. According to the makers, the film is an out-and-out action entertainer. To mark Naga Shaurya's birthday, the title and first look of the film

were unveiled on Wednesday.

According to the title, the story reflects the intense nature of Naga Shaurya's character. Notably, the word 'BAD' has been conspicuously removed from the van in the picture, subtly hinting at his character's aggressive nature and indicating the film's action-packed genre.

Vidhi is playing the female lead opposite Naga Shaurya. Samuthirakani, Sr Naresh, Saikumar, Vennela Kishore and Sridevi Vijaykumar are also there in key roles. The makers said that the shoot is nearing completion and the release date of this film will be announced in the coming days.



## Razakar won many film awards: Director



Director Yata Satyanarayana of 'Razakar' film fame is happy that his film is now streaming on OTT on January 24. "Though the film was released some time back, the delay in screening an OTT is due to film festivals and a Hindi release," said the director. He added that he sent it for many film festivals and won appreciation. "Our film received fantastic response in Hindi, Marathi and other languages. Out of 18 film festivals we applied to, we were selected for 15. It was recognized as the Best Indian Debut at the IFFI held in Goa, where I was nominated for Best Director," he said.

He added that representatives from 75 countries at the Goa Film Festival appreciated the film, and 72 countries attended its screening at the Jaipur Film Festival. They were all astonished to learn about such a significant chapter in India's freedom struggle. The film has won multiple awards. The film is now screening on Aha OTT channel from January 24.

The director said that he wrote many stories on Telangana's history. "I have 20 more stories about the heroes from Telangana's history, and I plan to turn them into films as soon as possible," said Satyanarayana.

## Rashmika Mandanna on a wheelchair, attended promotions

Actress Rashmika Mandanna, nicknamed as National Crush, is on a wheelchair, travelling to Mumbai for her upcoming Hindi film 'Chhaava's' promotions. The actress recently injured her leg while doing her gym and was unable to walk. Doctors advised her rest. It seems the actress couldn't sit idle at home and wanted to promote her Hindi film. So she came out and travelled to Mumbai in a wheelchair. This shows her dedication and commitment towards her professional work. She simply says 'no' to promotions because of her situation, but she travelled in a wheelchair and attended the promotions with a limping leg. A video of the actress travelling in a wheelchair is doing rounds on the

internet and social media. She was limping from her car to wheelchair and then she got help from her team. It is evident that she can't walk on her own.

After the blockbuster 'Animal', Rashmika is the most wanted, both in Hindi and also in down south. This is a big period project and she wanted to do her part to help the film. So she travelled, says a source. Vicky Kaushal is playing the lead character of Chhatrapathi Sambhaji Maharaj, while Rashmika is playing the role of Yesubai. The look of Rashmika was released a few days back and it got positive response from everywhere.



## Vikram's sequel locks the release date

Vikram is another Tamil actor, whose popularity in Telugu is big like many other actors. Actually, Vikram started his career with Telugu films and then settled in Tamil. All his films are dubbed into Telugu and they became super hits here also. Last year, his 'Thangalaan' was released in Telugu and was successful. Now, his upcoming film 'Veera Dheera Sooran' part 2 is releasing in Telugu along with the Tamil

version on March 27. Interestingly, the first part of 'Veera Dheera Sooran' started production a few years back, but later dropped. Now, the makers of this film put the title as 'Veera Dheera Sooran' part 2 and it is directed by SU Arun Kumar. SJ Suryah, Sooraj Venjaramudu and Dushara Vijayan are the other key actors in this film. GV Prakash Kumar is providing the music, while Riya Shibu is

the producer. This film revolves around Kaali, played by Vikram, a common and normal person involved in a dangerous crime network and what happened to him, why he was involved is the story, according to reports. The makers now officially announced the film release on March 27 in all languages. So, one hopes that Vikram is coming up with another stellar performance with this one.



# Australian Open: Swiatek will face Madison Keys in semifinals

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Iga Swiatek is dominating her Australian Open opponents the way no one has at Melbourne Park since Maria Sharapova in 2013. Swiatek's latest lopsided win came via a 6-1, 6-2 score in the quarterfinals against No. 8 seed Emma Navarro on Wednesday. The No. 2-seeded Swiatek not only has not dropped a set so far in the tournament, but also has lost a grand total of only 14 games as she seeks her first title at Melbourne Park and sixth Grand Slam trophy overall. Sharapova was the last woman to reach the Australian Open semifinals having dropped fewer than 15 games. "She does everything with 100% conviction and intensity," Navarro said about Swiatek. "She has a different style of movement and play. It's tough to not be sort of affected by that and not feel like, OK, I have to do everything at the same speed that she's doing it." So that was something, for sure, I felt a little bit today." Swiatek will face No. 19 Madison Keys of the U.S. On Thursday

night for a berth in the final. The other women's semifinal is No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka, the two-time defending champion, against her good friend, No. 11 Paula Badosa. Keys, whose best showing at a major was getting to the title match at the 2017 U.S. Open, was a 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 winner against Elena Svitolina and is into her third semifinal in Australia. "Iga is tough to beat, because she has a lot of spin, kind of naturally, on both sides. She's a good server. She's a good returner. She moves incredibly well," Keys said. "The biggest thing that makes her so difficult to beat is, because she moves so well, if you miss your spot just slightly, she has enough time to recover, and then the point goes back to neutral." There's an American in the men's semifinals, too: No. 21 Ben Shelton got that far in Melbourne for the first time with an entertaining 6-4, 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (4) win over unseeded Lorenzo Sonego of Italy. Shelton was a semifinalist at the 2023 U.S. Open and now will meet No. 1 Jannik Sinner, the defending champion, or No. 8 Alex de Minaur in that round. Sinner faced



de Minaur on Wednesday night. The other men's semifinal Friday is Novak Djokovic vs. Alexander Zverev.

Against Navarro, Swiatek benefited from a no-call of a double bounce on a point she won in the second set. Because Navarro

continued playing the point and did not immediately stop to ask for a video review, she wasn't allowed to have the sequence checked.

Either way, Swiatek's dominance was pretty clear, even if she was modest about things afterward. "Well, I think it was much more tougher than the score says," said Swiatek, a 23-year-old from Poland. "Emma's a fighter ... And I wanted to stay focused and keep my intensity." Swiatek has won four of five career matchups against Keys, 29. "Madison is a great player and experienced, so you never know," Swiatek said. "I'll be just focused on myself." Using a new racket this season, Keys is on a 10-match winning streak, including a title at a hard-court tune-up event in Adelaide. Her run to the semifinals in Melbourne includes victories over two past runners-up at the Australian Open, Danielle Collins and Elina Rybakina. Keys' past losses in the semifinals in Melbourne came against eventual champions Serena Williams in 2015 and Ash Barty in 2022. "I think I play a little bit smarter for sure ... Probably a little bit less fearless," Keys said. Svitolina, a three-time Slam

semifinalist, was in control during the first set. But Keys made some tactical adjustments, including looking for more opportunities to get to the net. She won 23 of the 26 points when she moved forward and ended up with a total of 49 winners, 23 on her powerful forehand side. The one difficulty Keys had was getting going in her return games. But she finally converted her seventh break chance to lead 4-2 in the second set. "Getting to the point where I'm starting to appreciate my career for what it has been, and it doesn't have to have a Grand Slam in order for me to look at it and say, I've done a really good job, and I've really left everything out there." Now, while that's obviously still the goal, there have been periods of my career where it felt like if I didn't win one, then I hadn't done enough," Keys said. "That kind of took a lot of the fun out of the game, and there were times where it felt paralyzing out on the court because it felt as if I needed it to happen, instead of giving myself the opportunity to go out and potentially do it.



## There was a sense of fear during rehabilitation: Shami

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Seasoned India pacer Mohammed Shami has revealed that he was gripped by a sense of fear when he began his rehabilitation after a long injury layoff, but managed to overcome that phase by training his mind to stay focussed on the national comeback. Shami was sidelined after the lost ODI World Cup final against Australia in November 2023 due to an ankle injury that required surgery. "The recovery from that was followed by a swelling on his left knee during the domestic comeback some weeks back. Following his inclusion in India's Champions Trophy squad, his return has garnered national attention. He is also in the squad for the five-match T20I series against England beginning here later this evening. "I waited for an entire year and I worked very hard (to get back to full fitness). There was a sense of fear (of getting injured during rehabilitation) even while running," Shami said in a video posted by BCCI. "It is difficult for any player to get injured after being in full flow, go to the NCA (National Cricket Academy) for rehabilitation and then make a comeback," he added. The cricketer, however, said an athlete is far more determined after dealing with an injury. "When you go through injuries, I feel you grow stronger as an athlete, this is

what I feel. Because you have to repeat a lot of things while being mentally strong." Shami went through the domestic grind, representing his home state Bengal in the Ranji Trophy, Syed Mushtaq and Vijay Hazare but a swelling in his knee finally ruled him out of the five-match Border-Gavaskar Test series in Australia. On his competitive return in the Ranji Trophy, he guided Bengal to their first win of the season with a seven-wicket haul. He followed it up with impressive performances in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (11 wickets) and the Vijay Hazare Trophy (five wickets). Shami's T20I career has been sporadic, with just 23 appearances since his debut in 2014. His last outing in the format was against England in the 2022 T20 World Cup semifinal. The 34-year-old said he has overcome the setbacks and is raring to go. "Whatever is done, is done. I have crossed that (injury) phase. If you work hard you will get the results. That's what I believe in. If you get injured you have to make a comeback for your team for your country. So fight and grow," he said. "If you are strong and believe in yourself and you have confidence in your abilities, have self-belief, then I don't think you will find any difference. Confidence is important for any task," he added.

## Big wins for England, Australia in U19 Women's T20 World Cup

PTI ■ JOHOR

Opener Davina Perrin smashed a fine half-century and Trudy Johnson put up a fine all-round show as England crushed the United States of America (USA) by eight wickets to climb to the top of Pool B in the U19 Women's T20 World Cup, here Wednesday. Bangladesh, New Zealand and Australia were the other winners on the day. Bangladesh overcame Scotland by 18 runs, New Zealand defeated Samoa by 67 runs, while Australia were menacing in their 83-run win over Nepal. England flexed their muscle by chasing down 120 in 14.2 overs with opener Perrin scoring a 45-ball 74, studded with nine boundaries and three sixes. Johnson hit an unbeaten 44 after taking two wickets for



17 runs. Prisha Thanawala (2/20) also contributed in restricting USA to 119/5. USA captain Anika Kolan led the charge with the bat, shoring their innings with an unbeaten 46 off 42 balls. Bangladesh outlasted Scotland in Group D after managing 121/9 and then restricting the opponents to 103/8 in the allotted overs.

Captain Sumaiya Akter top-scored for Bangladesh with an unbeaten 29 off 36 deliveries. She was supported by Afia Ashima Era (21 off 19) and Juairiya Ferdous (20 off 32). Scotland were courageous in their chase with Pippa Sproul scoring a 41-ball 43 but they couldn't get over the line.

In another match, New Zealand sealed a 67-run win against tournament newcomers Samoa. The Kiwis scored 107/9 in 17 overs and dismissed Samoa for 40 in 14.2 overs. Eye Wolland (48) shone with the bat while Rishika Jaswal (3/12) and skipper Tash Wakelin (3/3) excelled with the ball. Olive Lefaga Lemoe made history by taking Samoa's first ever ICC Women's U19 World Cup wicket, dismissing New Zealand star Kate Irwin caught-and-bowled for a duck. Australia had an easy outing against Nepal, defeating the Asian side by 83 runs after scoring 139/6. Nepal could only muster 56/8 in 20 overs with Lily Bassingthwaite (2/4), Juliette Morton (2/10) and Hasrat Gill (2/9) taking two wickets each.



## India will adhere to dress code set by ICC at CT: BCCI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian cricket team will adhere to the dress code set by the ICC during the upcoming Champions Trophy, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI on Wednesday, rejecting speculation that the Board had objected to host Pakistan's name on the side's official jersey. "BCCI will follow every uniform-related ICC rule during Champions Trophy," Saikia told PTI. "Whatever the other teams will do regarding the logo and dress code, we are going to follow in true letter and spirit," he added. However, Saikia said that whether national captain Rohit Sharma participates in the ICC's pre-tournament engagements, including a press conference and an official photo shoot in Lahore, is something that is still being discussed. "Whether Rohit Sharma travels to Pakistan for ICC media engagements is something that's still not decided," Saikia added. There were some unconfirmed media reports that the BCCI had objected to

the host nation's name being embossed on their jersey, which is an established practice for all ICC events, owing to the tense political ties between the two countries. It is understood that there was never any doubt about following the logo guidelines and the BCCI did not raise concerns with the global body. When Pakistan came to India in 2023 for the 50-over ICC World Cup, Babar Azam and his men duly sported the host country's name on their jerseys as part of the tournament protocol. The Champions Trophy is being conducted under a 'Hybrid Model' for the first time as BCCI didn't get permission from the Indian government to travel to Pakistan. India will play all its matches, including the marquee league match against the arch-rivals from across the border, in Dubai. In case, the Indian team reaches the semi-final and subsequently final, the two matches will be played in Dubai as well. As far as Rohit Sharma visiting Pakistan is concerned, the matter is still under consideration and there are certain issues that the Indian cricket board needs to consider if its captain visits Pakistan for a customary photo-shoot and pre-event press conference.

## AB de Villiers wants to play cricket again

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

AB de Villiers wants to play "real cricket" again. Not in the high-pressure environment of IPL but somewhere "casual" to have a bit of fun and please his children. De Villiers retired from all of forms of cricket in November 2021 to spend more time with his family. The 40-year-old former South Africa captain is now involved with multiple projects in charity and broadcasting. He is also the brand ambassador of the ongoing SA20. But in a chat with Melinda Farrell on her Youtube channel, de Villiers let it slip that he wishes to play the game again. "I might still play cricket one day. No confirmation whatsoever. My kids are putting me under a bit of



pressure and I feel like I could go to the nets with them," de Villiers said referring his three children - two sons Abraham and John, and daughter Yente. "My boy could feel me bowling machine balls... Maybe I will walk out and play a bit of casual cricket somewhere," he added.

De Villiers hinted at playing proper cricket outside the lens of professional leagues like the IPL. "I am talking on a more serious note, actually, of playing some real cricket not professional IPL or SA20 stuff but who knows? I have had my fair share (of high pressure cricket), that's done," he said.

A slight challenge to that ambition is his eye sight, especially the "bit blurry" left one. "This right one is the dominant one, it is working fine. I am doing it for my kids and see if I can go out there and enjoy cricket again. Even if it is very casual and see where we draw the line. "We are not talking RCB (Royal Challengers Bengaluru) and some stuff. I don't want to feel that pressure again. Wherever I go I would want to have bit of fun," added the batting great, whose wide range of strokes, some of them quite unconventional, earned him the moniker 'Mr 360'. De Villiers represented South Africa in 114 Tests, 228 ODIs and 78 T20s. The power-hitter holds the record for the fastest 50 (16 balls), 100 (31 balls) and 150 (64balls) in the ODI format.

## Praggnanandhaa crushes Mendonca to sole lead Tata Masters

PTI ■ WUJIK AAN ZEE

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa crashed through the defences of fellow Indian Leon Luke Mendonca to jump into sole lead after the fourth round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament here. Praggnanandhaa started off with an innocuous Ruy Lopez closed but found his chances in the middle game when Mendonca, clearly being the rookie here, could not handle the pressure of another high-profile game. It was another day when Praggnanandhaa found the fire to score his third win on the trot after 46 moves. Interestingly, all of Praggnanandhaa's victories have come at the expense of the Indians so far in the tournament, with the GM now looking forward to the clash against world champion D Gukesh.

Praggnanandhaa's victories have come at the expense of the Indians so far in the tournament, with the GM now looking forward to the clash against world champion D Gukesh. The game remained level for a long time and eventually both players got a new queen on the board with Sarana only having the final say with an extra Bishop. With no pawns left, the result was anyone's guess and the game ended in a draw soon after. P Harikrishna dumped Max Warmerdam of Holland to stake his claim in the tournament. The Indian was brought in after Vidit Gujrathi withdrew at the last moment. Harikrishna's score of 2.5 points from four games more than justifies his presence here. It was a Catalan opening and Warmerdam did not know what hit him as he found all the white pieces around his king despite the



trade of queens earlier in the opening. Harikrishna made short work of his opponent, winning in a mere 23 moves.

Just four days back, Arjun Erigaisi was on the top of the world but it has all come crashing down as he lost another game

against Vladimir Fedoseev, the Russian who now plays for Slovenia. It was another bad day in office for Erigaisi as his tactical

ability surrendered before his opponent's prophylactic thinking. Just out of the opening, Erigaisi was worse and then came close to winning in the queen pawn opening. But a blunder cost him dearly as he walked into a worse endgame. Fedoseev won a piece and never looked back. In the challengers' section, R Vaishali made a huge comeback at the expense of Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan and Divya Deshmukh proved her critics wrong with an exemplary victory over Ediz Gurel of Turkey. After a day that saw seven wins with white pieces in this section, Vaishali was at her best scrolling the tactical possibilities out of a queen's gambit declined and found her niche as Yakubboev forgot to take care of his weakened king. Vaishali, never shy of tactics, wrapped it up quickly. Divya had to wait for the fourth round for her first victory, and it was a clean triumph wherein the Indian outplayed Gurel, who played black. Winning a pawn was crucial for

Divya and after that her endgame skills were clearly on the fore as she won in 56 moves. **Results - Round 4: Masters:** P Harikrishna (Ind, 2.5) beat Max Warmerdam (Ned, 1); Arjun Erigaisi lost to Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 2.5); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 2.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 1.5); R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 2.5) beat Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 0.5); Wei Yi (Chn, 2) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 3); Divya Deshmukh proved her critics wrong with an exemplary victory over Ediz Gurel of Turkey. After a day that saw seven wins with white pieces in this section, Vaishali was at her best scrolling the tactical possibilities out of a queen's gambit declined and found her niche as Yakubboev forgot to take care of his weakened king. Vaishali, never shy of tactics, wrapped it up quickly. Divya had to wait for the fourth round for her first victory, and it was a clean triumph wherein the Indian outplayed Gurel, who played black. Winning a pawn was crucial for Divya and after that her endgame skills were clearly on the fore as she won in 56 moves. **Results - Round 4: Masters:** P Harikrishna (Ind, 2.5) beat Max Warmerdam (Ned, 1); Arjun Erigaisi lost to Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 2.5); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 2.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 1.5); R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 2.5) beat Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 0.5); Wei Yi (Chn, 2) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 3); Divya Deshmukh proved her critics wrong with an exemplary victory over Ediz Gurel of Turkey. After a day that saw seven wins with white pieces in this section, Vaishali was at her best scrolling the tactical possibilities out of a queen's gambit declined and found her niche as Yakubboev forgot to take care of his weakened king. Vaishali, never shy of tactics, wrapped it up quickly. Divya had to wait for the fourth round for her first victory, and it was a clean triumph wherein the Indian outplayed Gurel, who played black. Winning a pawn was crucial for Divya and after that her endgame skills were clearly on the fore as she won in 56 moves.