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BRING AS MANY INDIANS INTO MARKET ECOSYSTEM: BUCH



I am choosy, because of these reasons: **BRAHMANAND** QUOTE OF THE DAY the pioneer The Congress Government introduced the BhuBharati Portal in place of the Dharani Portal assuring that encroached lands will be taken back and given to the poor. One Minister himself has been helping his relatives to grab government lands with the Revenue Department's help. He delivered lectures in the Assembly but now is helping his relatives to grab tribal lands worth Rs 1,500 crore defying HC orders — Raghunandan Rao, BJP MP

Eluru district wins PM's Award

Eluru district has been honoured with the prestigious 'Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration 2023'. The Government introduced this scheme to acknowledge and reward exemplary work by civil servants across the country. For 2023, the scheme was revised to recognise the contributions of civil servants in the holistic development of districts under various government schemes. The award honours the efforts of those working to implement the welfare programmes of both the State and Central Governments...

India will lead in every sector by 2047

India will be number one in the world in every sector when it celebrates 100 years of Independence in 2047, Union Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday. Addressing the 18th convocation ceremony of Ganpat University, he also asked the youth to focus on acquiring knowledge instead of just a degree and to cultivate a culture of cooperation instead of culture of competition. Though there are challenges in front of today's youth, many opportunities have also been created for them by...

Infosys says H1B visa dependence lowered

Days after HCLTech said it has lowered reliance on H1B visas, Infosys on Thursday reported a significant decrease in its dependence on this visa category and exuded confidence in its ent" operational mode the years, our dependence on H1B visas has reduced significantly First and foremost, our onsite mix has reduced significantly -- we used to be in the 30 per cent range, (but) we are now at the 24 per cent range. Within that, our near shore has increased significantly..

-PAGE: 8

Women must make this year their best

Smriti Mandhana believes India's back-to-back 3-0 series wins against the West Indies and Ireland have provided the perfect momentum for making it their "best year in one-dayers" as the team gears up for the 50-over World Cup at home, India will host the women's ODI World Cup later this year and the team, which has been able to rediscover its form with six consecutive ODI wins. should drive home the advantage now, says Mandhana. "Two 3-0 sweeps are definitely really good in a World Cup year...

All systems on track: CM

SAYS AP EYES 15% GROWTH RATE AND \$42,000 PER CAPITA INCOME BY 2047

PNS VIJAYAWADA

"The people of Andhra Pradesh have reposed their faith in me, believing that with my return, the State will move on a progressive path and wealth can be generated through employment opportunities," observed Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, on Thursday.

During a PowerPoint presentation at the State Secretariat on the growth rate in the State, the Chief Minister assured that he would certainly maintain the people's trust and implement plans aimed at achieving a 15 per cent growth rate. "We have set a target of \$42,000 per capita income by 2047," he added.

Regretting the total collapse of systems over the past five years, which left the State in a state of turmoil, Naidu said that in the name of three capitals, Amaravati has been completely disregarded, while the Polavaram project, the lifeline for the people of the State, has also been neglected. The situation was so dire that even the natives of Andhra Pradesh were hesitant to invest in the State, he remarked. He further stated that the people have entrusted him with the responsibility to lead the State from destruction to development.

Making it clear that wealth generation is possible only through development, the Chief Minister said that if the State's revenue grows, it



- CM regrets the destruction of systems over the past five years, with key projects like Amaravati and Polavaram neglected
- Emphasises wealth generation through development and welfare, with plans to eliminate poverty

vated people's lives," he said.

introduced, which helped Telangana

can be utilised for welfare probecome the leader in per capita grammes, ultimately eliminating income, Naidu said that Telugu are poverty. "This is the economic polnow the highest-earning communiicy I strongly believe in. When I ty worldwide. "I am now laying the spoke about IT in 1995, people foundation for second-generation laughed at me, but today, IT has eleeconomic reforms. I also introduced the open sky policy for air-Pointing to the Vision 2020 he ports and laid the foundation stone

for the Shamshabad airport," the

on profitable farming Announces the launch of WhatsApp governance

and improvements in roads and amenities

progress in Amaravati and Polavaram, and a focus

Chief Minister recalled. The State Government is progressing with the Swarnandhra Vision-2047 and has set a target of becoming a \$2.4 trillion economy. The Chief Minister mentioned that the growth rate has increased by 4.03 per cent compared to last year.

LOCAL BODY POLLS

Only candidates with more than 2 kids eligible: Naidu

want to

share the

money

they

use those

riches for

their own

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has said that a person can

become a sarpanch, municipal councillor or mayor only if he/she has more than two children, hinting that it will arrest the falling population.
Naidu said he will bring

out policies to encourage people to have more chil-

"At one time, individuals with many children were not allowed to contest the panchayat (election) or local bodies. Now what I am saying is that individuals with lower numbers of children cannot contest. You will be a sarpanch, municipal councillor, corporation chairman or a mayor only if you have more than two children," he told reporters in Naravaripalle here recentenjoyment

According to the CM, North India may lose its advantage of having a stable fertility rate in

The TDP supremo noted that the to send them. We came to that sitolder generations had more chil-

dren, while the current generation

brought it down to one child and also highlighted that some 'smart' people nowadays are going for dou-ble income no kids (DINK) concept

P4

"Your parents bore four The CM to five children and you said some reduced it to one. Even smarter people now are couples are saying double income no averse to kids let us enjoy. If their having parents had thought like them, they would not have children come into this world," he nowadays because

All countries made this mistake, and we have to decide at the right time, they do not said Naidu, adding that the importance of having more children was not stressed and the situation went out of hand. earned and Citing countries like

South Korea Japan and continental Europe, he said people in those places did not realise the danger of plummeting populations but only focused on creating wealth, raising income

and taking those countries for-

"Now they need people, we have uation," Naidu added.



CM presents Rs 25L to Test cricketer Nitish

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu presented young cricketer Nitish Kumar Reddy with a Rs 25 lakh cheque on Thursday, recognising his exceptional performance during a recent cricket tour of Australia.

Nitish, a Visakhapatnam native and a member of the Indian Cricket Team, earned accolades for his stellar contributions, including a hero-

ic maiden century.

Accompanied by his father Muthyala Reddy and officials from the Andhra Cricket Association

(ACA), Nitish met CM Naidu at the Secretariat in Velagapudi. During their interaction, the Chief Minister praised Nitish's achievements and assured him of a house site as a reward for his success, as announced by ACA president Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni).

Later, Nitish was felicitated by Minister for HRD and IT, Nara Lokesh, who commended his performance in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test series. CM Naidu also shared his praise on social media. wishing Nitish further success and congratulating his family for their support.

'Swachha Andhra-Swachh Diwas' on 3rd Saturday of every month: CS 4 youths drown at Pakala Beach in Prakasam

Four youths, including two young girls, drowned in the sea at Pakala Beach in Singarayakonda mandal of Prakasam district on Thursday evening.

Police said a group of six friends had gone to the beach for a recreational outing. While enjoying the Minister for Social Welfare Dola Balaveeranjaneya Swamy water, they were swept away by a strong wave. The deceased have been identified as Nosina Jessica (16). Nosina Madhav (25), Kondabattuni Yamini (16), and T Pawan (22). Their bodies were recovered from the sea and shifted to the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Kandukur for post-mortem. Local villagers reported that Nosina Madhav had recently married Nosina Navya, who was fortunately rescued by local fishermen.

All the deceased hailed from Thimmapalem village in Ponnaluru mandal. The village is now



shrouded in grief following this tragic incident. SP AR Damodhar and Minister for Social Welfare Dola Balaveeranjaneya Swamy visited the beach to assess the situation. MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy, MLAs Damacharla Janardhan Rao, Enturi Nageswara Rao, and State Tourism Corporation Chairman Dr Nukasani Balaji expressed their shock over the loss of lives.

3 die as vehicle falls into canal

KAKINADA: Three persons died and a few more were injured when the vehicle they were travelling in fell into a dry canal in Kakinada district on Thursday, a police official said. The accident occurred at Gopal Cheruvu area in Vommangi village of er lost control of the vehicle. "The

Prathipadu mandal when the drivvehicle was on its way to

Darapalli waterfalls from Kakinada and was carrying 20 people," said the official in a release. The injured persons were shifted to Prathipadu government hospital for treatment, the official added

Centre to set up 8th pay panel

PNS NEW DELHI

In a major decision, the government on Thursday decided to set up the 8th Pay Commission to revise salaries of central government employees and allowances of pensioners.

The decision to set up the 8th Pay Commission was taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. The term of the 7th Pay

Commission will end in 2026.

"Prime Minister has approved 8th Central Pay Commission for central government employees," the minister said.

Shah's AP tour from tomorrow

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will embark on a twoday visit to Andhra Pradesh on January 18 and 19. His itinerary includes high-profile meetings and participation in significant events across the NTR, Krishna, and Guntur districts.

On January 18, Shah will arrive at Gannavaram Airport at 5:50 pm via a BSF flight from New Delhi. He will head to the residence of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in Undavalli, where he is set to meet CM Naidu and Deputy

Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan at 9:10 pm. The discussions will be followed by a dinner hosted by the Chief Minister. Shah will then stay overnight at Hotel Novotel in Vijayawada.

The next day, January 19, the Home Minister will inaugurate the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) South Čampus at Kondapavuluru in Gannavaram Mandal at 11:15

am. Following this, he will attend the 20th Foundation Day celebrations of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) 10th Battalion.

TDP membership crosses 1 cr-mark

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has surpassed 1 crore memberships in its registration campaign, launched on October 26, 2024, by party President and Chief Minister N. Ćhandrababu Naidu. The drive, conducted across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and the Andaman Islands, has drawn over 1,00,52,598 members, making TDP the largest

political family in the state. With a tech-driven approach led by TDP National General Secretary Nara Lokesh, the campaign ensured easy registration.

India achieves first space docking

ISRO SUCCESSFULLY DOCKS SPADEX SATELLITES

PNS BENGALURU

In a major boost to India's ambitious future space missions, ISRO on Thursday successfully performed the docking of satellites as part of the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) and announced that post docking, control of two satellites as a single object was also achieved.

"India docked its name in space history! Good Morning India ISRO's SpaDeX mission accomplishes historic docking success. Proud to witness this moment!", ISRO said in a post on 'X'.

With the successful docking of satellites -- Chaser and Target -- India has become the fourth country after the US, Russia and China to accomplish the technological feat.



including

In space, docking technology is essential when multiple rocket launches are required to achieve common mission objectives.

The docking experiment is crucial

for the smooth conduct of the coun-

try's ambitious future missions,

Chandrayaan-4,

Gaganyaan, setting up a space station and landing an astronaut on the moon. Last October, the government announced that India will have its own Space Station by 2035, known as the "Bharatiya Antriksh Station". Prime Minister Narendra Modi in

a post on 'X' greeted the scientists for the achievement. He said: "Congratulations to our scientists at @isro and the entire space fraternity for the successful demonstration of space docking of satellites. It is a significant stepping stone for India's ambitious space missions in the years to come.

Further, ISRO said: "Post docking, control of two satellites as a single object is successful. Undocking and power transfer checks to follow in

CM Naidu, Dy CM, Jagan compliment **ISRO** team

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu congratulated the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) team for successfully achieving satellite docking in space, making India the fourth country to accomplish this feat. On 'X', Naidu praised ISRO's dedication and hard work, emphasizing that the milestone will greatly enhance India's space capabilities and inspire future advancements.

Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalvan called it a historic moment for India. He hailed the SpaDeX satellite docking as a remarkable achievement, placing India alongside the USA, Russia, and China.

Hindenburg shuts shop

PNS WASHINGTON

Hindenburg Research, which made international waves with campaigns targeting billionaire Gautam Adani that wiped billions from market value of ĥis group companies, will disband, its founder Nate Anderson announced on Thursday.

Announcement by Anderson, 40, who started Hindenburg in 2017, came just days before Donald Trump's inauguration as the new President of the United States.

While he cited the toll of the "rather intense, and at times, all encompassing" nature of the work as the reason for his decision", critics were quick to link the shutting down Hindenburg's alleged ties with George Soros and the so-called deep state being under significant pressure from the incoming

Trump administration. Typically, short-sellers like Anderson, who managed his firm's



own money but not that of others, bet against companies they believe are olagued with mismanagement or involved in some fraud/scam. Short sellers borrow a stock to sell it in the expectation the price will fall, then repurchase the shares and pocket the difference. They book loss if the reverse happens.

Hindenburg in January 2023 published a report accusing the Adani group of "pulling the largest con in the orporate history", wiping out more than USD 150 billion in value of the group's shares at their lowest point.

SC uses Article 142 to deliver complete justice

¬he Constitution will help a student who cannot a student who can we afford to pay. Can we believe it? Article 142 is a unique provision that grants the Supreme Court the power to pass any order to enforce 'complete justice'. Its draft, Article 118, was adopted by the Constituent Assembly without debate. This means that defining its scope was left entirely to the Court.

Then higher education departments, governmentfunded universities and schools should have an implementable scheme to fund poor

See the judgment in the SC 2024 INSC 749 'Atul Kumar Petitioner Vs The Chairman (Joint Seat Allocation Respondents Authority) and Others' case. The problem was with a young man named entrance exam but could not pay the admission fee of ?17,500 in time. It's great that the Supreme Court granted Atul Kumar, a Dalit student, admission to the Indian Institute of Technology Dhanbad. It was not a dispute or a litigation, but a problem. They have lakhs of crores but this young man had to knock on the doors of the Supreme Court.

This meritorious student belonged to the Scheduled Caste category. He appeared for the JEE (Advanced) 2024 Examination and secured rank 1,455 in his category. He was allotted a seat in the Indian Institute of Technology Dhanbad for a four-year Bachelor of Technology course in Electrical Engineering. This was his second attempt and

"A talented student like the petitioner who belongs to a marginalized group and has done everything to secure admission should not be left in the lurch," the SC order said. The power of the SC under Article 142 of the Constitution to deliver justice is meant precisely to tackle such a situation

therefore, the last chance for the petitioner to secure admission to an IIT as only two attempts are allowed. The petitioner said that his father was a daily wage labourer. The petitioner completed higher secondary education in Khatauli in the Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh. The family is below the poverty line income-wise.

The time frame for completing online reporting, including

the payment of fees and uploading of documents, was 5 pm on June 24, 2024. The petitioner said that his parents had arranged funds to pay the fees. The fee was deposited in his brother's account by 4.45 pm. The petitioner said that had logged into the portal of the first respondent at 4.45 pm. the first respondent at 4.45 pm, applied in the 'float category' of admission and uploaded documents. The portal closed at 5 pm and his payment was



ACHARYULU Professor of Law, Mahindra

University, Hyderabad

not processed. The petitioner then sent an email to the first respondent. A response was received on June 26, 2024, from IIT Bombay's office for JEE candidate to the organising IIT, which is IIT Madras. Eventually, these attempts did not bear fruit.

The Supreme Court directed that the petitioner should be granted admission to IIT Dhanbad against the seat which was allotted to him in Electrical Engineering.
"The petitioner must be

admitted to the same batch to which he would have been which he would have been admitted as per the allotment order. The petitioner is willing to pay the fees of Rs 17,500, which may be paid personally at the time when admission is granted to him. A supernumerary seat should be created merary seat should be created for the petitioner, if required, to comply with this order and no existing student should be disturbed. The petitioner would be entitled to all the

admission, including allotment of hostel accommodation and other facilities. As the admission of the petitioner was delayed for no fault of his we request the Director of IIT Dhanbad to ensure that the petitioner can duly complete the course work for the period that has already elapsed during the academic year. This will ensure that the petitioner is abreast of his class and does not suffer for the delay in granting him admission," the SC said in its order

(Based on Para 8 of the Supreme Court). A talented student like the petitioner who belongs to a marginalized group and has done everything to secure admission should not be left in the lurch," the SC order said. The power of the SC under

Article 142 of the Constitution to deliver justice is meant precisely to tackle such a situation.

The Constitution has Article 142 with the phrase 'complete justice.' IIM Ahmedabad conducted an empirical study, which revealed that in 1,579 cases between 1950 and 2023, most were civil cases. The utility of the phrase 'complete justice' has been translated as Article 142 which allowed a writ that resulted in using the constitutional provision. The study found that the SC explicitly used its powers under Article 142 in only 791 cases. We need to thank Dr BR Ambedkar for this Article of

the Constitution, that is, Article 32, the right to remedy. What is the one-word answer to the most important Article in the Constitution? Doubtlessly, it is Article 32.

Robust steps for 76th R-Day celebrations: Vijayanand

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K. Vijayanand has instructed officials to make extensive and comprehensive arrangements for the 76th Republic Day celebrations, scheduled to be held at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium in Vijayawada on January 26. He reviewed the preparations virtually with concerned officials from the State Secretariat on Thursday.

Addressing the meeting, Vijayanand stated that the Republic Day celebrations would commence at 9:00 AM on January 26, with the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Justice S. Abdul Nazeer, attending as the chief guest and hoisting the national flag. Given the participation of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, AP High Court Chief Justice Justice Dheeraj Singh Thakur, other judges, public representatives, and a large number of citizens, he emphasized the need for



tight security and robust arrangements.

He directed officials to ensure adequate seating, drinking water, sanitation facilities, temporary restrooms, catering, and traffic control within the venue. Additionally, he instructed the relevant departments to decorate major government buildings such as Raj Bhavan, the High Court, the Assembly, the State Secretariat, and the CM Camp Office with electric lights for the occasion.

Since Republic Day falls on a Sunday this year, the Chief Secretary advised Education

setting up tableaux from at least 14 departments. He also directed the Vijayawada City Police Commissioner to manage traffic control for the exhiage traine control for the exhibition vehicles post-event.

The Chief Secretary further instructed the NTR District Collector and the Municipal

Commissioner to ensure the timely completion of stage decorations and other arrangements for the stadium.

To promote awareness of

government welfare schemes,

Suresh Kumar recommended

Principal Secretary S. Suresh Kumar, Vijayawada 8 AIR NCC Wing Commander A.S. Rathi, Protocol Director Mohan Rao, Additional Secretary (General) Kali Kumar, I & PR Additional Director L. Swarnalatha, and other officials participated in the meeting, along with DGP's office IGs Srikanth and Rajkumari, NTR District Collector, and Vijayawada Police Commissioner.



'Swachha Andhra-Swachh Diwas' on 3rd Saturday of every month: CS

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Chief Secretary K Vijayand has announced that the third Saturday of every month will be observed as 'Swachha Andhra-Swachh Diwas' in Andhra Pradesh.

Vijayand stated that this initiative is in response to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's call to dedicate one Saturday each month to cleanliness, with the vision of making Andhra Pradesh the cleanest state in India. The programme will be organised on a large scale every third

He urged officials at all levels, from state to village, to actively participate in ensuring the programme's success. The inaugural event will be launched by Chief Minister Chandrabábu Naidu in Maiduguri, Kadapa district, on January 18.

The Chief Secretary also mentioned that the guidelines for implementing the pro-gramme have already been shared with district collectors. He emphasised that collectors should focus on effective fieldlevel execution in line with

these guidelines.

He appealed to public representatives and citizens from all walks of life to take part in the programme on a large scale to make it a grand suc-Minister for Municipal

Administration P. Narayana attended the programme virtually. Other attendees included Panchayat Raj Principal Secretary Seshibhusan, Secretary to CM Pratyumna, Swachh Corporation MD B. Anil Kumar Reddy, and Municipal Administration Secretary Kannababu.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The State government has

granted administrative

approval to increase the

General Nursing and

Midwifery (GNM) seats at

the Government School of

Nursing in Vijayawada from

30 to 60. This move comes

after 28 years of the institution

operating with a 30-seat

The Government School of

General

Nursing operates under the

Hospital, Vijayawada, where

the bed capacity has increased from 1,050 to 1,700. According

to the norms set by the Indian

Nursing Council (INC), a 1:3

nurse-to-bed ratio is required

in medical and surgical units,

Government

Reverence to mark NTR's 29th death anniv

The 29th death anniversary of

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Dr Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), founder-president of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), former Chief Minister, and Padma Shri awardee, will be observed with reverence on January 18 across Andhra Pradesh. TDP State President Palla Srinivas Yadav has called upon party leaders, activists, and supporters to mark the occasion with grandeur and

respect.
NTR, who famously believed that "society is a temple and people are gods," established the Telugu Desam Party to uplift the backward and weaker sections of society. To honour his legacy, Yadav urged TDP members to organise service activities such as blood donation camps and welfare programmes statewide, reflecting NTR's ideals.

He also encouraged party workers to offer floral tributes at NTR's statues and memorials with dignity. Active participation in these programs is essential to ensure a fitting tribute to the iconic leader, he

thereby necessitating an

increase in the intake of GNM

In light of these develop-

ments, the Director of Medical

Education (DME) recom-

mended an increase in GNM

seats to comply with the INC

guidelines. Responding to the

proposal, Health, Medical, and

Family Welfare Special Chief

Secretary MT Krishna Babu

issued G.O.Rt.No.15 on

This decision is expected to

meet the growing demand for

trained nursing professionals

and strengthen healthcare ser-

vices at the Government

General Hospital, Vijayawada,

as well as other medical facil-

ities across the state.

Thursday, formally approv-

ing the increase.

Only candidates...

Continued from Page 1

the falling birth rate and said India should not repeat the mistakes committed by other countries such as South Korea and Japan, where birth rates have plummeted.

The CM said some couples are averse to having children nowadays because they do not want to share the money they earned and use those riches for their own enjoyment. Naidu, in October last year, said there was a need to manage the population in Andhra Pradesh given that there will be an increase in the ageing pop-

"Till 2047, we will have the demographic dividend, there will be more youngsters. After 2047, there will be more old people...if less than two children are given birth (per woman), then the population will reduce. If you (each woman) give birth to more than two children, then the population will increase," Naidu said

TODAY

ALMANAC Krishna Paksha Jan 17 04:06 AM Chaturthi to Jan 18 05:30 AM to Jan 19 07:31 AM Nakshatram: Jan 16 11:16 AM to Jan 17 12:44 PM Jan 17 12:44 PM Purva Phalguni: to Jan 18 02:51 PM 11:03 AM to 12:26 PM Rahukalam: 3:12 PM to 4:36 PM Yamagandam: 09:27 PM to 11:11 PM Varjyam 8:16 AM to 9:39 AM Gulika: 10:12 AM to 11:54 AM Amritakalam: Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:04 PM to 12:48 PM VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Mostly Sunny **Temp:** 31° **Humidity:** 58% Sunrise: 6:39 AM Sunset: 5:56 PM **Updated:** January 16, 2025 5:00 PM

Schedule for 'Praja Vedika' at TDP central office

As per the directions of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, the "Praja Vedika" programme will be held at NTR Bhavan in Mangalagiri, starting from Friday, January 17, 2025. Ministers and party leaders will be available to the public during this initiative, where they will listen to grievances and interact directly with the people.

The schedule for the ministers and leaders participating in Praja Vedika is as fol-JANUARY 17: TDP State

President Palla Srinivas and Politburo member, MLA Nakka Anand Babu. JANUARY 18: TDP State President Palla Srinivas, State Minister Kondapalli Srinivas, and MLC Paruchuri Ashok

JANUARY 20: State Minister BC Janardhan Reddy, Government Advisor MA

TDP membership...

Continued from Page 1

TDP's welfare wing,

under Lokesh, supports

workers with education,

healthcare, and financial

has been provided to

families of 5,164 work-

ers, alongside scholar-

ships and job opportuni-

The party's focus on

worker welfare, com-

bined with its record-

breaking membership,

strength and commit-

ment to grassroots

empowerment.

reflects its organisational

To date, ₹103.28 crore

Early this month, Naidu flagged PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA Sharif, and AP Koppula Corporation Velama Chairman PVG Kumar.

BT Naidu

Department officials and the

Vijayawada District Collector

to arrange transportation for

school children attending the

Earlier, Principal Secretary Suresh Kumar detailed the

arrangements, including secu-

rity measures by the police

department, traffic control,

and parking. He also instruct-

ed the Information and Public

Relations Department to pre-

pare and distribute the

Republic Day message from

the chief guest, and ensure suf-

ficient copies for dissemina-

MLC Bhoomireddy Rangopal Reddy. JANUARY 22: State Minister Vangalapudi Anita and MLC

JANUARY 21: State Minister

Kolusu Parthasarathy and

JANUARY 23: State Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar, Government Chief Whip, Panchumarthi Anuradha.

JANUARY 24: TDP State President Palla Srinivas, State Minister S. Savita, AP Development Kuruba Corporation Chairman Manvi Devenderappa.

JANUARY 25: TDP State President Palla Srinivas, State Minister Dr. Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swami, and MLC Duvvarapu Ramarao. The "Praja Vedika" programme aims to provide a platform for party leaders to engage with the public and address their concerns

Continued from Page 1

He added that the decline in growth rate

over the past five years had severely

impacted the living standards of the peo-

ple.
"We are now moving forward to make

Telugus the number one community in the

world by implementing the ten policies out-

lined in the Swarnandhra Vision-2047. Zero

poverty is the first policy, and P-4 is aimed

at achieving this," Naidu said. He also high-

lighted the pensions being provided to var-

ious beneficiaries and announced the

launch of WhatsApp governance on

January 18. Various corruption-free services

The State has received investments worth

will be offered to the people, he added.

YSRCP leader slams coalition govt for failing to check cockfights

PNS VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader Potina Venkata Mahesh has accused the coalition government of neglecting its responsibilities and allowing festivals in the State to become platforms for gambling, cockfights, and inappropriate entertainment. Addressing the media in Vijayawada on Thursday, he criticised the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Jana Sena, and BJP leaders for misusing a sacred occasion and damaging the cultural fabric of Andhra Pradesh.

He alleged that thousands of cockfighting arenas were set up across the State, with a significant surge in such activities reported in the Krishna and Godavari districts. Schools were reportedly converted into gambling hubs, with minors seen openly participating in betting and card games.

Mahesh also condemned the

All systems on track...



free availability of liquor during the festivities, claiming it encouraged reckless behaviour among the youth. He singled out constitutional representatives like Raghurama Krishna Raju for participating in cockfights, saying it set a dangerous precedent for society.

The leader criticised the government for promoting obscene dances and gambling as festival entertainment and questioned

over Rs 4 lakh crore since the TDP-led

NDA came to power, the Chief Minister

stated, further mentioning that Amaravati's

development is progressing well, along with

the acceleration of the Polavaram project.

He also announced that the Godavari and

Pennar rivers will be interlinked once the

Polavaram project is completed, and that

the State is now focusing on making farm-

basic amenities in the State. We are taking

the Swatchandhra slogan to the people.

Roads have been constructed in the past six

months, and those returning to their

native places for Sankranti are extremely

pleased with the pothole-free roads,'

I am also committed to improving

whether such activities reflected the cultural vision promised by leaders like Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan. He accused the coalition government of turning a blind eye to these unlawful activities, failing to act against organisers and celebrities who endorsed them.

Highlighting the contrast, Mahesh praised former Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration for its focus on infrastructure development, employment generation, and ambitious projects such as ports, harbours, and medical colleges. He asserted that such vices would never have been tolerated under Jagan's leadership.

"The coalition government

has turned Andhra Pradesh into a hub of gambling and vulgarity. Is this the vision for 2047 that Chandrababu Naidu boasts about?" Mahesh asked, urging the public to recognise the difference in leadership and governance.

Shah's AP...

Continued from Page 1

The visit assumes importance for Andhra Pradesh. The inauguration of the NIDM South Campus is anticipated to enhance disaster management capabilities in the region. Additionally, the NDRF 10th Battalion's Foundation Day celebrations underscore the critical role of disaster preparedness and response at the national level.

Amit Shah is expected to conclude his visit and depart from Gannavaram Airport at 5:35 pm on January 19, returning to New Delhi.

Centre to set up 8th pay... Continued from Page 1

GNM seats doubled at

students

Govt Nursing college

The chairman and two members of the Commission will be appointed soon, he added. There are over 49 lakh central government employees and nearly 65 lakh pensioners. The minister further said the setting up of the new Pay Commission in 2025 will ensure that its recommendations are received well before the completion of the term of the seventh pay panel. Vaishnaw said consultations will be held with central and state governments and other stakeholders. Since 1947, the government constituted seven pay commissions. The pay commission has a key role in deciding salary structures, benefits and allowances for government employees. Most of the state-owned organisations follow the commission's recommendations. The 7th Pay Commission was constituted in 2014 and its recommendations were implemented on January 1, 2016.

CM Naidu, Dy CM, Jagan...

Continued from Page 1

Pawan Kalyan highlighted the importance of this success for India's ambitious space projects, including the Bharatiya Antariksha Station (BAS) and future human spaceflight programs. Former chief minister

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy also congratulated ISRO, noting that the achievement marks a significant step forward for India's space technology. He praised the innovation and dedication of ISRO scientists, reinforcing India's growing prowess in space exploration.

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Chandrababu Naidu concluded.

ing more profitable.

Demand to retain Volunteers

State Volunteers Association warns of protest if no decision is taken in today's Cabinet meeting

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The All-India Youth Federation (AIYF), affiliated with the Andhra Pradesh State Volunteers Association, has urged the State government, led by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, to maintain the Gram/Ward Volunteer system and raise the honorarium for these volunteers.

Association's honorary president G Eswaraiah has demanded that this decision be made during the Cabinet meeting scheduled for Friday, along with the issuance of relevant orders. He warned that if these demands are not met, the association will escalate protests, which could include street demonstrations, gheraoing MLAs and ministers, and house sieges.

Speaking at a press conference held at Dasari Bhavan in Hanumanpeta, Vijayawada, Eswaraiah announced that Gram/Ward Volunteers will organise a 'Chalo Vijayawada' event on Friday. He emphasised that Chief Minister N



Chandrababu Naidu should fulfil his election promise of increasing the monthly wage of Gram/Ward Volunteers to Rs. 10,000. Eswaraiah pointed out that the volunteers' demands were legitimate, and included in the TDP's election manifesto. He highlighted that around 2,60,000 volunteers hold degrees—such as Graduation, Post-Graduation, MBA, and Engineering -- however, they have received just Rs. 5,000 as an honorarium during the past five years.

Furthermore, he mentioned that while the State government had promised to create two million jobs for the unemployed youth, it is neglecting the 2,60,000 volunteers. He won-

dered how the government can create two million jobs when it fails to adequately support these volunteers.

Later, Eswaraiah stated that seven months into the current administration, the election promise remains unfulfilled. He warned that if the government continues to neglect the volunteers, they will organise protests

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across the State to demonstrate their collective strength. Andhra Pradesh Gram/ Ward Volunteers Association State general secretary Lanka Govindarajulu and oʻthers were also present at the event

VSP workers seek exit as financial crisis deepens

EMPLOYEES WITH MORE THAN 15 YEARS OF SERVICE ARE PARTICULARLY INCLINED TOWARDS VRS

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The ongoing financial troubles at Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), the corporate entity of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), have left employees grappling with uncertainty. Despite strong opposition from workers' unions, many employees are now considering the Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) as a way to escape mounting financial pressures caused by delayed salaries and an unclear future.

Once a symbol of pride in the region, the steel plant now faces severe challenges. The VRS, introduced as a cost-cutting measure, is being seen by some as a dignified exit. Employees over 45 years old with more than 15 years of ser-

vice are particularly inclined towards this option.

Neerukonda Ramachandra Rao, State vice-president of the INTUC, stressed the need for long-term solutions. "Instead of VRS, the Centre should grant Rs 5,000 crore to increase equity and allocate captive iron ore mines to reduce production costs. Alternatively, RINL's acquisition by SAIL or NMDC could ensure sustainability," he suggested. RINL is struggling under a heavy debt of Rs 18,000 crore, and owes Rs 7,000 crore to vendors. The company also needs Rs 10,000 crore in working capital to procure raw materials, while its downgraded credit rating has

worsened its financial situation. J Ayodhya Ram of the Steel Pl Visakha Ukku Parirakshana doubt.

Samithi questioned the feasi-bility of VRS. "If the company cannot pay salaries, how can it manage the financial burden of VRS," he asked. About 1,000 employees are expected to opt for VRS in the first phase, which may cost the company Rs 600 to

Rs 900 crore. Union Steel Minister HD Kumaraswamy hinted that the Centre might approve a scaled-down revival package of Rs 9,000-Rs 10,000 crore instead of the originally proposed Rs 18,000 crore. If this fails, the government of the proposed Rs 18,000 crore. If this fails, the government of the proposed Rs 18,000 crore. ernment may revisit plans for 100 per cent privatisation of the plant. As uncertainty continues to grow, many workers see VRS as their only option, leaving the future of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and its workforce in

'Vaikuntha Dwara Darshanam' SSD tokens reviewed



A review meeting on the issuance of Vaikuntha Dwara Darshanam SSD tokens was held virtually on Thursday evening. The meeting was attended by TTD Executive Officer J. Syamala Rao, Additional EO Ch. Venkaiah

Veerabrahmam, District Collector Venkateswar, and SP Manikantha Chandolu.

As the Vaikuntha Dwara Darshanam concludes on January 19, the SSD tokens for the final day are expected to be issued by Friday, January 17. No SSD tokens will be issued on January 19 for darshan on January 20. Devotees are advised to join the Sarva Darshanam queue line for Sri shan on that day.

Additionally, SRIVANI tickets will not be issued offline on January 19 for darshan on January 20. The VIP Break Darshan will remain cancelled on January 20, except for Protocol VIPs, and recommendation letters will not be accepted on January 19.

Devotees are requested to plan their pilgrimage accordingly and cooperate with TTD. Temple DyEO Lokanatham also participated in the meet-

Preparations underway for R-Day parade

PNS VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha and Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu have informed Chief Secretary K Vijayanand that all necessary arrangements are being made for the 76th Republic Day celebrations, scheduled to be held at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada. They said that preparations are being made at the stadium as per plans.

The Collector and the CP attended the Chief Secretary's review meeting from the Collector's camp office on Thursday. They are coordinating with the Republic Day Parade Coordinator and other officials concerned. Governor SA Nazeer, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court Justice Deeraj Sing Thakur, several ministers, MPs, MLCs, MLAs and variebrations, they said.

They added that necessary security arrangements are



being made by the police with the coordination of the AP Special Police Battalion. In view of the attendance of VVIPs and VIPs, the district administration is coordinating with the respective departmental officials. The Republic Day parade rehearsal will be conducted in full dress. The Scouts and Guides, police band and other contingents will par-

AP boys runners-up in handball

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh bagged the runners-up trophy in the School Games Federation of India (SGFI) Under-17 Boys' Handball Nationals held at Mahbubnagar in Telangana recently. In the final match, AP lost to Telangana.

In total, 36 teams attended the tournament, conducted from January 10-14. Andhra Pradesh girls lost in

School Education Director V Vijaya Rama Raju, Samagra Siksha State Project



Director B Srinivasa Rao and School Games Federation of Andhra Pradesh Secretary

Bhanu murthy Raju congratulated the team, coaches and

Tribal village builds 3-km road amid Govt neglect

Repeated promises and allocated funds failed to yield results

PNS PADERU

Residents of Dayethikonda, a remote tribal village in Jeenabadu gram panchayat, have taken matters into their own hands, constructing a three-km road after years of enduring hardship due to the lack of proper road connectivity. The initiative follows repeated promises from the government and allocated funds that failed to yield results.

Dayethikonda, home to 109 families, is located in Alluri Sitarama Raju district. The road serves nearly 2,000 individuals from 11 other tribal villages, offering vital access to essential services. For years, the only route to the village was a perilous journey via Gummanthi from Ballagaru

Despite the allocation of funds and promises from various government departments, progress has been stymied. During the 2018-19 period, the Tribal Welfare Department sanctioned Rs 38 lakh for the construction of the road. However, heavy rains washed away the work. In 2022, the Panchayat Raj Department allocated Rs 1.50 crore for a gravel road, but only ?9 lakh was spent on a culvert, which was also destroyed in the subsequent rains.

Even a high-profile visit by Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on December 22, during which he laid the foundation stone for a road from Gummanthi to Ravakilam via Reddypalem at Ballagaruvu, failed to bring any tangible progress. The completion of the Gummanthi-Ravakilam road hinges on the unfinished Ballagaruvu to Dayethi stretch. The lack of a proper road

has had dire consequences, with villagers recounting numerous medical emergencies that turned tragic due to the inability to access healthcare in time. "We have been appealing to the Deputy CM for support, but no action was taken. Left with no other option, we decided to build the road ourselves," said one villager, expressing the frustration that led to their decision.

In response to the continued neglect, the community is now demanding Rs 13 crore under Panchayat Raj projects for the construction of a 12km road linking Ballagaruvu to Dayethi, Maddarebu, and Tunisibu villages. While their self-constructed road serves as a temporary solution, the villagers are emphasising the urgent need for permanent government-provided infrastructure.

Local political leaders have lent their voices to the cause. "It is time for the government to respond and ensure that such hardships are not faced by any community in the future," said K. Govinda Rao, CPM district executive member. The residents of Dayethikonda are now seeking more than just temporary relief-they demand lasting action from the government to address their transportation

Collector seeks urgent action for sea turtle conservation

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has highlighted the crucial role of sea turtles in maintaining the marine ecosystem balance, during the district-level coordination meeting on Olive Ridley protection and conservation held on Thursday. He emphasised the urgent need for collective action to protect these endangered species, particularly during their nesting season from November to February.

Expressing concern over the increasing number of dead turtles washing ashore, primar-



ily due to entanglement in fishing gear, plastic waste, and predation, the Collector urged fishermen to adopt Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in their trawl nets to allow turtles to escape unharmed. He also stressed the importance of proper waste disposal, including the use of dustbins on boats and discouraging plastic waste dumping into the sea.

The Collector reminded attendees of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which prohibits the killing, consumption, and trade of turtles. He advocated for measures similar to those implemented in Odisha, such as fishing bans in sensitive areas. He also highlighted the negative impact of bright lights from fishing boats on marine ecosystems and urged strict adherence to regulations regarding boat registration, crew identification, and the use of authorised fishing gear. The meeting addressed the issue of

URGES FISHERMEN TO ADOPT TURTLE EXCLUDER DEVICES IN TRAWL NETS

plastic pollution, emphasising the need to eliminate single-use plastics on fishing boats and in fish markets. The Collector highlighted the detrimental effects of plastic waste on marine life and the fishing industry, urging immediate action to protect the marine ecosystem and sustain livelihoods.

The Collector also called for awareness campaigns by the Forest and Fisheries Departments, alongside scientific organisations, to educate coastal communities and fishermen on turtle conservation, TED benefits, and sustainable fishing practices.

Commissioner suspends Head Constable for alleged cricket betting

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam City Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi has suspended a Head Constable from the special branch over alleged involvement

in cricket betting activities.

The suspended officer, P. Ganga Raju, was found to have sustained communication with known cricket bookies between 2023 and 2024, according to a preliminary investigation. The evidence, primarily gathered through a detailed analysis of call records, pointed to his alleged connections with individuals involved in illegal betting operations. Acting on this information, Commissioner Bagchi ordered

his immediate suspension pend ing further investigation.

'We have zero tolerance for cor ruption within our ranks," said Commissioner Bagchi while addressing the media. "All officers and staff members of the city Police Department are expected to maintain complete transparency in their duties. Any involvement in illegal activities, abuse of power, or corruption will be met with swift and strict action. This case should

serve as a warning to others." In an effort to promote transparency and curb corruption, the Commissioner has introduced a dedicated helpline 7995095799 for citizens to report any instances of bribery or corrupt practices by police personnel.

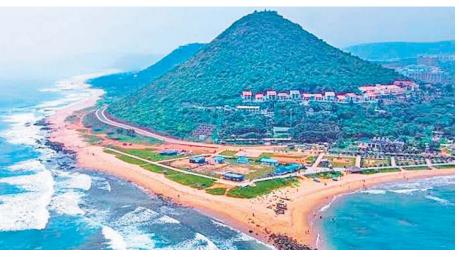
Concerns raised over future of Rushikonda beach

VISAKHAPATNAM'S BLUE FLAG BEACH STRUGGLES WITH CORRUPTION, POOR MAINTENANCE, AND LEADERSHIP VACUUM

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Rushikonda beach, once known for its environmental success and as a popular tourist spot, is now facing several problems. Issues like internal conflicts, accusations of corruption, and bad management have put a cloud over this well-known Blue Flag beach, causing worries about its future.

Since achieving the prestigious Blue Flag certification, which recognises exceptional environmental management, Rushikonda has witnessed a surge in the number of visitors. However, this influx has also led to increased fees, including a Rs. 50 parking fees, which has drawn criticism from some visitors. "We question whether



these exorbitant fees are being used for the beach's betterment or lining the pockets of a few,"

a local resident. said Furthermore, the beach's maintenance has become a point of

contention. The awarding of the cleaning and maintenance contract to an outside company has

raised eyebrows, with accusations of favouritism and disregard for local businesses. "The decision to overlook local vendors is not only unfair, but also detrimental to the local economy," stated a representative from

a local tourism association. The departure of the Regional Director, who was instrumental in the controversial contract decision, has exacerbated the situation. This leadership vacuum has fuelled internal tensions within the Tourism Department, with allegations of officials prioritis-ing personal interests over the beach's well-being. "Salaries are delayed, equipment is inadequate, and we are often left without proper resources, lamented a beach worker, highlighting the plight of those

directly involved in maintaining the beach.

These internal struggles are compounded by a lack of support from higher authorities. When officials from the State capital visit, they often bypass local expertise and impose their own agendas," claimed a senior Tourism official, highlighting the disconnect between local needs and Statelevel directives.

"Rushikonda Beach serves as a stark reminder of what can happen when mismanagement and internal strife prevail," warned an environmental activist. "The future of this valuable asset hinges on the ability of authorities to work collaboratively, ensure transparency, and prioritise sustainable management.

he pioneer



Minister Manohar assures super specialty services at Eluru GGH

Minister for Civil Supplies, Nadendla Manohar, has assured the provision of super specialty medical services at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Eluru. He directed the doctors and nurses to work in a coordinated manner to ensure better patient care.

The Minister conducted a surprise inspection of the hospital on Thursday. During his visit, he reviewed the outpatient statistics and inquired about the daily footfall of patients. He also examined the outpatient registration process on the computer system.

Expressing displeasure over discrepancies in the blood bank operations, he reprimanded the in-charge for the flaws in its management. Manohar instructed the Vaidya



Parishath Executive Engineer to complete the pending drainage works, CC road repairs, and water pipe leakage

fixes by February 28, warning of strict action if the deadlines

The Minister inspected the

ophthalmology and ICU wards, interacting with patients and inquiring about ward, where a patient complained about delays in seeing a doctor despite arriving at 9 AM. Angered by the negligence, the Minister took the doctor to task for the delay in attending to patients.

Addressing the media later,
Manohar highlighted that the
Eluru GGH had gained recognition for delivering quality
medical services in the erstwhile West Godavari district. He assured further upgrades and enhancements to the 600bed facility, including filling all vacant doctor and nurse positions and equipping the hospital with additional medical infrastructure.

The inspection was attended by GGH Superintendent MS Raju, MLAs P Dharma Raju and Chirri Balaraju, former MLAs Ganni Veeranjaneyulu and Ghanta Murali, along with

DC, JC directed to expedite port and fishing harbour works

PNS MACHILIPATNAM

Minister for Mines and Excise, Kollu Ravindra, has instructed the District Collector and Joint Collector to expedite the Bandar Sea Port and Fishing Harbour construction works.

The Minister convened a meeting on Thursday with District Collector DK Balaji, Joint Collector Gitanjali Sharma, and other officials to review the progress of the projects.

He suggested developing an MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises) Park in the Gilakaladindi area and directed officials to assess the park's feasibility. Additionally, he called for preparing a master plan for the park's development. "Proactive steps must be taken to safeguard the livelihoods of fishermen during the Port's construction. A dedicated cluster for fishermen should be developed, including a boat-making unit. Adequate training must be provided to ensure their livelihoods are not



adversely affected," the Minister instructed.

Highlighting the potential industrial growth due to the Port's establishment, the Minister urged officials to focus on generating employment and improving basic infrastructure in the region.

Discussions also covered development of Manginapudi Beach. The Minister proposed setting up a desalination plant to address drinking water needs and

directed the construction of washrooms for visitors to the beach.

He stressed the importance of developing the Bandar Port as a Heritage Park and taking steps to preserve the historic Bandar Fort. Plans for beautifying parks and widening roads in Machilipatnam town were also reviewed.

Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) K Swathi and other revenue officials attended the



3.58 lakh MT of paddy purchased in Eluru

PNS ELURU

Minister for Civil Supplies, Nadendla Manohar, has announced that 3,58,924 Metric Tonnes (MT) of paddy have been purchased from farmers so far during the current Kharif season.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, the Minister confirmed that paddy procurement is progressing smoothly across the district. "Up to now, 3,58,924 MT of paddy, valued at Rs 733.91 crore, have been purchased from 49,022 farmers. The procurement process is being efficiently managed by the district officials," Manohar said. He further revealed that the target district was 3.40 lakh MT, and the actual procurement has

already surpassed this goal. Manohar commended District Collector K. Vetri Selvi and Joint Collector P. Dhathri Reddy for their effective coordination and efficient procurement efforts. He also praised the Civil Supplies department staff for their hard work under the supervision of the district administration.

Eluru district wins PM's Award

PNS ELURU

Eluru district has been honoured with the prestigious 'Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Admini stration 2023'. The Government introduced this scheme to acknowledge and reward exem-plary work by civil servants across the country.
For 2023, the scheme was

revised to recognise the contributions of civil servants in the holistic development of districts under various government schemes. The award honours the efforts of those working to implement the welfare programmes of both the State and Central Governments effectively.

The then District Collector, V. Prasanna Venkatesh, played a key role in the development of Eluru, which was created after the bifurcation of the combined West Godavari dis-



trict. Venkatesh, during his two-year tenure, earned widespread appreciation for his efficient administration and dedication to public welfare.

Under his leadership, welfare initiatives like 'Akshaja' were implemented, focusing on the health of pregnant women and children in agency mandals. His efforts in good governance contributed to Eluru's special recognition among the 788 districts in India. Eluru was selected as one of the 16 districts in the country to receive the award, thanks to the diligent efforts of former Collector V.

Nishant Kumar earns award for PRISM

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Nishant Kumar, Director of Excise and Prohibition in Mangalagiri and former District Collector of Parvathipuram, has been hon-Award for Excellence in Public Administration for 2023. This prestigious recognition highlights his exceptional leadership in implementing the PRISM 10 initiative (Project to Reduce Infant Mortality Rate Below 10) from 2022 to 2024.

The initiative targeted critical healthcare issues in Parvathipuram, a newly formed tribal district grappling with high infant and

maternal mortality rates and low immunization coverage. Under Kumar's leadership, PRISM 10 made substantial strides, reducing the district's Infant Mortality Rate from 24 to 8 and Maternal Mortality coverage surged to 97.77% propelling the district to the top rank in the state. These achievements reflect the success of innovative, community-based solutions in improving healthcare outcomes.

The award, presented in the "Innovation-District" category, underscores Kumar's impact in transforming public health and administration in the region.

I & PR Minister assists woman hurt in road mishap

Minister for Housing and Information & Public Relations, Kolusu Partha sarathy, showcased compassion and quick action by assisting a woman injured in a road accident on the national highway. The incident occurred on Thursday while the Minister was returning to Vijayawada after attending a review meeting in Eluru.

Near the Kalaparru Toll Plaza, Parthasarathy came across the accident, in which



K. Sireesha, a resident of severe injuries. Her mother

also suffered minor injuries Kodurupadu, sustained in the mishap. severe injuries. Her mother The Minister immediate-

ly stopped his convoy and assessed the situation. He directed his team to transport Sireesha to Pinnamaneni Hospital for urgent medical care. Demonstrating his concern, Parthasarathy personally contacted the hospital staff, instructing them to ensure the best possible treatment for the injured woman.

The Minister's swift and empathetic response drew appreciation from bystanders and travelers on the highway, with many commending his humanitarian gesture.

ACA felicitates Nitish Kumar Reddy

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) President and Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath, along with ACA Secretary and Rajya Sabha member Sana Satish, felicitated Indian cricketer Nitish Kumar Reddy at the MP's office, NTR Bhavan, in Gurunanak Colony, here on Thursday. Nitish Kumar Reddy, hailing from Visakhapatnam, shared with the two MPs his experience of for India against Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Returning from the Australia tour, Nitish met MPs Sivanath and Satish as a courtesy gesture. The MPs warmly welcomed and felicitated him. They also commended Nitish's father, Mutyala Reddy, for his continuous support and encouragement in his cricketing journey.

Speaking on the occasion, MP Sivanath praised Nitish as



an inspiration for aspiring cricketers in Andhra Pradesh and across the country. He specifically lauded Nitish's remarkable century during his first Test match in Australia. Sivanath assured that the ACA would provide all necessary support to help the young cricketer further enhance his

In his response, Nitish Kumar Reddy expressed gratitude to ACA President Kesineni Sivanath for his encouragement and support. He also appreciated the efforts of MP Sivanath in fostering young talent and preparing them for platforms like the Indian Premier League (IPL). Nitish pledged to support upcoming cricketers in the

State to develop their game. The felicitation ceremony was attended by ACA Vice-President P Venkata Rama Prashanth, Dandamudi Srinivas, and other dignitaries.

GMC announces schedule for **Standing Committee polls**

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC) has announced the schedule for its Standing Committee elections, which will be held on February 3, 2025, from 10:30 am to 3 pm at the Municipal Council Meeting Hall. Municipal Commissioner Puli Srinivasulu shared the details during a press conference held at the Council Meeting Hall on Thursday.

The election notification and voters' list were released on January 16, 2025, and are displayed on the Municipal Corporation's notice board public reference. Nominations for the elections will be accepted from January 22 to 24, 2025, between 11 am and 3 pm, at Additional Commissioner's chamber in the GMC office. According to the schedule,

nominations received by January 24 will be announced, followed by scrutiny on January 27, 2025, between 11 am and 12 noon. The list of valid nominaon the same day. Candidates wishing to withdraw their nominations can do so on January 30, 2025, between 12 pm and 3 pm, after which the final list of candidates will be released. The election will take place as scheduled on February 3, 2025, and the counting of votes, along with the declaration of results, will commence at 3 pm on

Cong Minister, kin trying to grab land worth Rs 1,500 crore: Raghunandan

PNS HYDERABAD

The BJP's Medak MP, M. Raghunandan Rao, said that a Congress Minister is try-ing to register Bilaa Dhakhala land worth Rs 1,500 crore in the name of his relatives defying HC orders. He said that he is not aware of that Minister's position in the government, that is, whether he is number 2 or 3 or 4.

Addressing the media on Thursday at the State BJP office here along with the victims, Raghunandan demanded that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should do justice to the tribals, who have been cultivating the land for three generations.

Raghunandan said that tribals had approached the High Court in 1994 appealing to register those lands in their name. He said that a dispute regarding 85 acres of Bilaa Dhakhala land costing Rs 1500 crore is going on between the villages of Velimela in Ramachan drapuram mandal of Sangareddy dis trict and the Kondakal village of Shankarpalli mandal

in Rangareddy district. He said that relatives of one of the Ministers — Kommireddy Vikramkumar Revenue Department.



Reddy and Aurobindo Pharma MD K. Nithyananda Reddy — are now trying to grab the land with the help of CCLA Commissioner Navin Mittal, who faced allegations during BRS rule and is continuing even now.

Raghunandan said that encroachers are now constructing a wall around the land with the help of the police defying court orders. The court had ordered that the police should not interfere in the land issue, he said. He said the police had been vacating the villages forcibly since the last three

days defying court orders.
"The Congress Government introduced BhuBharati Portal in place of the Dharani Portal assuring that the encroached lands will be taken back and given to the poor. However, one Minister himself has been assisting his relatives to grab government lands with the help of the



IIT Kanpur inks MoU with KADA

The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K) and the Kuppam Area Development Authority (KADA) have signed a Memorandum of Understan ding (MoU) to make the constituency of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Kuppam, India's first Net Zero constituency.

This landmark partnership aims to advance sustainability and contribute to achieving the United Nations' Sustai nable Development Goals (SDGs) by targeting Net Zero emissions, Net Zero water, and Net Zero waste in the region, a release said here on Thursday.

The MoU was signed by Prof. Pratik Sen, Dean of Students; and Affairs at IIT Kanpur, and Vikas Marmat, Project Director at KADA. Under this collaboration,

The MoU was signed by Prof. Pratik Sen, Dean of Students; and Affairs at IIT Kanpur, and Vikas Marmat, Project Director at KADA. Under this collaboration, IIT Kanpur will serve as the technology and knowledge partner for KADA leveraging its expertise to support Kuppam's ambitious sustainability goals

IIT Kanpur will serve as the technology and knowledge partner for KADA, leveraging its expertise to support Kuppam's ambitious sustainability goals. The initiative will combine advanced technical interventions such as the adoption of renewable energy, energy-efficient systems, and sustainable waste management with community-driven efforts to foster a culture of sustain-

ability. Enhancing water man-

agement practices to achieve Net Zero water will also be a critical focus area. Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Sachchida Nand Tripathi, Dean, Kotak School of Sustainability, IIT Kanpur, said, 'This partner-ship bet ween IIT Kanpur and KADA represents a groundbreaking approach to redefining sustainability in

By leveraging IIT Kanpur's technological expertise and

are committed to implementing innovative solutions in renewable energy, waste management, and water conservation. This initiative highlights how shared expertise and a unified vision can drive scalable and impactful solutions, setting a benchmark for sustainable development across the country.

A vital aspect of the project is the on-ground involvement of IIT Kanpur's team in Kuppam, where they will work closely with the local administration, schools, and colleges to integrate sustainability principles into education. This engagement will empower students and faculty to actively contribute to achieving the Net Zero targets while fostering a deeper understanding of sustainability within the community.

Officials directed to take steps to curb road accidents



PNS ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector A Thameem Ansariya has directed police officials to take immediate measures to prevent road accidents and conduct joint inspections with officials from other concerned departments.

A road safety meeting was held on Thursday, chaired by the Collector, where the safety of roads and the pattern of road accidents were reviewed. Speaking at the meeting, the Collector stated that 872 road accidents occurred in the district in 2024, resulting in the

loss of 389 lives. "Stringent measures must be implemented to reduce road accidents. All motorists must adhere to road safety standards. Accident-prone areas on highways should be identified, and signboards should be installed,

she instructed the officials. The Collector further

emphasized the need for joint inspections on national and state highways within the district, identifying accidentprone areas, and implementing effective measures to curb accidents. Officials were also instructed to install barricades, stoppers, and hazard signs in high-risk accident zones.The Collector reviewed the ongoing initiatives by the National Highways and R&B departments to improve road safety and reiterated the importance of organizing special awareness programs on road safety. In addition, the Collector

directed Municipal and Traffic Officers to take action against road encroachments at major intersections and busy areas. The meeting was attended by DTC R. Sushila, DSP Suresh Babu, R&B SE Devanandam, GGH Superintendent Dr. Jamuna, DMHO Dr. Venkateswarulu, and other officials



ACROSS THE STATES



Committed to empowering women: Omar Abdullah

sserting the "Lakhpati Didi" campaign is a monumenta Ainitiative aimed at fortifying families and shaping future generations, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said the government is steadfastly committed to empowering women and is diligently working towards this cause. He said the campaign is revolutionizing the rural economy, paving the way for progress and prosperity in Jammu and Kashmir. "The government is steadfastly committed to empowering women and is diligently working towards this cause," Abdullah said addressing the 'Lakhpati Didi Sammelan' organized by the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in Jammu. The chief minister said the Lakhpati Didi campaign is not merely a means to increase the income of mothers and sisters but a monumental initiative aimed at fortifying families and shaping future generations. "This campaign is revolutionizing the rural economy, paving the way for progress and prosperity," he added.



'Climate change most serious issue facing humanity'

limate change is the most serious issue facing humanity and youth must be aware of it as there is increased exploitation of natural resources due to rise in population and needs of society, said Maharashtra Governor CP Radhakrishnan on Thursday. He was speaking at the inaugural programme of 'International Conference on Climate Change 2025' organised as a joint initiative of SNDT University, CT University of New York and the Maharashtra government. Saving the environment depends on saving water and trees, he said, adding the dangers of climate change included heavy unseasonal rains and very hot summers. "We are losing the environment in which we can live comfortably. Population is increasing and so are the needs of society. We are being forced to exploit natural resources more and more. Global warming is a major problem worldwide.



Vaishnodevi hills receive season's first snowfall

he Trikuta hills ensconcing the cave shrine of Mata Vaishnodevi received the season's first snowfall even as rain lashed large parts of the Jammu region, blocking the Mughal and Simthan roads. Despite the snowfall, pilgrims continued their journey on foot to offer prayers at the shrine, officials said. "We are happy to feel the snowflakes touching us. It is the first time in my life that I have seen snowfall, and that too at the abode of Mata. It is a blessing for me," a pilgrim from Pune said. The world-famous tourist resort of Sanasar in the Ramban district experienced moderate snowfall. Moderate to heavy snow fell in parts of Kishtwar, Doda, Ramban, Poonch, Kathua, and Reasi districts. officials said. Some inter-district roads, as well as the inter-regional Mughal road and Simthan roads, were closed due to snowfall, they added. Jammu-Srinagar national highway remains open for traffic despite rain in Ramban and Udhampur districts. Traffic police issued an advisory stating that vehicles on the highway were moving at a slow pace due to heavy snowfall in the Qazigund-Anantnag sector and the Banihal area near the Navyug tunnel.

Startup India a transformative programme, lauds PM Modi

Lauding 'Startup India' as a transformative programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on its ninth anniversary on Thursday that the initiative has propelled India to become one of the largest and most vibrant startup ecosystems globally.

It is a landmark initiative that has redefined innovation, entrepreneurship and growth, he said, describing the programme as "very close to my heart," as it has emerged as a powerful way of furthering youth empowerment.

He said on X, "Over the past nine years, this transformative program has empowered countless youngsters, turning their innovative ideas into successful Startups. People would doubt India's

ability to thrive in this system The prime minister said this

just a decade ago, he added. "transformative" programme

"We are actively promoting innovation and incubation centres so that our youngsters become risk-takers. I have personally been regularly interacting with upcoming startups."

has empowered countless youngsters, turning their innovative ideas into successful startups. From tech-driven solutions to rural innovations, healthcare advancements to biotech breakthroughs, Fintech to EdTech, clean energy to sustainable technology, Indian startups are solving global challenges while at the same time creating employment opportunities and boosting the country's quest towards

self-reliance, he added.

Underlining his government's commitment to fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem that uplifts every dream and contributes to 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', he said his dispensation has left no stone unturned to encourage a culture of startups.

He said his government's policies have focused on "Ease of Doing Business", greater access to resources and, most importantly, supporting them at every juncture. He said, "We are actively promoting innovation and incubation centres so that our youngsters become risk-takers. I have personally been regularly interacting with upcoming startups.'

This success of startup India reflects that today's India is dynamic, confident and futureready, he asserted.

Modi said, "I compliment every youngster in the startup world and urge more youngsters to pursue this. It's my assurance you won't be disap-



India welcomes Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal

PNS NEW DELHI

India on Wednesday welcomed the announcement on a Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal between Israel and Hamas.

Israel and Hamas have agreed a deal which would halt the war in Gaza and see the release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners, the US and mediators Qatar have said.

The deal between Israel and Hamas came after months and it is expected to come into effect on Sunday

if both sides fully approve it. In its reaction, India hoped that the agreement would lead to a safe and sustained supply of humanitar-

of Gaza.

"We welcome the announcement of the agreement for the release of hostages and a ceasefire in Gaza," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. "We hope this will lead to

a safe and sustained supply of humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza," it said in a statement.

The MEA added: "We have consistently called for release of all hostages, ceasefire, and return to a path of dialogue and diplomacy."

The full details of the deal are not yet announced.

The deal is expected to stop the ongoing war in Gaza and facilitate release of Israeli hostages held by ian assistance to the people Hamas.

Padma awardees in Odisha to receive monthly honorarium of Rs 30,000

PNS BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government will provide a monthly honorarium of Rs 30,000 to each of the Padma awardees of the state from the current month.

The Odia Language Literature and Culture Department issued a notification to this effect on Thursday.

In view of their outstanding contribution to society in various fields, the state government has decided to provide an honorarium of Rs 30,000 to the Padma awardees, the notification said.

All the Padma awardees of the state, who are alive, will receive the honorarium through direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode from January 2025, it said.

The government has asked collectors and culture officers of all districts to submit details of the Padma award winners (who are alive) including the district collector's certificate, bank account details, IFSC code to the Directorate of Odia, Language, Literature and Culture as soon as possible.

'Faulty road construction should be made non-bailable offence'

PNS NEW DELHI

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said faulty road construction should be made a non-bailable offence and road contractors and engineers should be held responsible for accidents and sent to prison.

Addressing an event organised by industry body CII, Gadkari further said India is number one in road accidents in the world. "Faulty road construction should be a nonbailable offence and road contractors, concessionaires and engineers should be held responsible for accidents and sent to prison," he said.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways aims to reduce road accident fatalities to half by 2030. According to the minister, the ministry data of road accidents in 2023 shows five lakh mishaps in the country resulting in 1,72,000 deaths.



"Of this, 66.4 per cent, or 1,14,000, were in the 18-45 years age bracket while 10,000 deaths were of children," Gadkari said.

He pointed out that 55,000 deaths were reported due to absence of helmets and 30,000 were due to non-use of seat

Gadkari also said the highways ministry is spending Rs 40,000 crore to rectify black spots on highways.

Gadkari urged the industry and other stakeholders to partner with the government to set up driver training and fitness centres to address the acute shortage of drivers in the country

India will lead in every sector by 2047, says Amit Shah

Asks youth to cultivate culture of cooperation

PNS MEHSANA

India will be number one in the world in every sector when it celebrates 100 years of Independence in 2047, Union Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday.

Addressing the 18th convocation ceremony of Ganpat University, he also asked the youth to focus on acquiring knowledge instead of just a degree and to cultivate a culture of cooperation instead of culture of competition.

Though there are challenges in front of today's youth, many opportunities have also been created for them by the Union govern-ment, Shah asserted, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had turned India into a global manufacturing hub.

"On the occasion of 75 years of Independence, 140



edical colleges has risen to 6 from 387 in these

crore citizens had taken a resolve to turn India into a developed country. I am confident India will be number one in the world in every sector when it celebrates 100 years of Independence in 2047," Shah said on the occasion.

"Today, companies across the world are eager to set up their plants in India. Youth will be benefited the most due to India's rising manufacturing prowess. Initiatives like Digital India and Startup

India have generated numerous opportunities for today's youth," he said.

"There are nearly 1,000 unicorn startups in Índia at present. In the past 10 years, eight IIMs, seven IITs, 16 IIITs and six new central universities and 54 private universities were set up by the government. The number of medical colleges has risen to 766 from 387 in these 10 years," the Union Home and Cooperation Minister said.

'IRREGULARITIES' IN BPSC EXAM

Prashant Kishor ends fast unto death

Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor on Thursday withdrew his fast unto death after 14 days of protest over alleged irregularities in a competitive exam conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission on December 13 last year.

However, the former political strategist said his 'Satyagraha' would continue for the cause of civil service aspirants, and the youth of the state and also against the alleged 'authoritarian' atti-

tude of the state government.
"The matter, seeking the cancellation of the BPSC's 70th Combined Competitive exam held on December 13, is being heard by the Patna High Court today. It is a coincidence that I am calling off my fast unto death on a day when the matter is being heard before the court. We are quite hopeful that job aspirants will get jus-



tice from the Patna High Court. If they don't get justice, we will knock on the door of the Supreme Court," Kishor

Ganga river and offered puja. Kishor was offered fruit

The party has set up its

He had started the fast unto death on January 2, demanding cancellation of the BPSC exam. Before withdrawing his fast unto death at the party's camp office here, Kishor took a dip in the juice by his party workers as he withdrew from the hunger

camp office at LCT Ghat on the bank of the Ganga

"Now, my 'Satyagraha' will continue from the Jan Suraaj party office here. We call it 'Bihar Satyagraha Ashram'. We will train at least 1 lakh students at this ashram till March 11," he said.

Rajnath, UK defence secretary hold phone conversation

PNS NEW DELHI

India-UK cooperation in niche defence technology areas such as electric propulsion and jet engines figured in a phone conversation between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his British counterpart John Healey.

Singh and Healey also explored the possibilities of joint work by the two countries in the "We reviewed the excellent

progress made in niche defence technology areas and discussed ways to further deepen cooperation in defence," Singh said on X. An Indian readout of the conversation said the two ministers briefly discussed the ongoing defence cooperation issues and emphasised on the need to maintain the "momentum" in the bilateral relations.

"The defence minister and UK Secretary of State for Defence reviewed the excellent progress made between the two countries in niche defence technology areas such as electric propulsion and jet engines," it said.

NEET-UG will continue to be conducted in pen and paper mode: NTA

PNS NEW DELHI

The Centre has decided against conducting the medical entrance exam NEET-UG in online mode for now, and announced on Thursday it will continue to be conducted in pen and paper mode.

The decision comes after detailed deliberations between education and health ministries on whether to conduct the NEET-UG in pen and paper mode or online mode.

As decided by the National Medical Commission(NMC), the NEET-UG shall be conducted in Pen and paper mode (OMR based) in a single day and shift," a senior National Testing Agency (NTA) official said on Thursday.

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) is the largest entrance exam in



more than 24 lakh candidates took the exam. The NTA conducts the NEET every year for admission into medical colleges. A total of 1,08,000 seats are

for the test. In 2024, a record

available for MBSS course. Of the seats available for the MBBS course, approximately 56,000 are in government hospitals and about 52,000 in private colleges.

Admissions to undergraduate courses in Dentistry, Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha also utilise the results of the

DELHI ASSEMBLY POLLS

Traders to offer discounts to encourage voting

PNS NEW DELHI

Ahead of Delhi Assembly elections to boost voter turnout the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) on Thursday announced discounts in over 50 markets across the city for people who cast their votes on February 5.

CTI Chairperson Brijesh Goyal said voters participating in the elections on February 5 will be eligible for discounts in various markets on February 6. Discounts ranging from 20 to 25 percent will be offered in hotels and guest houses.



Goyal also said that the first week of February is a busy wedding season in Delhi-NCR and emphasised that discusto ensure that voter participation does not decrease.

sions were held with more than 100 market associations Mahendra Agarwal, presi-

dent of Nehru Place Market, announced that voters will receive up to a 10 percent discount on computers, laptops, and related items. Similarly, Nitin Gupta, president of Kamla Nagar

Market, said that a 15 percent discount will be offered to those who visit the market after voting. In Khari Baoli, trader leader Bharat Arora offered a 5 percent discount for voters, while Tarun Gupta, president of Dariba Jewelers Association in Chandni Chowk, announced a 1 percent discount on gold and silver purchases.

'Nutritional support could prevent TB deaths' PNS NEW DELHI

In India, providing nutritional support to half the households with individuals undergoing tuberculosis (TB) treatment could prevent roughly 4.5 per cent TB-related deaths and 2.2 per cent of disease episodes by 2035, a modelling study has found.

The study, published in The Lancet Global Health journal, estimated that more than 3.6 lakh deaths and over 8.8 lakh TB cases could be averted through such intervention. Typically, about 24 house-holds would need to be treat-

ed of tuberculosis to prevent

one death, while 10 would

one case, researchers, including those from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT), Chennai, estimated.

The nutritional intervention could have an additional cost of about USD 1,349 million on the health system, with potential benefits of USD 167 for every disability-adjusted life-year averted, they projected. 'Disability-adjusted lifeyear' is a metric that helps measure overall burden of disease.

The researchers said that about a fifth of the world's tuberculosis incidence is attributable to undernutrition, with



the ratio increasing to more than a third in India.

A 2023 study, published in The Lancet journal, by the same research team had enrolled household contacts of

2,800 patients with tuberculosis across 28 units of the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme in four districts of Jharkhand.

receiving monthly food rations and micronutrients having 750 kilocalories (23 grams of pro-tein per day with micronutri-Results showed that over a

grams of protein per day with

micronutrients) for six months,

with their household contacts

two-year follow up period, tuberculosis incidence in a household dropped by 39-48 per cent, simply by extending nutritional support to household contacts of the infected. In this study, the researchers

used the 2023 study's model to inform estimates of the impact and costs of nutritional sup-The patients received food

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-PAPER WITH PASSION

Hope and dread

The Gaza truce between Hamas and Israel may be fragile but it is still welcome as it offers some relief to beleaguered people

he recent announcement of a potential truce between Israel and Hamas has brought" a mix of cautious hope and lingering fear to those on both sides of the conflict. After months of violence and suffering following the devastating events of October 2023, which saw Hamas's deadly incursion into Israel and the subsequent retaliatory offensive, the prospect of a ceasefire offers a moment of relief. However, the road ahead remains fraught with uncertainty. The conflict has left deep scars on both Israeli and Palestinian communities. For Israelis, the abduction of hostages—including women, children, and elderly civilians—has been a source of immense anguish. The release of 33 hostages as part of the initial phase of the ceasefire would bring some relief, but many fear the fragile agreement could collapse, leaving their loved ones in limbo. In Gaza, the humanitarian crisis is dire. The death toll exceeds 46,000, with women and children accounting for over half of the fatalities. Massive displacement has left 90 per cent of



the population—approximately 2.3 million people homeless. Entire neighbourhoods lie in ruins, and the lack of basic necessities has pushed residents to the

The proposed truce, brokered by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar, outlines a three-phased agreement. The first phase involves the exchange of hostages and Palestinian detainees, with the release of women, children, and the elderly prioritised. Subsequent phases would address the release of soldiers and other male captives, along with broader discussions to halt hostilities. A crucial component of the ceasefire includes a surge in humanitarian aid to Gaza. This would enable

displaced Palestinians to return to their homes and help rebuild critical infrastructure. Yet, the long-term success of this agreement hinges on both sides' willingness to engage in meaningful negotiations during the second phase. The fragile nature of previous ceasefires—such as the one in November 2023 that lasted only a week—underscores the difficulty of achieving lasting peace. Key obstacles include Hamas's insistence on maintaining its military capabilities and Israel's objective to dismantle Hamas's governing structures. Both sides are under immense domestic and international pressure, but deeply entrenched mistrust makes compromise elusive. For hostages' families, uncertainty looms large. Many remain haunted by the possibility that their loved ones may not survive captivity if the true fails. Meanwhile, Palestinians fear that a breakdown in talks could trigger renewed violence, exacerbating an already catastrophic situation. If the ceasefire holds, it could mark the beginning of a much-needed reprieve for Gaza's beleaguered population. Immediate priorities include addressing food insecurity, medical shortages, and the rebuilding of homes and infrastructure. International aid would play a critical role in alleviating the humanitarian crisis, but long-term recovery would require substantial investment, political stability and lasting peace.



People try to tame a bull as they participate in the 'Jallikattu' event as part of 'Pongal' celebrations, in Tiruchirapalli

Diplomacy: The pillar of India's global aspirations



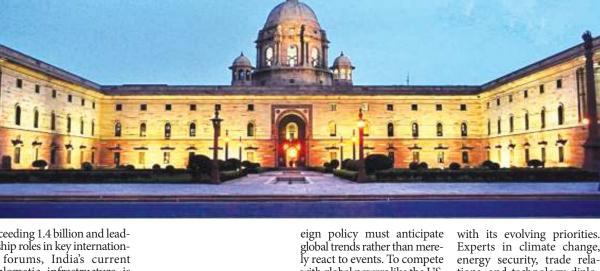
To fulfill its aspirations as a global leader, India must urgently bolster its diplomatic infrastructure by expanding and modernising the Ministry of External Affairs

ndia, the world's most populous nation and the largest democracy is emerging as a pivotal force in global affairs. As a leader of the Global South, its growing economic might, strategic autonomy, and commitment to peace have positioned it at the centre of international diplomacy.

However, despite these achievements, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)—the critical institution shaping and executing its foreign policy—remains under-resourced. With only about 850 diplomats, the MEA is inadequately equipped to handle the complexities of a rapidly evolving global landscape. For India to realize its potential as a global leader, it must significantly expand its diplomatic infrastructure, scaling the MEA to at least 5,000 personnel. Such an expansion would align with India's ambitions and its stature as a major international power.India's diplomatic requirements have grown substantially alongside its global ambitions.

As the world's largest democracy and one of its fastest-growing economies, India's foreign policy must address a wide range of global issues. From trade negotiations and climate change to digital diplomacy and global security, the MEA serves as the nerve center of India's international engagements. India's foreign policy has traditionally been guided by strategic autonomy and a commitment to peace, rooted in the Nehruvian tradition of nonalignment. Leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and VK Krishna Menon laid the foundation of an independent foreign policy that prioritized non-violence while asserting India's sovereignty. This legacy of non-alignment, which positioned India as a bridge between competing superpowers, remains a cornerstone of its diplomatic

However, the global order is shifting, and India must adapt its foreign policy apparatus to meet strated the transformative challenges. Strengthening the MEA is vital not only for safeguarding India's interests but also for crafting a vision capable of influencing global politics. With a population



exceeding 1.4 billion and leadership roles in key international forums, India's current diplomatic infrastructure is insufficient for the demands it faces. Countries like the United States, China and Russia deploy thousands of diplomats and foreign policy experts to maintain their global influence. In contrast, India's diplomatic corps, though skilled, is a fraction of the size required. This gap underscores the urgent need for a larger, more specialised MEA capable of shaping global discussions and providing strategic depth across multiple domains. Expanding the MEA to 5,000 personnel would ensure that India's foreign policy is both proactive and comprehensive. Such an expansion is not merely about increasing numbers; it is about cultivating strategic expertise across diverse fields.

India's diplomacy must address trade, defense, environmental sustainability, cybersecurity, humanitarian aid, and more. To achieve this, the MEA must recruit specialists who can navigate these complex issues. During the Cold War, figures like US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger de power of strategic brilliance in diplomacy. Similarly, India needs diplomats capable of long-term thinking and crafting policies that reflect its evolving global role. India's forTHE NEED FOR A

DIPLOMATIC CORPS THAT CAN SHAPE **GLOBAL DISCUSSIONS AND** PROVIDE THE INTELLECTUAL AND STRATEGIC DEPTH REQUIRED IN AN **INCREASINGLY** INTERNATIONAL

COMPLEX **ENVIRONMENT HAS** URGENT

with global powers like the US, Russia, and China, India requires a diplomatic team adept at building alliances, leveraging emerging opportu-nities, and addressing global challenges. This necessitates investments in strategic thinking and specialised knowledge. The MEA must develop expertise in fields such as space diplomacy, climate change negotiations, global trade, and defense strategy. Moreover, diplomats must engage with governments, businesses, think tanks, and civil society to shape decisions

in India's favour. A well-staffed MEA would enable India to better engage with key global issues and deepen its relationships with major powers. Just as the US relied on figures like Robert McNamara and John Foster Dulles to shape its diplomacy, India must nurture a generation of visionary diplomats. These individuals should possess deep understanding of global security, international aw, multilateral organisations, and global trade—qualities nplified by VK Krishna Menon, who championed India's interests on the international stage during the 1950s. Expanding the MEA is not just about addressing immediate challenges but about aligning India's diplomatic capabilities

Experts in climate change, energy security, trade relations, and technology diplomacy are essential to ensuring a forward-thinking foreign policy.

The expanded MEA must also

prioritise collaboration with

think tanks, academic institu-

tions, and media professionals. These partnerships can provide the intellectual foundation for strategic decisions and help India anticipate emerging global trends. Think tanks and universities—both domestic and international—can offer critical insights into shifting geopolitical dynamics, new economic policies, and other global developments. Engaging with these institu-tions will ensure that India's foreign policy remains agile and informed. Public diplomacy is another critical component of modern foreign policy. Beyond government-togovernment negotiations, India must focus on shaping global perceptions and building relationships with international audiences. The MEA should work closely with media professionals to effectively communicate India's vision and policies to the world. Leveraging India's soft power—its rich culture, democratic ideals, and values—can amplify its global influence and ensure its voice is heard.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

India's projector demand soars with eco-friendly innovations



These next-generation projectors not only offer enhanced energy efficiency and sustainability but also excellent output redefining the visual experience

ndia is rapidly becoming one of the fastest-growing projector markets globally, with an anticipated annual growth rate of 8.10 per cent over the next five years. This surge is driven by the increasing demand for projectors in both commercial and personal spaces. Technological advancements are playing a key role in this trend, as new, more ecofriendly projector alternatives are replacing traditional lamp-based models.

These older models, while effective, had significant drawbacks such as high power consumption, reliance on hazardous materials, and limited recyclability. In contrast, modern projectors are designed with sustainability in mind, making them an attractive option for a wide range of applications.

The rise in digitization across businesses and households further accelerates the need for effective display solutions. Eco-friendly projectors not only address this need but also offer a greener, more sustainable alternative to conventional options. With advanced production standards grounded in sus-

tainable development, these projectors are perfectly positioned to meet India's growing demand for high-tech, energy-efficient devices. Eco-friendly projectors are designed to tackle many of

the issues associated with traditional models. They operate with much higher energy efficiency, sig-nificantly reducing power consumption. The manufacturing process also minimizes carbon footprints, with materials sourced responsibly. Innovations such as LED and laser light sources have significantly improved these devices' energy efficiency and lifespan, making them superior to traditional lamp-based

These advancements appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and businesses alike, offering a more

generations, eco-friendly projectors offer several clear advantages. Their energy efficiency makes them much more cost-effective in the long term, as they consume far less power and do not require frequent replacements of parts like traditional bulbs. Additionally, the longevity of these projectors decreasing their environmental impact. Importantly, many eco-friendly projectors do not contain harmful substances like mercury, which is found in conventional models, thus contributing to

safer disposal practices. Furthermore, these projectors are built to last longer and require less maintenance, thanks to technologies like LED and laser, which do not degrade as quickly as traditional bulbs. Às a result, maintenance costs are significantly lower, and users benefit from reduced downtime and increased durability.

This is an appealing factor for both businesses and consumers, as it translates to sustainable solution to their lower total ownership costs

display and entertainment over the life of the needs. Compared to earlier device. Looking ahead, there are several trends that will further shape the future of eco-friendly display technologies. One of the most promising is the development of even more efficient light sources, such as OLEDs and advanced lasers, which will provide higher brightness while consuming even less power. Another exciting reduces waste, further possibility is the use of solarpowered projectors, especially in rural or off-grid areas, which would reduce reliance on conventional power sources and minimize carbon footprints. Additionally, there is growing interest in integrating biodegradable materials into the production of projectors, which would reduce the environmental impact when the product reaches the end of its lifecycle. The future will also likely see the introduction of more smart projectors that can integrate seamlessly with smart home and office ecosystems, featuring energy-saving modes based on usage patterns. (The writer is MD Optoma

Technology; views are personal)

RUPEE LOSING SHEEN

Madam — There is an ongoing concern over the rupee sharply losing value against the dollar. But then a nation's currency intrinsically represents two notions of value: one for the purchaser and seller in the domestic market and the other for the external one. China, in its monetary parlance, has the vuan and the renminbi. In layman's terms, the domestic standing of the rupee is broadly propped up by an incremental rise in GDP and per capita income, with the purchasing power sustained by low inflation.

Compared to most economies, we are far better placed. Our current concern would be more reining in inflation and fiscal deficit to retain the value of the rupee. The exchange value of the rupee with other currencies is a matter of the difference between the inflow and outflow of foreign currency for our external buying or selling, be it products, commodities, or services. The crux lies in developing our niche in any one of them to reverse the trade deficit. China found it in manufacturing and commodities and dares to keep its currency highly depreciated. The US despite its huge debt has the privilege of printing the dollar, the global currency. We must find it in diligence, research, and human potential.

R Narayanan | Navi Mumbai

NGO SUSPECTED FOR BOMB THREAT Madam—Apropos of the headlines 'Police find NGO, political ties in Delhi bomb threats', it is imperative to dig deeply into the conspiracy of scaring 400 Delhi schools with bombing. The 16-year-old boy is only a juvenile shield to escape punishment. This is a heinous crime closely connected with the terrorist act perpetrated by the sympathisers of terrorist Afzal Guru, who had been hanged during Congress's tenure. Delhi CM Atishi is also a potential source of investigation because of her family's sympathy with the terrorist Afzal Guru. All those associated with the NGO should be slapped with NSA under the zero-tolerance ed the removal of the word secularism from

Meta offers apologises on election remark

THE EDIT



ark Zuckerberg's controversial statement has sparked a new debate across India and the world. His remarks about the functioning of Joe Biden's administration and the 2024 Indian elections have angered the Indian Parliament. Now, Meta India has publicly apologised following backlash over its CEO Mark Zuckerberg's comments on India's 2024 general elections. This issue raises critical questions about the responsibility of tech companies and the impact of their statements

as damaging to India's image. Particularly, the questions raised about Prime

on a global scale. Zuckerberg's comments on

Joe Rogan's podcast regarding economic chal-

lenges and democracy in India are being seen

Minister Narendra Modi's government's economic management and COVID-19 strategies are considered serious. India's IT Minister, Ashwini Vaishnaw, has responded strongly, stating that foreign companies must respect India's constitutional dignity. This incident not only scrutinises the social impact of social media giants but also questions their political interference. India's stance highlights that major tech giants are now being held accountable for their actions. This development sends an important message that strict action against misinformation is essential to upholding the dignity of democracy

R K Jain | Barwani

Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist who carried out the Parliament attack in 2001 earned sympathy for those vying for Delhi rule. It is the most unfortunate for the country and the ugliest face of our political ecosys-

Hitherto, a part of the INDIA bloc, AAP must clarify the role of its Delhi CM. The Khalistani links of the Aam Aadmi Party and Arvind Kejriwal are already in public awareness. There seems to be no end to the revengeful acts of sympathisers of the terrorists, so the strongest punishment should be ensured against the culprits. We are aware that a team of leading advocates will protect the NGO behind the Delhi school bomb threats. Such an ecosystem should be exposed. Delhi has been targeted by the extremist forces; it is very obvious and evi-

Vinod Johri | Delhi

Madam — Bangladesh's Attorney General Mohammad Asaduzzaman has demandpolicy of the Union Government. The the Constitution. He has said that 90 per-

B'DESH AG'S ANTI-SECULARISM PITCH

cent of Bangladesh's population is Muslim, so it should be a Muslim country by removing the word secular. The Attorney General has said that words like socialism and secularism do not present the correct picture of Bangladesh. He has suggested making major changes in the constitution and

removing 'secularism'. He will make these changes before the next elections. Because Yunus is an educationist later and is first a fundamentalist Muslim. Earlier, in the year 2010, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh had ruled that the removal of secularism in 1977 was illegal. The court had reinstated secularism in the constitution. Just as Bangladesh is attacking temples in its country, similarly in India too, deities are being searched for in mosques. The destination of both the neighbours is the same. Bangladesh wants to become an Islamic nation while preparations are on in India to make it a Hindu

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

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FIRST COLUMN

US EXPORT CONTROLS: IMPACT ON INDIA'S AI

US export controls pose new challenges for India's AI and tech ambitions



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

he Biden administration's Interim Final Rule (IFR), effective January 2025, introduces strict regulations on the export, reexport and incountry transfer of advanced computing integrated circuits (ICs) and artificial intelligence (AI) model weights. These measures aim to limit the proliferation of advanced technologies with potential military and intelligence applications, particularly in Al-driven systems. While this move marks a significant policy step from the outgoing administration, its future under the next presidency remains uncertain, as the new administration could pause the implementation for review. India, a nation rapidly advancing its Al infrastructure, faces significant challenges under the IFR. Here are the key implications:

The IFR enforces licensing requirements for exporting advanced computing ICs and Al model weights, particularly those integral to high-performance Al models. For India, which is heavily investing in Al research and infrastructure, these restrictions may hinder access to state-of-theart U.S. technologies. A "presumption of denial" applies to licenses for advanced ICs used in training Al models, limiting India's ability to obtain cutting-edge hardware essential for its Al development.

The regulations impose stringent controls on advanced closed-weight Al models, while open-weight models are exempt. Since closed-weight models often drive groundbreaking Al research, this limitation could slow India's progress in leveraging advanced US AI models. Restricted access to these critical technologies could delay breakthroughs in Al-driven appli-



Although the IFR provides exceptions for low-risk destinations, India is not included in the list of preferred nations. As a result, Indian entities face capped allocations on advanced computing capacity based on total processing performance (TPP). Over the next three years, these limitations could restrict the computational resources available for Indian researchers and developers, potentially stalling Al initiatives.

Indian companies seeking US technology will face heightened scrutiny under the IFR, including stringent checks on supply chain security, personnel vetting, and cybersecurity compliance. These requirements will increase the complexity of partnerships with US firms and may delay India's efforts to scale its AI ecosystem.

India's plans to establish advanced data centers and high-performance computing clusters will be directly affected by the new regulations. The IFR mandates compliance with US security standards, such as NIST guidelines, adding operational costs and potential delays.

India's ambition to lead global Al collaborations, as demonstrated by its participation in initiatives like the Global Partnership on AI (GPAI), faces friction under these controls. With international partnerships playing a crucial role in India's technological growth, the restrictions on high-performance computing components and Al models could disrupt

To mitigate these challenges, India must consider alternative strategies, including strengthening domestic research and development, partnering with non-US technology providers, and leveraging diplomatic channels to negotiate favorable terms with the US The path forward will require Indian companies to adapt rapidly, focusing on self-sufficiency and fostering collaborations beyond traditional partnerships. While the IFR offers limited flexibility through license exceptions and potential adjustments, India's advanced computing and Al ambitions will require resilience and innovation to overcome the regulatory hurdles imposed by these new export controls.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

The war they waged, the price we paid



With Trump's return, the stage is set for continuation of the bloodstained legacy, with devastating consequences for the world's most vulnerable



he Vietnam War should have been the United States' breaking point—a humiliating defeat that exposed the futility of projecting brute force in a world that had long learned to resist imperialism. But instead of becoming a sobering moment of reflection it invited a shain a section of of reflection, it ignited a chain reaction of conflicts, interventions, and proxy wars that would devastate nations and leave millions dead. From Ronald Reagan to Joe Biden, the American war machine has not only endured but expanded, thriving on chaos and suffering. With Donald Trump poised to return, his new administration promises to perpetuate this bloodstained legacy, consolidating power at home while unleashing destruction abroad. Reagan's tenure marked a revival of the Cold War mindset, framed by a simplistic, almost cartoonish view of global politics.
His administration orchestrated covert

operations and military interventions with reckless abandon, leaving a trail of devastation across continents. In Grenada, a minuscule island nation, the U.S. flexed its muscle in a laughable display of overkill. Yet, the price for the people of NEIGHBOURHOODS Grenada was far from humorous-hundreds of civilians died in an operation sold as a "rescue mission." In Lebanon, Reagan's deployment of U.S. Marines ended in catastrophe, with 241 servicemen killed in a suicide bombing. The retaliatory shelling of Lebanese villages left countless civilians dead, their stories erased from the official narrative.George H. W. Bush brought the carnage to Panama and Iraq. Operation Just Cause in Panama left at least 3,000 civilians dead, according to independent estimates—numbers far higher than the

official U.S. tally. The Gulf War of 1991 killed tens of thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians, with entire neighbourhoods flattened by American airpower. The sanctions that followed—a form of economic warfare—led to the deaths of an estimated 500,000 Iraqi children, as reported by UNICEF. But these deaths were dismissed by then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as a price worth paying.

Bill Clinton's presidency, often remembered for its charm and centrism, was any-



THE GULF WAR OF 1991 KILLED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF IRAQI SOLDIERS FLATTENED BY AMERICAN AIRPOWER. THE SANCTIONS

FOLLOWED—A FORM OF ECONOMIC WARFARE—LED DEATHS OF AN ESTIMATED

thing but peaceful. Under his watch, NATO's bombing campaign in Kosovo killed an estimated 500 civilians, while strikes on critical infrastructure plunged the region into chaos. In Somalia, Clinton inherited and expanded a disastrous intervention that culminated in the infamous Black Hawk Down incident. The fallout was not limited to American soldiers—it cost the lives of an estimated 10,000 Somali civilians caught in the crossfire. The Bush-Cheney years saw the bloodbath reach industrial levels. The 2003 invasion of Iraq, based on falsified intelligence, unleashed a catastrophe of staggering proportions. By conservative estimates, 200,000 Iraqi civilians died in the war, though many argue the real number exceeds half a million. Afghanistan, initially framed as a AND CIVILIANS, righteous response to 9/11, turned into a graveyard for American credibility. The war cost over 70,000 Afghan civilian lives, with many more lost to starvation and disease caused by the destruction of infrastructure.

These numbers, while horrifying, barely scratch the surface.Barack Obama, heralded as a harbinger of change, instead became the drone king. Under his administration, drone strikes killed an estimated 3,800 people in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia. These numbers include as many as 800 civilians, though independent investigations suggest the real toll is much higher. Libya, once a stable if repressive state, was reduced to a TO THE failed state after NATO's intervention, with Obama admitting it was his greatest foreign policy mistake. Yet his admission did nothing to rebuild Libya, now a haven for 500,000 human traffickers and militia warlords.Donald Trump's first term shattered even the pretence of CHIDLREN restraint. Civilian casualties from U.S. airstrikes in Syria and Iraq

soared, with independent monitors estimating at least 4,500 civilians killed in 2017 alone.

In Somalia, Trump's loosening of drone strike protocols led to a surge in civilian deaths, including women and children obliterated in remote villages. Yemen's civil war, fueled by U.S.-supplied bombs and logistical support to Saudi Arabia, created what the U.N. calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. By some estimates, over 377,000 Yemenis have died—many of them from famine and disease exacerbated by the relentless bombing campaigns.Joe Biden's administration, while promising a pivot to diplomacy, has only perpetuated the violence.

The withdrawal from Afghanistan, while ending America's longest war, was executed with callous disregard for human life. At least 170 civilians were killed in a single ISIS-K bombing during the ic evacuation. Biden's continued drone strikes and military presence in Syria ensure that civilians remain collateral in America's unending "war on terror." In Ukraine, US military aid fuels a war that has already claimed tens of thousands of lives on both sides, with no end in sight. Across these decades, the pattern is unmistakable: the United States does not fight wars for freedom or

democracy. It fights for hegemony, resources, and geopolitical advantage, with human lives as expendable currency. The statistics are staggering but fail to capture the depth of the tragedy. From Vietnam to Yemen, from Iraq to Libya, the human cost is always paid by those least equipped to bear it: the poor, the displaced, and the voiceless.In just days, Donald Trump will return to the White House, his second administration poised to escalate the already relentless machinery of American war. This time, the

gloves are off—his power more consolidated, his team of loyalists more ruthless, and his ambitions unrestrained. The team surrounding him will be battle-hardened ideologues with little patience for opposition.

Trump has openly embraced authoritarian impulses, and his foreign policy will likely mirror his domestic ambitions—unapologetic, ruthless, and geared toward consolidating dominance. For the impoverished, this is a death sentence. The costs will not be borne by those who plan wars from airconditioned offices or justify them in press briefings but by the powerless: Yemeni mothers sifting through the rubble for scraps, Syrian children cowering as drones circle above, and Gazan families freezing to death amid the ruins of their bombed-out homes. These are not accidents of war; they are deliberate outcomes of a globa tem that treats human life as expendable in the pursuit of dominance over dignity.

The bombs will continue to fall, the starving will continue to die, and the architects of this destruction will dine in opulence, their hands stained with the blood of the voiceless.

We collectively absorb these atrocities—not with shock or outrage, but with numbed detachment, anaesthetised by the relentless churn of media cycles and the droning rationalisations of pundits. It is not that we do not care—it is that we have been conditioned not to. Once our souls have been amputated by decades of warmongering, by a system that normalises suffering as the cost of 'security,' we survive in resignation, compelled by the machinery of indifference to keep moving for-

> (The writer is a journalist and policy analyst. Views expressed

Uttarakhand's initiatives to strengthen climate resilience in the Himalayas

The State's efforts, encapsulated in the Dehradun Declaration, highlight the importance of collaboration and community empowerment

he Uttarakhand Council of Science and Technology (UCOST) recently organised a significant workshop in Delhi, focusing on climate resilience and disaster management, with a particular emphasis on Himalayan states. This workshop attracted eminent scientists, disaster management experts, and advocates of climate resilience, underscoring the pressing need to address environmental challenges in the region. This initiative follows Uttarakhand's landmark 2023 International Conference in Dehradun, which drew participants from approximately

50 countries. The conference culminated comprehensive action plan grimages such as the Char

aimed at fostering collaboration, innovation and effective strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change and natural disasters in Himalayan states. Uttarakhand's proactive approach to uniting stakeholders on these critical issues is both commendable and necessary

Rationale **Uttarakhand's Initiatives**

Uttarakhand's unique geographical and cultural significance drives its commitment to addressing climate resilience. With the secondlargest Himalayan boundary after Arunachal Pradesh, the state plays a pivotal role in supporting Northern India's vast

hinterland. in the adoption of the The region's popularity as a "Dehradun Declaration," a hub for tourism, religious pil-



DINESH KUMAR TYAGI

Dham Yatra, and adventure activities exerts considerable pressure on its fragile ecosys-

The state faces recurring natural calamities, including forest fires, landslides, cloudbursts, and glacier shrinkage. These disasters significantly impact local communities, strain state resources, and demand robust measures to minimise their devastating

effects. By organising international workshops and fostering collaborations, Uttarakhand aims to raise awareness, share best practices and leverage technology, such as data analytics and artificial intelligence, to design both preventive and responsive strategies.

Highlights of the Dehradun Declaration

The Dehradun Declaration lays out a comprehensive framework for building climate resilience and disaster preparedness in Himalayan states. Its key features include: **Strengthening Preparedness** Integrating disaster resilience into educational curricula. Framing regulations to protect vulnerable populations. Developing financial tools and frameworks to advance the "science of survival."



Protecting the Himalayan **Ecosystem**

Merging indigenous knowledge with traditional community practices. Promoting nature-based solu-

tions and active community Enhancing institutional collab-

oration for project monitoring and execution. **Empowering Communities** Establishing community-

based early warning systems. Educating and equipping communities to take local mea-Strengthening livelihoods and building local networks of

like-minded individuals. **Policy Integration** Establishing an Institute of Disaster Management and a global center for climate

resilience. Formulating policies based on national and international best

Coordinating among state, central, and international

organisations. **Promoting Innovation** Supporting startups and entrepreneurs in developing tools and technologies for climate resilience.

The Delhi Workshop and **Global Consensus**

The Delhi workshop served as a follow-up to the Dehradun Declaration and brought together disaster management scholars, international organisations, and corporate representatives engaged in CSR activities. Participants praised Uttarakhand's efforts to convene diverse stakeholders, emphasising that protecting the Himalayan ecosystem is a shared responsibility.

The Himalayas, often referred to as the "Soul of India" and the "Third Pole," are crucial for maintaining ecological balance. Workshop attendees agreed on the need for collective action to address challenges such as unchecked tourism and resource exploitation. Recommendations included regulating plastic use, promoting organic farming,

imposing green taxes on vehicles, and training locals to mitigate post-disaster damage. National Perspectives on Climate Resilience

The recently concluded COP 29 in Baku included an agenda to establish a global fund for addressing climate change. Developed nations were urged to allocate higher budgets to support developing and poor-er countries in reducing car-

bon emissions. Training volunteers at the village level and connecting them through a centralised platform can foster trust and confidence in disaster prepared-

(The writer is a retired IAS officer and president of Society of Digital Entrepreneurs; views are personal)

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | JANUARY 17, 2025

IN BRIEF



PFC signs loan pact with **Japan's JBIC**

tate-owned PFC on Thursday said it has inked an agreement with Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for 120 billion Japanese yen (around Rs 6,600 crore) loan facility. According to a PFC statement, under the agreement signed on Wednesday, JBIC will provide funding of JPY 72 billion, and the balance will be funded by commercial banks. This long-term (up to 20 years) loan to PFC will be provided under JBIC's initiative 'Global action for Reconciling Economic growth and Environmental preservation' (GREEN). The funds will be utilized by PFC to finance its renewable energy portfolio, advancing India's transition to non-fossil-fuel-based energy sources. This deal marks the largest green financing agreement ever executed by JBIC with any company in India The loan agreement was signed by Parminder Chopra, Chairman and Managing Director, PFC and Ogawa Kazunori, Senior Managing Director, JBIC in the presence of Takashi Ariyoshi, Minister & Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan; Shibuya Atsuki, Deputy Director General, JBIC



Spencer's Retail forays into quick commerce segment

pencer's Retail on Thursday announced its entry into the quick commerce space with operations starting from West Bengal. The retail chain aims at delivering orders within 20-30 minutes using its existing stores to meet the demand for fast delivery. "The existing 89 stores of ours will cater to the quick commerce segment in both Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. The operations will begin from West Bengal. We don't incur any capital expenditure for this initiative as we are leveraging existing stores. A dedicated third-party delivery system will handle logistics," Spencer's Retail Chairman Shashwat Goenka said. He stated that the retailer will evaluate building a dark stores network if the situation demands, but now the service will be catered from existing outlets. Goenka noted that quick commerce has impacted modern retail and emphasised the need to adapt to changing consumer preferences. He revealed that the company is looking to double its daily online orders, which currently contribute 10-11 per cent to its overall revenue



HDFC Life shares jump 8 pc after Q3 earnings

hares of HDFC Life on Thursday jumped 8 per cent after the firm reported a 14 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 415 crore in the December quarter. The stock ended 7.92 per cent higher at Rs 641.30 on the BSE. During the day, it surged 11.15 per cent to Rs 660.55. At the NSE, it soared 7.99 per cent to Rs 641.70. Intra-day, it rallied 11.67 per cent to Rs 663.60. In traded volume terms, 10.99 lakh shares of the firm were traded at the BSE and 241.99 lakh shares at the NSE during the day. The private sector insurer's profit stood at Rs 365 crore in the year-ago period, HDFC Life said in a regulatory filing on Wednesday. However, total income declined to Rs 16,914 crore in the latest quarter from Rs 26,694 crore in the year-ago period. The company's solvency ratio also declined to 188 per cent from 190 per cent as on December 31, 2023 as against the regulatory requirement of 150 per cent.

RBI to encourage cross-border transactions in Indian rupee

PNS MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday announced liberalised norms to encourage use of Indian Rupee and local/ national currencies to settle cross border transactions.

The decision comes at a time when the domestic currency is sliding and touched an all-time low of 86.70 per US

dollar on Monday.

The Reserve Bank has already signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the central banks of the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Maldives to encourage crossborder transactions in local currencies, including Indian

To encourage greater use of Indian Rupee (INR) for trade transactions, in July 2022, an additional arrangement in the form of Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA) was introduced. Several foreign banks have since opened SRVAs with banks in India.

Overseas branches of Authorized Dealer banks will be able to open INR accounts for a person resident outside India for settlement of all permissible current account and capital account transactions with a person resident in India," the RBI on Thursday said while announcing the



The Reserve Bank has already signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the central banks of the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Maldives to encourage cross-border transactions in local currencies, including Indian Rupee

changes made in the extant FEMA regulations.

Under the liberalised FEMA regulations, persons resident outside India will be able to settle bona fide transactions with other non-residents using the balances in their repatriable INR accounts such as Special Non-resident Rupee account and SRVA.

Also, persons resident outside India will be able to use their balances held in repatriable INR accounts for foreign investment, including FDI, in non-debt instruments.

RBI further said Indian exporters will be able to open accounts in any foreign currency overseas for settlement of trade transactions, including receiving export proceeds and using these proceeds to pay for imports.

The decision on promotions of cross border transactions in INR and local / national currencies follows a review of the FEMA regulations of 1999 undertaken by the Reserve Bank in consultation with the central government.

Wish to bring as many Indians into market ecosystem: Buch

Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch on Thursday said the capital markets regulator wants to get as many Indians into the market ecosystem and seize the wealth creation opportuni-

Buch said artificial intelligence is "the hero" of a large number of ini-tiatives that the watchdog is embarking on with the focus on serving as many people as possi-



ble. Virtuall

addressing an event organized by Sebi, Buch said the Indian economy has a "huge opportunity" and all the necessary technological tools have been put in place as part of a larger ecosystem with democratization being the core principle.

... a system that is efficient but is exclusive does not serve the nation. We wish for our market ecosystem to be inclusive and to bring as many citizens of the country into the fold and into the opportunity of wealth creation for our nation," Buch said.

Sebi is implementing and

deploying a slew of initiatives and AI, the hero, is at the core of a large number of them, she said.

"To me, it is not just about how powerful AI is in terms of technology and what it can do, but the fact that it is hugely democratizing the ability to deploy technology within an



organization," she said, calling technology the magic wand.

The commercial bankerturned-regulator said an organization does not have to rely on a small set of specialized talent to deploy technology as AI democratizes that whole process, and added that Sebi has undertaken "numerous transformations" using the same.

Speaking at the same event, Infosys chairman Nandan Nilekani said Sebi is using AI to adhere to its commitment of clearing the initial public offer documents within its targeted time frame of three months.

Gold rallies Rs 500 to Rs 81,300 per 10 gm

Silver soars Rs 2,300

PNS NEW DELHI

Gold prices rallied Rs 500 to hit over a two-month high of Rs 81,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid fresh buying from jewellers and retailers and rupee depreciation, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal had closed at Rs 80,800 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 500 to Rs 80,900 per 10 grams. It settled at Rs 80,400 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. Silver also surged Rs 2,300 to Rs 94,000 per kg from the

kg on Wednesday. Meanwhile, gold contracts for February delivery rose Rs 297, or 0.38 per cent, to Rs 79,007 per 10 grams in the futures trade on the MCX on

"Gold surged higher trading above Rs 79,000 in MCX, sup-



ported by a rupee depreciation," Jateen Trivedi, VP Analyst Research Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

On Thursday, the rupee depreciated 16 paise to close at 86.56 (provisional) against the US dollar, dragged down by a overseas, elevated crude oil prices and foreign fund out-

Silver contracts for March delivery appreciated Rs 654, or 0.7 per cent, to Rs 93,510 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Globally, Comex gold

futures increased USD 19.70 per ounce, or 0.72 per cent, to USD 2,737.50 per ounce. Further, Jateen Trivedi highlighted that in the internation-

l markets Comex gold rally followed the release of US CPI data, which came in line with expectations for However, a lower-than-expected core CPI, provided

additional support to gold prices. The softer inflation reading has strengthened expectations of continued rate cuts by the Federal Reserve, adding momentum to gold's rally, Trivedi added. HDFC Securities' Senior

Saumil Gandhi said market participants will keep an eye on important US macro data, such as retail sales and the Philadelphia Manufacturing Index to be released later on Thursday that will provide more direction for bullion prices.

Sensex, Nifty extend gains on strong global cues

PNS MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rallied for the third session on the trot on Thursday, helped by a rally in global markets after lowerthan-expected consumer inflation in the US ignited hopes of more rate cuts by the Federal Reserve.

Intense buying in Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank also boosted sentiments, traders said.

The 30-share BSE index climbed 318.74 points or 0.42 per cent to revisit 77,000 level at 77,042.82. During the day, it jumped 595.42 points or 0.77 per cent to 77,319.50.

On the similar lines, the NSE Nifty rallied 98.60 points

As many as 2,778 stocks advanced, while 1,188 declined and 101 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Unabated foreign fund inflows, weakness in the rupee and elevated global crude prices continue to weigh on domestic equity markets,



traders said.

"Benchmark indices continued to trade in the positive, albeit off highs, driven by positive investor sentiment following mild US inflation data, which raised hopes for a potential rate cut by the Federal Reserve.

"Additionally, favourable Hamas ceasefire and a reduced trade deficit further boosted the market's upward movement. However, weak economic growth data from the UK dampened some of this optimism," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Adani Ports, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Maruti, Reliance Industries and Axis Bank were the biggest In contrast, HCL Tech,

Nestle, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever, IŤC and Tata Consultancy Services were among the låggards.

IT services major Infosys on Thursday reported an 11.46 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 6,806 crore in the October-December quarter of FY25. Shares of Infosys slipped

1.21 per cent to settle at Rs 1,926.20 apiece on the BSE.

Meanwhile, Adani group stocks rallied on Thursday after Hindenburg Research founder Nate Anderson announced that he would disband the firm, which made international waves with campaigns targeting billionaire Gautam Adani that wiped billions from the market value of his group companies.

FM meets Singapore Prez, discusses strategic partnership

PNS NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday called on Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and discussed Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the bilateral meeting.
"Honoured to meet with His

Excellency the President of the Republic of Singapore @Tharman_S. India values its comprehensive strategic partnership with Singapore. This visit by the President will strengthen our bilateral relationship which marks its 60th anniversary," the Finance Minister said in a post on X.



elevated September 2024.

India-Singapore relations Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Singapore in

The president is accompanied by Chee Hong Tat, Second Minister for Finance and Minister for Transport.

The two leaders discussed #ComprehensiveStrategicPart nership between the two countries highlighting sectors such as #fintech, #digital technologies, #semiconductor ecosystem and #skill development. Both sides expressed confidence in expanding #trade and #investment relations over the coming decades," the finance ministry said in another post on X.

The Singapore president arrived here on Tuesday night for a five-day visit, aiming to further boost bilateral ties in a range of areas.

Maha Kumbh: UP's handicrafts to see Rs 35 cr trade

PNS MAHAKUMBH

The Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj is proving to be a significant platform for artisans of Uttar Pradesh. Officials estimate a turnover of about Rs 35 crore for the handicraft industry during the 45-day fair. After taking a dip in the Sangam, people are also visiting the 'One District, One Product' (ODOP) exhibition set up across 6,000 square metres area. The exhibition showcases an array of exquisite handicrafts, including carpets of Kushinagar, zarizardozi work, Firozabad's

De-registration application of Tata Sons as NBFC under 'examination': RBI

The RBI on Thursday again named Tata Sons -- the holding company of salt to software conglomerate -- among the large NBFCs that need to mandatorily list on stock exchanges, but the decision on de-registration of the company as NBFC, which

will exempt it from going public, is pending with the central bank. The Reserve

Bank Thursday released the list of 15 NBFCs in

Regulation for non-banking finance companies, which besides Tata Sons Private Limited, include Tata Capital, LIC Housing Finance, Bajaj Finance, and Aditya Birla Finance.

According to the RBI's 'Scale Based Regulation (SBR): A Revised Regulatory Framework for NBFCs', NBFC-UL shall be mandatorily listed within three years of identification as NBFC-UL. The norms came into effect from October 1, 2022.

Tata Sons Private Limited, a core investment company, was categorised as NBFC-UL on September 30, 2022.

Tata Sons, however, has applied for de-registration as a

pending with the Reserve Bank. ... inclusion of Tata Sons

Private Limited in the list of NBFC-UL is without prejudice to the outcome of its application for de-registration, which is under examination," the RBI said while releasing the list of 15 NBFCs in the Upper Layer
(NBFC-UL)

under Scale Based Regulation for NBFCs.

As per the reg-ulations, NBFCs are classified into four categories --Layer, Middle Layer, Upper Layer and

the Upper Layer Top Layer -- (NBFC-UL) under Scale Based based on their size, activity, and perceived riskiness.

The Upper Layer comprise of those NBFCs which are specifically identified by the Reserve Bank as warranting enhanced regulatory requirement based on a set of parameters and scor-

ing methodology.

The top ten eligible NBFCs in terms of their asset size always reside in the upper layer, irrespective of any other factor.

On Thursday, the RBI also said that despite qualifying for identification as NBFC-UL as per scoring methodology, Piramal Enterprises Limited is not being included in the list in the current review due to ongoing reorganisation in the busi-

Infosys says H1B visa dependence lowered quarter of FY25, reaching Rs 6,806 crore compared to Rs Expresses confidence in resilient biz model shift again. During his previ-

PNS NEW DELHI

Days after HCLTech said it has lowered reliance on H1B visas, Infosys on Thursday reported a significant decrease in its dependence on this visa category and exuded confidence in its "resilient" operational

"Over the years, our dependence on H1B visas has reduced significantly. First and foremost, our onsite mix has reduced significantly -- we used to be in the 30 per cent range, (but) we are now at the 24 per cent range. Within that, our near shore has

'Within the US-onsite population that we have, our H1 independent folks are now at 60 plus percentage. We have now built a pretty resilient model from that perspective. We are, therefore, much more confident from where we are versus where we used to be earlier," Infosys CFO Jayesh

Sanghrajka said. On Monday, HCLTech said that around 80 per cent of its workforce in the US comprises local hires, making its dependence on H1B visas among "the lowest in the industry"



...If I look back over the last 4 odd years, we have been pretty locally self-sufficient. And that reflects in the number of H1Bs that we go through every year. It ranges between 500-1,000 in a year max...so it is minimal dependence," HCLTech Chief People Officer Ramachandran Sundararajan

Infosys reported an 11.46 per cent increase in consolidated net profit for the December 6,106 crore during the same period last year. Revenue from operations for this quarter stood at Rs 41,764 crore, marking a 7.58 per cent rise from Rs 38,821 crore in Q3 FY24. The H1B visa programme

allows US companies to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialised roles and has been a significant avenue for Indian companies within the tech sector.

However, with Donald Trump's return to the presidency, implications for the H1B visa programme could

ous administration, Trump enforced stricter regulations aimed at prioritising American workers, a trend that may continue and increase competition for Indian tech professionals seeking these visas. Data from the US

Citizenship and Immigration Services shows that Indian-origin tech companies accounted for approximately one-fifth of all H1B visas issued in recent years. In the April-September 2024 period alone, about 24,766 visas were granted to Indian-origin firms out of a total of 1,30,000 issued.

what's brewing?

Saif Ali Khan stabbed in home invasion, now out of danger

In a shocking incident that took place in the early hours of January 16, Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was dition under medical supervision. Kareena's team has also issued a st ment requesting fans and the medi stabbed multiple times by an intruder who barged into his Mumbai residence. The attack occurred at around 2:30 am on Thursday, when the assailant, whose identity remains unknown, reportedly entered the actor's home by scaling a wall from an adjacent building.

Saif Ali Khan was immediately rushed to Lilavati Hospital, where he underwent a 2.5-hour surgery, which included both neurosurgery and plastic surgery. Thankfully, the hospital confirmed that the actor is no longer in danger and is currently in a stable con-

Kareena's team has also issued a statement requesting fans and the media to remain patient and refrain from speculation, as the police are currently conduct-

ing their investigations into Saif Ali Khan's stabbing case.

A statement issued by the actress's team, said, "There was an attempted burglary in Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan's residence last night." "Saif had an injury on his arm for which he is in hospital, undergoing a procedure. The rest of the family is doing fine. We request the media and fans to be patient and not speculate any further as the Police are already doing their due inves-



tigations. Thank you all for your concern. Team Kareena Kapoor Khan".

Following the surgery, Saif Ali Khan's team issued a public statement thanking the medical staff for their prompt intervention. The statement read, "Saif Ali Khan has come out of surgery and is out of danger. He is currently in recoverv, and the doctors are closely monitoring his progress. All family members are safe, and the police are investigat-

ing the incident."

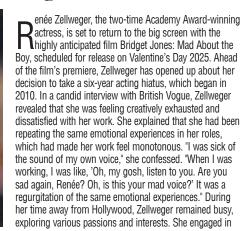
The statement further expressed gratitude to the medical professionals involved in Saif's treatment, including Dr Niraj Uttamani, Dr Nitin Dange, Dr Leena Jain, and the entire team at Lilavati Hospital.

Mumbai's Crime Branch and local police have launched an investigation into the attack. According to sources, the police have zeroed in on a suspect, and efforts are underway to apprehend the individual responsible. It has been revealed that the intruder gained access to Saif Ali Khan's home by jumping over a wall from a neighbouring building.

The police are currently gathering more details about the suspect's identity and motives. Meanwhile, Saif's fans and well-wishers have expressed their relief after hearing the news of his recovery.

As the investigation continues, both his family and fans are hopeful for a swift resolution to the case.

Renée Zellweger on stepping away from the spotlight: 'I needed to rediscover myself'



music, read international law and personally took on housebuilding and raising rescue dogs. She also cofounded a production company, organised a fundraiser to help a friend with an illness, and spent more time with her family, godchildren and pets.

Zellweger's return to acting has been met with critical acclaim, including an Oscar win for her portrayal of Judy Garland in the 2019 biopic Judy. Her upcoming film, Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy, is based on Helen Fielding's novel and celebrates Bridget's journey as a widow in her 50s, navigating modern life. As Zellweger prepares for the release of her latest film, her decision to take a sixyear acting hiatus serves as a reminder of the importance of self-care and creative rejuvenation. By stepping away from the spotlight, Zellweger was able to rediscover her passion for acting and return to the screen with renewed

Varun Dhawan joins the *Border 2* team as filming kicks off in Madhya Pradesh!

↑he much-anticipated sequel Border 2 has begun filming, and the excite-ment continues to build as Varun Dhawan joins the powerhouse cast in Madhya Pradesh.

Set in the highly secluded armed forces cantonment areas of Jhansi, the film aims to capture the raw emotions and heroism that have defined the franchise. With its gripping storyline, intense action sequences and heartfelt

drama, Border 2 is backed by a stellar production team, including Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, JP Dutta and Nidhi Dutta. Directed by Anurag Singh, presented by Gulshan Kumar & T-Series in association with JP Dutta's J.P. Films, the sequel promises to take audiences on a spectacular journey of patriotism, courage and sacrifice.

Mark your calendars as Border 2 gears up for a massive release on January 23, 2026. Stay tuned for more updates as the team brings this epic saga to life!



Brianna LaPaglia opens up about the most rewarding part of her split

Brianna "Chickenfry"
LaPaglia is speaking out about her highly publicized breakup with country singer Zach Bryan, and it's clear she's found a sense of purpose in the aftermath. In an interview with Sports Illustrated Swimsuit, the content creator and BFFs podcast host revealed the most rewarding part of her split.
According to LaPaglia, the breakup led to an outpouring of support from hundreds of women who reached out to her for advice on leaving emotionally abusive relationships. This influx of messages prompted a shift in the content she shares online, and LaPaglia says it's been a game-changer.
"It's probably been one of the most rewarding things that's ever happened to me," she shared. "To be able to help people in a way that feels more meaningful than what my

previous content was." LaPaglia acknowledged that her previous "silly" and "fun" content served as a welcome distraction for her audience, but she's found a new sense of fulfillment in being able to provide a "shoulder to lean on" for those in need. LaPaglia's breakup with Bryan made headlines in October last year, after the couple dated for over an year. While the split shocked fans, it's clear LaPaglia is using the

experience to fuel positive



ARCHIE









THE PLANET MERCURY WAS NAMED AFTER A ROMAN GOD WITH WINGED FEET.

REALITY CHECK

CALVIN AND HOBBES





CROSSWORD



GARFIELD









folks are "Smarties", and some folks are Soolish

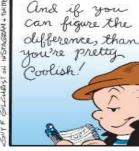
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ACROSS

- 1 Gets better after illness 7 An item of furniture
- 8 Move
- 9 Painter or sculptor
- 10 At this place 12 Pleased
- 14 A meal outdoors
- 17 Arrive at 18 A large lifting machine

DOWN

A mechanical person

19 A bird's covering

- 2 A mark from a fold
- 3 A holder for cut flowers 4 Lift up



5 People unknown

6 Made longer by

to you

pulling

11 Ring shape

13 Not asleep

16 Closed

15 Gets closer to

GINGER MEGGS







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> Friday January 17, 2025

TRAVELOGUE

'Travel is more than destinations; it's about connections'



TEJAL SINHA tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

ravelling is not just a physical journey for Srividya Maharshi; it's an emotional and spiritual experi-ence that allows her to disconnect from life's hustle and reconnect with herself. The actor, who has traversed paths for work, family obligations, pilgrimages and vacations, believes in the transformative power of travel. "For me, vacations are a way to unplug. mative power of travel. For me, vacations are a way to unplug. I prefer peaceful experiences over rushing to cover as many places as possible. The purpose is to rest and reset, not chase deadlines, even on a holiday," she shares.

Srividya ensures her travels reflect this philosophy by choosing accommodations that exude serenity. Whether it's a cozy Airbnb or a well-situated hotel, the place must align with her need for peace. This approach was evident in her most recent

need for peace. This approach was evident in her most recent trip, a girls' getaway to Thailand with her closest friends.

Organising a trip with working professionals can be a logistical challenge, but for Srividya and her friends, the effort was worth it. "Making it happen was the best decision we made. Good company makes even the slight hiccups in travelling easier to navigate," she remarks, fondly recalling how her friends'

meticulous planning balanced her



Whether it's a laid-back beach vacation, a cultural deep dive, or exploring India's rich heritage. Srividya Maharshi believes that travelling is much more than ticking destinations off a list — it's about creating memories and connecting with people. From a fun-filled girls' trip to Thailand to soulful journeys across Uttar Pradesh, she reflects on the experiences that have shaped her as a traveller, offering a glimpse into her most cherished moments and aspirations for future adventures.



Among the most cherished memories from the trip were moments spent in quiet reflection on the beach during sunsets, as well as some amusing cultural surprises. However, what truly stood out was a simple act of carrying an electric cooker and rice to cook meals with "podi" (a South Indian spice mix) when they struggled to find food to their liking. "It felt like a slice of home. We sat together and ate like real Telugu girls in their Ammamma's house," she says with a laugh.

While in Thailand, she and her friends made a conscious effort to explore the culture beyond the tourist hotspots. A cycling food tour through Bangkok turned out to be a highlight. The day-long journey included stops at age-old households to sample traditional recipes, visits to the floating mar-ket, and a trip to the vibrant fruit markets. "It was a wholesome experience that connected us with the locals and gave us a real feel of the place," she recalls.

For her, any place with a beach offers the ultimate rejuvenation. "The vast ocean reminds me of how small we are in the grand scheme of things. The sound of waves drowns out the noise in my head, helping me calm down," she reflects.

Her travels within India have been equally enriching. A recent journey across Uttar Pradesh, covering Agra, Mathura and Ayodhya, offered not only a glimpse into the country's heritage and spiritual significance but also insightful interactions with locals. "Every city and town in India has its own story, culture and history. Even within the same State, the diversity is striking, making every experience unique," she notes.

Not all travel experiences are smooth, and she recalls a particularly nerve-wracking moment during her return from London. A technical glitch with her boarding pass nearly caused her to miss the flight, which would have left her stranded with an expiring visa. "I panicked, imagining being labelled an illegal immigrant and deported," she admits, now able to laugh about it in

Looking back on her travels, she feels a deep sense of accomplishment. "Younger me would be so glad," she says. As a child, she often worried whether she would ever get the chance to explore the world. "Seeing those visa stamps on my passport reminds me that I'm doing something my childhood self

thought was unachievable." Next on her travel bucket list are Vietnam and Sri Lanka, destinations she hopes to visit with her husband. While she hasn't ventured into solo travelling for leisure, she enjoys group trips for the shared responsibilities and camaraderie. "Travelling with others means

less stress and more fun," she shares.
For her, the essence of travel lies in the little details — the stories shared by shopkeepers, drivers and long-time residents. "Tourist attractions often offer a filtered view. The real feel of a place comes from interacting with its peo-

ple," she concludes. With her mindful approach to travel and a heart open to experiences, Srividya Maharshi continues to explore the world, one story and memory at a time.

Chidiya Udd delivers gritty drama, but struggles to soar high

Chidiya Udd, streaming on MX Player, presents a gritty exploration of survival, resilience and crime, set against the backdrop of Mumbai's infamous redlight district, Kamathipura. Directed by Ravi Jadhav, the series attempts to shine a light on the struggles of those caught in the web of human trafficking and exploitation. While it boasts a promising premise and a stellar cast, it struggles to break free from the conventional tropes of its genre.

The narrative centres on Seher, a young woman from Rajasthan whose life takes a drastic turn when circumstances force her to flee her hometown and seek refuge in Mumbai. Far from the haven she hoped for, Mumbai thrusts her into the heart of Kamathipura, where she faces the grim realities of prostitution and crime. At the same time, the show introduces Qadir Khan, a menacing figure who holds sway over the area. As Seher fights to reclaim her agency amidst the chaos, the story unfolds with a mix of suspense, emotional depth and moments of harrowing intensity.

The show's greatest strength lies in its character-driven storytelling. Bhoomika Meena's portrayal of Seher is deeply Meenas portrayal of Seher is deeply moving, capturing both the vulnerability and the quiet strength of a woman determined to survive against all odds. Jackie Shroff is compelling as Qadir Khan, exuding authority and menace with ease. Supporting performances from Sikandar Kher and Madhur Mittal add denth to the parartive as their characters. depth to the narrative, as their characters navigate the murky waters of Kamathipura's underworld.

Drawbacks

However, while the series is engaging, it falls short of being groundbreaking. The plot often feels predictable, following a familiar trajectory that seasoned viewers of crime dramas will recognize. There are moments of brilliance, but they are diluted by the reliance on conventional storytelling and an overuse of genre clichés. Despite its efforts to shed light on the grim realities of exploitation, the show fai offer fresh insights or perspectives, which could have elevated it from being just another tale of survival.

Performances

her portrayal of Seher, balancing vulnerability and strength with remarkable ease. She embodies the struggles and resilience of her character with authenticity, making her arc the emo-tional backbone of the series. Jackie Shroff brings gravitas to the role of Qadir Khan. His commanding screen presence and layered performance add depth to the antagonist, making him a memorable figure. Sikandar Kher and Madhur Mittal provide solid support, adding complexity to their characters with nuanced perfor-

Technical aspects

Visually, Chidiya Udd excels in immersing the audience in its gritty setting. The cinematography by Lawrence Alex D'Cunha is striking, vividly capturing the chaos and despair of the redlight district. The dimly lit alleys, crowded streets and claustrophobic interiors paint an unflinching portrait of Kamathipura. The direction by Ravi of Kamathipura. The direction by Ravi Jadhav ensures that the emotional beats of the story land effectively, even if the pacing occasionally falters. The music and background score, composed by Roshin Balu, complement the narrative without standing out as particularly memorable. While the score heightens moments of tension, it does not leave a lasting impression. Similarly, the editing, though generally sharp, struggles to maintain momentum in certain Bhoomika Meena stands out with unnecessarily stretched.

Director: Ravi Jadhav **Producer:** Harman Baweja

Cast: Jackie Shroff, Bhoomika Meena, Sikandar Kher, Madhur Mittal, Mayur More and Mita

Streaming on: Amazon MX Player **Rating:** 3.5/5

In conclusion, Chidiya Udd is a wellcrafted series that delivers a gripping, albeit familiar, exploration of Mumbai's underworld. Its strengths lie in its performances, particularly those of Bhoomika Meena and Jackie Shroff, and its authentic portrayal of Kamathipura's harsh realities. However, its predictable plot and lack of innovation in storytelling hold it back from achieving greatness. Chidiya Udd is a commendable attempt to highlight the struggles of those caught in the web of exploitation, but its adherence to familiar tropes prevents it from standing out. Strong performances and a gripping setting make it worth a watch, though it falls short of being truly

For fans of crime dramas with emotional depth, Chidiya Udd offers an engaging experience, though it may not linger long

The future of car protection

 n the last few years, we have all witnessed that the auto-motive industry and its technology have evolved rapidly. There are several kinds of methods that can be used to protect vehicles from damage and give them an appealing look like never before. Along similar lines, ceramic coating and graphene coating are two cutting-edge technologies at the forefront of the industry. Both are applied to the car's exterior and offer exceptional protection against damages. However, while choosing the best car coating, car owners sometimes need help with their prices, durability, etc. This article delves into some key differences between graphene coating and ceramic coating and, specifically, answers the dilemma of which is better for a vehicle.

Ceramic coating

Ceramic coating is a combination of liquid polymer & ceramic particles applied to a car's exterior, forming a protective layer upon curing. It comes with a wide range of benefits: it elevates the paint's gloss, exuding depth and smoothness to the look, and it protects the car's exterior from external damage. Ceramic coating is also renowned for its hydrophobic properties, making the car look better and improving safety by enhancing vising the car look better and improving safety by enhancing visits. ibility during weather conditions. It quickly beads off the windshield and other glass surfaces, reducing the need for constant windshield wiper usage.

Graphene coating

Graphene coating is a single layer of carbon atoms arranged in a hexagonal lattice, which is one of the most robust materials known among car enthusiasts. Graphene coating leverages its incredible strength and provides unparalleled protec-tion for the vehicle. It forms a very thin yet durable protective layer that is virtually impervious to scratches, chips, and other forms of damage.

Difference between ceramic coating and graphene coating

- Longevity: Graphene coatings are generally considered more durable than ceramic coatings and offer superior protection against harsh environmental factors, including minor scratch-
- Self-healing properties: One of the most important factors that attracts car owners to opt for graphene coating is its self-healing properties. This factor allows minor scratches to repair themselves over a period of time.
- Hydrophobic properties: Both graphene and ceramic coatings exhibit excellent hydrophobic properties, repelling water and other contaminants. However, graphene coatings often



offer superior water beading and sheeting.

• Gloss & Shine Look: While both coatings can enhance a vehicle's gloss and shine, ceramic coatings are often preferred for their ability to produce a deep, wet-look finish.

How do you choose a suitable coating for your

The choice between graphene and ceramic coating depends on the vehicle owner's specific needs and preferences. Graphene coating is an excellent option if they prioritize maximum durability and cutting-edge technology. However, if they prefer a more traditional approach with a strong emphasis on gloss and shine, ceramic coating may be the better choice for

It's important to note that both the coatings require professional application to achieve optimal results. Additionally, it is always advisable to do regular maintenance, such as washing with car-friendly products, which can help prolong the life

of the coating and maintain its protective properties.

In conclusion, as technology in the automotive sector advances, we expect to see even more innovative car protection solutions emerge in the coming years. However, graphene and ceramic coatings currently represent the pinnacle of exterior protection, offering unparalleled durability, gloss, and ease of maintenance to car enthusiasts.

(The author, Kunal Sethi, is the CEO of The Detailing Mafia)

Australian Open: Iga Swiatek moves into third round against Emma Raducanu

ga Swiatek rushed through the first set in 26 minutes and completed her 6-0, 6-2 second-round win over Rebecca Sramkova in an hour at the Australian Open.

The five-time Grand Slam champion makes a habit of advancing quickly through the early rounds at the majors. She's won almost 12% of her sets in Grand Slams by 6-0, which puts

her in exclusive company.
So when No. 49-ranked
Sramkova ended a seven-game losing run by holding serve on Thursday, she raised her arm to acknowledge the applause from the Rod Laver Arena crowd. It was one of the few chances she had to celebrate.

"It was good to play in such an efficient way and just finish it quick," Swiatek said. "Also, you know, just feel the court and how it is in RLA."

Second-seeded Swiatek next faces

an early break in the second set to hold off Amanda Anisimova 6-3,

Taylor Fritz hasn't wasted any time advancing to the third round, dropping just eight games across two rounds and spending iust over three hours on court. The 2024 U.S. Open runner-up and No. 4 seed beat Cristian

Garin 6-2, 6-1, 6-0 to move into a third-round match against 38year-old Gael Monfils, who last week became the oldest player to win an ATP Tour title. Also advancing on the men's side

were local hope Alex de Minaur, seeded 8th, No. 16 Lorenzo Musetti, No. 19 Karen Khachanov and No. 21 Ben Shelton, who beat Pablo Carreno Busta 6-3, 6-3, 6-7 (4), 6-4. Raducanu has struggled with

injuries since her breakthrough major in 2021, when she became the first qualifier to win a Grand Slam singles title.

She didn't play a warmup tournament ahead of this year's 2021 U.S. Open champion Emma Australian Open because of a Raducanu, who recovered from muscle strain and needed time



her match against Anisimova to get treatment on her back from a trainer. After advancing beyond the

second round for the first time at Melbourne Park, the No. 61she'd recover in time for her next

challenge against Swiatek. "It'll be a very good match for me, ranked Raducanu was confident another opportunity to test my game," she said. "Going into it, I

have nothing to lose. I'm just going to swing.

Swiatek is moving on from the doping infringement which led to her one-month ban last year. And she's not showing any signs of it being a distraction.

She did everything at pace in the second round, including quick claps of her racket to acknowledge the crowd after her win. Swiatek didn't face a break point against Sramkova and converted five of the six she had. She finished off points with winners off both sides, and also hit some clean volleys on her ventures to the net.

She's feeling slightly less pressure this year, too, after losing the No. 1 ranking to two-time defending Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka.

Yeah, there was a lot of pressure starting the year as No. 1, but I think overall last year I didn't think about it this much anyway," she said. "Also, I realized last year that I don't have 100% influence on what happens with my ranking sometimes. So now I just

Emma Navarro, a U.S. Open semifinalist last year and seeded in the top eight for the first time at a major, was in trouble after two service breaks early in the third set before she reeled off four straight games to beat Wang Xiyu 6-3, 3-6, 6-4,

She hopped from the baseline toward the net, and made a big, swirling swing of her arm to underline another tough, three-

set victory. "It was really tough the whole time ... Super tough there at the end," Navarro said. "Found some good tennis there in the last

games." She'll next play Ons Jabeur, a three-time Grand Slam runnerup, who struggled with asthma but held off Camila Osorio 7-5,

Sixth-seeded Elena Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion and runner-up in Australia two years ago, registered her 50th win in a Grand Slam main draw singles match when she beat American qualifier Iva Iovic 6-0, 6-3



Barcelona reaches Copa del Rey quarterfinals with a 5-1 victory over Real Betis

PTI ■ BARCELONA

 $B^{\text{arcelona}}_{\text{rout of Real Madrid in the}} \ \,$ Spanish Super Cup final with a comfortable 5-1 victory over Real Betis in the round of 16 of the Copa del Rey.

Gavi and Jules Koundé scored a goal each in the first halfhour and Raphinha, Ferran Torres and Lamine Yamal added to the lead in the second half to give the Catalan club the win and a spot in the quarterfinals.

It was the fourth straight victory in 2025 for Barcelona, which on Sunday defeated Madrid 5-2 in Saudi Arabia to win the Spanish Super Cup.

We wanted to keep momentum from the Super Cup here at home in front of our fans," Barcelona defender Pau Cubarsí said. continue like this and keep the foot on the throttle. The (Christmas) break did well for us, we were able to refresh."

Barcelona had lost its last two games in 2024 before going on a winning streak against Barbastro in the Copa del Rey and Athletic Bilbao and Madrid in the Spanish Super

Cup. Playmaker Dani Olmo, registered in the last minute after a long battle between Barcelona, the Spanish league and Spain's federation because of a missed deadline by the club, helped set up Gavi's opening goal in the third minute at Montjuic stadium. Yamal gave the pass for Kounde's goal in the 27th. Koundé thought he had added to the lead in first-half

stoppage time but his effort was disallowed by video review because he was offside. Yamal also had one called back by the VAR because of offside early in the second

Barcelona's third goal finally counted when Raphinha found the net in a breakaway in the 58th. Torres scored the fourth from inside the area in the 67th, a few minutes after coming off the bench, and Yamal sealed it after a nice run in the 75th.

Vitor Roque scored Betis' lone goal by converting an 84thminute penalty kick.
ATLETICO

WINNING

Atletico M without many regular starters, routed second-division club Elche 4-0 to extend its record winning streak to 15 matches. The club had never won more than 13 games in a row across

all competitions before.

Alexander Sorloth scored from close range in the eighth and converted a 29th-minute kick. Rodrigo penalty Riquelme scored the third from long range in the 61st, and Julian Alvarez closed the scoring in the 75th.

Elche played a man down from the 50th after Nicolás Fernández was sent off with a second vellow card.

OTHER RESULTS Álvaro Rodríguez scored two

minutes into the match as Getafe won 1-0 at fourthdivision club Pontevedra. The visitors played a man down from the 41st after a straight red card was shown to Rodríguez.

India women must make this year their best in ODIs: Smriti Mandhana

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Cmriti Mandhana believes India's back-to-back 3-0 series wins against the West Indies and Ireland have provided the perfect momentum for making it their "best year in one-dayers" as the team gears up for the 50-over World Cup at

India will host the women's ODI World Cup later this year and the team, which has been able to rediscover its form with six consecutive ODI wins, should drive home the advantage now, says Mandhana.

World Cup year especially. We have to like keep going and have this for the best year for one-days (dayers)," Mandhana said in a video

"Two 3-0 sweeps are definitely really good in a



shared by BCCI. Mandhana (135) and Pratika Rawal (154) put on 233 for the first wicket for the third highest opening wicket partnership for India in ODIs, setting up their highest ever total of 435/5 and eventually for their biggest ever ODI win by 304 runs on

"I wanted to go out and bat with a lot of freedom. I said in the dugout before I went in about that you know, I'm going to try and play my shots because not many times you get an opportunity to do that," Mandhana said.

Rawal, who notched up her first hundred to make 154 off 129 balls with 20 fours and

down nearing her century but gained pace of scoring once she was past the landmark. "As a batter I always wanted to score more runs and doing that for your country is actually a privilege and I am

one six, admitted she slowed

very happy," she said.
"After (crossing) 70 (runs) I was a bit conscious that there was a hundred (on the cards). I was taking singles and going slow but when I got the hundred, I was like, let's just go for it. The 50 runs after the hundred came a bit quicker. I was able to score the way I score," she said.

Talking about her 233-run opening stand with the senior batter, Rawal said, "It felt like that it was happening with the flow, we didn't think about it."

"We got to know stats now, actually," Mandhana added.



Leroy Sané answers critics by scoring two goals as Bayern routs Hoffenheim

PTI MUNICH

eroy Sané answered critics Lby scoring two goals as Bavern Munich routed Hoffenheim 5-0 to restore its four-point lead in the Bundesliga.

Sané is subject to increased attention with his contract due to expire at the end of the season. Pundits including former Bayern great Lothar Matthaeus say he hasn't lived up to expectations since joining from Manchester City in 2020, making a contract extension unlikely. Matthaeus was speaking to broadcaster Sky before kickoff.

Sané wasted responding with the opener in the seventh minute when he fired a fierce shot inside the far post after Thomas Müller laid the ball off. Sane's celebrations showed the criticism had perhaps taken its toll.

"You always want to shake him, that he just does something and doesn't think too much. And today he did a lot and didn't think too much and he looked good," Müller said.

Raphaël Guerreiro was celebrating five minutes later as a long evening beckoned for Hoffenheim. Guerreiro played a one-two with Harry Kane before scoring his first Bundesliga goal of the season.

Kane made it 3-0 with a penalty in the 26th. It was his Sané got his second after the and substitute Serge Gnabry scored minutes after going on for Kane. Sané went off to applause

from the Bayern fans after Gnabry's goal. "In the end, you get praised if

you give a good performance and you might get a bit of flack if things don't go so well," Sané said. "I always try to help the team, to give a good performance. And I'm the first one who's unhappy when I don't give a good performance and can't help the team."

S T U T T G A R T PRESSURING LEIPZIG FOR CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUALIFICATION Fourth-p

finished with nine players after squandering a lead to lose 2-1 at Stuttgart, which moved a point behind the visitors. Benjamin Šeško gave Leipzig

an early lead, but the home team was irate that play had continued after an apparent foul by Ridle Baku on Deniz Undav in the buildup. Referee Sascha Stegemann booked Stuttgart assistant coach David Krecidlo for complaining.

Unday set up winter signing Jacob Bruun Larsen to equalize in the 50th and Nick Woltemade completed the comeback 10 minutes later when he poked home the rebound from an Unday effort. Šeško and Loïs Openda were sent off late as Leipzig slumped to its fifth defeat of the season. Both will miss the next match at Bochum on Saturday.

India men, women hockey teams to commence season with Pro League matches next month women's team making their

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian men's and I women's hockey teams commence international assignments this year with the highprofile FIH Pro League matches here from February The Indian men's team will

face Spain, while their women counterparts will take on England on February 15 at the Kalinga Stadium. Most of the Indian men's and women's team players are currently playing in the Hockey India League (HIL) in Rourkela and Ranchi respectively.

The Bhubaneswar leg of the FIH Pro League will be after the Australia leg (February 04-09) in Sydney. Between February 15 and 25, the men's teams of India, Spain, England, Germany and Ireland will go head-to-head with all teams reaching the half-way point of their season by the end of the Bhubaneswar stage.



"Following the Australian leg, the league will move to Bhubaneswar, India, renowned for its passionate hockey fan base. It will be the same in the women's competition for India, Spain, England, Germany and Netherlands," FIH said in a

"With 24 matches over the 11 days, the action will be unceasing among the top ranked teams in the world, which will be a true showcase of the 'League of the Best."

The FIH Pro League action this year will begin in Australia. The Kookaburras, who won the title in the previous edition, will start off defence against

reigning Olympic champions Netherlands, and Spain. The Hockeyroos will also start their 2024/25 campaign simultaneously, facing off against China and Spain. Both the Spanish teams will play their first matches of the

season in the Sydney stage of the Pro League, with the

first appearance since 2020 having qualified for the current season by winning the FIH Hockey Nations Cup in 2024. China women will look to

continue their strong start to the season after taking eight points from the opening four games of their season, played at home in Hangzhou. Netherlands

meanwhile, will be hoping to return to their best, after an uncharacteristic start slow saw them pick up no wins in their opening four games, totalling six points through three draws and a loss. The FIH Pro League action will also simultaneously

continue in Argentina as the Bhubaneswar stage goes on, with Santiago del Estero hosting the final stage from the first half of the season from February 19 to 24. Locking horns in front of the large crowds will be Argentina, Belgium and

Australia, in both the men's

and women's competition.

16th goal of the season. break, set up by Mathys Tel,

League three. Moyes' immediate priority is to find goals from somewhere. last 10 games in all competitions and Newcastle is on a nine-match Everton has failed to score in nine of its last 11 league games.

Isak opened the scoring in the LEICESTER SLUMPING The hiring of Ruud van Nistelrooy hasn't paid off for Leicester yet. He got his second in the 57th and

A 2-0 loss at home to Crystal Palace leaves the 2016 champion second from bottom of the standings and without a league win since Van Nistelrooy's first game in charge at the start of

December. It's now six straight defeats in the league, with Jean-Philippe Mateta and Marc Guehi scoring for Palace in the second half at the King Power Stadium.

"Six without a win is not good Everton manager and was enough. You can't keep talking about performances. We need to win and that needs to happen soon," Van Nistelrooy said. UNITED DROPS

Manchester United doesn't play until Thursday, but Palace's win saw the record 20-time champion

Arsenal closes in on Premier League leader Liverpool after 2-1 win over Tottenham Liverpool still has a game in hand **PTI** ■ LONDON Isak's form has pushed Newcastle and a point above the bottom on second-place Arsenal but has Champions contention. He's scored 12 in his

Arsenal closed the gap on Premier League leader Liverpool to four points after a 2-1 victory over Tottenham. Mikel Arteta's team took

advantage of Liverpool's draw with Nottingham Forest on Tuesday, with Leandro Trossard firing the winner in the north London derby at the Emirates Stadium. "Everybody knows you need to

win these games, the fans are buzzing and it's a great night for us," Trossard said. "It's an amazing feeling, especially to get the winner as well, it had to come and now we need to look forward." Arsenal was runner-up to

Manchester City in the last two

seasons and is in contention for the title again this year. But it was given a fright by Spurs when Son Heung-min opened the scoring for the visitors in the 25th minute. A Dominic Solanke own goal when trying to defend a corner leveled the game in the 40th and

Trossard struck low from just

inside the box four minutes later to

put Arsenal ahead.

dropped points by drawing its last two league matches and is on a run of just one win in four in all competitions. That was against fourth-division Accrington Stanley in the FA Cup.
Arsenal bounced back quickly

after the disappointment of being knocked out of the FA Cup by Manchester United on penalties and opened up a two-point lead over Forest in third. "Less than 72 hours ago we played

120 minutes in another competition that we went out of that is not easy psychologically. So the way we performed and played today was exceptional," Arteta

Tottenham has won just one of its last nine games in the league. "The losses hurt me but they aren't acceptable. We have had too many losses this year and too many games that have got away from us. That needs to stop," head coach

Ange Postecoglou said. ISAK ON TARGET AGAIN Alexander Isak scored for the eighth straight league game to



propel Newcastle into the top four. The Sweden international struck twice in a 3-0 victory over Wolverhampton to take his season total to 17 in all competitions. He became the fourth player to score straight games.

in eight consecutive games in the Premier League, following Ruud van Nistelrooy, Jamie Vardy and Daniel Sturridge.

Vardy scored a league record 11-

practice his finishing. It is an art form. He is there after training every day trying to do more, Newcastle manager Eddie Howe

"Like most strikers, Isak wants to

But he couldn't inspire his relegation-threatened team to sealed Villa's win.

winning streak.

in successive games.

UNHAPPY

FOR MOYES

crowd.

34th against relegation-threatened

Wolverhampton at St James' Park.

Anthony maintained his own scoring form with his fourth goal

Howe's team is now one point

David Moyes' return to Everton

didn't get off to the start he

wanted after a 1-0 loss to Aston

charge of his 519th game as

welcomed by the Goodison Park

HOMECOMING

ahead of fifth-place Chelsea.

victory as Ollie Watkins' goal six minutes into the second half

Everton is 16th in the standings slip to 15th in the standings.

the pioneer

I AM CHOOSY, BECAUSE OF THESE REASONS: BRAHMANANDAM

SURESH KAVIRAYANI sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

egendary comedian Brahmanandam is acting in a film titled 'Brahma Anandam', after a long break. The interesting thing about this film is that his son Raja Goutham is also acting in it. Brahmanandam is playing the role of a grandfather and his son is playing his grandson in it. Another comedian Vennela Kishore is also there in the film. "The director RVS Nikhil told me that he wrote the story for me and he wanted me to act in it, otherwise he won't do. Then they told me that my son is playing the lead actor and also grandson to me. I felt that this is something new for me, so I accepted," said Brahmanandam. More than all this, the title is on his

name which is another reason to accept. "This is the first time that the title is named as 'Brahma Anandam," he said. He added that though the title of this film is on his name, he didn't feel tense about it. "More than tension, it's a high moment for me because of the title," said the comedian.

Brahmanandam acted in more than 1,000 films as comedian, but recently he is choosy about films. When asked about it, Brahmanandam said one of the reasons is age factor. "Many people are telling me that my performance is good, but they couldn't get laughs like earlier. This is one reason and the other one is the age factor. You have to think about your age and I know I am becoming old and I can't be as active as earlier. So, with these reasons I reduced my films. It is

Brahmanandam talks about his comeback and why he reduced films and what are the reasons. He also talks about the present comedy in films...



not true that I didn't get films, I am getting, but I am choosy. If you want to remembered forever, you have to reduce something and I reduced films," said

Brahmanandam about his gap.
The actor said that his son Raja
Goutham is the first choice for Sekhar
Kammula's 'Godayari' film Sekhar is a rel-

ative of Goutham too. "Goutham didn't do that film because it is a female-oriented one. I didn't say anything to Goutham at that time because I don't want to inter-

fere in his decision, because his generation's thinking is different. I too think that we have to check ourselves and self criticism is very important. That's why I reduced films," said Brahmanandam.

When asked that in recent years, comedy is completely reduced in films, "Without a comedian, you can make a film, without comedy you can't make any film. Nowadays, comedians are not doing comedy in films, the lead actors are also doing comedy. There are some good writers and directors, but I still can't say the reason. I am distant from the industry and choosy about films, so I can't tell," said the comedian.

The actor said that the film has a lot of entertainment and also emotion. "In front of the camera we are actors and we do whatever the director gives us and we don't think that he is my son and how can I act as a grandfather to him. Once we come out of camera, then we come to reality," said Brahmanandam, for another question. The film is releasing on February 14, Valentines' Day and it is not related to anything about it. "It's a beautiful film where the story tells about a bond between a grandson and a grandfather," he said.

Brahmanandam all praises another

Brahmanandam all praises another comedian Vennela Kishore. "He is one of the comedians who continue his legacy now," said Brahmanandam about him. He added that Kishore is doing well at present. Brahmanandam also praises all the actors who acted in 'Brahma Anandam'. "They gave an outstanding performance and it's a young team and I am very happy working with them," said the senior actor.



Venkatesh is Sankranthi winner

enior actor Venkatesh became the Sankranthi winner with his film 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam' after his film's huge collections at the box-office. The film released on the Sankranthi day, January 14, and got a hit talk from the first show onwards. The first day collections are also sensational and no one expects that it will be huge. This is also Venkatesh's best till today. Dil Raju is the producer, while Anil Ravipudi is the director. Aishwara Rajesh and Meenakshi Chaudhary are the female leads.

Interestingly, Dil Raju's other film 'Game Changer', a high budget one, directed by Shankar, is declared a flop and now he is getting at least some money in 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam'. Dil Raju may lose more than Rs 100 crore in 'Game Changer', says the source, but he may recover at least some from 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam'.

"I am happy that my film is getting good response everywhere. Whenever I do family entertainment, the audience comes and enjoys my films. It gives me a different emotion," said Venkatesh after his film's success. He added that this film is going to be the biggest success in his career. "I should thank director Anil Ravipudi, for giving me a career best film," he added.

Venkatesh did promotions for this film like never before and it definitely attracted the audience. The film may get breakeven on the third day and from the fourth day onwards, it entered into profits.

Boyapati shooting at Kumbh Mela for *Akhanda 2*

irector Boyapati Srinivas is teaming up with Nandamuri Balakrishna for the sequel of 'Akhanda 2'. Balakrishna plays a dual role in this first part and his Aghora character is one of the highlights of the film. Now, Boyapati has already started the shooting of this sequel at the famous Maha Kumbh Mela. "Yes, we started shooting for some key scenes with the Aghora's backdrop. I met a few Aghoras and also Naga Sadhu at this Kumbh Mela. We started shooting from January 11 here and we will almost complete it on Thursday," said director Boyapati.

The first part of 'Akhanda' was a big success and recently they launched the second part. Ram Achanta and Gopi Achanta are the producers of this sequel. Whenever Boyapati and Balakrishna join hands, there are huge expectations on the film. They worked earlier for three films 'Simha,' 'Legend' and 'Akhanda', all of them are blockbusters.

Now, he started 'Akhanda 2' with the tagline Thandavam, and the story revolves more around the Aghora character played by Balakrishna. Boyapati canned some key scenes at the Kumbh Mela and now, he starts the regular shoot in Hyderabad. On the other hand, Balakrishna is on cloud nine, delivered his fourth consecutive hit with 'Daaku Maharaaj'. The film was released recently and is doing well at the



Jagapathi Babu is satisfied with his look in Ram Charan's film

Ram Charan is now concentrating on his upcoming film with director Buchi Babu Sana. The film already started shooting sometime back and now will continue for longer days. Buchi Babu later made his debut as director with 'Uppena' that was released nearly four years back. Now, after taking a long break, he is teaming up with Ram Charan, for a period drama and the tentative title is RC16. The film's shooting has been taking place briskly. Janhvi Kapoor is playing the female lead opposite Charan in this one.

Apart from the lead pair, the film has some good actors like Kannada actor Shiva Rajkumar, versatile actor Jagapathi Babu, and talented Bollywood actor Divyenndu of 'Mirzapur' fame. Building on the excitement, Jagapathi Babu shared his enthusiasm for the film. The actor posted a high energy behind-thescenes video that offered a peek into the hard work and dedication that is being put into his character transfor-

"After a long time, Buchi Babu gave me good work for RC16. I feel very satisfied after watching my look (getup) in the movie," said Jagapathi Babu, on his social media sharing the video. Maestro AR Rahman is providing the music and definitely it's going to be a highlight of this film. Avinash Kolla is the production designer, while Ratnavelu is the cinematographer.



Chiranjeevi, Jr NTR shocked after an intruder attacks Saif Ali Khan

Popular Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was attacked by an intruder at his house in the early hours of Thursday. Saif was injured seriously and is now in the hospital and his condition is stable, according to the doctors. After getting the news, a few Tollywood celebrities expressed their shock and prayed for speedy recovery of Saif Ali Khan. Jr NTR worked with Saif in the film 'Devara' part one directed by Koratala Siva. Jr NTR on his social media expressed shock about the incident. "Shocked and saddened to hear about the attack on Saif sir. Wishing and praying for his speedy recovery and good health, said Jr NTR on his 'X'. Mega Star Chiranjeevi also responded and said he is disturbed after hearing about the news. "Deeply disturbed by news of the attack by an intruder on #SaifAliKhan. Wishing and praying for his speedy recovery," said Chiranjeevi on his social media page.

Melody song from Return of the Dragon unveiled

Pradeep Ranganathan became an overnight star after the success of 'Love Today'. He acted as lead actor, provided the story and also directed the film. It became a huge success in Tamil and also did well in Telugu. Pradeep became a household name with that success. It was made with a small budget, but at the box-office it collected huge money. Now, Pradeep is coming up with a film titled 'Return of the Dragon'. Pradeep is playing lead actor, while Ashwath Marimuthu is the director and also provided the story for

radeep Ranganathan became an overnight star after the success of 'Love Today'. He acted as lead actor, provided the story and also directed the film. It became a huge success in Tamil and also did well in Telugu.

this one. Anupama Parameswaran is the female lead. India's leading production company, AGS Entertainment, is producing it. Ashwath Marimuthu earlier directed a Telugu film 'Ori Devuda' After the chartbuster first single

After the chartbuster first single 'Rise of Dragon', the team dropped the second single titled Madhuvaramae. This most enchanting melody features Pradeep and Kayadu Lohar. The song is sung by Sarath Santhosh and Srinisha Jayaseelan in an enchanting way. Ramajogayya Sastry penned the lyrics.

