

# the pioneer

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**PoK crown jewel of India says**  
**Rajnath**



**'WANT TO BE A LEADER IN EVERY SEGMENT'**



**I tried my best to get Padma Award to my mother:**  
**NARESH**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer

**If you want a corruption-free admin in Telangana you need a double-engine government. The BRS and the Congress are responsible for corruption and illegalities and they are looting the state. The BJP, which has been in power for the last 10 years in the country, has not faced even a single corruption charge**

**- G. Kishan Reddy, Telangana BJP chief & Union Minister**

**DON'T MISS...**

**'Disaster mgmt must begin at village level'**

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj K Pawan Kalyan has emphasised the importance of establishing disaster management systems at the village level to ensure a swift response during emergencies. Speaking at an event marking the 20th Raising Day of the NDRF at Kondapavuluru near Vijayawada on Sunday, Pawan Kalyan highlighted that disaster response teams should be available at every panchayat to provide immediate assistance in times of crisis. The AP Panchayat Raj is progressing with a strong action plan...

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**Cops cite intl conspiracy angle**

A Mumbai court on Sunday remanded a man arrested in the Saif Ali Khan attack case in 5-day police custody after observing that the prosecution's contention of an international conspiracy cannot be ruled out. Police produced the accused Mohammad Shariful Islam Shehzad (30) before a metropolitan magistrate court in Bandra at 1:30pm. Police told court that the alleged attacker was a Bangladeshi national residing illegally in India and there was need to find the motive behind his act. Police also told...

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**India emerging as a 'bright spot'**

India's current economic environment is conducive for private investments with the country emerging as a 'bright spot' amid the challenging global environment, according to a CII survey. The pan-India survey is an ongoing initiative, which would be completed for 500 firms by the first week of February. The interim results are based on a sample of 300 firms spread across all industry sizes (Large, Medium and Small). Notably, early results reveal that about 97 per cent of the sample firms are likely...

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**SKY will be missed in CT: Suresh Raina**

Former India all-rounder Suresh Raina feels middle-order batter Suryakumar Yadav will be sorely missed in the upcoming Champions Trophy as he could have provided the 'X-factor' in Dubai, where Rohit Sharma's side will play all its games. Suryakumar and fast bowler Mohammed Siraj were the two big names missing from the Champions Trophy squad announced on Saturday. They are among a total of six players who featured in the 2023 ODI World Cup squad. The others to miss out are Prasidh Krishna...

-SPORTS

**Jyothi Surekha bags silver at Indoor World Cup**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ace archer Vennam Jyothi Surekha from Vijayawada added another feather to her cap by clinching the silver medal at the renowned Nimes Archery Tournament (Indoor World Cup) in Nimes, France, on Sunday.

In a nail-biting final, Jyothi Surekha narrowly missed the gold, losing to Alejandra Usquiano of Colombia with a close score of 147-146. Her stellar performance throughout the tournament highlighted her exceptional precision and skill.

During the qualification rounds, Jyothi Surekha scored an impressive 592 out of 600 points, securing 6th place among the top archers globally. Her consistent form carried her to the finals, where she showcased remarkable resilience and competitive spirit.

This silver medal marks a proud



moment for India, further establishing Jyothi Surekha as one of the nation's top archers on the international stage. Her achievement is a testament to her hard work and dedication.

**DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

## India a global leader: Shah

**Inaugurates NIDM southern campus & launches projects worth Rs 220 cr**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday highlighted India's global leadership in disaster management, attributing the country's success to its resilient infrastructure and the adoption of a 'zero casualty' approach during disasters.

Addressing a gathering on the 20th Foundation Day celebrations of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at Kondapavuluru in Krishna district, Shah also praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's support for Andhra Pradesh. He announced that the Centre had approved projects worth over Rs 3 lakh crore for the state in just six months.

The event marked the inauguration of the National Institute of Disaster Management's (NIDM) southern campus and the NDRF's 10th Battalion campus near Vijayawada. Shah also inaugurated and laid foundation stones for various development projects worth approximately Rs 220 crore. "I can confidently say that NDRF's implementation of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) policies has been instrumental in positioning India as a global leader in disaster management," Shah remarked.

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- Union Home Minister emphasises the shift from relief-centric to rescue-centric disaster management
- He praises NDRF's role in global disaster response and highlights the increase in disaster management funds from Rs 12,500 crore to Rs 61,000 crore
- Amit Shah assures continued support for AP, with Rs 3 lakh crore worth of projects approved in six months, including funding for Amaravati's development

## NDRF, first line of defence during calamities: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has emphasised the critical role of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in disaster management, stating that the force is the first entity that comes to mind during any calamity. Speaking at the inauguration of the NDRF 10th Battalion and the National Institute of Disaster

Management (NIDM) South Campus at Kondapavuluru in Krishna district, the Chief Minister highlighted the NDRF's swift and effective responses to emergencies such as cyclones, earthquakes, and fires.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah was present at the event alongside the Chief Minister. Chandrababu Naidu commended the NDRF for its stellar efforts not only in India

but also internationally, citing examples of its contributions during disasters in Japan (2011), Nepal (2015), and Turkey (2023). Reflecting on his personal experiences with the NDRF, he recalled the force's remarkable work during the Hudhud cyclone in 2014 and the recent Budameru floods in Andhra Pradesh.

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## Traffic surge on V'wada-Hyd highway

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada-Hyderabad National Highway (NH65) witnessed a significant traffic surge on Sunday as people returned to Hyderabad after celebrating the Sankranti holidays across Andhra Pradesh. The heavy rush at toll plazas and key junctions led to delays and inconvenience for commuters.

The vehicular flow was especially dense at Nandigama, Keesara Toll Plaza, Chillakallu Toll Plaza, Jaggayyapet, and other crucial points along the highway. Most travellers were residents of Hyderabad and other cities in Telangana who had visited their hometowns in Andhra Pradesh for the Sankranti festivities, celebrated on January 12.

To alleviate the pressure, the NTR District Police implemented traffic diversions via the Vijayawada West Bypass, which stretches from



Chinna Avutapalli to Gollapudi. This move allowed vehicles coming from Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Rajamahendravaram, Eluru, and nearby areas to bypass Vijayawada City, significantly reducing traffic congestion within city limits.

Many residents appreciated Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu and his team for their proactive measures to ensure smoother traffic management. However, despite

these efforts, heavy congestion persisted on the bypass and NH65, particularly during the early hours of the day. Key areas like Nandigama, Kanchikacherla, and Jaggayyapet experienced bottlenecks due to the sheer volume of vehicles.

Traffic and local police worked tirelessly to manage the situation, but the unprecedented rush made it challenging to fully ease the gridlock.

## TDP leader trampled to death by elephants

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

In a tragic incident, a herd of wild elephants trampled a Telugu Desam Party (TDP) youth leader to death in the early hours of Sunday. The incident occurred at a mango orchard located between Chinna Ramapuram and Kongaravaripalli villages.



The deceased, Marupuri Rakesh Chowdhary (32), was reportedly inspecting his mango orchard to assess the damage caused by the elephants when the tragedy struck. According to the police, Rakesh Chowdhary, who failed to notice the presence of the herd, attempted to shoo them away. However, a few tuskers surrounded him and trampled him to death.

Continued on Page 2

## Failure in exam drives medico to suicide

**VIZIANAGARAM:** Atukuri Saimanideep, a 24-year-old second-year MBBS student from Nidadavolu in West Godavari district, died by suicide in his hostel room at MIMS Medical College. According to police, Saimanideep was deeply distressed after failing his recent exams. The pressure of academics, coupled with the departure of his successful classmates, is believed to have led to severe depression.

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# Naidu heads for WEF Summit in Davos

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu embarked on a four-day tour to Davos on Sunday, marking another significant step in his efforts to bring global investments to Andhra Pradesh. With a clear focus on attracting investment, the CM left his residence in Undavalli and made his way to New Delhi, where he will then fly to Zurich before heading to the World Economic Forum (WEF) sessions in Davos. Alongside him are IT Minister Nara Lokesh, Industries Minister TG Bharat, and officials from the Economic Development Board (EDB).

The primary objective of the visit is to promote 'Brand AP' on the world stage, engage with global business leaders, and secure investments that will drive job creation and economic growth in the State.

During his time at Davos, the Chief Minister will engage in high-level discussions with industrialists, foreign investors, and other key stakeholders, strengthening Andhra Pradesh's presence in the global business arena.

On the first day of his tour, CM Naidu will meet the Indian Ambassador in Zurich, followed by engagements with industrialists at the Hilton Hotel and the Telugu diaspora at the Hyatt Hotel during the 'Meet and Greet with Telugu Diaspora' event. The CM will also have a special meeting with Arcelor Mittal's Lakshmi Mittal, exploring potential collaboration for industrial growth in Andhra Pradesh.

Day two promises to be packed with crucial meetings, as the CM participates in discussions on Green Hydrogen and energy transition. He will meet CEOs from global giants



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like Coca-Cola, LG, Cisco, and others to discuss potential investments in the state. The CM will also meet with UAE Economy Minister Abdulla Bin to discuss "The Blue

Economy" and further opportunities for collaboration. In addition, Naidu will take part in media interactions with national and international outlets, including Bloomberg, to high-

light Andhra Pradesh's policy framework and investment climate.

The third day of the visit will see CM Naidu continue his meetings with business leaders and potential investors, while the fourth day will conclude with his return to Zurich and onward journey back to India.

This trip to Davos is part of the state's larger effort to attract investments and create 20 lakh jobs over the next five years. With substantial backing from officials like Nara Lokesh and TG Bharat, the government has introduced over 15 new policies, including the Industrial Development Policy, MSME Policy, and Electronics Policy, to boost the state's appeal to investors.

The Chief Minister's visit comes at a time when Andhra Pradesh has already secured significant investment commitments, including agreements with companies like Google.

Continued on Page 2



# Monday Mirchi

**COLLECTOR TURNS TRIGONOMETRY GURU, LEAVES STUDENTS AWESTRUCK**

Medak collector Rahul Raj decided to ditch the usual formalities on Saturday and stepped into a classroom at Vadiyaram Zilla Parishad High School in Chegunta Mandal. But this wasn't your run-of-the-mill pep talk—he dived straight into teaching trigonometry, all without cracking open a book! Students, who were likely expecting a quick handshake and a motivational speech, found themselves grappling with sine, cosine, and tangents, as the Collector tested their math skills. The buzz? His impromptu lecture impressed not just the students but even the teachers, who couldn't help but marvel at his ease with numbers. You don't see this every day—a Collector casually solving and quizzing kids on formulas.

**RACHAKONDA CP'S PRESS MEETS: FASTER THAN COOKING MAGGI!**

Rachakonda Commissioner Sudeher Babu has set a new benchmark for lightning-fast press meets, wrapping them up in just ten minutes—quicker than cooking Maggi noodles! The usual script? "We've made the arrest; the investigation is ongoing." And that's it. Journalists trying to dig deeper or get an exclusive scoop are finding themselves hitting a solid wall. The Commissioner's tight control over media leaks has become the talk of press circles, leaving scribes scratching their heads and scrambling for alternative sources. "Breaking Sudeher Babu is harder than breaking news," quipped one frustrated journalist. For now, it seems the CP is winning this cat-and-mouse game with the media, keeping his cards close to his chest!

**SUBBARAYUDU'S EMOTIONAL OUTBURST AFTER STAMPEDE SPARKS DEBATE**

Ex Tirupati SP and IPS officer Subbarayudu's sudden transfer following the tragic stampede has become a talking point across Andhra Pradesh, with emotional moments and political allegations fueling the controversy. Subbarayudu, who was hand-picked by Chandrababu Naidu from Telangana for a three-year deputation, reportedly broke down after the incident. In a tearful moment, the SP is learned to have told the now suspended DSP Ramana Kumar, "You should have killed me instead of this," expressing his anguish over the situation. Subbarayudu reportedly felt that the officer, who was just months away from retirement, had ruined everything with his actions during the stampede. Witnesses say the SP's emotions underscored the weight of the tragedy and its aftermath. However, the transfer has stirred political murmurs. Some Jana Sena followers alleged that Subbarayudu's transfer was rooted in caste politics, claiming it happened because he doesn't belong to the Kamma community. TDP loyalists, on the other hand, strongly refuted the claims, reminding critics that Subbarayudu was personally chosen by Chandrababu Naidu. Subbarayudu departs his post under a cloud of grief and controversy.

**PV PULIKUMAR: RSP'S TAKE ON LION CAGED BY BIAS**

The name PV Pulikumar is echoing across Andhra Pradesh, thanks to Retd IPS officer RS Praveen Kumar's fiery call for IPS officer PV Sunil Kumar to shed his silence and fight back against the system. "Enough of these quiet tears, brother. It's time to roar like PV Pulikumar!" Praveen declared, as he lashed out against what he calls systemic bias and injustice. Sunil, who finds himself embroiled in an inquiry and stripped of a posting, is being championed as a victim of caste discrimination by his supporters. "Is being born into the SC Mala community his only crime?" Praveen asked pointedly, adding that the absence of surnames like Reddy, Naidu, or Sharma on his name tag seems to have sealed his fate. The emotional spotlight turned to Sunil's decades-long service, contrasted sharply with what Praveen referred to as the "hypocrisy" of scam-tainted leaders walking free. "Hundreds of crores looted, and yet they hold public office. Meanwhile, a decorated officer like Sunil is left without a post and burdened by an unjust inquiry." For newbies Sunil Kumar is facing charges of misconduct when he was Additional Director General of Police (CID) and being responsible for the alleged custodial torture of then Member of Parliament and present Deputy Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly K. Raghuram Krishna Raju. As calls for "Pulikumar" to rise grow louder, one thing is certain—Sunil Kumar's fight isn't just against an inquiry but against a system that, as Praveen puts it, "knows how to crush and silence the underprivileged." Will the lion roar back or remain caged? The whispers have only begun!

**AIS OFFICER'S FAMILY FACES HUMILIATION**

An All India Service officer of the state Forest Department family has to face humiliation from his house owner. The senior officer Ramesh Kumar Suman (59), passed away from a heart attack on January 16 while on training session in Kochi, Kerala. Suman, an Indian Forest Service officer from Jharkhand, was serving as the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests in Andhra Pradesh. After his death, authorities arranged to bring his body from Kochi to his rented residence in Mangalagiri. However, the landlord refused to allow the mortal remains into the rented premises. As a result, the body was moved to a Forest Department guest house in Guntur. A tent was set up for the last rites, attended by family members, relatives and department staff. Suman's wife and two daughters, deeply grief-stricken, were seen standing motionless near his body.

The final procession took place, with the last rites conducted near the Krishna River. Interestingly Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu expressed his condolences on social media, honoring Suman's contribution to forest conservation. The officer is known for his tireless efforts in environmental conservation, particularly in forest preservation. Suman had dedicated much of his career to restoring degraded forests.

--Yours truly

# Amit Shah calls for BJP unity in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah urged Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Andhra Pradesh to work in unison and effectively communicate the Central government's developmental initiatives to the public. Addressing party leaders and members at a meeting in Vijayawada on Sunday, Shah emphasised the need to resolve internal differences and focus on strengthening the BJP in the state.

The meeting, chaired by BJP Andhra Pradesh president and Rajahmundry MP Daggubati Purandeswari, was attended by prominent leaders, including MPs and MLAs. Shah, the chief guest, discussed strategies to promote the central government's assistance to Andhra Pradesh and reviewed the party's position in the state.

According to sources, discussions also covered the political landscape, coalition dynamics, and potential leadership changes to strengthen the party. Shah highlighted the importance of publicising central schemes and packages to create greater awareness among the people.



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Stressing the need for unity, Shah urged leaders to prioritise party consolidation over personal disputes. He congratulated the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and BJP members for successfully organising the "Hindu Shankharavam" event, which he described as a testament to collective effort.

Recent incidents in Tirupati-Tirumala were also discussed. Shah assured leaders that the

Home Ministry is closely monitoring the situation and advised the party to act in alignment with public aspirations while respecting Hindu sentiments.

Amit Shah's address reflected the BJP's commitment to expanding its presence in Andhra Pradesh and ensuring the state benefits from the central government's initiatives.



# Lokesh bids farewell to Shah

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education and Information Technology, Nara Lokesh, attended the 20th Foundation Day celebrations of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at Kondapavulluru in Gannavaram Mandal, Krishna District, where Union Home Minister Amit Shah was the chief guest. The event also saw the participation of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, BJP State President D. Purandeswari, Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Ram Mohan Naidu, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay, and various state ministers and officials.

The program commenced with a tour of the newly constructed National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) building and the 10th Battalion NDRF campus, which was inspected by Nara

Lokesh, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and other leaders. During the inspection, officials briefed Minister Lokesh about the facilities.

Following the inspection, Nara Lokesh participated in the inauguration of the NIDM building and the NDRF campus, where he also planted a sapling. He then observed a demonstration of NDRF operations, showcasing their disaster response techniques through drills. Later, Nara Lokesh, along with other leaders, took part in the virtual inauguration of the Tirupati Regional Forensic Science Lab.

After the events, Minister Nara Lokesh, along with Union Ministers Dr. P. Chandrasekhar, Bandi Sanjay, BJP AP President Purandeswari, and others, bid farewell to Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Gannavaram Airport.

# Naidu heads for WEF...

Continued from Page 1

With investments exceeding ₹4 lakh crore in just seven months, including major projects like ArcelorMittal Steel and BPCL, the government is optimistic that this trip will yield further investment opportunities.

By showcasing the state's growth potential at a global platform like the WEF, CM Naidu is positioning Andhra Pradesh as an attractive investment destination, intending to create a thriving economy that benefits the youth and businesses alike.

# Promote tribal products: Venkaiah

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Vice President of India, M Venkaiah Naidu, has stressed the need to promote tribal products to improve the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities. He urged both the state and central governments to prioritise tribal products and provide adequate marketing facilities to enhance income sources for tribal artisans.

He also encouraged tribal communities to cultivate leadership qualities through unity. The Girijana Praja Samakhyia (GPS) and Girijana Vidyarthi Samakhyia (GVS) national committees organised the "Tribal-Aboriginal Sammelanam" at the Tummalapalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada on Sunday. The event witnessed active participation from tribal representatives and dignitaries, with traditional cul-



Former Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu participates in the Adivasi Sammelanam organised by Girijana Praja Samakhyia (GPS) and Girijana Vidyarthi Samakhyia (GVS) in Vijayawada on Sunday. Pic: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

tural performances by tribal participants adding vibrancy to the occasion. Speaking as the chief guest, Venkaiah Naidu highlighted the exceptional potential of tribal artisans who craft unique and eco-friendly products using natural raw materials. He noted the increasing global demand for

tribal crafts and encouraged artisans to seize these opportunities.

He also underscored the importance of tailoring tribal products to contemporary tastes to enhance their appeal in both domestic and international markets. Promoting tribal goods and handicrafts, he said, is crucial for

improving the economic well-being of tribal communities. Naidu further advised artisans to merge their traditional skills with modern business practices, such as leveraging e-commerce platforms and digital marketplaces, to expand their reach. He urged policymakers and stakeholders to collaborate in creating a supportive ecosystem for tribal artisans, focusing on better market access and skill development to uplift their socio-economic conditions.

Additionally, Naidu encouraged tribal people to learn Telugu and English alongside their mother tongue to navigate societal challenges effectively. He pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has launched various schemes for the development of tribal communities and urged them to make the most of these initiatives.

# TDP leader...

Continued from Page 1

Rakesh Chowdary, the vice-sarpanch of Kandulavaripalle, also served as the ITDP Chandragiri mandal president. The police have registered a case and sent the body to the Chandragiri area hospital for a postmortem examination.

Villagers informed the media that the elephants had wreaked havoc, destroying mango and plantain orchards in the area. Following the incident, Chandragiri MLA Pulivarti Nani visited the village and consoled the grieving family members.

TDP sources revealed that the Chief Minister expressed profound sorrow over the untimely demise of Rakesh Chowdary.

# Excise Dept busts cocaine ring in Guntur, 3 arrested

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a breakthrough in the battle against narcotic drug crimes, the Prohibition & Excise Department of Guntur arrested three persons on Sunday following an intelligence-led operation. The arrests took place during a routine check on the road connecting Ravindra Nagar to Shyamala Nagar, where the accused were found near a parked two-wheeler in an open area.

The authorities seized 8.5 grams of cocaine, a two-wheeler, and three mobile phones from the suspects. The arrested individuals have been identified as

Sheikh Dadawali (27), Sheikh Qasim Peera (31), and Sheikh Sameer Baji (34), all residents of Guntur town.

The accused have been charged under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The seized items have been documented as evidence, and the accused were remanded to judicial custody after appearing in court.

Upon spotting the Excise team, the suspects attempted to flee but were quickly apprehended with the help of local police. During interrogation, the accused admitted to possessing cocaine and revealed that they had purchased it from

unknown sources, intending to sell it at inflated prices to support their livelihoods.

Investigations revealed that the accused were selling cocaine at prices ranging from Rs 3,000 to Rs 6,000 per gram. The Excise Department has urged the public to report any drug-related activities to the 14500 helpline, stressing the importance of community cooperation in combating the narcotics problem in the region.

This arrest marks another significant step in the ongoing efforts of the Prohibition & Excise Department to tackle the growing drug menace in Guntur.

# TTD EO conducts surprise inspections at SVIMS, Vishnu Nivasam

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

TTD Executive Officer (EO) J. Syamala Rao, accompanied by Joint Executive Officer (JEO) Veerabrahmam, conducted surprise inspections at the Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS) and Vishnu Nivasam to review the amenities provided to patients and devotees.

At SVIMS, the EO inspected the attendance records of doctors and staff during the night shift. He instructed the officials to display the details of on-duty doctors and staff for each shift on notice boards across different wards. He also emphasised the importance of maintaining cleanliness both inside and outside the hospital premises.

During the visit, the EO interacted with patients to gather



feedback on the medical services and amenities, including Annarasadam, provided by the TTD. The patients expressed satisfaction with the facilities and medical care. The EO also visited several key departments, including the Emergency Services Department, Nephrology Ward, ICU, Surgical Gastroenterology, Cardiology, and RICU. The inspection was attended by SVIMS Director Dr. R.V. Kumar, Medical Superintendent Dr. Ram,

and other senior officials.

Later, the EO and JEO visited Vishnu Nivasam, where they inspected the accommodation facilities and interacted with devotees. The devotees, who had travelled from distant places, shared that they were preparing for Srivara darshan in the Sarva Darshan queue lines on Monday since no SSD tokens were available on Sunday.

When the EO enquired about the communication of darshan-related updates, the devotees informed him that regular announcements were being made.

The EO directed the officials to ensure continuous announcements and effective communication, enabling devotees to directly join the queue lines at Tirumala for hassle-free darshan of Srivara. TTD officials accompanied the EO during the inspections.

# NDRF, first...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister noted that the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act mandated the establishment of an NDRF campus in the state. He reminisced that the foundation stones for the NDRF and NIDM campuses were laid by former Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and former Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu, respectively, and expressed satisfaction at the successful completion of both projects.

Praising Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Chandrababu Naidu applauded his dynamic leadership, particularly in handling national security and law enforcement. He lauded Shah's innovative approach to governance, which leverages advanced technology and proactive disaster management strategies. The Chief Minister remarked that Shah's mission-driven leadership had significantly strengthened India's administrative capabilities.

Chandrababu Naidu also spoke about the Vision-2047 plan envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, aimed at making India a global leader by its centenary of Independence. He underlined the importance of technology in achieving this goal, with a focus on green energy, hydrogen, space exploration, and innovation.

Turning to the state's economic challenges, Chandrababu attributed several issues to the impact of bifurcation in 2014 and subsequent inefficiencies under the current administration. However, he expressed confidence in overcoming these hurdles with central govern-

**TODAY**  
**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha  
Tithi: Shashthi: Jan 19 07:31 AM to Jan 20 09:58 AM  
Saptami: Jan 20 09:58 AM to Jan 21 12:40 PM  
Nakshatram: Hasta: Jan 19 05:30 PM to Jan 20 08:30 PM  
Chitra: Jan 20 08:30 PM to Jan 21 11:36 PM  
Rahukalam: 8:16 AM to 9:40 AM  
Yamagandam: 11:03 AM to 12:27 PM  
Varjyam: 05:32 AM to 07:20 AM  
Gulika: 1:50 PM to 3:14 PM  
Amritakalam: 01:45 PM to 03:33 PM  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:04 PM to 12:49 PM  
**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**  
Forecast: Partly Cloudy  
Temp: 32°  
Humidity: 60%  
Sunrise: 6:40 AM  
Sunset: 6:57 PM  
Updated: January 19, 2025 5:00 PM

# India a global leader...

Continued from Page 1

He also highlighted India's leadership in disaster-resilient infrastructure through the establishment of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), which has now become a platform for 48 countries. Shah outlined the shift in disaster management strategy, noting that under the Modi government, the approach has moved from being relief-centric to rescue-centric, aimed at saving lives. He emphasised that the "zero casualty" goal is now a key objective, with NDRF, NDMA, and NIDM working in close coordination to achieve it. The Minister recalled the devastating cyclone in Odisha, where 10,000 lives were lost, and noted that in the last two years, two cyclones had struck India but the "zero casualty" goal was successfully achieved. Shah praised the NDRF's efforts, which have been recognised internationally in countries such as Nepal, Indonesia, Turkey, Myanmar, and Vietnam.

The Modi government has allocated Rs 61,000 crore for disaster management under the 14th Finance Commission, compared to just Rs 12,500 crore under the 12th Finance Commission, Shah

said. He also pointed out that the Centre has provided Rs 27,000 crore for the development of Amaravati through HUDCO and the World Bank. Shah assured the people of Andhra Pradesh that the Centre would continue to provide unwavering support for the state's development. "The Narendra Modi government stands firmly with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for the development of Andhra Pradesh," he stated, urging the people not to focus on the "wasted" five years under the previous YSRCP government.

The Home Minister also expressed confidence that after the NDA's successes in the 2024 Assembly elections in Maharashtra and Haryana, the coalition would form the government in Delhi in early 2025. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu appealed to Shah for continued Centre support until the state fully recovers, expressing gratitude for the Centre's revival package for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and funding for the Polavaram Irrigation and Amaravati Capital projects. Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Union Ministers K. Ram Mohan Naidu and Bandi Sanjay Kumar, and other dignitaries were also present at the event.

# Voices within TDP...

Continued from Page 1

At a meeting in Mydukur, Kadapa district, in which Naidu was present, senior TDP leader Srinivas Reddy, also urged the CM to promote Lokesh to the position to build confidence among the youth and party supporters.

"With this, the party will have an excellent future. He is striving to attract investments to the state. People have also recognised it," he said.

In a video released recently, TDP spokesperson Mahasena Rajesh expressed disappointment that Lokesh, who played a key role in bringing the NDA to power in the state, is only serving as a minister and urged the CM to elevate him to Deputy CM. "... If it takes time to make him (Lokesh) the CM. It is okay. At least announce that he is Deputy CM now and keep his picture in every government office. TDP's future is Nara Lokesh," Rajesh said.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Lanka Dinakar acknowledged Lokesh's political maturity and administrative competence but emphasized that political decisions within an alliance should remain the prerogative of individual parties, as long as they do not negatively affect the state or the nation.



# MP plans to develop 295 villages in two years

SPECIAL MEETING HELD WITH NIRD REPRESENTATIVES AND COLLECTOR

Representatives from NIRD shared plans to implement a pilot project in the Tiruvuru, Mylavaram, Jaggayyapet and Nandigama constituencies. Six villages will be selected from each constituency to form a cluster and a total of 32 participants will undergo training at NIRD in Hyderabad



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) is working towards developing 295 villages within his constituency and ensuring that every family has an entrepreneur. On Sunday, a special meeting was held with

the representatives from the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) and NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha.

During the meeting, the MP outlined his plans for the development of rural areas, aiming to transform these villages into developed panchayats. He

stressed the need for comprehensive development of the 295 villages within the next two years and requested the cooperation of the Collector in executing the development programmes. In response, Collector Lakshmisha assured her support for the upcoming initiatives. Representatives from NIRD

shared plans to implement a pilot project in the Tiruvuru, Mylavaram, Jaggayyapet and Nandigama constituencies. Six villages will be selected from each constituency to form a cluster and a total of 32 participants will undergo training at NIRD in Hyderabad. The training programme will begin

on February 3 and go on for 15 days. NIRD representatives also expressed their commitment to support rural development in NTR district.

As part of the vision for a developed panchayat, Kesineni Sivanath discussed various aspects of village transformation, including creating energy-efficient villages, healthy villages, child welfare villages, women empowerment villages, women-friendly villages and poverty-free villages. The programme will also focus on imparting training related to self-employment. NIRD will offer guidance on marketing, branding, and product development for those trained, with the MP facilitating collaborations with large companies for support.

Senior consultant at NIRD Mohammad Khan, Associate Professor Dr Anjan Kumar Banja, NIRD officials Dilip Kumar Paul, Murali Krishna and OSD Venkataratnam, among others, attended the meeting.



## Controversy over Central aid to Visakhapatnam Steel Plant

Aid condemned as inadequate, restrictive, and a 'step toward privatisation disguised as support'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Centre's announcement of Rs. 11,440-crore financial assistance for the cash strapped Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) has drawn sharp criticism, with many alleging it is a step toward privatisation disguised as support. "Coalition leaders, who remained silent during four months of unpaid salaries for employees, are now celebrating the package despite its stringent conditions," said a senior employee, expressing scepticism about the government's intentions.

The announced aid comes with limitations, rendering it inadequate for addressing the immediate needs of the steel plant. Notably, the funds cannot be used for employee salaries or to procure essential raw materials. This approach contrasts sharply with the Rs 15,000-crore granted to the Visvesvaraya Steel Plant in Karnataka, which has a much smaller production capacity of 0.5 million tonnes, and faced no such restrictions.

"VSP, with a capacity of 7.3 million tonnes, has been allocated Rs. 11,440 crore but under stringent terms," pointed out Ayodhya Ramu, vice-

president of the Steel Workers Federation of India (SWFI), highlighting the disparity in treatment.

A significant portion of the aid is earmarked for addressing financial liabilities. By December, Rs 7,350 crore must be paid to banks, while Rs 1,400 crore is designated for clearing dues to suppliers such as Tata and JSW. Additionally, Rs 500 crore has been set aside for a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS), affecting 500 employees. By year-end, 1,200 retirements are anticipated, requiring Rs 1,500 crore in payouts. Furthermore, 2,000 contract workers are slated for dismissal, with the process already underway.

Although the total aid announced is Rs 11,440 crore, it includes previously allocated funds such as Rs 500 crore from the Steel Ministry and Rs 1,140 crore as a loan from the Finance Ministry. This leaves a net amount of Rs 9,800 crore to be disbursed by March. However, none of this money is allocated for procuring raw materials or operational expenses, raising concerns about the feasibility of running the plant's three blast furnaces.

Critics argue that the package fails to address the broader issues plaguing the steel plant. "The displaced families who provided thousands of acres of land for VSP have been ignored, with no compensation or assurances of job security," stated Naiduamma, who parted her land to setting up of VSP. In fact, many of these displaced individuals, employed as contract workers, are now being laid off. Furthermore, the Union Cabinet's 2021 resolution for 100 per cent disinvestment remains intact, leaving the spectre of privatisation hanging over the plant.

"The Centre's move has been labelled a superficial attempt at support, benefiting private interests rather than ensuring the long-term revival of VSP," asserted former Minister and YSRCP leader Gudivada Amarnath. Without addressing critical issues like unpaid salaries, operational funding, and job security for displaced workers, the announced package appears more like a prelude to privatisation than a genuine effort to sustain the steel plant. Coalition leaders have been called upon to clarify how this package will ensure the plant's revival amidst these unresolved challenges.

## Cigarettes, spit tobacco worth Rs 1 crore seized

THEY WERE STORED WITHOUT PROPER DOCUMENTS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Commissioner of Customs & Central Tax CGST Commissionerate, Sadhu Narasimha Reddy, has said that a major illegal storage and trading has been foiled by officers of Anti-Evasion, Vijayawada Guntur Central GST Commissionerate, by seizing 25,38,000 sticks of cigarettes and 46,000 pouches of spit tobacco (Khaini), worth Rs 1 crore.



He explained that in a significant operation, the vigilant officers of Anti-Evasion, Vijayawada Guntur Central GST Commissionerate, along with the assistance of Officers of Customs Commissionerate (Preventive), Vijayawada, carried out a search operation on unregistered premises in Ambapuram panchayat, Ajith Singh Nagar, Vijayawada, where Indian origin cigarettes and khaini were stored without proper documents, thereby evading tax payment.

Narasimha Reddy said that upon meticulous inspection, it was discovered that a substantial quantity of Indian origin

cigarettes was stored at the place. It was found that there are 102 HDPE sacks containing 25.38 lakh sticks of cigarettes of GTPL Vimal, Gold Vimal, Gold Flake and Paris, valued Rs. 96.82 lakh, and 23 HDPE sacks containing 46,000 pouches of khaini, valued Rs. 3.68 lakh. He mentioned that the tenant of the premises, who is owner of the goods, did not turn up and could not produce the invoices evidencing legitimate purchase. Sadhu Narasimha Reddy

## Special drive to remove unauthorised constructions in Guntur

GMC COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR A VENDING ZONE THAT WILL FACILITATE STREET BUSINESSES

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Guntur Municipal Corporation Commissioner Puli Srinivasulu has issued directives for a special drive to remove unauthorised constructions in various ward secretariats throughout Guntur city. On Sunday, the Commissioner inspected cleanliness and development initiatives in areas such as Shyamala Nagar, Housing Board Colony, Brodipet, Lakshmiapuram, and the Pedapalalalur Road. After evaluating proposed vending zones at the Gujjanagundla Center, appropriate instructions were given to officials.

The GMC Commissioner, along with local Corporator Padmasree from the Gujjanagundla area, Town Planning officials, and street vendors, toured the area and announced plans for a vending zone that will soon facilitate street businesses.

During his inspection, the Commissioner noticed the

unauthorised installation of municipal taps in an under-construction apartment in Syamala Nagar. Expressing his displeasure towards the Town Planning and Engineering officials, he ordered an immediate disconnection of the taps. He instructed the officials to ensure the removal of existing house tap connections prior to the approval of new building construction plans. Additionally, he directed the administrative secretaries and revenue inspectors to levy property tax without delay, ensuring occupancy certificates for apartments in multi-story buildings are addressed promptly.

The GMC Commissioner also emphasised the need to maintain proper access for ramps at building sites so that they do not obstruct roads. He also ordered the Sanitary Inspector to establish a dairy facility in residential areas and issue notices to individuals discharging waste into drainage systems.

## 'Coalition bringing down sanctity of Tirumala'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former TTD Chairman Bhumana Karunakar Reddy has alleged the sanctity and brand image of Tirumala has got a big dent with N Chandrababu Naidu at the helm, who has been continuing his 'cheap gimmicks' to stall probe of any kind into the Tirupati stampede.

Speaking to media here on Sunday, he said the Union Home Ministry had asked Sanjiv Jindal, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, to probe into the series of irregularities in the TTD and he was supposed to arrive on Sunday. However, another letter cancelling the trip was sent to the Executive Officer last night purportedly after the Chief Minister and his deputy met Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is in the State.

"While the first letter has the proper credentials, the second one has come from the Control Room of the Union Home Ministry, which appears to be in a hurry which coincides with

the meeting of Chandrababu Naidu and Pawan Kalyan with Amit Shah.

"The very fact that the Centre intervening and asking to send a report on the series of events which include the January 8 stampede, Tirupati laddu issue, fire at prasadam counter and other irregularities is a shame on part of the State administration and has brought down the image of the pious Devasthanam. "Chandrababu might have managed institutions but he cannot manage God or ire of the people," he said adding that there is no movement on the judicial inquiry or other promises made by the Chief Minister, and his deputy who talks tall about Sanatan Dharma seems to be helpless.

Drawing a contrast, Bhumana said, "When I was the Chairman of TTD, I was one of two persons who were invited for the Ayodhya Ram Temple and the Centre has sought our help in crowd management for the event".

## TG needs double-engine Govt, says Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"A double engine government should come to power in TG," Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said. He said the BJP should come to power if people want a corruption-free admin in Telangana.

Addressing the media at the State BJP office here on Sunday after inducting leaders from various political parties into the BJP, Kishan said that anti-people rule is continuing in the state. He said that the BRS and the Congress are the main reasons for corruption and irregularities.

"If you want a corruption-free admin in Telangana there is a need for a double-engine government. The BRS and the Congress are responsible for corruption, illegalities and looting in the state. The BJP, which has been in power for the last 10 years in the country, has not faced even a single charge of corruption," he said.



'PLASTIC-FREE VIZAG'

## GVMC commends social media influencers

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) Commissioner, Dr P Sampath Kumar, praised social media influencers for their vital role in promoting the ban on single-use plastics at the 'Plastic-Free Vizag' programme held near RK Beach on Sunday. The event, a collaborative effort by GVMC, Vizag Social Media Influencers, Vizag City Pages Insta Community, and Millennium Software Solutions, underscored the importance of environmental awareness.

"Single-use plastics clog our drains, degrade the environment, and impose a significant financial burden on GVMC," Dr Sampath Kumar stated. "They also pose serious health risks, such as cancer, due to the entry of microplastics into the food chain." He emphasised that Visakhapatnam generates 15 tonnes of single-use plastics daily and assured that GVMC

will guide manufacturers towards sustainable practices while enforcing penalties for non-compliance.

The event featured a diverse range of activities, including the creation of a 100-foot-long cloth banner with the message "Let's Make Vizag Plastic-Free" and a walkathon from Matsya Darshini to the sand art installation near the GVMC Sports Complex. Participants, including Vizag II actress Pavani Karanam and social media influencers, actively engaged in a beach clean-up drive.

A highlight of the programme was the presentation of Crunchy Biscuit Cups, an innovative eco-friendly alternative to plastic-lined tea cups, by Rajamahendravaram-based producers Ponnada Manikumari and Alamuri Khejia. These edible cups, bearing the slogan "Drink Tea - Eat the Cup," received enthusiastic endorsement from the Commissioner and officials.

## Chandrababu puts personal agenda ahead of State: Rambabu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Ambati Rambabu has said that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has been taking forward his personal agenda instead of discussing State issues with Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who was here on Sunday. Speaking to the media, he said the Chief Minister had been pursuing his personal agenda instead of taking up the issues like unfulfilled State Reorganisation promises,

Krishna water dispute, Polavaram, Vizag Steel Plant and others.

"Taking the Home Minister to the illegal residence he has been staying himself shows the intent of Chandrababu Naidu, and he has been using his friendly media to repeat the same old allegations against YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. We also have information that the issue of Lokesh and his foolish behaviour came up for discussion and Amit Shah was not happy about it. The talk of elevating Lokesh to Deputy Chief Minister

has been vetoed by the Union Home Minister," he said. "To cover up the misdemeanours, Chandrababu has been using his friendly media for false propaganda and Pawan Kalyan has been confined to praising the Chief Minister and people's issues were not discussed in the meeting with Amit Shah," he said.

"The Polavaram C-Dam damage has been the inefficiency of Chandrababu while the works gained momentum under the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government.

# Anomalies found in YSRCP Govt's housing projects

UNAUTHORISED CONSTRUCTIONS, DISCREPANCIES IN BILLING RAISE CONCERNS OVER THE INITIATIVE TO BUILD 1.3 LAKH HOUSES

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Significant irregularities have surfaced in the housing projects launched during the YSRCP government's tenure, casting a shadow over the ambitious initiative to construct 1.3 lakh houses across 73 layouts on the outskirts of Visakhapatnam district. The project, aimed at providing housing for the poor, was marred by the rush to meet deadlines, leading to contracts being awarded without necessary permissions in several areas.

The current administration has identified unauthorised constructions in layouts at Mudapaka, Gollalapalem,



Nanginarapadu, and Anandapuram mandal, which have been reported to higher

authorities. Furthermore, housing authorities failed to approve Detailed Project Reports

(DPRs) or issue proceedings before work began in several areas, resulting in houses being

built without DPR approval. This has led to discrepancies in billing, with only houses with approved DPRs and proceedings being geo-tagged for online billing.

The project's funding included Rs 1.5 lakh from the Central government under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Rs 30,000 from the State, and an additional Rs 1.8 lakh as the fixed unit cost. However, the remote locations of the layouts discouraged many beneficiaries from proceeding with construction, prompting the unofficial assignment of projects to contractors. Despite the Collector flagging irregularities during reviews under the previous

administration, no action was taken, and contractors were assured of payments for completed houses.

The situation has been further complicated by the lack of coordination between housing department staff and GVMC officials. Investigations have revealed that hundreds of allocated plots were assigned to ineligible beneficiaries, and contractors had already begun construction, leaving these houses ineligible for billing. The current administration is now collecting data on unauthorised constructions and assessing the extent of pending bills, with nearly 10,000 beneficiaries requesting alternative plot allocations.



# Pawan stresses disaster management at village level for effective response

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj K Pawan Kalyan has emphasised the importance of establishing disaster management systems at the village level to ensure a swift response during emergencies.

Speaking at an event marking the 20th Raising Day of the NDRF at Kondapavuru near Vijayawada on Sunday, Pawan Kalyan highlighted that disaster response teams should be available at every panchayat to provide immediate assistance in times of crisis.

"The AP Panchayat Raj is progressing with a strong action plan. We will form response teams at the Panchayat level to rescue people during calamities, and we will ensure these teams receive the necessary training," Pawan



**"THE AP PANCHAYAT RAJ IS PROGRESSING WITH A STRONG ACTION PLAN. WE WILL FORM RESPONSE TEAMS AT THE PANCHAYAT LEVEL TO RESCUE PEOPLE DURING CALAMITIES, AND WE WILL ENSURE THESE TEAMS RECEIVE THE NECESSARY TRAINING," PAWAN KALYAN STATED**

Kalyan stated. He acknowledged the valuable services of the NDRF, noting that Andhra Pradesh, with its long coastline, is prone to cyclones and unexpected disasters. "The lives of

fishermen along the coastline are often disrupted due to these calamities," he added.

Pawan Kalyan praised the NDRF's contributions, mentioning that in the past 18

years, the force has saved 1,55,700 lives, evacuated 8,62,084 people to safer locations, and conducted 12,320 rescue operations. Additionally, NDRF personnel have handed

over the bodies of 7,465 individuals to their families, allowing them to have a final glimpse of their loved ones.

"The role of disaster management is crucial, especially as India strives to become a developed nation by 2047. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a Climate Smart Nation should be realized through the use of technology and infrastructure," Pawan Kalyan asserted.

The Deputy Chief Minister also expressed concern over the potential consequences if the YSRCP were to come back to power in the 2024 elections, suggesting that it would lead to a disastrous situation for the state. He concluded by thanking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for allocating funds to strengthen the public sector Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP).

# 24 SW hostels to get improved facilities in EG

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector P. Prasanthi has announced that 24 social welfare hostels across the district will be upgraded with enhanced facilities. The required work for the improvements is set to begin soon.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the Collector informed that the State Government has sanctioned Rs 378.05 lakh to carry out necessary repairs and provide additional amenities at these hostels.

The funds will be used for various upgrades, including roof repairs, flooring work, provision of drinking water facilities, toilet pipes, electrical works, installation of meshes on doors and windows to prevent mosquito breeding, and the construction of retaining



walls. The Andhra Pradesh Education and Welfare Infrastructure Development Corporation, along with officials from the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWS) and Panchayat Raj departments, has been responsible for

overseeing the works.

The Collector further detailed the allocation of funds for repairs at welfare hostels in different constituencies. Rs 144.84 lakh has been earmarked for 10 hostels in the Gopalapuram constituency, Rs 70.01 lakh for six hostels in the Rajamahendravaram city constituency, Rs 32.51 lakh for two hostels in the Rajamahendravaram rural constituency, Rs 17.05 lakh for one hostel in Jaggampeta constituency, Rs 11.05 lakh for a hostel in Peddapuram, Rs 11.29 lakh for a hostel in Rajanagar, Rs 52.53 lakh for three hostels in Nidadavole constituency, and another Rs 52.53 lakh for two hostels in Kovvur constituency.

Collector Prasanthi has instructed officials to complete all the works by the first week of March.

## Minister Gottipati condemns 'misleading' campaign on free power supply

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar strongly criticised the Opposition YSRCP for allegedly launching a misleading campaign against the government's free power supply initiatives for farmers and SC/ST communities.

Speaking to the media on Sunday, the Minister accused the YSRCP leaders of using their media outlet, Sakshi, to propagate false claims that the government intends to discontinue free power supply to these groups.

"During his five-year tenure, Jagan Mohan Reddy ruined the power sector. However, our Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, has taken significant steps to revive it. We are now providing uninterrupted, nine-hour quality power for agricultural purposes. Unable to accept this progress, the YSRCP is spreading false stories through their media," the Minister said. He alleged that the YSRCP is attempting to disrupt the supply of quality electricity to farmers and SC/ST families by spreading false propaganda.

Minister Gottipati



announced that the Suryagarh Scheme, currently being implemented experimentally in the Kuppam constituency, would soon be expanded across the state. Under this scheme, solar panels are being installed free of cost for SC and ST families. The Minister questioned the YSRCP's objections to the government's efforts, including the Suryagarh and PM Kusum schemes, which aim to provide quality electricity without imposing additional burdens on the beneficiaries.

He further stated that the damage caused to the power sector during Jagan Mohan Reddy's regime had been reported to the Central authorities.

## Minister lays stone for development works in island villages

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu laid the foundation stone for various development works in island villages. The Minister unveiled plaques on the occasion at Elamanchili village on Sunday.

He also paid tribute to Dr B.R. Ambedkar by garlanding his statue at the village. Speaking at the event, the Minister announced that development works worth Rs 1.50 crore would be undertaken in Chintadibba, Elapakurru, Abbirajupalem, Lakshmi Palem, and Yelamanchili villages in Yelamanchili mandal.

The Minister credited Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for preventing the privatization of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP). He recalled that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had allocated Rs 4,500 crore for the VSP, and now the Modi-led Central Government has sanctioned over Rs 11,440 crore for strengthening the plant.

Highlighting the achievements of the coalition government in the state, Ramanaidu mentioned the opening of more than 200 Anna Canteens,



the revocation of the controversial Land Titling Act, and the extension of a Rs 25,000 input subsidy per hectare to farmers. He further announced that 100 additional Anna Canteens would be opened across the state soon. To keep the state clean, Chief Minister Naidu launched the 'Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas' programme and urged the public to support it to ensure its success.

Ramanaidu emphasized that welfare schemes and development works are being implemented together, highlighting the efficient disbursement of social security pensions in the state. Taking a job at the previous YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government, the Minister alleged that the Jagan Reddy government had failed to announce the DSC

(District Selection Committee) for filling vacant teacher posts during its tenure.

"Chandrababu Naidu has signed the mega DSC to fill over 16,500 teacher posts, and the notification has already been issued. Steps have been taken to fill these teacher posts by the beginning of the next academic year," the Minister revealed. He acknowledged the cooperation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in ensuring development across all sectors in Andhra Pradesh. Earlier, Ramanaidu travelled to the village on a motorcycle and was warmly welcomed by the villagers.

Tahsildar Granthi Naga Venkata Pawan Kumar, MPDO G. Srinivasa Rao, and several other officials and leaders attended the event.



## Flamingo Festival draws large crowds: Collector

PNS ■ NELLORE

District Collector S Venkateswar has said that the Flamingo Festival 2025 is drawing a large number of visitors, with arrangements including free boat rides and drinking water facilities to ensure their comfort.

The Collector took a boat ride on Pulicat Lake at Atakanithippa village on Sunday. Students accompanying the Collector followed in other boats to catch a glimpse of the flamingos, adding to the enthusiasm of the event.

Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh inaugurated the Flamingo Festival 2025 on Saturday at Sullurpet. On the festival's second day, the Collector and local MLA Vijayasri joined the festivities

at BV Palem, where they enjoyed boating in the lake. The Collector interacted with students and visitors, seeking their feedback on the event.

He assured that all necessary arrangements had been made to make the festival a grand success. Highlighting the unique opportunity to observe flamingos in their natural habitat, he encouraged everyone to visit Pulicat Lake. Free boat rides, a medical camp, and drinking water facilities have been provided for visitors to enhance their experience.

Visitors who attended the festival expressed their joy and satisfaction with the arrangements. Many thanked the Tourism Minister, the Collector, and MLA Vijayasri for organizing the event on such a grand scale.

## 7 cattle die after consuming pesticide-laced water

PNS ■ ELURU

In a tragic incident, seven cattle, including three buffaloes, died after drinking water contaminated with pesticides at Rajavaram village in Koyyalagudem mandal on Sunday.

Vottipolu Saibabu, a local cattle rearer, reported that the animals—three buffaloes, two cows, and two calves—collapsed soon after consuming the water. They succumbed to the effects shortly thereafter. Saibabu claimed the water



had been tainted with pesticides, leading to the unfortunate deaths.

The total value of the seven cattle is estimated at Rs 4.5 lakh. Saibabu has appealed to the authorities to provide financial assistance to mitigate the loss.

## CITU demands retraction of BJP leader's remarks on VSP privatisation

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

CITU Visakhapatnam district general secretary RKS V. Kumar has demanded that BJP leader PVN Madhav retract his recent statements criticising the Left parties' stance on the privatisation of the RINL-Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

In a press release issued on Sunday, Kumar sharply criticized Madhav for his lack of participation in the ongoing protests against the privatization. He highlighted that Madhav has not shown solidarity with the protesters who have been engaged in a relay hunger strike at the main gate of the steel plant for over 1,400 days.

"Madhav has demonstrated a complete lack of understanding of the struggles faced by workers and trade union leaders fighting for the future of the steel plant," Kumar stated. He further condemned Madhav's claims that the Left parties are not sincere in their efforts to protect the plant, labelling them as baseless and insulting. Kumar demanded an apology from Madhav for these remarks.

Kumar also pointed out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Visakhapatnam has failed to yield any concrete support or announcements regarding the reversal of the privatization decision, a critical issue for local workers and their unions. "If Madhav fails to withdraw his statements, strict action will be taken," warned Kumar, emphasizing that such remarks should not be tolerated.

## Officials directed to submit development proposals for Eluru GGH

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has instructed officials to submit proposals for undertaking development works at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Eluru. On Sunday, the Collector, accompanied by officials, conducted a visit to assess the hospital's infrastructure and identify areas requiring improvement.

The Collector emphasised the immediate preparation of

proposals with detailed estimates for key development initiatives. This includes constructing a ramp at the entrance of the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) building to enhance wheelchair accessibility and upgrading the hospital's drainage system to ensure efficient sewage management.

She directed the engineers from the Municipal Corporation Engineering Department and the Hospital

Engineering Department to collaborate closely in preparing the proposals. The Collector further instructed officials to prioritise urgent works and prepare separate estimates accordingly.

The visit was attended by Hospital Superintendent Dr. M.M. Raju, Eluru RDO Achyuta Ambareesh, Municipal Corporation Executive Engineer G. Surendra Babu, Tahsildar G.V. Seshagiri, and other officials.



# Araku Utsav 'Chali': A celebration of culture & nature's beauty

**TO ENHANCE THE FESTIVAL'S APPEAL, A PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN WILL SHOWCASE NEARBY ATTRACTIONS LIKE THE MISTY LAMBASINGI HILLS, THE SERENE TAJANGI VALLEY, THE STUNNING KOTHAPALLI WATERFALLS, THE TRANQUIL CHAPARAI STREAMS, AND THE SUNRISE VIEWS AT VANAJANGI. THESE NATURAL WONDERS WILL BE PROMOTED EXTENSIVELY TO DRAW VISITORS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY.**

PNS ■ PADERU

The Alluri Sitharama Raju district is preparing to host the much-anticipated three-day tourism festival, Araku Utsav, from January 31st. Aply themed Chali—the Telugu word for "cold"—this grand event aims to spotlight the region's cultural richness, scenic beauty, and vibrant traditions.

The festival promises a dynamic blend of activities, ranging from mesmerising cultural performances to thrilling adventure sports, all set against the breathtaking backdrop of Araku Valley. Folk dancers and artists from states like Odisha, Manipur, Telangana, and Pondicherry will grace the event, offering visitors a glimpse of India's diverse cultural heritage. District Collector A.S. Dinesh Kumar, who is leading the organisation of the festival, has emphasised metic-

ulous planning to ensure a seamless and unforgettable experience for all.

At the heart of Araku Utsav will be a grand stage set amidst the valley's picturesque landscape, hosting daily cultural programmes that showcase India's rich artistic diversity. The event will feature a carnival, a marathon, and a cycling expedition from the iconic Borra Caves to Araku Valley. Adding a dash of adventure, visitors can enjoy hot air balloon rides and paragliding, alongside yoga sessions and a tribal fashion show.

he district administration is highlighting its commitment to sustainability with a large-scale plantation programme. Stalls featuring tribal products, Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, and the famed Araku Coffee will provide an authentic taste of local culture. To enhance the festival's appeal, a promotional campaign

will showcase nearby attractions like the misty Lambasingi hills, the serene Tajangi Valley, the stunning Kothapalli waterfalls, the tranquil Chaparai streams, and the sunrise views at Vanajangi. These natural wonders will be promoted extensively to draw visitors from across the country. District Collector Kumar, during a video conference with department heads, stressed the importance of robust publicity across various platforms. Plans are underway to create a dedicated blog and promotional materials to inform visitors about the festival's schedule and events.

The festival will feature food courts, an amusement arena, and essential amenities such as sanitation facilities managed by the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC). Mobile toilets and other conveniences will ensure a comfortable experience for all attendees.

Affordable transport options between Visakhapatnam and Araku are being arranged in collaboration with travel operators. Budget allocations are also being prepared for cultural programmes, stage setups, transportation, accommodation, and catering services.

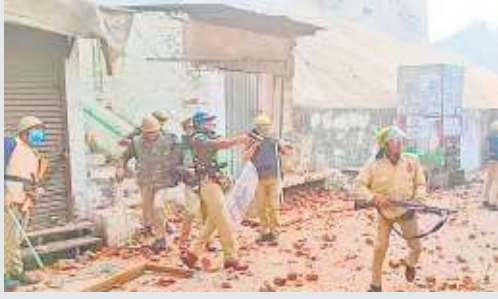
A core organising team, including Competent Collector Dr Abhishek Gowda, Paderu ITDA Project Officer V. Abhishek, and other officials, is dedicated to ensuring the festival's success. Clear responsibilities for committees and nodal officers have been established to streamline coordination and execution.

With its unique blend of culture, adventure, and natural splendour, Araku Utsav promises to be a spectacular celebration, leaving visitors with unforgettable memories of the valley's charm and hospitality.





ACROSS THE STATES



**Sambhal violence: Police arrest 10 more**

Police on Sunday arrested 10 more people in connection with the November 24 violence near the Shahi Jama Masjid in this Uttar Pradesh district, officials said. With this, 70 people have so far been arrested in connection with the incident, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Srish Chandra said. Those arrested were Tahzeeb, Azhar Ali, Asad, Danish, Suhaib, Alam, Mohammad Danish, Shane Alam, Bakir and Mulla Afroz, the officer said, adding that they were nabbed after police scanned CCTV footage and photographs that had gone viral on the social media. The ASP said Afroz, son of Afzar, is a active member of the Sarik Sata gang that is involved in vehicle and arms trafficking. He was reportedly present at the scene during the commotion and had allegedly fired at the police party during the chaos. The bullets struck several individuals, including Bilal and Ayan, who succumbed to their injuries. Police have seized a .32-bore pistol, three live cartridges and 15 blank cartridges from Afroz's possession.



**Militant held by Assam Police under 'Operation Praghat'**

A person, suspected to be a member of a fundamentalist terror group, was arrested in Assam's Dhubri district, a police spokesperson said on Sunday. The arrest was made by the state police's Special Task Force (STF) as part of 'Operation Praghat', an ongoing multi-state exercise against terrorists, fundamentalists and terror networks. The spokesperson said, "One Jaheer Ali, a 'jahadi', was apprehended from Khudigaon village under the Bilasipara police station limits." Twelve suspected terrorists, including Bangladesh nationals, have been arrested in the 'Operation Praghat' so far, he said. Under the ongoing operation, the Assam Police, had in December last year, arrested eight fundamentalists, including one Bangladeshi, and busted an attempt to set up 'sleeper cells' to carry subversive activities across the country.



**Actor Sathyaraj's daughter Divya joins DMK**

Nutritionist and daughter of noted actor Sathyaraj, Divya, formally got inducted into the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) on Sunday, in the presence of Chief Minister M K Stalin at Anna Arivalayam, the party headquarters here. DMK MP T R Baalu, Ministers P K Sekar Babu and K N Nehru were present on the occasion, the party said in a statement. "Today marks the beginning of an important chapter in my life. I am truly honoured to announce that I have officially joined the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. I sincerely thank our Chief Minister M K Stalin sir, and our Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin sir for their trust and support," Divya said after joining the party. "Inspired by the visionary path laid down by Muthamil Arignar Dr Kalaignar (the late DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi), I embark on this new journey as a proud daughter of Tamil Nadu to work selflessly for the progress of our people," she wrote in a social media post. "My father and comrade Puratchi Tharmizhan Sathyaraj has always taught me that the real luxuries of life are in the rooted principles of equality and social justice -- values that our Periyar (Dravidar Kazhagam founder E V Ramasamy Periyar) passionately commissioned.

**Centre to hold talks with farmer leaders on Feb 14**

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH



"It is not a big victory for us, but we were successful in getting a shut door open," said Punjab farmer leaders on an invitation extended by the Centre for holding a meeting to discuss their demands on February 14 at Chandigarh. They further said fasting farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal had refused to take medical aid till the end, but when farmer leaders kept requesting him, he told them with a feeling of sadness, "Do whatever you feel is right." Considering the whole situ-

ation, the farmer leaders said they decided that medical aid for Dallewal should be started. "We cannot say it is a big victory, but we can say that we made one step forward. We were successful in getting a meeting (from the Centre), and we were successful in getting a shut door open (for talks)," farmer leader Kaka Singh Kotra said.

**'PoK crown jewel of India'**

**J-K INCOMPLETE WITHOUT IT, SAYS RAJNATH**

PNS ■ JAUNPUR (UP)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday described Pakistan-occupied Kashmir as the "crown jewel of India" and asserted that Jammu and Kashmir was incomplete without it. The senior BJP leader also accused Pakistan of continuing its conspiracy to foster terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

Singh was speaking to reporters in the Nizamuddin village of Jaunpur district, where he attended a ceremonial event at the home of senior BJP leader Jagat Narayan Dubey. "It (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) is the crown jewel of India and Jammu and Kashmir is incomplete without it," he said. "For Pakistan, the Kashmir occupied by it is nothing more than a foreign



territory being used to promote terrorism and anti-India propaganda. Terror camps and launch pads there (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) should be dismantled or it will face an

appropriate response," Singh added. The defence minister also hit out at Pakistani leader Anwar-ul-Haq over his alleged anti-India rhetoric. "Pakistan is trying to pro-

voke people against India on religious grounds while oppressing citizens there," he said. He also claimed that India had emerged as the world's largest digital economy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership.

India, which now has the highest number of 5G users, is on track to becoming a developed nation by 2047, Singh asserted. "Today, when India speaks, the world listens attentively. Our scientists are manufacturing defence equipment on Indian soil and exporting those to other nations. Moreover, 1.30 lakh start-ups are operational in the country," the defence minister said.

Singh urged youngsters to delve deep into India's history and said it reflected the country's accomplishments across domains.



**EC used power of technology to strengthen people's power: Modi**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the Election Commission on Sunday, saying it has used the power of technology to strengthen people's power and also shown commitment to a fair polling process.

Modi's praise for the poll body in his monthly Mann ki Baat broadcast came ahead of its foundation day on January 25, observed as the National Voters' Day, and amid frequent criticism from the opposition for its alleged pro-BJP bias.

The EC has modernised and strengthened the election process from time to time, Modi asserted. "It has used power of technology to strengthen people's power," he said, asking people to participate in the polling process in large numbers to be part of democratic process and empowering it.

Opposition parties have increasingly raised questions on the integrity of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and Modi's remarks can be seen as an endorsement of the EVMs. The prime minister said doubts were cast on India's viability as a democracy after it became independent, but the country proved them wrong. After all, India is mother of democracy, he said.

The programme was held on the third Sunday this month as against the last, which is usually the case, as next Sunday is Republic Day, Modi noted.

Opposition parties have increasingly raised questions on the integrity of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and Modi's remarks can be seen as an endorsement of the EVMs.

The prime minister played short audio clips of some of the members of India's constituent assembly, including its chairman Rajendra Prasad, Bhim Rao Ambedkar and Syama Prasad Mookerjee, to highlight the values they promoted.

Ambedkar called for everyone to work together in everyone's interest, while Prasad highlighted India's commitment to humanistic values, he noted. "We should take inspiration from them to build an India of which our Constitution makers would have been proud," Modi said.

The Republic Day will mark the 75th anniversary of the implementation of Constitution, he said. Speaking of the ongoing Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj, the prime minister said people of various castes and regions have come together. There is no discrimination of any kind, he added.

Modi said extensive participation of the youth is visible in the gigantic get-together of devouts, saying it will strengthen civilisational roots and assure a gold future.

SAIF ATTACK CASE

**Cops cite intl conspiracy angle**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A Mumbai court on Sunday remanded a man arrested in the Saif Ali Khan attack case in 5-day police custody after observing that the prosecution's contention of an international conspiracy cannot be ruled out.

Police produced the accused Mohammad Shariful Islam Shehzad (30) before a metropolitan magistrate court in Bandra at 1:30pm. Police told court that the alleged attacker was a Bangladeshi national residing illegally in India and there was need to find the motive behind his act. Police also told court they needed to find out if there was an international conspiracy linked to the case.

However, defence lawyer Sandeep D Sherkhane contended his client was residing in the country for several years and has vital documents (for staying in the country) and that his family is also residing in

ACCUSED IN 5-DAY POLICE CUSTODY



India. The case has been hyped because of the presence of actor Saif Ali Khan, the defence lawyer further submitted. The police, however, sought 14-day custody stating the case was not just about a celebrity but that it involved a brutal attack. The police also told court the investigation is at a primary stage. Khan sustained grievous injuries in the attack, including a part of the knife blade

getting embedded in his body, the investigating officer told court.

The knife broke into three parts, two of which have been found, while the third needs to be recovered from the accused, police told court. The clothes the accused had worn at the time of the incident will have blood stains and it needs to be seized as part of the probe, police submitted.

The police, however, sought 14-day custody stating the case was not just about a celebrity but that it involved a brutal attack. The police also told court the investigation is at a primary stage

A probe was required to find out how he entered the actor's house and the motive behind the attack, the IO said. However, the defence lawyer said Shehzad should be remanded in judicial custody.

Accepting the police's contention after perusing documents on record, the court said the prosecution's submission of international conspiracy "cannot be said to be impossible".

**Rahul launches 'White T-shirt movement' for justice, equality**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Sunday announced the launch of a 'White T-shirt Movement,' championing the rights of the masses, even as he accused the Narendra Modi government of turning its back on the poor. Gandhi announced the launch in a post on X and urged people to be a part of it.

"If you believe in economic justice, oppose rising wealth inequalities, fight for social equality, reject all forms of discrimination, and strive for peace and stability in our country, wear your white T-shirts and join the movement," said a video voiceover posted by Gandhi on X. "Today the Modi government has turned its back on the poor and the working class and has left them to their own devices. The government's entire focus is on enrich-



ing a select few capitalists." He said that because of this, inequality is constantly increasing and the condition of the workers "who nourish the country with their blood and sweat" is getting worse and they are forced to endure various kinds of injustice and atrocities. "In such a situation, it is the responsibility of all of us to raise our voice strongly to get them justice and rights. With this thought, we are starting the #WhiteTshirt Movement," he said on X. "I appeal to my youth

and working class colleagues to participate in this movement in large numbers. To join this campaign and get detailed information about it, visit this link - https://whitetshirt.in/home/hin or give a missed call on this number 99998 12024," the post further read.

The website of the 'White T-shirt Movement' states that a 'white T-shirt' is not just a piece of cloth but is a symbol of the party's five guiding principles -- compassion, unity, non-violence, equality, and progress for all.

**'Need for collective action to address issues of women, children'**

PNS ■ ITANAGAR

Union Minister Savitri Thakur on Sunday called for collective action and continued collaboration among stakeholders to address the challenges faced by women and children, and to ensure holistic development for all sections of society.

The Union Minister of State for Women and Child Development, who is in Arunachal Pradesh on a three-day visit, also inspected several ongoing projects at Daporijo in Upper Subansiri district.

Interacting with officials and community leaders, she commended the efforts to implement various government schemes effectively in the district. The minister's visit to the remote district highlights the Centre's commitment to fostering inclusive growth, empowering women and promoting



the welfare of children, particularly in far-flung areas, an official release said.

During the day, Thakur also inspected the One Stop Centre (OSC) at Daporijo, a critical support system for women in distress. She highlighted the importance of such facilities in ensuring the safety and empowerment of women, especial-

ly in remote areas. Thakur also assessed the implementation of housing projects under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), and steps taken under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in Sikarjio village, the release said.

**'Action plan ready to host 2036 Olympics'**



PNS ■ BHOPAL

Union minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Sunday that a robust plan has been drafted to boost the sports environment to prepare India to host the Olympics in 2036. Mandaviya addressed a programme in the MP capital to launch the state's maiden Fit India Club. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav was also present.

"PM Modi ji said we will organise the Olympics in 2036. He said India would

have to achieve the 1 to 10 ranking in international sports in the next ten years.

"When the country celebrates the centenary year of Independence, we have to improve the sports ranking on a 1 to 5 scale in the sports sector," the Union minister for Sports and Youth Affairs said. He said this is not just a slogan, but a robust action plan has been prepared to achieve this target.

The Union minister said talented players are being identified and nurtured by

organising Khelo India school games for boys aged 9 to 15.

He said sports infrastructure is being expanded to propel India to the top ten in the world in 2036 by involving youths. "We are moving ahead with a comprehensive planning. India is changing and moving ahead under the leadership of PM Modi," he said. Yadav and Mandaviya unveiled the kit of players from MP participating in the upcoming National Games in Uttarakhand. They launched 'Khelo Badho Abhiyan' in MP, and inaugurated and performed the groundbreaking ceremony of various sports infrastructure.

Yadav said the Madhya Pradesh government is committed to the welfare of the youth. He said the Fit India Club follows the Fit India theme of physical, mental and spiritual development of players of every class and age.

THE UNION MINISTER SAID TALENTED PLAYERS ARE BEING IDENTIFIED AND NURTURED BY ORGANISING KHELO INDIA SCHOOL GAMES FOR BOYS AGED 9 TO 15. HE SAID SPORTS INFRASTRUCTURE IS BEING EXPANDED TO PROPEL INDIA TO THE TOP TEN IN THE WORLD IN 2036 BY INVOLVING YOUTHS.







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Trump in the Oval Office

As Trump begins his second term, he is likely to reshape domestic policies and redefining America's role in the world

Donald Trump will begin his second term as President of the United States today, marking a significant moment in US political history. The swearing-in ceremony has dignitaries from around the world in attendance. Notably, Chinese Vice President Han Zheng will represent China, highlighting the importance of US-China relations in the coming years. President Trump's second term is anticipated to commence with a series of decisive actions. Reports suggest that he plans to issue approximately 100 executive orders on his first day in office, targeting areas such as immigration, trade and energy. These orders aim to deport illegal immigrants, end birthright citizenship and reinstate the 'Muslim ban.'



Economically, he plans to raise tariffs, cut taxes and eliminate regulations. Trump seeks to boost fossil fuel production by reducing green energy initiatives. His cultural policies include banning transgender women from female sports and restricting hormone treatments for minors.

In the international arena, President Trump's approach to China is poised to be assertive. He has proposed imposing tariffs ranging from 10 per cent to 20 per cent on imports, with the possibility of escalating to 100 per cent for BRICS countries like China and Russia if they move away from using the US dollar. Additionally, Trump has indicated a focus on addressing issues such as fentanyl trafficking and the operations of Chinese companies like TikTok in the US. A recent phone call between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping covered topics including trade, fentanyl and TikTok, suggesting a complex and potentially contentious relationship moving forward. Another area which is more relevant to us here is his attitude towards Indian companies and tech professionals working in the US with H1-B visas. The relationship between the United States and India is expected to experience both opportunities and challenges during President Trump's second term. The personal rapport between President Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi may facilitate continued cooperation. However, Trump's 'America First' policies could lead to heightened trade barriers, especially in sectors like information technology and pharmaceuticals, where India has significant interests. Despite these potential hurdles, India's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific region and its role in diversifying global supply chains away from China may provide avenues for strengthened collaboration between the two nations. As President Trump embarks on his second term, the global community will be closely monitoring how his administration's policies unfold, particularly in relation to major economies like China and India. The decisions made in the coming months will have profound implications for international trade, security and diplomatic relations.

## Need for a unified global strategy against terrorism



SUDHIR HINDWAN

Nations must come together to share a common vision and adopt a multilayered approach that prioritises security, innovation and collaboration



In the face of escalating transnational terrorism, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive global anti-terror strategy. Such a plan should involve a shared strategic vision and a unified, multilayered approach to ensure safety and security across borders. To counter the evolving threats, nations must develop a fresh perspective that emphasises mature international cooperation and robust retaliation strategies to deter destabilising activities.

### Strengthening International Cooperation

Collaboration among nations is essential to design and implement an integrated strategic framework. This includes pooling development funds, fostering mutual trust and crafting plans to address shared security challenges. India, with its growing prominence on the global stage, is well-positioned to lead such efforts.

Its successful handling of key responsibilities—such as the G20 Presidency, leadership in the Quad Group, and chairing organizations like Interpol and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—demonstrates its capability to drive global strategic initiatives.

India's role in enhancing multi-layered security cooperation can serve as a model for addressing issues like the financing of terrorism, enhancing policing collaboration, countering cyber threats, and leveraging technological advancements. Tightened border and maritime security measures, coupled with efficient intelligence-sharing, are critical components of this strategy.

### Adapting to Evolving Challenges

The nature of global threats has become more severe, with adversaries employing increasingly sophisticated tactics. This calls for an adaptable and proactive approach to strategic policy-making.

Nations, particularly in Asia, must diversify their strategies and implement forward-looking recommendations to effectively counter emerging challenges. A modernised approach to safety and security is imperative to outpace organised threats and propaganda-driven terror networks.

### Bridging Policy Gaps

A significant gap exists between theoretical strategies



IN A GLOBALISED WORLD, THE IMBALANCE OF POWER AND INEQUALITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMY OFTEN FUEL TERRORISM

and their practical application in countering terrorism. Regional political actors must engage in rigorous policy analysis and embrace innovative approaches to address these shortcomings. More integrated programs that support both military and law enforcement agencies are necessary to strengthen their efficiency in combatting terrorism and terror. Community development within regional alliances like the Quad can also foster resilience against destabilising forces.

### Addressing Underlying Socio-economic Factors

In a globalised world, the imbalance of power and inequality in the international economy often fuel terrorism. Socio-economic disparities create fertile ground for non-state actors to exploit psychological vulnerabilities and propagate extremist ideologies. To counter this, nations must dismantle the mechanisms that enable the spread of false narratives and ill-intentioned ideologies.

### Specialised Counter-Terrorism Frameworks

A robust counter-terrorism strategy must include spe-

cialised think tanks and talent development programmes. These institutions can provide tactical expertise, real-time feedback, and innovative solutions to address evolving threats.

Interactive communication between intelligence, law enforcement and military branches can further enhance operational efficiency. A modern, vigilant, and assertive network of military, police, and paramilitary forces must replace outdated systems to address the complexities of modern terrorism.

### The Path Forward

To combat terrorism effectively, nations must overcome entrenched mindsets and outdated practices. Strategic planning should evolve to address the realities of state-sponsored terrorism and propaganda. Establishing a new consensus on international security and fostering a collaborative global environment are vital for achieving long-term stability.

(The author is a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award, is a professor and expert in international relations; views are personal)

### PICTALK



A farmer prepares an agricultural land for paddy cultivation, in Nadia

PTI

## When elephants roamed beyond: A remarkable journey through China



C K NAYAK

A historic event captivated the world as a herd of 15 wild elephants embarked on a 500-km journey from Xishuangbanna to the bustling city of Kunming

Some time back an extraordinary event unfolded in China: for the first time in recorded history, a herd of 15 wild elephants embarked on an unprecedented journey. Leaving their natural habitat in Xishuangbanna (commonly referred to as Banna), the elephants traveled over 500 kilometers to Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province. Xishuangbanna, an autonomous prefecture for the ethnic Dai people, lies in the southernmost part of Yunnan, bordering Myanmar and Laos.



This remarkable migration captured the attention of the world, with live 24/7 broadcasts and drones following their every move. The Chinese authorities, committed to the conservation of these majestic creatures, responded with care rather than confrontation. However, their journey caused panic among local residents, who abandoned their homes in fear. Despite trampling crops and cornfields along the way, the elephants did not harm any humans. In some instances, curious jumbos ventured

into deserted homes, with one even slipping under a bed. Yet, they remained peaceful throughout their expedition. During their long journey, the elephants maintained their routines, munching on leaves, bathing in mud, and sleeping.

In a touching moment, a calf was born mid-journey. Eventually, after weeks of gentle coaxing and careful management, the herd returned to their home in Xishuangbanna. The reasons behind this unusual migration remain unclear. Experts speculate that an inexperienced leader might have led the herd astray, or that they were seeking a new habitat due to environmental changes. While conservation efforts in China have resulted in a gradual increase in the elephant population, these efforts are complicated by

human activity. Large-scale commercial rubber cultivation, introduced to Banna, has significantly disrupted the region's rainforest ecosystem. These plantations, consisting of monocultures of Brazilian rubber trees, replace diverse habitats, further encroaching on the elephants' range. Asian elephants, an endangered species, number only about 300 in the wild in China, primarily in Banna. Protecting these animals is a national priority. Emergency workers and volunteers were mobilised during the migration, providing tonnes of corn, pineapples and other food to ensure both the safety of the elephants and the local population. Trucks and drones were deployed to guide the animals along safe paths, offering them a feast akin to a celebratory banquet. Xishuangbanna is a biodiversity hotspot, home to a wide variety of flora and fauna.

The region's tropical climate and historical isolation have preserved its rich ecosystems. In addition to Asian elephants, the area supports other endangered species such as green peacocks, wild oxen, and monkeys. The Wild Elephant Valley Forest Park, located 47 kilometers north of Jinghong city, serves as a key conservation site. Spanning 369 hectares, this park provides a haven for wildlife and a unique opportunity for visitors to observe elephants. The reserve features observation towers, allowing visitors to watch wild elephants bathing, playing, and strolling. A cableway provides breathtaking views of the valley, while the park's elephant-domestication school entertains visitors with performances by trained elephants, including dancing, headstands, and football tricks. Looking ahead, the Chinese government plans to establish an Asian Elephant Breeding Centre in Banna to further conservation efforts. These initiatives aim to protect not only the elephants but also the rich biodiversity of this unique region, ensuring a harmonious coexistence between humans and wildlife.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SELECTORS RETAIN ROHIT SHARMA

Madam — The news that the selectors have retained the Indian skipper Rohit Sharma for the upcoming series against England for ODIs and for the Championship Trophy. While Rohit was averaging 6 runs in his last six innings, on the other side, the Karun Nair is waiting for his chance by having proved his immense worth with 752 runs in 7 innings with an average of 72.2 with 5 recent unbeaten centuries to his credit at the much-acclaimed Vijay Hazare Trophy, still waiting for his place patiently. It is also disproving the Board's statement that the players must play the local games to prove themselves to claim their place at the international level was not considered in Karun Nair's case.

One can expect that during the crisis in the upcoming series, when the team struggles, in the name of injury, Nair may get a call back from Rohit to join the team, as we have seen such inclusions in the past. One thing is evident that the selection criteria lack complete transparency and without the godfather, finding a place is becoming increasingly difficult in the team. Ironically, Sanju Samson was dropped for the series by assigning reasons that the board was not happy because he didn't play the local games. Stranger than fiction of selection won't do good for the sport and currently for the Indian cricket.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

### JOBS OVER FREEBIES

Madam—The Delhi assembly elections have transformed into a marathon race for freebies without realising the negative impact on the state's economy and the diversion of massive funds for turning the potential workforce passive. Delhi loses its charm if the development, infrastructure, education, health, job creation and entrepreneurship are sacrificed. Delhi people should not ask for jobs as the parties are promising enough for their sustenance. Alas! After all, votes appear to decide their lives. The taxpayers pay taxes for the development, security and growth of the nation but virtually provide funds for freebies.

## Centre announces 8th Pay Commission



In a major decision, the Union government has announced the 8th Pay Commission to revise salaries and pensions of over 1 crore central government employees and pensioners. With more money in the hands of the employees and pensioners after the implementation of recommendations of the next pay commission, the gov-

ernment is expecting a boost for overall consumption and demand in the economy. Though every employee deserves more, the appointment of a pay commission is an exercise against fiscal prudence.

At a time when 60 per cent of revenue expenditure is spent only on salary, pension, interest and subsidies, leaving only 40 per cent for development activities, the implementation of the 8th pay commission will further shrink the share of development activities in revenue expenditure. Every pay commission brings inflation to the economy, which affects the poor most. In addition, the financial condition of the states is not ready to bear the burden of another pay commission.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

Delhi is one of the biggest sources of revenue collection in income tax and GST. At least the taxpayers should have the option in their ITRs to invest or spend their taxes towards national security, education, industrial and civil infrastructure, health and welfare schemes.

All the welfare schemes and freebies are funded at the cost of higher electricity, water and municipal taxes paid by the non-eligible class besides taxes paid by them. In the long run, the taxpayers may be demotivated to pay taxes honestly as the political parties are squandering their hard-earned money on freebies, which are the antithesis of growth and development. At least the BJP was expected to promise jobs to the youth and empower them instead of turning them into dead wood like other parties. We should not lose the demographic dividend by parasitising the youth.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

### EXPECTATIONS BURDEN WOMEN

Madam — Refer to The Silent Struggles of a Daughter-in-Law. A call to change

(January 18). The natural shift in family roles—where elders move from decision-makers to mentors (less responsibility, less freedom) and younger generations take on more responsibilities and more freedom in decision-making—can become complicated when societal pressures interfere. High expectations with society's rigid rules on newer generations often result in rigid roles, particularly for daughters-in-law, who are expected to navigate complex expectations. This situation may hinder the balance within the family.

To achieve the ultimate goal of love, care, and empathy, families must embrace internal management and communication rather than following society's rigid rules that allow shared responsibilities and individuality. This fosters understanding and reduces the generational gap, creating harmony and mutual respect among family members. The ultimate goal is a stable and loving society.

Riti Dwivedi | Indore

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

## A REUNION OF HEARTS, MINDS AND THE DIVINE

Today, we are connected not just by the bonds of friendship but by the threads of technology



RAVI VALLURI

Three decades ago, we were perhaps merely a group of motley friends and acquaintances. We were a bunch of strapping youngsters and petite women who had flowered from their teens, all tutees in an estimable institution. Three decades back we professed and cherished a heterogeneity of political ideologies spanning the left, right and center spectrums, in an era of a controlled economy and what also was the pre-globalisation era. This was a generation ago. Meanwhile, the Soviet economy crumbled and disintegrated, the Berlin Wall collapsed and diverse countries swiftly embraced consumerism and capitalism. A talismanic Zuckerberg bought a contrivance called WhatsApp from Jan Koum. All the technology and gadgets have provided seamless connectivity and people across the globe have been moored, and so it was with us. In a trice, we were all trussed up through WhatsApp.

A few months of endless chatting on WhatsApp resulted in a clarion call for a reunion. This was followed by frenetic preparations and a homecoming took place at the opulent Rajputana Sheraton, Jaipur. The assembly and the bonding were indeed amazing. For three days and four nights we were to shed our past baggage and live another life. The friends of yesteryears conducted themselves as a group of children rediscovering their roots. This is purely a physical pining. The geometry and architecture of the human mind are unmindful, unsuspecting and unaware of the exalted, elevated and lofty state it is capable of. This is the pining and longing for the Divine. The same longing that Radha Arjuna or Sudama possessed for Lord Krishna. This is true of all religions, faiths and spiritual masters. Like Yusuf, Dawud, Sulayman, and Ibrahim beckoned Allah. Akin to what the apostles, and more recently, Saint Teresa felt for Jesus or Ananda for Buddha. This is divine love without any attach-



ments and entanglements. This is not an emotion of craving but that of five Es. What are these five Es? The devotee, seeker and devout are subsumed with exhilaration, ecstasy, euphoria, elation, exultation and ebullience. This is the authentic and genuine pining for the Divine. It is a meditative state in which the seeker or the disciple basks in the glory of the Master and utters his name with the doctrine of the three Cs: credence, confidence, and conviction.

Yes, the enlightened Buddha does say nothing is permanent in life, and impermanence is the only constant factor. However, the heart and mind aching for the Divine is voracious. It transcends all boundaries and frontiers. Feelings and emotions encompass the human mind with constructive and efficacious thoughts, where it becomes intrepid to scale and surmount any misadventure. To elaborate further, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar poses a teaser, "Do we give quality time to the Divine?" He goes on to add, that we do that only after partying hard, watching some tantalizing movies and entertaining guests. The remainder or balance of our time is set aside by the mind to pine for the Divine.

The universe thus showers upon us only that quantum of benediction and bounty, depending upon our tapas or the tractive effort of the mind. However, through methodical and punctilious practice of techniques like yoga, pranayama, meditation and the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya, the mind can achieve the state of continuous communion with the Divine by remaining in the present moment. So, what happened to the group that met after thirty years? They are in abiding and sustained touch. Perhaps a dash of spiritual sparkle is required to cement the bonding from within and without.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

## LPG subsidies: Give it to the poor and needy



UTTAM GUPTA

As state-owned oil companies grapple with massive losses from selling LPG below cost, the Govt is set to allocate Rs 35,000 crore in subsidies to mitigate the financial burden



During the current financial year (FY) 2024-25, the state-owned Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) are expected to incur an under-recovery of Rs 19,550 crore, Rs 10,400 crore and Rs 10,570 crore respectively on sales of LPG to household consumers. To make up for this loss totalling Rs 40,500 crore, the Union Government is likely to provide a subsidy of Rs 35,000 crore. In the Budget for 2025-26, to be presented on February 1, 2025, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will make a provision of Rs 10,000 crore in the revised estimate (RE) for the current FY and the remaining Rs 25,000 crore in the budget estimate (BE) for 2025-26.

The under-recovery arose because these corporations sold LPG for Rs 803 per 14.2-kg cylinder against the cost of supplying at the retail point being higher. The cost is calculated as the refinery-gate price or RGP (taken as import parity price or IPP and export parity price or EPP in the ratio of 80:20) plus freight, marketing costs, marketing margin, dealers' commission, and taxes and duties. During the current FY, the cost is Rs 1043 per cylinder, and the loss is Rs 240 per cylinder which on total sales of 169 crore cylinders would be Rs 40,500 crore. Modi - government had stopped giving subsidies on LPG during FY 2021-22. Then, how come, it continues to make huge payments from the budget? LPG is an environment and human-friendly fuel that meets the needs of millions of households (HHs).

Subsidy on LPG ought to be given only to those HHs who are poor. The government also needs to track the income status of the beneficiaries and withdraw support from those who become better off and can pay cost-based prices. Ignoring these cardinal principles, the subsidy was given to anyone who had an LPG connection. It went to all and sundry including the rich. The poor who alone should have got it sat at the bottom. According to the Economic Survey (2015-16), only 0.07 per cent of LPG subsidies in rural areas went to a fifth of the



LPG IS AN ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN-FRIENDLY FUEL THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF MILLIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS (HHS) SUBSIDY ON LPG OUGHT TO BE GIVEN ONLY TO THOSE HHS WHO ARE POOR. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO NEEDS TO TRACK THE INCOME STATUS OF THE BENEFICIARIES AND WITHDRAW SUPPORT FROM THOSE WHO BECOME BETTER OFF AND CAN PAY

poorest households. In urban areas, the poorest fifth got only 8.2 per cent.

A lot of subsidies went to fake beneficiaries or the diversion of stocks (albeit subsidised) of LPG cylinders to hotels, restaurants, and other commercial users. Despite lacking sound justification, sheer populism drove politicians to give subsidies to all and sundry. They found ways to give it without taking the burden on the Centre's balance sheet. Initially, the subsidy on LPG (besides petrol and diesel) was cross-funded/subsidised by charging more on the sale of other products such as fuel oil, naphtha, ATF, etc. hence, no burden on the budget. In 2002-03, the Vajpayee-led NDA government ended the above system and decided to give subsidies on these products directly from the budget with the intent to eventually disband them. But, that was not to be.

The UPA government which took charge in 2004, even while continuing with subsidised sales, used disingenuous methods such as the issue of oil bonds to IOCL/BPCL/HPCL (instead of losses incurred by them due to selling these products at below-cost prices), and sale of domestic crude oil by state-owned upstream oil and gas companies viz. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Limited (OIL), etc. at a discounted price to these fuel refiners-cum-retailers.

In June 2010, petrol was decontrolled followed by diesel in November 2014. As for LPG, the Kelkar Committee recommended the removal of 25 per cent of the subsidy in 2012-13 and 75 per cent in the following two years. Modi Government which took charge in May 2014, started acting on it but in a calibrated manner. On January 1, 2015, it launched a direct benefit transfer (DBT) of subsidy.

Under DBT, oil PSUs deliver the cylinder to the beneficiaries at a full cost-based price and follow it up by depositing a subsidy in the beneficiary's account.

In turn, they claim reimbursement of the subsidy amount from the Centre. This helped in eliminating fake beneficiaries and curbing misuse that was inherent in the erstwhile system wherein subsidy was embedded in the price. But, the government couldn't muster the courage to trim the number of beneficiary HHs sans Modi requesting the rich to give up on their own.

The FY 2020-21 was a boon, viewed from a subsidy angle. In that year, there was a steep decline in international prices (due to the COVID-19 pandemic) leading to a fall in the cost of supplying an LPG cylinder to a low of Rs 600; hence, it could be given to all HHs at Rs 600 requiring no subsidy support. The BE of Rs 36,000 crore for that year was used largely to clear past dues of oil PSUs and provide free gas connections under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY). During 2021-22 when the international price rose due to waning COVID and demand revival, the cost of LPG zoomed to over Rs 900 per cylinder.

This prompted the government to give subsidies but only to the PMUY beneficiaries. They were 9.6 crore out of a total of 33 crore HHs. It spent Rs 14,000 crore during that year. During 2022-23, it spent Rs 9,170 crore. But, this doesn't tell the full story. From June 2020 to June 2022, the government had asked the three fuel retailers namely IOCL/BPCL/HPCL to sell LPG at a price below cost and gave them a one-time grant of Rs 22,000 crore to compensate for the losses incurred in 2021-22 and 2022-23 (against under-recovery of Rs 28,250 crore).

This was nothing but subsidy (albeit 'hidden') given to all and sundry, and not just PMUY beneficiaries. In the Budget for 2023-24, it kept the BE for LPG subsidy at Rs 2,257 crore. As in the previous two years, that allocation was meant to cover subsidy to PMUY beneficiary HHs @ Rs 200 per cylinder for up to 12 refills per year. However, to benefit all the 33 crore HHs, on August 29, 2023, the Union Cabinet approved a reduction in the price by Rs 200 per cylinder effective from August 30, 2023, thereby enabling the PSU retailers to sell it at Rs 903 per cylinder (Delhi). Taking 4 fills per HH, @Rs 200 per cylinder, the annual burden comes to Rs 26,400 crore (200x4x33).

Since the decision was effective from August 30, 2023, for the remaining seven months of FY 2023-24, the outgo would be around Rs 15,300 crore. On March 9, 2024, the fuel retailers namely IOCL/BPCL/HPCL were asked to cut the price by another Rs 100 per cylinder (courtesy, of general elections) to Rs 803.

During the current FY 2024-25, the price has remained unchanged despite the cost remaining at an elevated level. The under-recovery for 2023-24 and 2024-25 thus comes to over Rs 40,000 crore of which the Centre now wants to reimburse Rs 35,000 crore. This and the earlier payment of Rs 22,000 crore for loss incurred by IOCL/BPCL/HPCL during 2021-22 and 2022-23 could have been avoided if only it had stuck to its earlier stance of restricting LPG subsidy only to the poor HHs and keeping it transparent. But, this is unthinkable in the current political climate wherein all decisions based on sound economic logic are hamstrung by populism.

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

## The silent epidemic: The untold story of gender inequality against men in India

Indian society, long entrenched in patriarchy and gender inequality against women, is now grappling with an overlooked dimension of the issue—gender inequality against men

Indian society has always been dominated by patriarchy and gender inequality against women. However, the two recent suicides of a techie and a head constable, both alleging extortion and harassment by their estranged wives and families, point to a highly skewed, female-oriented and obsolete legal framework. Gender inequality largely remains a half-told story, deprived of the male counterpart.



KAJLEEN KAUR

The legal system in India favours women with the dowry laws in India being specifically highly discriminatory. As per section 113B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 (now Bhartiya Saksham Adhiyog, 2023) if a married woman commits

suicide within 7 years of marriage, it is assumed that the husband or his family abetted suicide, while the same does not apply to women. Marriage litigation experts claim that when women file complaints against their husbands and families, the dynamics of abuse and unclear documentation frequently make

these cases highly complex and a woman's statement is usually considered at face value, creating a significant imbalance in the legal process.

Additionally, females also get a preference in the custody of children especially in younger ages below 5 years, in most divorce cases, as per the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2022 data, men accounted for 1,22,724 suicides out of a total of 1,70,896.

This is 71.81 per cent of all suicides. The data also highlights that a man commits suicide every 4.45 minutes while a woman every 9 minutes. Moreover, the rate of

suicide among married men is three times that of married women. In 2021 as many as 81,063 married men committed suicide while the women's figure stood at 28,660.

Family problems and marriage-related issues were the leading causes of suicide in metropolitan cities, accounting for 32.5 per cent of the cases. Gender inequality towards men finds limited discussions both culturally and in academic research, not just in India but globally. However, a closer look at the facts reveals a biased feminist societal structure predominantly.

According to the founder of a Delhi-based organisation, Purush Ayog, society stereotypes assume that 'males



cannot be victims', which leads to ignorance and neglect of the issues facing them. A study by Stoet and Geary, 2019 for 134 countries claimed that men were more disadvantaged in 91

(68 per cent) countries than women. They argued that the Global Gender Gap was flawed, due to lopsided measuring techniques, which did not include situations where men are disadvan-

taged, due to the absence of literature.

Another study in France found that discrimination against men in female-dominated workplaces is more prevalent than discrimination against women in male-dominated workplaces. Similar examples of reverse sexism, with anti-male prejudice are vastly prevalent, but ironically barely quoted. The mental health research is also focussed on women, and scholars warn of the problems faced by men as a 'silent epidemic'. In the legal framework, the female culprits are less likely to have longer and more stringent imprisonment for similar crimes. Women's liberalisation and empowerment are necessary

for a progressive social structure and developed economy. Still, a gender-equal status should not be thrived at the cost of male exploitation.

In modern-day society, with evolving gender roles and relationships; better education and awareness; and a feminism gaining force, balanced matrimonial laws are more pertinent than ever. The government must consider amending marriage laws to include prenuptial agreements to address financial complexities, disputes, and legal rights.

(The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



MONEY MATTERS



Tripura surpasses rubber plantation target

Tripura has surpassed its five-year rubber cultivation target of 30,000 hectare under an initiative of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA), and is now aiming to increase the plantation to 69,000 hectare, an official said on Sunday. Indian Natural Rubber Operations for Assisted Development (INROAD), backed by ATMA, was launched in 2021 to develop 2 lakh hectare of natural rubber plantation in Northeast and West Bengal over five years. Under this initiative, the Rubber Board had set a target of 30,000 hectare for Tripura. "Tripura has already raised rubber plantations on 47,747 hectare against its five-year target of 30,000 hectare. We are expecting to increase the plantation areas up to 69,000 hectare," Rubber Board's Development Officer Arunabha Majumder said. He said rubber plantations under INROAD suffered setbacks in Assam, Manipur and West Bengal due to various reasons, prompting the Rubber Board to focus on Tripura. "Naturally, Tripura will be a major player in fulfilling the target of raising rubber plantations on 2 lakh hectare by the end of this year."



ODOP products' exhibition at Mahakumbh

Items such as carpets, glass toys from Firozabad, and wooden toys from Varanasi are being showcased under the Centre's 'One District One Product' (ODOP) initiative at the Mahakumbh 2025 in Prayagraj, an official statement said on Sunday. It also said that e-commerce firm Flipkart has set up a stall at the Mahakumbh, providing entrepreneurs with an opportunity to sell their products on their platform for free. Sharad Tandon, Joint Commissioner of Industries for the Prayagraj Division, stated that in 2019, the Kumbh Mela generated a business worth Rs 4.30 crore, and this time the business is expected to reach up to Rs 35 crore. The initiative is aimed promoting the handicrafts and cottage industries of the country. "Items such as carpets, zari-zardosi, glass toys from Firozabad, wooden toys from Varanasi, and other handicraft products are becoming major attractions for devotees," it said. Products having Geographical Indications (GI) have also been displayed at the Mahakumbh.



Delhi-NCR sees 30 pc increase in housing prices

Housing prices in Delhi-NCR appreciated the most among seven major cities with rates rising by an average 30 per cent during the last year on rise in input cost, according to Anarock. Real estate consultant Anarock noted that Delhi-NCR recorded the "highest yearly jump of 30 per cent in average residential price -- from Rs 5,800 per sq ft in 2023 to nearly Rs 7,550 per sq ft in 2024." The sharp increase in housing prices in Delhi-NCR was despite higher supply and a marginal fall in sales during the 2024 calendar year. There has been a significant increase in prices of land and labour as well as construction costs. As per the Anarock data, the housing sales dropped 6 per cent to 61,900 units in the last year from 65,625 units in the preceding year. The fresh supply of housing properties in Delhi-NCR rose 44 per cent to 53,000 units in 2024 from 36,735 units in the preceding year. Overall, Anarock data showed housing prices rose between 13-30 per cent across the top 7 cities, primarily due to increased input costs and strong homebuyer demand. The top seven cities together saw a 21 per cent yearly jump in average residential price to Rs 8,590 per sq ft from Rs 7,080 per square feet.

India emerging as a 'bright spot': CII survey

Says current economic environment conducive for private investments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's current economic environment is conducive for private investments with the country emerging as a "bright spot" amid the challenging global environment, according to a CII survey.

The pan-India survey is an ongoing initiative, which would be completed for 500 firms by the first week of February. The interim results are based on a sample of 300 firms spread across all industry sizes (Large, Medium and Small).

Notably, early results reveal that about 97 per cent of the sample firms are likely to increase employment in both 2024-25 and 2025-26.

In fact, 79 per cent of the respondents' firms said that they added more people over the past three years.

The CII survey, which was conducted over the past 30 days, suggests that 75 per cent of the respondents believe that the current economic environment is conducive to private investments.

"Given that 70 per cent of



"Given that 70 per cent of the firms surveyed said that they would invest in FY'26, an uptick in private investments might be on the cards over the next few quarters."

the firms surveyed said that they would invest in FY'26, an uptick in private investments might be on the cards over the next few quarters," said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII.

"Even though geopolitical fault lines have disrupted global supply chains and have posed serious challenges to global growth, India has emerged as a bright spot amid this challenging global backdrop. The sound economic policies initiated by the Government helped revive the economy with emphasis on public capex-led growth," stated CII. The industry survey was

conducted to assess the pick-up in private-sector investments, employment in the private sector and growth in wages in the private sector.

The average increase in direct employment due to planned investments in the next year is expected to be in the range of 15 to 22 per cent between the manufacturing and services sectors respectively.

Similar expectations were seen in the interim results on indirect employment with manufacturing and services firms expecting about 14 per cent increase in indirect employment respectively over and above the existing levels of employment.

Majority of the firms surveyed indicated that it takes anywhere between 1 to 6 months to fill in vacancies of Senior management, Management/ Supervisory level, while regular and contractual workers take less time to fill in a vacant position indicating the need to fill the availability of skilled staff at the higher level in sample firms. "With the two critical drivers of growth - private investments and employment - looking positive, we feel confident that the overall growth is likely to remain around a stable 6.4-6.7 per cent this year and is likely to be 7 per cent in FY'26," said Banerjee.



India not seeking duty concessions in FTA with Oman: Sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is not seeking customs duty concessions on over 100 product categories such as liquor, and cigarette in the proposed free trade agreement (FTA), which is under negotiations between the two countries, sources said.

They also said that though the FTA negotiations were concluded, Oman has sought revision of its market access offers on some products. The two sides have discussed three to four issues flagged by Oman, and any potential changes would be minimal, they said.

India is expected to gain greater market access for about 98 per cent of its goods in Oman, along with significant access to the services sector.

"There could be about 125-130 tariff lines (or product categories), where we have not asked for duty concessions and that included goods like liquor, and cigarettes," they added.

On January 14, India and Oman held the fifth round of talks for the agreement, which is aimed at boosting bilateral economic ties. The negotiations for the agreement, officially dubbed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), formally began in November 2023.

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

'Composite materials industry to touch US\$ 2.8 bn-mark'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic composite materials industry is expected to grow at a 7.8 per cent annual growth rate to reach USD 2.8 billion by 2030, a report said.

Composite materials or fibre-reinforced plastics (FRP) help in the circular economy as these are manufactured by combining multiple materials with different properties. The Indian composite materials market is estimated at USD 1.8 billion in 2024, FRP Institute said in its report. "The Indian composite materials market is likely to grow at a healthy CAGR of 7.8 per cent over the next six years to reach USD 2.8 billion by 2030," the Chennai-based body said. The major growth drivers for the industry will be increasing demand from sectors like electrical vehicles (EVs), renewable energy, transportation and construction industries, consumer and white goods, construction and defence.

Government projects like smart cities, hydrocarbon, freshwater transportation, sewage treatment system, and rehabilitation of water and sewage pipelines will also aid the growth.

'Want to be a leader in every segment'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ITC is sharpening its competitiveness and strengthening innovative capacity under its 'Next Strategy' as the multi-conglomerate aims to be a leader in the segments in which it operates, said its Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Puri.

The cigarettes-to-consumer goods conglomerate has articulated a strategy of the organisation, the ITC Next Strategy aiming to shape a future-ready enterprise and define the next phase of growth and profitability, Puri said.

As part of the ITC Next Strategy, it identified levers of competitiveness, which include digitalisation, sustainability, innovation and supply chain efficiency, among others for its future growth.

"These have been identified as areas where specific interventions have been made to become competitive and contemporary. The objective is to keep innovating while leveraging enterprise strengths"

Stresses ITC Chairman Sanjiv Puri



"These have been identified as areas where specific interventions have been made to become competitive and contemporary. The objective is to keep innovating while leveraging enterprise strengths"

strengths," said Puri. The idea is to be a leader and to be a very large-scale business, in which ITC has made "appreciable progress" in its ongoing journey over a period of time. "For us, ITC's Next strategy is a journey in action. While we have made appreciable progress in many areas, I would not say that this journey is anywhere near completion. Our vision is to be a very large player in every segment that we operate in," said Puri. He further added: "In some

segments, we are already leaders. It is our goal to be a leader in every segment we operate in." According to Puri, the world is now much more volatile and uncertain given the geo-political and geo-economic situation and the existential climate crisis. "Given this context, we believe that a large and growing organisation like ours must remain nimble and consumer-centric, sharpening our competitiveness and strengthening our innovative capacity.

Improving connectivity to boost India-New Zealand trade: GTRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and New Zealand should address market access issues for goods, promote collaborations in key sectors, and work on improving connectivity with an aim to boost bilateral trade, which is just USD 1.5 billion, think tank GTRI said on Sunday.

Both countries should set a target to double two-way trade within five years by identifying products for early tariff relief and organizing business delegations and roadshows in India, it said.

It also said that India's proposed free trade agreement with New Zealand would have limited benefit to domestic companies as they are already enjoying duty free access to a significant number of goods in that market. New Zealand's average import tariff is just 2.3 per cent, com-



pared to India's 17.8 per cent.

Besides, 58.3 per cent of New Zealand's tariff lines (or product categories) are duty-free, meaning Indian products already enjoy significant access without a trade pact in the New Zealand market, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said that while the India-New Zealand CECA (comprehensive economic cooperation agreement) negotiations

remain stalled, both countries can take steps to enhance their trade and economic ties.

"By addressing market access issues, promoting collaboration in key sectors (like agriculture, pharmaceuticals, IT, education, and tourism), and improving connectivity, India and New Zealand can unlock their trade potential and create a more robust economic partnership," he said.

Amid weak earnings outlook, rising dollar

FPIs take out Rs 44,396 cr from equities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have pulled out Rs 44,396 crore from Indian equities this month, driven by strength of the dollar, rising bond yields in the US, and expectations of a weak earnings season.

This came following an investment of Rs 15,446 crore in the month of December, data with the depositories showed. The shift in sentiment comes amid global and domestic headwinds.

"The continued depreciation in Indian rupee is exerting significant pressure on foreign investors leading them to pull the money out of the Indian equity markets."

Rupee expected to appreciate a bit to hover around 85-86/US\$



"I was quite confident to say that the rupee might be holding at 83-84 six months back, but given the uncertainty we have it should now stabilise at 85-86 against a dollar."

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rupee is expected to appreciate a bit and stabilise around 85-86 a dollar in the coming weeks with RBI's continued focus on stability of the domestic currency, Deloitte economist Rumki Majumdar said.

She said that the rupee may not now see the level of 83 despite RBI's intervention and the Indian currency being more stable than others.

The rupee tanked last week to hit its all-time low of 86.70 against the US dollar as massive foreign fund outflows and falling domestic equity markets dented investor sentiment. The rupee on January 13 logged its steepest single-day fall in nearly two years and ended the session 66 paise down at its historic low of 86.70 against the US dollar. The currency's previous record one-day fall of 68 paise was witnessed on February 6, 2023.

The domestic currency has depreciated by over 1 per cent in 2025 so far following a nearly 3 per cent decline in 2024 due to a strong dollar and FII outflows. The rupee closed at 86.60 a dollar on Friday.

"I was quite confident to say that the rupee might be holding at 83-84 six months back, but given the uncertainty we have it should now stabilise at 85-86 against a dollar," she said. The dollar has been gaining strength in the run-up to the US president-elect Donald Trump's oath-taking ceremony on January 20. To manage steep volatility in the forex market, the RBI has routinely stepped in by selling US dollars in the forex market to arrest rupee depreciation. As a result, India forex reserves came down from a high of USD 704.88 billion at the end of September to USD 625.871 billion in the week ended January 10.

Auto enthusiasts swarm Bharat Mandapam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile enthusiasts of all ages and genders made their way to the country's flagship motor show at Bharat Mandapam on Sunday to check out their favourite cars and bikes on display.

With the marquee event opening for the general public after two days of press and business days, scores of visitors were seen entering the Bharat Mandapam premises from the

morning hours. As the day progressed, visitors' count swelled.

Traffic snarls, long queues at security checkpoints and crowded entry points did not deter the crowds who were keen on checking out the latest technologies and models lined up across multiple halls by OEMs.

Newly unveiled electric vehicles, concepts and new automotive technologies on display witnessed huge interest from visitors from across the NCR as

AUTO EXPO OPENS FOR PUBLIC



Newly unveiled electric vehicles, concepts and new automotive technologies on display witnessed huge interest from visitors from across the NCR as well as neighbouring cities and towns.

well as neighbouring cities and towns. Naveen, hailing from Meerut, said he started in the

early morning to reach Delhi to see his favourite cars and bikes. Several of his friends, who

could not make it today, are looking forward to visiting the Expo in the remaining days, he said. Expecting large crowds, companies also seemed prepared with more manpower at hand and barricading done around the display areas.

The staff has been sensitised to follow safety protocols and ensure a pleasant experience for visitors, a company executive said. Eating outlets around the premises also saw long queues throughout the day





## When Los Angeles police threw Rami Malek on the LAPD car bonnet

If you thought that Hollywood actor Rami Malek couldn't surpass the level of being a chameleon by perfectly internalising music legend Freddie Mercury in the biopic 'Bohemian Rhapsody', then him being mistaken for a criminal will shake your belief. The actor was once "thrown on the bonnet of an Los Angeles Police Department cop car" after he was mistaken for a criminal, reports 'Female First UK'. The 43-year-old actor still has vivid memories of being stopped by police officers on the streets of Los Angeles during his younger years. Rami told the Guardian newspaper, "I got thrown on the bonnet of an LAPD cop car because someone had robbed a liquor store and stolen a woman's bag. They said the (thief) was of Latin descent and, 'You fit the description'. I remember how hot that engine was, they must have been racing over there and it was almost burning my hands". He further mentioned, "My friend, who was Caucasian, was clever enough to go, 'Actually, sir, he's Egyptian. Not Latin'. I remember laughing in the cop car, thinking, 'OK, this is a very precarious situation. I may well be going to jail for something I've not done'". As per 'Female First UK', Rami was born in California to Egyptian parents and he now appreciates the sacrifices his parents made for him after arriving in America. The 'Oppenheimer' star explained, "The school system in Los Angeles was not great. She would handwrite these long letters in blue fountain pen explaining our situation. She'd say, 'I'm going to give my kids every opportunity possible'. I would hear stories about her being pregnant with my brother and me, and taking three buses, three different buses, to get to work and back". Rami previously admitted that he struggled to fit in during his childhood.

## Raima Sen's Maa Kaali wins Best Political Film Award at Jaipur Film Festival

After the world premiere at the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), renowned production house and producer of National Award winning 2022 superhit film Karthikeya 2, People Media Factory's upcoming trilingual film Maa Kaali has bagged the Best Political Film award at the prestigious Jaipur International Film Festival. Produced by TG Vishwa Prasad and TG Kriti Prasad, Vijay Yelakanti directorial Maa Kaali stars Raima Sen and Abhishek Singh in the lead. Overwhelmed by the honour, the leading lady of the film Raima Sen shares, "I always knew that Maa Kaali had a potential which will resonate with the audience. This recognition empowers us to continue to tell stories that matter and inspire positive change. As this is a female lead film, it is more satisfactory to get this recognition from JIFF." Director Vijay Yelakanti shares, "Receiving the Best Political Film award for Maa Kaali is incredibly encouraging, as it shows audiences are eager to engage with important and timely stories. This recognition by JIFF encourages many filmmaker to create films that spark conversation and inspire change." Touted amongst the most relevant and important films of contemporary times, Maa Kaali not only



offers an insight into the untold chapters of history, but also serves as a reminder of the gruesome truth of socio-political anarchy, which is prevalent in the nation till date. Based on the erased chapter of Indian history, Maa Kaali delves into the untold chapters of Bengal, backed by a powerful story and impactful performances. Highlighting the bloody truth of the ruthless massacre in Calcutta and Noakhali in present day India and Bangladesh respectively, Maa Kaali aims to bring forth the truth behind the Direct Action Day, which resulted into the partition of India. The socio-politically relevant subject of Maa Kaali makes it one of the most important films of the current time. Depicting the persecution of Hindus and the communal turmoil of Bengal from 1946 to the present day Bangladesh, Maa Kaali also highlights the importance of CAA and the need of its implementation. Written and directed by Vijay Yelakanti, Maa Kaali is produced by TG Vishwa Prasad and TG Kriti Prasad, and presented by makers of Karthikeya 2 People Media Factory. The pan-Indian film shot in Hindi and will release in Bengali and Telugu as well in theatres in 2025.

## Nimrat Kaur & Akshay Kumar share electrifying chemistry in 'Rang' Song from 'Sky Force'

Nimrat Kaur and Akshay Kumar will be seen sharing screen space in the forthcoming action entertainer 'Sky Force' next. Before the flick reaches the audience on 24th January 2025, the makers have released the latest track from the drama, 'Rang'. Akshay Kumar and Nimrat Kaur bring energy and grace to the track full of infectious beats and impressive choreography. Aside from these two, the peppy number also stars Sara Ali Khan and debutant Veer Pahariya. While Akshay Kumar and Nimrat Kaur's chemistry has garnered a lot of eyeballs, Sara Ali Khan and Veer Pahariya's charismatic screen presence adds another layer of appeal. Refreshing your memory, Akshay Kumar and Nimrat Kaur were previously seen romancing each other in the 2016 outing 'Airlift'. Their latest union has brought back some fond memories of their unforgettable chemistry in the blockbuster drama. Prior to this, the makers unveiled the gripping trailer, and the first two songs from

'Sky Force' titled 'Maayee', and 'Kya Meri Yaad Aati Hai'. Scored by Tanishk Bagchi, 'Rang' has been crooned by Satinder Sartaaj and Zahrah S Khana. The lyrics for the track have been penned by Shloke Lal. Talking about the song, composer Tanishk Bagchi was quoted saying, "With Rang, we wanted to create a track that's vibrant, full of life, and captures the essence of celebration within a disciplined yet warm environment. Satinder Sartaaj and Zahrah S Khan have done a phenomenal job in bringing the song to life with their powerful vocals. After the overwhelming love for Maayee and Kya Meri Yaad Aati Hai, this celebration anthem fits perfectly into the world of Sky Force." Helmed by Abhishek Kapoor, 'Sky Force' will also see Sharad Kelkar, Mohit Chauhan, and Manish Chaudhari in key roles, along with others. Produced by Jio Studios, Maddock Films, and Leo Films UK Production, the project will see editing done by A. Sreekar Prasad. Santhana Krishnan Ravichandran is the head of the cinematography.



## Rediscover love and family with Rajshri Productions' grand OTT debut, Bada Naam Kareng



This February 7th, Rajshri Productions makes its highly anticipated OTT debut with Bada Naam Kareng, a heartwarming tale of love, family, and self-discovery. Just in time for the season of love, this series promises an unforgettable celebration of relationships, traditions, and dreams. Helmed by the legendary "Sooraj R. Barjatya as showrunner" and directed by "Gullak fame Palash Vaswani", Bada Naam Kareng offers a refreshing twist on classic storytelling while staying true to Rajshri's legacy of heartfelt narratives. Follow the journey of "Rishabh and Surbhi", a modern Gen Z couple navigating their dreams while embracing the warmth of traditional family values. Their story intertwines love, tradition, and self-identity, creating moments that will make you laugh, cry, and reflect. Speaking about this milestone debut, showrunner Sooraj R. Barjatya said: "Bada Naam Kareng is a labor of love that

celebrates family, dreams, and respect for tradition in a modern world. It bridges generational gaps, proving that Gen Z can be both ambitious and deeply rooted in values. Palash has brought this vision alive with an extraordinary mix of old-school charm and fresh energy." Talking about the show, director Palash Vaswani added: "I firmly believe that the pure, innocent romance that once dominated our screens is sorely missing from modern-day entertainment. With that in mind, I've set out to revive this beloved genre and bring back the wholesome, family-friendly storytelling that we all grew up with. Bada Naam Kareng is a show that's perfect for watching with loved ones of all ages – a truly family-oriented experience that's sure to delight and inspire. Two scenes I'd like to mention that touched me deeply and you'll see those in the trailer too: one between Jameel Sir and Ayesha and the other with Ritik and Ayesha at the Ujain ghat. Stories like these remind us about the importance of relationships in today's world. Bringing this vision to life with Rajshri Productions and the legendary Sooraj Sir is a great honor." As you rediscover love that takes you back to your roots, the show's stellar cast includes Ritik Ghanshani, Ayesha Kaduskar, Kanwaljeet Singh, Aika Amin, Rajesh Jais, Chitrali Lokesh, Deepika Amin, Jameel Khan, Rajesh Tailang, Anjana Sukhani, Sadhika Sayal, Gyanendra Tripathi, Priyamvada Kant, Ommi Dubey, and Bhavesh Babani, among others.



## LOOKBOOK

Jio World Garden was transformed into a haven of soulful melodies as the third edition of Haazri unfolded to a spellbound crowd. The event, dedicated to the enduring legacy of the late Padma Vibhushan Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan saw a captivating performance by the iconic, Oscar-winning musician A.R. Rahman, who paid homage to his Guru with a selection of Sufi classics, including 'Khawaja Mere Khwaja', 'Kun Faya Kun', 'Maula' and 'Izzu Mantasha' among others. Adding to the magic, veteran vocalist Hariharan's mellifluous voice resonated through the venue, while Ustad ji's sons, Murtuza Mustafa Khan, Qadir Mustafa Khan, Rabbani Mustafa Khan, and Hasan Mustafa Khan, along with his grandsons Faiz Mustafa Khan and Zain Mustafa Khan, enchanted the audience with their renditions of 'Aao Balma', 'Piya Haji Ali', 'Noor-Un-Ala', among other songs, keeping the maestro's legacy alive.



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 |   |   |   |   |
|   | 9 | 5 |   | 6 |   |   |   | 1 |
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Yesterday's solution

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

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

- ACROSS
- Further up
  - Set free from captivity
  - A stopper for a bottle
  - Follow orders
  - An artist
  - A stinging plant
  - A short coat
  - Cooked over boiling water
  - Not normal
  - A hole through a hill
  - Your body's covering
  - Devours
  - A baby's toy
- DOWN
- A horse's foot
  - Invited visitors
  - Opposite of under



### GINGER MEGGS





## 'Watna Ve is not just a song; It's a call to honour our Motherland'



universal feeling of patriotism that runs deep in every Indian's heart. It's not just about my personal journey; it's about the shared pride and emotion we feel when we come together for our country. This song is a celebration of that bond."

For him, Watna Ve is more than just a piece of music-it's a heartfelt expression of his devotion to the nation. The title itself holds deep significance for him. "The phrase Watna Ve feels like a direct conversation with my country," he explained. "It's a declaration of love, loyalty, and gratitude. It's about saying, 'I owe everything to this land, and I'm ready to sacrifice everything for it.'"

The recording process for Watna Ve was an electrifying experience, according to Sudhir.

Collaborating with composer Arjit Srivastava, the team aimed to infuse the song with raw energy and deep emotion. "From the very beginning, we knew this song had to be special," Sudhir recounted. "The energy in the studio was contagious. One of the most memorable moments was when we nailed the final chorus. It was as if the song's spirit came alive in that instant. It felt like we were channeling the collective heartbeat of India."

His preparation for the song was just as intense. "Emotionally, I dug deep into my love for India," he said. "Vocally, I approached it with the same intensity as if I were preparing for a major Bollywood action sequence. Every note had to carry the weight of the song's message, and I wanted to ensure it resonated with listeners on a profound level."

One of the most powerful aspects of Watna Ve is its ability to evoke a sense of unity and pride. For the Shambhu singer, the song is deeply personal. "Every time I sing Watna Ve, I feel a surge of emotion. It's a reminder of how much my country has given me," he reflected. "There was a moment during the



recording when I felt overwhelmed by the lyrics and the melody. It was as if I could feel the heartbeat of every Indian in that room. That moment will stay with me forever."

The lyrics, penned by Arjun Sarkar, beautifully capture the bond between an individual and their homeland. "The words are a reflection of the sacrifices we're willing to make for our country," Sudhir explained. "They speak of devotion, pride, and the eternal connection we share with the land that nurtures us."

Yadhuwanshi hopes Watna Ve serves as an inspiration, particularly for the younger generation. "Patriotism isn't just about grand gestures or special occasions," he said. "It's a daily feeling-a way of life. It's about uniting beyond differences and putting the nation first. Through this song, I want to remind the youth that our strength lies in our unity and our commitment to building a brighter future for Bharat."

The song's bold, energetic spirit aligns with Sudhir's vision of patriotism as an active and unifying force. "When the country calls, we stand as one, ready to sacrifice. That's the message I hope resonates with every listener of Watna Ve," he added.

As Watna Ve garners attention and praise, he is already looking ahead to an exciting year. "I recorded a lot of songs last year, and I'm hoping to share them with my audience in 2025," he revealed. "There are Bollywood tracks, indie songs, and pop projects waiting in the wings. I'm praying to the universe-and to Mahakal-that everything I've worked on sees the light of day this year. I can't wait for my fans to experience what I've been creating."

Grateful for the unwavering support of his fans and the blessings of his faith, the Bam Bhole Bam singer is optimistic about the future. "This year is going to be epic," he said with a smile. "Thanks to everyone who has stood by me, I'm ready to take on whatever comes next."

Sudhir Yadhuwanshi's Watna Ve is a powerful reminder of the strength and unity that patriotism can inspire. With its stirring lyrics, soulful composition, and Sudhir's passionate voice, the song is destined to leave a lasting impact on listeners.

As Sudhir puts it, "Watna Ve isn't just a song-it's my heart poured out for my nation. It's a call to celebrate the bond we share as Indians and to honor the land that unites us all."

Be sure to listen to Watna Ve, now available on all major platforms, and join Sudhir in celebrating the spirit of India.



## Pregnancy brings 4.9 per cent grey matter volume loss, partially recovered postpartum

**A** new research shows that 94 per cent of the grey matter in the brains of mothers undergoes changes during pregnancy.

The team from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) found that there is a reduction and partial recovery of almost 5 per cent of the total grey matter volume of the brain, especially in regions linked to social cognition. The study analysed the brains of women during pregnancy for the first time using neuro-imaging techniques.

The study, published in the journal Nature Communications, included non-pregnant mothers, whose partners were pregnant, to distinguish biological effects from those caused by the experience of being a mother. Researchers from UAB, the Gregorio Marañón Health Research Institute and the Hospital del Mar Research Institute together, with other prestigious international institutions, were part of the study. The findings reveal a

dynamic trajectory in the brain during pregnancy and postpartum, significantly linked to the steroid hormone fluctuations inherent to pregnancy, and to the psychological well-being of the mothers.

The findings revealed that, during the first pregnancy, grey matter volume in the brain is reduced by up to 4.9 per cent, with a partial recovery during the postpartum period.

"These changes are observed in 94 per cent of the brain, being particularly prominent in regions linked to social cognition," said the study.

The study also demonstrated, for the first time, that the evolution of these morphological changes in the brain is associated with fluctuations in two estrogens hormones that increase exponentially during pregnancy and return to basal levels after delivery.

The researchers observed that a greater increase and subsequent decrease in estrogen levels is associated with a greater decrease and subsequent recovery of brain grey matter volume.

Known for his passionate voice and deep-rooted connection to his heritage, Sudhir Yadhuwanshi is back again with Watna Ve, a powerful tribute to the indomitable spirit of India. As he reflects on the emotions that fueled the creation of this stirring track, he delves into his unwavering love for his country and how Watna Ve serves as a heartfelt call for unity and pride among all Indians.

TEJAL SINHA  
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**W**hen passion meets purpose, magic is born-and in the world of music, few artists embody this truth like Sudhir Yadhuwanshi. A singer with an undeniable connection to his roots and an unyielding love for his craft, Sudhir has carved a niche for himself as a voice that speaks not just to the ears but to the hearts of millions. His latest release, Watna Ve, is a stirring anthem of patriotism that encapsulates the spirit of India and its people.

With soulful lyrics by Arjun Sarkar, a powerful composition by Arjit Srivastava, and the vision of producers Mayur and Deepa Agarwal, Watna Ve is more than a song-it's a call to unity, strength, and the timeless love for one's motherland. Released under the Be Together Music label, this track is a reflection of Sudhir's journey, his devotion, and his unwavering commitment to using music as a force for connection and inspiration.

In a world where music often transcends boundaries, Sudhir Yadhuwanshi stands out as an artist whose melodies are deeply rooted in his heritage while resonating with universal emotions. Watna Ve is not just a testament to his artistry but also a celebration of the indomitable spirit of Bharat.

Speaking about the inspiration behind the song in an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, the Kaawaa Kaawaa fame shared, "Watna Ve was born from the



Emotionally, I dug deep into my love for India. Vocally, I approached it with the same intensity as if I were preparing for a major Bollywood action sequence. Every note had to carry the weight of the song's message, and I wanted to ensure it resonated with listeners on a profound level

**E**yes are one of the most active organs of the body and work endlessly throughout the day and even continue to move and work in our sleep. They have a variety of muscles that are responsible for eye movement and focus and need toning for best functioning. Here are five exercises we all must do to enhance our eye function as per ophthalmologists.

## 7 EYE EXERCISES TO TRY!

**Dr. Digvijay Singh, Director, Noble Eye Care, suggests:**

**Pencil pushups:** This is a form of convergence exercise where the eyes are made to focus on the tip of a pencil, which is moved from an extended arm length distance towards the nose. As the pencil tip approaches the nose, it may appear double or blurry and the eyes will need to make an effort to keep a clear image. Hold the pencil close to the nose for about 30 seconds while focusing on the tip and then take it further away to a full arm's length. Remember to blink your eyes during this exercise. Repeat this five to ten times.

**Eye rotation and gazes:** Move your eyes in all extreme gazes: up, down, left, right, left up, left down, right up and right down, each time starting from a straight-ahead gaze and returning to the straight-ahead gaze. Eye rotations in a clockwise and counterclockwise manner should be done to ensure full excursion of the extraocular muscles.

**Tratak/gaze holding:** Focus on a distant object of interest, such



as a candle flame, and hold your gaze on it for a period of thirty seconds or as long as you comfortably can. This is done while holding your blinking and

then one can blink rapidly a few times and repeat the exercise.

Dr. Neeraj Sanduja, MBBS, MS, Ophthalmologist, and Eye

Surgeon, Viaan Eye and Retina Centre, said, "With the advent of smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc., and increased screen time at work and home, digital eye

strain has become a very common cause of eye discomfort. This leads to symptoms like blurred vision, tired eyes, headache, and itchy and watery eyes. The below-mentioned eye exercises can help in relief from the above-mentioned symptoms. It is important to keep the head and spine straight and relaxed while performing the exercises.

**Palming:** Palming is an eye exercise that helps relax the muscles around the eyes, reducing eye fatigue. To palm, start by rubbing your hands together to warm them up. Close your eyes and place the palm of each hand over the corresponding cheekbone. Cup your hand over each eye and breathe deeply for five minutes.

**Blinking:** When we spend time on digital devices, our blink rate slows down. This can cause the eyes to dry out, making them feel sandy, gritty, and tired. Taking the time to consciously blink can restore the tear film. It also helps to spread the tears over the eyes. A blinking exercise involves closing the eyes, pausing for two seconds, then opening them again.

**Near and far focus:** Alternating between near and far focus helps to train your focusing system to engage and relax appropriately. Hold your thumb 10 inches from your face and focus on it for 15 seconds. Alternatively, you can hold a near object with a letter on it to better engage your focusing system. After fifteen seconds, shift your gaze to a target 20 feet (6 meters) away and again, hold your focus for 15 seconds. Return to your thumb. Repeat several times.

When we use our eyes for near work, our focusing system can become fatigued. Our eyes can also dry out. Scheduling regular breaks can help to alleviate some of this strain. The 20-20-20 rule is easy to remember. For every 20 minutes of near work, look at a target 20 feet away for 20 seconds. You can now return to your near activity. Regularly performing these eye exercises ensures good eye function and optimum vision. It is recommended to take a healthy diet rich in vitamins A, C, and E and other micronutrients and plenty of fluids along with these exercises for the best results.



# SKY will be missed in CT, he could have been the 'X-factor': Raina

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India all-rounder Suresh Raina feels middle-order batter Suryakumar Yadav will be sorely missed in the upcoming Champions Trophy as he could have provided the 'X-factor' in Dubai, where Rohit Sharma's side will play all its games. Suryakumar and fast bowler Mohammed Siraj were the two big names missing from the Champions Trophy squad announced on Saturday. They are among a total of six players who featured in the 2023 ODI World Cup squad. The others to miss out are Prasidh Krishna, Shardul Thakur and Ishan Kishan, while Ravichandran Ashwin has recently retired from the game. "Surya was an integral part of the World Cup squad, he is a 360 player who can score at 9 runs per over at any stage of the game. He can dominate the opposition and bats in a

different way," Raina said on Star Sports Press Room. "If Surya was there there would have been an X-factor, he will be missed. The responsibility will be now on top 3 who are not in form. Surya is someone who can bat in any position." Raina also said with uncertainty looming large over Jasprit Bumrah's fitness and Mohammed Shami returning from an injury, Siraj would have been a better option although he still feels, the Hyderabad pacer can still make it to the squad. "Siraj was in a different form in Australia but you can change the squad till 12 February. So I feel Siraj can be back in the side if Bumrah is not fully fit," he said. "Harshit Rana has done well. He has good pace, good bumper, variation, yorker and pace. He and both Arshdeep Singh can bowl at the death but I still feel, Siraj is a better option if Bumrah is not there." While Bumrah is racing



against time to be fit from back spasms that he suffered during the recent Sydney Test against Australia, Shami is returning to the ODI set up for the first time since the 2023 World Cup after recovering from a heel injury. While Rohit will lead the side, young talented batter Shubman Gill has been named as the vice-captain for the Champions Trophy, and Raina termed the decision as a forward-thinking move. "Gill got the vice-captaincy at the right time. He is the next superstar of India cricket, and has done remarkably well in ODIs. Rohit knows how to mentor a youngster and what value Shubman will bring in," said Raina, a member of India's 2013 Champions Trophy-winning side. With Dubai pitches tend to play slow and offer turn, Raina said left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav and all-rounder Hardik Pandya will play vital role in the bowling department. "Shami lacks of match

practice, Bumrah is still uncertain and Kuldeep is returning back from an operation. What will be important is to see who will partner Kuldeep in the spin department." India had won the Champions Trophy twice - in 2002 jointly with Sri Lanka and in 2013 in England, and Raina has no doubts that Rohit and his men can go all the way. "Rohit has the capacity, he has team but what will be important is out 11 player combination out of 15. The wickets will be a bit slow, but we have the capacity." Raina too backed Rishabh Pant to be first choice wicket-keeper in the Indian team, which also has KL Rahul. "Definitely Pant, his wicket-keeping has improved. But he has to play with more responsibility in a 50-over game. If he stays there for 40-50 balls he can take the game away from the opposition but he needs to spend more time at the crease."



## ITF W50 singles event: Tatiana Prozorova saves six match points to emerge champion

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tatiana Prozorova saved six match points to bag the singles title at the ITF W50 tournament, edging past second seed Panna Udvardy in a marathon final here on Sunday. Seventh seed Prozorova saved three match points in the 12th game of the second set and then three more in the tiebreaker to force a decider and finally prevailed 4-6 7-6(6) 6-4 in the three-hour-long final that was littered with breaks and unforced errors from the two players. "I am really happy that I could win this match and save so much points and also didn't miss my chance. I am really happy to win my first title in this year, in January and I will look forward to playing next tournament here in New Delhi," said Prozorova. It was Prozorova's first singles title in four months, her last trophy coming in September 2024 when she triumphed at the ITF W100 event in Incheon. Udvardy, who hails from Hungary and featured in top-100 in 2022, was playing her first final since June 2024 when she ended a runner-up in the WTA 125 event on clay in Italy and yet again missed out on a title. The two players traded early breaks to be at 3-3. From there, Prozorova had the chance to keep it a close affair but unforced errors let her down. She was down 0-40 in game

seven but managed to save all three break chances. She netted a backhand at deuce and then hit a forehand marginally long to drop her serve again. Udvardy too struggled to keep the ball within the lines and also her first serve troubled her. She saved four break points in the game eighth but eventually lost her serve, making it 4-4. Prozorova, by dropping her serve again, allowed Udvardy to be in a position from where she could have served out the opening set and the Hungarian did not miss the opportunity this time. Udvardy bagged the set when Prozorova hit a forehand long. Prozorova did not help her cause by not holding her serve at the start of the second set, handing that one-break cushion to her rival. Udvardy, though, could not consolidate the advantage, hitting a forehand error on a breakpoint in game six to allow her rival make it even-Stevens again. At 5-5, 30-all, Prozorova hit a backhand wide but Udvardy could not convert the chance. However, the Hungarian got the break when her rival again made a backhand error. Udvardy came to serve out the match, and had three match-points but lost all and was facing a breakpoint when she netted a forehand at deuce point. Prozorova grabbed the opportunity with a crushing backhand down-the-line winner, stretching the set to tie-break

## India begin women's U-19 WC title defence with nine-wicket win over West Indies

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Indian bowlers shot a clueless West Indies batters out for a measly 44 to set up a commanding nine-wicket win to begin their title defence on a resounding note in the women's U-19 World Cup here on Sunday. Left-arm spinners Parunika Sisodia (3/7) and Aayushi Shukla (2/6) as well as pacer VJ Joshitha (2/6) toyed with the West Indies batters to bowl the Caribbeans out in just 13.2 overs in the Group A match at Bayuemas Oval. Kenika Cassar top-scored for the West Indies with a 29-ball 15 while opener Asabi Callender contributed 12. All the other West Indies batters could score in single digit figures with five of them getting out without opening account.



India chased down the target of 45 in just 4.2 overs, reaching 47 for 1 with opener Trisha G getting out for 4 on the second ball off Jahzara Claxton. Wicketkeeper-batter G Kamalini (16 not out off 13 balls) and Sanika Chalke (18 not out off 11 balls) took India home for an easy win. India play hosts Malaysia in their next group match here on Tuesday. Sri Lanka is the other team in Group A. The top three teams from each of the four groups will progress to the Super Six stage, with the three teams from Group A and Group D combining to form one Super Six group and similarly with the top three teams of Group B and Group C in the other

group. The teams will also carry forward their points and net run rates and will play the two sides who were not in their group in the first stage and who finished at a different position from them. As an example, if India finish second in Group A, then they will play the winner and the third-place team of Group D. The top two teams from each Super Six group will progress to the semi-finals. The final will be played here on February 2. Brief Scores: West Indies U-19 Women: 44 in 13.2 overs (Kenika Cassar 15; Parunika Sisodia 3/7, Aayushi Shukla 2/6, VJ Joshitha 2/6). India U-19 Women: 47 for 1 in 4.2 overs (Sanika Chalke 18 not out, G Kamalini 16 not out; Jahzara Claxton 1/18).

## India defender Pritam Kotal joins Chennaiyin FC

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India defender Pritam Kotal on Sunday joined Indian Super League (ISL) side Chennaiyin FC, leaving Kerala Blasters FC on a two-and-a-half-year deal. The 31-year-old Kotal, who has more than 50 caps for India has been a regular feature in the ISL for the last decade. Kotal began his youth career with Chirag United before moving to the I-League and eventually to ISL. The West Bengal player has captained Mohun Bagan Super Giant in the past, leading them to eight consecutive wins in Kolkata derby. He has also been a member of the ISL winning sides in 2016 and 2019-20. The move will strengthen the defence line of the Marina Machans. With the Indian



team, Kotal won the 2016 South Asian Football Championship and was also a member of the sides that won the 2018 Intercontinental Cup and the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. He received the AIFF Player of the Year award in 2015. "The coach explained he really wanted me in his team, so when I got the offer, I had no doubts about joining. This is a very good team that plays well. My goal from hereon would be to try and win every match and go to the playoffs," Kotal said.

## Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka moves into Australian Open quarterfinals

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Aryna Sabalenka has advanced to the quarterfinals at the Australian Open, where she's three wins from achieving something no woman has done since the 1990s. The two-time defending champion extended her winning streak at Melbourne Park to 18 matches with a 6-1 6-2 win over 14th-seeded Mirra Andreeva to open play Sunday on Rod Laver Arena. Martina Hingis, from 1997 to 1999, was the last woman to win three straight Australian Open singles titles. Sabalenka hugged Andreeva after the match, waved to the crowd, took a photo with her Polaroid camera and gave a thumbs up to mark the occasion. She's won 24 consecutive sets in Melbourne. "I'm super happy to get through this difficult match in straight sets," she said. It



was over in just over an hour. Apart from the fifth game of the second set, when Sabalenka has triple breakpoint but Andreeva rallied by winning five straight points to hold, just about everything went the way of the No. 1-ranked player. Sabalenka didn't face a break point until midway through the second set, when she saved three in one game. It seemed like she was testing

## Viktor Axelsen, An Se-Young claim India Open titles

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic champions Viktor Axelsen and An Se-Young secured the men's and women's singles crowns respectively with dominating wins in lop-sided finals at the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament here on Sunday. Axelsen, a 2017 and 2019 winner, prevailed 21-16 21-8 over last year's finalist Lee Chuek Yiu of Hong Kong in the men's singles summit clash at the KD Jadhav indoor hall which was almost full despite the fact that no Indian was competing in the two finals. Axelsen, a two time world champion, thus erased the disappointment of falling in the opening round of Malaysian Open super 1000 last week to the same opponent. In the women's singles, it was another graceful performance from An Se-



Young as she effortlessly packed off P Chochuwong 21-12 21-9. Malaysian combination of Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzududin, who had ended India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's run at the semifinals, produced another superlative show to outwit Korean pair of Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae 21-15, 13-21, 21-16 in the men's doubles final. In the women's doubles final, Japan's Arisa Igarashi and Ayako Sakuramoto beat Kim Hye Jang and Kong Hee Young of South Korea 21-15 21-13

In the mixed doubles final, China's Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin prevailed 21-18 21-17 over Thom Gicquel and Delphine Delrue. Axelsen vs Lee Lee, 2019 Hong Kong open winner, had finished as runner-up in the last edition and his dream of winning the title remained unfulfilled after he went down in the final for the second time in two years. Lee made a good start, opening up a 6-3 lead. But Axelsen slowly build up the momentum to gather a 11-8 advantage at the break. Lee kept fighting but couldn't pose a real threat as Axelsen took five game points and converted after Lee went long. The script didn't change despite the change of sides as Axelsen moved from 10-6 to 19-6 with a series of booming smashes to dismantle Lee's defence and complete the win in no time.

## Barcelona again held to draw at Getafe, Griezmann misses penalty as Atletico's win streak ends

PTI ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona was bested by Getafe's defence again in a 1-1 draw in La Liga, while Atletico Madrid's club record winning streak ended after a late penalty miss by Antoine Griezmann. Barcelona got its first goal in five visits to Getafe thanks to Jules Kounde in the 10th minute on Saturday, but Getafe equalized and clamped down to get a fourth consecutive draw at its stadium against the powerhouse. The last time Barcelona won at Coliseum Stadium was in 2019, making the fixture an annual quagmire for the Catalan club. Real Madrid will aim to take advantage of the slips by its title rivals when it hosts Las Palmas on Sunday. Atletico's 15-win streak ended in a 1-0 loss to Leganes, its first loss since October 27. Atletico remained one point ahead of Madrid.

Barcelona was five points behind the front-runner. This round marks the beginning of the second half of the league. Barcelona frustrated again Barcelona was coming off huge wins: A 5-2 thrashing of Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup final and a 5-1 win over Real Betis in the Copa del Rey. Barcelona visits Benfica in the Champions League on Tuesday. But José Bordalás's Getafe, with its physical, defensive style, once again frustrated Barcelona in Hansi Flick's first visit as its coach. "This was another exercise in survival," Bordalás said. "Taking a point today is like getting a win." Kounde put Barcelona ahead when Pedri threaded a pass to meet the right back's move into the area. Goalkeeper David Soria blocked his first effort but Kounde scrambled the rebound out of Soria's grasp and over the line. Moments after Raphinha headed a cross by Kounde



into the side netting, Getafe leveled in the 34th during a defensive letdown by the visitors. Mauro Arambarri put in a loose ball after Iñaki Peña did well to make a one-handed save of a volley by Cobo de Costa. "We controlled the game but they scored on the one chance they had, it is too bad," Kounde said. "We didn't have our finishing touch." Griezmann misses spot kick

Griezmann had a chance to at least snatch a point for the league leader after a video review awarded Atletico a 90th-minute penalty for a handball by defender Sergio González. But the French forward stroked his spot kick wide. Griezmann and Julián Alvarez hit the woodwork in the first half, but the leaders couldn't respond after Leganes defender Matija Nastasic scored with a 49th-minute header. Last week, Atletico broke its own record of 13 consecutive victories from 2012-13. Leganes returned to the first division this season and has become a giant-slayer in the top-flight. The modest club from Madrid stunned Barcelona when it was leader in December. Its win over Atletico lifted it into 15th place. "We don't have anything special, this is just the result of the hard work we put in each week," Leganes goalkeeper

Marko Dmitrovic said. "We have beaten two of the three big teams in the league, so we have no excuse not to perform like this each time out." Atletico, which was the biggest spender for Spanish clubs in the summer, is trying to win its third league under Simeone after titles in 2014 and 2021. Simeone said that during those championship runs, his side lost to smaller clubs Almeria (in 2014) and Levante (in 2021), and that didn't stop them from still beating Barcelona and Madrid to the title. "We had 15 wonderful games, a record in the history of this club. It was a great run that benefitted us in the league, Copa del Rey and Champions League," Simeone said. Atletico defenders Javi Galán and Clement Lenglet received their fifth yellow cards of the season and will miss the next round against Villarreal. But first, Atletico hosts Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions

League on Tuesday. Kike García blasts Betis Alaves striker Kike García scored a hat trick to lead a 3-1 win at 10-man Real Betis. The 35-year-old García, known more as a workhorse than a big scorer, earned a penalty after being fouled by Marc Bartra and opened the scoring in the 11th. After Betis lost Romain Perraud to a red card for a dangerous foul in the 55th, García spun before firing home in the 80th and thumped in a header for his treble. Lukébakio produces Sevilla late winner Dodi Lukébakio starred again for Sevilla after scoring a solo effort in the 89th minute to complete a 2-1 comeback at Girona. The Belgium forward tallied his team-leading ninth goal of the season after he nutmegged Ladislav Krejci before slotting the late winner past goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga.



# I TRIED MY BEST TO GET PADMA AWARD TO MY MOTHER: NARESH



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Senior actor VK Naresh spoke about the Padma Awards and he expressed his anguish that his mother didn't get the award. "My mother created history with 46 films as director, which is a rare one in the world cinema. She is an actor, director and producer and I tried my best to get a Padma Award for her. I took up the issue to Delhi also, but of no use," said Naresh.

The actor added that he will try even in the coming days. "When KCR was the chief minister, he recommended my mother's name for Padma Award, but she didn't get it at that time," said Naresh and added that he still felt anguish that she didn't get the award.

"There are many people who deserved Padma awards, but they too didn't get it. Now, the BJP government is giving awards for deserving people," he said. He added that he will try in the future not only as her son, but also as a film personality. "I appeal to the government that people who worked relentlessly

for the development of the film industry should be honoured with awards," said Naresh. The actor said he is busy with a number of films this New Year.

"In the last 40 days I heard 22 stories and I selected a few of them which I liked. I am playing lead in two stories," he said. He added that both films and OTTs are doing well at present. "My film 'Veeranjaneyulu Vihara Yatra' became sensational in OTT and now the film 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam' is also a huge hit in theatres. So people are watching in theatres and at the same time they are also watching

films in OTT," said Naresh. He expressed happiness that he is getting offers to play roles in OTT films too.

The actor said that he is writing stories and he wants to direct in the near future. "I am very busy as an actor in my second innings. I would like to make sequels to 'Chitram Bhalare Vichitram' and 'Srivariki Premalekha' which I have started writing for these two. Definitely, I would like to direct in the near future," he said.



The actor said that a biopic on his mother Vijayanirmala is also on the cards. "My mother wanted me to write her story. So, I started writing and completed three pages and stopped. She asked me to write only the truth about her and not to write any lies. If a correct director and producers approach me, definitely I will give my mother's story to do a biopic," said Naresh.

The actor said that 2025 is going to be the busiest year for him. "I am acting in nine films and all of them are different from each other. Also, last year my successful film 'Veeranjaneyulu Vihara Yatra' created a new market for me in OTT," said Naresh. He added that he is working with young directors in these films. "I completed 52 years as an actor in the industry and I should thank all the directors, producers, writers and technicians for taking in their films," said Naresh.

The actor said that he earned so much from society, so he wanted to give back something to it. "So, I am planning two big projects this year: one Cinema Museum and a Library, the other one is Creative Space for Young People. Pavitra and I already started on these two projects and the details of these two projects will be announced later," said the actor.

He added that director Jandhyala, Krishna and Vijayanirmala are his gurus.

"Jandhyala taught me the basics of acting and he gave life to me as an actor. He is like a father to me. I started a dubbing and post production theatre on Jandhyala's name and soon I am coming up with a book on him," said the actor. He added that he will launch the book on Jandhyala on February 20 on the occasion of his mother Vijayanirmala's birthday. The actor also announced that from this year he is going to start a 'Vijaya Krishna' award.

Talking about his life after Pavitra entered, he comments, "The Titanic Ship reached the shore." He added that he is in a good phase of his life and everything is positive. The actor is celebrating his 65th birthday on Monday.



## I am naming Thaman as NBK Thaman: Balayya

Nandamuri Balakrishna is on a high after the success of 'Daaku Maharaaj' which was released on January 12, on the occasion of Sankranti festival. Directed by Bobby Kolli, the film did well and gave Balakrishna his fourth consecutive hit. Speaking about the success, the actor said, the film has a good message. "The story's backdrop is about water and in this film we created awareness about water preservation," said Balakrishna. He added that a Telugu engineer went to Rajasthan and became a Daaku Maharaaj to protect the people there. "I should thank the Telugu audience for making this film a great success," said Balakrishna.

The actor praises director Bobby for getting good performances from every actor. At the same time, Balakrishna praises music director Thaman and said that fans changed his name as Nandamuri Thaman. "From now onwards I want to name him as NBK Thaman," said Balakrishna at the success meet of this film.

Balakrishna talks highly about Telugu cinema and it is now watched by all over the world and appreciated. "The Telugu Film Industry is now growing up to match the world cinema," said the actor. Talking about his records, he said, "my records, collections, awards and rewards are all unstoppable," he said about himself.

He finally said that the Telugu audience always encourages when you show something new in the film. "It is proved with my 'Daaku Maharaaj'," he said. Because of the

Tirumala stampede incident, they cancelled the pre-release event in Anantapur, but now, they want to hold a success meet on January 22 at the same place, the actor declared. The actor praised the female leads Pragya Jaiswal and Shraddha Srinath for their performances.



Senior actor Naresh says that his mother deserves a Padma Award and he will try even now. He talks about his upcoming films, his personal life, his guru Jandhyala and his future plans

## Finally, Nithiin locks his film release date at IPL time



Last year, actor Nithiin's films were not released and he is looking forward to this New Year. His film 'Robinhood' was supposed to be released last year, but due to some reasons, it got postponed. Directed by Venky Kudumula, the film is produced by big production house Mythri Movie Makers. Their film 'Pushpa 2' released on December 5, and they initially planned to release 'Robinhood' on December 25. But the makers thought that the film may not get a number of screens, because of their other film 'Pushpa 2'. So they postponed.

Many expected that they may compete at the Sankranti festival with other films, but they didn't release at that time either. Now, the makers announced the release date as March 28. The actor needs a good break as his

last two films tanked at the box-office. His last successful film was 'Rang De' which was released in 2021. Now, he is banking on 'Robinhood' which is a heist comedy. Director Venky Kudumula earlier worked with Nithiin for 'Bheeshma' and it was a successful project. Now, he is joining hands for 'Robinhood' and Sreeleela is playing the female lead.

The film was completed long back and now the makers want to cash in on it during summer vacation. So, they announced the release date as March 28, but at the same time, the IPL cricket matches start and it is definitely a testing time for Nithiin. They already started the promotions by releasing a song. Now they are planning to release the second song featuring Ketika Sharma. The film's music is composed by GV Prakash Kumar.

## Interesting Telugu title for Dhanush film

After the successful 'Raayan', actor Dhanush is focusing more on his directorial skills. Dhanush is the actor and director for 'Raayan', but in his next film 'Nilavuku En Mel Ennadi Kobam', he didn't act, but he completely focused on direction and also produced. The Tamil film is now dubbed into Telugu and releasing, but it gets an interesting title 'Jaabilamma Neeku Antha Kopama'.

A song with the same title is very popular in the film 'Pelli' that stars Vadde Naveen and Maheswari. Now, Dhanush's film gets this song lyric as his title and releases on February 21 along with the Tamil film. The film is releasing in Telugu by Asian Suresh distributors.



Dhanush has left a significant mark on the entertainment industry with his acting and also now as director. He is now all set to bring his third directorial, with this 'Jaabilamma Neeku Antha Kopama', after 'Pa Paandi' and the recent blockbuster 'Raayan'. This film also marks the actor's return to producing a movie after his 2018 film 'Maari 2'. The movie, which is touted as a romantic comedy, is also penned by the actor. The film has an ensemble cast of actors, including Pavish, Anikha Surendran, Priya Prakash Varrier, Mathew Thomas, Venkatesh Menon, Rabiya Khatoun and Ramya Ranganathan, in the lead roles. GV Prakash Kumar scored the music.

## Varun Tej to join hands with Merlapaka Gandhi

Actor Varun Tej is looking for a good break as his earlier films didn't do well at the box-office. On the occasion of his birthday on Sunday, the actor announced his new film with director Merlapaka Gandhi. UV Creations and First Frame Entertainment are jointly producing this film. This time, Varun Tej is coming up with a new genre with this film, says a source. The title is also considered as 'Korean Kanakaraju', added the source.

The story's backdrop is based on Indo-Korean and it's a horror comedy. Merlapaka Gandhi is a successful director with films

like 'Venkatadri Express', 'Express Raja', 'Ek Mini Katha' and 'Maestro'. On the other hand Varun Tej is giving continuous flops with films like 'Gandeevadhari Arjun', 'Operation Valentine' and 'Matka'. He pinned hopes on his recent 'Matka', but the film turned out to be a huge flop. The actor worked very hard in this period drama, with Visakhapatnam backdrop story, but the audience didn't like it.

Now, he is completely banking on Merlapaka Gandhi and also trying a new genre of horror comedy. This is Varun Tej's 15th film and S Thaman is giving music for this one.



## Tovino Thomas to widen the Telugu market

Malayalam actor Tovino Thomas is eyeing the Telugu market as his films are releasing in Telugu too. Last year, the actor promoted his film 'ARM' here in Telugu, but the film got an average talk. Now, the actor delivered the first Malayalam hit in the New Year with the film 'Identity'. Trisha played as the female lead and the film was released on January 2 in Malayalam.

Directed by Akhil Paul and Anas Khan, the film is an action thriller and for Trisha, this is her second Malayalam film. 'Identity' is a gripping action thriller that captivated Malayalam audiences, and is now set to enthrall Telugu viewers. The movie's Telugu distribution rights are brought by Movie Max Srinivas Mamidala in collaboration with Sri Vedakshara Movies Chintapalli Rama Rao.

With edge-of-the-seat suspense and numerous twists, this film promises to keep viewers glued to the screen. The film's action-packed storyline and thrilling narrative have already got positive reviews. With this film, Tovino Thomas wanted to widen his market into Telugu.

