

# the pioneer


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




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



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



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



## DAY 1 OF WEF SUMMIT IN DAVOS

# CM woos Swiss investors

### Naidu discusses regional development with TG CM Revanth at an unexpected meet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the first day of his visit to Davos on Monday, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu held a series of meetings with investors and business leaders. The Chief Minister, who is attending the World Economic Forum (WEF) summit, focused on showcasing the vast potential of Andhra Pradesh as a prime investment destination, according to a press release from the AP government.

Earlier, the Chief Minister met with Indian Ambassador to Switzerland, Mrudul Kumar, at the Hilton Hotel in Zurich. The discussion centred on investment opportunities in Andhra Pradesh for Swiss industrialists. Ambassador Mrudul Kumar informed Naidu that over 350 Swiss companies, including Nestle, Novartis, and ABB, have established units across India, and many more are keen to invest.

Naidu emphasised that Andhra Pradesh offers numerous opportunities in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, medical devices, technology, textiles, and rail component manufacturing. He also requested Ambassador Kumar's assistance in fostering closer ties between universities in Switzerland and Andhra Pradesh, as well as in promoting the upcoming skill development and AI-focused universities in the state.

The Chief Minister further highlighted that Andhra Pradesh's youth is highly skilled across various sectors and is readily available to work remotely.

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- CM meets Indian Ambassador to Switzerland, Mrudul Kumar
- Highlights sectors like pharmaceuticals, medical devices, technology, and textiles for potential investments
- Discusses fostering cooperation between Swiss and Andhra Pradesh universities and promoting skill and AI initiatives
- Holds meetings with CEOs of Swiss companies to invite investments, focusing on skilled workforce and business-friendly policies

- Initiatives in research, innovation hubs, and joint ventures in aerospace, automotive, and energy highlighted
- A warm reception was given at Zurich airport by TDP Forum and Indian diaspora
- Unexpected meeting with Telangana CM Revanth Reddy, discussing regional development

## DAVOS 2025: Will Naidu or Revanth steal the show?

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As the glitz of Tollywood's box office battles fades, a new contest is sparking public interest - who will emerge victorious at Davos 2025? With both Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy attending the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Switzerland from January 20 to 24, all eyes are on which leader can secure the most significant investments for their state.



For Telangana, the cards appear favourable. Despite Revanth Reddy's relative lack of administrative experience, the state boasts several key advantages.

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## DON'T MISS...

### Officials directed to adopt villages

Eluru District Collector K Vetri Selvi has instructed district and mandal-level officials to adopt villages to foster development. Accompanied by Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy, she chaired a meeting on Monday to review efforts to improve living standards in rural areas. The Collector urged officials to adopt villages and focus on providing essential facilities, including education, healthcare, employment opportunities, sanitation, drinking water, and infrastructure. She assured full support for developing the adopted villages, including constructing roads...

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### Withdraw draft UGC regulations

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

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### India at forefront of tech evolution

In an era defined by technological evolution, India stands at the forefront as one of the world's fastest-growing economies and a global hub for startups and digital innovation, the World Economic Forum said on Monday. The Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR) India, liaison office of World Economic Forum (WEF) in India, launches its 6-year impact journey report on the inaugural day of the WEF Annual Meeting 2025 here. The WEF said its partnership with India dates back more than 40 years...

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### Pant named captain of LSG

Dynamic keeper-batter Rishabh Pant was on Monday named the captain of Lucknow Super Giants for the upcoming IPL and he vowed to give his '200 percent' to win the team's maiden title. Pant was picked at the mega auction for an IPL record Rs 27 crore by the franchise owner Sanjiv Goenka. 'I will give my 200 percent. That's my commitment to you. I will try whatever is there in my power to repay the faith. I am really excited and looking forward to new beginning and new energy. And have a blast out there ...'

-SPORTS



## Trump promises 'golden age of America' Becomes 47th president of the US

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump, who overcame impeachments, criminal indictments and a pair of assassination attempts to win another term in the White House, will be sworn in Monday as the 47th US president taking charge as Republicans claim unified control of Washington and set out to reshape the country's institutions.

Trump's swearing-in ceremony, moved indoors due to intense cold, and began at noon ET. Festivities started earlier when the incoming president arrived for service at St. John's Episcopal Church.

**Here's the latest:**  
Not-so-record inflation  
Trump vowed to "defeat what was record inflation." Inflation peaked at 9.1 per cent in June 2022 after rising steadily in the first 17 months of Biden's presidency from a low of 0.1 per cent in May 2020.  
The most recent data shows that as of December it had fallen to 2.9 per cent.  
But other historical periods have seen higher inflation, such as a more than 14 per cent rate in 1980, according to the Federal Reserve.  
Trump's promised Day 1 executive orders.

## MAJOR IAS, IPS SHAKE-UP IN AP

### Sai Prasad made Spl CS to CM

### RK Meena is SLPRB chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant administrative reshuffle, Chief Secretary K Vijayanand issued a Government Order (Rt No 126) on Monday, transferring and redesignating 25 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers. These changes are aimed at improving governance in key departments across the state. Key appointments include G Sai Prasad, IAS (1991), who has been re-designated as Special Chief Secretary to the Government, Water Resources Department and also appointed Ex-Officio Special Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister. Ajay Jain, IAS (1991), takes on full additional charge as Special Chief Secretary to Government, Tourism & Culture, replacing V Vinay Chand, IAS (2008).

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PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a major reshuffle of IPS officers across Andhra Pradesh, the government has transferred 27 officers and issued new postings for several others. The orders were issued by Chief Secretary K Vijayanand in GO Rt No 123 on Monday. Among the key transfers, Rajiv Kumar Meena, Additional Director General of Police (Operations), Greyhounds & Octopus,

has been appointed as Chairman of the State Level Police Recruitment Board (SLPRB), filling the existing vacancy. N Madhusudhana Reddy, Additional DGP, who was awaiting posting, has been appointed as Additional DGP, Law & Order, in the existing vacancy. Ch Srikanth, has been transferred to the position of IGP (Operations), with additional charge of IGP (Technical Services) until further orders.

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## New structure for panchayat cluster system: Dy CM

### Income, population to define clusters; staff allocation to be streamlined

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a bid to enhance rural governance and ensure efficient service delivery, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan has directed the Panchayat Raj department to address staff shortages and revise the village panchayat cluster system. He issued these directives during a comprehensive review meeting on Monday.



The Deputy Chief Minister emphasised the importance of uninterrupted services in rural areas and proposed a new classification system

for panchayat clusters based on both income and population, replacing the earlier method that considered only income. The meeting highlighted disparities in the previous system, where some high-income panchayats had smaller populations, while others with lower income had larger populations. These imbalances often led to inefficient staff allocation.

**Nara Lokesh seeks Swiss Indian envoy's cooperation P:2**

## KOLKATA DOCTOR RAPE-MURDER VERDICT Sanjay Roy gets life term till death

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A Kolkata court on Monday sentenced Sanjay Roy to life imprisonment until death after he was convicted of raping and murdering an on-duty doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, rejecting demands for the death penalty saying it was not a "rarest of the rare" crime.



the state government to pay compensation of Rs 17 lakh to the family of the deceased doctor.

Additional District and Sessions Judge in Sealdah, Anirban Das, had on Saturday found Roy guilty of committing the crime against the postgraduate trainee doctor on August 9 last year. The heinous crime triggered nationwide outrage and prolonged protests in West Bengal. The court also ordered Roy to pay a Rs 50,000 fine and directed

Judge Das stated that the crime did not fall under the "rarest of the rare" category, which justified the decision to not give the death penalty to the convict. "The CBI prayed for the death penalty. The defence lawyer prayed that a jail term be given instead of the death penalty... This crime does not fall under the rarest of the rare category," the judge said.

## Birth, death certificates via WhatsApp soon

### Statewide Implementation based on results of the pilot project to be launched in Tenali: CS Vijayanand

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government will soon introduce WhatsApp Governance services to the public, allowing citizens to obtain birth and death certificates through WhatsApp. This initiative is in tune with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's vision of making government services more accessible. A pilot project will be launched in Tenali later this month to test this process.



Chief Secretary K Vijayanand on Monday chaired a review meeting at the Real-Time Governance Society office in the Secretariat with officials from various departments to discuss the issuance of birth and death certificates via WhatsApp. He emphasised that the Chief Minister's goal is to improve the convenience of

Panchayati Raj, Health and Medical, and Municipal Administration to fully cooperate with RTGS officials for the success of the initiative.

S Suresh Kumar, Principal Secretary of the Department of WhatsApp and called for swift action to begin the necessary work. He recommended using Tenali as a test site to identify any challenges or technical issues that may arise during implementation. He also instructed the departments of

government services for citizens. He urged RTGS officials and relevant departments to expedite the process. Vijayanand highlighted the importance of delivering birth and death certificates through WhatsApp and called for swift action to begin the necessary work. He recommended using Tenali as a test site to identify any challenges or technical issues that may arise during implementation. He also instructed the departments of

Continued on Page 2

## Draft agenda items for SZC meet reviewed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand held a review meeting at the State Secretariat on Monday with officials from various departments to discuss the draft agenda for the upcoming Southern Zonal Council meeting. The focus was primarily on pending issues stemming from the state bifurcation, which are to be addressed during the meeting.



Key issues from Schedule 13 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act were reviewed, including the Visakhapatnam-Chennai Industrial Corridor, the expansion of Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, and Tirupati airports, and their upgradation to international standards. The meeting also assessed the progress of Amaravati's development, with particular emphasis on rapid rail connectivity to the capital.

Further discussions centred on the development of the seven backward districts in North Andhra and Rayalaseema, and the central assistance received thus far.

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# APSSDC launches German language training for nurses

PNS ■ KURNOOL

The Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) has introduced a German Language Training and Placement Linked Programme for nursing professionals under its Skill International Initiative. In collaboration with 2COMS Consulting Pvt. Ltd., the programme aims to train eligible candidates in the German language and facilitate their placement in the German healthcare sector as nurses.

The inaugural session of the programme's first batch was held at the Government College of Nursing, Kurnool. The event was graced by prominent dignitaries, including Manjula Rani, Principal of the College, P Deepthi, District Employment Officer, L Anand Rajkumar, District Skill Development Officer (DSDO), Kurnool, V Sreekanth Reddy, DSDO, Nandyal, and Akanksha, Manager at 2COMS.



D Manohar, Executive Director of APSSDC, emphasised the programme's role in empowering nursing professionals with language skills essential for global healthcare opportunities. "German language proficiency is in high demand in European countries. This training will not only enhance nurses' employability but also pave the way for exciting careers in the global healthcare sector. Certified language instructors will ensure the quality of training," he said.

The training, spanning 8-10 months, aims to equip aspiring nurses from Andhra Pradesh with the German language proficiency required to secure jobs in Germany's healthcare sector. Successful candidates will be placed in nursing roles in Germany upon completion of the programme. Students and faculty at the Government College of Nursing expressed their enthusiasm for the initiative, which promises valuable international career opportunities. This programme is a significant step towards enhancing the skills of young professionals and broadening their global career horizons.

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# Couple among 7 killed in three road accidents

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A couple and two children were among 7 people killed in three road accidents which took place during the last 24 hours in the State.

Police said that a couple was killed and two others were injured when the car in which they were travelling collided with a private bus at Kukkaldoddi village in Renigunta mandal.

Police said that the accident took place on the night of Sunday. The deceased and the victims belonged to Hyderabad. After visiting the hill shrine Tirumala, they were going to Hyderabad in the car which collided with a private travel bus killing the couple Anjali Devi (40) and Sandip (45). The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH in Renigunta for postmortem.

Three people including two children were killed and four others, including their parents, were critically injured when the car in which they were travelling collided with at Jakkalavaripalali village in Chandragiri mandal on Puthalapattu-Naidupet highway on the night of Sunday.

The deceased were identified as Jeevan (10), Viswa (6) and Kalaivani. The injured were admitted to the Ruia hospital. CI Sbbarami Reddy registered a case and shifted the bodies to the SVIMS hospital for postmortem. The deceased and the injured belong to Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu and went to the Tirumala hill shrine on pilgrimage.

In another road accident, two youths were killed when the motorcycle they were riding hit the road divider at the KCP flyover bridge on the Vijayawada-Machilipatnam highway on Monday. The deceased were going to Hyderabad on a bike from Kakinada and their motorcycle hit the divider in which they suffered fatal head injuries and died instantaneously.



The deceased were Dsari Chandrasekhar (23) and Mukta Durga Babu (24). Poor visibility was said to be the reason for the accident. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH in Vuyyuru for postmortem.

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# Officials directed to adopt villages for development

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has instructed district and mandal-level officials to adopt villages to foster development. Accompanied by Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy, she chaired a meeting on Monday to review efforts to improve living standards in rural areas.

The Collector urged officials to adopt villages and focus on providing essential facilities, including education, healthcare, employment opportunities, sanitation, drinking water, and infrastructure. She assured full support for developing the adopted villages, including constructing roads and improving sanitation, and called for transforming them into model villages.

She advised officials to hold grama sabhas in the adopted villages to raise awareness about welfare schemes and gather information on the villagers' needs and available amenities. The officials were tasked with resolving issues related to education, healthcare, sanitation, sustainable livelihoods, and community infrastructure in the adopted villages.



"The focus should be on increasing literacy rates, empowering women, and conducting door-to-door surveys to collect details about the poor," the Collector emphasised.

She also directed officials to devise action plans for village development, aiming to lift rural families out of poverty. Identifying unemployed youth and organising skill development programmes to enhance their employability were highlighted as key priorities.

DRO V Visweswar Rao, DRDA PD R Vijay Raju, and ZP CEO K Subba Rao were among those present at the meeting.



# DGP inaugurates police petrol bunk

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Director General of Police (DGP) Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao visited Rajahmundry on Monday to inaugurate a Police Petrol Bunk and a newly constructed Police Parade Ground.

The DGP was accorded a warm welcome by GVG Ashok Kumar, Inspector General (IG) of Eluru Range, D Narasimha Kishore, Superintendent of Police (SP) of East Godavari, and other police officials.

The Police Petrol Bunk, located near Lalacheruvu in Rajamahendravaram, was constructed by Indian Oil Corporation Ltd under the supervision of the district police. DGP Dwaraka Tirumala Rao formally inaugurated the facility, which aims to support the operational needs of the police force.

The DGP also unveiled the newly established Police Parade Ground at the district police office and inspected its facilities.

Senior police officials, including Additional SP (Admin) NBM Murali Krishna, Additional SP (Law & Order) Alluri Venkata Subbarao, Additional SP (Crimes) L Arjun, Additional SP (AR) L Chenchi Reddy, DSP (SB) B Ramakrishna, and Inspector (SB) A Srinivasa Rao, along with other police personnel, attended the event.

The inaugurations are expected to bolster police infrastructure and improve the working conditions of law enforcement personnel in the district.

# Promote orchid flower cultivation: Collector

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has directed horticulture officials to promote the cultivation of orchid flowers among farmers in the district.

The Collector visited an orchid farm in Kapavaram village of Peravali mandal, where decorative flowers are being cultivated and interacted with the growers to understand the cultivation process.

She inquired about the duration of orchid cultivation, the source of the plants, the number of plants grown per acre, and the costs involved. She also discussed the workforce engaged in the cultivation of the flowers.

Orchid farm manager K Srinivasa Mangaraju explained the process, noting that the plants were imported from Thailand in 2016. After a 45-day quarantine and inspection by the Central Research Institute, they were issued an NOC. The plants were then placed in plastic pots in special sheds on the farm, surrounded by coconut fibre, with relevant solutions sprayed on them.



"For optimal flower cultivation, water puddles must be dug at the base of the plants, and sprinklers should be installed to maintain a cool environment," Srinivasa told the Collector. "An acre can accommodate approximately 45,000 plants. The initial investment for purchasing plants, setting up canopies, and other arrangements in the first year is about Rs 60 lakh."

The orchids are ready for harvest approximately eight months after planting. The price of each stem ranges between Rs 20 and Rs 25, with expected monthly income from an acre exceeding Rs 5 lakh.

Srinivasa also revealed that once a plant is established, there is no need for re-purchase, as the same plants continue to be cultivated. The flowers are sold to various cities, including Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Hyderabad, Pune, Bangalore, Pondicherry, and beyond, with decorators regularly placing orders.

The Collector highlighted that the government would offer a subsidy of around Rs 32 lakh for orchid cultivation and instructed officials to inform farmers about the subsidy details. District Horticulture Officer R Devanand, Drip Irrigation Officer P Veerabhadra Rao, and Municipal Commissioner T Ravi Kumar accompanied the Collector on the visit.

# 120 youths get placements at 'Job Mela': Minister

PNS ■ ELURU

A total of 120 job aspirants were selected for various positions at a job mela organised at Agiripalli on Monday, announced Minister for Housing and I&PR, K Parthasarathi.

The Minister inaugurated the job mela at the NRI College campus in Gopalapuram, near Agiripalli, where Amara Raja Batteries selected eligible candidates for various job roles.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Parthasarathi reiterated the Government's commitment to creating 20 lakh jobs over the next five years. He highlighted that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is working towards bringing world-class technology to the state, ensuring a bright future for the youth.

The Minister further emphasised that Chief Minister Naidu is prioritising education, employment, and job creation in the state. He expressed hope that the job mela would provide a significant opportunity for unemployed youth and urged them to take full advantage of the event.

"Since the coalition government came to power, under the leadership of Chandrababu Naidu, steps have been taken to generate job opportunities in both the Government and private sectors. As a result, major companies are now eager to invest in the state," he said.

Parthasarathi also stated that a special industrial policy is being formulated to encourage entrepreneurship in every household. He shared that a 'skill census' is being conducted, similar to the population census, to assess the skills of youth in every household.

"Skill hubs are being set up in 175 constituencies across the state, offering skill development training in all sectors and creating job opportunities," he added.

The Minister also mentioned that NTPC will establish a non-conventional energy development unit with an investment of Rs 1.87 lakh crore, which will generate employment for 1.06 lakh youth. He further claimed that Education Minister Nara Lokesh, during a recent foreign trip, successfully convinced Google to set up its unit in the state.

Reliance Industries has also initiated the establishment of 500 compressed biogas units with an investment of Rs 65,000 crore, Parthasarathi revealed.

Later, the Minister handed over appointment letters to the 120 selected youths.

# Mermaid performance wows audience at VISAKHA Expo 2025

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The VISAKHA Expo-2025 is making a splash in the city, with a mesmerizing mermaid performance that is setting the event apart from others. A first for Vizag and only the second of its kind in India, this captivating spectacle promises to be a showstopper, drawing thousands of tourists and providing an unforgettable experience for all.

The performance features a talented team of four mermaid performers, hailing from both the Philippines and Australia. After two years of rigorous training at a specialized centre in the Philippines, supported by the local government, the performers are ready to showcase their incredible skills. Two performers from the Philippines and two from Melbourne, Australia, have honed their underwater expertise for months to ensure a flawless and breathtaking show.

The show takes place in a custom-designed tank, where the water temperature is carefully maintained at 28°C to ensure the performers' comfort. In a bid to uphold high standards of hygiene and safety, the water is changed daily, creating a clean and safe environment for both the performers and the audience.

The first-ever mermaid show in Vizag, featuring performers from the Philippines and Australia, adds a magical touch to the expo, attracting thousands of tourists and boosting the local economy.



Speaking to The Pioneer, Anil Azia, 28 year old performer from the Philippines, described the performance as one of the most physically demanding she has ever undertaken. Despite spending hours underwater, Azil expressed her joy in performing, especially in front of young children, who are often mesmerized by the magical display.

Fellow performer Ruth, 33, also from the Philippines, echoed Azil's thoughts, emphasizing the challenging nature of the performance. After completing her own two years of training, Ruth

revealed the satisfaction she feels when delivering a captivating show and shared her excitement about being a part of VISAKHA Expo-2025.

The Expo's impact has been felt far beyond the performance itself. The event has employed around 400 local workers, significantly boosting Vizag's economy. The influx of tourists has helped elevate local businesses, making the Expo a key driver of the region's tourism sector. With a range of attractions—including the highly anticipated mermaid performance—VISAKHA Expo-2025 is expected to continue drawing large crowds until April 2025.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

### A giant leap in space

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

India's space programme, spearheaded by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), has achieved yet another landmark with its first successful space docking experiment. This milestone represents a pivotal moment in the nation's space exploration journey, further cementing ISRO's reputation as a key player in global space technology.



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

This docking experiment lays the groundwork for India's ambition to develop its own modular space station, a project slated for the next decade. Space docking technology is critical for future missions to the Moon and Mars.

Gateway or other collaborative space station endeavours. The success underscores ISRO's ability to innovate and develop sophisticated technologies domestically, reducing reliance on external support. Executing a docking manoeuvre is no small feat. ISRO had to address multiple challenges, including developing highly accurate navigation and control systems capable of autonomous decision-making.

#### PICTALK



School students perform during Kokborok Day celebrations, in Agartala

## Mahakumbh: Spiritual fervour meets economic revival



NAND GOPAL GUPTA NANDI

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

Over 3 crore devotees, both national and international, taking a holy dip on the debut day of Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, has just validated what we have been saying for the past several months. In terms of scale and grandeur, this edition of Mahakumbh would not only be the largest religious congregation on the planet. But it would also remain unmatched for a very long time.



A more apt term would be epic-scale preparations. Yes, this is what went into this grand event which we would like to be remembered forever. The UP government had sanctioned more than 540 projects to create world-class amenities in the vicinity of Rs 7,000 crore.

There is hardly any name (big or small) in the consumer-facing business that you will find missing in action at the holy site serving the devotees with their offerings. On a cumulative basis, we are expecting a generation of economic activities worth Rs 2 lakh crore or over \$24 billion which is simply staggering.

The security architecture created for this mega event is powered by artificial intelligence (AI), which is an added feature. Our objective has been simple. We wanted to create a site that would be the best possible amalgamation of religious fervour of the highest order and modern amenities of the best class.

our core focus right from day one of the planning stage as we knew that Mahakumbh this time would also be leaving a host of critical messages for the world. In symbolic terms, at a time when the geo-political turbulence is quite evident and religious intolerance is raising its head in many corners of the world, the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj is yet another occasion to prove the richness of our Sanatani heritage which is rooted in the philosophy of co-existence and welfare of the humanity.

The event has to intrinsically validate our subtle claim of global leadership in several spheres. There is one more critical message that we wish to emanate from Mahakumbh this time. And that pertains to the growing economic prowess of Uttar Pradesh. From being in the disparaging 'Bimaru' state club till the recent decade, the turnaround in the state's economic fortune would be



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

quite evident at the site for which we have left no stone unturned. That millions of visitors should carry the impression of a modern and thriving economy is indeed an objective.

We have been working quite hard in reviving the state's economy since 2017 trying to put it in the leader's club (among states) in the country. There has been a slew of policy and regulatory interventions which have delivered positive results. We are the third largest economy (state-wise) which has an impressive share of over 8 per cent in the national GDP.

This year, we will be announcing a new export policy that will take into consideration the new business opportunities (for the next five years) emerging from a far superior infrastructural base. We today have the largest rail network in the country, 38 per cent expressways' share of the national

kitty, four international and nine domestic airports. Further, seven new airports are under construction including the world-class Jewar Airport which will be unveiled soon.

To energise grassroots economies, one of our major initiatives has been: the one-district-one-product scheme. Launched in 2018, this scheme seeks to identify the specific USP product of 75 districts and help the local stakeholders take that business to the next level with all-round support (training to marketing) from government agencies. Since the inception of the scheme, we have supported over 1,33,472 artisans across the state. The efforts to give a decisive rejig to the state economy have considerably paid off, propelling us to commit to further pushing our growth momentum and becoming a \$1 trillion economy in the not-so-distant future.

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

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

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

Last week, I had the privilege of being on the panel of judges for an elocution competition for students, with the topic 'The Perfect Solution to Make People Smile More'. It was an intriguing subject-one very close to my heart-because I am the kind of person who smiles a lot. A lot more than people sometimes care to respond to or reciprocate.



ASHA IYER KUMAR

As I waited for those ideas to unfold, I felt a gentle discomfort with the implicit belief that nothing happens these days without gadgets. But then came a few gems that emphasised the importance of compassion, empathy, and kindness as part of our daily lives-powerful ingredients for sparking smiles. This is what I want the younger generation to embody-an attitude that encourages them to be better people each day, spreading

smiles through simple acts of kindness, rather than relying solely on innovations. I was deeply moved by what some of the children shared. When I asked one young participant what act of kindness he had done that day to make someone smile or brighten their day, his answer was simple yet profound: 'I told my mother how yummy the breakfast was, and it made her very happy.'

My takeaway from the experience was this: the new generation is competitive, full of energy to beat the odds and rise to the top in life. But it is also brimming with humanness and rationality, qualities nurtured by the guidance of teachers, parents, and mentors. As they navigate the pressures of becoming super achievers, they still understand that the roots of happiness and peace lie in kindness and compassion. As is my habit, I often ask my students if they enjoy going to school and, if so, why. The answer I invariably hear is they like school not because of what they learn in class, but because of their friends. This sometimes makes me question my belief that schools

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

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

##### GOVERNOR VS STATE GOVERNMENT

Madam - The dispute between the Tamil Nadu government and Governor Dr RN Ravi over vice-chancellor appointments has reached the Supreme Court. On January 17, 2025, a bench led by Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan intervened, stating that the matter would be resolved by the next hearing unless the parties reached an agreement. The Tamil Nadu Government has filed writ petitions accusing the Governor of delays and non-compliance with constitutional duties. The court has scheduled the next hearing for next Wednesday, signalling its readiness to resolve the deadlock.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

##### STRICTER RULES FOR MIGRANTS

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

##### Indian women win Kho kho World Cup



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

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

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

R K Jain | Barwani

##### FIRE BROKE OUT AT MAHAKUMBH

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

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur Nagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

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



SAKSHI SETHI

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

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

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



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

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

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

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



DINESH SOOD

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



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

### Growing Demand for Vocational Expertise

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

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

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

### Parity Between B Voc and BSc Degrees

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

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

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

**2. Self-Employment and Freelancing:** These courses

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

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

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

### Breaking Stigmas Around Vocational Careers

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

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

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

**1. Quality Assurance:** Maintaining high standards and industry relevance requires collaboration with established industry players.

**2. Awareness:** Many students and parents remain unaware of these

opportunities, favouring traditional careers. Awareness campaigns are crucial.

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

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

### Vision for the Future

Skill-based degree programmes signify societal reform, recognising youth aspirations and aligning education with market realities. By formalising careers through structured courses, India creates a skilled and confident workforce.

These reforms reflect a commitment to inclusivity, providing pathways for diverse socio-economic backgrounds to pursue rewarding careers.

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

(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of GoI. The views expressed are personal)



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

# Balancing rights and order: Innovations in protest management

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

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



O P SINGH

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

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

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

### Leveraging Technology:

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

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

### Non-Lethal Methods:

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



focus remains on proportionality—ensuring responses are measured, harm is minimised, and democratic freedoms are respected. **Transparency and Accountability** Transparency is crucial for public trust. In New Zealand, body-worn cameras document police actions during protests, ensuring accountability and protecting officers from false accusations. Oversight bodies review

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

### Multi-agency coordination for Large Protests

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

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

### Comprehensive Training:

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

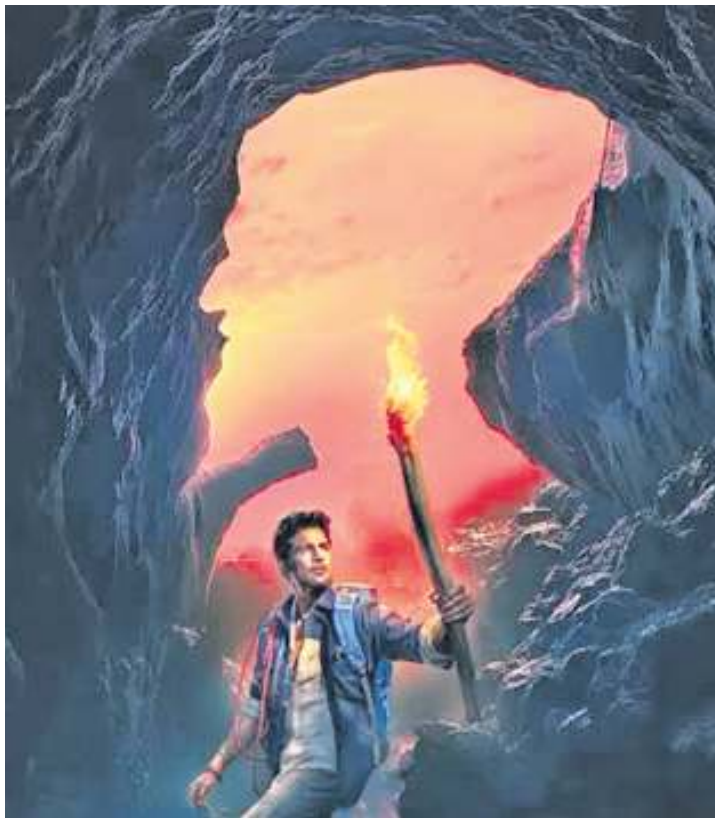
Globally, technologies like drones and AI are governed by protocols that protect privacy and civil liberties. Similarly, the principle of proportionality—using the minimum force necessary—guides actions to ensure demonstrators' rights are respected. In India, police increasingly emphasise ethical practices.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

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





# Rajiv Khandelwal: I had no idea what I was stepping into with *The Secret of the Shiledars*



Actor Rajiv Khandelwal, who will be seen in the upcoming series *The Secret of the Shiledars*, said that he actually had no idea what he was stepping into. Rajeev said, "Playing a character like Ravi has been an incredible journey for me. It's a contradiction of sorts that despite knowing what I was stepping into I actually had no idea what I was stepping into. From the moment we started shooting, I knew we may end up creating something magical under the skilled direction of Aditya." "And we actually did. With *The Secret of the Shiledars*, he has ventured into an entirely new and intriguing genre, showcasing his brilliant creative vision." Rajeev's character Ravi embarks on a quest to uncover hidden secrets and untangle his true identity, the path is far from straightforward. Produced by Nitin Vaidya under the banner of Dashami Creations LLP, with Aditya Sarpotdar as the showrunner and director, the series is based on the acclaimed Marathi novel Pratipashchandra.. He added: "The show's unique premise inspired me to push my limits as an actor, and working with Sai, Ashish sir and all other cast and crew members made the experience even more rewarding. I can't wait for the world to see what we've made.

Hope they enjoy this joyride as much as we did while creating it" Actress Sai Tamhankar said that to be part of such an enriching show that challenges you at every step and shapes you as an artist is truly what an actor craves. "With *The Secret of the Shiledars*, I'm glad to have put my best foot forward. Being from the heartland of Maharashtra, seeing it represented on-screen so authentically is immensely fulfilling. I believe this story will keep viewers hooked till the very end." "Sharing screen time with stalwarts like Rajeev, with his incredible body of work, was truly inspiring. I am looking forward to what the audience has to say." Showrunner & Director of the show Aditya Sarpotdar said, "Being a Maharashtrian, *The Secret of the Shiledars* is especially close to my heart. It's my way of representing the courage and sacrifices of the Marathi Shiledars. The novel Pratipashchandra written by Dr. Prakash Koyade has been a favourite of mine for long." Producer of the show, Nitin Vaidya said that with *The Secret of the Shiledars*, they've brought together history, self-discovery and unexpected twists in an intriguing narrative that is set in the modern world. *The Secret of the Shiledars* will be streaming on Disney+ Hotstar on January 31.



# what's brewing?

## HINA KHAN: DRAWN TO CHARACTERS WHO HAVE FLAWS, BUT ARE REAL

Actress Hina Khan, who takes on the role of a woman torn between societal expectations and her own desires in *Grihalaxmi*, said that she is drawn to characters who have flaws, make mistakes but are real. Speaking about it, Hina says, "I am drawn to characters who aren't just black or white. They have flaws, make mistakes, but at their core, they are real. The imperfections make them more relatable. I want to portray characters whose struggles reflect the complexities of human nature." The actress, who is currently fighting breast cancer, is making a return to the screen with "Grihalaxmi," which centers around power and survival. It also stars Chunky Pandey, Rahul Dev, and Dibyendu Bhattacharya. *Grihalaxmi* tells a compelling story of resilience, survival, and personal transformation. A few days ago, Hina and the team of *Griha Laxmi* sought divine blessings in Siddhivinayak Temple in Mumbai for the new series. In other news, Hina in July, had announced her return to work for her first assignment since her breast cancer diagnosis. In a heartfelt post, the *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai* actress wrote, "My first work assignment after my diagnosis. Walking the talk is challenging, especially when facing life's biggest challenges. So, give yourself a break on bad days; it's okay... you deserve it. However, don't forget to live your life on the good days, no matter how few they are. These days still hold importance. Accept the change, embrace the difference, and normalize it." On June 28, Hina Khan confirmed that she had been diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. Taking to her Instagram, the actress shared a note that read, "Hello everyone. To address the recent rumor, I want to share some important news with all the Hinalohics and everyone who loves and cares for me. I have been diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. Despite this challenging diagnosis, I wish to reassure everyone that I am doing well." "I am strong, determined, and fully committed to overcoming this disease. My treatment has already begun, and I am ready to do everything necessary to emerge from this even stronger."

## Yami and Pratik -starrer *Dhoom Dhaam* to release on Valentine's Day

Yami Gautam Dhar and Pratik Gandhi star in new comedy, *Dhoom Dhaam*, which will be released on Netflix this Valentine's Day. Directed by Rishab Seth, the comedy revolves around Yami plays Koyal, a wild child with zero chill, and Pratik stars as Veer, a timid momma's boy and animal-loving veterinarian. Their stars have (somehow) aligned, but on their wedding day, the newlyweds find themselves in far-from-perfect situations. The film is produced by Aditya and Lokesh Dhar of B62 Studios, and Jyoti Deshpande of Jio Studios. "With *Dhoom Dhaam*, we wanted to create something unique and entertaining, where humour, chaos, action and romance come together in a fresh, high-energy story. Collaborating with Netflix has been an amazing journey, allowing us to bring this thrilling narrative to a global audience. Yami and Pratik have done an incredible job capturing the essence of Koyal and Veer, with their amazing chemistry and depth. We're excited for viewers to experience this rollercoaster of emotions on Netflix, February 14." Dhar brothers said in a statement. Deshpande, President - Jio Studios, RIL, said, "Yami and Pratik's performances bring incredible energy to the story, and we can't wait for audiences worldwide to enjoy this rollercoaster ride when it premieres on Netflix on February 14!" Ruchikaa Kapoor Sheikh, Director of Original Films, Netflix India, said the film is set against the backdrop of a wedding night where an unexpected adventure unfolds. "The film is a true entertainer with its heart in the right place. The fresh pairing of Yami Gautam Dhar and Pratik Gandhi makes it a perfect Valentine's Day watch. We are excited to collaborate with Aditya Dhar, Lokesh Dhar and Jio Studios for Rishab Seth's directorial. With *Dhoom Dhaam*, we reaffirm our commitment to



bringing unique and engaging films to audiences around the world." Yami has multiple successful films including "Chor Nikal Ke Bhaga", "Article 370" and "Dasvi" while Pratik, best known for his role as Harshad Mehta in "Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story", was most recently seen in "Do Aur Do Pyar" and "Madgaon Express".

## Rasha Thadani: Shooting for *Azaad* had been special, completely irreplaceable

Debutante Rasha Thadani, who has stepped into the world of cinema with *Azaad*, said that shooting for the film had been so special and completely irreplaceable for her. She described it as the "best years" of her life. Rasha, daughter of actress Raveena Tandon, took to Instagram, where she shared a string of pictures from the behind-the-scenes moments from the film, which is directed by Abhishek Kapoor. She wrote a thank you note expressing her gratitude to the audiences. "What a wild ride it's been. The best years of my life. I couldn't be more thankful for all the love I've been receiving for Janaki. Thankyou for those who watched and loved *Azaad*. Shooting for this film had been so special and completely irreplaceable," she wrote. The actress added: "Thankyou for all the feedback as well, taking it into account, working on my

craft and will work harder for the next endeavour. Lots of love, Rasha." *Azaad*, which also stars Ajay Devgn and Aaman Devgn, is set in 1920s India, where a young stable boy bonds with a spirited horse. Amid rebellion and tyranny, his quest to ride the majestic animal becomes a journey of courage, awakening him to the country's fight for freedom. Bankrolled by Ronnie Screwvala and Pragma Kapoor, the film also features Diana Penty, and Mohit Malik. During the promotions of the film, Aaman and Rasha said that they are glad that they are fluent in Hindi. Rasha said, "My mother talks at home in Hindi only. Meanwhile, Aaman added by saying, "I think the industry that we are trying to work in, its main language is Hindi. So if we don't know the language, it is not a good thing. I am glad. We were unaware that we know Hindi so well."



### FUN

#### ARCHIE



#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



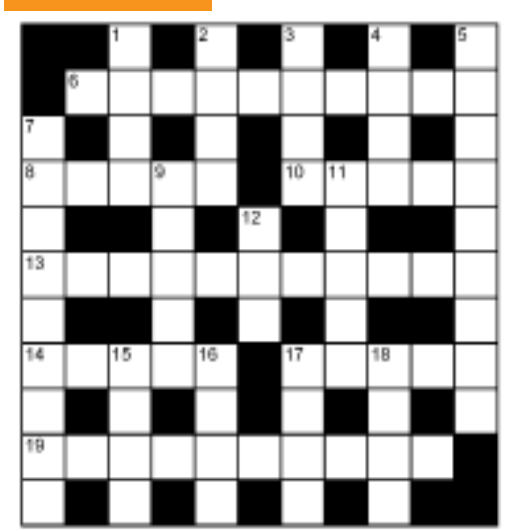
#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU



**Yesterday's solution**

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

**Rules**

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

**ACROSS**

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

**DOWN**

- The middle of the day
- Things to play with
- A wartime explosive
- Birthday present
- A day of the week
- Opposite of dullest
- The colour of grass
- Make smile or laugh
- Timid
- This lives in soil
- Cold winter flakes
- He wears a crown
- Require

**SOLUTION**

H	I	G	H	E	R	C	O	R
O	U	N	G	O	V	E		
C	O	L	O	R	R	A	T	
S	T	E	A	M	E	D		
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C	U	N	S	A	L			
T	N	T	O	N	K			
T	U	N	N	E	L			
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R	A	I	L	E				



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

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

TEJAL SINHA  
 tej.sinha30@gmail.com

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

In an engaging conversation with The Pioneer, she opens up about her journey, her approach to acting and the intriguing projects on the horizon.

Reflecting on her evolution as an artist, Nyrra credits her diverse experiences for shaping her both personally and professionally. “Transitioning from films to television and reality shows has opened up my creative horizons. It has helped me explore new facets of my personality,” she shares.

Interestingly, reality shows, particularly Bigg Boss, marked an important yet challenging chapter in her career. “I’ve never been part of a reality show before, and honestly, it tested me in ways I didn’t expect. As the daughter of a naval officer, I have an analytical mindset. I study patterns, look for facts and present my arguments with precision. This analytical nature made it hard for me to adapt to the unpredictable and chaotic

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

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

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

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

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

The character’s complexity intrigued Nyrra. “She’s not

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Beyond her acting career, Nyrra’s journey is a testament to her resilience, adaptability, and creative spirit. As she continues to explore diverse roles and mediums, her dedication to storytelling remains unwavering.

With *Checkmate* set to premiere and exciting projects in the pipeline, Nyrra is undoubtedly a name to watch out for. As she puts it, “I’m here to create, to inspire, and to keep evolving - not just as an actor but as a person.” Her words and work reflect the true essence of a multifaceted artist, and her fans can eagerly anticipate what’s next in her ever-evolving career.

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

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

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

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

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



### WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

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

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

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

#### Enhanced Efficiency in Waste Management

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



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

#### Transparency through Blockchain

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

Blockchain integration for data transparency and traceability is one of the most important contributions technology has made to waste management. The traditional systems lack reliable mechanisms to track waste from its origins all the way through to its final disposal. This lack of accountability leads to inefficiency, fraud, and non-compliance.

Blockchain technology solves this problem by creating tamper-proof records of waste management. The data is immutable, and all parties can access it. QR codes that are linked to blockchain records enhance traceability and allow real-time compliance verification.

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

#### Scalability for Large-Scale Waste Management

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

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

#### Empowering stakeholders through collaboration

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

#### Drive compliance and sustainability.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Actor Vijay Rangaraju is no more

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

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

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

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

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

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

## RGV'S CONFESSION AFTER WATCHING SATYA AGAIN!

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Akshay Kumar as Lord Shiva from Kannappa

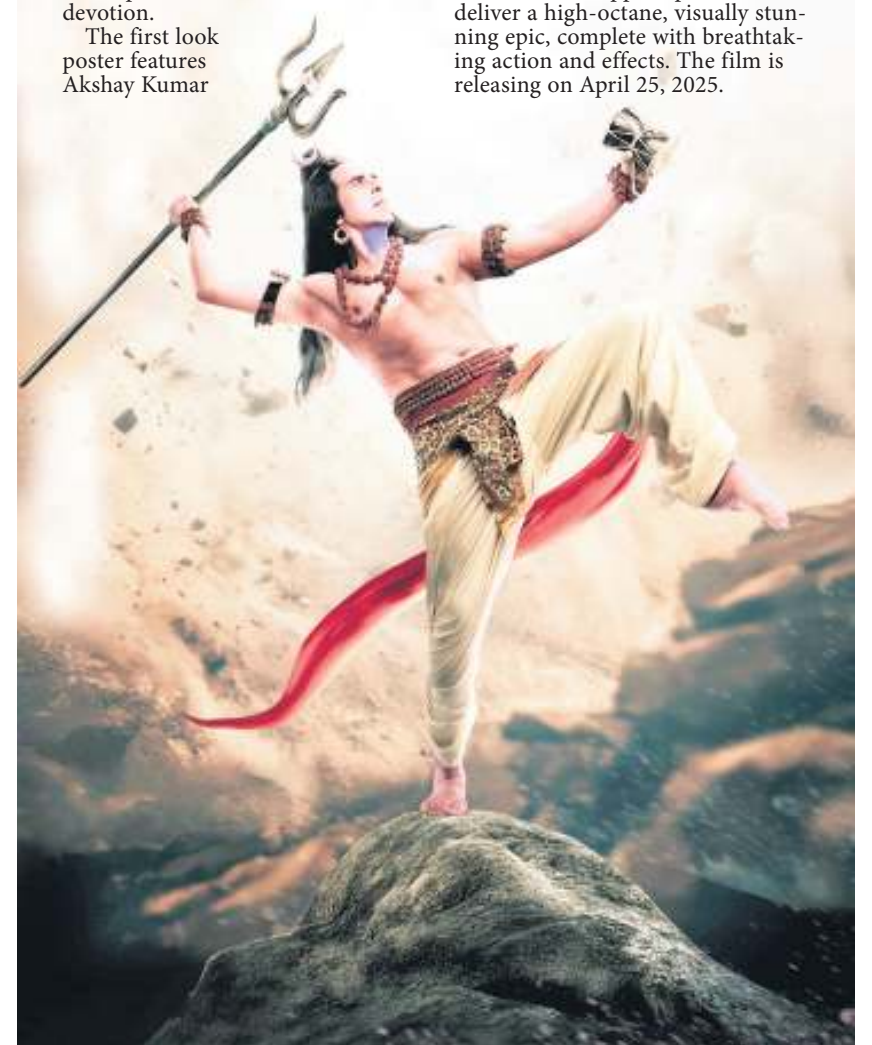
The promotions for the much-awaited film 'Kannappa' is now going aggressively. Vishnu Manchu, playing the protagonist of Kannappa and is also producer of the film, recently started promotions in Bengaluru and Chennai. Now, it's Monday, so the makers unveiled another look from the film, and this time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

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

The first look poster features Akshay Kumar

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

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



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

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



characters in this film and it was a blessing for me to work with them," said Sreenivas.

Manoj praises director Vijay and says he is a dedicated person. "I have seen the film and Sai's performance is top notch. Rohit is my childhood friend and he gave voiceover for my film a few years back, again for this film, I was happy that I shared screen space with him," said Manoj.

Rohit said that he became closer with Manoj with this film. "It's a wonderful journey working with Sai and we enjoyed a lot while shooting this film. This is one of the most memorable films for me and I hope it is going to be a great success and director Vijay is going to direct big films," said Rohit.