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Alcohol is available in Delhi but not water: **Modi**

**THE TEACHER**  
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Sankranthiki Vasthunnam is a case study for me: Director **ANIL RAVIPUDI**



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer  
**MoUs that could have been signed over chai in Hyderabad, now need Swiss Hot Chocolate. What is "innovative thinking?" Is it making Hyderabad-based companies travel thousands of miles to Davos in Switzerland and announce them as investments? Elect a clown, expect a circus**  
— KT Rama Rao, BRS MLA, Telangana

**DON'T MISS...**

**₹326 cr to support minorities**

The Minister for Law and Minority Welfare, NMD Farook, has announced that the State government has initiated a significant scheme aimed at the financial uplift of minority communities. Under the project, the government has earmarked a budget of ₹326 crore for the financial year 2024-2025 to support minority beneficiaries in self-employment and skill training. Minister Farook stated that the government is dedicatedly rolling out plans to implement this scheme for the welfare of the minority population....

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**23 blood-sucking flies discovered**

Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) researchers have identified 23 species of blood-sucking flies in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, including 13 species previously unreported in India. ZSI director Dhriti Banerjee said. The study, recently published in the journal 'Parasites and Vectors', is the first comprehensive survey of these insects in the region. Locally called 'Bhusi flies,' these insects belong to the Culicoides genus and are similar to mosquitoes in their feeding habits. They primarily feed on the blood of livestock....

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**'Indian talent plays key role in US growth'**

Nasscom on Wednesday said H-1B visas have nothing to do with immigration issues and instead fill critical skills gap in the US, as the apex industry body asserted that technology will be the "lynchpin" of US economic growth, triggering continued need for "win-win partnerships" between companies on both sides. Nasscom vice president Shivendra Singh slammed "myth" that H-1B workers are cheap labour, replace American workers, or depress US salaries, and sought to assuage concerns around any adverse....

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**India will adhere to dress code: BCCI**

The Indian cricket team will adhere to the dress code set by the ICC during the upcoming Champions Trophy, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI on Wednesday, rejecting speculation that the Board had objected to host Pakistan's name on the side's official jersey. The Champions Trophy will be held from February 19 and India will play its share of matches in Dubai after citing security concerns as the reason for refusing to travel to Pakistan. "BCCI will follow every uniform-related ICC rule during...."

-SPORTS

## 'AP a global destination for investments'

Naidu showcases state's potential at Davos

Chandrababu smiles as Revanth says Amaravati is not our competitor

PNS ■ DAVOS

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has positioned Andhra Pradesh as a prime destination for global investments, showcasing the State's potential in technology, green energy and infrastructure, at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. During his third day at the forum, CM Chandrababu engaged with executives from major multinational corporations to explore new investment opportunities and further strengthen the State's economic ties with global leaders.

**Google Cloud expansion in AP**

One of the key highlights of the CM's engagements on Wednesday was the meeting with Google Cloud CEO, Thomas Kurian. They discussed the potential for establishing a design centre in Visakhapatnam focused on developing proprietary chips used in servers. The CM invited Google Cloud to set up a manufacturing unit in the State to integrate its server supply chain, assuring full support from the Andhra Pradesh government. The State is eager to position itself as a global hub for server management services, leveraging its strategic location and advanced infrastructure.

Google Cloud, the third-largest cloud provider globally, already has two cloud regions in India -- Delhi and Mumbai -- and recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Andhra Pradesh government. [Continued on Page 2](#)

**Invites Google Cloud to set up a manufacturing unit**



**Naidu meets Bill Gates, seeks collaboration in health, innovation**

PNS ■ DAVOS

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu met with Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum summit in Davos. The meeting focused on forging partnerships to transform Andhra Pradesh into a global hub for health, education, and innovation.

During the discussion, the Chief Minister



proposed the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Health Innovation and Diagnostics in Andhra Pradesh. Highlighting the potential of this centre to deliver cutting-edge healthcare services to the public, the Chief Minister emphasised the State's commitment to leveraging innovation to improve public health outcomes.

He further invited Bill Gates to join the advisory board for the proposed Artificial Intelligence University in Andhra Pradesh. This initiative aims to position the State as a leader in AI research and development, aligning with global advancements in technology and education. [Continued on Page 2](#)

**'Telangana & Mah are rich and AP is poor'**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy reiterated the state's vision of fostering friendly ties with neighbouring states and competing on a global scale during the "Country Strategic Dialogue" round table at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. Sharing the stage with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, Revanth highlighted the importance of cooperation and development.

AP Chief Minister Chandrababu was all smiles when TG CM Revanth said, "We are not competing with Amaravati" and "My state and Hyderabad is going to be China Plus One."

Acknowledging the contribution of Andhra CM Chandrababu Naidu, Revanth said, "Chandrababu and YSR developed Hyderabad."

While CM Revanth said, "We want to be a one Trillion USD economy," CM Chandrababu said, "Unfortunately they are rich and I am poor. Maharashtra is the financial capital of India and Telangana has the highest per capita income."

"It is a pleasure to share the stage with my counterparts from Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. These states not only share borders but also rivers like Krishna and Godavari, which originate in



Maharashtra, flow through Telangana and reach Andhra Pradesh. Development is our priority," Revanth stated during the session.

He emphasized Telangana's ambition to position Hyderabad as a global city comparable to New York and Tokyo.

"Hyderabad is Telangana's crown jewel, and we are focused on building world-class infrastructure to make it compete with cities like Tokyo and Singapore. Our focus is not just on competition but on making Telangana the destination of choice for global investors as part of the China Plus One strategy," he added.

Reflecting on the contributions of leaders like Rajiv Gandhi, PV Narasimha Rao, Chandrababu Naidu, and YS Rajasekhara Reddy, Revanth acknowledged the economic reforms that laid the foundation for Telangana's progress. [Continued on Page 2](#)

## Lokesh discusses aviation expansion plans with Air India CEO

Suggests establishment of MRO hub at Vizag Airport, international airport within CRDA area

PNS ■ DAVOS

Education, IT and Electronics Minister Nara Lokesh met Air India Managing Director and CEO Campbell Wilson here on Wednesday, and discussed the development of the aviation sector in the State. During the meeting, Lokesh highlighted the achievements of the State's air traffic, noting that the seven operational airports in Andhra Pradesh have successfully handled 5.251 million passengers.

The Minister proposed the estab-



lishment of a Regional Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) hub at Visakhapatnam

Airport, stressing that such a facility would not only boost the local economy but also enhance Air India's operational efficiency. He also suggested the creation of an international airport within the CRDA (Capital Region Development Authority) area, similar to Dubai, spanning 3,000 to 5,000 acres.

"This new airport," he argued, "would play a crucial role in global aviation, attracting international traffic and investment to Andhra Pradesh." [Continued on Page 2](#)

## Focus on timely resolution of grievances, growth targets: CS

Nodal officer in each department to oversee grievance redressal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand has stressed the need for timely and rational resolution of public grievances. During a review meeting with department secretaries and district collectors, he said that non-financial complaints should be resolved immediately. A nodal officer should be appointed in each department to oversee grievance redressal, with random checks to monitor progress, he added.

Vijayanand also revealed that a collectors' meeting will be held in the second or third week of February. Secretaries are to provide detailed information about government schemes to collectors one week prior, ensuring they are fully informed to discuss the programmes effectively.

He reiterated the government's vision for achieving a 15-per cent growth rate by 2047 as part of the Swarna Andhra initiative. The Planning Department has identified 525 key performance indicators and departments are urged to meet their targets.

Additionally, Vijayanand instructed all departments to submit relevant data to the one-man commission on SC categorisation by January 27. To ensure district collectors are well-versed in government schemes, secretaries will brief them virtually every Saturday, with a temporary schedule already in place for the next 11 weeks. This initiative aims to enhance the effective implementation of programmes at the district level.

CCLA G Jayalakshmi, CM Secretary Pradyumna and others attended the meeting.



**Principal Secretaries assume office**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Two higher officials assumed office in two separate programmes at the Secretariat in Velagapudi in Amaravati on Wednesday. Mukesh Kumar Meena officially took charge as the Principal Secretary of the General Administration Department (GAD) of Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday, in the first building of the State Secretariat.

His appointment comes in the light of recent transfers of several senior IAS officers.

In addition to his new responsibilities at the GAD, Meena will continue to hold his previous role as the Principal Secretary of the Excise Department. On the occasion of his assuming office, various GAD officials, along with numerous Secretariat staff and employees, gathered to extend their congratulations and well wishes to Meena. [Continued on Page 2](#)

**AP to boost tourism with focus on Buddhist sites, tribal circuit**

P3

**PANIC OVER FALSE ALARM 12 dead after jumping off train, getting killed by another**

PNS ■ JALGAON

At least 12 passengers were killed on Wednesday evening when they jumped from their train in panic due to a 'fire incident', only to be run over by another train on the adjacent tracks in North Maharashtra's Jalgaon district, officials said.

Twelve bodies were sent to the nearby civil hospital while six to seven persons were injured, special Inspector General of Police Dattatraya Karale told PTI.

The accident took place between Maheji and Pardhade stations near Pachora, more than 400 km from Mumbai, where the 12533 Lucknow-Mumbai Pushpak Express had halted after someone pulled the chain around 5 pm, Central Railway officials said, without confirming the death toll.

Some passengers of the Pushpak Express jumped off, and were hit by the oncoming Karnataka Express heading from Bengaluru to Delhi, said Central Railway's chief spokesperson Swapnil Nila.

IG Karale told PTI that a "fire incident" occurred on Pushpak Express, at km 372/07 between Maheji and Pardhade stations. The



train stopped at the location, and some passengers disembarked. Train No. 12627, Bengaluru-New Delhi Karnataka Express hit people standing on the railway tracks, he added.

"Six to seven people have been injured. All injured passengers are being treated at the hospital, none of their injuries are serious. Both trains have reached their respective next stations and the accident site has been cleared," the senior police official added.

Pushpak Express departed from the spot in just 15 minutes, while the Karnataka Express was removed within 20 minutes after the accident, a railway official said.

## Raise awareness on PM Surya Ghar Yojana: CS

Central scheme allows households to generate electricity by installing rooftop solar systems

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand has directed officials to take immediate steps to raise awareness on the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana across the State. During the first State-level Coordination Committee meeting held at the State Secretariat on Wednesday, Vijayanand discussed the implementation of both the PM Surya Ghar Scheme and the PM Kusum Scheme.

The Chief Secretary stressed that the Central government's initiative allows households to generate their own electricity by installing rooftop solar systems, which will significantly reduce electricity bills. The scheme, which will be rolled out by the National

Programme Implementation Agency (NPIA) at the national-level and the State Implementation Agencies (SIAs) at the State-level, aims to promote solar energy across the country. Under the scheme, DISCOMs will facilitate the instal-

lation of solar rooftops in their respective areas. Vijayanand directed the officials to launch a comprehensive awareness campaign to ensure widespread participation in the scheme. He stressed the importance of encour-



aging people to take advantage of the initiative. The Chief Secretary also highlighted a significant proposal to develop Nadimuru village in Kuppam mandal of Chittoor district and Naravari village in Chandragiri mandal of Tirupati district as model solar villages, aiming for 100 per cent solarisation. In addition, the State government plans to develop five villages in each district as model solar villages under a pilot project.

Under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, the Central government offers substantial subsidies, 60 per cent of the cost for systems with a capacity of 2 kW, 40 per cent for systems between 2 and 3 kW, and up to Rs 78,000 for systems up to 3 kW. Applicants need to have a suitable

[Continued on Page 2](#)



# AP to boost tourism with focus on Buddhist sites, tribal circuit

● Proposal to create digital library showcasing tourism sites across State



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Amrapali Kata, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC), has emphasised the State's strategic direction in bolstering tourism with a focus on Buddhist sites, Shakti Peethas, and the Tribal Circuit. Speaking at a stakeholders meet on Wednesday, Amrapali outlined several key initiatives aimed at elevating Andhra Pradesh's tourism potential.

A key proposal was the creation of a digital library showcasing tourism sites across the State, enhancing accessibility and promoting virtual experiences. Amrapali also announced the forthcoming introduction of a new alcohol policy for hotels, a step towards establishing clear operational guidelines for the hospitality sector.

K Vijay Mohan, president of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Forum (APTF), emphasised the need for a comprehensive action plan to boost inbound tourism, particularly from ASEAN countries with over 200 mil-

lion Buddhists. He suggested focusing on the 18 Astadasha Shakti Peethas as key spiritual attractions for visitors from regions like China, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. Mohan also proposed 'The Story - The Footsteps of Buddha', a thematic tourism project centred on Buddhist monasteries. He highlighted the potential of the European market, especially through the Tribal Circuit, and identified the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as another key target for tourism growth.

The session was rich with valuable input from various tourism stakeholders, including hotel representatives, who shared insights into the future of the industry. Discussions delved into the challenges and opportunities in developing Inbound Tourism, particularly in Buddhist, temple, and tribal sectors, which are seen as critical for the growth of the State's tourism industry. APTF secretary M V Pavan Kartheek, vice-president S Prasanth, V Prabhu Kishore, chairman of Varun Group, and K Raghavendra Rao, chairman of Dasappa Hotels attended the meet.



## DLTC meeting proposes crop loan limit for 2025-26

● Rs 46,000 loan per acre proposed for paddy, Rs 42,500 for mango

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminisha has announced that the loan limits for the 2025-26 financial year were proposed to banks based on an evaluation of cultivation costs and crop yields during the 2023-24 and 2024-25 financial years. He emphasised that the District Level Technical Committee (DLTC) has prioritised farmers' welfare by deciding on high crop loan limits compared to previous years, aiming to support the agricultural community better.

Collector Dr Lakshminisha chaired the Krishna District Cooperative Central Bank (KDCCB) NTR District Level Technical Committee meeting at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Wednesday. Officials from the agriculture and allied sectors, progressive farmers, bankers, and others were present.

During the meeting, loan limits, i.e., the scale of finance for the various crops, and necessary steps were discussed. Various departmental officials and progressive farmers expressed their opinions. The farmers also explained the cost of cultivation, yielding, fertilisers, pesticides, harvesting, and other expenses.

The Collector said that the government's loan limit has been proposed through the DLTC. According to the proposals, the banks would provide a Rs.46,000 loan per acre for paddy for the 2025-26 financial year. Also, Rs.75,000 was proposed for oil palm and Rs.60,000 for silkworm. Also, the meeting proposed Rs.1.10 lakh for mirchi (Dry), Rs.1.15 lakh for mirchi (Irrigated), and Rs.42,500 for mango crops, he added.

Further, he said that compared to the previous year, this year, the DLTC proposed more loaning facilities for all agriculture and horticulture crops. Based on the Scale of Finance, banks would sanction 30 per cent more loans, he added. Meanwhile, he asked the farmers to utilise the various welfare schemes implemented by the State government and improve their financial status.

KDCCB Chief Executive Officer A Shyam Manohar, General Manager A Ranga Babu, Assistant LDM M Ramesh, NTR District Agriculture Officer DMF Vijaya Kumari, Horticulture Officer P Balaji Kumar, progressive farmers K Narasimha Rao, P Nageswara Rao, A Ajay Kumar, PSR Prasad, M Rajasekhar, and bankers attended the meeting.

## Durga temple chief priest Badrinath Babu passes away

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Lingambhotla Badrinath Babu, 64, the Chief Priest of Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam on Indrakeeladri Hill in Vijayawada, passed away due to a heart attack at his residence in the early hours of Wednesday. A devoted spiritual leader, Badrinath Babu had been associated with the Durga Temple for the past 40 years, providing invaluable guidance to devotees and performing rituals with dedication. He is survived by his wife, two sons, and a daughter. For the past 20 years, Badrinath Babu has been responsible for creating the exquisite Alankarams (decorations) of Durga Devi during the Dasara Sarannavaratri festivities, a role that earned him immense respect and recognition among devotees. Prominent figures expressed their condolences upon learning of his demise.

Minister for Endowments Anam Ramanarayana Reddy mourned the loss, calling it untimely and a significant blow to the community. "His untimely passing is deeply saddening. As the Chief Priest, he brought unparalleled expertise in the rituals and decorations of Durga Devi, leaving an indelible mark on the temple's spiritual traditions. His guidance and contributions remain an inspiration to all," the Minister stated. He also expressed his heartfelt sympathy to Badrinath Babu's family, recognising his decades of dedicated service to the temple and the spiritual uplift of its devotees.



## YSRCP seeks arrest of Tiruvuru MLA in attack case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP has demanded the immediate arrest of Tiruvuru MLA Kolikapudi Srinivas Rao for attacking Bhukya Chanti's family in Gopalapuram.

Former minister and YSRCP Bapatla district president Merugu Nagarjuna, along with MLC

Mondithoka Arun Kumar and party leaders Devineni Avinash, Nallagatla Swamidas, and Rayana Bhagyalakshmi, visited Bhukya Chanti's family to express their support and assured them that YSRCP stands with them.

Merugu Nagarjuna strongly condemned the attack and accused the ruling TDP of protecting the

family. Kolikapudi despite his illegal actions. He stated that Kolikapudi intervened in a family property dispute and physically assaulted Bhukya Chanti's family, leading her to attempt suicide.

He criticised the TDP government for failing to take action and demanded justice for the victim's family.

YSRCP leader Devineni Avinash stated that the MLA misused his power, and called for strict legal action. He also questioned the role of the local police in deleting crucial video evidence of the incident. The YSRCP vowed to continue its fight until justice was served to the victim's family and urged the government to take immediate action.



## Vijayawada city witnessing rapid development: MP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) has highlighted the rapid development of Vijayawada city, especially in the capital region, following the formation of the NDA alliance government under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. He expressed happiness over the availability of new vehicles for the convenience of the people of the city.

On Wednesday, MP Kesineni Sivanath, along with State Government Advisor MD Ahmad

Shareef and TDP State spokesperson Nagul Meera, unveiled the Hyundai Creta Electric Vehicle (EV) at the Lucky Hyundai showroom in Enikepadu.

Speaking at the event, MP Kesineni Sivanath stressed that the world is turning towards electric vehicles (EVs), which play a crucial role in reducing pollution. He also highlighted the benefit of reduced operational costs for consumers, making EVs more accessible. He expressed his desire for Vijayawada to develop as a city with green energy systems.

## 15-year-old physically challenged girl sexually assaulted

● Accused is identified as B. Yella Reddy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A 15-year-old physically challenged girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by a 50-year-old man in Bhemunipatnam on Tuesday. The incident came to light on Wednesday after the police registered a First Information Report (FIR) based on a complaint filed by the girl's parents.

According to Inspector G. Sudhakar of the Bhemunipatnam Police Station, the alleged assault occurred while the girl's parents were away at work. The accused, identified as B. Yella Reddy, reportedly took advantage of the situation. Upon learning of the incident, the girl's parents immediately reported the matter to the police. The accused was subsequently arrested and remanded on Wednesday. The police have registered relevant cases under the relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

Home Minister V. Anitha has assured that the government will take all necessary steps to ensure that the accused receives strict punishment. She further stated that the State government will provide all possible support to the victim and her family.

## Removal of private lands from 22-A list top priority

● District starts efforts to correct misclassifications in government land records

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to rectify misclassifications, the district administration has made it a top priority to remove private land details mistakenly included in the 22-A list of government lands. This list, which should only contain government-owned properties, has wrongly included private lands for various reasons, and steps are now being taken to rectify these errors.

"The administration is actively working to ensure that private properties, particularly those belonging to Visakhapatnam Port and VMRDA, are removed from the 22-A list," stated a senior revenue official. "The first phase has already identified properties for exclusion."

During recent revenue conferences, 687 petitions were submitted by landowners seeking the removal of their properties from the 22-A list. "We have successfully addressed 455 petitions and are currently reviewing the remaining 232," said Joint Collector K. Mayur Ashok. "We are committed to resolving these concerns promptly."

A significant achievement was the removal of approximately 5,000 acres of Visakhapatnam Port land



from the 22-A list during the previous government's tenure. However, another 5,000 acres of port land remain listed as government-owned. "We have prepared a report to facilitate the removal of these lands, primarily located in Gopalapatnam and Mulagada mandals," explained a Revenue Department official.

VMRDA, which oversees 2,500 to 3,000 acres across 19 villages, is also actively involved. These lands, acquired by the government and developed into layouts, have either been sold or remain unused. Yet, many are still incorrectly classified as government lands in the 22-A record, hindering resale and mortgaging for landowners. "We are

focusing on resolving these issues to assist the landowners," said the official. To expedite the process, Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has directed the removal of private lands from the 22-A list. "This directive aims to streamline the process and ensure swift resolution of these land-related issues," said a government spokesperson.

A committee led by the Collector has been formed to deliberate and make final decisions. "We aim to resolve most of these cases by the end of this month," said Mayur Ashok. This initiative is expected to alleviate the difficulties faced by landowners in Visakhapatnam and improve the overall land records system.

## Vizag police rescue five youth stranded in Sharjah

Jobless and abandoned abroad, skilled workers return home after swift action by city police

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Five youth from Visakhapatnam, who were stranded in Sharjah after being misled by a local consultancy, were brought back home by the city police on Wednesday. The youth, all trained in welding and other skilled trades, had travelled abroad seeking better opportunities but were left jobless and helpless. The group was received at the Visakhapatnam Airport by Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi, who briefed the media about the operation.

The victims, identified as Poluparthi Lakshmi Narayana (21), Gara Rajesh (21), and Paila Rama

Swamy (21) - all welders from PK Gudem, Nathavaram mandal, Anakapalle district - along with Kalla Venkata Rao (25), a rigger from Kanchili, Srikakulam district, and Gedda Lokes (24) from Seekuvanipalem, Pedagantyada, Visakhapatnam city, were assured employment through agents Durga Rao (alias Prasad) and Chandu.

According to Bagchi, the youth had completed their Intermediate education and were trained in welding through a consultancy and training institute in Gajuwaka. Each of them paid around ₹78,000 to the consultancy, which facilitated their move to Sharjah last year. However, while a few



secured jobs after skill tests conducted by the company, many others were left without employment or support.

The abandoned youth faced severe challenges as they struggled to return home. "The consultancy that sent us abandoned us after failing to coordinate with the company," said Rajesh, one of the rescued individuals. Unable to find a way back, the youth reached out to the Vizag media after seeing a social media post. Their appeal prompted an immediate response. "The police acted swiftly and helped us return home," Rajesh added.

Bagchi explained that the police

chose to prioritise recovering the victims' money instead of pursuing legal action against the consultancy. "This was in accordance with the victims' request for financial restitution," he said.

The Commissioner also highlighted that this was not an isolated incident. Similar cases involving stranded Telugu youth in countries like Saudi Arabia and Cambodia have also been addressed by the Vizag police. "We are collaborating with the Ministry of External Affairs to investigate job consultancies, examining their registration status, and ensuring compliance with licensing regulations," Bagchi stated.

## Couple dies in road accident

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A road accident near the Aganampudi Toll Gate, under the Duvvada police station limits, resulted in the death of a couple on Wednesday. The victims have been identified as G. Manmadha Rao (38) and his wife Aruna Kumari (35), residents of Donkada in Aganampudi.

According to the police, the couple was traveling on a motorcycle towards Gajuwaka for a bank-related errand when the accident occurred. The duo allegedly collided with a lorry, and they were crushed under the rear wheels of the vehicle. The impact of the crash led to their immediate deaths at the scene.

It was learnt that the victims are survived by two children.

# Tourism Minister assures of constructing BAR association building

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Minister for Tourism Kandula Durgesh assured of constructing a building for the BAR association after discussing the matter with the Collector. The Rajamahendravaram BAR association felicitated Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister lauded the Rajahmundry BAR association for completing 100 years. He promised that he would discuss with Law Minister Farooq, MP D Purandeswari and local MLA to resolve the problems of the BAR Association. "I will discuss with the district Collector on constructing a building for the Rajahmundry BAR association and convene a meeting of Corporate Social Responsibility to discuss issues," the Minister asserted. Kandula Durgesh vowed that he would take the notice of the State Cabinet for the construction of POCSCO court here. He reiterated his commitment for the development of Rajahmundry city and the surrounding areas. "Akhandha Godavari project is being carried out to attract international tourists to the district. The tender process for the same has been completed and the project works will begin soon under which permanent structures will be constructed to provide hospitality to the tourists," the Minister announced. "As part of the Akhandha Godavari project,

innovative cascading fountain designs, light and sound shows will be set up in the Havelock Bridge area, and attractive waterfalls, glass bridges, gaming zone, space theme, urban hot craft bazaar, hanging gardens, hologram zoo, time travel, rail museum, and aquarium tunnels will be developed," the Tourism Minister highlighted. Kandula Durgesh mentioned that the Bridge Lanka Island would be constructed under the name 'Tapovanam' and setting up resorts with a focus on environmental friendliness. Furthermore, a nature walk would also build camping sites in Bridge Lanka, as well as develop Kadiyam nurseries. As part of the Akhandha Godavari project, the Kota Sattemma temple would also be developed. "With the support of Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, an allocation of Rs 98 crore has already been made for the tourism projects in the State. The Gandikota is being developed in the Rayalaseema region at a cost of Rs 78 crore. Tourism circuits and anchor hubs are being established not only in Rajahmundry but also in all parts of the State as part of tourism development," Minister Kandula Durgesh revealed. MLAs Gorantla Butchhai Chowdary, Adireddy Srinivas, Battula Balaramakrishna, BAR Association president Veerendranath, Secretary Ramesh were among those who attended the meeting.



# Cycle rally taken out to mark 10 yrs of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A cycle rally, led by Prakasam district Collector A Thameem Ansariya, was taken out here on Wednesday, to mark 10 years of launching the Central scheme of 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao'. District Collector Thameem Ansariya peddled the cycle along with the participating girls in the cycle rally, taken out on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Collector Thameem Ansariya said that in order to make the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' a success, all government and non-government organizations should lend their support for reducing gender discrimination and promoting development of girls in all fields, and that the public should also provide full cooperation for this. Earlier the Collector flagged off the rally. Later the girl students formed a human chain and a pledge was administered on the occasion. DRO China Obulesu, PD ICDS Sujana and district Children protection officer P Vishes Kumar and other officials were present.



# Teachers asked to strive hard for best results in DSC

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu asked the teachers to strive hard to ensure that West Godavari district get best results in the DSC examination. The Minister held a meeting with teachers, who will be training for free coaching for the DSC examination to be conducted, under the the Dharma Rao Foundation in Palakollu on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ramanaidu said that teachers should work hard to ensure good results in the DSC to be conducted with great ambition

by the coalition Government in the State. The Minister opined that being an MLA is not just about implementing government welfare and development programs, but also about carrying out social service awareness programs among the people. Despite the difficulties faced, many good programmes are being implemented by the Dharma Rao Foundation. The Minister revealed that most of the unemployed young women requested that the foundation provide training for DSC examinations. Initially it was expected that there would be around 100 to 150 candidates applying in the Palakollu con-

stituency, but the applications received were 600 to 700 for the DSC training, the Minister mentioned. He made it clear that a large number of candidates have come forward for the training because of the credibility of the programs which he is conducting and arrangements are being made accordingly. Minister Ramanaidu said that study material would be provided from the coaching center in Avanigadda for the training. Free coaching committee principal CHS Nagalingeswara Rao and convener Deepthi Appa Rao were among those who attended the programme.

# Installing 1 lakh CCTV cameras aimed across the State: DGP

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Director General of Police Dwaraka Tirumala Rao has said that 18,000 CCTVs have been installed across the State and it is aimed to install one lakh CCTVs in the coming days. The DGP held a meeting with the Kurnool Range DIG Koya Pravin, SP Adhiraj Singh Rana and other officials here on Wednesday and reviewed the law and order situation of the district. The DIG and the SP explained to the DGP about the steps taken to contain crimes and maintain the law and order situation efficiently in the district. Speaking on the occasion, DGP Dwaraka Tirumala Rao said that the crime rate has come down in the State as efficient steps taken by the police officials across the State. "The number of crimes has also decreased across the state. Crimes are currently under control. The police officers and police personnel should use technology in investigating cyber crimes and important cases and to take strict measures from time to time to control crimes. All officials should work with commitment and maintain law and order in the district," the DGP told the police officials.

# 3 Vedic School students killed in accident, Guv, CM express grief

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Kurnool, Jan 22: In a tragic road accident, three students of a Vedic school were killed when the van in which they were travelling overturned in Karnataka State and Andhra Pradesh Governor, Chief Minister AND Ex-CM expressed grief over the death of three Vedic students. Vedic school officials in Mantralaya said on Wednesday that a group of students of Sanskrit and Vedic School, located in Mantralayam in Kurnool district in AP, were going to Hampi in Karnataka State to participate in the spiritual programme Aradhana. The van in which they were travelling overturned at Sindhanur in Karnataka State killing three Vedic students, Sujendra, Abhilash and Haivadhan. The three Vedic students were killed instantaneously. The driver of the van was also killed in the mishap. Governor of Andhra Pradesh S Abdul Nazeer expressed anguish and profound grief on the death of three students of Vedic pathashala of Mantralayam and the driver in a road accident near Sindhanur of Raichur district in Karnataka on Wednesday,



that took place when the vehicle they were traveling in turned upside down. Governor Abdul Nazeer offered his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members and directed the officials to provide better treatment facilities to the injured. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu also expressed shock and grief over the death of three Vedic school students in a road accident. He directed the officials to take steps to provide the best medical treatment to those who were injured in the accident. The

Chief Minister conveyed his profound sympathies to the bereaved families. Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy also expressed shock over the death of three Vedic students. In a message he expressed deep shock over the tragic road accident near Sindhanur in Karnataka, which claimed the lives of three Vedic students of Veda Patashala of Mantralayam and the driver. He extended his heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased and urged the government to provide the best medical treatment for the injured.

# Three cops suspended over breach of service rules

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Guntur District Superintendent of Police, S Satish Kumar, has suspended three police personnel for their involvement in taking loans in violation of police service regulations. This action was taken following an internal investigation into the conduct of these officers. The suspended officers include

one AR head constable, one AR constable, and one home guard. According to a statement released by the SP, these individuals were found to have violated Rule 3 of the Andhra Pradesh Cooperative Societies (Conduct) Rules - 1964. Consequently, they were suspended under Rule 8(1) of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules - 1991.

# Police arrest woman offender, recover Rs 35 L. worth booty

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The Prakasam district police arrested a woman offender at Balaji, nagar here, and recovered Rs 35 lakh worth booty including gold jewellery. Informing this to the media here on Wednesday, Superintendent of police AS Damodar said that the police arrested the offender Ganta Elishamma alias Gandham Sujatha (39), wife of Chinna Anjaiah and recovered gold jewellery weighing

460 grams, worth over Rs 35 lakh. The police also recovered intoxicative medicines including Olanzapine Mouth Dissolving Tablets 7.5mg and Trihexyphenidyl Hydrochloride Tablets. The SP said that the accused woman used to search for a lonely woman. She committed thefts at Tangutur, Ongole Taluka, kothapatnam, Ongole I Town, Ongole II Town, NG Padu, Kandukur Town PS limits. Among them she committed 9 thefts by giving intoxicat-



ed sleeping pills and committed two thefts in the gold shops. Two elderly women died in these cases.

She used to attend functions and befriend lonely and elderly women. Later she used to go to their homes,

offer soft drinks laced with intoxicative pills including Olanzapine Mouth Dissolving Tablets, and Trihexyphenidyl Hydrochloride Tablets IP. When the victims fell into a deep sleep, she used to decamp with gold jewellery and cash. The police formed special teams to arrest the accused in the cases. The SP appreciated DSP R Srinivasa Rao, CI Hazarathaiiah, Sis B Mahendra, Naga Malleswara Rao and Sk Babu Basha for cracking a major crime case.

# Officials directed submit detailed report on endowment lands

PNS ■ ELURU

The district administration has initiated steps to protect the endowment lands and the endowment and revenue officers have been directed to submit a report on endowment lands on mandal wise by Friday. A committee, comprising officials of various departments, headed by the district Collector, was formed especially to take steps to protect the endowment lands in the district. District Collector K Vetri Selvi held a meeting with the officials of various departments here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector directed the officials to lay focus on encroached endowment lands and take steps to free them from the encroachers. She also directed the officials to collect lease amounts from the tenants. "A comprehensive report on the endowment lands that exist in 25 mandals in the district should be submitted by Friday. A detailed report on the endowment lands which have been encroached by the



grabbers should be submitted with the survey numbers of the lands," she ordered the officials. The Collector emphasized that details of the endowment lands, which are lying vacant, should be gathered and informed the same to

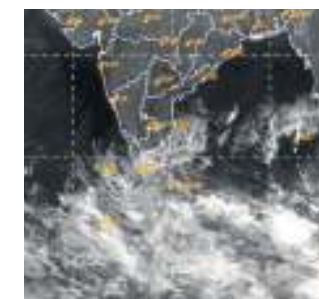
the revenue divisional officer and mandal Tahsildars to take steps to protect the lands. Collector Vetri Selvi underlined that all departments should work in coordinated manner to protect the endowment lands. Collector P Dhatri Reddy,

Additional SP N Suryachandra Rao, DRO V Visweswar Rao, Endowment Assistant Commissioner V Hari Surya Prakash and Sub-collector Smarn Raj were among those who attended the meeting.

# Shallow fog likely in AP in next 3 days

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Shallow fog is likely to occur at isolated places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next three days. Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday. In a daily weather report here, it said that dry weather is likely to prevail in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days. The lowest minimum temperature of 13 degrees Celsius was recorded at Aroyavaram in the plains of Coastal Andhra Pradesh on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, the report added.



# Investments by Hyd companies could have been settled over chai here itself, says KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS leader KT Rama Rao took a swipe at the TG government's decision to announce investments by Hyderabad-based companies at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos in Switzerland. In a post on 'X' on Wednesday, KTR criticised the practice, labelling it as a symbol of misplaced priorities. Sharing an image highlighting agreements signed by local companies like MEIL, Skyroot Aerospace and CtrlS at Davos, KTR sarcastically remarked, "What is 'innovative thinking'? Is it making Hyderabad-based companies travel thousands of miles to Davos in Switzerland, and announce them as investments?" He added, "Elect a clown, expect a circus," followed by the hashtag #CongressFailedTelangana. KTR's critique centred on the irony of promoting investments by companies headquartered in Hyderabad on an international platform. The leader suggested



that such announcements could have been made locally, saving costs. "A simple conversation over chai in Hyderabad could have achieved the same thing," he said.

ACROSS THE STATES



Mock drill conducted for Uttarakhand UCC Portal

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



HC dismisses EPS' petition against lower court order

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



Man found dead in home, FIR against wife

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

Two Maoists killed in Bokaro

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

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

Alcohol is available in Delhi but not water: Modi

URGES BJP TO TARGET WINNING MORE THAN 50 SEATS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

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

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

Those born in the last 25

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

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

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

The BJP will run a massive

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

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

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

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

Kejriwal unveils 7-point 'manifesto' for middle class

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

India on track to meet SDG health targets: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

The NHM has contributed to improving India's public

health outcomes through its relentless efforts in expanding human resources, addressing critical health issues, and fostering an integrated response to health emergencies, the Cabinet was informed.

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

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

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



India's development needs to be inclusive: Rajnath

PNS ■ PATHANAMTHITTA (KERALA)

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ BENGALURU

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

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

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

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

Shivakumar, who is also the Congress Karnataka unit president, the supporters raised slogans - "Shivakumar should be made the next Chief Minister". A Digambar Jain monk, Gunadhara Nandi, along with 18 other senior monks of the Jain order blessed Shivakumar of becoming the next CM.

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

Scientists discover 23 species of blood-sucking flies

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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

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

Locally called 'Bhusi flies,' these insects belong to the Culicoides genus and are similar to mosquitoes in their feeding habits. They primarily feed on the blood



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

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

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

Banerjee emphasised the need for regular surveillance

Nadda lauds milestones of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister J P Nadda on Wednesday lauded the BJP-led central dispensation's work in bringing about a continuous improvement in the women's health markers ever since it came to power in 2014. The minister was speaking at the 10th-anniversary celebrations of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign here.



our women. BBBP was not just a campaign to save and educate the girl child, but a broader vision to bring women into the mainstream," Nadda said. He claimed the initiative has

led to significant improvements in India's sex ratio at birth. "We have moved from 988 to 930, and the day is not far when the sex ratio will reach equality. But this requires us to work together with a focus on education and health," he said.

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

Haryana, often in the spotlight for its skewed sex ratio, implemented strict monitoring of ultrasound clinics to curb

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

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



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

PNS ■ MATHURA

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

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

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

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

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

SAIF ATTACK CASE

Multiple depts of forensic lab to examine evidence

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

Police on Sunday arrested the attacker, identified as Bangladeshi national Shareeful Islam Shehzad Mohammad Rohilla Amin Fakir, for stabbing Khan at his Bandra apartment on January 16 during a

burglary bid. A variety of materials, including mobile phones, clothes of the accused, and CCTV footage seized following the arrest of Fakir (30) alias Vijay Das, have been sent to the FSL for examination.

FSL departments such as Tape Authentication and Speaker Identification (TASI), Biology, DNA, Footprints, Physics, Cyber, and others will be involved in analysing the evidence, a police official said.

An official said police didn't notice blood stains on the clothes of the accused seized



FSL departments such as Tape Authentication and Speaker Identification (TASI), Biology, DNA, Footprints, Physics, Cyber, and others will be involved in analysing the evidence, a police official said.

from his bag when he was arrested from Thane. The official said investigators are facing difficulty in interro-

gating Fakir due to the language barrier as he speaks Hindi with a heavy Bangladeshi accent.

The accused has been asked to speak slowly so that police could decipher his statements, the official added.

Police on Tuesday reconstructed the sequence of events of the crime unfolded at Khan's building in Bandra. The accused was taken to a nearby building briefly during the recreation of the crime, the official added.

A day before, Khan was discharged from a private hospital in Mumbai after five days during which he underwent two surgeries.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A Boost for Indian Professionals

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

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



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

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

### PICTALK



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

# The legacy and survival of the Fourth Estate



SANTHOSH MATHEW

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

In 1780, James Augustus Hicky published India's first printed newspaper, 'Hicky's Bengal Gazette', also known as the Calcutta General Advertiser, normative power of print media.

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

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



press—with publications in Hindi, English and regional languages—even stalwarts like Dainik Bhaskar and Malayala Manorama are grappling with reduced readership. Legacy newspapers such as Deepika, India's oldest surviving Malayalam publication, and Mumbai Samachar, the nation's longest-running newspaper, now struggle to adapt to the digital age.

The shift is not merely technological but also cultural. The younger generation's preference for quick, digestible content over in-depth reporting signals a change in information consumption patterns. Traditional newspapers, with their rich investigative journalism and nuanced storytelling, are increasingly viewed as slow and outdated. The immediacy of apps like Daily Hunt and platforms offering free e-papers has made paying for physical newspapers seem redundant. This decline, however, should not overshadow the irreplaceable value of print media.

Unlike digital platforms prone to misinformation and algorithmic biases, newspapers have long been trusted for their credibility and editorial rigour. They offer a depth of coverage that ensures stories are not just told but examined and contextualised. Newspapers are archives of history, recording



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

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

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

need to make informed decisions. At a time when digital echo chambers threaten the very fabric of public discourse, newspapers serve as a counterbalance, offering diverse perspectives and challenging groupthink.

The theme of survival is intrinsic to the narrative of Indian newspapers. Just as Hicky's Bengal Gazette persevered despite colonial censorship and competition, today's publications must navigate the challenges of the digital age. The story of newspapers is one of resilience and adaptation. From the handwritten Acta Diurna of Julius Caesar's Rome to Gutenberg's printing revolution, and from Hickey's modest four-pager to modern broadsheets like The Times of India, the medium has continually evolved to meet the needs of its time. As we celebrate Indian Newspaper Day 2025, it is an opportunity to reflect on the enduring significance of the printed word. While the medium may change, the principles of journalism—truth, accountability, and the public good—remain timeless. It is up to readers, journalists, and policymakers to ensure that these principles continue to thrive in an age of rapid technological change.

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### US EXITS FROM PARIS AGREEMENT

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

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

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

### LACK OF SKILLED WORKERS

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

### Ban criminals from contesting election



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

confiscating others' lands and buildings, extorting, and rioting, serve as a public representative in the Parliament, assemblies, and local municipal bodies? Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are glaring examples of such billionaire mafia dons whose crime list knew no bounds.

Both states suffered in development, education and growth for decades. Fielding the criminals and convicted killers in the elections is the antithesis of democracy and the Constitution. Money and muscle power win elections for them even if in jails. Such a list is quite exhaustive across all political parties. If 25-30 per cent of elected representatives have a criminal background, people are also to be blamed for their own decline and eclipsed future. Some political parties prominently field criminals and extremists in elections and depend on the cadre of criminal backgrounds.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

### SENIOR CITIZEN DEMAND CONCESSIONS

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

S K Khosla | Chandigarh

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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



SANJAY CHANDRA

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

Violence against the weak is a timeless and universal phenomenon. Child abuse, bullying, ragging, eve-teasing, molestation and domestic violence are only a few that can result in irretrievable damage to the psyche or can even have tragic consequences. I joined the hostel for the first time as a 12-year-old adolescent. I was out in the world, away from the shelter of my parental love, trying to overcome my insecurities.

One time a senior shouted at me to fetch a packet of cigarettes from the dormitory. I still remember my tears as I was roughly reprimanded for being tardy. I was scared of the hostel life. Three years later, I joined the college hostel. Ragging had not yet been banned and was openly indulged in by seniors. It was supposed to be a harmless fun activity to initiate the newly joined youngsters into college life. It had degenerated into something completely different. One Sunday, we were forced to sit above the wardrobe and hurl choice profanities at each other. I mouthed words



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

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

bully. It exists even at the workplace, sometimes in the guise of the rude superior who would not think twice before throwing the file back at you, or the one preying upon the junior female colleague. Women do not have a pleasant experience travelling on public transport. They are afraid to step out after sunset.

Every day we read of brutal assaults and deaths. The list is endless. Many are unable to bear the trauma and give up on life. I am not a psychologist. The reasons might be more complex than blaming it on not inculcating the right values in the children. But, that can be a starting point.

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



## FIRST COLUMN

### SHUN THE VIOLENCE, EMBRACE PEACE

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



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR **NIKUNJ JI**

Today we are living in a world where violence has become our culture. It may be seen in the hundreds of wars going on in different parts of the world or it may be seen through innumerable violent incidents that occur every day in cities and homes across the universe. So, what exactly has led to the spread of violence so much even though people strongly denounce it? We all know that the history of human civilisation is an epic saga of violence punctuated by episodes of relative calm. Violence, subtle and gross, manifest and incognito, has been the defining force of humanity's quest for power in the last two millennia. The rise and fall of empires, the religious crusades and socio-political uprisings down the ages were impelled by violence on a massive scale. One of the major reasons why violence has become so deeply embedded in the human psyche is that on the one hand, we denounce it but on the other hand we condone or even justify it. In the 21st century, which we all boast of living in, violence has been glorified in ingenious ways by the media, especially television, the internet and films. A world that has been fed so much on violence is no wonder becoming increas-



ingly dangerous to live in for its occupants. It's a known fact that today violence has become the means to seek political and social justice. Men kill men in the name of the almighty and later on, these killings are then justified as dharma by the custodians of religion when it is used for a righteous purpose. Amidst all these, a question that comes up is, Can one justify so much violence? Or, can violence ever root out adharm (unrighteousness)?

Well!!! To conquer dharma we need to first understand the true dharma of the self. We all must realise that good or evil are the traits of the human soul and even after death these traits or *sanskars* are carried on to the next birth. This *sanskars* may change or become stronger as per the person's karma in the next life. Hence, it follows that one may kill an evil person but one cannot destroy the evil in that person. It would instead increase due to feelings of hatred and revenge. Remember!! An evil act is bound to be punished as per the Law of Karma in the present or the next birth because there is a natural justice system that works infallibly and eternally. Hence, one must never think that if someone avenges a wrong by doing wrong in turn, he/she will not suffer. No!! The truth is that in this case, both persons will have to pay for their respective wrong actions by undergoing some suffering because any act done with ill will towards others is violence and it is bound to bring sorrow for the doer. Hence, a person may escape the laws of the land but his karma will catch up with him sooner or later for sure. We all need to understand the philosophy behind the word religion or dharma. Dharma in the true sense simply means living by eternal spiritual values such as peace and love. When we share love and goodwill with others it is bound to stir up similar feelings in that person. On the contrary, when we hate and harm others it is bound to spark ill will in them. The world that God created for us was a completely non-violent and harmonious world where no evil existed. Goodness exists eternally; it is when we begin to lose touch with our real values that we are enslaved by negative tendencies. We are all children of "Almighty" who is the ocean of love, peace and joy, so his qualities are our qualities too eternally, aren't they? That is why all humans resist hatred. They never resist love or joy. He is always merciful and benevolent towards all, so how can he justify violence? And the only way to bring peace and harmony back on earth is to empower ourselves spiritually and rid our minds of all negativities. This will uproot violence completely out of the world and the world would become the one that it was, serene and peaceful.

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

## Renuka Ji Dam: Addressing Delhi's water woes



K S TOMAR

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



The visionary Renuka Ji Dam project, conceived 58 years ago on Himachal Pradesh's serene Giri River, is finally transcending decades of delays to emerge as a game-changer. This landmark initiative promises to alleviate Delhi's chronic water scarcity while energising Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh with sustainable power generation. Beyond its functional benefits, the dam exemplifies federal cooperation and political resolve. Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually laid the foundation stone of this Rs 6,946-crore project on December 27, 2021. Now, with 95 per cent of procedural hurdles cleared, global tenders will soon be floated, paving the way for construction. Cost estimates have surged to Rs 8,262 crore, factoring a 5 per cent annual escalation. Targeted for completion by 2030, with operations commencing in 2032, this project's progress is critical for Delhi and beyond.

For Delhiites, the dam symbolises the realisation of a 58-year-old aspiration. The stored water will be routed to Delhi-NCR, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana through the Hathnikund Barrage, further reaching the Wazirabad and Okhla Barrages. Delhi's water demand exceeds 1,200 million gallons daily (MGD), with severe shortages during summer. The Renuka Ji Dam, promising 275 MGD, will bridge this deficit, bolstering domestic supply, industrial growth, and infrastructure development.

Haryana leads with a 5.73 BCM share (47.82 per cent), contributing Rs 555.95 crore. Uttar Pradesh's 3.721 BCM (31.05 per cent) follows with Rs 361.04 crore. Rajasthan holds 1.119 BCM (9.34 per cent), contributing Rs108.58 crore. Himachal, Uttarakhand, and Delhi contribute Rs 36.67 crore, Rs 30.17 crore, and Rs 70.25 crore, respectively. Uttarakhand's share of water in the upper Yamuna basin is 0.311 BCM, which constitutes 2.60Rs30.17 crore of the total share. Together, the states allocate Rs 1,162.66 crore for this critical project. Originally slated to showcase progress before Delhi's 2025 Assembly elections, the dam faced delays, pushing construction timelines by 5-6 months. Intervention by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO)



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

could expedite design approvals and tendering. Local tensions remain high. The Jan Sangharsh Samiti criticised project authorities for inadequate rehabilitation efforts, including compensation gaps for displaced families. Activists demand higher pay-outs aligned with Public Works Department estimates, claiming the current compensation is insufficient. Harikesh Meena, Managing Director of HP Power Corporation, refutes these allegations, stating Rs 1,573 crore has been disbursed, with 90 houseless families offered relocation options.

Himachal Pradesh is set to gain 200 million units of electricity annually, worth Rs 66 crore. Delhi has already transferred Rs 270 crore, funding 90 per cent of the Rs 300-crore power machinery cost, underscoring the project's importance. Renuka Ji, nestled in Himachal's Sirmaur district, is ideal for the dam due to its geographical and hydrological advantages. The Giri River, a Yamuna tributary, ensures a steady water flow. The site also holds immense cultural significance. Named after Goddess Renuka, the mother of Parashurama (an avatar of Lord Vishnu), the area is steeped in mythology. Renuka Lake, India's largest natural lake, draws pilgrims year-round. Ancient temples dedicated to Goddess Renuka and Lord Parashurama further enhance its spiritual and historical value. The project blends technological ambition with religious reverence, ready to address Delhi's water woes and power needs for generations.

The Rs 8,262.28-crore Renuka Ji Dam project, a 148-meter-high rock-filled structure, will transform water and power availability across six states. Submerging 1,508 hectares and displacing 7,000 residents, including 346 houseless families, the project spans 41 villages across 25 panchayats. Proposed in 1976, the dam faced decades of procedural hurdles. Initially estimated at Rs 4,596 crore

in 2015, costs have ballooned. A significant milestone was achieved in January 2019, when a MoU among the six beneficiary states, brokered by then Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, resolved water-sharing disputes. In 2022, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by PM Modi, approved financial support, pushing the project into execution mode. Located near Dadahu village, the dam will store 498 million cubic meters of water, routed to Delhi-NCR, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan via key barrages. As part of the PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, it will deliver 23,000 litres per second to Delhi. Additionally, incidental hydroelectric power generation (40 MW) will earn Himachal Rs120 crore annually. Technical Experts predict a 110 per cent increase in the Giri River's flow, ensuring reliable water supplies during lean periods. Despite challenges faced by displaced communities, the Renuka Ji Dam promises long-term benefits: improved water security for Delhi, agricultural irrigation, and energy generation marking it a milestone in cooperative federalism and infrastructure development.

Despite its potential, the project's journey was fraught with challenges. Environmental concerns, inter-state disputes, land acquisition hurdles, and funding delays plagued progress. Securing environmental clearances was a monumental task. Forested landscapes raised alarms over wildlife displacement and green cover submergence. Years of negotiations and compensatory afforestation plans eventually paved the way.

Inter-state discord over water-sharing ratios and financial contributions delayed progress. Himachal Pradesh had to acquire 1,477 hectares of land, including 909 hectares of forest. Protests and legal battles over compensation and rehabilitation compounded delays until enhanced packages and livelihood restoration initiatives placat-

ed affected communities. The project's escalating cost was another sticking point. Initially pegged at Rs 3,600 crore, delays ballooned the budget to Rs 6,946 crore by 2021. Financial deadlock broke when the central government agreed to fund 90 per cent of the cost under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY). This eased the financial burden on states, with Delhi swiftly sanctioning Rs 1,066 crore as its share.

The central government played a crucial role in reviving the project. Integrating it into initiatives like the Jal Shakti Abhiyan and National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), underscored the dam's importance. Accelerated clearances, robust mediation, and funding commitments demonstrated political resolve. With construction set to commence by mid-2025 and completion targeted for 2032, strict oversight will ensure timely execution.

The Renuka Ji Dam epitomises cooperative federalism at its finest—where the centre and states unite to tackle shared challenges. For Himachal Pradesh, it heralds economic growth, energy self-sufficiency, and enhanced infrastructure. For Delhi, it is a lifeline, promising a reliable solution to its chronic water crisis. Beyond immediate benefits, the dam's capacity to regulate river flow and mitigate downstream flooding enhances its value as a climate-resilient infrastructure.

As a testament to sustainable development, the Renuka Ji Dam underscores the synergy of political will, inter-state collaboration, and community engagement in overcoming complex challenges. By transforming Himachal Pradesh into a green energy hub and securing Delhi's water needs, the project exemplifies inclusive growth and environmental stewardship.

(The writer is a senior political analyst and strategic affairs columnist based in Shimla; views are personal)

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

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

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

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 mandated the transfer of authority of 29 functions, underscoring their vital role in delivering services directly to the communities. Despite this mandate, Gram Panchayats (GP) lack functionalities and have limited infrastructure and capacity for planning and implementation. This often leads to either underutilisation



MANMOHAN SINGH

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

the capacity of GPs to adeptly identify, plan, and implement projects that align with the needs established through Gram Sabha.

The Panchayat Raj System established panchayats as the foundation of decentralised power, emphasising that sustainable development must begin with our smallest unit of democracy: the Panchayat, led by the VM (Sarpanch). Elevating the role of the VM akin to the PM and CM at the centre and state, supported by a strong administrative structure, can drive effective grassroots decision-making. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has grouped the 17 SDGs into nine themes, demonstrating India's commitment to achieving these goals through the implementation of Localised

SDGs (SDGs) by Panchayats. GPs across India, are tasked with creating Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDs) that align with LSDG priorities. However, a survey of 800 panchayats revealed that only 7 per cent of Sarpanches independently chose their LSDG themes using the Gram Panchayat Planning Facilitation Tool (GPPFT), while 34 per cent of themes were decided by Block officials, 22 per cent by Sarpanches or Sachivs, and 16 per cent were directed by the state, reflecting a need for strengthening planning at the panchayat level. To develop Viksit Panchayats, four key actions are proposed: **Support panchayat for last-mile convergence:** When a 13-year-old girl drops out of school, the responsibility



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

embraced the 'Healthy Panchayat' LSDG theme. Collaborating with ASHAs, Anganwadi Didis, and Gandhi Fellows to achieve 'Zero Home Delivery' eventually boosting institutional delivery rates from 25 per cent to nearly 90 per cent in just one year. Replicating such successes requires empowering panchayat through convergence of funds, and functional and administrative support.

**Reimagine development of Panchayat Leaders:** India has 2.6 lakh elected VMs, dedicated to strengthening panchayat governance. Prime Minister's call to bring 1 lakh youth into politics is a great encouragement for local youths. To unlock their full potential, we need to reimagine the institutional framework

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

**Democratise data through Panchayat:** Village Mukhiyas, as key information providers of government schemes, need real-time access to comprehensive beneficiary data and scheme details. Implementing technology solutions that provide such access is paramount for informed decision-making and efficient governance. The Ministry of Panchayat Raj and the Ministry of Rural

Development has taken some initiatives which need further integration with planning and execution at the panchayat level.

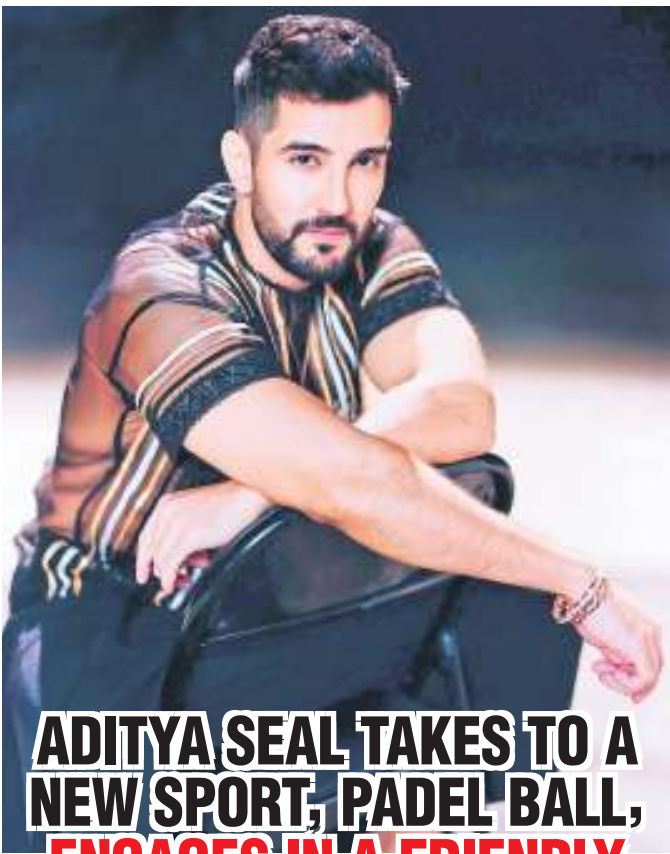
**Revitalise Village Committees:** Village-level committees such as School Management Committees, Village Health and Sanitation Committees, Jan Arogya Samitis, and Village Water and Sanitation Committees, play a pivotal role in fostering decentralised governance and community participation in development efforts. To achieve Viksit Bharat, these committees need to align to avoid duplication of efforts and promote community ownership.

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





# what's brewing?



## ADITYA SEAL TAKES TO A NEW SPORT, PADEL BALL, ENGAGES IN A FRIENDLY MATCH WITH ALIA BHATT

Aditya Seal was recently spotted enjoying a game of Padel Ball alongside Alia Bhatt. The duo's teamwork in the game caught attention, as a video of them playing together was captured, showcasing their camaraderie and sporting spirit. Aditya, a sports enthusiast, is always exploring new ways to keep his fitness regime dynamic and engaging. While he enjoys playing a variety of sports, he has recently discovered a new passion for Padel Ball. A unique blend of tennis and squash, Padel has captured Aditya's interest and become an integral part of his fitness routine. Padel ball, on the other hand, is also gaining traction among Indian celebrities, combining elements of badminton, tennis, and squash. Played with paddles and a perforated plastic ball on a badminton-sized court, it offers an exciting way to stay active and

competitive. Speaking about his newfound love for Padel Ball, Aditya said, "Padel has taken me by surprise. I expected it to be a very easy sport, tennis ka bachcha. I thought I wouldn't break a sweat. But the sport took me by surprise. Its quite a strategic game and quite exhausting. Now I realise the reason for why the sport is gaining so much popularity. And honestly its a great sport to play with friends. For me, playing a sport is a great contribution towards fitness. And if its mixed with sense of fun with friends, that's an absolute game changer. And that's what this sport provides." Aditya's passion for sports continues to inspire his fans, proving that fitness is not just about working out but also about embracing activities that keep both the mind and body active. With the growing popularity of paddle ball among celebrities, it seems these sports are here to stay.

## Sagarika Ghatge on her comeback: Hasn't been easy to land a film

Actress Sagarika Ghatge, who is making a comeback after eight years with the film 'Lalal', says it has not been easy to just walk in and get a film. Talking about why she decided on making a comeback amidst chatter about her plans to have a baby, Sagarika said, "There's no straightforward answer to this. Of course, there are plenty of opportunities with the variety of films and series being made today, and it's exciting to see horizons expanding - not just for actors but for audiences too. "However, it hasn't been easy to just walk in and land a film." "For someone like me, who took a break, getting back to work wasn't simple. But I'm grateful to have a film now that will showcase my work, and I hope it encourages people, especially those who assumed I didn't want to work, to reach out in the future," said the actress, who made her Bollywood debut in 2007 with the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Chak De! India." The actress said that the script was the key reason she chose this film, along with the opportunity to step into a character which is both 'naive and incredibly strong, with so much bravery and depth.' "It was a truly fulfilling experience to portray a character with such rich layering. The physical transformation was something I was both excited and nervous about, but it gave me an immense sense of fulfillment after every single day on set," said Sagarika, who is married to former cricketer Zaheer Khan. She shared that "Lalal" was shot entirely in Rajasthan, in a small village that brought so much authenticity to the story. "Every day, we had to drive at least two hours from the nearest town to reach the location, which added to the experience. I had the privilege of working with some incredible actors who were all so wonderful." Talking about her co-star she added, "Satish Ray, in particular, has portrayed a character that people will really love once they see the film. Every cast member brought something unique to their roles, making the story even more beautiful. It was such a joy to work with this amazing team, and we all had a great time together on set." What was Zaheer's reaction, when she told him about her role in the film? "He was incredibly happy and excited that I was getting back to doing what I love. More than anything, he's always been the person who pushes me to go that extra mile, so with this journey, it was no different." She added, "In fact, when I was nervous and sometimes doubted myself, it was he who would make sure I just focus on what I need to do - which was to prepare."



## Blake Lively's legal team says 'every frame' of Justin Baldoni's released footage corroborates her claims

Hollywood actress Blake Lively has reacted through her legal team at director-actor Justin Baldoni's recently released video proof quashing the actress' claim of sexual harassment. Her legal team fired back after attorneys for Justin Baldoni released footage shedding light on the actors behind-the-scenes conflict on 'It Ends with Us', reports 'People' magazine. On Tuesday, January 21, Baldoni's attorney Bryan Freedman released a video, obtained by TMZ, in an effort to refute some of Lively's claims made in her December 20 sexual harassment complaint against her director-actor. As per 'People', the footage depicts Baldoni, 40, and Lively, 37, filming a dialogue-free scene in the hit 2024 movie, speaking out of character to joke about his nose and her spray tan. The actress-producer's lawyers now say in a statement shared with 'People' that "every frame of the released footage corroborates, to the letter", what Lively included in her lawsuit about that scene. In her December 20 complaint suing Baldoni and some of his associates, alleging sexual harassment and a retaliatory smear campaign against her, Lively claimed he exhibited "disturbing" and



"unprofessional" behavior on the set of the hit Colleen Hoover adaptation, causing a "hostile work environment" and "grief, fear, trauma, and extreme anxiety". In Lively's complaint was the accusation that during a "slow dance scene", Baldoni "leaned forward and slowly dragged his lips from her ear and down her neck as he said, 'It smells so good'".

## Ryan Gosling in talks to star in upcoming Star Wars film directed by Shawn Levy



Oscar-nominated actor Ryan Gosling is reportedly in talks to star in an upcoming Star Wars film directed by Shawn Levy. This project, which has been in development since 2022, is poised to bring a fresh and exciting new direction to the Star Wars universe, promising to expand beyond the traditional storylines that have dominated the saga. Levy, renowned for his work on blockbuster hits like Deadpool and The Adam Project, has been involved with the film for over two years. Jonathan Tropper has penned the script, while Levy is producing the project through his 21 Laps banner in collaboration with Lucasfilm's Kathleen Kennedy. The film is confirmed to be a standalone feature, distinct from the iconic Skywalker Saga, allowing it to explore new characters, storylines and settings within the vast and beloved Star Wars galaxy. Although details about the film remain scarce, industry sources have revealed that it will delve into fresh narratives, potentially focusing on new Jedi, Sith, or other intriguing aspects of the Star

Wars universe. Fans are speculating about the direction the film might take, wondering if it will focus on lesser-known characters or explore entirely new worlds. While specifics about the timeline and plot are still under wraps, it's clear that the film will bring something unique to the franchise, distinct from the established lore. Gosling's involvement in the film marks a significant development, adding star power to a project that is quickly gaining traction. The actor, who has recently ventured into the science fiction genre, including his upcoming role in Project Hail Mary, a space-themed film directed by Phil Lord and Chris Miller, is a perfect fit for a major role in the Star Wars universe. His interest in the project has reportedly injected new momentum into the production, which had originally been intended to follow a different creative direction with Levy. Filming for the Star Wars film could begin as early as this fall, with the production expected to be one of the next major releases in the franchise. Given the ongoing success of The Mandalorian series and the anticipation surrounding its upcoming 2026 release, this film could be the next big step in the evolution of the Star Wars universe. As the Star Wars franchise continues to grow with new television series and films, this new standalone project, with Gosling and Levy at the helm, is sure to generate excitement and anticipation among fans eager for fresh takes on the galaxy far, far away.

## Entertainment Cricket League 2 is here!

The Entertainment Cricket League (ECL) is gearing up for its second season, set to start in the first week of March. Following the success of its debut season, which captivated millions with a blend of fierce competition and entertainment, Season 2 promises even greater excitement, intense rivalries, and fresh talent to keep fans on the edge of their seats. This season will feature eight

franchises led by renowned captains who bring unique leadership styles to the field. Elishv Yadav leads the defending champions Haryana Hunters, while Munawar Faruqui captains the Mumbai Disrupters. The lineup also includes Zayn Saifi for Rajasthan Rangers, Abhishek Malhan for Bangalore Bashers, Pushkar Raj Thakur for Kolkata Superstars, Mahesh Keshwala for Chennai Smashers, Gaurav Taneja for Dynamic Delhi, and

Anurag Dwivedi for Lucknow Lions. These leaders, representing a mix of entertainers and strategists, are set to add flair and energy to the league. The inaugural season set a high benchmark, with the Haryana Hunters clinching the title under Elishv Yadav's leadership. They remained undefeated throughout the league, showcasing exceptional teamwork and a "friends first" philosophy. Anurag Dwivedi's Lucknow Lions, known for their

strategic gameplay inspired by MS Dhoni, finished as runners-up, while the star-studded Mumbai Disrupters led by Munawar Faruqui secured third place after a nail-biting loss in Qualifier 2. For this season, at a grand event in Mumbai, under the hammer featured over 350 players, with 50+ retained and 15 marquee players boasting a combined following of over 800 million. The event saw fierce competition among 8 teams,

comprising 160+ players, with content niches from dancing to comedy to gaming, amongst others. The live stream attracted significant engagement, garnering 2.7+ million views and over 50,000 likes. As anticipation builds for Season 2, fans can expect intense rivalries, emerging talents, and unforgettable moments that redefine cricket entertainment. The countdown has begun - mark your calendars NOW!

### FUN

#### ARCHIE

#### CALVIN AND HOBBS

#### GARFIELD

#### NANCY

#### GINGER MEGGS

#### REALITY CHECK

#### SPEED BUMP

#### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	
5				6
7		8		
9			10	
12	13	14		15
17		16		18
				19

#### SUDOKU

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

#### ACROSS

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

#### DOWN

- Weary
- Throbbing with pain
- Two matching things
- A command

#### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

#### SOLUTION

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

## TEACHING BEYOND TEXTBOOKS

# The Teacher App's uplifting educators & students

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

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

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

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



## UNLOCKING THE FUTURE OF HEALTH WHY GENETIC TESTING MATTERS

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

### Your Genes

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

### THE KEY BENEFITS OF GENETIC TESTING :

#### 1. Early Detection and Prevention

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

#### 2. Precision Medicine

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

#### 3. Informed Family Health Decisions

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

#### 4. Lifestyle Tailored to

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

# GLAMPING WITH AN ECO-TWIST

PNS| HYDERABAD

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

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

sunset's purple hues are just a few of the adventures that will leave you speechless in Gangapura Dam. Well, let's go on. It would have been impossible to overlook the wine tasting at this eco-glamping experience, which is located in what the nation refers to as the capital of vineyards. Therefore, one of the things that they refer to as adventures is a wine-tasting trip at the top winery. We became more convinced that a dining experience could be as gourmet as this even in a local setting after taking part in indigenous cooking workshops in the middle of vineyards with a touch of that local Maharashtrian masalas: the Kara Dosa, Kolhapuri Misal Ki Sabzi, authentic Chicken Curry, Bajre Chi Bhakri and everything garnished with the poha, which is the signature ingredient of downtown Maharashtra. Similar to this, we had an agro-tourism workshop experience that gave us a fresh viewpoint on the industry while also touching the site's senses. The retreat's class on farming, gardening, picking your own veggies and other leisure pursuits will undoubtedly satisfy the goal of sustainability, which is what this glamping experience is ultimately intended to achieve. Sustainability, indeed! There is one aspect of this entire event that cannot be ignored. It does nourish the world and the psyche when it is infused with a little sustainability.

"Sustainable vacations," as we like to call them, encourage us to walk lightly, give back generously and establish a close connection with nature. Every element, from carbon-neutral excursions to eco-lodges made from recycled linens, is intended to protect the delicate ecosystem's equilibrium. You will learn that the most lasting memories are those created with a clear conscience and a gentle footprint as you stroll through the pristine landscape at Girnare village, the canopy of trees that you can see from the other side of the riverside and how they are helping local communities by setting up these awesome workshops. A bamboo cane entryway, a sustainable-looking shack housing those art and naturopathy courses and numerous other sustainable accents—how can we not call this a really eco-friendly experience? Should we discuss the cultural aspect of it a bit? Oh, we adore the way this confluence of luxury, sustainability and culture is happening. The air of the Godavari was filled with the beautiful aroma of incense, the delicate chanting of mantras and the gentle lap of the river's waves as

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

give Maharashtra tourism some credit for making these experiences come to life with the retreat and preserving the traditional legacy even when visitors are looking for a luxurious vacation. That's the way to go! This memoir comes to a spectacular conclusion when the dholkars' deft hands brought the "nagadas" of Nashik's famous Dhol experience to life. Uff, there was an electrifying energy pulsing through the air. Visions of traditional Maharashtra culture were evoked with each Dhol. The stresses of the outside

world will melt away as you enjoy the glamping festival as it is renowned to be. According to the observation, it was about immersion rather than only accommodations. It was about enjoying the good things in life while integrating with the natural world. For those who appreciate the outdoors or adventure, eco-glamping offers the conveniences of a luxurious lifestyle while allowing for constant reconnection. You may refer to it as a festival or a retreat, but one thing is certain: it is a tent city that is a magnificent wonder.



# Australian Open: Swiatek will face Madison Keys in semifinals

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

PTI ■ JOHOR

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



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

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

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



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian cricket team will adhere to the dress code set by the ICC during the upcoming Champions Trophy, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI on Wednesday, rejecting speculation that the Board had objected to host Pakistan's name on the side of official jersey. The Champions Trophy will be held from February 19 and India will play its share of matches in Dubai after citing security concerns as the reason for refusing to travel to Pakistan. "BCCI will follow every uniform-related ICC rule during Champions Trophy," Saikia told PTI. "Whatever the other teams will do regarding the logo and dress code, we are going to follow in true letter and spirit," he added. However, Saikia said that whether national captain Rohit Sharma participates in the ICC's pre-tournament engagements, including a press conference and an official photo shoot in Lahore, is something that is still being discussed. "Whether Rohit Sharma travels to Pakistan for ICC media engagements is something that's still not decided," Saikia added. There were some unconfirmed media reports that the BCCI had objected to

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

## AB de Villiers wants to play cricket again

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

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



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

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

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

## Praggnanandhaa crushes Mendonca to sole lead Tata Masters

PTI ■ WILK AAN ZEE

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa crashed through the defences of fellow Indian Leon Luke Mendonca to jump into sole lead after the fourth round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament here. Praggnanandhaa started off with an innocuous Ruy Lopez closed but found his chances in the middle game when Mendonca, clearly being the rookie here, could not handle the pressure of another high-profile game. It was another day when Praggnanandhaa found the fire to score his third win on the trot after 46 moves. Interestingly, all of Praggnanandhaa's victories have come at the expense of the Indians so far in the tournament, with the GM now looking forward to the clash against world champion D Gukesh. With his third win, the Chennai-based player has stamped his authority ahead of the first rest day of the long and gruelling tournament that lasts till 13

rounds with three rest days thrown in. Recently-crowned world champion D Gukesh played true to his instinct but could not get past Alexey Sarana, who now plays for Serbia instead of Russia. The Indian, playing with black pieces, tried every trick under the sun but Sarana stuck to the basics to not force anything which could be fatal. The game remained level for a long time and eventually both players got a new queen on the board with Sarana only having the final say with an extra Bishop. With no pawns left, the result was anyone's guess and the game ended in a draw soon after. P Harikrishna dumped Max Warmerdam of Holland to stake his claim in the tournament. The Indian was brought in after Vidit Gujrathi withdrew at the last moment. Harikrishna's score of 2.5 points from four games more than justifies his presence here. It was a Catalan opening and Warmerdam did not know what hit him as he found all the white pieces around his king despite the



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

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

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

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

skills were clearly on the fore as she won in 56 moves. **Results - Round 4: Masters:** P Harikrishna (Ind, 2.5) beat Max Warmerdam (Ned, 1); Arjun Erigaisi lost to Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 2.5); Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 2.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 1.5); R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 2.5) beat Leon Luke Mendonca (Ind, 0.5); Wei Yi (Chn, 2) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 3); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 2.5) drew with Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 1.5); Alexey Sarana (Srb, 2) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 2.5). **Challengers:** Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 1.5) beat Ediz Gurel (Tur, 2); Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 1.5) lost to R Vaishali (Ind, 2.5); Svane Frederik (Ger, 2) drew with Nogerbek Kazymbek (Kaz, 2); Miaoyi Lu (Chn, 3) drew with Irina Bulmaga (Rom, 0.5); Nguyen Thai Dai Vam (Cze, 3) drew with Aydin Suleymanli (Aze, 2); Arthur Pijpers (Ned, 1) drew with Erwin L'Ami (Ned, 3); Oro Faustino (Arg, 1) beat Benjamin Bok (Ned, 1.5).

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

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

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

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

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

gives confidence to do better in my next film."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the director with his experience.

For another question, he said he will watch all movies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

were unveiled on Wednesday.

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

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



## Has Rajamouli started shooting Mahesh's film?

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

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

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

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



## Razakar won many film awards: Director



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

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

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

## Rashmika Mandanna on a wheelchair, attended promotions

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

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

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



## Vikram's sequel locks the release date

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

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

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

