



the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Sanjay is speaking due to frustration as Malkajgiri MP Eatala Rajender is becoming the Telangana BJP President. We would like Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy to reveal whether Sanjay's comments on the Gaddar-Padma Awards issue were his own or is it the party line? The Centre gave Padma Awards to persons who shot Karsevaks

- B Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC chief P4

'India working with a new vision'

PARDE KE PEECHHEY IS A TRIBUTE TO 'VELVET CURTAINS'

There is no point talking about Vishal's health

VARALAKSHMI

DON'T MISS...

Lankan team visits model farms

An eleven-member Sri Lankan delegation visited Anantapur district on Tuesday to study the Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) model, a globally acclaimed initiative by the Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS), Government of Andhra Pradesh. The visit was part of a 10-day programme organised in collaboration with NOW Partners. The delegation, representing the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, was led by Palane Vidane Aratchige Chamari Lakshmi, Manager ...

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Cong left alone in Delhi election

With several INDIA bloc parties backing the Aam Aadmi Party for the February 5 Assembly elections in Delhi, Trinamool Congress and Samajwadi Party leaders are set to campaign for the Arvind Kejriwal-led outfit, leaving aside the Congress, the largest constituent of the opposition bloc. Formed ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls to challenge the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the INDIA bloc includes the Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Samajwadi Party (SP) as its key constituents ...

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Growth in housing prices to moderate

Housing prices are likely to rise 3-4 per cent next fiscal on high base effect and better supply, according to India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra). The rating agency expects the housing price rise to taper in the 2024-26 financial year. Ind-Ra expects property prices to increase 5-6 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in 2024-25 fiscal, then moderate to 3-4 per cent YoY for 2025-26, due to base effects and new launches. Prices surged 21 per cent YoY in 2023-24 with old stock cleared and existing inventory largely ...

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Trisha scores first ever century in U19

Opener Trisha Gongadi etched her name in the record books by scoring the first ever century in women's U-19 T20 World Cup that powered India into the semifinals with a 150-run victory over Scotland here on Tuesday. Trisha, who was deservedly adjudged player of the match, slammed 110 not out off just 59 balls with the help of 13 boundaries and four maximums after India were sent in to bat by Scotland at toss. The Indians will next face England in the first semifinal on January 31. She was ably supported ...

-SPORTS

IM1B's green skills academy launched in Kuppam



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday said that 1 Million for 1 Billion (IM1B), a United Nations accredited organisation, has launched its first Green Skills Academy and Career Readiness Centre at Kuppam, Chittoor district to create green entrepreneurs.

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ALL NOMINATED POSTS TO BE FILLED BY JUNE

Priority to loyalists: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has made it clear that all nominated posts in the government will be filled by June. He further emphasised that party leaders should prioritise those who have been loyal to the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) from the beginning, rather than those who joined from other parties.

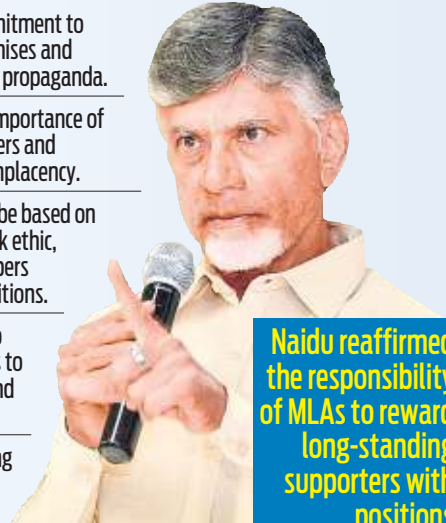
On Tuesday, Naidu held a teleconference with key TDP leaders, including MLAs, MPs, Ministers, and party in-charges. The discussion covered several issues, including government programmes, party affairs, and the performance of leaders. During the teleconference, the Chief Minister outlined various directives for the party members. The Chief Minister stressed the importance of elected representatives, including MLAs, MPs, and Ministers, being actively involved in party activities. He urged leaders to be accessible to party workers and the public daily. Leaders were encouraged to meet the expectations of the people and workers, who have been pivotal in the party's historical achievements.

Naidu also urged party leaders to work with dedication to secure a victory in the 2029 elections. He highlighted the importance of taking government schemes and programmes

MLAs directed to submit recommendations for Agriculture Market Committees and Temple Committees

- Chief Minister emphasises the importance of prioritising long-standing party members over those who joined from other parties.
- A teleconference conducted on govt programmes, party affairs, and leader performance.
- Elected representatives urged to actively engage in party activities and be accessible to workers and the public.
- Leaders told to meet the expectations of the people and workers who contributed to the party's success.
- Naidu stresses the need for dedicated work to secure victory in the 2029 elections and to take government schemes to the people.

- He reiterates his commitment to fulfilling election promises and countering opposition propaganda.
- Naidu highlights the importance of respecting party workers and cautioned against complacency.
- Nominated posts will be based on contributions and work ethic, with only active members recommended for positions.
- Ministers instructed to collaborate with MLAs to resolve party issues and local problems.
- Swift action on pending bills in the legislature was stressed.



Naidu reaffirmed the responsibility of MLAs to reward long-standing supporters with positions

to the people and underscored the need for constant monitoring and improvement of the government's work.

The Chief Minister reiterated his commitment to fulfilling all promises made during the elections and instructed leaders to counter the false

propaganda spread by the opposition YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). He stressed the significance of respecting party workers, and acknowledging their hard work that contributed to the party's recent electoral success. He cautioned against complacency and advised leaders not to take

their positions for granted.

In line with the party's commitment to justice, Naidu assured that nominated posts would be offered to deserving party workers and leaders, based on their contributions and work ethic.

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Countdown for ISRO's 100th mission begins

NVS-02 navigation satellite scheduled for liftoff at 6:23 am today from second launch pad at SDSC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has initiated the 27-hour countdown for its historic 100th mission, marking a significant achievement for the space agency. The mission, which involves the launch of the NVS-02 navigation satellite, is scheduled for liftoff at 6:23 am on January 29, 2025, from the second launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota.

The launch will be conducted aboard the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) in its 17th flight, featuring an indigenous Cryogenic upper stage. The NVS-02 satellite, developed by ISRO's U R Rao Satellite Centre, is the second in the series of Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) satellites. It aims to improve the accuracy of positioning, velocity, and timing for users across the Indian subcontinent and in regions up to 1,500 km beyond India's borders.

The 50.9-m-tall GSLV-F15 follows the successful GSLV-F12 mission, which launched the first of the second-generation satellites, NVS-01, on May 29, 2023. The NVS-02 satellite will form part of a five-satellite constellation, designed to enhance NavIC's base



layer with improved features, ensuring continued service.

Weighing approximately 2,250 kg, NVS-02 carries a navigation payload in the L1, L5, and S bands, along with a ranging payload in the C-band, similar to its predecessor. The satellite will support a wide range of applications, including terrestrial, aerial, and maritime navigation, precision agriculture, fleet management, location-based services for mobile devices, orbit determination for satellites, IoT applications, and emergency and timing services.

The successful launch of the NVS-02 satellite will further reinforce India's space navigation capabilities, as ISRO continues to make strides in space exploration and technological advancement.

SC dismisses plea to transfer Naidu cases to CBI

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court has dismissed a petition seeking the transfer of cases filed against Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu from the CID (Criminal Investigation Department) to the CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation).

The petition was filed by senior advocate B Balayya, representing a group that sought the transfer of seven cases to the CBI.

The bench, led by Justice Bela Trivedi, expressed strong disapproval of the petition, calling it entirely frivolous.

The court made it clear that any further remarks regarding the petition would result in a heavy fine. The bench also remarked that they could not have imagined experienced lawyers getting involved in such cases.

Ultimately, the Supreme Court dismissed the petition without further discussion.



Realtor held for killing sister for Rs 1 cr payout

PNS ■ PODILI

A real estate businessman in Prakasam district has been arrested for allegedly murdering his divorced and childless younger sister to claim a Rs 1 crore insurance payout.

Malapati Ashok Kumar (30) was arrested for the crime, which took place on February 2, 2024, near a petrol station in Podili, the police said on Tuesday.

Kumar, who was facing significant debt, allegedly planned to insure his sister for Rs 1 crore with various insurance companies, kill her, and stage the death as an accident to claim the insurance money.

Continued on Page 2

HC directs Union Min to consider Jyothi Surekha for Khel Ratna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a landmark ruling, the High Court of Andhra Pradesh has directed the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports to consider Vennam Jyothi Surekha, India's top-ranked compound archer, for the prestigious Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award. The court's ruling, issued on 10 January 2025, acknowledges Jyothi Surekha's exceptional achievements both at national and international levels, affirming her rightful claim to the highest sporting honour in the country.

This is the first time in India's sporting history that a court has intervened



in the selection process for the Khel Ratna Award, setting a historic precedent for fairness and transparency in awarding such honours. The ruling

has been hailed as a significant step towards ensuring that sporting excellence is recognised equitably, with the judiciary playing an active role in safeguarding athletes' rights.

The writ petition was filed by Unnam Akhil Chowdhary and senior advocate Unnam Muralidhar Rao, who represented Jyothi Surekha in the case. This unprecedented ruling marks a key moment in the history of Indian sports, reinforcing the importance of transparency and fairness in national awards and guaranteeing that athletes like Jyothi Surekha receive the recognition they truly deserve.

VSP staff go without pay for 5 months

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Employees of the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd, the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, are grappling with mounting financial difficulties as the management has failed to pay full salaries for the past five months. The situation, which has pushed workers to their breaking point, shows no signs of easing. In September, only 50 percent of the employees' salaries were paid, a figure that was marginally increased to 65 per cent in October and November. However, despite the festive periods of December and



Despite strong production levels, workers face growing financial strain, with only partial salary disbursements, while the future of the plant remains uncertain amid ongoing financial challenges

January, workers did not receive any salary payments, exacerbating their distress. In the latest development on Tuesday, only 30 per cent of the expected salaries were disbursed.

This ongoing crisis comes at a

time when the steel plant has continued to achieve strong production levels, raising questions about how the workforce is expected to maintain performance under such dire circumstances.

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Naidu to campaign for BJP in Delhi polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu will actively participate in support of BJP candidates in the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections. He is expected to focus on constituencies with a significant Telugu-speaking population in New Delhi.

On 1 February, Chandrababu Naidu will actively participate in the BJP's election campaign, lending his support to their candidates. The BJP leadership had extended an invitation to him to join the campaign for the Delhi

polls. Voting for the Delhi Assembly elections is scheduled for 5 February, with the results set to be announced on 8 February.

The election outcome will decide which party will govern the national capital.

In a similar instance, during the Maharashtra Assembly elections last year, Chandrababu Naidu and Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan campaigned separately in the state. Their efforts significantly contributed to the success of the Maha Yuti coalition, which secured a notable victory.



ABV suspension period regularised

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The state government has issued orders regularising the suspension periods of retired IPS officer AB Venkateswara Rao, treating them as periods spent on duty. The decision makes him eligible for full pay and allowances for those periods.

AB Venkateswara Rao was suspended twice by the previous government. The first suspension, from 8 February 2020 to 7 February 2022, was linked to allegations of misconduct in the procurement of security equipment during his tenure as Additional Director General of Intelligence. However, the Supreme Court, in April 2022, ordered his reinstatement with effect from 8 February 2022.

The second suspension spanned from 28 June 2022 to 30 May 2024, following his implication in a criminal case. This suspension was challenged in the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), which quashed the orders in May 2024.

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'No Bag Day' on Saturdays for AP schools: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education, IT, and Electronics Nara Lokesh on Tuesday directed officials to gather opinions from grassroots-level teachers and unions regarding the revocation of GO 117. He emphasised the need to find a solution acceptable to all, noting that the GO was issued without proper consideration by the previous YSRCP government.

During a review meeting on school and intermediate education, officials briefed Lokesh on the feedback collected during preparatory meetings conducted by the Director of Education under the supervision of district collectors. The Minister instructed officials to analyse these suggestions and take steps to prevent student dropouts. Lokesh also focused on the upcoming legislation for teacher



Lokesh focused on the upcoming legislation for teacher transfers, directing officials to consult teachers and unions on the proposed law. Additionally, he announced that every Saturday would be observed as 'No Bag Day,' with co-curricular activities planned for students.

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The Minister urged officials to expedite the creation of a unified app for teachers, replacing multiple existing apps, and to complete the APAAR ID project to validate student numbers across the state. He also called for the development of an AP Model of Education blueprint.

Reforms in intermediate education were discussed extensively during the meeting. Education Secretary Kona Sasidhar, Director of School Education V Vijaya Rama Raju, Director of Intermediate Education Kruthika Shukla, and other officials attended the meeting.

Desertions leave Jagan with limited options

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is facing a crisis when preparing to launch a mass contact programme after his defeat in the 2024 general elections. The resignation of Rajya Sabha Member V Vijayasai Reddy from the party was a shocker as he had played a key role in shaping the political career of Jagan. As most YSRP cadres knew the role of Vijayasai Reddy in the party his unexpected decision has got its own importance. Why did he suddenly decide to quit as he was a member of Jagan's inner circle? Vijayasai is believed to have been the mastermind behind Jagan's political career since the days of Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy. His task included setting up paper companies to ensure a steady flow of money labelled as investments. This was done



during YSR's rule when Jagan had not yet entered active politics. Vijayasai became the YSR family's most trusted person after he extended his services to the family in the mid-1970s as an auditor. He became a full-fledged politician after Jagan's emergence as the head of a party floated by himself. Vijayasai became Jagan's choice when he had to select a candidate for a Rajya Sabha seat. Another RS membership term was granted for Vijayasai by Jagan by denying a chance to senior leader Dr MV Mysura Reddy who had joined the YSRCP from the Congress. Political observers thought that Mysura might get Jagan's nod due to his seniority. But Jagan preferred to give an extension to Vijayasai as his presence in New Delhi was important for him due to his DA cases filed by the CBI and the ED.

The anti-incumbency factor started gaining ground in the second half of Jagan's tenure (2019-24) and that led to many changes in the party, particularly in the close circle of Jagan. Eventually, Vijayasai's hold in the YSRCP touched its lowest point at the behest of Jagan. He is believed to have felt suffocated in the YSRCP due to the change in the attitude of the party leadership

As a YSRCP parliamentary party leader, Vijayasai preferred to be close to New Delhi's corridors of power. He was behind all decisions taken by Jagan regarding the support extended to the NDA government for passing crucial Bills in Parliament. Jagan had to support the Modi government as it was necessary to slow down the cases charged against Jagan by Central agencies. Vijayasai continued as No. 2 in the YSRCP and became

popular for his criticism of TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu. He earned fame with his criticism of political bigwigs like CBN and Jana Sena Party (JSP) president Pawan Kalyan. Moreover, he is a co-accused (A2) in several cases faced by Jagan and was at the Hyderabad Chanchalguda Prison for around a year. The anti-incumbency factor started gaining ground in the second half of Jagan's tenure (2019-24) and that led to many



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

changes in the party, particularly in the close circle of Jagan. Eventually, Vijayasai's hold in the YSRCP touched its lowest point at the behest of Jagan. He is believed to have felt suffocated in the YSRCP due to the change in the attitude of the party leadership. After the TDP led by CBN joined hands with the JSP and

the BJP and became part of the NDA, the NDA's attitude towards the YSRCP changed. The cordial relations that the Modi government had with the YSRCP couldn't continue due to the TDP's presence in the NDA. The situation became so precarious for the YSRCP that it extended support to the Modi government unconditionally. Now coming to the point of how the resignation of Vijayasai is likely to affect the YSRCP and its leadership. Despite being a trusted lieutenant of Jagan, Vijayasai faced suffocation in the party due to Jagan's inner circle. Vijayasai's resignation would be a loss for the YSRCP. The RS seat given up by Vijayasai would go to the NDA if by-polls are held now. If anybody (among RS members) follows Vijayasai due to personal reasons, the result will be the same. This means that Vijayasai was intending to

damage the YSRCP. He has embarrassed Jagan by stating that he is not against CBN and Pawan Kalyan. The needle of suspicion points at Vijayasai himself on why he remained silent when Jagan dragged Pawan into the public domain on the issue of polygamy. He also remained silent when CBN faced humiliation at the hands of YSRCP legislators in the AP Assembly when they raised suspicions about the fidelity of his wife, the daughter of TDP founder NT Rama Rao. Despite saying that he has said goodbye to politics, Vijayasai might join the BJP or the JSP. Both Jagan and Vijayasai have to face trial inevitably and they need the help of the Centre. So Vijayasai might be forced to join the NDA. Earlier, the TDP's RS members, YS Chowdary and CM Ramesh, had joined the BJP and became MLA and MP

respectively. Political observers say that both leaders joined the BJP only to protect the TDP's interests at CBN's behest. Why can't Vijayasai's case be similar? The move by a trusted lieutenant is believed to have delivered a big blow to the YSRCP leadership. The party's strength in the RS would give Jagan some hold over the Centre. But desertions may hit Jagan's position. As the YSRCP has been decimated in the AP Assembly with just 11 seats in hand, it could manage things with its strength in the RS. But desertions would leave the party with no role in national politics. If the YSRCP wants to have a role at the Centre, it should join the NDA which may not be possible now. Parties which are arch-rivals at the State level can't be allies at the national level. In these circumstances, the YSRCP has no other choice but to depend on its cadres.

Lokesh addresses grievances on Day 58 of 'Praja Darbar'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

People from across Andhra Pradesh thronged the 58th day of the Praja Darbar in Undavalli, seeking solutions to issues ranging from land rights and pensions for the elderly and widows to job opportunities, financial aid for medical treatment, and employee grievances. Minister for Education and IT, Nara Lokesh, personally reviewed each grievance and assured swift action. He directed officials to address the concerns raised without delay.



Rentapalla, Palnadu district, sought assistance for the online registration of four acres of land in his late wife's name, a request pending despite repeated appeals. Lokesh promised immediate action to resolve the matter.

Similarly, S. Edayya from Ekonampet, Macherla Mandal, whose 3.10 acres of land was submerged due to the Satrasala Dam, requested a job as promised by the government. Lokesh assured him of suitable

employment opportunities. B. Mallanna from Nandavaram Mandal, Kurnool district, shared his struggles after migrating to Vijayawada due to agricultural losses and requested a job in the municipal office. Lokesh assured support in resolving his issues. Representatives from the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in Eluru requested the restoration of 26 welfare schemes for backward classes and the withdrawal of wrongful cases against activists filed during the previous government's tenure. Lokesh assured a thorough review of the matter.

AP Data Entry Operators Welfare Association members requested recognition as contract workers to address job security and employment terms. Lokesh assured them of a solution.

Madarsa volunteers from the Guntur district sought clearance of pending honorarium payments. Lokesh assured them that the dues would be settled promptly.

SI, constable in ACB net for Rs 1.4 L bribery

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major crackdown on corruption, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) arrested a Sub-Inspector and a constable of Thirumalagiri police station, Suryapet district, for demanding and accepting a total bribe of Rs 1.4 lakh.

Sub-Inspector Vukkurthy Suresh and constable Nagaraju were caught red-handed after they allegedly sought bribes in exchange for issuing a notice under Section 35 of the BNSS Act to prevent the arrest of a complainant in a case registered under Crime No.

12/2025 at Thirumalagiri police station. According to ACB officials, SI Suresh initially demanded Rs 3 lakh but accepted Rs 30,000 through an online transfer to a petrol pump account on January 25.

Another Rs 70,000 was routed to Constable Nagaraju's account on January 28, along with an additional Rs 30,000.

Efforts underway to make AP the 'Drone Capital'



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Roads & Buildings, Investment, and Infrastructure Minister BC Janardhan Reddy has called for collective efforts to realise Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's vision of transforming Andhra Pradesh into the "Drone Capital" of India.

At a review meeting held on Tuesday, attended by Secretary for Investments & Infrastructure Dr N Yuvraj, Drone Corporation MD K Dinesh Kumar, and other senior officials, the minister emphasised aligning all initiatives with the Chief Minister's ambitious goal.

Minister Janardhan Reddy highlighted the potential for

Andhra Pradesh to become a role model in drone utilisation. Officials briefed him on a comprehensive study of drone applications across sectors such as agriculture, industry, traffic management, mining, medical services, and defence. The discussion also explored the use of drones for delivering medicines in remote areas, emergency response, and disaster management.

Plans to expand drone use in agriculture, particularly for field-level applications, were also outlined. Additionally, drones are being considered to combat illegal activities, including marijuana cultivation and unauthorised mining.

In a significant move, the Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) has allocated 300 acres in Komarolu within the Orvakal Industrial Corridor for the establishment of the country's first-ever Drone City. This initiative marks a milestone in strengthening the state's drone ecosystem. The meeting also deliberated on implementing incentives and subsidies under the state's Drone Policy to support budding drone entrepreneurs. Minister Janardhan Reddy stressed the importance of providing necessary assistance to foster growth in the drone industry and ensure the state remains at the forefront of drone innovation.

Naidu betrayed public trust: Bhumana

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

YSR Congress Party senior leader Bhumana Karunakar Reddy accused Telugu Desam Party chief N. Chandrababu Naidu of betraying the trust of the people of Andhra Pradesh and breaking his election promises.



became burdens rather than offering relief. He also criticised Naidu for exploiting religious sentiments for political gains.

Highlighting Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership during the pandemic, Karunakar Reddy claimed that it served as a model for the country, despite opposition propaganda. He accused Naidu's government of cutting pensions for over 5 lakh beneficiaries, increasing electricity tariffs by Rs 19,000 crore, and encouraging liquor sales, resulting in Andhra Pradesh being overrun by belt shops and illegal bars, leaving citizens as victims of alcohol addiction.

Karunakar Reddy emphasised the growing public discontent with Naidu's governance and urged people to reject deceptive politics in favour of welfare-oriented leadership.

Naidu of inflating state debt figures, alleging that Naidu misled the public with varying claims of debt ranging from Rs 14 lakh crore to Rs 10 lakh crore. He contrasted this with the governance of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, who has focused on welfare and development despite borrowing only Rs 2.3 lakh crore.

Calling Naidu the "Buddha of Lies," Karunakar Reddy alleged that schemes like "Thalli ki Vandanam" and "Annadatta Sukhibhava"

Karunakar Reddy accused

VSP staff go without..

Continued from Page 1

The growing financial strain on employees is leaving many uncertain about how they will continue to meet their daily needs while contributing to the plant's success.

Adding to the tension, Union Steel Minister Kumaraswamy is set to visit Visakhapatnam on January 30th, a visit that follows the Steel Secretary's recent trip to the city. During this visit, it was revealed that the Rs 11,400 crore package announced by the Central Government will not be used to pay employee salaries, a decision that has left workers and the community in shock.

This package, meant to revive the steel plant, has raised significant questions about its true purpose. Will it be used to clear the Rs 1800 crore owed to Tata and Jindal? Or will it address the Rs 7800 crore debt to the banks? Furthermore, a portion of the

funds is expected to go toward a Rs 500 crore voluntary retirement scheme for employees, leaving many to wonder if their financial struggles will ever be alleviated.

With no immediate resolution in sight, uncertainty looms over the future of the steel plant and its dedicated workforce. Questions abound regarding the government's plans to continue operations if the current workforce, including contract workers, is pushed to the brink. As the situation remains unresolved, the coming weeks will prove critical in determining whether this financial crisis can be addressed, and what steps the leadership will take to ensure the plant's future. The community waits with bated breath as employees' patience wears thin, and as the leadership faces the monumental task of navigating these turbulent times.

ABV suspension...

Continued from Page 1

AB Venkateswara Rao retired from service on 31 May 2024, after serving as Commissioner, Printing, Stationery & Stores Purchases in Vijayawada.

After reviewing the matter, the government concluded that both suspension periods should be regularised. The first was resolved following the dropping of proceedings, while the second was deemed invalid by the CAT and upheld by the High Court. Invoking Rule 5 (B) (4) of the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969, the government ordered the regularisation and release of full pay and allowances.

Adjustments will be made for subsistence and other allowances already paid, as per the Government Order.

Priority to loyalists...

Continued from Page 1

He further directed that only those active in the party's organisational structure—such as Cluster, Unit, Booth, and Section members—should be recommended for nominated positions.

Naidu directed MLAs to submit suitable recommendations for appointments to Agriculture Market Committees and Temple Committees. He emphasized that those aspiring for positions in these committees must be members of the CUBS.

The Chief Minister confirmed that all pending nominations for market committees and trust boards would be completed by June, with performance reviews for officeholders every two years. Naidu assured that those excelling in their duties would be given opportunities for advancement in future appointments.

Ministers were instructed to work closely with MLAs in

their districts to address party issues and resolve local problems. The Chief Minister also stressed the need for swift action on pending bills in the legislature. He advised leaders to prioritise long-standing party workers over those who have recently joined from other parties, reaffirming that it was the responsibility of MLAs to ensure that those who have supported the party from the beginning are duly recognised and rewarded. Naidu urged party leaders to effectively communicate the party's future plans to the public, ensuring that the people remain confident in the government's direction. He also directed party leaders to continue implementing welfare schemes and countering the opposition's false narratives.

The Chief Minister assured that more programmes would be launched in the coming days to benefit the public, building on the systems already in place.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Amavasya: Jan 28 07:36 PM to Jan 29 08:05 PM
Sukla Paksha: Jan 29 08:05 PM to Jan 30 04:10 PM
Pratipada: to Jan 30 04:10 PM
Nakshatram:
Uttara Ashadha: Jan 28 08:58 AM to Jan 29 08:20 AM
Shravana: Jan 29 08:20 AM to Jan 30 07:15 AM
Rahukalam: 12:29 PM to 01:53 PM
Yamagandam: 8:16 AM to 9:40 AM
Varjyam: 12:09 PM to 01:41 PM
Gulika: 11:05 AM to 12:29 PM
Amritakalam: 09:19 PM to 10:51 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 31°
Humidity: 57%
Sunrise: 6:39 AM
Sunset: 6:02 PM
Updated: January 28, 2025 5:00 PM

Addl EO reviews steps for Rathasapthami

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In preparation for the upcoming annual Rathasapthami on February 4, the Additional Executive Officer (AEO), Ch. Venkaiah Chowdary, conducted a review meeting on Tuesday at Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala. Accompanied by JEO Veerabrahmam and CVSO I/c Manikantha, the Additional EO reviewed the ongoing arrangements, with a particular focus on security and crowd management.

Ch. Venkaiah Chowdary instructed various TTD department officials, along

with those from vigilance, security, and the police, to coordinate their efforts. He emphasised the need for comprehensive risk assessment preparedness, measures to prevent overcrowding, traffic and parking arrangements, and the readiness of emergency response teams.

He also urged the preparation of a detailed Bundobust plan, careful monitoring of ghat road vehicular movement, efficient execution of evacuation plans in case of emergencies, and seamless communication among all teams.

In addition, the

Additional EO reviewed arrangements for Annarasadam, sanitation, Srivari Sevaks, medical teams, LED screens, and other essential services.

Earlier, he also assessed the token issuance process at Srivari Mettu with the relevant officials.

District Collector Venkateswar and SP Harshavardhan Raju participated in the meeting virtually.

CE Satyanarayana, Tirumala Additional SP Ramakrishna, GM IT Isha Reddy, Temple DyEO Lokanatham, and other Heads of Departments were also present.

Hyd student bags Cambridge Outstanding Learners Award

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hansini, a high school student from Manthan School, Hyderabad, has been awarded the prestigious Cambridge Outstanding Learners Award in the World Topper category for Economics at the AS Level. This recognition, presented by Cambridge International, celebrates students worldwide who demonstrate exceptional academic performance.

Hansini attributed her success to her hard work and the academic environment at her

school. She said, "The opportunities and resources I had access to were instrumental in helping me excel. I am especially thankful to my teacher, Ruchika Ma'am, for her exceptional guidance and encouragement. Her passion for Economics inspired me to push my boundaries and strive for excellence."



Ruchika Upadhyay, Vice-Principal of Manthan School and Hansini's Economics teacher, expressed pride in the achievement. She remarked, "Hansini's dedication and intellectual curiosity have been remarkable."

Realtor held for killing sister for...

Continued from Page 1

On the day of the incident, Kumar took his sister to Ongole in his car under the pretext of a hospital visit, then gave her sleeping

pills and smothered her to death on the way back, they said. The man has been arrested under various sections of the IPC, including 120 (B), 302, and 201, they added.

1M1B's green skills academy...

Continued from Page 1

1M1B empowers youth to become future ready problem solvers. The chief minister noted that 1M1B will train 50,000 job aspirants, offer workplace experience, internships and jobs to 30,000 youngsters, including creating 100 green energy entrepreneurs.

"A special initiative for the talented youngsters of Rayalaseema! 1M1B, a UN accredited organisation building a future-ready technology workforce, has launched its Green Skill Academy & Career Readiness center in Kuppam," said Naidu in a post on X. The CM said 1M1B will offer training, internships and others over the next few years.

Make use of PM Surya Ghar scheme: V'wada MP Sivanath

● Goal is to install 2 lakh solar panels in NTR Dist, says Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



MP Kesineni Sivanath and District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha have called upon the people to take advantage of the PM Surya Ghar scheme being implemented to reduce the burden of paying electricity bills, and to register names immediately for solar panel connections. The MP and the Collector took part in a rally organised to create awareness among the people about the Surya Ghar scheme on Tuesday, starting from Patamata NTR Circle to Guru Nanak Colony.

During the event, the MP explained that the Central government is implementing the PM Surya Ghar scheme to reduce electricity costs for the public. He mentioned that by installing solar panels at very low costs, beneficiaries can generate free electricity for their household needs, instead of paying electricity bills which would

result in significant financial benefits. He further explained that a 3-kW solar panel system worth ₹2 lakh can be installed for ₹78,000 with government subsidies and the remaining amount can be availed as a low-interest bank loan. The system can provide free solar electricity for up to 20 years. A 3-kW system can generate up to 300 units of electricity per month and any excess

can be sold to the grid to earn income.

Dr Lakshminsha highlighted that the goal is to install solar panels in two lakh houses in the district, making it a top-performing region. He added that more than one lakh beneficiaries are expected to receive loans from banks and around 800 people have already applied for loans. Over 700 of them have paid

their 10 per cent share. Beneficiaries who receive loans can use the free solar electricity to save on electricity bills and repay the loan. The Collector urged banks to process loan applications promptly without delay.

Dr Lakshminsha also mentioned that nearly 70,000 beneficiaries have already registered for solar panels. Self-help groups, especially women, have been actively registering for the scheme. He encouraged the public to adopt solar energy to contribute to a pollution-free, environmentally sustainable society.

VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra, Additional Commissioner Dr D Chandrashekar, POMCD P Venkatanarayana, Zonal Commissioner Prabhudas, DRDA PD K Srinivas Rao, Transco SE A Murali Mohan, Corporator Ch Usharani and officials from various departments were present.

'Tap connections to all households in Bapatala dist'

PNS ■ BAPATALA



Minister for Housing and I&PR K Parthasarathy has announced that drinking water connections will be provided to all households in the district under the Amrit Dhara scheme soon.

A District Review Committee meeting was held here on Tuesday, attended by Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravikumar, Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad, MP Krishna Prasad, and Collector Venkata Murali. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Parthasarathy confirmed that the government has initiated road repair works across the State and instructed officials to ensure that the repairs are completed with quality.

He also directed officials to take steps to provide drinking water and electricity in housing colonies. Since the YSRCP regime had not undertaken works under the Jal Jeevan Mission, the funds had expired. However, the Naidu-led government is working to bring those funds under the Amrit Dhara scheme, and proposals have been

sent to the Centre, he added. The Minister ordered officials to address the growth of creepers in the irrigation canals and noted that 1.07 lakh acres of land are being irrigated through 92 lift irrigation schemes in the district. However, only 67 lift schemes are operational at present. He instructed officials to prepare proposals for repairs to the lift schemes to ensure water supply for agricultural fields.

Minister Parthasarathy emphasised that the construction of houses under PMAY must be completed by December. He warned that if the work is not finished within the

deadline set by the Centre, the funds will expire.

He also directed officials to prioritise the 100-day work under the NREGA scheme and expressed dissatisfaction over the Rs 31 crore worth of incomplete NREGA works. Additionally, he instructed officials to submit proposals for the development of the Suryalanka beach at a cost of Rs 97 crore, assuring that the proposals will be forwarded to the Chief Minister for approval.

Minister Parthasarathy further announced that 50,000 metric tonnes of paddy had been purchased in the district during the kharif season, and the government has now permitted authorities to procure an additional 7,000 MT of paddy from farmers.

Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad, and MP Tenneti Krishna Prasad raised various issues, highlighting existing problems, and directed officials to take necessary steps to address them. SP Tushar Duty and JC Prakhar Jain were also present.

CPI seeks probe into allegations against Vijayasai Reddy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



CPI State assistant secretary JV Satyanarayana Murthy has called for an in-depth investigation into corruption allegations against YSRCP leader and former Rajya Sabha member V Vijaya Sai Reddy. Speaking to the media, Murthy urged the State government to order a probe under the oversight of a sitting High Court Judge, insisting the truth must be unearthed.

Murthy accused Vijaya Sai Reddy of abusing his influence within the ruling YSRCP to damage the reputation of Visakhapatnam. He pointed to earlier complaints filed by BJP State president Daggubati Purandeswari with the Supreme Court regarding Reddy's alleged misconduct during her time in Opposition. However, he sharply criticised her silence now, attributing it to the BJP's current alliance with the ruling dispensation.

The CPI leader didn't spare the TDP either, slamming Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu,

IT Minister Nara Lokesh, and Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan for their inaction despite their past accusations. He accused them of betraying public trust by failing to address the issue.

Murthy outlined damning allegations of large-scale corruption, including the removal of 22A restrictions on Daspalla lands—prime real estate in Visakhapatnam—which he claimed

were registered under the names of Reddy's relatives. He further demanded an investigation into alleged land grabs at 'Kaarteeka Vanam' on Beach Road, now the site of Hotel Radisson Blu.

Murthy warned that Vijaya Sai Reddy's withdrawal from active politics doesn't absolve him of accountability. He cautioned the government against turning a blind eye. "Failure to act will expose the government's complicity in these wrongdoings," he stated.

Murthy also announced the CPI's National Executive Meeting in Visakhapatnam on January 30 and 31, where leaders from across the country will convene to assess the Central and State governments' performances and chart the party's future course. CPI national general secretary D. Raja is set to deliver a keynote address during a seminar at the event. Murthy's explosive remarks have ignited political tremors across the State, amplifying calls for a transparent and immediate investigation into the allegations against Vijaya Sai Reddy.

Mitochondrial genetics could hold key to understanding cancer metastasis: Expert

● Prof Danny R. Welch of University of Kansas Cancer Centre delivers talk at Gitam University

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



New research from the University of Kansas Cancer Centre has shed new light on the pivotal role of mitochondria in cancer progression, particularly in metastasis. Professor Danny R. Welch, a leading researcher, delivered an expert talk at Gitam University here on Tuesday, sharing insights on the potential of mitochondrial DNA in understanding and combating cancer metastasis.

Metastasis, the spread of cancer cells from their original site to other parts of the body, is responsible for more than 90 per cent of cancer-related deaths. While it has long been recognised as the leading cause of cancer mortality, the mechanisms behind metastasis have remained elusive. Prof Welch's research addresses this gap, focusing on the crucial interactions between tumour cells and their microenvironments.

Recent discoveries suggest that mitochondrial genomes, often overlooked in traditional cancer research, play a pivotal role in the spread of cancer. Prof Welch's work shines a light on the potential of mitochondrial DNA to unlock new insights into the genetic factors that drive metastasis.

"The role of mitochondria in cancer progression is a game-changer,"

stated Prof Welch. "By understanding how mitochondrial DNA influences cancer spread, we can develop more targeted and personalised treatments. This research holds the potential to revolutionise how we approach cancer care." Mitochondrial research, an emerging and rapidly evolving field, is poised to reshape cancer treatment strategies. Prof Welch emphasised

that the ultimate goal is to translate these findings into clinical practice, improving outcomes for cancer patients worldwide.

The session sparked engaging discussions among faculty, researchers, and students, with many eager to explore the possibilities that mitochondrial research presents for the future of cancer care.

DGP raises concerns over cybercrimes

● Proposes setting up dedicated cybercrime police station in every district

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



The Andhra Pradesh's Director General of Police (DGP), Ch. Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, has raised serious concerns over the rising crimes across the State, with a particular focus on the alarming surge in cybercrimes. While acknowledging a decline in overall crime rates, the DGP highlighted the rapid escalation of cyber offenses, which have become a nationwide issue demanding immediate attention.

Speaking to the media on Tuesday, DGP Rao stressed the urgent need for stronger cybersecurity measures. He advocated for the establishment of a dedicated cyber-crime police station in every district to address this growing menace. Additionally, he emphasised involving experts in the field and ramping up public awareness campaigns to educate citizens on protecting themselves from digital threats. Rao advised the public to exercise

caution and avoid making payments to unknown callers, a common tactic used by cybercriminals.

Addressing other critical issues, the DGP expressed deep concern over the disturbing rise in sexual assaults, particularly against vulnerable groups. Condemning these attacks as a grave societal issue, he called for heightened vigilance,

stricter enforcement of laws, and measures to protect victims. The DGP also turned his attention to the growing menace of drug abuse in the State, particularly the widespread trafficking of ganja. He revealed that the government has formed a committee of five Cabinet ministers and is in the process of establishing the 'Eagle' organisation,

a special task force dedicated to tackling ganja trafficking head-on.

To combat drug abuse, the Police Department has initiated educational programmes, including 'Sankalpa', aimed at raising awareness among students in schools and colleges about the dangers of drug abuse. As part of broader crime prevention efforts, Rao announced the State's plans to install 1,00,000 CCTV cameras by March 1. This initiative, supported by public donations and citizen contributions, is expected to significantly enhance surveillance and deter criminal activities in public spaces.

The DGP reaffirmed the Police Department's commitment to transparency and accountability in its operations. He also addressed the issue of Maoist activities, reassuring citizens that while the Central government is actively monitoring Maoist groups, there is no immediate threat to the safety and security of Andhra Pradesh.

District Judge flags off helmet awareness rally

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY



East Godavari District Judge Gandam Sunita flagged off a helmet awareness rally here on Tuesday.

The rally commenced from the Transport Officer's office and passed through key locations including the FCI godown, Central Jail, Kambala Cheruvu, Paper Mill, Tilak Road, and Lala Cheruvu junction, concluding at the RTO office. Addressing the gathering, the District Judge highlighted the grim statistics, revealing that 329 people lost their lives in 849 road accidents in 2023. In 2024, 298 fatalities were reported in 728 accidents across the district.

Judge Sunita urged the public to be more cautious on the roads, emphasising the importance of having both vehicle insurance and a valid driving license. She warned that in the event of an accident, vehicle owners and drivers would be liable to pay compensation, which

could range from lakhs to crores of rupees, depending on their income.

As part of the awareness campaign, the Judge announced that 550 helmets, donated by various banks, the Rotary Club, and the Horlicks Factory, were distributed to two-wheeler riders in the district under corporate social responsibility

initiatives, in line with the directives issued by the State High Court following the Honorable Supreme Court's verdict. Judge Gandam Sunita commended the efforts of the district transport department officials for organising the rally and promoting road safety awareness in the community.

Five ganja peddlers arrested in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



The Vijayawada police arrested five persons involved in ganja peddling on Tuesday, and seized 8.7 kg of ganja worth approximately Rs 45,000 and seized mobile phones from them. They were identified as Y Solaman Raju, Patibandla Kranti Chaitanya, Jayaraju Vishnu Vardhan, Putta Revanth Kumar, and Budipogu Mahesh.

The task force and law & order police have been watchful on ganja transportation, sale, purchase and supply activities closely and a special focus has been placed on tracking individuals absconding from previous drug-related cases.

Acting on a tip-off, the task force and law & order teams conducted a raid in Kuddus Nagar under the jurisdiction of Satyanarayanapuram Police Station. They arrested the five accused who were found moving suspiciously in the area. Upon interrogation, the police recovered the banned ganja and mobile phones.

Investigation revealed that all five accused were habitual users of ganja and later started its illegal trade as a means of making quick money. They purchased ganja from different sources and sold it to youth in various parts of Vijayawada. They spent the money from these sales for their extravagant lifestyles. Police have urged the public to report any information about ganja cultivation, transportation, sale or consumption. Citizens can share details confidentially through the Narcotic Cell helpline number (9121162475) or email to antinarcoticcell@vza.apolice.gov.in.

CSR programme to provide free assistive devices to differently-abled persons

● Civil Aviation Minister launches AAI's Rs 50-lakh programme

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM



Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu has unveiled a novel initiative to provide free assistive devices to differently-abled persons, supported by the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme of the Airports Authority of India (AAI). Announcing the programme at an event held at the Zilla Parishad meeting hall, Rammohan Naidu emphasised the government's commitment to empowering differently-abled individuals. The event, aimed at identifying eligible beneficiaries, was attended by District Collector Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar and Srikakulam MLA Gondu Shankar, who joined the Minister as chief guests.

The Minister revealed that Rs 50 lakh from AAI's CSR funds will be allocated to procure internationally certified assistive devices. "This initiative reflects the State government's dedication under Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu to improve the lives of disabled individuals. Eligible beneficiaries across Palasa, Tekkali,

and Srikakulam divisions will be identified and supported promptly," he said. Highlighting the programme's scope, Rammohan Naidu noted the high demand for three-wheeled bicycles and battery-operated vehicles. The Minister also referred to the success of previous

campus held in collaboration with the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) and MP funds. Beneficiaries will be evaluated by medical experts and provided with devices such as artificial limbs, hearing aids, walking sticks, and three-wheelers. The distribution process is expected to conclude within six weeks of the eligibility assessment.

The Collector described the initiative as a transformative step, commending AAI's CSR support in making the programme possible. He urged all eligible individuals to participate actively, emphasising its potential to bring significant change to the lives of differently-abled individuals.

The event also saw participation from Zilla Parishad CEO, AD Kavitha from the Differently-Abled, Elderly, and Hijra Welfare Department, as well as local staff and beneficiaries from various mandals. With its focus on mobility and independence, the programme is set to uplift disabled communities and foster inclusivity across the district.

Collector raises awareness on helmet use among bikers

Highlighting the life-saving role of helmets, the Collector stated that 595 road accidents occurred in the district in 2024, resulting in 290 fatalities and 628 injuries. "Wearing a helmet can save lives during road accidents. All two-wheeler riders must wear helmets," she said, warning that fines would be imposed on violators.

PNS ■ ELURU

West Godavari District Collector K Vetri Selvi emphasised the importance of wearing helmets while driving two-wheelers to ensure road safety. She, along with MLA Badeti Radhakrishnaiah, flagged off a bike rally at the Police Petrol Filling Station Centre on Tuesday, as part of a month-long awareness campaign on helmet usage.

Highlighting the life-saving role of helmets, the Collector stated that 595 road accidents occurred in the district in 2024, resulting in 290 fatalities and 628 injuries. "Wearing a helmet can save lives during road accidents. All two-wheeler riders must wear helmets," she said, warning that fines would be imposed on violators.

MLA Badeti Radhakrishnaiah echoed the Collector's appeal, urging bikers not to ride without helmets. He pointed out that head injuries are a leading cause of fatalities among two-wheeler riders, which could be prevented by wearing helmets. He also urged parents to prohibit their minor children from driving two-wheelers, citing the risks involved.

Deputy Transport Commissioner K.S.M.V. Krishna Rao, DMHO Dr Malinki, and other officials participated in the programme, stressing the urgent need to prioritise road safety as the number of two-wheelers continues to rise, contributing to increased accidents.



Sri Lankan team explores APCNF model farms

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

An eleven-member Sri Lankan delegation visited Anantapur district on Tuesday to study the Andhra Pradesh Community Managed Natural Farming (APCNF) model, a globally acclaimed initiative by the Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS), Government of Andhra Pradesh. The visit was part of a 10-day programme organised in collaboration with NOW Partners.

The delegation, representing the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, was led by Palane Vidane Aratchige Chamari Lakshmi, Manager of the Sustainable Development Unit, and Edirimanna Ranapura Dilum Hasanka Edirimanna, Program Assistant. It included nine farmers who toured key agricultural sites to understand sustainable farming practices.

The group visited Mucchukota village, where they explored the sweet lime A-Grade model farm of M. Ramanjaneyulu and the banana A-Grade model farm of Yadhubushan. In Varadaiahpalem village, they observed the A-Grade and ATM (Any Time Money) models at the farm of J. Venkata Ramudu. They also visited the Bengal gram A-Grade model farm of J. Venkata Lakshmi and the banana A-Grade model farm of Ramaiah.

RySS representatives provided detailed insights into the ATM and A-Grade models, designed to ensure con-



tinuous income for farmers while fostering ecological balance and sustainability. The delegation interacted with local farmers to learn how these practices have enhanced livelihoods and agricultural productivity.

This visit underscores the global recognition of Andhra Pradesh's leadership in sustainable farming. It also reflects the state's commitment to empowering farmers and contributing to global food security and ecological sustainability. The delegation was accompanied by RySS officials, including Madhu Preethi, Project Executive, Krishna Chaitanya, District Agriculture Officer (APCNF), Narendra, Consultant, and Anuradha, Project Manager.

Seven students have miraculous escape as school bus falls into canal

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Seven school students had a miraculous escape when the bus they were travelling in plunged into an irrigation canal at Vadlamuru village in Peddapuram mandal on Tuesday. According to the police, the private

school bus was carrying students to school when it veered off the road and fell into the canal. Fortunately, all seven students escaped unhurt in the mishap. Officials said that a major tragedy was averted as there was no water in the canal at the time of the incident.



Jakkampudi Raja slams Naidu over unfulfilled poll promises

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

YSR Congress Party Youth Wing State president and former MLA Jakkampudi Raja strongly criticised TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu for failing to fulfil his poll promises, particularly regarding housing schemes. Speaking to the media on Tuesday, Raja accused Naidu of neglecting the poor, stating that despite his long political career, Naidu did not allocate even a single cent of land for housing the underprivileged.

Raja highlighted that during former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure, house sites were distributed to 30 lakh poor families. He also dismissed Naidu's opposition to housing projects in Amaravati, where the latter claimed they would cause "social imbalance".

Elaborating on the YSRCP government's efforts, Raja revealed that



nearly 72,000 acres of land were acquired for housing schemes, including 25,000 acres purchased for Rs 11,343 crores, with a market value of Rs 75,000 crores. Houses were built in 17,000 colonies, complete with infrastructure such as roads, drainage, water tanks, electricity, Anganwadi centres, and substations, with an investment of Rs

32,909 crores, amounting to a total expenditure of Rs 1.27 lakh crores. Additionally, financial aid of Rs 1.80 lakh was sanctioned to 22 lakh families, along with zero-interest loans worth Rs 57,375 crores. Raja noted that property registrations were prioritised in women's names to promote their empowerment.

He accused Naidu of falsely claiming credit for wealth creation while ignoring the housing needs of the poor and burdening the public with Rs 19,000 crores in electricity tariff hikes. Raja also criticised Naidu for failing to control the rising prices of essential commodities.

Raja demanded that Naidu either fulfil his election promises or resign, warning of growing public anger. He announced that the YSRCP would stage a protest on February 5, demanding the immediate clearance of Rs 4,000 crores in pending student fee reimbursement dues.



Firm steps to curb illegal transportation of PDS rice: Manohar

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendra Manohar reiterated the government's commitment to curb the illegal transportation of rice meant for the Public Distribution System (PDS) and announced that firm measures are being implemented across the State to address the issue.

A review meeting was held at the Collectorate here on Tuesday, chaired by district in-charge Minister Kandula Durgesh. The meeting discussed various issues, including steps to curb the illegal transport of PDS rice and the implementation of welfare schemes such as the free gas cylinder scheme. Speaking on the occasion, Civil Supplies Minister Manohar stated that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has issued clear instructions to district Superintendents of Police to register cases and take strict action against those involved in the illegal transportation and sale of PDS rice.

Highlighting the implementation of the free gas cylinder scheme, the Minister said there are over 1.48 crore white ration cards and 1.55 crore gas connections in the State. Due to the non-linking of these, 8 lakh excess gas connections were identified. He assured that the responsibility for resolving this issue would be handed over to the village and ward secretariats next week.

Manohar noted that over 87 lakh free gas cylinders have been provided to beneficiaries in the State at subsidised prices, with 3.83 lakh cylinders distributed in Guntur district alone. He emphasised the government's aim to benefit more consumers and stated that the issue of utilising ration commodities transport vehicles efficiently would be discussed with the Chief Minister. He also directed officials to conduct constituency-wise drives to sanction loans to all those holding CCRC cards. District in-charge Minister and Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh urged public representatives and officials to work in coordination for the proper implementation of welfare schemes and development programmes to ensure the all-round development of the district.

The meeting was attended by Legislative Council Chief Whip Panchumarthi Anuradha, District Collector S Nagalakshmi, Rajya Sabha member Alla Ayodhya Ramireddy, MLCs K S Lakhmana Rao, Chandragiri Yesuratnam, T Kalpalatha Reddy, Murugudu Hanumantha Rao, and MLAs B Ramanjaneyulu, Dhulipalla Narendra Kumar, Tenali Shruvan Kumar, Galla Madhavi, and Mohammed Nasir Ahmed. Joint Collector A Bhargava Teja and Municipal Corporation Commissioner Puli Srinivasulu were also present.

Ministers, MLAs, officials directed to drive Guntur development

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Guntur District In-charge Minister and State Tourism, Culture, and Cinematography Minister Kandula Durgesh presided over a district review committee meeting at the Collectorate on Tuesday. During the meeting, he reviewed the performance of key departments, including Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries, Medical, Education, Civil Supplies, and Housing. Minister Durgesh emphasised the need for a comprehensive action plan, incorporating inputs from ministers, MLAs, MLCs, and officials, to address district-specific issues and accelerate development.

Highlighting the importance of effective implementation of welfare schemes, Minister Durgesh instructed officials to ensure seamless deliv-

ery of benefits to the public. He stressed coordinating with local public representatives and sharing welfare statistics with MLAs to showcase the extent of government support. Departments such as Revenue and Agriculture were directed to resolve issues faced by tenant farmers, particularly regard-



ing bank loans and CCRC cards, by March 15. The minister announced plans to introduce a new law for the protection of tenant farmers.

Discussions also focused on improving agricultural water facilities through Guntur Canal expansion and irrigation channel modernisation. Under the 'Mana Badi -

Mana Bhavishyathu' programme, officials were urged to expedite school infrastructure development. Housing beneficiaries under PMAY were directed to receive updates and support, with house construction targets set for February completion.

Minister Durgesh reviewed medical services at Guntur Government

Hospital, emphasising quality healthcare for the underprivileged. He sought updates on the status of burn wards and stressed the need to complete road patchwork in Guntur district, with 65% of the 335 km completed and the rest expected by February 15. Minister Nadendra Manohar highlighted the state's welfare achievements, noting that 1.48 crore white ration cardholders and 1.55 crore gas connections exist in Andhra Pradesh. He mentioned an excess of 8 lakh gas connections, which would be addressed by village and ward secretariats next week. In Guntur district, 3.83 lakh free gas cylinders have been distributed to benefit more households.

Rajya Sabha MP Alla Ayodhya Rami Reddy, local MLAs, and officials from various departments attended the meeting.

Sanjay criticising Gaddar due to frustration: Congress

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress said that the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, is speaking out of frustration as Malkajigiri MP Eatala Rajender is becoming the president of the Telangana BJP.

The Congress demanded Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy to reveal whether Sanjay's comments on the Gaddar-Padma awards issue were his personal ones or it was the party line. TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said the Centre gave Padma awards to persons who shot several Karsevaks. It is not proper for Sanjay to speak stooping so low and to give political colour to Padma awards, he said. The Congress's Gadwal in-charge

Saritha Tirupathaiah said that Eatala is going to be the new president of Telangana BJP and so Sanjay is frustrated as his importance will decline. Fisheries Corporation Chairman Mettu Sai Kumar said that Sanjay has no right to speak about Naxalites. "Isn't Eatala Rajender having ideological links with Naxalites? As long as Kishan is there, Sanjay will not have a chair in the BJP office. DK Aruna, who came from the Congress, has a chair, Maheshwar Reddy has a chair but Sanjay doesn't. Sanjay is talking like this because of his pain and anger," Mettu Sai Kumar said. He said that with Assembly Martyrs' Statue as a witness, Sanjay should rub his nose on the ground and unconditionally apologise to

Gaddar and to Telangana. He said the BJP has no role in the Telangana Movement, that's why Sanjay doesn't know the value of Gaddar. TPCC General Secretary Ravali Reddy criticised Sanjay for describing Gaddar as a person with naxal ideas. He asked Sanjay how he had inducted Bodige Shobha, Eatala Rajender, Konda Vishweshwar Reddy and some others into the BJP when he was the President of Telangana BJP. He criticised Sanjay for saying that Eatala Rajender, who had slapped a realtor did the right thing. "Gaddar is the person who united all sections of society. Sanjay is speaking as he liked as Gaddar belongs to the Congress. However, Eatala's ideology is Gaddar's ideology.

2 notorious burglars arrested, booty worth ₹28 L recovered

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Guntur police arrested two interstate burglars and recovered stolen gold jewellery and silver ornaments worth over Rs 28 lakh.

Superintendent of Police S. Satish Kumar, addressing the media on Tuesday, said that the accused, Akula Srinu and Dasari Naga Mahesh, were

apprehended at Lalapet. The recovered items include 318 grams of gold jewellery and 1.5 kg of silver ornaments.

The SP revealed that the duo's modus operandi targeted jewellery shops in isolated areas. They would break open the shutters to commit the burglaries. Some of the stolen gold jewellery had already been sold to Attica

Gold Finance for Rs 9 lakh.

One more burglar involved in the crimes is absconding, and police teams have launched a search operation to apprehend him.

The arrested individuals will be produced before the court, the SP stated, adding that efforts are ongoing to trace and recover the remaining stolen property.



Three chain snatchers arrested

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

The police have arrested three chain snatchers and recovered stolen goods, including gold jewellery weighing 166.5 grams, Rs 2.58 lakh in cash, and five stolen motorcycles.

Superintendent of Police Adnan Naveem Asmi informed the media on Tuesday that the Kalla police had apprehended the trio, who were involved in various criminal activities, including thefts and motorcycle lifting. The arrested suspects have been identified as Jonnala Venkatesh, Akurati Jyotsna Devi, and Gorrela Krishna.

The police revealed that the accused were responsible for chain snatching incidents targeting women when they were alone at different locations. SP Asmi praised Akividu CI Jagadeswara Rao and his team for their efforts in apprehending the notorious criminals.



ACROSS THE STATES

'India working with a new vision'

Can't accept export of raw materials, asserts PM Modi

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said he cannot accept raw materials getting exported and finished products being shipped into the country, asserting that value additions must happen in India.

Inaugurating the 'Utkarsh Odisha, Make in Odisha Conclave' in Bhubaneswar's Janata Maidan, Modi said he considers eastern India as the growth engine of the country, and the state plays an important role in it.

"The country's development is not possible only by exporting raw materials. Therefore, we are changing the entire ecosystem and working with a new vision," he said.

"The minerals are extracted here and exported to some other country where value addition is done and finished products are then sent back to India. This trend is not acceptable to Modi," he added, citing the example of the export of marine products for processing



in other countries.

Urging all to recognise the challenges of the global supply chain in a changing world, the PM said India cannot rely on fragmented and import-based supply chains.

"Instead, a robust supply and value chain must be built within India to minimise the impact of global fluctuations. This responsibility lies with both the government and the

industry," he said. The PM said the milestone of a USD 5 trillion economy was not far away for India.

He said India's economy rests on two major pillars -- the innovative service sector and quality products.

"The potential for green jobs is also growing significantly. There is a need to adapt to the demands and requirements of the times. India is focusing on

green technology and a green future, including solar, wind, hydro, and green hydrogen, which will power the energy security of a developed India," he said. The PM said the aspirations of crores of people were driving India's movement on the path of development. "Today, India is moving on a path of development driven by the aspirations of crores of people. This is an era of AI.

The country's development is not possible only by exporting raw materials. Therefore, we are changing the entire ecosystem and working with a new vision," he said. "The minerals are extracted here and exported to some other country where value addition is done and finished products are then sent back to India

tion," he said. Modi said the 21st century is about connected infrastructure and multi-modal connectivity.

"India is building specialised infrastructure at unprecedented speed and scale. It will make India a great destination for investment," he said.

The PM said ASEAN countries have shown interest in strengthening trade ties with Odisha. "I consider eastern India as the growth engine of the country, with Odisha playing a crucial role in this. History shows that during times when India significantly contributed to global growth, eastern India also made important contributions," he said.

Modi said measures were being taken to expand the petrochemical sector in the state, and dedicated industrial parks and investment regions were being developed in Paradip and Gopalpur. "I am confident that Odisha will soon reach heights of development that no one has ever imagined," he said.

However, the aspiration of India, not just AI, is the power of our country. Aspiration grows when the needs of the people are fulfilled. In the last decade, the country has witnessed the benefit of empowering crores of people. Odisha represents the same aspira-



'Vigilant against infiltration attempts from Bangla'

Assam is extremely vigilant when it comes to attempts of infiltration from Bangladesh, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said here on Tuesday. He also said the situation in Bangladesh is not good now and it is heard that ISI along with a section of Bangladeshi militants is trying to re-group. "Assam is very very vigilant when it comes to attempt of infiltration from Bangladesh," he said while interacting with a group of visiting journalists on the sidelines of an event held here to mark five years of the Bodo Peace Accord of 2020. He said there was no local support for insurgency in Assam. On a question on ULFA chief Paresh Baruah, Sarma said the rebel leader "also wants peace and does not want to derail peace and stability in the state". On asked if Assam was proposing to invite industrialists for investment in the Bodoland Territorial Region, the cm said tribal people are 'very sensitive' about land and hence they have to be talked with, taken into confidence before land is allotted for industries and businesses.



Maha to organise intl-level Marathi film festival

The Maharashtra government will organise an international-level Marathi film festival from this year, Cultural Affairs Minister Ashish Shekar said on Tuesday. The objective was to promote the regional film industry and provide a platform for films that do not reach the audiences, he said at a press conference here. He also announced nominations for the preliminary round of the 60th State Marathi Film Awards besides winners in the technical and child artist categories. "The State Marathi Film Awards have been held regularly for the last 60 years. But there is no official, government-organised film festival. While various institutions in the state hold international film festivals with the government providing assistance ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs four crore, we do not have an official state-level event," the minister said. The inaugural, three-day festival will be organised in Mumbai.



Women assaulted over land dispute between two families

A case has been registered at Manor police station in the district against six men for allegedly beating up five women of a family over land dispute, an official said on Tuesday. No arrest has been made in the case yet. The incident took place at Nagjari village on Monday. An FIR was registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt), 118(1) (voluntarily causing hurt or grievous hurt by dangerous weapons or means), 351(2) (criminal intimidation) and other relevant provisions. As per the complaint, Niraday Pavde, Jayesh Pavde, Nitesh Pavde, Pradip Pavde, Mahesh Pavde and Nilesh Pavde -- all related to each other -- allegedly attacked the women with iron rods and sticks when the latter were digging up land to build a compound wall on a disputed piece of land. The women claimed they had a court order allowing the construction. The victims were undergoing treatment at hospital, police said, adding that probe was underway.

Middle East 'crucial passage to world beyond': EAM

PNS ■ ABU DHABI

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Tuesday highlighted the significant expansion of India-Middle East engagement driven by strong trade, connectivity, and people-to-people linkages, saying India sees the Middle East as a crucial passage to the world beyond.

Addressing the inaugural session of Raisina Middle East here, Jaishankar said the Middle East region, which India calls West Asia, is crucial to India's strategic interests. The country's trade in the Gulf region amounts to about USD 160 to USD 180 billion.

"Our presence in the Gulf is both pervasive and crucial. More than 9 million Indians live and work here, but the Gulf also serves as a gateway to the MENA region and the Mediterranean," Jaishankar said, adding this larger geography is a very critical connection between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic. "And as our history underlines, there is a



sympiotic relationship between us. We certainly have stakes that are continually rising; but increasingly, India also has contributions to make that would influence the direction of events," a Ministry of External Affairs statement quoted Jaishankar as saying.

"Our annual trade with the Mediterranean, incidentally, is another USD 80 billion, and the Indian diaspora there is close to half a million," the minister said, adding that India's projects in the region include airports, ports, railways, phosphates, green hydro-

gen, steel and submarine cables. Jaishankar said the endeavours of India and the Middle East can be projected further into Africa, Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

"Perhaps there is no domain that has a stronger case for such plurilateral cooperation than that of connectivity... Maritime security and safety is another issue where understandings and mechanisms will have to step in to fill global deficits. Jaishankar said the two regions, long connected by the flow of people, have a common interest in the emergence of a global workplace.

75 YEARS OF SC

Embodies aspirations of 1.4 billion, says CJJ

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On a ceremonial benchmarking 75 years of the Supreme Court, Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna said it was a "true people's court" that evolved into the world's most vibrant apex court, embodying the aspirations of 1.4 billion people. "What began in 1950 as a successor to the federal court, has evolved into perhaps the world's most vibrant and dynamic apex court, one that truly embodies the aspirations and diversity of 1.4 billion Indians. What sets our Supreme Court apart on the global stage is its unique character as a true people's court," he said. The apex court came into existence on January 26, 1950 when the Constitution came into force and was inaugurated on January 28, 1950.

It initially functioned from the old Parliament House and moved its functioning to the present building on Tilak Marg in 1958.

Justice Khanna said 75 years after the constitutional journey



began, the Supreme Court stood transformed, yet anchored in its foundational mission. "This transformation reflects a deeper recognition - that justice must be both principled and practical. In doing so, it makes the constitutional promise of justice - social, economic, and political - a living reality for millions of Indians," he said.

While the apex court's journey reflected remarkable evolution in rights and reach, three challenges demanded attention, said the CJJ.

"Firstly, the weight of arrears which continues to delay justice. Secondly, mounting costs of litigation threatens true accessibility. Thirdly, and perhaps most fundamentally - justice cannot thrive where and when falsehood is practised," shared CJJ Khanna.

The challenges marked the next frontier in the pursuit for justice, he said.

The CJJ was a part of the ceremonial bench assembled to mark the diamond jubilee year of the Supreme Court.

CJJ Khanna said the apex court remained accessible to the public and in its diversity of the judges in these court-rooms, the multitude of voices found representation at the highest level of our judiciary.

Referring to the journey of 75 years, he said each decade of the court's jurisprudence served as a mirror to our nation's challenges with several landmark judgements.

"What emerges is not an unmovable structure carved from sandstone, but a living, breathing institution.

DELHI POLLS

TMC, SP to campaign for AAP; Cong left alone

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With several INDIA bloc parties backing the Aam Aadmi Party for the February 5 Assembly elections in Delhi, Trinamool Congress and Samajwadi Party leaders are set to campaign for the Arvind Kejriwal-led outfit, leaving aside the Congress, the largest constituent of the opposition bloc.

Formed ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls to challenge the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the INDIA bloc includes the Congress, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Samajwadi Party (SP) as its key constituents, among others. Some other member of the bloc, including the Nationalist Congress Party (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT), have also extended their support to AAP for the Delhi polls.

A source told PTI that actor-politician and TMC MP from Asansol, Shatrughan Sinha, will canvass for AAP in at least three constituencies on February 1-2.

These include former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's constituency New Delhi, Chief Minister Atishi's Kalkaji, and Jangpura, where the party has fielded its senior leader Manish Sisodia. Sinha, who hails from Bihar, could mobilise Delhi's

Purvanchali voters, a term that refers to primarily Bhojpuri-speaking migrants from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. The Purvanchalis form an influential vote-bank in the capital.

The source added that "one or two more" TMC leaders may join

the AAP campaign in Delhi. The Samajwadi Party, which played a major role in pushing the BJP back in Uttar Pradesh in last year's general elections, will also campaign for AAP. SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, along with his party MPs, will campaign for the

ruling party candidates ahead of the elections, AAP said on Tuesday. While Yadav will join Kejriwal for a roadshow in Rithala on January 30, several other SP MPs, including Iqra Hasan from Kairana, will join AAP in its campaign trail.

Biggest liquor scam took place under Kejriwal: Rahul



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi launched a blistering attack on AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday, saying the former chief minister came talking about bringing in clean politics but the biggest "liquor scam" took place in Delhi under his watch.

Addressing a public rally in Patparganj here for the

upcoming assembly polls, Gandhi also took a swipe at former deputy chief minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia, calling him, along with Kejriwal, the "architect of the liquor scam". Gandhi urged people to vote for the Congress' candidate Anil Chaudhary as Sisodia had "run away" from the Patparganj constituency after indulging in corruption.

He said Kejriwal stared off with a promise of bringing in

a new kind of politics but he now lives in a "sheesh mahal". Gandhi said the AAP chief was nowhere to be found when the poor needed him the most and when there was violence in Delhi, an apparent reference to the February 2020 riots. The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha also launched a stinging attack on the BJP, saying they talked about '400 paar' with the intention of changing the Constitution.



Will continue our journey on social justice path, says Stalin

PNS ■ VILLUPURAM

The Dravidian movement emerged to establish social justice, and the DMK would continue its journey on the social justice path, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK president M K Stalin said here on Tuesday.

It was only during the DMK rule that the reservation for BC was enhanced to 31 percent from 28, 18 percent quota was provided to the SCs, one percent reservation was provided to ST, while a separate reservation was announced for MBC, the government ensured 3.5 percent quota for Muslims, besides 3 percent internal reservation for Arundathiya, he said.

55 pc truck drivers in India have compromised vision



ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, ABOUT 33.9 PER CENT OF DRIVERS REPORTED MODERATE STRESS, WHILE 2.9 PER CENT WERE FOUND TO HAVE HIGH-STRESS LEVELS, EMPHASISING THE NEED FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About 55.1 per cent of truck drivers in India have compromised vision, while 53.3 per cent require distance vision correction and 46.7 per cent need near-vision treatment, a new report released on Tuesday revealed.

The report prepared by IIT Delhi further said that about 44.3 per cent of drivers exhib-

ited borderline or above body mass index (BMI), 57.4 per cent had elevated blood pressure levels, and 18.4 per cent showed borderline or high blood sugar levels.

A total of 50,000 truck drivers in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were screened by IIT Delhi in collaboration with the

Foresight Foundation.

According to the report, about 33.9 per cent of drivers reported moderate stress, while 2.9 per cent were found to have high-stress levels, emphasising the need for mental health support. Trucks are the backbone of India's logistic sector, connecting regions across the country and bridging many modes of transport to complete the logistics cycle.

Truck drivers in India endure many challenges and a difficult lifestyle. Key issues include long working hours, irregular shifts, extended periods away from family and various health concerns.

7 killed as wooden structure collapses in UP

PNS ■ BAGHPAT (UP)

Seven people died and about 60 were injured after a temporary wooden structure collapsed at a religious event in Baraut city of this district on Tuesday, officials said.

The incident occurred at around 8 am during a programme organised for the 'Abhishek' of Lord Adinath on Shri Digambar Jain Degree College ground on Gandhi Road in Baraut, they said. The event was part of the Moksha Kalya nak Nirvana Mahotsav of the Jain community under the aegis of Shri 1008 Adinath

Bhaktaambar Prachar.

Of the injured, 20 were discharged after they were administered first aid while 39 are undergoing treatment at a hospital, the officials said, adding that about 100 people were present at the event. The wooden stairs of the 65-foot temporary stage built in the Maanastambh Complex broke due to which the devotees on the stage and standing near it fell down, police said. A case has been registered against a contractor in connection with the incident, the officials said, adding a magisterial inquiry has been ordered.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Recalibrating US-India ties

India-US relations face a shift as India tackles trade, immigration, amid Trump's 'America First' policy

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump engage in dialogue to strengthen bilateral relations, the future of US-India ties appears poised at a critical juncture. Modi's commitment to global peace, prosperity and security, paired with Trump's vision of 'America First,' highlights a partnership that must balance shared strategic goals with diverging domestic priorities. India and the US have cultivated a robust Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership over the years, encompassing key areas like defence, technology, energy and counterterrorism. President Trump's emphasis on India increasing its procurement of American-made security equipment underscores Washington's aim to deepen defence collaboration. With Modi's planned visit to the White House and continued diplomatic exchanges, both nations are set to expand their cooperation in these critical domains. However, this partnership extends beyond bilateral gains. Modi and Trump's discussions on global challenges, including tensions in West Asia and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, highlight their shared interest in playing pivotal roles on the global stage.



Trade remains a contentious issue, with Trump's protectionist policies, including potential tariff hikes, posing a challenge to India. The US President's focus on achieving a 'fair bilateral trading relationship' reflects his administration's concerns about trade imbalances. India, on the other hand, seeks to protect its economic interests while fostering a mutually beneficial partnership. Negotiating these trade tensions will require careful diplomacy, as both nations aim to preserve the benefits of their economic ties. The potential for

increased investment, innovation and job creation through collaboration in sectors like renewable energy and space exploration offers a promising path forward. Immigration has emerged as yet another critical point of discussion. Trump's crackdown on illegal migrants and emphasis on tighter border controls have direct implications for India, one of the largest sources of irregular immigration outside Latin America. The US has identified approximately 18,000 Indian nationals for deportation, a figure India has cautiously addressed while advocating for a systematic verification process. Moreover, visa delays for Indian nationals have raised concerns, particularly as India is a significant contributor to the US tech workforce. Balancing Trump's domestic priorities with the need for a skilled global workforce will be essential to sustaining the mutually beneficial flow of talent and innovation. The relationship between India and the US is at once ripe with potential and fraught with challenges. While Trump's 'Make America Great Again' agenda and Modi's vision for a self-reliant India may occasionally clash, their shared goals of security, economic growth, and technological advancement offer ample ground for collaboration. As the world's largest democracies, India and the U.S. have a unique opportunity to lead by example in addressing global challenges.

PICTALK



Folk artists take part in a procession on the eve of the unveiling of 'Bhuvaneshwari Devi' statue, in Bengaluru PTI

Simulation-based learning: Transforming emergency medical training

By replicating real-world medical emergencies, this innovative training method bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical expertise

Simulation refers to the imitation of real-world processes or systems for training, education, or evaluation purposes. In emergency medical learning, simulation creates realistic scenarios that replicate medical emergencies, allowing healthcare providers to practice and refine their skills in a safe, controlled environment. The implementation of Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME) by the National Medical Council (NMC) has shown that simulation significantly enhances clinical competence for both undergraduate and postgraduate medical students. One of the most significant advantages of simulation is that it enables learners to practice handling critical and high-stakes situations without risking patient safety. This is particularly important in emergencies, where errors can have severe consequences. By engaging in simulated scenarios, participants can repeatedly practice emergency protocols, improve technical skills such as intubation and defibrillation, and gain confidence in their abilities.



Simulations replicate the high-pressure environment of real emergencies, helping individuals develop the ability to make rapid, informed decisions under stress. They also provide a risk-free setting to identify and correct mistakes, enabling participants to learn how to prevent such errors in real-life situations. Additionally, exposure to diverse scenarios prepares learners to adapt to unexpected complications effectively. Teamwork plays a critical role in emergency medical training, and simulation emphasises the importance of collaboration and communication. Learners develop skills in articulating observations, providing updates, and conveying instructions clearly, which are essential in high-pressure situations. Simulation allows team members to define roles, such as team leader or airway manager and practice seamless coordination. Through repeated practice, team-based simulations foster trust, cohesion, and an understanding of each member's strengths, weaknesses and working styles. Structured debriefing sessions after simulations promote a culture of continuous learning by encouraging open discussions about successes and areas for improvement. These sessions help build leadership and followership skills, enabling team

Trump's America: A reality check for the Desis

In Trump's transactional world no group, not even the perceived 'model minority,' is immune from the fallout of his unpredictable policies



BHOPIINDER SINGH

It's not Elon Musk's early frustrations with President Donald Trump handing over the crucial project to build America's AI (Artificial Intelligence) infrastructure to rival Sam Altman-led 'StarGate,' that ought to worry us, but the fate of fellow Trumpeteer, Vivek Ramaswamy, that rings closer home. During the campaign trail, the racist Trump was busy mocking minority ethnicities and religions, the Indian-American Desis, seemed smug in assuming that somehow, they were a cut above the other minorities. The purported personal equation between Trump and the Indian Prime Minister was banded as proof of the special treatment, that awaited India and Indians.

Names of a few Indian-Americans in the new Trump administration (especially of Vivek Ramaswamy in the Department of Government Efficiency or DOGE) were showcased as proofs of Trump's affection for the world's largest democracy. The lazy and simplistic assumption was that he'd be tough on the likes of China and Pakistan, hence pro-India. But the cold reality of dealing with the unpredictable politics of Trump hit much earlier than even anticipated by commentators who had been warning of Trump's ascendancy, despite many shortcomings of the Democrats under Joe Biden. For starters, Chinese President Xi Jinping got an invite to attend the swearing-in of President Trump, but the Indian Prime Minister didn't.

Soon thereafter Trump kept peppering his Make-America-Great-Again (MAGA) spiel with threats of tariff spikes against traditional allies like Canada, Denmark, Mexico etc., (including naming India) but recently suggested that he'd 'rather not' impose tariffs against China - this after promising up to 60% tariffs against China during the campaign! He flipped. Soon thereafter, the Indian-American community was hit the hardest of all immigrant communities by the direct implications of the executive order ending birthright citizenship. Chances for many Indians working under H-1B (work), H-4



(dependent), L (intra-company transfer) and F (student) got jeopardized, as amongst the largest and fastest-growing immigrant groups in the US. With all assumed equations besetting Washington DC and Delhi, it seems fait accompli with little scope for Delhi to counter-influence a policy measure, that impacts it, more than anyone else. Such radical disruptions were certainly not the norm in the Biden era. The supposed leverage of a voluble Vivek Ramaswamy with a Trump also seems to have come a cropper, given the mystery surrounding Vivek's sudden decision to leave DOGE. Having invested a lot of personal stake, content and pride, in supporting the Trump ascendancy to power (clearly prematurely?), Vivek is at pains to deny that his oyster has anything to do with him having defended the immigration position after calling some, 'lazy Americans.' To add insult to injury of being forced into grandstanding, a journalist has just released a video of Vivek's text confirming his departure from Trump, due to the same. The ostensible bid for Ohio Governorship (if true?) is an afterthought and wasn't the intention, even a week earlier. That for a Trump, anyone is completely dispensable once a purpose has been served, be it



IT IS A LESSON THAT VIVEK RAMASWAMY OR EVEN ELON MUSK WILL WAKE UP TO, AS IN THE INDIFFERENT AND TRANSACTIONAL WORLDVIEW OF A TRUMP, TOPICAL RELEVANCE IS ALL THAT MATTERS TO THE AUTHOR OF THE 'ART OF DEAL'

an individual, cause, country, or even a supportive Indian-American like Vivek, seems true. Anyone can be thrown under the bus, irrespective of their ethnicity or personal chemistry. A telling tweet by Vivek on 26th Dec 2024 captures his nuanced position on the contentious immigration issue (as wishfully believed by many Indian-Americans to be the first amongst the equals within minorities, owing to our unique culture and work ethics). He had commented, "The reason top tech companies often hire foreign-born & first-generation engineers over 'native' Americans isn't because of an innate American IQ deficit (a lazy & wrong explanation). A key part of it comes down to the c-word: culture". The underlying suggestion is that Indians do not suffer from the supposed 'Wokeism' of the Democrats as Indians do not have 'a culture that celebrates the prom queen over the math olympiad champ, or the jock over the valedictorian', hence would escape the prying eyes of a Trump targeting immigrants. While it is true that Trump has spoken about the logic of 'meritocracy' in extending citizenship - it is equally true that in applying his power of potential misuse, he hasn't spared or protected the interests of the Indian-

American community which did tick most of the qualifying boxes defined by Trump. The hard truth is that Trump has no special affinity or even intention of any preferential treatment to Indian Americans or India if his conduct in the initial few days of his Presidency is anything to go by. The fact is, the one-time star of the TV series 'Apprentice' is more famous for his heartless line "You're fired" than for any historical demonstration of empathetic leadership. Ultimately, it is a lesson that Vivek Ramaswamy or even Elon Musk will wake up to, as in the indifferent and transactional worldview of a Trump, topical relevance is all that matters to the author of the 'Art of Deal' (that too, ghostwritten). Those eagerly waiting for a decisive and assertive POTUSA in Trump who would do wonders for India, need to brace for some discomforting reality check. Biden had limitations and undeniable failings, but he wasn't a bull in a China shop or necessarily anti-India, ever. With Trump, you never know, as Indians or India don't seem anything special, at least for now.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHINA TAKES ON AI

Madam — Less than a week after his swearing-in ceremony, US President Trump said that the private sector would invest \$500 billion in AI technology, making the US the most advanced country in the world and creating jobs for millions. Just a week after this statement, the US stock market crashed on Monday, January 27. The reason behind this was the DeepSeek app launched by China last week, which became the most downloaded free app in the US, beating rivals including ChatGPT. DeepSeek was reportedly developed at a fraction of the cost of its competitors, raising questions about the future of America's AI dominance and the scale of investment planned by US firms. AI leader Nvidia's share price sank 17 per cent, and it lost about \$593 billion in stock market value, according to market experts, the biggest one-day loss ever for a company on Wall Street. I was wondering if Mr. Trump, who has just given a 75-day extension to China's app TikTok, will be able to show his displeasure with China and announce a 100 percent import duty on it instead of 60 percent. But it doesn't seem that Trump will be able to deal with China the way he deals with Mexico and Colombia. That's why he has refrained from imposing the previously announced 60 percent import duty. On the contrary, he is advising his American tech companies that 'this is a wake-up call for you guys.' Despite limited access to advanced hardware, DeepSeek's ability to compete with American models shows that software simplicity and data efficiency can compensate for hardware constraints, and underestimating China in any field can be a cause of embarrassment for anyone.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

CRACKDOWN ON FRAUD CALLS

Madam — The Indian government's steps to curb fraudulent international calls are a significant and commendable effort in

India-China border talks



The visit to Beijing by the foreign secretary, Vikram Misri and a series of high-level meetings between the officials of India and China meant to bring some normalcy back to their ties after years of heightened tensions. While these hectic parleys demonstrate intent on both sides to try to build on the momentum from the border pullback, the recent crises in their relationship have deepened mutu-

al distrust that will not go away with a few meetings. The past few months have seen India raise concerns about a new Chinese plan to build the world's largest dam in Tibet on the upstream part of what India calls the Brahmaputra. New Delhi fears that the dam could allow Beijing to weaponise water, either by denying India adequate water or by unleashing floods. The Quad grouping, which met in Washington on the margins of the swearing-in ceremony of Donald Trump, issued a statement that was more overtly critical of China and its territorial ambitions in the Indo-Pacific than has been the norm. No one expects New Delhi and Beijing to be best friends. But they do not need to be enemies either.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

the field of digital security. The Department of Telecommunications has developed an innovative and indigenous system that identifies and blocks the misuse of Indian mobile numbers. The primary aim of this initiative is to free users from cyber fraud and safeguard their financial interests. This new system has achieved the remarkable feat of reducing fraudulent international calls by 90 per cent within just 24 hours. Additionally, by blocking more than 20 foreign service providers, the government has sent a clear message that there is no place for such activities. This effort is not only a stringent step toward preventing fraudsters but also a symbol of securing the digital lives of Indian citizens. It is a critical move toward realising the vision of Digital India. The initiative not only curbs cybercrimes but also enhances the sense of trust and security among citizens. It brings greater transparency to the telecom sector and helps users feel safer in their digital activities. This initiative truly marks a new chapter in the

realm of digital security.

R K Jain | Barwani

SMRITI MANDHANA WINS ICC AWARD

Madam — India's star batter Smriti Mandhana was adjudged as the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2024, the global body announcement. Mandhana had a memorable outing with the bat in 2024. She smashed 747 runs this year with the help of four centuries and three fifties in 13 games. She set new batting standards in ODIs, scoring more runs than she ever had before in a calendar year. She also tested herself with the ball in hand and ended up taking a wicket as well. The 28-year-old now has equalled New Zealand batter Suzie Bates' record of winning the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year on multiple occasions. Mandhana won her ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year award in 2018.

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN THE PATH TO BEING TRULY SPECIAL

We all want to feel special, but often our desires and decisions lead us astray



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We all want to be special. There is nothing wrong with such thinking, but most of us do not desire properly or decide sensibly. In this article, I will shed some light on how to do both of these wisely. What should we desire? This must be in sync with our circumstances and capabilities. Imagine desiring to become very rich while doing a small business. Similarly, desiring to become famous anytime soon while being a club-level sports person is not wise.

We will be disappointed only. Persons not blessed with good looks should accept their limitations and focus on what capabilities they have been blessed with. There was a dark and not-so-good-looking actress in the USA; she only got small roles. But she acted so well that she became a household name. A social worker in India decided to help tribals. He moved in with them. He became very famous and very special. However, something awaits all of us; which is not so difficult either. This is simply to become a devotee of God, and He will make us special.

I will write more about it in this article. The same wisdom should



be used in decision-making. When there is a choice between being good and not so good, what should we choose? The same logic applies to following dharma and staying within 'maryada' (limits). We know what these are, but are very causal about controlling ourselves. Succumbing to negative emotions like anger, lust, greed, hate, etc. is so easy. What it does is to make us very ordinary. We have been taught to be disciplined in eating, sleeping, entertainment and what we do and how much. Are we prepared to do that? If we are keen on becoming special, we have to.

A similar yardstick is required in choosing goals. Are they good in the long term? Or, the short-term is easy? What will you choose? Regarding usefulness to others, we should be very sincere. If we wish to be special in the eyes of others, this is the 'mantra'. Lastly, if we really and truly wish to be special, be dutiful; do all duties as best as possible. This will be the starting point in pleasing God, who is everything. After the efforts of many births, a yogi in the end becomes wise and he takes My shelter. A great soul, who considers Lord Vasudeva thus as everything is very rare. (The Bhagavad-Geeta verse #7.19) What will happen then? You will be rewarded like you cannot imagine. Because God is the controller of what happens to us. Begin doing some easy spiritual practices, which suit your nature.

I have a large photo of Lord Krishna, which I have hung on the right side of my bed. I spend a lot of time looking at the Lord, while I gently chant Krishna, Krishna, Krishna....What has happened? I have become special. God guides me when I pray for His guidance and help. Isn't God omniscient? He knows what will work. God helps us as only He can, being the controller. I am beginning to feel secure. Fears and anxieties are reducing.

There is more peace. I can tolerate better what I must. Physical health is improving. There is steady progress, which is very satisfying. I feel that I have become special. This is possible for one and all. Nothing mentioned in this article is very difficult. One just has to be determined. Then, one can enjoy the status of being special.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Budget 2025: Prioritise health education for a stronger India



RAHUL MEHRA

With over 40 per cent of India's population under 25, empowering youth with physical and mental is a vital investment in the nation's future



As the Union Budget for 2025 approaches, expectations run high across various sectors. Among these, education - specifically health education - deserves special attention. To ensure the holistic development of our youth, the government must consider allocating funds for the integration of health education into school curricula. Such an initiative will not only address immediate concerns but also align with the aspirational vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, where a healthy population becomes the cornerstone of a developed nation. With the Union Budget 2025 at the stage of finalisation, it is time to prioritise health education.

Allocating funds to this cause is not merely an educational reform; it is an investment in India's future. It is stated time and again, including in the National Education Policy, that it is critical to allocate public investment in education from the current over 4.5 per cent to about 6 per cent of total budgetary allocation. Besides this, the Government must consider designing schemes that ensure health education is imparted to children at an early stage to be able to build a healthy society. Development is not merely economic or technological - it is also social, cultural and, above all, human.

A nation's progress depends on the health of its people, and with over 40 per cent of India's population under 25, ensuring the health and wellbeing of its youth is critical. This cannot be achieved without systematically integrating health education into our school curricula. Our goal is to improve student's health knowledge and more importantly, their health behavior. The urgency for such an intervention is rooted in troubling realities. Studies indicate that 30-40 per cent of Indian students face serious mental health challenges. A Global School



A NATION'S PROGRESS DEPENDS ON THE HEALTH OF ITS PEOPLE, AND WITH OVER 40 PER CENT OF INDIA'S POPULATION UNDER 25, ENSURING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF ITS YOUTH IS CRITICAL.

Health Survey (GSHS) conducted as far back as 2007 revealed that more than 25 per cent of students aged 13-17 experienced periods of deep sadness or hopelessness, often disrupting their daily activities. These numbers have only worsened in the years since, as highlighted by small-scale studies and the alarming rise in student suicides. Ignoring the mental and physical health of students today will lead to grave consequences for the nation tomorrow.

The contrast between India and nations that give primacy to health education is stark. In the United States, the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) collects data every two years on the health behaviours of high school students. This data informs evidence-based interventions and policies that address mental health, substance abuse, nutrition, and other critical issues. Many US states mandate health education, covering mental, physical, and social health literacy. Similarly, countries like the United Kingdom and Canada have integrated health education into their school curricula, starting at the primary level.

India, however, lacks a comprehensive approach. While physical education is emphasised in schools, the broader concept of health education, encompassing mental and social wellbeing, is largely absent. The much-lauded National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 only touches upon physical health, failing to address the critical need for a holistic health education framework. Why does this matter? Because healthy individuals contribute to a healthier economy. Poor health not only

reduces productivity but also pushes families into financial crises due to high medical expenses.

India's average life expectancy in 'full health' is a mere 60 years, significantly lower than that of many Asian countries, including Japan (74 years) and China (69 years). A healthy lifestyle, ingrained early, can change this trajectory. Countries like Japan provide valuable lessons. Their emphasis on hygiene, nutrition and physical activity is embedded in their cultural fabric. Children grow up practising these habits, resulting in a population that enjoys a higher quality of life and longer years of productive health.

India, with its rich traditions of yoga and Ayurveda, has the cultural foundations to promote such a shift. However, without institutionalising health education, these remain underutilised. Introducing health education as a mandatory subject in schools can address this gap.

A comprehensive curriculum must include modules on physical fitness, mental health resilience, nutrition, social interaction and technology use. For instance, students could learn the importance of balanced diets, strategies to cope with academic pressure, and the benefits of physical activities and mindfulness practices.

The curriculum should also emphasise practical life skills, such as decision-making, interpersonal communication, and self-advocacy, to prepare students for real-world challenges. A structured approach is essential. First, the government must design a standardised health education curriculum with clear performance

benchmarks. Students' progress should be evaluated at key stages, such as the end of classes 6, 8, and 10. Second, teachers need specialised training to effectively deliver this curriculum. Public-private partnerships can play a crucial role in addressing resource gaps and providing innovative solutions.

Importantly, this initiative aligns seamlessly with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Viksit Bharat 2047. A healthy India is a productive India. By equipping the younger generation with the knowledge and skills to prioritise their wellbeing, we are not only improving individual lives but also strengthening the nation's human capital, driving economic growth, and enhancing societal happiness.

Beyond the classroom, the ripple effects of mandatory health education can be transformative. A population that understands the value of preventive care will reduce the burden on India's healthcare system. Families will adopt healthier lifestyles, and communities will benefit from reduced rates of lifestyle-related diseases, such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart ailments.

The road to Viksit Bharat 2047 is paved with initiatives that prioritise people over policies, and action over aspirations. Health education is not just a subject; it is a foundation for a stronger, healthier, and more prosperous India.

(The writer is UNESCO Chair for Global Health & Education and Chairman of Tarang Health Alliance. Views expressed are personal)

How restoring forests can combat climate change and empower communities

Reforestation stands as both a climate action imperative and a cornerstone for building sustainable future

Amid escalating climate changes, reforestation has come to be one of the most effective, nature-driven methods to combat environmental degradation and enhance climate resilience. Beyond absorbing carbon dioxide, forests support livelihoods, stabilise ecosystems, and foster sustainable communities. Forests have a great role in countering global warming and providing essential resources that not only support communities but also manufacturing and trade. However, as research indicates, India in the past two decades has lost nearly 414-kilo hectares of humid primary forest which made up 18 per cent of its total tree loss. This highlights an urgent need to prioritise reforestation, not



SHWETA RAWAT

just as a climate action tool but also as a cornerstone for community development. **Reforestation's Dual Role:** Climate Action and Community Resilience Forests have an immense capacity to capture and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, thus reducing the greenhouse effect.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, established in 1988 estimates that reforestation and afforestation could account for up to 30 per cent of the carbon reduction required to limit global warming. Additionally, forests regulate microclimates, mitigating the urban heat island effect and stabilising local weather patterns crucial for agriculture. Reforestation plays a crucial role in combating desertification, which poses a significant threat to food security, water availability and livelihoods. Forests help anchor the soil, replenish organic matter, and improve water retention, thereby enhancing agricultural productivity and water access, particularly in ecologically fragile regions. According to

the India State of Forest Report 2021 (ISFR), tribal and rural communities living in these areas face high vulnerability but also exhibit remarkable climate resilience.

For these communities, reforestation is a game-changer as it can help prevent and even undo desertification by stabilising the soil using tree roots, which reduces wind and water erosion. Furthermore, forests help replenish organic material in the soil, leading to improved water retention and increased fertility which can lead to environmental regeneration and socio-economic stability.

Community-driven Reforestation: A Proven Model Even with rapid urbanisation, India's conservation ethos has a rich legacy of pro-



tecting nature. Be it the collective Chipko movement of the 1970s or the inspirational restoration of more than 1300 acres of Brahmaputra's Forest by Jadav Payeng, the Forest Man of India, the success of any reforestation effort hinges on community and local participation.

With the input of individuals and stakeholders from communities, any conservation project remains culturally relevant, ecologically sound and

economically beneficial. Take Aravalli Hills Afforestation Project as an example for instance. By involving Village Forest Protection Committees, the project rejuvenated over 151,390 hectares of degraded land and built nearly 200 water storage dams to support wildlife, boosting biodiversity and tiger populations in Sariska Sanctuary. With an impressive 87 per cent tree survival rate, the initiative balanced environmental restoration with tangible social benefits such as job creation and improved livelihoods. This model demonstrates that sustainable reforestation thrives on collaboration, community empowerment, and measurable impact. Partnerships for a Greener Future To scale reforestation

efforts, collaboration is key. Governments, philanthropies, non-profits and businesses must unite to amplify impact. For instance, non-profits can mobilise grassroots participation and bring cultural insights. Corporations can leverage resources for large-scale projects while fulfilling sustainability commitments. Local governments can ensure policy alignment and provide regulatory support. Together, these stakeholders can create integrated strategies that combine ecological restoration with community upliftment. Initiatives like the National Afforestation Programme and the Green India Mission lay a solid foundation, but partnerships can catalyse progress. Reforestation for Generations to Come

Reforestation offers a rare synergy—mitigating climate change while addressing critical challenges like water scarcity, food insecurity and rural poverty. It is not merely an environmental solution but a pathway to holistic development. By fostering meaningful partnerships with non-profits, businesses, and communities, and aligning efforts with governmental initiatives.

The time to act is now. With a shared vision and commitment, we can restore forests not just as carbon sinks but as vibrant ecosystems that sustain life and empower generations. A greener, more resilient future is within our reach—if we plant the seeds today. (The writer is chairperson and founder, The Hans Foundation; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



BSNL announces launch of IFTV platform

State-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has announced the country-wide launch of the IFTV platform in partnership with Skypro and OTT partner PlayboxTV. The platform will offer more than 550 Live TV channels and premium OTT apps in India, a statement said. Under the partnership, BSNL with its network enables access to content for customers across India. Skypro, as the technology backbone of IFTV, ensures content delivery while PlayboxTV brings a curated selection of premium content, catering to diverse entertainment preferences, it explained. With over 4 million FTTH customers across diverse terrains of India, from urban to rural areas, BSNL now enables all its customers to access premium TV and OTT apps at no additional cost, the statement said. BSNL had earlier launched the platform on pilot basis in some parts of the country. "This collaboration with Skypro and PlayboxTV to launch IFTV is a game changer for our customers, particularly in rural India," BSNL CGM Maharashtra HK Makkar said at the launch event in Pune on Monday evening.



Skoda looks to turn profitable: Official

Czech carmaker Skoda is looking to turn profitable in India this year as it expects sales to double with its foraying into the high volume sub-compact SUV segment with its new offering Kylaq, according to a top company executive. Bullish on its growth aspects, the automaker expects the Indian market to break into its top five markets globally with enhanced sales volume growth. In an interaction with PTI, Skoda Auto Board Member for Sales and Marketing Martin Jahn said the company plans to enhance its model lineup, including electric cars, and bolster localisation to ramp up the scale of operations in India. He said the company also plans to utilise India to export to various markets globally. "We want to more than double our sales this year. We believe that India will make it to the top five of the global markets of Skoda. We also plan to use India to export more to the Middle East, North Africa, to Australia," Jahn said.



Bajaj Auto net up at Rs 2,196 crore

Bajaj Auto on Tuesday said its consolidated net profit increased by 8 per cent to Rs 2,196 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2024, on the back of robust exports. The company had reported a net profit of Rs 2,033 crore in the October-December quarter of last fiscal. Total revenue from operations was at Rs 13,169 crore for the third quarter compared with Rs 12,165 crore in the year-ago period, Bajaj Auto said in a regulatory filing. The company said it sold a total of 12,24,472 units in the third quarter, a 2 per cent increase over 12,00,997 units in the same period of last fiscal. Sales in the domestic market declined 9 per cent year on year to Rs 7,07,105 units as against 7,78,281 units in the year-ago period. Exports, however, rose 22 per cent year on year to 5,17,367 units from 4,22,716 units in the December quarter of last fiscal. The company said it has a robust balance sheet with surplus funds of over Rs 15,001 crore after having infused capital of nearly Rs 1,600 crore in the financing subsidiary and executing a capex of Rs 450 crore in the year to date.

FICCI: Review of tax structure to spur demand, boost growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Budget, a majority of the members surveyed by FICCI favoured review of the direct tax structure with a view to spur demand and boost growth. A re-look at the slabs and the tax rates is warranted as this could leave more money in the hands of people and spur consumption demand in the economy, FICCI said.

The current round of FICCI's Pre-budget 2025-26 survey was conducted between late December 2024 and mid-January 2025. The survey drew responses from over 150 companies spanning across diverse sectors, offering a comprehensive insight into India Inc's sentiments amid moderating economic growth. The surveyed members expect that the country's GDP growth will be 6.5-6.9 per cent in 2025-26 financial year beginning March.

Respondents also called for a strong policy push on simplifying the tax regime, incentivizing the development of green technologies/renewables and EVs, and easing compliance through digitization. On the taxation front, providing tax certainty, addressing custom duty inversion, and

rationalization of TDS provisions were highlighted as important themes by the participants.

The participants also showed support for an amnesty scheme under customs, with 54 per cent favouring its introduction to enable swift resolution of disputes.

According to the survey, the government's commitment to fiscal consolidation has put the



country in good stead as the participants expect the government to remain on that course.

About 47 per cent of participants expected the government to meet the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent for FY 2024-25 and another 24 per cent reporting that the government could improve and report a lower fiscal deficit number for the current year.

Besides, a majority of respondents highlighted the need for sustaining public capital expenditure, with 68 per cent calling for a thrust on capex to sustain the growth momentum.

Budget: Automakers want support for green tech, EV ecosystem

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Automakers want the government to provide merit-based policies to support a full range of green technologies and alternative fuels besides allocations to facilitate electric vehicle ecosystem like charging infrastructure to further accelerate sustainable mobility in the upcoming Union Budget.

With the automobile industry showing early signs of growth slowing down, they said budgetary initiatives to boost the disposable income of consumers are necessary to support robust growth.

"We request the government for appropriate merit-based policies that support and help in popularising full range of greener technologies and alternative fuels thereby helping in faster and greater adoption of multiple sustainable mobility solutions," Toyota Kirloskar Motor Country Head and Executive Vice President - Corporate Affairs and Governance - Vikram Gulati said.

Further, he said measures to encourage the scrapping of old vehicles through the budget will also boost demand for newer generation vehicles and eliminate the polluting ones.

Stating that the upcoming Union Budget presents an opportunity to address some pressing needs of the automotive sector, Skoda Auto Volkswagen India MD & CEO



With the automobile industry showing early signs of growth slowing down, they said budgetary initiatives to boost the disposable income of consumers are necessary to support robust growth

Piyush Arora said, "A long-term vision for favourable tax structure catering to different automotive technologies would certainly benefit the industry."

The product development cycles are quite lengthy and require substantial investment which needs to be considered, he said, adding, "simplifying the GST structure for the different classes of vehicles and components is another ask".

Arora said, "Budget allocation on facilitating the EV ecosystem like charging infrastructure will give further lift to sustainable mobility. Allocating a budget for better

and safe road infrastructure will facilitate the growth of the auto industry."

Noting that there are early signs of auto industry growth slowing down, he said, "therefore, budgetary initiatives to boost disposable income of consumers is necessary to support robust growth."

Expressing similar views, Volvo Car India Managing Director Jyoti Malhotra said, "We hope the budget will prioritise measures to boost consumer spending, accelerate EV (electric vehicle) adoption through incentives and infrastructure development and invest in skill development

programmes to address the evolving needs of the sector."

Furthermore, continued policy stability and a focus on sustainable growth will be crucial for the Indian automobile sector to navigate the current economic landscape and contribute significantly to the nation's economic progress, he added.

Malhotra noted that the Union Budget 2025-26 arrives at a critical juncture for the Indian economy, grappling with global uncertainties and a slowdown in consumer demand.

Mercedes-Benz India MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said the company hopes for forward looking measures from the budget that fosters sustainable economic growth and enhances India's global competitiveness.

"Continued push for BEV adoption by pursuing the existing incentives, infrastructure development and R&D initiatives will be crucial in accelerating India's transition to green mobility, positioning us as a key player in the global BEV value chain," he added.

"Reducing trade barriers and simplifying regulatory frameworks can further integrate India into global supply chain, while any additional measures that lower the cost of doing business, can result in attracting new investments and boost advent of new technologies and innovation," Iyer said.

Stock markets snap 2-day decline

Banking shares shine on RBI liquidity move

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Snapping the two-day decline, benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Tuesday following intense buying in banking and rate-sensitive stocks as the RBI decided to inject liquidity into the financial system.

The 30-share Sensex climbed 535.24 points or 0.71 per cent to settle at 75,901.41. During the day, the benchmark surged 1,146.79 points or 1.52 per cent to hit a high of 76,512.96.

The broader 50-share NSE Nifty appreciated by 128.10 points or 0.56 per cent to close at 22,957.25. In the intraday session, the 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 308.8 points or 1.35 per cent to 23,137.95.

"The national benchmark indices demonstrated optimism today, primarily driven by gains in the banking sector following the RBI's announcement of open market interventions to address liquidity concerns.

Among the Sensex shares, Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Tata



Motors, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Zomato, IndusInd Bank, Maruti Suzuki India and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers.

Sun Pharmaceutical, Larsen & Toubro, ITC, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Power Grid, Nestle India, Tata Consultancy Services, and Asian Paints were among the laggards. Investors remain cautious due to growing global uncertainty and disappointing domestic economic indicators.

However, optimism in banking, auto and realty aided sentiment even as worries over Trump's trade policies and fading chances of any rate cut in next month's cred-

it policy weighed, Tapsee added.

Among the sectoral indices, Bankex climbed the most by 1.49 per cent, Financial Services by 1.45 per cent, Realty by 1.27 per cent, Auto by 1.16 per cent, and Consumer Discretionary rose by 0.23 per cent.

Healthcare, Industrials, Utilities, Capital Goods, Power, Oil & Gas, Energy, IT and Focused IT were among the laggards.

In the broader market, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC shares declined 4.82 per cent to close at Rs 612.30 apiece on BSE after the company's December quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.

Shares of Anant Raj depreciated by 20 per cent to close at Rs 534.45 apiece -- also its lower circuit level -- on the bourse.

The scrip plunged after China's disruptive low-cost AI-startup DeepSeek threatened the dominance of US artificial intelligence (AI) companies such as Nvidia and triggered a rout among global tech stocks.

India, Oman to amend tax treaty for greater cooperation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Oman have agreed to amend the DTAA to align it with international standards on cross-border taxation, simplifying procedures, and promoting greater cooperation in tax matters, an official statement said on Tuesday.

A protocol to amend the India-Oman Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) was signed during the visit of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal to Muscat.

The treaty was implemented in 1997. "Both sides signed the protocol to amend the India-Oman DTAA, aligning it with international standards on cross-border taxation, simplifying tax procedures, and promoting greater cooperation in tax matters," the commerce and industry ministry said.

The two countries have also agreed to expedite the discussions for an early signing of the proposed free trade agreement, which is under negoti-

ations. Goyal was in Muscat for the India-Oman Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) with Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef.



"The two ministers exchanged views on a bilateral India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which is under advanced stages of negotiations," it said.

The pact is aimed at boosting two-way trade and investments.

The negotiations for the agreement, officially dubbed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, formally began in November 2023.

Tata Steel expects stable realisations

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Tata Steel management projected flat realisations for the Indian market in the fourth quarter with potential upside contingent on significant changes in the upcoming Union budget or government safeguards.

However, coking coal costs in India are expected to reduce by USD10 per tonne quarter-on-quarter, providing some relief to the company, the management told analysts in a concall.

The steel industry was seeking safeguard duty against cheap imports.

The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), has also started an investigation into imports of 'Non-Alloy and Alloy Steel Flat Products', used in various industries, including fabrication, pipe making, construction, capital goods, auto, tractors, bicycles, and electrical panels.

Tata Steel, on the European front, anticipates lower realisations in both the UK and Netherlands due to annual contract renewals at the calendar year-end.

Growth in housing prices to moderate: India Ratings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Housing prices are likely to rise 3-4 per cent next fiscal on high base effect and better supply, according to India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra).

The rating agency expects the housing price rise to taper in the 2025-26 financial year.

Ind-Ra expects property prices to increase 5-6 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in 2024-25 fiscal, then moderate to 3-4 per cent YoY for 2025-26, due to base effects and new launches.

Prices surged 21 per cent

YoY in 2023-24 with old stock cleared and existing inventory largely liquidated, the agency said.

Ind-Ra has maintained a neutral outlook for the residential real estate sector for the next fiscal.

"Growth in bookings is likely to reduce significantly due to the high base, high prices and a likely slowdown in the luxury segment," it said.

The residential real estate market is expected to register a strong performance in 2024-25, where the sales growth will be around 17 per cent YoY in terms of area sold (square feet



of area sold) and around 15 per cent in terms of units sold for the top eight real estate clusters. This growth will be largely driven by the premium and luxury segment sales.

"FY26 is likely to see contin-

ued positive growth in bookings, although at a slower pace due to the base effect and moderation in affordability. Among the top eight cities, the National Capital Region, Bengaluru, and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region are likely to remain relatively resilient in bookings, except for the luxury segment," said Mahaveer Shankarlal Jain, Director, Corporate Ratings, Ind-Ra.

Developers might continue to experience positive growth in collections and operating cash flows, leading to a sustained strong balance sheet,

No 1 position in two-wheeler market within sight: Honda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Japan's Honda Motor Co Ltd on Tuesday said it is within reach of achieving the number one position in the Indian two-wheeler market and will introduce a variety of products, including scooters and EVs, to solidify its position.

The company, which parted ways in 2011 with erstwhile partner Hero MotoCorp -- the current market leader, said it will also strive to capture the largest market share in the electric two-wheeler segment in India,

where it will begin operating a dedicated electric two-wheeler production plant in 2028.

"We have launched highly competitive products of all kinds... With the advantage of the strength of 6,000 dealers and service networks covering all the geographies of India, we have increased the unit sales. Now, the number one position is well within our sight," Honda Motor Co Executive Officer,

Chief Officer, Head of Motorcycle and Power Products Operations, Motorcycle Business Unit, Minoru Kato said in a news conference in Tokyo.

"Going forward, we will accommodate the diverse needs and income levels of customers (in India). We will fortify with all products, including EVs, scooters and motorcycles, in order to solidify the number one position."

Honda is present in the Indian two-wheeler market through its wholly-owned arm Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI). In 2011, it exited from the erstwhile joint venture Hero Honda after 26 successful years.

As per data from the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), in the April-December period this fiscal, HMSI has narrowed the gap to Hero MotoCorp with total wholesales of 41,38,346 units to the Indian rival's 43,30,928 units.



78 pc employees aim for prioritising family: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Amid debate over striking a work-life balance and L&T chairman SN Subrahmanyam recommending a 90-hour work week, a report has revealed that 78 per cent of employees interviewed said their aim is to prioritise family.

According to global job site Indeed's 'Future Career Resolution' report there is a significant shift in the priorities of Indian employees, with nearly four in five (78 per cent) stating they aim to prioritise family time with spouses, children

and parents over career advancement in 2025. Employees want less stress and more focus on mental well-being while being in well-paid jobs that they enjoy and offer flexibility for family and personal interests, it added.

"We're definitely seeing a shift in what matters to Indian workers. More and more, people are telling us they want to find a better balance between work and home life. While earning more is important, the dream career for most isn't about moving up the ladder - it's about feeling secure, being paid

fairly, and having benefits that actually make a difference," Indeed Marketing Director (Australia, India and Singapore) Rachael Townsley said.

The report is based on a survey by predictive analytics system Valuvox on behalf of Indeed between December 2024 and January 2025, reaching 6,126 employees and job seekers across Singapore, India, Japan, and Australia. The sample size included 2,507 respondents from India.

It further found that alongside the evolving priorities, Indian employees remain opti-



mistic about the job market as well. Over half (55 per cent) of respondents express confidence in the expansion of opportunities in emerging sectors and

industries, said the report.

In preparation, employees are actively working to build diverse skill sets and are staying flexible and are open to new job opportunities or relocations, it added.

This optimism extends to the adoption of advanced technologies, with 55 per cent of respondents expressing confidence in the growing potential of AI and tech-driven fields.

Key skills identified for career advancement in 2025 include emotional intelligence and conflict resolution, data literacy and analytical abilities

and advanced technology competencies such as AI, machine learning, and coding, it stated.

Over 59 per cent of Indian employees also expect to see a shift in hiring practices, with a stronger focus on skills-based recruitment over traditional degree-based qualifications. This trend reflects the growing demand for job roles in emerging industries such as technology and AI, where practical expertise and hands-on skills often outweigh formal educational credentials, said the report.

Shahid Kapoor reveals his early fear of Randeep Hooda during NSD workshops

Bollywood star Shahid Kapoor recently shared a heartfelt reflection on his long-standing admiration for actor Randeep Hooda during a live social media session. The two actors, who are set to share the screen for the first time in Vishal Bhardwaj's much-anticipated film *Ustara*, have a deep connection that dates back to their National School of Drama (NSD) days. Shahid revealed an interesting anecdote from their early years in acting workshops, shedding light on how their bond has evolved over time.

During the live interaction, Shahid recalled his first impression of Randeep during their acting workshops with the legendary Naseeruddin Shah. Shahid shared that, as a junior to Randeep in those workshops, he found Randeep's intensity quite intimidating. "He was very senior to me in the workshops, and I was quite scared of him," Shahid confessed. However, over the years, the two actors have forged a strong friendship, and Shahid is now eager to work alongside Randeep in *Ustara*.

Shahid expressed his excitement about their upcoming collaboration, stating, "Randeep Hooda is also there. How can I forget? He's my buddy from our NSD days when I also visited. I'm very excited. This is my first time working with



Randeep. We've never worked together before. We actually did a lot of acting workshops together with Naseer uncle. He was very senior to me, and I used to be very scared of him."

Their shared experiences at NSD, along with their years of friendship, have shaped a unique camaraderie

that Shahid is eager to bring to the screen in *Ustara*. Directed by the renowned Vishal Bhardwaj, the film also features an impressive ensemble cast, including veteran actor Nana Patekar, the versatile Vikrant Massey, and the talented Tripti Dimri, making it one of the most anticipated releases of the year.

Kriti Sanon brings Mukti to life in *Tere Ishk Mein*

After the resounding success of *Raanjhanaa* (2013), a film that left an indelible mark in the hearts of audiences, the powerhouse trio of director Anand L Rai, actor Dhanush and music maestro AR Rahman are reuniting for a brand-new cinematic journey. Their upcoming film, *Tere Ishk Mein*, promises to offer a captivating exploration of unrequited love, heartbreak, and longing - emotions that will strike a chord with viewers.

Produced by Anand L Rai and Himanshu Sharma, along with Bhushan Kumar and Krishan Kumar, *Tere Ishk Mein* is set to take audiences through a rollercoaster of intense emotions, with a soundtrack composed by the legendary AR Rahman. The music, along with Irshad Kamil's evocative lyrics, is expected to add another dimension to the storytelling, providing a musical experience that will resonate deeply with audiences.

A key highlight of *Tere Ishk Mein* is the incredible performance of Kriti Sanon, who takes centre stage in what is poised to become one of the most iconic female roles in recent cinematic history. Kriti's character is shrouded in mystery and depth, and the newly released promo gives viewers a glimpse of her in a truly enigmatic avatar. Her portrayal is set to captivate the audience, showcasing a raw intensity and the emotional turmoil of a woman caught in the throes of unrequited love. Fans can expect a film filled with layered storytelling, unforgettable dialogues, and moments that will leave a lasting impression. The promo also reveals a hauntingly beautiful score that adds to the mystique and

emotional depth of the film. After Dhanush's emotional first look, Kriti's reveal further elevates the excitement surrounding *Tere Ishk Mein*, heightening anticipation for what is sure to be an unforgettable cinematic experience.

Tere Ishk Mein is being positioned as a spiritual successor to *Raanjhanaa*, diving deeper into themes of unrequited love, longing, and emotional conflict. Directed by Anand L Rai and written by Himanshu Sharma, the film promises to continue the legacy of their previous collaboration while adding new layers to the emotional landscape.

Produced under the banner of Gulshan Kumar, T-Series, and Colour Yellow, the film also brings back the iconic collaboration of AR Rahman and Irshad Kamil, whose musical chemistry was pivotal in the success of *Raanjhanaa*. With *Tere Ishk Mein*, the duo is expected to deliver another unforgettable soundtrack that enhances the story's emotional depth.

Scheduled for a worldwide release in Hindi and Tamil on 28th November 2025, *Tere Ishk Mein* is shaping up to be a monumental film, reuniting some of the most talented minds in Indian cinema. As anticipation builds, fans can look forward to yet another poignant and heart-wrenching tale that will leave them reflecting on the power of love and loss.



'I always felt drawn to films and there's no specific reason why'

For Palak Tiwari, films have always been more than just a career choice - they've been a calling. While the allure of television might have been a natural option, she found herself gravitating toward the expansive world of cinema. "I always felt drawn to films, and there's no specific reason why. It's just something that resonated with me. With films, I feel like I have the freedom to explore and build my own identity. It's my chance to create a space that's truly mine," she says.

Palak's choice reflects a desire to step into a medium where storytelling feels limitless. For her, cinema is a place where she can break free from boundaries and embrace the opportunity to evolve. She views each film as a canvas to express herself, to discover new facets of her craft, and to leave a unique mark on audiences.

As she continues her journey, Palak's focus remains on experimenting with roles and finding projects that align with her vision. Her approach to acting is driven by a deep connection to the art form, choosing roles that allow her to grow both personally and professionally.

In a world that often demands conformity, Palak is intent on carving out a space that is entirely her own - true to her voice, her vision, and her love for films. With every step forward, she's proving that her resonance with cinema is more than just a feeling - it's the foundation of a promising and authentic career.



Sunny Leone and Himesh Reshammiya turn up the heat with 'Tandoori Days'

Sunny Leone and Himesh Reshammiya are back with a bang, treating fans to their latest track, 'Tandoori Days'. This upbeat number showcases a unique fusion of Himesh's signature music style and Sunny's undeniable charm. The duo's on-screen chemistry is electric, adding a vibrant energy to the song that makes it impossible to resist. The music video is packed with catchy beats, striking visuals, and a blend of desi vibes with a modern twist, promising to make 'Tandoori Days' a party favorite, hailing the Sunny-Himesh pairing as the highlight of this sizzling new release.

Sanya Malhotra-starrer Mrs brings fresh perspective on women's struggles & aspirations

What happens when a woman with big dreams is married off to a family where the only thing on the menu is khana, ghar ka kaam, and a side of patriarchy? ZEE5 announces the launch of *Mrs* directed by Arati Kadav. The film is a powerful and thought-provoking film that delves into the everyday struggles of women while tackling critical issues such as gender inequality, societal expectations, and personal growth, all without compromising on entertainment. Starring the talented Sanya Malhotra in the lead role, *Mrs* follows the journey of a young bride who finds herself drowning in an ocean of household chores, all while her aspirations of becoming a dancer slowly fade into the background. Produced by Jio Studios in association with Baweja Studios, this compelling film sheds light on the patriarchal mindset and a woman's silent struggle to preserve her sense of self. *Mrs* premieres on ZEE5 on February 7.

As seen in the trailer, 'Mrs' follows the journey of a young woman Richa (Sanya Malhotra) whose dreams of becoming a dancer take a backseat when she is married into a traditional family with a patriarchal twist. Suddenly, she's overwhelmed by an endless pile of household chores, all while her in-law's mantra of 'the kitchen is a woman's domain' echoes in her mind. As she battles the overwhelming weight of expectations and sees her dreams fade, something inside her shifts. Will Richa continue to submit to a system that gives her nothing but oppression, or will she take a

bold step that surprises both her family and herself? The question is: can one woman ignite a revolution in her own home? Watch *Mrs*. on ZEE5 to find out.

Arati Kadav, director of *Mrs*, said, "Directing *Mrs* has been an incredibly rewarding experience. It's a story that speaks to the everyday challenges faced by women, but it's also about breaking free from the confines of tradition and finding one's true voice. The opportunity to present this narrative allowed me to explore universal themes of identity, ambition, and the struggle to hold onto one's dreams. I am grateful to Harman Baweja, our producer for choosing me to tell this story. Partnering with ZEE5 for this film has been amazing, as it allows us to showcase this powerful story to a global audience. Moreover, Sanya in the role of a young hopeful bride truly embodies the joy, vulnerability and strength of the character, and I couldn't have asked for a better lead to tell this story."

Sanya Malhotra said, "When I read the script for *Mrs*, I was excited to bring this powerful story to life - it's a reflection of the everyday struggles many women face, and it's about time we start talking about it. My character's journey is one of quiet resilience, as she goes from doing the dishes to dreaming big again. It's been a rewarding challenge to play someone who dares to break free from the routine and find her voice, and I hope the audience feels inspired by her transformation!"



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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6	5			1	7		
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Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Very good indeed
- A leader of a tribe
- Chefs
- A religious holiday every year
- A large continent
- A ship's tall pole
- The country just north of the USA
- A female relation
- A wild dog from Australia
- Opposite of strength

DOWN

- Worshipped statues
- Yelling loudly and shrilly
- A moving staircase
- A rider's seat on a horse
- Part of a stage play
- Opposite of uncles
- A pointed top of a mountain



GINGER MEGGS



Parde Ke Peechhey is a tribute to 'velvet curtains'

Spanning five decades, Ila Arun's career in theatre, film and music has been marked by her ability to break stereotypes and amplify women's voices. As she launched her autobiography *Parde Ke Peechhey* here in Hyderabad, *The Pioneer* got in touch with her as she speaks of the emotional moment of launching it at the 'Razia Baig Series' and more insights on the book

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

An actor, singer and what not! Ila Arun's illustrious career, spanning over five decades, has made her one of the most iconic figures in India's cultural landscape. With a commanding presence on stage, a distinctive voice that resonates across genres, and an unwavering determination to challenge norms, Ila has redefined the boundaries of theater and music. In her deeply personal and reflective autobiography, *Parde Ke Peechhey*, she invites readers into the heart of her extraordinary journey. From



the struggles she faced to the triumphs she celebrated, Ila's story is a testament to her relentless passion for the arts and her dedication to breaking barriers along the way.

The book launch, held as part of the Remembering Razia Baig series, was a deeply emotional event for Ila. Razia Baig, a figure known for her dedication to education and cultural empowerment, held a special place in Ila's heart. Reflecting on the significance of the occasion, Ila shared, "This series is such a heartfelt tribute to Razia Baig Sahiba. She was a self-made woman, a homemaker, yet a pillar of support for teachers and education. Launching my autobiography as the first event in her memory was deeply touching. She had always supported my plays, and I'm certain she would have been proud of this book." Ila added, "Razia Baig was a great supporter of theatre and a backbone for her husband's initiatives. 'Parde Ke Peechhey' is my book about my journey around the theatres, and getting it launched here couldn't have been a better opportunity to remember her. From watching my plays to my book being launched in her memory, it's such an honor."

The decision to write *Parde Ke Peechhey* was not one that Ila took lightly. Over the years, she had been approached multiple times to share her story, as publishers often seek motivational tales of overcoming adversity and building a legacy. Ila reflected on the offer: "Publishers are always looking for stories that resonate with people - whether from cricketers, writers, or entertainers. They want to know how someone pursued their dreams, overcame challenges, and built a legacy. For years, I hesitated, unsure if I wanted to take this on, but eventually, I realised my journey could inspire a wide audience." For Ila, the

book is not just a recounting of her life but a message for dreamers of all ages. "Whether it's young girls just starting out, teenagers looking for guidance, or older generations who've followed my career, this book is for everyone. It's a reminder that no matter where you come from, dreams are achievable if pursued with dedication and honesty."

The book also sheds light on the societal hurdles Ila faced as a young woman in theater. "When I started, theater wasn't a respectable career, especially for women," she recalled. "My family didn't fully support it, and financial constraints were always a challenge. But I refused to give up. My love for the stage and my passion for storytelling kept me going." She added that her mother had been her biggest support throughout this journey. Ila also shared the significance behind the title 'Parde Ke Peechhey', revealing that while some suggested a more commercially appealing title like 'Choli Ke Peechhey', her intention was far more symbolic. Ila chose 'Parde Ke Peechhey' as a tribute to the iconic velvet curtains that have defined her theatrical journey. For the unaware, 'Choli Ke Peechhey' is the renowned song Ila Arun sings for the film *Khalnayak*. She explained that the title was meant as a tribute to the "velvet curtains" of the theater, which have always been an integral part of her journey in the world of performing arts.

A key theme of 'Parde Ke Peechhey' is the role of teachers and mentors in shaping Ila's life. She speaks fondly of those who have guided her along the way. "From the beginning, my path has been closely

linked with teachers. Whether they were mentors in music, theater, or life itself, they helped me become who I am today. Teachers have the power to transform lives, and I wanted to honour them in my story." Ila's collaboration with Anjala Bedi, who co-wrote the book, was also an important part of this process. "I write in Hindi, but the autobiography is in English. Anjala has been a long-time collaborator, and she ensured that the language captured my voice authentically. She's been a part of my theater family and understands me deeply, which made her the perfect choice to help bring my story to life."

Reflecting on her career, Ila shared that her work in theater, television, and film has been transformative. "I started with plays like *Mandi in Boondi* and *Sushman* in Pochampalli. Later, I moved to films and television, working with directors like Rajkumar Santoshi on *The Legend of Bhagat Singh*. Each experience enriched me as an artist," she said. Her collaborations with legends like Shabana Azmi and Sunny Deol have been particularly special to her.

"Working with Shabana has been a joy. We share a close bond, and I've always admired her craft," Ila shared. She also recalled the deep emotional impact of the recent loss of her teacher and guide. "My last meeting with him, where I wished him on his anniversary, is one of the golden moments of my life."

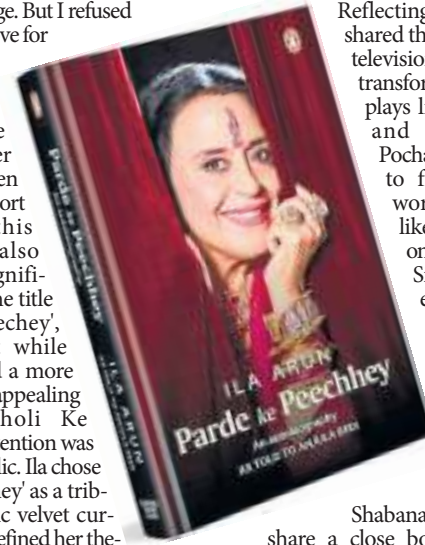
A consistent thread in Ila's work has been her focus on amplifying women's voices. "All my plays center on women's stories because they resonate deeply with me. Women play so many roles—mother, daughter, wife, friend—and I've tried to bring those complexities to life on stage. Through

my work, I've always sought to give a voice to their struggles and triumphs," she explained.

Writing 'Parde Ke Peechhey' was not without its challenges, and Ila was determined to be honest and unfiltered in her storytelling. "I didn't want to romanticize my struggles or manipulate the narrative. Life is a mix of joy, sorrow, failure, and success, and I wanted to show all of it. Some people advised me to present only the glamorous aspects of my life, but I felt that would be dishonest," she said. "My readers deserve the truth, even if it shows my flaws or vulnerabilities." This commitment to honesty has resonated deeply with readers, who have praised the transparency and approachability of the book. "One of the biggest compliments I've received is that the book feels transparent and approachable. People have told me they can hear my voice as they read it, and that's exactly what I wanted. It's not just about my achievements; it's about the journey, the mistakes, and the lessons I've learned along the way."

When asked if there was a specific moment from her book that she would like to relive, Ila found it difficult to choose. "There are so many—teasing my mother about not remembering my birthdate, my last meeting with Sombhu Mitra, or even the early days of my career when everything was new and exciting," she shared. However, she also emphasized the importance of embracing the present. "People often say they want to relive their golden moments, but I believe in living in the moment. Life is full of opportunities, and every moment is a chance to create something meaningful."

In conclusion, 'Parde Ke Peechhey' is much more than an autobiography. It is a celebration of resilience, passion, and authenticity. Through her words, Ila Arun reminds readers of the power of dreams and the importance of staying true to oneself. As she continues to captivate audiences with her art, her book stands as a timeless testament to her remarkable journey—a journey that proves the stage of life is as transformative as any performance.



Hisaab Barabar is a call to action: Kirti Kulhari on fighting financial scams

PNS| HYDERABAD

The much-anticipated *Hisaab Barabar*, starring Kirti Kulhari, is set to premiere on ZEE5, offering audiences an engaging narrative that delves deep into the world of financial scams. The film takes a close look at how deceitful practices within financial institutions impact ordinary people while weaving an entertaining and thought-provoking story. At the heart of *Hisaab Barabar* lies a powerful message about empowerment and awareness. Speaking about the film's intent, Kirti Kulhari shared, "I hope we all become more conscious of how the systems we are part of might be misleading us and preventing us from seeing the bigger picture. Beyond that, I hope the film provides the common man with an understanding of how financial scams work. That said, it's not just an informative film—it's also packed with fun, memorable characters and performances. My wish is for viewers to enjoy watching it while also walking away with something meaningful."

While the subject of financial scams has been explored in films before, *Hisaab Barabar* offers a fresh perspective through its unique tone and narrative approach. According to Kirti, what sets the film apart is its accessibility and simplicity in storytelling. "The way everything is explained in the film makes it relatable and easy to understand," she explained. "It also shows how one person's courage can challenge corruption and inspire others to stand against wrongdoing. The collective power of people united for a cause is remarkable, and the film emphasizes this beautifully."

For Kirti, the empowering message of the film resonates strongly. "Being a common man doesn't mean being powerless. When you stand for what's right, others will join you. Intentions rooted in goodness can lead to meaningful change. The film is both a call to action and an entertaining experience, showing how these scams operate while ensuring viewers remain engaged throughout."

With its gripping storyline, compelling performances, and impactful themes, *Hisaab Barabar* promises to be both an eye-opening and entertaining watch. The film balances the complexities of financial deception with a narrative that inspires resilience and collective action.

By shedding light on financial fraud while maintaining a light-hearted and engaging tone, *Hisaab Barabar* strikes a chord with audiences, encouraging them to question, learn, and take a stand against unethical practices. As *Hisaab Barabar* gears up for its premiere, viewers can expect not just a cinematic experience but also a lesson in empowerment and vigilance. Don't miss this riveting drama, streaming exclusively on ZEE5.



Winter has arrived and so has the common colds, coughs, and seasonal flu. While it's a good idea to wrap yourself in warm clothes and sip soup sitting in blankets, your immune system still needs to be fortified by the right kind of superfoods to let you stay ahead of the season's ailments. Superfoods possess nutritional density, which can sail you right by the hard times of the season by building your immunity and overall well-being.

SUPERFOODS TO STRENGTHEN YOUR WINTER IMMUNITY



THE POWER OF SUPERFOODS

Superfoods are nature's pot of gold as far as health is concerned. They are nutrient-rich and built with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that fight off infections. Some superfoods that are suitable for winter:

• Citrus Fruits

Citrus fruits are champions in vitamin C. Oranges, lemons, and grapefruits enhance the production of white blood cells, your body's main defense against infections.

• Ginger and Turmeric

Both ginger and turmeric are anti-inflammatory and are antioxidant-rich. Gingerol in ginger acts against harmful pathogens, assisting curcumin in turmeric to balance immune responses. Include these two in soups or teas to provide simultaneous warmth and immunity.

• Nuts and Seeds

Almonds, walnuts, and chia seeds are filled with the right minerals needed by your body for immune cells and anti-inflammatory phenomena like vitamin E, zinc, and omega-3 fatty acids. A handful of nuts keeps the common cold and flu away.

• Green Leafy Vegetables

Spinach and kale contain a lot of vitamins A, iron, and folate, which are not only good immunity boosters, but also maintain the skin's first line of defense against germs by providing proper blood circulation.

• Probiotic-rich foods

Yogurt and fermented foods like kimchi, dosa, idli, and kanji, improve gut health, the home to 70% immunity of the human body. Probiotics strengthen the composition of the gut microbiome, thereby reducing the chances of infection.

• Stay Hydrated and Balanced

Winter usually dampens thirst, but it is also necessary to ensure adequate hydration as it helps in transport of essential nutrients and removal of toxin from the body. Warm herbal teas and soups also help to stay balanced in terms of fluid levels.

• Conclusion

Incorporating these superfoods into your daily diet can significantly bolster your immune system. Remember, good nutrition is a consistent effort, not a quick fix. This winter, put first these natural immunity boosters to keep your health shining through the cold days.

(The author, Dr Ridhima Khamsera, is a Clinical Dietician.)

Bumrah named ICC men's Cricketer of the Year

PTI ■ DUBAI

India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah on Tuesday won the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC men's Cricketer of the Year after delivering "a master-class in skill, precision, and relentless consistency" across formats in a record-shattering 2024.

The 31-year-old was adjudged the ICC's Test Cricketer of the Year on Monday and was also named in the Test Team of the Year last week.

"Jasprit Bumrah has been honoured with the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Award for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year at the ICC Awards, recognising his extraordinary 2024, in which he dominated opponents in the longest as well as the shortest format of the game," the ICC said.

Bumrah played a key role across formats for India as he became the fifth winner of the award from the country after Rahul Dravid (2004), Sachin Tendulkar (2010), Ravichandran Ashwin (2016) and Virat Kohli (2017, 2018).

"The pacer's brilliance was reflected in his ICC Test Bowling Rankings, where he crossed the elusive 900-point mark, ending the year with a record-breaking 907 points — the highest for



any Indian bowler in history," the governing body stated in its tribute. "Across formats, Bumrah's 2024 exploits were a masterclass in skill, precision, and relentless consistency,

as he shattered record after record and cemented his place as the world's premier fast bowler," it added. Bumrah had a stellar year 2024 in which he played a decisive role for

India with 15 wickets in their title-winning campaign in the T20 World Cup in the Americas and also became the fastest Indian pacer to reach 200 Test wickets with a bowling average of

sub-20, which is also the best in history. "I'm very happy with the honour, but I don't let myself get too high. My feet are on the ground and I'm really happy with the accolades that I get," the amiable bowler from Gujarat said in a video statement.

At the T20 World Cup, his 15 wickets came at an astonishing average of 8.26 and an economy of just 4.17, making him the Player of the Tournament.

He also garnered 900 points in ICC Test bowling rankings and ended the year with 907 points, which is the highest for any Indian bowler in history.

In Tests, Bumrah finished the year with 71 wickets in only 13 matches at an average of 14.92, which was also the second best among fast bowlers to former India captain Kapil Dev's 100 wickets in 1983.

The right-arm pacer was at the peak of his performance in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy Down Under towards the end of 2024, snaffling 32 wickets in five Tests.

Overall, Bumrah claimed 77 wickets in the World Test Championship points table for India but the two-time finalists failed to make a third appearance in the summit clash for the 2023-25 cycle.



Paarl Royals defeats Durban's Super Giants

PTI ■ PAARL

Paarl Royals registered a thrilling six-wicket victory over Durban's Super Giants to complete a historic five-game 100 per cent home record at Boland Park in the SA20 here. It is the first time any team has gone unbeaten at home throughout the league phase of the competition with the previous best being Joburg Super Kings' four victories and one washout at the Wanderers in the maiden season.

Durban's Super Giants have now been eliminated as last season's runners-up can now no longer qualify for the playoffs.

The cream of South Africa's young talent Luan-dre Pretorius and Kwen Maphaka played a major role in the Royals maintaining their stranglehold on top of the Betway SA20 table. The Royals moved to 28 points.

The teenage duo did the double act with Maphaka delivering his best performance of the competition thus far with fine figures of 2/22 to restrict DSG to 143/7 before Pretorius clubbed 43 off 29 balls (5x4s, 1x6) in the successful run-chase.

Pretorius reclaimed the top run-scorer position from his opening partner Joe Root, who was trapped LBW off the first ball of the innings on Monday evening, by becoming the first batter to pass the 300-run mark in the ongoing season.

Royals have certainly unearthed new young batters this season and Rubin

Hermann also continued his dream debut SA20 season with a superb 59 off 51 balls (4x4s, 2x6s) to set up the chase. Hermann showed great innovation, particularly against the spinners as he swept and reverse-swept with confidence.

But it was left to all-rounder Dayyaan Galim to smash the winning six with just two balls remaining to take the Royals over the line. Maphaka delivered his best performance of the competition thus far with the teenager striking upfront and at the death.

He sent down a peach that burst through Brandon King's defence upfront before flummoxing Heinrich Klaasen with a slower ball. Super Giants will be ruing a season where luck has deserted them with Keshav Maharaj's team not finding form when they needed it most.

Australian T20 World Cup winner Marcus Stoinis tried his best to make an impact with his maiden SA20 half-century off just 35 balls (4x4s, 2x6s). He finished unbeaten on 55 and partnered with Kane Williamson (45 off 36 balls) in a 53-run partnership to lift DSG to 143/7.

Stoinis was particularly severe on Root taking 24 runs off 11 deliveries sent down by the off spinner, including two maximums in the 18th over. Royals' only concern will be the fitness of captain David Miller, who left the field during DSG's innings and did not come out to bat in the run chase.



Trisha scores first ever century in women's U19 T20 World Cup

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Opener Trisha Gongadi etched her name in the record books by scoring the first ever century in women's U-19 T20 World Cup that powered India into the semifinals with a 150-run victory over Scotland here on Tuesday.

Trisha, who was deservedly adjudged player of the match, slammed 110 not out off just 59 balls with the help of 13 boundaries and four maximums after India were sent in to bat by Scotland at toss.

The Indians will next face England in the first semifinal on January 31.

She was ably supported by fellow opener and wicketkeeper Kamalini G (51 off 42 balls) and Sanika Chalke, who remained unbeaten on 29 off 20 balls as India scored 208 for 1 in 20 overs.

In reply, Scotland cut a sorry figure as they were bowled out for 58 in 14 overs.

For Scotland, openers Pippa Kelly (12) and Emma Walsingham (12) were joint top-scorers.

Left-arm orthodox spinner Ayushi Shukla was the star for India with the ball returning with figures of 4 for 8, while left-armer Vaishnavi Sharma (3/5) and Trisha (3/6), after her exploits with the bat, also performed with the ball in hand.

The 19-year-old Trisha, who hails from Telangana, has been in tremendous form in the tournament and notched up two 40-plus scores before the big knock on Tuesday. Meanwhile in other matches of the day, Bangladesh finished their campaign in style with an easy 10-wicket victory over the West Indies.

The Asian side performed well with the ball to restrict the West Indies to just 54 for 6 from their 13 overs and cruised past the victory target inside nine overs on the back of an unbeaten 25 not out from opener Juairiya Ferdous.

Bangladesh won the toss and elected to bowl at Bayuemas Oval after tireless effort from ground staff in the nation's capital, with spinner Nishita Akter Nishi collecting three wickets.

Anisa Akter Soba claimed a pair of wickets as the West Indies struggled in the conditions and Bangladesh eased home to move up to third place on the Group 1 standings.

In another Group 2 match, no play was possible in Sarawak, with heavy rain leaving the Super Six contest between South Africa and the USA abandoned without a ball being bowled.

South Africa had already qualified for the semi-finals of the event, while USA picked up a point to move to third in Group 2.

Hobart Hurricanes wins Big Bash

PTI ■ HOBART

Mitchell Owen hit the fastest century in Big Bash League history as he rushed the Hobart Hurricanes to their first Australian Twenty20 domestic title.

Owen's 39-ball ton on Monday tied Craig Simmons' century on balls from 2014. He had a chance to break it but a boundary fell just short of the rope.

After a shift up the order to opener, the 23-year-old Owen has become one of the brightest Australian prospects in short-form cricket. He raised his bat for a half-century in just the fourth over, powering on with 11 sixes — a BBL final record — and six fours.

"That was next-level hitting that made it pretty easy for us at the end," teammate Matthew Wade said. "The sellout crowd of 15,706 at Bellerive Oval chanted Owen's name as the run-rate required ticked down.



"That was super special," Owen said. "The most special thing is hearing everyone in the crowd enjoying it. And I'm so grateful, I'm so proud that we could bring this trophy to Tassie (Tasmania)."

Midway through his innings, Owen became the BBL's leading run-scorer for the season, overtaking David Warner.

Owen was out for 108 off 44 balls in the 11th over at 139-3. Chasing 183 to win against

the Sydney Thunder, Hobart reached 185-3 with 35 balls to spare and won by seven wickets.

Hobart's success in the 14th BBL left the Melbourne Stars as the only side yet to win the title.

French club Lyon to hire Paulo Fonseca as its new coach

PTI ■ LYON (FRANCE)

Lyon will hire Paulo Fonseca as its new coach, a person with direct knowledge of the deal has told The Associated Press. The person requested anonymity because the deal has yet to be announced officially.

Fonseca will replace Pierre Sage, who was fired despite leading the French league club out of a crisis last season and having the team within reach of a Champions League place in this campaign.

Sage's dismissal on Tuesday followed a 1-1 draw with Nantes in Ligue 1 over the weekend and left many observers baffled. Sage had rapidly become a fans' favorite after guiding Lyon from the bottom of the standings to a sixth-place finish last season.

And after 19 matches this season, Lyon is sixth in the



league — just four points off a Champions League spot — and in a good position to qualify for the knockout stage of the Europa League.

Lyon, however, said the decision to part ways with Sage was a "sporting choice." Lyon is owned by American businessman John Textor, who visited the club in person this week.

Textor, a 59-year-old digital media and entertainment

entrepreneur, owns several teams, including in Belgium (RWD Molenbeek), and Brazil (Botafogo) as part of his multi-club model that is becoming more common in soccer.

Textor had been in regular contact with Fonseca in recent years and previously tried to hire him. The former Lille coach has been out of a job since he was fired by AC Milan on December 30.

Mumbai announce 16-member squad for clash against Meghalaya

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Defending champions Mumbai announced their 16-member squad sans India stars Rohit Sharma, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shreyas Iyer to take on Meghalaya in their must-win Ranji Trophy Elite Group A clash starting here on Thursday.

Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Suryansh Shedge and Atharva Ankoekar have been called back.

Mumbai, who are coming off a five-wicket defeat against Jammu and Kashmir last week, will be without the India stars Jaiswal, Iyer and Rohit, who all have joined the Indian team for the upcoming ODI series against England starting on February 6.

These three players had featured in the sixth round game here at the BKC Ground, with Rohit and Jaiswal following the BCCI diktat to play domestic cricket regularly.



Iyer, on the other hand, has been a vital cog in Mumbai side for domestic competitions across formats this year.

The trio is also a part of the Indian squad for the Champions Trophy next month. Karsh Kothari, who also featured in Mumbai's playing XI against Jammu and Kashmir, was not picked.

The defeat against Jammu and Kashmir has dented Mumbai's title defence as the Ajinkya Rahane-led side will now be required to record a big victory

— with a bonus point — against Meghalaya and hope that Baroda beat the table-toppers Jammu and Kashmir in their backyard.

Mumbai squad: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Ayush Mhatre, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Amogh Bhatkal, Siddhesh Lad, Akash Anand (wk), Hardik Tamore (wk), Suryansh Shedge, Shardul Thakur, Shams Mulani, Tanush Kotian, Mohit Avasthi, Sylvester D'Souza, Royston Dias, Shreyas Gurav, Atharva Ankoekar.

Virat Kohli checks in at Kotla for training with Delhi team

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

At exactly 9am when his jet black Porsche zoomed in through the Feroz Shah Kotla ground's 'Virender Sehwag Gate', it was homecoming for Delhi's very own Virat Kohli, who checked in for a training stint with his first-class team after more than 12 years. Save for pacer Navdeep Saini, all other 18 members of Delhi's squad had only seen him on TV and grown up listening to the tales of how 'Cheeku', the cherubic talent, became the 'King' of Indian cricket.

In the last 15 years, Delhi's 'Cheeku' became a hazy memory as he turned into the most commercially viable brand in global cricket, the face that ICC sold in its Olympic bid presentation.

On Monday, he was at his home ground for around three hours and had everyone in his vicinity hypnotised. Whether the young impressionable players, or seasoned head coach Sarandeep Singh or batting coach Bantu Singh

— all of them evidently wanted to be close to him.

Though courteous with all, the former India skipper seemed more comfortable with his former U-19 coach Mahesh Bhati, who is also the administrative manager of this team.

"Woh badlaa nahi hain. Usko chhole-poori pasand the aur humne mangaake rakkha tha. Usne bola chole puri nahi khawoonga (He loves chhole poori, we made arrangements for him but he said he didn't want it)," a senior DDCA (Delhi and Districts Cricket Association) official told PTI.

What he did seek out after practice ahead of his first Ranji appearance in 12 years from January 30 was also an old favourite.

"Practice ke baad purane time ki tarah kadhi chawal khaya sabke saath (He had kadhi chawal with everyone)," revealed the official. Everyone shadowed the icon like it was an event. Ranji Trophy matches are covered by a select bunch of domestic cricket faithfuls but on Monday, the numbers



trebled. Every move by the 'King' was followed. The two coaches -- Sarandeep and Bantu -- were by his side throughout and it would be difficult for photographers or videographers to edit them from the frame. "I remember it was Ajit

Chaudhary, the erstwhile manager of the Delhi Ranji team, who nicknamed him 'Cheeku' back in 2006-07," DDCA secretary Ashok Sharma, fondly called 'Mama', recollected as if it was yesterday. He has seen Kohli since he first came here for U-15 trials. **The Training**

It was an occasion to remember for the Sanat Sangwans, Arpit Ranas and Siddhant Sharmas that Kohli it was business as usual. It seemed he had left the star outside the ground and had turned up as their very own 'Virat Bhaiya'.

The 35 minute warm-up before an inconsequential final game against the Railways was the longest that the senior team has spent to loosen up prior to net session.

There was a 15-minute game of football and he had some sprints down the wide right, also enjoying a laugh or two.

But once the net session started, the game face was on.

He quietly walked to the nets where skipper Ayush Badoni was batting. Seeing Kohli walk towards the nets, Badoni was visibly conscious before Kohli told him: 'Ayush tu batting karle, phir dono switch karke karenge (Ayush you keep batting. After sometime, we will take turns to bat).'

Once he had done enough knocking, Kohli entered the spinners' nets where he faced left-arm spinners Harsh Tyagi and Sumit Mathur. A few balls did grip and stop but there wasn't much bite in their bowling.

Ditto for pacers Navdeep Saini, Money Grewal, Rahul Gehlot and Siddhant Sharma.

Unlike India nets, Kohli hardly looked troubled although he did practice leaving a lot of deliveries. With the Champions Trophy round the corner, Kohli was seen trying to play a lot beside the line of deliveries.

Of late, he is concentrating on back-foot play and trying to increase his range of shots square of wicket. Obviously, before trying out in Champions Trophy, domestic cricket is good ground for a 'Pilot Episode'.

"He was very happy with the surfaces. He said, practice wicket, centre strip everything is of top quality. I told him credit to our young curator Ankit Datta. He said, 'Bhaiyya mazaa aa gaya batting karke. Kal phir aaonga

batting karne,' Bhati said. Advice for little Kabir and his teammates. A chubby fourth standard student Kabir had come with a sketch of 'Uncle Virat', who once played Delhi U-17 and U-19 cricket with his father Shavez back in the day.

"We had a bat contract with BDM and would go together to pick bats. We have been friends for long," Shavez said. When Kabir was asked about his conversation with Kohli, he said: "I asked him how can I play for India? He said, 'You have to practice hard. And it shouldn't be your Papa telling you to go to practice. You should tell Papa, I have to go to practice.'"

And for his young Delhi colleagues, the advice was vintage Kohli. "Delhiwaale ho, dum dikhao. Shuruat accha kiya phir thande padh gaye. Positive khelo jaise Delhiwaale khetle hain," he said referring to Delhi's inconsistent season. In Form or out-of-form, 'King' will remain a 'King'.

Pawan Kalyan is always a Power Star: Vishnu Vardhan

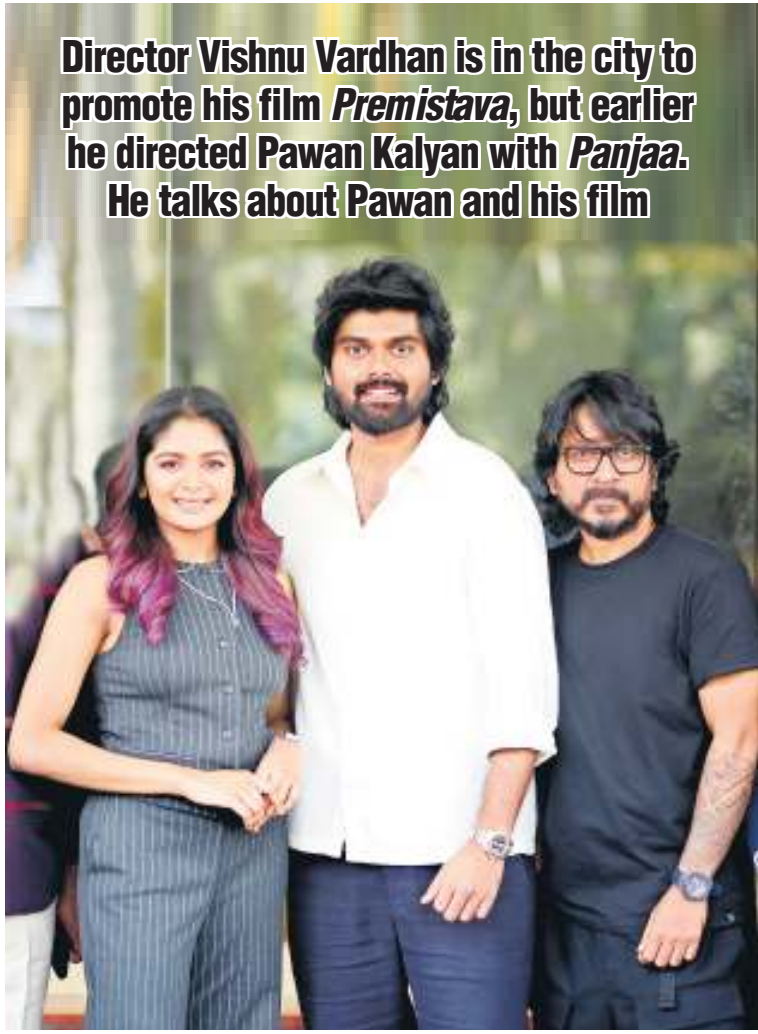
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Senior Tamil actor Karthik's son Akash Murali made his debut with the Tamil film 'Nesippaya' directed by Vishnu Vardhan. Popular director Shankar's daughter Aditi Shankar played the lead in this romantic action drama, which was released in Tamil on January 14. Now, the makers are releasing the film in Telugu with the title 'Premistava' and the big production house Mythri Movie Makers is distributing it in Telugu.

Interestingly, Vishnu Vardhan directed a Telugu film 'Panjaa' with Pawan Kalyan as the lead actor. Though the film was not a commercial hit, the action episodes were made in very stylishly and became talk of the industry at that time. It was released in 2011, and after many years Vishnu Vardhan is promoting his film 'Premistava' in Telugu.

Vishnu Vardhan said that he is very happy to be here in the city. Talking about the film, he said it is a love story with drama. "After seeing today's generation of love stories, do they respect their relationships, are they taking it seriously? Even though they are breaking up their relationships so easily, I was surprised after seeing it. My film deals mostly with these issues and both Akash and Aditi performed very well," said Vishnu Vardhan. He added that after seeing them doing some scenes in the shoot he got emotional. "That means both did really well," he said. The director first attempts a love story with a lot of drama with this 'Premistava'.

Talking about the other artistes, he



Director Vishnu Vardhan is in the city to promote his film *Premistava*, but earlier he directed Pawan Kalyan with *Panjaa*. He talks about Pawan and his film

said he really begged Hindi actress Kalki to do a role in this film. "I need an Indian-based foreigner. So, I requested Kalki to do the role. She was born and brought up in Pondicherry. She speaks Tamil very well. So glad that she was part of my film," he said about her.

Talking about the music, he said Yuwan Shankar Raja is providing music for all his films. "He was my classmate from seventh class. Actually, he was junior to me and I told him that if I became a director, I want to put him as music director. He turned music director at the age of 16 and after eight years I became a director. From then he is giving music for all my films," said Vishnu Vardhan.

He said generally the producer may reject this script as it needs to shoot in some European countries. But producer Sneha Britto accepted the script. "I roped in a few technicians from Europe, like the cameraman from Canada and also the action director from Spain. This film has come out with good quality, because it is the combination of all the technicians and other people who worked for it," said Vishnu Vardhan.

Talking about his Telugu film 'Panjaa' and working with Pawan Kalyan, he spoke highly about Pawan Kalyan. "He is always a Power Star. You have to be straight and very direct and he likes people with those qualities, because he is like them. He is powerful and at the same time he is like a child. If he needs anything, or belief, excitement, he is very strong and adamant. He is very correct. It's very long and I am in touch with him > I am very happy that he became a Deputy CM," said Vishnu Vardhan about Pawan Kalyan.



There is no point talking about Vishal's health: Varalakshmi

Tamil film 'Madha Gaja Raja' was released after 12 years and it was a surprise hit. Vishal played the lead actor, while Anjali and Varalakshmi are the female leads. The film was supposed to be released in 2013, but because of some financial problems, it was delayed for a long time and released during Sankranti festival. Now, the makers are planning to release the Telugu version of the film and both the leading ladies Varalakshmi and Anjali are promoting it in Hyderabad. The Telugu version is hitting the screens on January 31.

Talking about the film, Anjali says that she was surprised to see the film released finally after many years. "Vishal is a very dear friend to me and he worked very hard in this film. He is a fun person. I hope that the Telugu version is also a good success," said Anjali.

For Varalakshmi this is her second film, but released now. "I was new at that time and now I have grown up as an actress, so there is a difference in acting. Though the film was delayed in the release I did very well and I am happy about it," said Varalakshmi.

When one person asked her about Vishal's

health and when he came to this film function he was literally shivering and the pictures are viral. When asked about that, did she meet him after getting to know about his health? "He is now in good health and you are stuck with when he gets a fever. After that he participated in the success meet and he is very good now. Your question is irrelevant," said Varalakshmi. She added that she learnt a lot from Anjali. "Anjali is a fantastic actor and I learnt a lot from her. This is my first commercial break as a lead actress and I played a western girl in it," said Varalakshmi.

The film completed nearly 13 years back and if the same story comes to them, will they accept it now? "It depends on the director, if Sundar sir approaches us then we will definitely do it. It's a complete entertainer and one can enjoy every scene," said Anjali. The actress is disappointed as her 'Game Changer' did not do well, but her Tamil film is a hit. "Result is not in my hands. When a good character comes to me, I do and I promote it well. Though 'Game Changer' has not done well commercially, people appreciated it as a 'good cinema'," said Anjali.



Ram Charan has not committed any film for the losses

There are many reports that actor Ram Charan is committed to do a film for producer Dil Raju. Charan's latest film 'Game Changer' directed by Shankar and produced by Dil Raju is a disaster and the producer incurred huge losses with this failure. So, some reports say that a kind-hearted Ram Charan told Dil Raju that he will do a film for him to recover the losses from 'Game Changer'.

But the Ram Charan team completely denied these reports and said that it is false. The team said he didn't commit any new film to anyone. "He is now working with director Buchi Babu Sana for a film in which the shooting is going on. After this,

he signed a film with director Sukumar and he didn't commit to any other film," said the team.

The team also gave updates on Buchi Babu and Ram Charan film. The next schedule will take place from Wednesday onwards. The title is not announced yet as they tentatively called it RC16. The team also clarified that AR Rahman is working for this film. "There are reports that Rahman has come out of this project, which is not true," said the team.

Janhvi Kapoor is playing the female lead in this Buchi Babu film, while Kannada actor Shivaraj Kumar and Jagapathi Babu are playing important roles.

Naga Vamsi is trolling after *Daaku Maharaja* flops in Hindi



Nandamuri Balakrishna and director Bobby Kolli combination 'Daaku Maharaja' released in Telugu on January 12, received good response. Naga Vamsi is the producer, while Urvashi Rautela, Shraddha Srinath and Pragya Jaiswal are the female leads. The film was released in Hindi on January 26, and there were no takers for it. The film is a big flop in Hindi. Usually, Telugu films with action backdrop do well in Hindi, but 'Daaku Maharaja', an action drama, is a disaster in Hindi. Bollywood actor Bobby Deol is also there in a key role, but still the film collected only a few lakhs of rupees in the first two days, according to trade analysts.

Though there are a few actresses who did Hindi films along with big actors like Bobby Deol, the makers expected some good openings. But the film is a total disaster in Hindi. Now, many people are trolling the producer Naga Vamsi on the social media. Remember, producer Naga Vamsi, in a discussion, he very badly commented about Hindi films, business and also few producers. Now, many take this 'Daaku Maharaja' flop and trolling Naga Vamsi, added to his earlier remarks. They are trolling that 'your film didn't collect even Rs 25 lakh after its release'.



Small artistes not working without vanity van: Brahmajji

Senior actor Brahmajji is playing a major role in the upcoming film 'Baapu'. Daya is the director and the film is releasing on February 21. The teaser was unveiled by actor Vishwak Sen at a function in Hyderabad. On this occasion, Brahmajji thanked Vishwak for attending the event. "For many films, Chiranjeevi used to come to give his blessing. Now, for small films Vishwak Sen is supported very well. Though he is busy with his upcoming film 'Laila', he came to this function to support our film," said Brahmajji about Vishwak Sen. He added that because of actors like Vishwak, the industry is doing well.

Talking about the film 'Baapu', Brahmajji said that director Daya narrated the story to him and he liked it very much. "Though there are some budget constraints, we wanted to complete it and we did it. These days, a small actor

is also not coming to shoot if there is no vanity van. But we are all working for this film in a village near Karimnagar without any vanity van," said Brahmajji. He added that everyone in this film worked hard to do a good film.

"This is not a regular film; it's a different story and I know Telugu audiences encourage good films and I hope this film also does well," said the actor. He also thanked Rashmika for releasing the teaser on her social media. "She didn't ask the film details. When we asked her, she immediately said 'yes' and released the teaser. She is very talented and at the same time very down-to-earth person," said Brahmajji about Rashmika.

Aamani, Dhanya Balakrishna, Balagam Sudhakar, Avasara and Mani Egurla also played important roles in it. Dhruvan provided the music, while it is produced by Raju and Ch Bhanuprasad Reddy.

Thala locks the release date

Amma Rajasekhara started as choreographer and then turned into a film director. He made a few films as a director and the popular one is 'Ranam' with Gopichand. The director is now introducing his son Amma Ragin Raj as the lead actor with the film 'Thala'. He is also introducing Ankita as the female lead. The film is all set to hit the screens on February 14. Actors Sohail and Ashwin Babu attended as guests and supported this film.

"Many in the industry thought that I was completely out and finished. But I am here promoting my film. Actually, my mother is not well, so there is this big gap and now I am free," said Amma Rajasekhara. He said that he wanted to make a movie when his son was a kid. "Since then I didn't sleep and I was thinking of a story related to a boy. I want a good story, so I thought about it and it has mass elements," said Rajasekhara.

He added that in his real life he told his wife Radha 'I love you' and the next day he married. "I don't want this kind of story. So, I thought of it differently planned with mass elements and whoever wants something new, they will definitely enjoy my film 'Thala' with my son as lead actor," said Rajasekhara. He added that he worked for nearly two years on this story. The trailer was released on Tuesday and it shows that the film has a lot of action, but it is different.

Rajasekhara thanked producer Srinivas Goud for producing this film. "My entire family is indebted to him. He is releasing the film in Telugu and Tamil in a grand way, which is really a great thing. Later, his son Ragin Raj spoke about his parents and said that they worked hard for this film."

