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**'Delhi does not forgive sinners'**



**BEING THE HAIR-OES OF KINDNESS AND HOPE**



**Rao Ramesh dances with Sundeep in MAJAKA**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should take over the responsibility of making Rahul Gandhi the Prime Minister. Revanth is an all-rounder. After becoming the CM he executed development and welfare programmes on the one side and managed political affairs on the other. Politics is as important as development. Revanth Reddy is becoming a national leader**

— Dr Mallu Ravi, Congress MP

**DON'T MISS...**

**'Helmets do not cause hair loss'**

Union Minister for Rural Development and Communications, Dr Pemmasani Chandrasekar, dispelled the widely circulated myth that wearing helmets leads to hair loss. Speaking at the inauguration of National Road Safety Month-2025 at the District Collectorate in Guntur on Wednesday, Dr Chandrasekar stressed the importance of wearing helmets for road safety, noting that it is a lifesaving habit. Dr Chandrasekar launched a helmet rally for two-wheeler riders to further promote road safety...

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**Kejriwal against quota to Dalits**

Stepping up his attack on AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged that the former Delhi chief minister is opposed to reservations and is against Dalits, backwards, minorities and the poor. Addressing an election rally in Bawana here, Gandhi said he and his party do not fear Prime Minister Narendra Modi and on the contrary, "the PM is afraid of the Congress". He also attacked Kejriwal with the 'sheesh mahal' jibe for the second straight day and said that though...

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**Gold strikes fresh all-time high**

Gold prices rallied Rs 910 to hit a fresh all-time high of Rs 83,750 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday due to heavy buying from jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 82,840 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. The bright metal had jumped Rs 4,360 or 5.5 per cent to Rs 83,750 per 10 grams from Rs 79,390 per 10 grams on January 1. Snapping a two-day losing run, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also...

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**Tilak rises to 2<sup>nd</sup> spot in ICC rankings**

Talented India batter Tilak Varma climbed one spot to second, while mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy made a massive leap of 25 places to break into the top five in the latest ICC men's T20I rankings released on Wednesday. Varma now sits just behind Travis Head in the batters' list, with the Australian maintaining a 23-point lead at the top. The young Indian left-hander has been in sublime form, posting scores of 19 not out, 72 not out, and 18 in India's ongoing T20I series against England. With two matches

-SPORTS

## 30 DEAD IN MAHA KUMBH STAMPEDE



**PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR (UP)**

At least 30 people were killed and 60 others injured in a stampede at the Maha Kumbh Mela in the early hours of Wednesday, officials said. The pre-dawn stampede at the Sangam area occurred as millions of pilgrims jostled for space to take a holy dip on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, considered one of the most auspicious days during the mela. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police Vaibhav Krishna told a press conference here in the evening the stampede has left 30 dead and 60 others injured. "The incident took place between 1-2 am due to the pressure of crowd. The crowds broke barricades and jumped to the other side, crushing those waiting there. Over 90 injured were rushed to the hospital, out of whom 30 died," he said.



**Yogi orders judicial probe**

## 161 services through WhatsApp from today

**CM alerts officials on data getting into hands of cyber criminals**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Andhra Pradesh is set to become the first State in the country to implement 'WhatsApp governance', as 161 government services will be available online from Thursday onwards. During a review meeting held at the State Secretariat here on Wednesday in this regard, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said that the practice of the citizens making rounds to the government offices for obtaining various certificates will henceforth be put to an end. At the same time, CM Chandrababu stressed the need for initiating steps to ensure that the information of citizens should not fall into the hands of cyber criminals, and told the officers to take necessary measures in this direction. He emphasised the need to strengthen the forensic and cyber security wings. Stating that the State government entered into an agreement with Meta on October 22 last year, the Chief



Minister said that WhatsApp governance will facilitate speedy delivery of public service to the people at a time when the State government is moving ahead to take Andhra Pradesh to the top position in using digital technology. The Minister for Information Technology (IT) and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, will officially launch the WhatsApp governance on Thursday. Chief Secretary K Vijayanand and other officials were present at the review meeting. The officials gave a PowerPoint presentation on WhatsApp governance to the Chief Minister, during which they explained in detail how those who want to utilise the WhatsApp services can select their options. Though 161 services are set to be launched initially, more services will soon be made available. As of now, services with regard to various departments, including Endowments, Energy, APSRTC, Revenue, Anna Canteens, CMRF and Municipal Administration are available.



**ISRO scores a 100, PSLV takes the cake**

**PNS ■ SRIHARIKOTA**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Wednesday achieved a historic milestone with its 100th mission and revealed an ambitious future plan of crossing the next 100 launches in five years. Starting off with the SLV in 1979, the space agency crossed the 100-mission mark after 46 years, but what stands out is the PSLV's dominance through the years with 62 missions. The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) has turned out to be ISRO's most trusted rocket, thanks to its unmatched reliability.

## Rs 6.33L cr investments for AP in 7 months: Min

**Previous government's mismanagement caused irreparable damage to economy**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

The Minister for Housing and Information & Public Relations, Kolu Parthasarathy, has alleged that the previous government has destroyed Andhra Pradesh in all sectors, while the coalition government led by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is making all efforts to put the State back on track. Speaking at a media conference on Wednesday, the Minister said that in the past seven months, MoUs worth Rs 6.33 lakh crore have been signed with various companies regarding investments. These efforts aim to generate millions of job opportunities, with significant investments coming from companies like TCS, NTPC, ArcelorMittal, HBC and Reliance in Visakhapatnam. Parthasarathy condemned the criticism regarding the NITI Aayog report on the State's financial situation, stressing that the previous government's mismanagement had caused irreparable damage to the economy. He highlighted that under the previous regime, the State was plunged into nearly Rs 10 lakh crore of debt, and several financial obligations were left unaddressed. These included Rs 2,800 crore for student fee reimbursements, Rs 1,700 crore for anganwadi food supplies, Rs 20,000 crore in pending salaries for government employees and Rs 7,800 crore for housing schemes.



## SC cancels domicile quota in PG medical seats

**Terms it as unconstitutional**

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Wednesday held domicile-based reservation in post graduate medical courses by a state was unconstitutional. A three-judge bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy, Sudhanshu Dhulia and S V N Bhatti said if such a reservation was permitted, it would be an invasion of the fundamental rights of several students. "We are all domiciled in the territory of India. We are all residents of India. Our common bond as citizens and residents of one country gives us the right not

only to choose our residence anywhere in India but also gives us the right to carry on trade and business or a profession anywhere in India," the bench said. It went on, "It also gives us the right to seek admission in educational institutions across India. The benefit of 'reservation' in educational institutions including medical colleges to those who reside in a particular state can be given to a certain degree only in MBBS courses." The apex court held that considering the importance of specialist doctors in PG medical course reservation on the basis of 'residence' would be violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.

## TTD lodges plaint against social media reps

**Says false news being spread about Brahmasri Chaganti Koteswara Rao's visit**

**PNS ■ TIRUMALA**

TTD has lodged a complaint with the police against a few social media representatives for spreading false news against the Tirumala visit and the religious discourse programme of scholar Brahmasri Chaganti Koteswara Rao. Though TTD has informed the Tirumala visit details of the famous spiritual scholar Brahmasri Chaganti Koteswara Rao, the Hyderabad-based Dial News, Post 360 and journalist YNR have repeatedly spread false news about his visit on social media, distorting the facts and propagating falsehoods with malicious intent to damage the reputation of the scholar as well TTD, it alleged. Following the complaint, a case was registered against the represen-



tatives in the University Police Station in Tirupati on January 28 and a complaint has been lodged with the PIB (Press Information Bureau) in New Delhi and Vijayawada. Similarly, a complaint was registered with the YouTube Meta Management seeking the cancellation of the licences of those social media companies who have 'spread malicious propaganda hurting the sentiments of devotees and diluted the morale of the spiritual fans of Chaganti Koteswara Rao all over the world.'



**Unchecked illegal sand mining endangers coastal villages**

**PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI**

Illegal sand mining continues unchecked along the seashore near several villages in Rambilli mandal, sparking outrage and fear among local residents. Despite repeated reports of the activity, authorities have failed to take decisive action, leaving the residents feeling abandoned and vulnerable.

## R-Day Parade: AP tableau wins Jury Award

**FIRST AWARD IN 30 YEARS; NETIZENS ENTHRALLED BY ETIKOPPAKA DOLLS' REPRESENTATION OF STATE'S HERITAGE**

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

The Andhra Pradesh government's tableau presented during the 76th Republic Day Parade held at Kartavya Path in New Delhi has won a Jury Award. The tableau, showcasing the significance of the State's handicrafts while symbolising Andhra Pradesh's rich heritage, was designed using the iconic Etikoppaka toys. It stood out as the highlight of the Republic Day celebrations and drew the attention of people across the nation. It's for the first time in 30 years that Andhra Pradesh is winning a Central Government Award for its tableau at the Republic Day Parade. The tableau featuring the Etikoppaka toys was awarded the third prize in

the Jury category. On social media, millions of people expressed their admiration for the tableau, showering it with praise. With a vision to promote the State's handlooms and handicrafts on national and international platforms, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's vision was brought to life through the State's Information and Public Relations Department. The tableau featured a



**As the tableau moved, a song highlighting the beauty of the Etikoppaka toys played, describing them as "Toys of Andhra Pradesh, dolls that teach knowledge, toys that bring joy, toys that express devotion and toys that celebrate handicrafts and nature's colours." This song resonated with the people, touching their hearts.**

statue of Lord Ganesha at the front and Lord Venkateswara at the rear, flanked by the Bobbili Veena and traditional Telugu jewelry, offering a true reflection of the State's cultural essence. As the tableau moved, a song highlighting the beauty of the Etikoppaka toys played, describing them as "Toys of Andhra Pradesh, dolls that teach knowledge, toys that bring joy, toys that express devotion and toys that celebrate handicrafts and nature's colours." This song resonated with the people, touching their hearts. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Union ministers were all in awe of the tableau's beauty and elegance.

## Araku Chilli Utsav set to celebrate tribal culture, tourism

**Festival to take place from 31<sup>st</sup> to Feb 2**

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

The much-anticipated Araku Chilli Utsav-2024 is all set to take place from January 31 to February 2, promising an immersive experience that highlights the rich cultural heritage and traditions of tribal communities. District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has directed officials to ensure seamless execution, emphasising meticulous planning and interdepartmental coordination to make the festival a resounding success. At a high-level review meeting on Wednesday, the Collector finalised key preparations, assigning responsibilities to various departments. Sanitation will be prioritised by the Panchayat department, while the police force will oversee traffic and parking management. To ensure uninterrupted festivities, Transco officials have been instructed to maintain a stable power supply. Additionally, recognising potential connectivity challenges, mobile signal boosters will be installed for smooth communication.





# Helmets do not cause hair loss: Pemmasani

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Union Minister for Rural Development and Communications, Dr Pemmasani Chandrasekhar, dispelled the widely circulated myth that wearing helmets leads to hair loss. Speaking at the inauguration of National Road Safety Month-2025 at the District Collectorate in Guntur on Wednesday, Dr Chandrasekhar stressed the importance of wearing helmets for road safety, noting that it is a lifesaving habit.

Dr Chandrasekhar launched a helmet rally for two-wheeler riders to further promote road safety awareness. He was joined by several key dignitaries including District Collector S Nagalakshmi, District SP Satish Kumar, MLAs Galla Madhavi, Mohammed Naseer Ahmed, B Ramanjaneyulu, T Sravan Kumar, and Guntur Municipal Commissioner Puli Srinivasulu.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Chandrasekhar underscored the safety benefits of wearing helmets, which pro-



tect riders during accidents and shield from dust and pollution. He also pointed out that hair loss is typically caused by genetics and chemical factors, rather than helmet use. For those concerned about hair health, he recommended opting for air-flow helmets that provide better ventilation.

The Minister also emphasised the crucial role of seat belts in vehicle safety, citing that wearing a seat belt can reduce the risk of injury during a crash by up to 90 per cent. He urged young drivers

to control their speed, stressing that reckless driving is a far greater threat than any fashionable pursuit.

In her address, District Collector S Nagalakshmi emphasised that road safety regulations are vital for personal protection. She noted that the ongoing National Road Safety Month, running from January 16 to February 15, aims to raise public awareness on road safety norms. She also reminded the public that wearing helmets is mandatory for two-wheeler riders and that seat belts must be used by

those traveling in cars.

District SP Satish Kumar raised concern over the rising number of accidents due to non-compliance with safety rules. He compared road fatalities to murders, highlighting the devastating impact on families. Guntur West MLA Galla Madhavi stressed the importance of adhering to basic road safety rules, while Guntur East MLA Mohammed Naseer Ahmed suggested introducing road safety education in schools to instil safe driving habits from an early age.

## Minister highlights labour reforms in AP at conference

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State Labour Minister Vasamsetti Subhash expressed happiness over being given the rare honour of sharing the stage with Central ministers at the National Conference of Labour Ministers of States held in New Delhi. During his speech, Minister Subhash highlighted Andhra Pradesh's progress in labour reforms, noting that the State is far ahead in this area. He credited CM Chandrababu Naidu for implementing labour reforms in Andhra Pradesh since 2015, reforms that the Central government is now largely adopting.

Minister Subhash pointed out that Andhra Pradesh is not only leading in industrialisation attracting investments, but it is also paying significant attention to the welfare of workers. He informed the Union Minister about several welfare initiatives, including the NTR Bharosa pensions ranging from Rs 4,000 to Rs 15,000, the highest in the country and the NTR Aarogya Seva that offers insurance coverage up to Rs 25 lakh, also the highest in India.

# Mock drill conducted at Visakhapatnam Airport

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A comprehensive mock drill focused on disaster management was successfully conducted at Visakhapatnam Airport on Wednesday, aimed at enhancing the facility's preparedness for natural calamities such as cyclones and floods. The exercise, coordinated by the Disaster Management Authority under the leadership of MD Ronamki Kurmanath, simulated a variety of emergency scenarios to evaluate and strengthen the airport's response strategies.

Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha participated in the drill remotely from Dubai. She emphasised the significance of the successful recovery operations during past cyclones like Hudhud and Titli, which impacted the region. Anitha also highlighted the importance of training Aapda Mitra volunteers for rescue operations and announced a major initiative to train 14,000 individuals in disaster response by May this year. Organised by the Airport

To enhance preparedness for natural calamities such as cyclones and floods



Authority of India in collaboration with the State government, the drill brought together key agencies such as the Navy, police, and medical authorities. A virtual tabletop exercise was conducted in conjunction with real-time disaster simulations at the airport, enhancing coordination among stakeholders.

Ronamki Kurmanath, while reflecting on the devastation caused by Cyclone Hudhud in 2014, emphasised the need for constant preparedness. "This drill is crucial for

improving operational responses, increasing public awareness, and ensuring better coordination between government departments to minimise loss of life and property in times of crisis," he stated.

Following the drill, an exhibition organised by the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) showcased the latest disaster management tools. The exhibition allowed officials to familiarise themselves with essential equipment for handling future emergencies.

## ISRO scores a 100...

Continued from Page 1

While PSLV has been used for 62 missions, GSLV with indigenous cryogenic upper stage comes next with 17. LV-M3 (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle MkIII—the heaviest rocket) with 7 and SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle) 3, follow suit. The others are Reusable Launch Vehicle, TV (Test Vehicle) and PAT (Pad Abort Test).

PSLV, often dubbed as the "trusted workhorse of ISRO" by scientists, has been used consistently to inject various satellites into precise Low Earth Orbits. The vehicle which is 44.4 metre tall is equipped to take payloads of up to 1,750 kg to Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbits of 600 km altitude.

However, on account of its unmatched reliability, ISRO said PSLV was also used to launch various satellites into Geosynchronous and Geostationary orbits, like satellites from the IRNSS constellation.

The PSLV comes in four variants -- PSLV-CA, PSLV-DL, PSLV-QL, PSLV-XL.

The first launch of PSLV was PSLV-D1 launched on September 20, 1993. It was an unsuccessful attempt. However, the rocket made its first successful launch in October 1994 and later emerged as the most reliable and versatile launch vehicle of ISRO.

# Peddireddy slams Babu, to file defamation against media house

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Former Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy has alleged that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has been using his friendly media for character assassination of his political opponents by levelling false allegations. He added that he will file a defamation case against the media house.

Speaking to the media here on Wednesday, he said Chandrababu has been time and again targeting YSRCP using his friendly media as a front and spreading false stories.

"The report that I have encroached on forest land is baseless and totally false. The 75.76-acre land was purchased in the name of our family members, way back in 2001, and it has the clearances from the competent authorities.

"We will file a defamation case against the media house for Rs 50 crore for publish-

Says Chandrababu has been targeting YSRCP using his friendly media

ing such news which is aimed at character assassination. We had done the same on the Madanapalle issue as well," he said.

The land was cleared by the Revenue and Forest Departments and the Director of Settlements had given the nod after resurvey based on a complaint filed by Venkatramana Reddy. He had complained to the then Chief Minister Kiran Kumar Reddy and had also moved the court.

"As the records were clear and, in our favour, there was action. Now the media house picked up the old story and tried to project us as encroachers without verifying the facts for which we will move the court," he said, adding that the details were also available in the gazette which is in public domain.

"During electioneering Pawan Kalayan and Chandrababu had levelled allegations against me, and even went to the extent of saying that I have exported red sanders to Nepal. If that be the case Pawan Kalyan, the Forest Minister should have taken action. They did not as they knew that what they went on propagating was not true," he said.

Chandrababu has been resorting to such tricks as he had conceded that he cannot fulfil his election promises. YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, on the other hand, had given a welfare calendar and disbursed money to the beneficiaries directly on the dot.

When asked about V Vijayasai Reddy leaving the party, he said YSRCP came into being with a single MP, and it has won the faith of people.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The government of Andhra Pradesh has appointed senior IPS officer Harish Kumar Gupta (1992 batch) as the new Director General of Police (DGP) for the State. Chief Secretary K Vijayanand issued the official order (GO Rt No 208) in this regard on Wednesday.

Harish Kumar Gupta, who was serving as the Director General of Vigilance and Enforcement and Ex-Officio Principal Secretary to the Government, has been entrusted with full additional charge of the DGP (Head of Police Force) until further orders. This follows the retirement of

Ch D Tirumala Rao (1989 batch), who has been serving as the Director General of Police (Coordination) and DGP. Tirumala Rao is retiring on January 31, upon reaching the age of superannuation.

The announcement of Gupta's appointment was first reported by The Pioneer a few days ago, ahead of the official confirmation by the government.

Harish Kumar Gupta began

as a probationer from 1992 to 1993 and was later appointed as Additional SP of Khammam and later Medak and Peddapalli in the undivided AP State. He was promoted as Additional SP of Karimnagar. In 1997 he became Krishna district SP. He was later appointed as DCP Hyderabad South Zone in 2002 and was later posted as Nalgonda SP in 2004. He was elevated as DIG in 2006 and served as Joint Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad. In 2011, he was promoted as IG overseeing Guntur range.

Post bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, Harish Kumar Gupta held the position of IG Law and Order and Technical

Services 2014 to 2017. In early 2022, Harish Kumar got promoted as Director General of Police, heading the Railways for a month and then became Principal Secretary (Home).

Finally on May 6, 2024, on the directions of Election Commission of India, he became the Head of Police Force of Andhra Pradesh Police for a short-term. After more than a month of being assigned the position of HoPF, Harish Kumar Gupta was re-assigned as Principal Secretary (Home) from June 2024 and a new Head of Police Force, Ch D Tirumala Rao, belonging to the 43rd Regular Recruit batch was appointed in his place.

# 'Chandrababu Naidu keeps deceiving people of Andhra'

PNS ■ RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

Former minister Venu Gopala Krishna has criticised TDP chief and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for not fulfilling the election promises. He stated that Andhra Pradesh is not far from the situation Sri Lanka faced in April 2022. However, despite various challenges, former Chief Minister YS Jagan fulfilled all his promises, proving his commitment to the people, he claimed.

Even when State revenue declined due to the COVID-19 crisis, Jagan stood strong and provided assurance to the people, showcasing true leadership.

In contrast, Chandrababu Naidu deceived volunteers by promising a salary of Rs. 10,000 before the elections, only to dismantle the volunteer system after coming to power.

"Chandrababu, who once spoke of creating wealth and implementing the 'Super Six' policies, now finds himself in a struggling position. While YS Jagan brought 17 medical colleges to the State, Chandrababu opposed them, preventing 750 medical seats from being allocated to the State.

"Furthermore, the benefits of this government have seemingly not reached anyone except BR Naidu, Pawan Kalyan and the Eenadu media

group," he alleged.

He added that in the last seven months, Chandrababu Naidu has been involved in financial mismanagement amounting to Rs 73,630 crore.

His government also presented misleading figures regarding previous debts, raising concerns about the transparency of governance.

The people's trust in democracy is being shaken due to such actions. Chandrababu Naidu, who has deceived the people thrice, continues to prove himself to be a leader who prioritises power over public welfare, Venu Gopala Krishna stated.

Araku Chilli Utsave...

Continued from Page 1

One of the major highlights this year is the introduction of helicopter rides, offering visitors a breathtaking aerial view of the stunning Araku Valley. This exclusive experience, organised in partnership with the private sector, will be operated from a specially designated local helipad. Adding to the festive spirit, a marathon is scheduled for January 31, covering the route from Degree College to RTC Complex junction and back, while a thrilling cycle rally will take place from Borra Junction to Araku Valley Degree College grounds.

The festival is set to witness the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including Assembly Speaker Ayyanna Pruduru, Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh, District In-charge Minister Gummadi Sandhyarani, along with MPs, MLAs, and MLAs from across Uttarandhra.

# 30 dead in Maha Kumbh...

Continued from Page 1

Barricades have been placed in the mela and akhara areas for lane management but they gave way under the pressure of the jostling throng, he said.

As the barricades broke, people fell on those sitting and waiting for taking the holy dip during the 'brahm muhurt' (early morning time considered auspicious to perform

certain activities), he said.

Many, including women and children, fell down and were crushed. Twenty-five of the deceased have been identified, Krishna said. Four of the deceased are from Karnataka and one each from Assam and Gujarat. Among those injured, 36 are undergoing treatment at the hospital and the rest have been sent with their families, he said.

He said the Mela administration has issued a helpline number -- 1920 -- for tracing missing persons. The officer said the government has issued strict directives there will be no VIP protocol in the mela now onwards. "We will not be entertaining VIP protocol for the coming 'snans'."

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has contacted all the

Mahamandaleshwars, saints and akharas and has requested them to participate in this 'Amrit Snan'.

Mela Adhikari Vijay Kiran Anand said the administration's priority is to ensure that those who have come to take the bath return home safely.

The officers did not answer any questions of the journalists.

# Yogi orders judicial probe

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday ordered a judicial inquiry to find the reasons that led to the stampede at the Maha Kumbh in which 30 people died and 60 were injured.

Adityanath also announced an ex gratia of Rs 25 lakh each for the kin of the deceased. The three-member inquiry panel would be headed by retired judge Harsh Kumar and

also include former DGP VK Gupta and retired IAS officer DK Singh.

The chief minister said a separate police inquiry would also be conducted into the whole issue. "It is important to get to the bottom of the whole episode on how such a tragedy occurred," a visibly emotional Adityanath said, adding the chief secretary and DGP would visit the Maha Kumbh on Thursday for an in-depth probe into the tragic incident

# Unchecked illegal sand mining endangers...

Continued from Page 1

Locals describe a relentless operation, with tractors extracting and transporting sand day and night. Makeshift roads, reinforced with banana and coconut leaves, crisscross the coastline, facilitating the movement of heavy vehicles across the shifting sands. "It's an ongoing problem, and no one seems to be doing anything about it," lamented a local fisherman. "We see it every day, but the authorities turn a blind eye." The illegal mining

is concentrated around the villages of Vadapalem, Kothapatnam, and Seethapalem. Unlike river sand typically used in construction, miners are extracting sea sand, reportedly using it as fill material for foundations and vacant spaces in buildings. "They're using it to fill foundations and vacant spaces in buildings instead of soil or gravel," explained a resident. This practice, while illegal, is also environmentally destructive, causing significant damage to the fragile coastal ecosystem and eroding vital sand dunes.

TTD lodges plaint...

Continued from Page 1

As per proceedings issued by TTD dated December 20, Sri Chaganti Koteswara Rao was to give pravachanam at Mahati Auditorium on January 16 evening.

In the wake of the stampede in Tirupati on January 8, TTD officials requested Sri Chaganti to postpone his discourse scheduled at Mahati on January 16. He agreed to this request.

As the spiritual orator holds the cabinet rank and protocol privilege, TTD even made arrangements for Srivari darshan on January 14 through bio metric and also provided battery vehicles to transport him from Rambagicha Rest House to Srivari temple.

R-Day Parade...

Continued from Page 1

Netizens, too, shared the tableau widely on social media platforms, with many setting it as their display picture. Additionally, the Etikoppaka tableau received tremendous support in online voting polls.

Both Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan praised the Etikoppaka tableau. On Republic Day, both leaders took to their social media platforms to express their admiration and share their joy over the tableau. The award for the State's tableau after several decades has been met with widespread celebrations.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH  
PANCHAYAT RAJ DEPARTMENT  
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE  
NT No. 31-37/PMS/1-FM JANMAN (2023-24) Bakhise FR.VSP/2024-25, Dt.27.01.2025  
The Superintending Engineer, PR Circle, Visakhapatnam invites percentage  
rate tenders for taking up 6 Road works in Alluri Seetharama Raju District.  
Estimate Amount: Rs.1361.18 Lakhs. Bid download after: 04.02.2025.  
Further details visit: pmsgtendersap.gov.in, Ph.No.: 9891-2521739.  
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# DRM urged to prepare DPRs for railway projects

Collaborate with district administration: MP, Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath alias Chinni and NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshimisha have urged the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Vijayawada, Narendra A Patil, to collaborate with the district administration in preparing Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for various railway development projects. They emphasised that this collaboration would expedite project completion and ultimately benefit the residents of the district. Additionally, they recommended that the DRM take the necessary steps to resolve any pending dues owed to the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation.

Municipal Corporation HM Dhyanchandra, and officials from South Central Railway, Revenue, Municipal, R & B, NHAI, Water Resources, and other related departments were present. During the meeting, they discussed preventive measures to ensure that the recent floods in Vijayawada do not recur and strategies for uninterrupted railway-related development works. Officials were instructed to take immediate action on desilting and sanitation programmes in drains, removal of floating debris at manholes, CC approach, sanction and construction of ROB/RUB, removal of encroachments, and preparation of DPRs. Speaking at the meeting, MP Sivanath emphasised the urgent need to prepare DPRs for railway projects and underground drainage system developments. He assured that he would advocate for Railway Projects, Satellite Communication Systems, Bullet Trains, and Metro line construction at the central level and work to establish Vijayawada as a railway hub. Further, he pointed out the

severe inconvenience faced by people due to the Gunadala railway gate being opened 180 times a day. He stressed the necessity of expediting the bridge construction and mentioned that a DPR had already been submitted to the Railway Board, with efforts underway to secure approvals promptly. He also acknowledged the financial loss suffered by Vijayawada residents due to recent heavy rains and floods. MP Sivanath highlighted the government's focus on Budameru modernisation and Vijayawada city development. He emphasised the necessity of executing development projects efficiently during the summer months, which are ideal for construction. He also urged the railway department to clear its dues to the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation to generate more funds for urban development. The DRM acknowledged the State government's keen interest in railway projects and assured that coordination meetings like these would yield better results for the timely completion of works within the Vijayawada Railway Division. He noted that the next two years are crucial for development and pledged to work closely with other departments to expedite project execution. He also highlighted the importance of railway bridge maintenance and coordinated efforts for desilting drains at these bridges. DRO M Lakshmi Narasimhan, Senior Divisional Engineer (Coordination) S Varun Babu and officials from various departments also participated in the meeting.

On Wednesday, a special coordination meeting was held at the Pingali Venkaiah Meeting Hall on the NTR District Collectorate premises to discuss the completion of railway-related projects and development works. The meeting was chaired by MP Kesineni Sivanath, DRM Narendra A Patil, and District Collector Dr Lakshimisha. Mylavaram MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad, Vijayawada

# 86-year-old gets new lease of life through POEM procedure

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant medical breakthrough, an 86-year-old man was successfully treated for Achalasia Cardia at Manipal Hospital Vijayawada, using the innovative Peroral Endoscopic Myotomy (POEM) procedure. The patient, who had been suffering from long-standing difficulty swallowing, recent regurgitation, and nocturnal cough, sought medical attention after his symptoms worsened. Despite experiencing these issues, he did not experience a loss of appetite, but had noticeable weight loss and emaciation.

Initial evaluations pointed to possible esophageal cancer, with tests revealing a dilated esophagus and food retention, but no signs of malignancy. A Contrast-Enhanced Computed Tomography (CECT) scan of the chest and upper abdomen ruled out any tumours or external pressure on the esophagus. Further diagnostic testing with high-resolution esophageal manometry confirmed the diagnosis of Type I Achalasia Cardia, a rare condition where nerve damage impairs the ability of the lower esophagus to relax, making it difficult for food to move down to the stomach.

# Increasing prevalence of burnout among students in India: Expert



PNS ■ GUNTUR

Dr Shabbir Amanullah, an expert in burnout prevention and well-being, delivered an insightful lecture on managing burnout and stress to dental and nursing students at Care Dental College in Guntur. During the lecture he provided a unique opportunity to address the growing issue of mental health challenges among students, including stress, depression and coping difficulties. Dr Amanullah highlighted the increasing prevalence of burnout among students in India and stressed the importance of equipping them with the right coping skills to manage stress effectively. He praised Care Dental College for creating a platform that prioritizes the well-being of both

nursing and dental students, noting that the institution's commitment to addressing mental health is a positive step forward. "Burnout has become a major concern, but addressing it systematically has often been hindered by a lack of funding and allocated time," said Dr Amanullah. Drawing from his extensive research in the field, Dr Amanullah outlined several key strategies for managing stress and preventing burnout. He emphasised the importance of recognising the role of diet in overall well-being and incorporating physical exercise into daily routines. He also discussed how reframing stress as a challenge rather than a threat can help reduce its negative impact on mental health. "When we perceive stress as a threat, it triggers a fear

response, which can undermine our coping skills," he explained. Incorporating traditional practices, particularly yoga and spiritual practices from various Indian belief systems, was another point Dr Amanullah stressed. He believes that India's diverse cultural and spiritual traditions offer valuable tools for enhancing mental well-being, which should be integrated into modern approaches to stress management. "Strong, stable individuals contribute to a strong and stable India," Dr Amanullah remarked, emphasising the need for a holistic approach to well-being. He also highlighted the importance of follow-up sessions for students to ensure lasting impact and continuous support in managing stress and burnout.

# Steel Minister announces visit to VSP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Urges steel plant workers to support PM's vision of increasing India's steel production to 300 million tonnes by 2030

Union Minister of State for Steel, Bhupathi Raju Srinivasa Varma, has announced that he along with his colleague, Union Minister for Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy, will visit the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) this Thursday. The visit follows the Central government's recent announcement of a significant financial assistance package for Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL), the plant's operator. Minister Srinivasa Varma, speaking to reporters in New Delhi on Wednesday, emphasised the crucial role of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu in establishing the VSP. He attributed the financial package to extensive discussions with plant workers and central authorities. "This package is the result of collective efforts," Varma stated. "We must unite, as we did to secure this assistance, to ensure the plant's profitability."

He urged steel plant workers to support Prime Minister Modi's vision of increasing India's steel production to 300 million tonnes by 2030 and stressed the importance of utilising the financial support effectively. Addressing workers' concerns about privatisation, Varma clarified, "Rumours about privatisation are untrue. The plant was established through the Andhra move-

ment, and it is our collective responsibility to protect it." He acknowledged the plant's financial difficulties, revealing that RINL has outstanding dues of Rs 35,000 crore, including Rs 18,000 crore owed to banks and Rs 17,000 crore to suppliers. He noted the plant, originally built for Rs 11,440 crore, requires a robust revitalisation strategy. "The goal is to have three blast furnaces operational by August," Varma added. "After increasing production capacity and restoring financial stability, further decisions regarding the plant's future will be made."

# GO soon to grant accreditation to eligible journalists: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Information & Public Relations and Housing, Kolu Parthasarathy, has announced that the Andhra Pradesh government will soon issue a Government Order (GO) to grant Accreditation Cards to all eligible journalists in the State. The work on finalising the GO has been completed.

A delegation from the Andhra Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ), including president IV Subba Rao, vice-president K Jayaraju, State committee member Chava Ravi, Electronic Media Journalists Association State vice-president KV Suresh Kumar Reddy, and Indian Journalists Union (IJU) national secretary D Somasundar, met the Minister at the State Secretariat on Wednesday. Later, they also met the Minister's office special officer, Prof. G Anitha.

During the discussions, the union leaders urged the Minister to remove the restrictive



rules imposed by the previous government, which had reduced the number of accreditations. They requested the restoration of district-level accreditation committees with their previous discretionary powers and called for the prompt release of the GO. Parthasarathy responded positively, assuring the delegation that the government is committed to granting accreditations without unnecessary delays.



# Expedite BSNL 5G rollout: MP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MP Kesineni Sivanath alias Chinni has taken over as chairman of the NTR District Telephone Advisory Committee. He has urged BSNL officials to enhance their services and expedite the rollout of 5G connectivity in Vijayawada. He emphasised that improving telecom services is essential for fostering business growth and positioning Vijayawada as a leader in the Andhra Pradesh telecom sector. The first session meeting for the term 2024-2026 was held

at the BSNL Office in Chuttugunta on Wednesday. During his first visit to the BSNL office, MP Sivanath made a courtesy call to Andhra Pradesh Chief General Manager M. Seshachalam. Following this, he convened a meeting of the NTR District Telephone Advisory Committee. During the meeting, MP Chinni expressed his determination to restore BSNL to its former glory, vowing to advocate for improved services within the department. He stated that he would act as a liaison between the peo-

ple and BSNL and assured his support for the development of BSNL in the district. BSNL General Manager K Murali Krishna explained the progress and future plans during the meeting. He mentioned that the department is working to upgrade all towers to 4G, with plans to introduce 5G services afterwards. Additionally, he noted the development of the BSNL FTTH Fiber Net service, and announced that they will soon provide faster internet services using advanced MAAN equipment.

# CM assured swift action to address chilli farmers' issues: MP

Farmers facing 50 pc drop in prices per quintal compared to last year

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) floor leader and Narasaraopet MP, Lavu Srikrishna devarayalu, has stated that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has assured prompt action to address the challenges faced by chilli farmers, particularly in Guntur district. Speaking to the media, MP Devarayalu said the Chief Minister has promised to take immediate corrective measures to resolve the ongoing issues, which have been severely impacting the livelihoods of farmers. Devarayalu, who had written to the CM on January 12 regarding the difficulties faced by chilli farmers, highlighted that



Chandrababu responded positively when the matter was raised during the parliamentary party meeting on Tuesday. The MP said the Chief Minister has committed to tackling the core issues affecting farmers and ensuring

their welfare. One of the main concerns raised by the MP was the steep decline in the market price of chilli, with farmers facing a 50 per cent drop in prices per quintal compared to last year. He explained that the situation is expected to worsen with the main crop season approaching by the end of February, potentially resulting in losses of up to Rs 60,000 per acre for farmers. This significant loss is exacerbated by several factors, including a reduction in global chilli exports, the spread of the black thrips disease, and increasing costs of fertilisers and pesticides, which have further strained farmers' finances. In response, the Chief Minister has instructed the

Agriculture, Marketing and Commerce departments to take immediate action. Devarayalu confirmed that measures will be implemented to alleviate the debt burden on farmers, provide financial assistance, and form special teams of agricultural scientists to combat the black thrips disease. Additionally, new policies will be devised to stabilise market prices and ensure long-term support for chilli farmers. "The Chief Minister has made it clear that his government is committed not only to addressing the current problems faced by chilli farmers, but also to securing their future," said Devarayalu, expressing confidence in the government's swift intervention.

# North Andhra leads the way in organic farming

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Farmers embrace sustainable practices with govt support

North Andhra is witnessing a remarkable transformation in agriculture, with organic farming emerging as the preferred method for many farmers across the region. Supported by the State government, this shift, once considered a niche practice, has now rapidly gained traction, leading to significant improvements in both crop yields and farmer incomes. Speaking on this transformation, Kurma Naidu, a farmer from Kondabari village of Kurupam mandal, shared his positive experience, saying, "The expenditure in organic farming is much lower than conventional methods. We can achieve manageable yields with significantly reduced costs." The shift has been propelled by the State's proactive support, enabling farmers to replace chemical fertilisers with organic alternatives, including cow dung, urine, and bio-fertilisers like Ghana Jeevamrutham (a solid



manure) and Drava Jeevamrutham (a liquid manure). These natural farming inputs not only improve soil health but also contribute to long-term soil fertility, promoting biodiversity and enhancing the carbon content of the land. District Collector Shyam Prasad, who recently visited the village of Kondabari, praised the farmers for their dedication to eco-friendly farming practices. "Kondabari has emerged as a model for organic farming in the region, with all farmers embracing sustainable practices." Organic farming has also fostered a healthier ecosystem by encouraging the presence of beneficial organisms like earthworms and snails, which help maintain soil fertility.

The focus on organic fertilisers has led to a drastic reduction in the use of expensive chemical pesticides and fertilisers, making it a more cost-effective option for farmers in the long run. While initial yields may be lower, the benefits become apparent after two to three years of practice. The cultivation of millets like jowar, foxtail millet, ragi, and pearl millet has seen a sig-

nificant rise, especially in districts like Parvathipuram Manyam and Alluri Seetharama Raju. These crops, once mainly grown by tribal farmers, are now gaining popularity due to their nutritional benefits. "Health-conscious consumers in urban areas are increasingly seeking alternatives to rice and wheat, which has led to a surge in demand for these millets," noted a local farmer. In addition to millets, organic vegetables like tomatoes, brinjal, ridge gourd, lady's finger, and leafy greens are now flourishing in the region. This diversification of crops is not only boosting farmer incomes but also enhancing food security in the area. The rise in demand for organic products highlights North Andhra's success in sustainable farming, benefiting both farmers and consumers while ensuring environmental and financial gains.

# MLC polls on Feb 27

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the election schedule for Member of the Legislative Council (MLC) seats, including two Graduate Constituencies and one Teacher Constituency. According to the schedule, the notification will be issued on February 3, with polling taking place on February 27.

The counting of votes will occur on March 3. Elections will be held for the Graduates' Constituencies to represent the former East and West Godavari districts, as well as for the Krishna-Guntur Constituency. "The ECI will also conduct elections for the Srikakulam-Vizianagaram-Visakhapatnam Teachers' Constituency."



# Erstwhile YSRCP regime wasted Rs 19,871 crore: Gottipati

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravikumar alleged that the previous YSRCP regime had wasted Rs 19,871 crore of the Government money during the five years regime.

The Minister participated in the public grievance programme, organized in the TDP State headquarters, NTR Bhavan at Mangalagiri on Wednesday. Talking to the media on the occasion, Minister Ravikumar said that a large number of victims of Jagan Mohan Reddy headed regime thronged to the grievance meet and explained the injustice meted out to them.

The victims with tears filled eyes explained to him about the frauds committed by the YSRCP leaders during the five years rule and the loss they

**"Due to anarchic rule of Jagan Mohan Reddy, the State had become bankrupt. The YSRCP leaders committed financial destruction in the State making the Government debt-ridden. The Government had borrowed over Rs 8 lakh crore during the five years regime," the Minister lashed out.**



incurred and urged him to justice.

"Due to anarchic rule of Jagan Mohan Reddy, the State had become bankrupt. The YSRCP leaders committed financial destruction in the State making the Government debt-ridden. The Government had borrowed over Rs 8 lakh crore during the five years regime," the Minister lashed out.

"The then Government had given 1,600 crore worth advertisements to the Sakshi media. The YSRCP administration had spent Rs 3 crore for refreshments like effpuffs," he slammed. Despite the YSRCP borrowing lakhs of crores of rupees, there was no development in the State and the money was not spent on development, he lamented.

The coalition Government is forced to pay Rs 71,000 crore interests on the loans borrowed by the previous Government, he deplored. He lambasted that the Jagan government has caused immense losses to farmers due to its negligent attitude in irrigation projects, which are crucial for the agricultural sector.

Minister Gottipati Ravikumar expressed impatience that the YSRCP Government had not paid dues, worth Rs 19,000 crore to the contractors of the irrigation department in the last five years. The impact of these dues is affecting the construction of current irrigation projects now, he lamented. He alleged that funds worth about Rs 256 crore were misappropriated in the purchase of chickens and eggs to be distributed to the school children.

# Mega Handloom Park to be set up at Mangalagiri, Minister visits site



PNS ■ GUNTUR

A mega handloom park will be established at Mangalagiri. The mega handloom park will come up in 10.80 acres of land.

Minister for BC, EBC Welfare and handloom development S Savitha visited the site, located near auto nagar at Mangalagiri, where the mega handloom park is going to be established here on Wednesday, accompanied by handloom Commissioner Rekharani.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister made it clear that the Government had decided to establish a mega handloom park near Mangalagiri on the lines of the handloom park in Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. With an aim of providing employment to the handloom workers, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and IT Minister Nara Lokesh are keen to establish the mega handloom park as part of industrial development and generation of employment, the Minister highlighted.

She asserted that ten new clusters with weavers would be set up across the State, adding that steps are being taken to construct handloom and textile parks across the State. "With

**Speaking on the occasion, the Minister made it clear that the Government had decided to establish a mega handloom park near Mangalagiri on the lines of the handloom park in Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. With an aim of providing employment to the handloom workers, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and IT Minister Nara Lokesh are keen to establish the mega handloom park as part of industrial development and generation of employment, the Minister highlighted**

the help of the Central Government, a Unity Mall is going to be established on 5 acres in Visakhapatnam," the Minister announced.

Minister Savitha lamented that the handloom workers had been debt-ridden during the last five years with the flawed policies of the YSRCP regime and due to their indifference to take measures to safeguard the interests of handloom workers. The previous government had failed to provide facilities to the weavers to sell their clothes in the market, she criticized. She lamented some of the debt-ridden handloom weavers even committed suicides.

"During the past seven months, handloom bazaars have been set up in many cities of the State and steps have been

taken to increase the sales of handloom textiles. At the same time, a new textiles policy is being formulated and will be launched soon," Minister Savitha acknowledged.

Minister Savitha said that CM Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Lokesh are determined to provide financial security to the handloom workers. As part of this, the government is taking steps to provide financial assistance and provide work for 365 days to the weavers.

"During the 2014-19 TDP regime, many schemes were introduced and implemented for the handloom weavers. Subsidy extended to purchase yards to the handloom unit owners while electricity provided at free of cost to the handloom units.

# TTD complains to police against social media representatives for spreading false news



PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Wednesday said it has lodged a complaint with the police against a few social media representatives for spreading false news against the Tirumala visit and the religious discourse program of renowned scholar Brahmasri Chaganti Koteswara Rao.

Though TTD has informed the Tirumala visit details of the famous spiritual scholar Brahmarshi Chaganti Koteswara Rao, the representatives of Hyderabad based Dial News, Post 360 and Journalist YNR have repeatedly spread false news about his visit on social media, distorting the facts and propagating falsehoods with malicious intent to damage the reputation of the scholar as well TTD.

As a result, a case has been registered against the representatives in the University Police Station in Tirupati on January 28 and a complaint has been lodged with the PIB (Press Information Bureau) in New Delhi and Vijayawada.

Similarly, a complaint was registered with the YouTube Meta Management seeking the cancellation of the licenses to those social media companies who have spread malicious propaganda hurting the sentiments of devotees and diluted the morale of the spiritual fans of

Chaganti Koteswara Rao all over the world.

As per proceedings issued by TTD dated December 20, Chaganti Koteswara Rao after his darshan of Srivaru on January 14 was to give pravachanam at Mahati Auditorium on the evening of January 16.

In the wake of the stampede incident in Tirupati on January 8, TTD officials requested Chaganti to postpone his discourse scheduled at Mahati on January 16 and they will come with another date for his Pravachanam. He also agreed to this request.

As the renowned spiritual orator holds the cabinet rank and protocol privilege, TTD has even made arrangements for Srivari darshan on January 14 through biometric and also provided battery vehicles to transport him from Rambagicha Rest House to Srivari temple.

However, the scholar has politely rejected the special arrangements made by TTD and had darshan of Lord Venkateswara Swamy through Vaikuntam Queue complex like any other common devotee. While the facts were like this, some social media representatives spread false news deliberately.

TTD has warned that legal action will be taken against the individuals and organizations who are indulging in deliberately spreading falsehoods and trying to defame the reputation of TTD.

# Notification for MLC election will be issued on Feb' 3: Collector

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has announced that the notification for the Legislative Council graduates constituency election will be issued on February 3 and the election will be held on February 27.

Informing the election scheduled to the media here on Wednesday, the Collector and Returning Officer for the Graduate MLC Elections of the combined West Godavari and East Godavari Districts, said that the notification for the Graduate MLC elections of the joint West and East Godavari districts would be issued on February 3rd and nominations would be accepted till February 10th.

The Collector stated that the Central Election Commission released the schedule for the



conduct of the Graduate MLC elections in the joint West and East Godavari districts. Collector Vetri Selvi informed that the scrutiny of nominations would be held on February 11 and nominations can be withdrawn by the 13th.

"MLC graduate constituency elections will be held on February 27 from 8 am to 4 pm, the counting of votes will be held on March 3 and the election process will end on March

8," she made it clear.

The Collector explained that the elections would be held in the districts of Eluru, West Godavari, East Godavari, Alluri Seetharamaraju, Konaseema and Kakinada under the jurisdiction of West and East Godavari districts. The Eluru District Collector will act as the Returning Officer and the election process from the receipt of nominations to the counting of votes will be held in Eluru.

"The Election Code has come into effect in the joint West and East Godavari districts from January 29. As many as 440 polling stations will be set up to conduct the election," Vetri Selvi noted. She mentioned that 3,15,261 graduates have been registered as voters, out of which 1,83, 734 are men, 1,31,507 are women and 20 are third gender voters.

# Arrangements for CM's visit reviewed

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will visit West Godavari district on January 31 and participate in various programmes. He will visit the Sri Nagreshwara Mahishasuramardini Sri Vasavi Kanyaka Parameswari temple at Penugonda and participate in various programmes.

District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani, accompanied by SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi, MLA Pitani Satyanarayana and Joint Collector Rahul Kumar Reddy, visited the Penugonda Agriculture Market Yard here on Wednesday and inspected construction of helipad on the premises.

She made some suggestions to the R&B officials on constructing a helipad. She also visited the L-1 and L-2 areas, where some people will meet the Chief Minister during his visit. The Collector directed the DPO of the Market yard to take steps to clean the premises and keep it tidy.

Later, the Collector and the officials visited the Srinagreshwara Mahishasura Mardini temple and inspected the arrangements at the place where a Homam will be solemnized on January 31 in which the Chief Minister will participate.

She made some suggestions to the security officials. She



directed the Endowment officials to decorate the Gosala located on the premises of the temple and draw rangolis on the floor.

Later the Collector visited Sri Santhi Dham Rushi Gotra Suvarna Rushi Mandir and discussed with the temple trustee Dr.PN Govindarajulu on the arrangements for the Chief Minister's programme.

Later the Collector held a meeting with the police and revenue officials and reviewed the security arrangements for

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the Chief Minister's visit. She instructed the officials to complete the arrangements expeditiously. She ordered the police officials to make pool proof arrangements for the Chief Minister's visit.

Chief Minister programme's Security officer and additional SP Ramana, Endowment Regional Joint Commissioner K Subba Rao, Additional SP V Bhima Rao and a host of endowment, revenue and police officials who accompanied the Collector.



# CM to take part in pension disbursement, housewarming programmes in Kovvur: Durgesh

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will participate in the NTR Bharosa pensions' disbursement and housewarming programmes on February 1 at Dommeru village in Kovvur constituency.

Disclosing this to the media, Minister for Tourism Development Kandula Durgesh, accompanied by East Godavari district Collector P Prashanthi, MLA Gorangla Butchchiah Chowdary and other officials held a meeting in the RDO office in Kovvur and reviewed the arrangements for the Chief Minister's programmes.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Durgesh said that the Chief Minister would participate in various programmes on February 1 at Dommeru village in Kovvur mandal. He would hand over NTR Bharosa pensions to some of the beneficiaries and would also interact with the beneficiaries. The Chief Minister would also participate in the housewarming programme of the beneficiaries and in the Grama Sabha and address the villagers.

Minister Durgesh reviewed the arrangements for holding a meeting with the locals at the village and directed the officials to ensure that the people would not suffer any difficulties during the Chief Minister's programme.

The Minister advised the officials concerned to make drinking water available and make sanitation arrangements. The R&B officials were instructed to erect barricades at the helipad to regulate crowds.

**Minister Durgesh reviewed the arrangements for holding a meeting with the locals at the village and directed the officials to ensure that the people would not suffer any difficulties during the Chief Minister's programme**

The officials were also ordered to make arrangements for the setting up of bio-toilets at the venue of the meeting for the attendees of the meeting.

Tourism Minister Durgesh told the officials that ambulances, fire engines and medical personnel should be made available and constituency and mandal special officers should prepare reports on public issues related to their respective constituencies.

The welfare assistants should definitely be present at the places where the Chief Minister participated, under the DRDA, he told the officials. Minister Durgesh directed the officials to take special measures to ensure continuous electricity supply. Elaborate security should be provided for the Chief Minister's visit, he instructed the police officials.

Collector P Prashanthi, SP Narasimha Kishore, Joint Collector Chinna Ramudu, MLAs Muppidi Venkateswara Rao, Gorantla Butchchiah Chowdhury, Bathula Balaramakrishna, RDO Rani Susmita, and DSP Dev Kumar were among those attended the meeting.



# Collector inspects EVM godown

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari district Collector P Prashanthi here on Wednesday inspected the godown where Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) were preserved.

Collector Prashanthi informed that the EVM inspection was carried out on Wednesday as part of the routine inspections as per the orders of the Central Election Commission.

The Collector, along with RDO R Krishna Nayak, inspected the EVM godown. The Collector examined the CCTV cameras installed as part of EVM security and the CCTV footage.

She inquired about the details of the police security shift at the EVM godown and then signed the register. Representatives of political parties, and the officials accompanied the Collector during her inspection.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MP from Nagarkurnool Dr Mallu Ravi stated that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy should shoulder the responsibility of making Rahul Gandhi the prime minister.

Ravi said everyone calls CM Revanth Reddy an all-rounder. After Revanth Reddy became CM, he did development and welfare programmes on one side and political affairs on the other, he said.

Saying that politics is as important as development, Ravi said that Revanth Reddy is becoming a national leader. The CM is performing yagna for the people.



However, BRS and BJP leaders are spoiling the yagna.

Speaking to the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Wednesday, Ravi said that the BJP and the Modi government are working against Ambedkar's Constitution. He alleged that Union Home Minister Amit Shah insulted Ambedkar in the Rajya Sabha. Lok Sabha Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi asked Amit Shah to apologize, but he did not. He said the BJP follows Godse ideology while the Congress follows Mahatma Gandhi's ideology. Rahul Gandhi is fighting to protect the Constitution. He is implementing Mahatma Gandhi's ideology, he added.



ACROSS THE STATES



**B'luru palace land: K'taka issues ordinance to assert control**

The Karnataka government has issued an ordinance to assert its rights over the expansive Bangalore Palace grounds, which spans 472 acres and 16 guntas near Mehkri Circle here. The move follows the state cabinet's decision on January 24 to reject the issuance of Transferable Development Rights (TDR) to the Mysuru royal family for acquiring nearly 16 acres of land within the palace grounds. According to the state government, granting TDR for the Bangalore Palace grounds would not be in the best interests of the state. The cabinet had expressed concerns that paying Rs 3,014 crore to acquire 16 acres of land for the development of just two kilometers of road would not be economically beneficial for the state. The ordinance aims to regulate and determine the utilisation of the land under the Bangalore Palace (Acquisition and Transfer) Act, 1996, which vests ownership of the land with Karnataka. The total value of the entire 472-acre property has been assessed at Rs 11 crore as per the provisions of the Act.



**CBI books 7 ITBP officers for alleged corruption**

The CBI has filed two separate FIRs against seven officers of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) for large scale alleged pilferage and fraudulent activities in government stores and corruption worth Rs 1.8 crore, officials said Wednesday. In the first FIR registered on a complaint from ITBP, the CBI has alleged that then Commandant Anupreet Borkar, who was posted in Pithoragarh in collusion with Deputy Commandants Deepak Gogoi, Purnan Ram, Mukesh Chand Meena, Inspector Anil Kumar Pandey and contractor Madan Singh Rana, was involved in a series of illegal actions, primarily related to the tendering process for hauling government stores and material to Border Out posts (BOPs) in 2019-21. The complaint from ITBP has listed 12 instances of alleged corruption during the year 2020-21, the year India-China troops came face to face in Galwan Valley and a major push was given to boosting infrastructure at border outposts. In one such instance, the force alleged that during 2020-21 approval was given to purchase 105 pairs of Boot Combat Rubber (gum boots) at the rate of Rs 1,198 per pair but he purchased cheaper shoes of a different specification at Rs 499 per pair causing a loss of Rs 73,395 to exchequer.



**GRAP 3 curbs invoked in Delhi amid rise in pollution**

The Centre's panel on Delhi-NCR's air quality on Wednesday invoked curbs under stage 3 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) amid a sharp rise in pollution due to unfavourable meteorological conditions, according to an official order. The air quality in Delhi deteriorated sharply amid calm winds, smoggy situation and low mixing height with the 24-average AQI rising to 365 at 4 pm, prompting the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) to implement curbs under stage 3 of GRAP. GRAP Stage 3 entails a ban on non-essential construction work. Classes up to grade 5 are required to shift to hybrid mode under Stage 3. Parents and students have the option to choose online education wherever available. Under Stage 3, the use of BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel cars (4-wheelers) is restricted in Delhi and nearby NCR districts.

**'Delhi does not forgive sinners'**

● Modi slams Kejriwal over 'poisoning Yamuna' remark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Slamming AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal over his remarks that "poison" is being mixed in the Yamuna, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that fearing their defeat in the Delhi polls, "AAP-da people" have turned desperate.

Addressing a public meeting in Kartar Nagar here in the run-up to the February 5 assembly polls, he also likened AAP leaders to serial killer Charles Sobhraj, who gained notoriety for duping people.

"Those who built 'sheesh mahal' and those who looted public money worth thousands of crores of rupees can never think of the welfare of the poor. That is why they are spreading lies in Delhi. These AAP-da people speak lies with such innocence that people get trapped," Modi said.

"You may have heard of Charles Sobhraj, he was a known thug. He was such an expert at duping people with innocence that every time people would get duped by him. That is why one has to remain



This is fraud and shamelessness. They want to make people struggle for water and want Purvanchalis to chhathi maiya's puja surrounded by garbage

cautious of such people," he said. Delhi has made it clear that now excuses, fake promises as well as "loot and lies" of the "AAP-da" government will not work, Modi said as he made a fervent appeal to voters to give him a chance to serve after 25 years of Congress and AAP governments.

Further hitting out at the AAP, Modi said that during the last two elections, the party asked for votes on the promise of cleaning the Yamuna and now it says that the issue does not yield votes.

"This is fraud and shamelessness. They want to make people struggle for water and

want Purvanchalis to chhathi maiya's puja surrounded by garbage," he said.

The AAP has committed a "sin" that history, the people of Haryana and the country will not forget.

"A former CM has made malicious allegations against the people of Haryana. AAP-da people have become desperate due to the fear of defeat. Is Haryana different from Delhi? Don't they have children and relatives in Delhi? Will they mix poison for their own people?" Modi said, hitting out at Kejriwal.

He said the people of Delhi, PM Modi, diplomats in embassies and judges staying in the national capital drink the same water from Haryana.

"Can anyone think that to poison Modi, Haryana BJP has mixed poison in water? What are you saying? It is in Indians' character to forgive mistakes but neither Delhi nor India forgives sins committed with ill-intention," he said.

Kejriwal had alleged that the BJP is trying to keep the people of Delhi thirsty as it indulges in "dirty politics".



**29 Naxalites surrender in C'garh's Narayanpur**

PNS ■ NARAYANPUR

Twenty-nine Naxalites, including seven women, surrendered in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh on Wednesday, a senior official said.

The cadres belonging to Kutul area committee of Maoists turned themselves in before the police, Border Security Force (BSF) and Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) officials here citing disappointment with the "hollow" Maoist ideology and growing internal differences within the banned outfit, Narayanpur Superintendent of Police (SP) Prabhat Kumar said.

They also said they are influenced by the development work being carried out in Maad area of Narayanpur, including rapid construction of roads, and said they wanted to lead a normal life henceforth, he said.

The surrendered cadres were active as members of Janatana Sarkar, militia, Chetna Natya Mandli (CNM - a cultural wing of Maoists) and lower rungs of Maoists, he said, terming the development as a major success for security forces.

With this, 71 senior and lower cadres have surrendered so far in the district since January 2024. During the same period, more than 60 Maoists were killed and 50 arrested, he said.

**Parl panel adopts report on Waqf bill by majority**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A parliamentary panel examining the Waqf Amendment Bill on Wednesday adopted by a majority vote its report that contained changes suggested by ruling BJP members, prompting the opposition to dub the exercise as an attempt to destroy the Waqf boards.

The Joint Committee of Parliament (JCP) on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, chaired by BJP member Jagdambika Pal, adopted the report on the draft legislation by a 15-11 majority vote. Opposition members were submitting dissent notes to the report. BJP members insisted that the bill, introduced in Lok Sabha in August last year, seeks to bring modernity, transparency and accountability in the management of Waqf properties, while the opposi-



● OPPOSITION SLAMS MOVE

tion termed it as an attack on the constitutional rights of the Muslim community and interference in the functioning of the Waqf boards.

Speaking to reporters after the 38th sitting of the committee, Pal

said the report will be presented to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday and tabled in both Houses of Parliament during the Budget Session beginning Friday. A key concern of the opposition was the

appointment of non-Muslims on the Waqf Board, which they claimed was violative of Article 26 of the Constitution that granted citizens freedom to manage their religious affairs, including establishment and

maintenance of institutions for religious and charitable purposes. "You have violated our rights granted under Article 26 of the Constitution. You talked about Uniform Civil Code, but there are Hindu Endowment Board, Sikh Boards, Christian boards which do not have non-Hindus, non-Sikhs, and non-Christians as members. But why does this not extend to Muslims? This is an attempt to destroy the Waqf Boards," Congress member Imran Masood told reporters here.

At its meeting on Monday, the committee had adopted 14 amendments to the bill, all proposed by BJP members and rejected every change suggested by the opposition members, including Congress, DMK, TMC, AAP, Shiv Sena-UBT and the AIMIM.

**Kejriwal opposed to quota against Dalits, minorities**

● Rahul Gandhi steps up attack at poll rally

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stepping up his attack on AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday alleged that the former Delhi chief minister is opposed to reservations and is against Dalits, backwards, minorities and the poor. Addressing an election rally in Bawana here, Gandhi said he and his party do not fear Prime Minister Narendra Modi and on the contrary, "the PM is afraid of the Congress". He also attacked Kejriwal with the 'sheesh mahal' jibe for the second straight day and said that though he talked about clean governance, the "biggest scam" in Delhi took place under his watch.

Gandhi said Kejriwal reneged on his promise of bathing in and drinking Yamuna water and challenged him to drink the water from the river. He said both Prime Minister Modi and Kejriwal are opposed to reservations and are against Dalits, minorities, backwards and the poor.

"Kejriwal should say clearly that he would get caste survey done and breach the wall of 50 per cent cap on reservation, but he will not do so as he is against Dalits, backwards and



minorities. When riots were taking place, where was he. Did he stand with you?" Gandhi said, slamming the former chief minister.

Training his guns specifically on Kejriwal, Gandhi said he used to move around in a small car wearing muffler and claim that he will do clean politics but the biggest scam in Delhi worth crores of rupees was done by his party and his people.

"He (Kejriwal) ran a corrupt government. Modi ji lies in his speeches and just like him, Kejriwal does the same. Five years ago, he (Kejriwal) had stated that he will take a bath in the Yamuna and drink its water. Five years have gone by and

he did not do so. You have to drink dirty water but Kejriwal lives in 'sheesh mahal' which is worth crores and lies to you," the former Congress chief said. Gandhi said he had told PM Modi in Parliament that the Congress will get a caste census done.

"When our government comes in Delhi, we will do a caste census. I had said that we will breach the wall of 50 per cent cap on reservations. We will break down this wall. I want to ask Kejriwal whether he wants to remove the 50 per cent cap on reservation. Kejriwal and Modi ji are against reservation and are against Dalits, minorities, backwards and the poor," Gandhi said.

**Don't 'waste' your votes on Cong: Kejriwal to Delhiites**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on the Congress, urging voters not to "waste" their votes on the grand old party.

Addressing a 'janasabha' in the Badli constituency here, Kejriwal accused the Congress of indirectly aiding the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"Why waste your votes on the Congress? The Congress will not win, it will just cut our votes. The Congress and the BJP are fighting this election together to defeat the AAP. Vote to make someone win, not to make someone lose," he said.

The AAP leader further emphasised his party's welfare schemes, claiming that 70 per cent of women, according to a survey, support the AAP.

He urged women to convince men in their families to vote for his party, alleging that men often get "distracted" by the BJP and the Congress.

The AAP has fielded its sitting MLA Ajesh Yadav from Badli against Congress' Delhi unit president Devender Yadav. While Ajesh Yadav has won the seat in the last two elections (2015 and 2020), Devender Yadav had previously held it in 2008 and 2013. The BJP



has nominated Deepak Chaudhary as its candidate in the constituency. Taking on the BJP over the rising ammonia levels in the Yamuna, Kejriwal once again accused the Haryana government of "poisoning" Delhi's water supply.

"The BJP has crossed all limits in politics. The BJP-led Haryana government has put poison named ammonia in the water. But we saved the people of Delhi by diverting the toxic water. We all are one — the people of Haryana are also us and the people of Delhi are also us," he said.

Kejriwal's fresh attack on the Congress comes amid growing rifts within the INDIA alliance.

The fissures deepened on Tuesday when he hit back at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who had accused him of being "afraid" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and being involved in the "liquor scam".

BEATING RETREAT

**Foot-tapping music, soulful renditions mark end of R-Day celebrations**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foot-tapping melodies and the majestic backdrop of a setting sun over Raisina Hills mesmerised the audience at Vijay Chowk on Wednesday during the Beating Retreat ceremony, marking the culmination of the 76th Republic Day celebrations.

From "Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja" and "Aye Watan Tere Liye" to "Ganga Jamuna" and "Bharat Ke Jawan" -- bands from the Indian Army, Navy, Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) played 30 foot-tapping tunes before a distinguished audience comprising President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhanekar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, among others.

President Murmu arrived in the tradi-

tional buggy with the audience cheering as her open gold-plated carriage rolled down the Raisina hill.

The ceremony began with the massed band's "Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja" tune, followed by several captivating numbers such as "Amar Bharati", "Indradhanush", "Jai Janam Bhumi", "Nati in Himalayan Valley", "Ganga Jamuna" and "Veer Siachen" by the Pipes and Drums band.

The CAPF bands played "Vijay Bharat", "Rajasthan Troops", "Aye Watan Tere Liye", and "Bharat Ke Jawan".

"Galaxy Rider", "Stride", "Rubaru" and "Millennium Flight Fantasy" were the tunes played by the IAF band, while the Navy band played "Rashtriya Pratham", "Nishak Nishpad", "Aatmanirbhar Bharat", "Spread the Light of Freedom", "Rhythm of the Reef" and "Jai Bharati".



It was followed by the Army band which played "Veer Sapoot", "Taqaat Watan", "Mera Yuva Bharat", "Dhruv" and "Faulad Ka Jigar".

The Massed Bands then played the tunes "Priyam Bharatam", "Aye Mere Watan Ke Logon" and "Drummers Call", drawing loud cheer and applause from the audience.

The event came to a close with the ever-popular tune "Sare Jahan Se Acha", played by the Buglers.

The principal conductor of the ceremony was Commander Manoj Sebastian.

The Army band conductor was Subedar Major (honourary captain) Bishan Bahadur, while M Antony, MCPO MUS II, and Warrant Officer Ashok Kumar were the conductors of the Navy and IAF bands, respectively.

The conductor of the CAPF band was Head Constable GD Mahajan Kailash

Madhava Rao. The Pipes and Drums band played under the instructions of Subedar Major Abhilash Singh, while the Buglers performed under the leadership of Naib Subedar Bhupal Singh.

The ceremony follows a centuries-old military tradition, wherein troops cease fighting, sheathe their arms, withdraw from the battlefield, and return to their camps at sunset upon the sounding of the retreat.

The first Beating Retreat ceremony in India was held in 1955, during the state visit of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip.

It was conceived by Major GA Roberts and commissioned by then-prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Since then, the ceremony has become an annual event, showcasing the musical and cultural heritage of India.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Indian economy in fast lane

India's economy is set to lead global growth, requiring right policies in the upcoming budget to maintain momentum

India's growth story is going strong despite interruptions in the global markets. Indian economy has maintained its momentum and will continue to do so in the next two years. According to the January 2025 edition of the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects report, India is poised to retain its position as the fastest-growing major economy, with an impressive projected growth rate of 6.7 per cent for both FY26 and FY27. This remarkable trajectory not only surpasses global growth forecasts of 2.7 per cent but also cements India's status as a critical player in the global economic landscape. India's robust economic performance is underpinned by several key factors. The services industry continues to be a cornerstone of India's economy, contributing significantly to GDP and job creation. IT services, financial technology, and healthcare have been pivotal in driving growth. Government initiatives like 'Make in India' and the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes have helped manufacturing, fostering innovation and attracting both domestic and foreign investments. Investments in infrastructure, including roads, railways and digital connectivity, have bolstered economic activity and enhanced productivity.



India's economic ascent is noteworthy in a global context where growth remains tepid. With China's growth slowing to an estimated 4 per cent next year, India's consistent expansion underscores its growing prominence. The International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook aligns with the World Bank's projections, estimating India's growth at 6.5 per cent for 2025 and 2026, further reinforcing the nation's stable economic fundamentals. Despite its impressive performance, India faces a set of challenges that demand attention, especially as the Union Budget for FY26 approaches. While growth is robust, the need to create adequate job opportunities for India's burgeoning youth population remains pressing. Addressing structural unemployment will be crucial to ensuring inclusive growth. Rising global commodity prices and domestic supply chain constraints pose risks to price stability. Effective monetary and fiscal measures are required to contain inflation without stifling growth. With increased spending on infrastructure and social welfare, maintaining fiscal discipline will be a balancing act for policymakers. The agriculture sector, a backbone of the Indian economy, continues to face challenges such as erratic monsoons, low productivity, and market inefficiencies. Comprehensive reforms are needed to modernise and stabilise this sector. Geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions, looming tariff hike in the US and climate change are external risks that could impact India's growth trajectory. Strengthening economic resilience against these uncertainties is imperative. As Nirmala Sitharaman prepares to unveil the Budget, she must focus on addressing these challenges to keep India's growth momentum. Prioritising investments in education, healthcare, and skill development will ensure that the benefits of growth are widely shared.

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### PICTALK



NCC cadets during the National Cadet Corps (NCC) rally at Cariappa Ground in New Delhi

# The Gandhian ethos: A guide for a polarised world



RAJDEEP PATHAK

### As societies grapple with discord and division, Gandhi's legacy inspires us to embrace dialogue, empathy and unity

On January 30, 1948, three gunshots ended Mahatma Gandhi's life but failed to extinguish the ideals he stood for. The physical silencing of Gandhi only immortalised his message of nonviolence, reconciliation and understanding. Seventy-seven years later, his teachings remain as vital as ever, resonating loudly in a world increasingly fraught with impatience, intolerance, and polarisation. In the face of these challenges, Gandhi's life work continues to urge humanity to rediscover the virtues of patience, empathy, and constructive dialogue. In our polarised global society, where divisions grow deeper and disagreements often turn hostile, Gandhi's philosophy offers a beacon of hope. The sound of silence left by those three bullets asks a poignant question: Can humanity heal its divisions without resorting to violence? Though Gandhi's message arose in a specific historical context, its relevance transcends time, providing an antidote to the impatience and discord threatening our shared humanity today.

**Reviving Gandhian Ideals in Education**  
The urgency of restoring values like patience, dialogue and empathy is most pronounced in the education of younger generations. Early exposure to these principles can shape the leaders of tomorrow. Initiatives like Taking Gandhi to Schools integrate Gandhian philosophy into children's lives through storytelling, discussions, and experiential learning. These programmes go beyond preaching; they immerse students in the practice of nonviolence and coexistence. For example, lessons on managing classroom conflicts teach students to approach disagreements with empathy and active listening—skills they carry into the broader world. Educators and community leaders are also being empowered to foster these values. Workshops on nonviolent communication, mediation and conflict resolution turn abstract concepts into



actionable practices. These tools have been successfully applied in diverse settings, from resolving domestic disputes to rebuilding trust in conflict-ridden communities. The Gandhian ethos of reconciliation—rooted in forgiveness, nonviolence and dialogue—provides a framework for healing even the most entrenched divisions. **The Transformative Power of Reconciliation**

Gandhi's approach to reconciliation was not just about resolving conflicts but about restoring relationships. He believed in confronting injustice with courage, yet harboring no hatred for the wrongdoer. This philosophy promotes harmony over revenge, emphasising understanding and collective wellbeing. Archbishop Desmond Tutu echoed this belief, stating, "True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth." Similarly, Nelson Mandela, inspired by Gandhi, viewed forgiveness as a tool for lasting peace, asserting, "Courageous people do not fear forgiving, for the sake of peace."

By embedding these principles into education and social discourse, Gandhi's legacy becomes more than a commemoration; it becomes a lived reality. Seminars and dis-



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cussions on topics like forgiveness, interfaith harmony, and dialogue encourage participants to reflect deeply and adopt these values. Immersive experiences like these inspire young minds to embrace nonviolence as a powerful force for change.

#### Gandhi Smriti: A Living Tribute

At the heart of Gandhi's enduring legacy is Gandhi Smriti, the site where he spent his final days. Located at 5, Tees January Marg in Delhi, this historic place, once Birla House, holds profound significance. Gandhi arrived here on September 9, 1947, after finding his intended residence occupied by refugees from West Punjab following Partition.

Today, Gandhi Smriti is a national memorial, home to museums, Gandhi's preserved room, and the prayer ground where he held evening meetings. It attracts visitors from around the world, serving as a place of pilgrimage and a reminder of the tragedy that ended his life. Yet, Gandhi Smriti is more than a heritage site; it is an educational hub where people of all ages, especially children, learn about courage, compassion, and responsible citizenship. Every year, on Gandhi's birth and death anniversaries, chil-

dren perform musical tributes at the evening prayer meet. These events embody Gandhi's belief that peace must begin with the young: "If we are to teach real peace in this world... we shall have to begin with the children."

#### A Call to Action

The principles Gandhi championed—nonviolence, reconciliation, and understanding—are not relics of the past but vital tools for addressing modern challenges. His teachings remind us that change begins with small acts of kindness, empathy, and constructive dialogue. By nurturing these values in young hearts, we lay the foundation for a more harmonious future. As we commemorate Gandhi's life and philosophy, let us remember that the silence left by those three bullets was not an end but a beginning. It calls on us to transform divisions into unity, hostility into understanding, and despair into hope. The path to peace may be long and arduous, but it begins with the courage to believe in the power of nonviolence and the quiet persistence of nurturing hope in the hearts of the next generation.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### UTTRAKHAND IMPLEMENTS UCC

Madam—The implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand is a landmark move with nationwide implications. Politically, it has reignited the debate on uniform laws, with the BJP advocating it as a step toward equality, while opposition parties and minority groups see it as a threat to India's pluralistic ethos. Legally, the UCC may face challenges from groups arguing it infringes on religious freedoms under Article 25 of the Constitution.

If successful, it could harmonise personal laws on marriage, divorce, and inheritance, simplifying legal processes and promoting gender equality. Socially, concerns about cultural and religious autonomy are significant, particularly among minority and tribal communities. While many welcome its focus on equality, critics argue the mandatory registration of marriages, live-in relationships, and notification of pregnancies could be intrusive and difficult to enforce.

Administratively, the UCC relies on digital infrastructure, such as Aadhaar-based verification and AI translations, but challenges may arise in rural areas with limited access to technology. Citizens must meet strict deadlines for registering relationships, highlighting the need for robust awareness campaigns. On a broader level, the UCC aims to foster national integration and secularism by reducing divisions created by diverse personal laws. Uttarakhand's success will determine whether this initiative becomes a model for other states or remains a divisive issue in India's socio-political landscape.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

### US TARIFFS CONCERN INDIA

Madam—The editorial on Indo-US trade and relationships (January 29) presents valid points. India has been wasting time in giving mere slogans instead of finding solutions and strengthening the structures. Now even the GDP is not growing to the expected level, and the demands in rural and urban areas are declining, causing cau-

### JPC approves 14 amendments in Waqf Bill



The Joint Parliamentary Committee set up to scrutinise the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, on Monday cleared the proposed legislation with 14 amendments in the original bill. The bill is likely to be taken up in Parliament for discussion and subsequent passage. One of the key amendments accepted by the JPC is to empower the state government to nominate to the authority to determine

whether a property is 'Waqf.' In the original bill, this power was entrusted to the district collector. As it was a foregone conclusion, the non-NDA members in the JPC opposed dilution of the existing Act. In fact, the Waqf Act 1995 had extended unlimited powers to the Waqf Tribunals. In the existing act, the decision of a tribunal is final and binding on the parties. No suit or legal proceedings shall lie under any civil court. In the absence of an appealing mechanism, decisions made by the Waqf Tribunals lack transparency. In addition, there were reports of widespread misuse of Section 40 of the Waqf Act to acquire and declare a property as Waqf property, which has led to disharmony among the communities. Thus, the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is the need of the hour.

Manoj Parashar | Ghaziabad

It is time India focuses its priorities on promoting meaningful education that parts with skills, talents and knowledge and infusing more vibrancy in the domestic markets by ensuring increased demands. The lifeline today is the IT sector, which is able to provide employment to the cream of talents among the graduates in the field. The migration policy of Trump is likely to disturb this lifeline.

Further, India cannot find fault with Trump calling for America First and Make in America, as the same is the slogan PM Modi was raising all along. In the background of a growing trade imbalance with the US, India cannot afford a penalty tariff nor take back such a huge number of migrants without pain. The actions of Trump are nothing but a declaration of the failure of globalisation, which was promoted against protectionist theory and insisted on free movements of capital, labour, goods, and services. However, it is time India focuses on empowering the vast majority to spend more, as the enriched rich cannot save this situation, and they are seeking safe places to deck their capital in

countries abroad. Change in the policy is inevitable.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

### STAMPEDE IN MAHAKUMBH

Madam—The news of death at Mahakumbh is grotesque. More than seven people were killed and around 10 injured in a stampede at the Maha Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj, as tens of millions gathered to take a holy dip on the most auspicious day of the six-week Hindu festival. The drone footage showed millions of devotees, shoulder to shoulder, arriving in the pre-dawn dark at the temporary township in Prayagraj for the holy dip at the confluence of three rivers, the Ganga, Yamuna, and the Saraswati. Distraught families gathered outside temporary medical centres, searching for missing relatives, while emergency teams attended to the injured and police struggled to regain control over the crowds.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur Nagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## The lost art of balance: Lessons from a life of overwork



SANJAY CHANDRA

In the relentless pursuit of professional success, the lines between work and life often blur, leaving behind stories of missed moments, lost connections and unforeseen struggles

I remember a senior colleague reminiscing about his earlier years in the job. His daughters were small. He was a workaholic and the children would be long asleep when he returned. They would be gone to school by the time he surfaced the next morning. One of the children left a note on her pillow that there would come a time when she might not have time for him. I was talking to a young lady. Her father retired from the services. He felt lost with more than enough free time on hand. The organisation had taught him to work hard. There were no training manuals to lead a retired life. I met a relative at a wedding. He will superannuate from a senior position in a few months. He sounded uncertain about the future. He is a scientist and had no hesitation in accepting that he had considered science as a hobby his entire life. Now he was not so certain. I caught snatches of conversation between a few gentlemen. An evening, that could have been spent talking about things other than business,



had turned into an extension of the workplace. They might not agree with me now. They derive joy from such conversations when still in active service. Will they feel the same after retirement in a few years? I flew with a young IT professional many years ago. He was on the verge of quitting a well-paying senior-level private sector job to join a government company at the mid-management level. I was confounded till he explained. He was working in a software company with the majority of clients from America. His Indian job required him to work Indian hours. His American clients wanted him to be available for calls when they woke up. He could at least sleep in the night in his new job. I do not

know if he found peace. It does not matter if one works in the private sector or with the government. The first lesson drilled into us when I joined the railway services was that a railway officer is always on duty, 24x7. It sounded glamorous in the heady euphoria of youth. I started believing that stress brought out the best in me. Till it was too late. I developed hypertension, and then diabetes. I also had meltdowns. I have transitioned from being a technocrat manager to exploring creativity. I write fiction novels, short articles, and stories, and guide others to pursue passions from a bucket list that they could not take up, lost in the quest to earn a living. Many are not so fortunate. They do

not even realise that they need to strike a balance or that they need help. Recent statements by a couple of respected business leaders raise issues beyond chuckles and memes. A professional typically spends almost four decades working. This is 2/3rds of his total life at the time of retirement. Unfortunately, this is the only life he has seen. He has not even been prepared to lead a different later life. It is tougher for women. They are expected to take care of the children also, and sooner rather than later, the birds fly out of the nest. As we grow older, we start equating productivity with longer working hours. We also start believing that health and mental wellbeing, whether working or after retirement, is not important. How wrong we are! Melissa Stegins, mindfulness teacher and productivity coach, reminds us, "Remember that work and life coexist. Wellness at work follows you home and vice versa."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN CULTIVATING PURE FEELINGS

By nurturing empathy, mindfulness and gratitude, we can create stronger relationships



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Since our childhood, we have been taught to be polite and to be nice to others. In a way, it's important because you get what you give, and if we want others to be nice to us, our behaviour towards them should be similar, shouldn't it? But! If our so-called nice behaviour is superficial, acting as a mask over not-so-nice feelings, it will not win us any goodwill in return, because the law of karma operates even at the most subtle level, which states: "As you sow, so shall you reap." Hence, it is very important to have genuinely good feelings towards others, because when our feelings are pure, good wishes and nice behaviour come naturally. We don't have to tell ourselves to be nice to someone or, at a more subtle level, suppress or dismiss negative thoughts that arise upon seeing someone. Because if the feelings are pure, such negativity would never arise from within us.

We tend to have pure feelings and love towards our near and dear ones. We wish them well from the core of our hearts and celebrate their successes. Even when they fail, we give them hope and encourage them to do better. Why? Because we love them. But what about those out-



side the circle of our family and friends? Our feelings towards them keep changing according to how we perceive them. It is not that anyone is inherently bad, but it's our perception that makes us react differently when the same mistake is made by a loved one or by someone else. To one, we show sympathy and understanding, and to the other, we may show irritation and anger. We are quick to affix negative labels to others viz: selfish, lazy, stupid, egoistic, etc.

Our thoughts, words, and behaviour towards that person are shaped by that label. Thus, we find ourselves unable to be nice to some people. However, it's important to understand that our perception can often be clouded by our own biases and prejudices. We may not always be aware of the reasons behind our judgments, and these judgments can lead us to act in ways that are not truly reflective of our values. By acknowledging this, we can start to challenge our assumptions and work towards a more empathetic approach. For instance, if we encounter someone who initially seems unapproachable or difficult, instead of allowing our initial impression to dictate our interactions, we should take a moment to consider the possibility of underlying factors that might be influencing their behaviour. Mindfulness encourages us to be present in the moment and to approach each interaction with an open mind and heart. When we are mindful, we are less likely to react impulsively or allow our judgments to cloud our interactions. It helps us to listen more deeply and to respond with greater empathy.

This appreciation naturally extends to others, helping us to see the good in them even when it might be obscured by their actions or behaviour. Furthermore, building strong, authentic relationships requires effort and intentionality. It involves not just being kind in moments of ease but also extending understanding and support during challenging times. It means being willing to engage in open and honest communication and being receptive to feedback. In essence, the habit of looking at every person with mercy and compassion can lead to profound transformations—not just in them, but in us as well. When we consistently choose to see the good in others and extend our support, we create an environment where healing and growth are possible. By cultivating these attitudes and practices, we contribute to a more compassionate and understanding world. Remember! Each of us has the power to influence our surroundings through our actions and attitudes, and by choosing to engage with others in a meaningful and supportive way, we help build a community characterized by genuine goodwill and harmony.

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

# Beyond the 70-hour workweek: Redefining productivity



A S MITTAL

Fostering efficacy, accountability and a strong sense of ownership plays a big role in cultivating a productive and innovative workforce

Recent statements by prominent Indian business leaders advocating for extended work hours have sparked significant debate across the industries and political sphere. Infosys founder Narayana Murthy suggested a 70-hour workweek for the younger generation, while Larsen & Toubro chairperson S N Subrahmanyam pushed the idea further, proposing a 90-hour workweek, including Sundays. While their intent—to encourage competitiveness and efficiency—is commendable, the emphasis on extended work hours misses a crucial point: the number of hours worked is not the primary determinant of success. Efficacy, accountability, trust and a spirit of ownership are far more vital in creating a productive and competitive workforce.

The Fallacy of "More Hours Equals More Productivity" Globally, data and research have consistently shown that longer working hours do not directly correlate with increased productivity. According to a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), countries with shorter average work hours often rank higher in productivity. For instance, Germany—known for its robust industrial base—averages 34.6 hours of work per week and boasts one of the highest productivity levels in the world. In contrast, countries like Mexico, where workweeks stretch beyond 42 hours, report significantly lower productivity rates. The human brain has a finite capacity for sustained focus and creative thinking. Prolonged hours often lead to diminishing returns, increased burnout, and higher rates of errors. Studies by the World Health Organization (WHO) have also highlighted the adverse health effects of excessive work hours, linking them to cardiovascular diseases and mental health disorders.

Moreover, the concept of presenteeism—being physically present but mentally disengaged—is an often-overlooked consequence of extended work hours. Overworked employees may appear productive but are less likely to deliver high-quality output. This underscores the importance of optimising work hours for maximum efficacy rather than simply extending them. What Truly Drives Productivity? Instead of focusing on quantity, business leaders should shift the discourse to quality. Productivity is not about the time spent at a desk or shop floor but what is achieved during that time. Three key factors contribute to this:

**1. Efficacy:** Efficacy emphasises doing things right rather than simply doing more. This involves leveraging technology, optimising workflows, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Organisations like Toyota have championed this principle through methodologies such as Lean and Kaizen, which focus on reducing waste and enhancing efficiency.

**2. Accountability:** Empowering employees to take ownership of their work fosters accountability. When individuals feel responsible for outcomes, they naturally align their efforts toward achieving goals. Google's OKR (Objectives and Key Results) framework exemplifies how clearly defined goals and transparent accountability can drive exceptional results. A sense of accountability ensures that time is used effectively and results are prioritised over mere activity.



WORK-LIFE BALANCE IS NOT A "LUXURY" BUT A NECESSITY FOR SUSTAINED PERFORMANCE. THE HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW NOTES THAT EMPLOYEES WITH BALANCED LIVES DEMONSTRATE 21 PER CENT GREATER PRODUCTIVITY AND ARE 57 PER CENT LESS LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE BURNOUT

**3. Ownership Spirit:** A sense of ownership transforms employees from passive participants to proactive contributors. This requires building a culture where employees feel their work has a purpose and their contributions are valued. Startups often exemplify this culture, with employees going above and beyond not because of long hours but because they believe in the company's mission. When employees feel emotionally invested, their creativity and commitment naturally increase, making the organisation more competitive.

**The Role of Work-Life Balance** Work-life balance is not a "luxury" but a necessity for sustained performance. The Harvard Business Review notes that employees with balanced lives demonstrate 21 per cent greater productivity and are 57 per cent less likely to experience burnout. Moreover, a healthy work-life balance fosters creativity, problem-solving, and emotional resilience—all essential traits in today's dynamic business environment. Countries and companies that respect the need for work-life balance are reaping the rewards. For example, Scandinavian nations, with their strong emphasis on work-life balance, consistently outperform others on innovation and competitiveness indices. Similarly, companies like Microsoft Japan, which experimented with a four-day workweek, reported a 40 per cent increase in productivity while reducing electricity costs and boosting employee satisfaction. Flexible working arrangements are becoming increasingly prevalent worldwide. The rise of hybrid work models in the post-pandemic world has shown that flexibility and accountability coexist and thrive. This shift highlights that the hours worked and the autonomy, trust, and resources provided to employees drive results. Leaders must

embrace these new paradigms rather than revert to outdated notions of success linked solely to time spent at work.

**Lessons from History** Historical evidence further undermines the argument for excessively long work hours. During the Industrial Revolution, labour movements fought for the eight-hour workday, recognising that overworking led to physical exhaustion and declining efficiency. The founder of Ford Motor Company, Henry Ford's decision to implement a five-day, 40-hour workweek in the 1920s was driven not by altruism but by a realisation that well-rested employees were more productive and innovative. His approach improved productivity and set a precedent for modern labour practices. In the 21st century, technology has amplified this principle. Automation, artificial intelligence, and digital tools enable employees to accomplish in hours what once took days. Instead of relying on human endurance, organisations should not focus on integrating these tools to enhance productivity and free up employees for strategic, high-value tasks.

**Reimagining Competitiveness** India's demographic dividend presents a unique opportunity to shape the future of work. With one of the world's youngest workforces, the focus should be on enhancing skills, fostering creativity, and nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset—not on extending work hours. By investing in upskilling programs, digital tools, and robust processes, Indian businesses can boost productivity without exhausting their workforce. Additionally, introducing flexible work arrangements can help tap into employees' diverse needs while improving engagement and output.

**Addressing the Challenges** While advocating for shorter or

optimised work hours, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges. Industries with high operational demands, such as manufacturing and healthcare, may find it challenging to reduce work hours without compromising service delivery. In such cases, solutions like staggered shifts, better workforce planning, and investment in automation can help balance operational needs with employee well-being. Similarly, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with limited resources may perceive shorter work hours as a risk to productivity. However, even these organisations can benefit from adopting efficiency-focused strategies like process optimisation and targeted skill development. The Way Forward As a moderate business leader, I firmly believe that success stems from striking the right balance between ambition and sustainability.

While hard work and dedication are indispensable, they must be guided by innovative strategies, supportive cultures, and a focus on outcomes. Asking employees to clock 70 or 90 hours a week may yield short-term results, but it risks long-term consequences in the form of burnout, disengagement, and declining health. Let's redirect the conversation from "hours worked" to "value created." By fostering efficacy, accountability, trust and an ownership spirit, Indian businesses can achieve competitiveness and efficiency while respecting the well-being of their greatest asset—their workforce. After all, it's not the hours you put in but what you put into the hours that truly counts.

The Author is vice-chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, vice-chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council. Views expressed are personal

## Budget 2025: Paving the way for a sustainable, inclusive and innovative agriculture

From increased investments in rural infrastructure to empowering farmers with technology, the policy decisions can redefine the future of Indian agriculture

As we come closer to the announcement of Budget 2025, the agriculture industry, considered the backbone of the Indian economy, at this point brings us to the crossroads. Agriculture is not just an economic sector, but a way of life for the millions who do it, accounting for nearly half of the country's workforce and a major chunk of the GDP. This has offered a unique pathway of change to tackle the pressing challenges as well as unlock the tremendous scope of Indian agriculture ecosystem in the budget.

**A Call for Increased Investments in Agriculture** The agricultural sector in India calls for a drastic increase in its budgetary allocation, with a heavy focus on rural infrastruc-



AMIT BK KHARE

ture, irrigation systems, as well as agricultural research and development (R&D). Such investments will, therefore, not only improve productivity but also ensure that farmers particularly small holders have equitable access to modern farming techniques. Projects to complete irrigation systems

under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) and investment in micro-irrigation systems—such as drip and sprinkler technologies—should be the first priorities.

**Empowering Farmers through Technology** Farmers are increasingly looking for smart and precision farming tools and technologies, ranging from drones to IoT, artificial intelligence, etc, promising competitive thinking towards Indian agriculture. Budget 2025 should encourage adoption of these technologies by providing subsidies, training and affordable digital tools. By equipping farmers with technological innovations, not only will resources be utilised efficiently, but it will also enable higher yields and prof-

its. **Improving Crop Insurance and Financial Security**

Agriculture is still highly vulnerable to climate risks and market volatility. To protect farmers, there is an urgent need to expand the coverage of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), make the premiums affordable and provide simple and instant delivery of claims. Besides, direct targeting of small and marginal farmers' access to credit for investment in agriculture as well as affordable risk coverage can remove uncertainties and promote investment in agriculture.

**Promoting Sustainable Farming Practices** Climate change is an increasingly urgent threat to agricultural productivity. It should be



able to focus on better and climate-smart farming practices. It is essential to provide incentives for organic farming, crop diversification and development of drought- and flood-resistant crop varieties to make agriculture resilient to climate challenges. **Encouraging Value Addition and Agro-Processing**

India has tremendous potential in agro-processing and value addition. Budgetary support for food processing units, supply chain modernisation, and cold storage facilities will help reduce post-harvest losses and increase farmers' incomes. Tax incentives for startups in this sector can attract private investment and create rural employment opportunities.

**Focus on Women Farmers and Youth in Agriculture** Key to the future of Indian agriculture, therefore, are the women farmers and rural youth. Customised programmes for financial support, even during the plantation phase, skill development, and entrepreneurial support for women would instil them as agricultural leaders. Likewise,

youth participation can be restructured and enhanced through innovation grants, incubation centers and awareness campaigns to revitalise this sector.

**Pursuance of Export Booster and Market Access** In this context, India is immensely capable and has the potential to set itself up as a global agri-exporter. The government should create dedicated export portals, cut regulation, and develop a policy that supports traders dealing in high-demand crops. Strengthening integration of rural connectivity & e-NAM (National Agricultural Market) platforms will provide the farmers with access to markets and fair pricing. **The Role of Allied Sectors** Allied sectors such as dairy,

fisheries, poultry, etc., have enormous potential to help bolster rural incomes and employment. Feed, vaccines, and infrastructure budgetary allowances for these sectors will also promote diversification and give farmers added revenue streams.

**Towards a Prosperous Agricultural Ecosystem** Budget 2025 can afford to be a gamechanger for India's agricultural ecosystem—when we bring sustainability, inclusivity and innovation in farming at the core of agriculture policy. Which, if met, will provide the farmers community to timely tackle the pitfalls and excel on the worldwide map. (The writer is the Founder & Managing Partner at Snail Integral Pvt. Ltd. Views expressed are personal)



## IN BRIEF



### Infosys, Siemens AG to drive digital learning

Services company Infosys on Wednesday announced the expansion of its collaboration with technology major Siemens AG to accelerate its digital learning initiatives with generative AI. The collaboration aims to provide over 250,000 Siemens' professionals globally with upskilling opportunities, and a personalised learning and growth experience, according to a release. "As part of the collaboration, Siemens' My Learning World, a digital learning platform that is accessible from anywhere anytime, will leverage Infosys Topaz, an AI-first offering using generative AI technologies, and Infosys Wingspan, an AI-powered next-gen enterprise learning experience platform," it said. A key feature of the improved platform include an AI-powered knowledge assistant, that acts as a learning companion and provides instant answers and personalised recommendations for the user. "The platform also has an AI-assisted content authoring feature that generates tailored content in multiple languages. An AI chatbot assists learners in real-time -- navigating courses, explaining complex concepts, and leads them to additional study resources if needed," the release further said.

## Need policy changes to achieve 6.4 pc GDP growth: Moody's

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs to change its fiscal and monetary policy to achieve a 6.4 per cent GDP growth in 2025 amid a weak rupee, declining foreign investment and volatile inflation, Moody's Analytics said on Wednesday.

Moody's Analytics said it expects the 2025-26 Union Budget to support domestic demand, particularly investment while aiming for a fiscal deficit of less than 4.5 per cent of GDP for the next fiscal. In 2023-24, the fiscal deficit was 5.6 per cent of GDP, which is estimated to come down to 4.9 per cent in the current fiscal.

"India is facing a bumpy road in 2025. A weakening rupee, declining foreign investment, and volatile inflation are the areas of greatest economic risk. Changes in fiscal and monetary policy, likely in the first half of the year, is needed if India is to achieve 6.4 per cent growth," Moody's Analytics Associate Economist Aditi Raman said.

Moody's said that while India had one of the fastest-



growing economies in Asia in 2024, GDP growth waned over the first three quarters. GDP growth likely picked up in the December quarter, resulting in an overall expansion of 6.8 per cent in 2024. That compares with 7.8 per cent in 2023.

"The slowdown versus 2023 sets a cautious tone for 2025. With interest rates staying higher for long, domestic demand will moderate.

"Potential US tariffs on Indian imports will make for a challenging export environ-

ment that hampers growth. However, that won't be too influential, given India's relatively closed economy. Our baseline has GDP growth slowing to 6.4 per cent in 2025," Raman said.

Moody's Analytics said the rupee has weakened significantly since the start of the U.S. Federal Reserve's easing cycle in September.

Donald Trump's win in the US presidential race only put more pressure on the rupee as investors sold Indian assets, jumping on a greenback rally.

Despite interventions by the Reserve Bank of India, the rupee lost more ground in the opening weeks of 2025, hitting a record low of Rs 86.6 to the US dollar in mid-January.

"Although the rupee hasn't weakened as much as some other developing economies' currencies, we expect it to keep depreciating over the long term as a growing middle class increases the country's reliance on imports. The central bank will be hard-pressed to offset that pressure on the currency," Raman said.

Moody's Analytics expect inflation to cool to 4.7 per cent in 2025 from 4.8 per cent in 2024.

Food inflation should ease, but the tumbling rupee will likely add to input costs, driving up imported inflation.

Currency weakness may also delay rate cuts, Raman said.

"India faces a challenging 2025; growth is slowing, the rupee looks set to tumble against the greenback, and headline inflation is far from the midpoint of the central bank's target range," Raman said.

## Steel makers expect protectionist measures in Budget

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Domestic steel makers said they are expecting protectionist measures in the upcoming Budget to safeguard the sector from dumping.

AMNS India CEO Dilip Oommen said he expects the government to continue its focus on infrastructure development while enhancing the ease of doing business.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget for the 2025-26 financial year in Parliament on February 1, 2025.

JSW Steel Joint MD & CEO Jayant Acharya said a level-playing field and measures against unfair trade will be essential for maintaining growth momentum of the Indian steel industry.

Synergy Steels Managing Director Anubhav Kathuria said the Budget may also consider fiscal incentives and logistical support to offset high input costs, which squeezed out margins in 2024.

JSL MD Abhyuday Jindal said, "We urge the government



to raise the basic customs duty on stainless steel products to 15 per cent for all non-free trade agreement countries."

These steps will further strengthen the domestic stainless steel sector and position it as a vital driver of India's Viksit Bharat@2047 vision, he said.

Ritabrata Ghosh, Vice President & Sector Head, Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said,

"Current year 2024 was a challenging year for the domestic steel players, as the industry witnessed earnings pressure amidst steel exports from China and other FTA countries being diverted in large volumes to high-growth markets like India."



### Union Bank of India plans to raise up to Rs 20,000 cr

Union Bank of India on Wednesday said it plans to raise long-term bonds worth up to Rs 20,000 crore to finance infrastructure and affordable housing. The public sector lender also plans to issue green/sustainable bonds of up to Rs 5,000 crore, it said, announcing the outcome of the meeting of its Board of Directors. On Monday, the bank reported a 28 per cent increase in net profit to Rs 4,604 crore for the third quarter ended December 2024, helped by improved core income. The Mumbai-based bank had earned a net profit of Rs 3,590 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Its total income rose to Rs 31,375 crore in the reporting quarter from Rs 29,137 crore a year ago, Union Bank of India said in a regulatory filing.

## Gold strikes fresh all-time high of Rs 83,750

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rallied Rs 910 to hit a fresh all-time high of Rs 83,750 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday due to heavy buying from jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 82,840 per 10 grams in the previous trading session.

The bright metal had jumped Rs 4,360 or 5.5 per cent to Rs 83,750 per 10 grams from Rs 79,390 per 10 grams on January 1.

Snapping a two-day losing run, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also surged Rs 910 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 83,350 per 10 grams on Wednesday. The yellow metal finished at Rs 82,440 per 10 grams on Tuesday.

Silver climbed Rs 1,000 to Rs 93,000 per kg from Rs 92,000 per kg in the previous trading close.

In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery rose Rs 228 to hit a fresh lifetime high of Rs 80,517 per 10 grams. Also, contracts for April delivery climbed Rs 199, or 0.2 per cent, to hit a fresh peak of Rs 81,098 per 10 grams for the

first time on Wednesday.

"MCX gold surged to a record high amid a pullback in the dollar index and weak consumer data print from the US lifted the sentiment of precious metals.

"Investors sought safe-haven assets after the stock market rout, particularly in the US tech stock," Deveya Gaglani,



Research Analyst of Commodities, Axis Securities, said.

Silver futures for March delivery advanced Rs 105, or 0.12 per cent, to Rs 91,156 per kg from the previous close of Rs 91,051 per kg on Tuesday.

Globally, Comex gold futures traded flat at USD 2,794.70 per ounce.

"Gold rose on Wednesday as traders sought safety in the precious metal against President Donald's expected tariff plan," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

## Markets surge nearly 1 pc on buying in IT stocks, global cues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged nearly 1 per cent on Wednesday, buoyed by a rally in IT, capital goods and industrial stocks amid a firm trend in global markets.

However, unabated selling by foreign investors ahead of the Union Budget kept market sentiment extremely cautious, traders said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 631.55 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 76,532.96. During the day, it jumped 698.32 points or 0.92 per cent to 76,599.73.

As many as 2,978 stocks advanced while 1,011 declined and 93 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The NSE Nifty soared 205.85 points or 0.90 per cent to 23,163.10.

"The Indian market has demonstrated resilience in anticipation of the upcoming Union Budget, with expectations of measures, aimed at stimulating consumption and job creation. Investors are now focusing on the upcoming FOMC meeting, with general expectations that the Fed will maintain its current hawkish stance," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30-share blue-



chip pack, Zomato jumped nearly 7 per cent. Tata Motors, Infosys, UltraTech Cement, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj Finance were the other major gainers.

In contrast, ITC Hotels, Bharti Airtel, Maruti, Asian Paints and ITC were among the laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge surged 3.28 per cent and the midcap index rallied 2.54 per cent.

"Most key sectors contributed to the recovery. However, the highlight of the session was the strong rebound in broader indices. Looking ahead, market participants will react to the US Fed meeting outcome in early Thursday trades, followed by the focus shifting to the January derivatives expiry," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Among BSE sectoral indices, realty jumped 3.10 per cent,

industrials (2.94 per cent), capital goods (2.70 per cent), IT (2.65 per cent), BSE Focused IT (2.63 per cent), commodities (2.30 per cent) and healthcare (2.20 per cent).

FMCG emerged as the only laggard.

In Asian markets, Seoul and Tokyo settled in the positive territory. Markets in Shanghai and Hong Kong were closed due to holidays.

European markets were trading mostly in the green. US markets ended higher on Tuesday.

"India VIX has seen a surge from 13 to 19 levels in the last five weeks and rising volatility created swings with negative bias in the market.

"FIIs Long Short Ratio is now at around 20 per cent, which is near the lower part of the range, but selling from FIIs in the cash market is the real cause of concern to get the market stability.

## Digital payments rise 11.1 pc at Sept-end 2024: RBI data

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Digital payments across the country registered an 11.11 per cent year-on-year rise as on September 2024, according to RBI's index that measures the adoption of online transactions.

RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) for September 2024 stands at 465.33 as against 445.5 for March 2024, the Reserve Bank said in a statement on Wednesday. The increase in RBI-DPI index was driven by growth in payment infrastructure and payment performance across the country over the period, it said.

The central bank had announced the construction of a composite RBI-DPI in March 2018 as a base to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country. The index comprises five broad parameters that enable the measurement of the deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different periods.

These parameters are Payment Enablers (weightage 25 per cent); Payment Infrastructure - Demand-side factors (10 per cent); Payment Infrastructure - Supply-side factors (15 per cent); Payment Performance (45 per cent); and Consumer Centricity (5 per cent).



### Sebi mulls modifying investor charter for stock brokers

Markets regulator Sebi on Wednesday proposed reviewing the investor charter for stock brokers in a bid to boost financial consumer protection alongside enhanced financial inclusion and financial literacy. The proposal is also in view of the recent developments in the securities market including introduction of Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) platform and SCORES 2.0 - a web based centralized grievance redressal system of Sebi. In its consultation paper, Sebi has proposed to modify the investor charter for stock brokers and sought comments on the proposal till February 17. The proposed modified charter would include vision, mission, services provided to investors by brokers, various activities of brokers with timelines, DOs and DON'Ts for investors, grievance redressal mechanism and handling of investor's claims in case of default of a trading member along with the format for investor complaints data to be displayed by brokers on their respective websites and trend of annual disposal of complaints.

## KRBL unveils new packaging for 'India Gate' basmati rice

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

KRBL Ltd on Wednesday unveiled new packaging for its flagship 'India Gate' basmati rice brand after 25 years, with an aim to capture 60 per cent market share over the next 3-5 years.

The company currently holds a 42 per cent market share in the branded basmati rice segment.

"We have 42 per cent market share at present and aim to reach 60 per cent in the next 3-5 years," KRBL Business Head Ayush Gupta told reporters here.

The new packaging features an updated logo, struc-

### Targets 60 pc market share



tured information about basmati rice grain length, usage guidelines for different food preparations, and a QR code.

Gupta said the redesigned packaging will help consumers make informed decisions while purchasing branded

packaged products.

He noted that only two brands - India Gate and Daawat (LT Foods) - operate at the national level, with a combined market share of 60 per cent in India's branded basmati rice segment.

To achieve its market share target, the company plans to challenge regional brands and convert consumers from loose to packaged rice while expanding the category, Gupta added.

The company also offers black and brown rice under its health category. However, this remains a niche segment that requires time for market expansion

## Aditya Birla Housing Finance raises Rs 830 crore fund

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited (ABHFL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Aditya Birla Capital, on Wednesday said it has raised Rs 830 crore in funding through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) from the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The funds raised through IFC's investment will be utilised to address critical gaps by providing housing loans to low-income and middle-income groups, with a particular focus on encouraging homeownership among women, the company said in a statement.

A portion will also be allocated to supporting MSMEs (micro, small & medium enterprises), especially women-led enterprises, to drive growth and economic progress, it added.

This investment aims to enhance financial inclusion, and uplift underserved communities in the affordable housing and MSME sectors, the company said.

"This collaboration with IFC

marks a key milestone in advancing financial inclusion and equitable growth," said Pankaj Gadgil, MD & CEO of Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited.

Wendy Werner, Country Head, India and Maldives, IFC, said, a dynamic housing sector and improved financial access for MSMEs, are essential for



India's sustainable development.

"Through our partnership with Aditya Birla Housing Finance, we aim to expand affordable housing finance and enable more women to become business owners," Werner said. ABHFL is registered with the National Housing Board (NHB) as a non-deposit-accepting housing finance company and commenced operations in October 2014.

## Australian team to explore opportunities in wool sector

PNS ■ THANE

An Australian delegation of 40 farmers and entrepreneurs is currently visiting India to explore research developments and assess opportunities in the wool production sector.

The delegation visited the Wool Research Centre in Thane on Tuesday to gain insights into its research and operations, an official release by the centre said on Wednesday.

The Wool Research Centre, established in 1980 at Sandoz

Bagh, Thane, operates under the Union Ministry of Textiles. It is the only research facility in India dedicated to wool and its processing.

The centre conducts extensive research on wool and fabrics used by the Indian Army, athletes, and the medical field, ensuring they meet international standards.

Numerous researchers work at this institute, which has been a government-approved hub for wool research in India for over four decades. Wool Research Centre founder Ravikant



Kapoor said. During the visit, Harish Chatterjee, Director General

of the Wool Research Association, highlighted the significance of the delega-

tion's tour. "A team of 40 farmers and entrepreneurs from

Australia's wool production sector visited the Wool Research Centre to explore research developments and assess opportunities for industry growth in India," he said.

A meeting of the Australian delegation and representatives from the Australian and Indian governments is also scheduled in the national capital. The discussions will focus on strengthening trade ties and fostering growth in the wool industry between the two nations, Chatterjee added.



# what's brewing?

## Zeenat Aman reveals why she is 'prone to being misunderstood'

Veteran Bollywood star Zeenat Aman revealed that as an introvert she thinks she is prone to being "misunderstood." Zeenat took to Instagram, where she shared an old photograph of herself and wrote: "As an introvert I think I'm



prone to being misunderstood. Or if that sounds too self-indulgent and dramatic, you can say that introversion invites miscommunication." The veteran actress said that she is "protective about her life". "I don't like to overshare, I reserve my comments on other people's lives to my own head and I find large social dos draining. Just ask Cara and Zahaan who deal with my invites. The stack of regrets is brushing the ceiling

while the acceptances can fit in my purse," she added. "On a good day my quietude is read as enigmatic, composed, graceful. Oh, but on a bad day... I can be seen as aloof, brusque, uptight. With this predicament I find myself walking a tightrope. Of course, I enjoy the odd social engagement but I really can't fake candour and ribaldry." She concluded by saying: "Then again I suppose no introvert has figured out the perfect social scenario. I guess I may as well stay in with Lily, a cup of tea and my peace of mind. You extroverts go have fun."

The actress on January 21 had talked about her facing a near-death experience as she almost choked on her BP medicine. "It the risk of sounding like an old lady suffocating on her tablets, allow me to share with you what happened last night. It was the end of a long day of shoot at a studio in Andheri East. I had returned home to an ecstatic Lily and, after giving her the attention she is entitled to, had swiftly gone through my night rituals."

"My very last task before I could surrender to sleep was to take my blood pressure medication." She added: "I popped the pill into my mouth, took a sip of water, and then felt my breath catch. There it was, this little pill lodged in my throat. Too far down to regurgitate and too far up to swallow. I could still breathe, but it was restricted. I took another drink of water, and then another and another, until the glass was empty but the pill remained stuck."

Zeenat Aman further added how her son, Zahaan Khan came to her rescue. "There was nobody at home with me other than the dog and the five cats, and panic began to set in. The doctor's number was busy, and so I made frantic calls to @zanuski, who abandoned his plans to rush over. As I waited for him, the discomfort in my gullet grew. I could think of nothing but that deviant pharmaceutical robbing me of easy breath." Zeenat revealed that there's no dramatic ending to this story. She concluded, "Sometimes it's important to tackle an issue head-on. To confront, challenge, change. But sometimes a situation requires those other softer acts of patience, restraint and equanimity."

## Nawazuddin Siddiqui shoots in New Delhi for Raat Akeli Hai 2

Acclaimed actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui is currently in the National Capital as he is busy shooting for the second installment of the film "Raat Akeli Hai".

According to an independent industry source, "Nawazuddin Siddiqui is shooting for his next, Raat Akeli Hai 2, in Delhi."

"He was also seen celebrating Republic Day on the film's sets. The actor will reprise his role as the resolute Inspector Jatil Yadav. The sequel is expected to follow Jatil Yadav as he takes on another intense, high-profile case," he added.

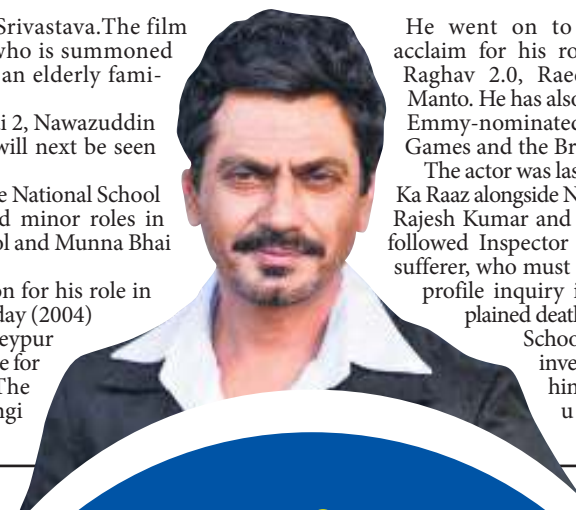
"Raat Akeli Hai" is a Hindi-language thriller drama film directed by Honey Trehan. It released in 2020 and stars Nawazuddin, Radhika Apte, Shweta Tripathi, Tigamshu Dhulia, Shivani Raghuvanshi, Nishant Dahiya, Gyanendra Tripathi, Ila Arun, Swanand Kirkire, Nitesh

Kumar Tiwari and Aditya Srivastava. The film follows a small-town cop who is summoned to investigate the death of an elderly family member.

Apart from Raat Akeli Hai 2, Nawazuddin has an exciting lineup. He will next be seen in Maddock Films' Thama.

After studying acting at the National School of Drama, Nawazuddin had minor roles in films such as Sarfarosh, Shool and Munna Bhai M.B.B.S.

He first gained recognition for his role in Anurag Kashyap's Black Friday (2004) and the 2012 Gangs of Wasseypur duology. Further success came for his supporting roles in The Lunchbox, Kick and Bajrangi Bhaijaan.



He went on to gain critical acclaim for his roles in Raman Raghav 2.0, Raees, Mom and Manto. He has also starred in two Emmy-nominated series, Sacred Games and the British McMafia.

The actor was last seen in Rautu Ka Raaz alongside Narayani Shastri, Rajesh Kumar and Atul Tiwari. It followed Inspector Negi, a PTSD sufferer, who must solve the high-profile inquiry into the unexplained death of a Sevadham School warden. This investigation leads him to the some unsettling truths.



## Avinash Tiwary exceeds expectations in The Mehta Boys

Avinash Tiwary and Boman Irani's star-studded "The Mehta Boys" trailer is out, and it is set to take the audiences on a rollercoaster of an emotional ride about a father-son relationship. Avinash Tiwary excels in his role as a son and does not fail to hit the ball out of the park with his excellent emotional depth as an actor. Meanwhile, Boman Irani fulfills his role of a father like you'd expect the legendary actor to do. The 2-minute 26-second trailer shows a tumultuous relationship between a father and son, who are forced to stay together for 48 hours. During the time span, the two are compelled to face the differences in their thoughts, and the facet that restricts them from deepening their bond. Apart from Avinash Tiwary and Boman Irani, "The Mehta Boys" also stars Shreya Choudhary in the lead, who plays the role of Avinash's on-screen partner and lends solid support in adding depth to the film's plot. On the other hand, Avinash Tiwary impresses in another unique role. From the awkwardness of opening up to his father to making difficult emotional confrontations, expressing uneasiness, facing misunderstandings, and highlighting the generation gap, Avinash Tiwary commands attention in each frame.

"The Mehta Boys" marks the directorial debut of Boman Irani. Produced by Boman Irani, Danesh Irani, Vikesh Bhutani, and Shujaat Saudagar, "The Mehta Boys" is written by Academy Award winner Alex Dinelaris Jr., writer of "Birdman" and "The Revenant". After making waves on international platforms including IFFSA Toronto and the 15th Chicago South Asian Film Festival, the Boman Irani directorial is all set to land on Amazon Prime Video on February 7.

## Pulkit Samrat's intense workout session channelise his undying love for fitness and health

Pulkit Samrat never fails to impress with his dedication to fitness, and his latest workout session proves his relentless commitment. The actor, known for his chiseled physique and high-energy screen presence, recently shared glimpses of his intense training routine, leaving fans in awe.

From heavy weightlifting to core-strengthening exercises, Pulkit's workout reflects his disciplined approach to fitness, inspiring countless youngsters to hit the gym with the same passion. The actor shared the video on social media with a caption which says, "Tried regular push-ups. They got jealous. So I upgraded to these. Pretty sure Gravity is filing a complaint. #PushupFlex #PhysicsWho?"

Beyond his acting prowess, Pulkit has established himself as a true fitness inspiration, setting new benchmarks for a healthy and active lifestyle. His well-maintained physique and rigorous training sessions make him one of the most desirable stars in the industry. Whether flaunting his sculpted abs or pushing his limits in the gym, Pulkit's fitness journey is a testament to his dedication and hard work, proving why he continues to be the heartthrob of Indian cinema.



## MEDHA SHANKR WRAPS THE SHOOT OF HER NEXT UNTITLED OPPOSITE SUNNY KAUSHAL

After her impressive debut in 12th Fail, Medha Shankr has completed shooting for her next film, where she stars opposite Sunny Kaushal for the first time. This untitled project, produced by Laxman Utekar, is a quirky comedy that brings a fresh pairing to the screen.

The film was shot in Bikaner over nearly two months, and Medha wrapped up her portions early this week. This marks a new phase in her career, as she takes on an urban role, different from her previous performance.

With a unique story and an exciting cast, the film is one to look forward to. Medha's growing journey in the industry continues, and this project adds to the anticipation around her future work.



## STANDALONE



At a landmark event, acclaimed actor and education advocate Padma Shri. Paresh Rawal unveiled Chetana Education's pioneering personalised OTT platform for schools, designed to transform the way schools and students engage with learning. This innovative digital platform promises to personalize the educational experience, making it more accessible, engaging, and effective for learners across India.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



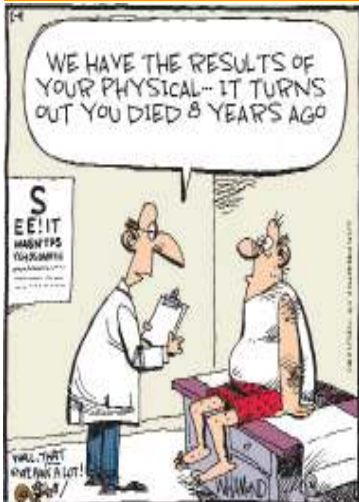
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



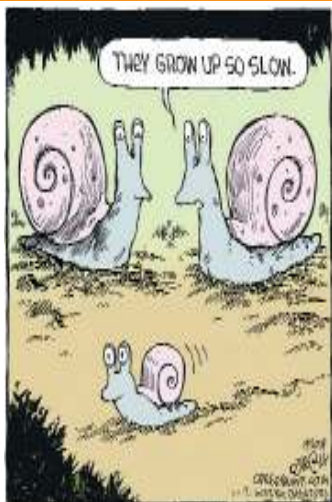
### GARFIELD



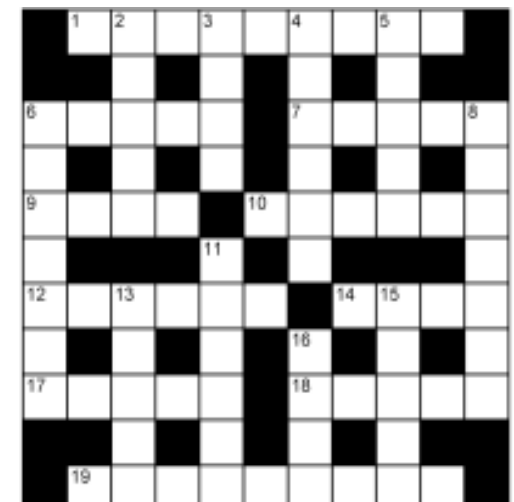
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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		3			2	1	4	5
			8					6
3				8				5
	2							9
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Yesterday's solution

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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### ACROSS

- Large printed words on a newspaper's front page
- One of the five senses
- Brush hard to clean
- Catch fish with these
- Opposite of youngest
- A cricket referee
- Clean with water
- The sound a horse makes
- A smell
- These are carried in rain

### DOWN

- The fourth even number
- A fruit on a palm tree
- A very rude remark
- Weird or uncanny
- What you get if you stay out in the sun too long
- Someone who sells meat
- A shooter of arrows
- A piece of glass that can make a rainbow
- A greeting in Hawaii
- This covers a sheep





## HERO? NAH!

# Being the hair-oes of kindness and hope



In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, hairstylist and philanthropist Shiva Kumar Yadav, founder of Hyderabad Hair Donation for Cancer Patients, shared his inspiring journey of turning discarded hair into a source of hope for cancer patients. Since 2020, his initiative has provided over a thousand wigs-free of cost-to economically challenged cancer patients across India

TEJAL SINHA  
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

In a small Hyderabad salon, hairstylist Shiva Kumar Yadav watched strands of hair being swept away after every haircut. But unlike most, he saw potential where others saw waste. Why let this hair go unused when it could bring hope to someone in need? he thought. This idea led to the creation of Hyderabad Hair Donation for Cancer Patients in 2020, a heartfelt initiative that has since provided over a thousand wigs - free of cost - to economically challenged cancer patients across India. As a hairstylist, Shiva had always admired the transformative power of a good haircut. But he also recognized that hair loss for cancer patients wasn't a choice - it was a painful side effect of their treatment. "Every day, I saw long strands



of hair being cut and discarded," Shiva recalls. "I wondered, Why not put it to good use? That's when I decided to start collecting hair and donating it for wig-making." Initially, he sent the donated hair to an organization in Mumbai that specialized in making wigs for cancer patients. But soon, he had a new realization: Why not create a system in Hyderabad itself? Just as Shiva's initiative was gaining traction, the COVID-19 pandemic struck, and the Mumbai-based organization he relied on shut down operations. He was left with a stockpile of donated hair but no way to turn it into wigs. Determined to keep going, Shiva began searching for a local wig-maker in Hyderabad. "I travelled across the city, meeting different people, but no one was willing to do it for free," he says. Finally, he met Pradeep Kumar, a wig-maker who offered to help - but with a condition. "He told me, 'Nothing comes for free. If you can cover the making charges, I'll help you make the wigs,'" Shiva remembers. With no other option, he started funding the wig-making process himself, ensuring that every wig reached a patient in need. Unlike many initiatives

that stop at hair collection, Hyderabad Hair Donation for Cancer Patients manages the entire process - from collecting hair to making wigs and personally delivering them to cancer patients. Each wig costs about Rs 4,000 to make and requires seven ponytails of at least 12 inches in length. Even after processing, only 600 grams of usable hair remain from every kilogram collected. "We don't just gather hair and send it somewhere. We make sure it's transformed into wigs and given to the people who truly need them," Shiva emphasizes. "It's not just about cutting hair - it's about making a difference." Since its inception, the initiative has donated over a thousand wigs to cancer patients across India. Shiva has received support from various donors, including his mother, wife, and anti-trafficking activist Sunitha Krishnan, who were among the first to contribute their hair. As World Cancer Day (February 4) approaches, Shiva's work stands as a beacon of resilience and kindness. "When I started, I never imagined we'd reach this point," he says. "But seeing the smiles on cancer patients' faces when they receive a wig - it makes everything worth it."

One of the most remarkable aspects of this initiative is that there is no financial exchange involved. Shiva funds the entire wig-making process himself, ensuring that both donors and recipients participate purely out of goodwill. "My donors are my heroes - or should I say hair-oes," he smiles. "A small act of kindness, like donating hair, can bring confidence to someone who is battling for their life. That's what keeps me going." With each wig, Shiva isn't just giving hair - he's giving hope, dignity, and the courage to face the world once again. Recently, actress Madhavi Latha donated her hair to Hyderabad Hair Donation for Cancer Patients, supporting the cause of providing free wigs to economically challenged cancer patients. Founder Shiva Kumar Yadav emphasizes that his initiative operates independently and is not affiliated with any organization or hospital - wigs are given directly to patients in need. Additionally, Shiva recently had the opportunity to appear on a game show alongside popular actor Ravi Teja, helping to spread awareness about the importance of hair donation and its impact on cancer patients.

- How you can contribute**
- Want to make a difference? Here's how you can support the initiative:**
- Grow your hair to at least 12 inches before donating.
  - Avoid cutting, dyeing, or layering your hair while growing it.
  - Wash and dry your hair before donation.
  - Spread awareness by allowing a short video reel to be made for social media.

Shiva personally collects hair donations and delivers wigs to patients. If you want to donate or request a wig, you can contact him at +91 96664 06586 or follow @hyderabadhairdonation99 on Instagram.

## Expert insights into hair transplantation

PNSHYDERABAD

Imagine feeling confident again, looking younger and enjoying a newfound sense of self. This vision is being realised by someone! They have mastered the art of changing lives, one hair at a time and are a leading force in the field of hair restoration. Through the combination of futuristic technology and meticulous medical knowledge, the bespoke approach guarantees a hair transplant experience that is as distinct as it is correct. Whether thinning hair, receding hairlines, or the obvious symptoms of male or female pattern baldness have started to undermine your confidence, beyond your expectations, the talented team is dedicated to delivering outcomes that look natural. For what reason are you waiting? Let's dive into this exclusive interview and rediscover the delight of having a healthy, beautiful mane while also opening up a newfound freedom to live life to the fullest.

Do you know how our interviewee starts the conversation? "Hair plays a big role in one's self-esteem and confidence," recalls Dr. Gaurang Krishna, one of the founding members of MedLinks Hair Transplant. "Baldness and hair loss can have a major psychological impact on many people, particularly those who are not yet married. For most people, hair loss can impact not only their self-esteem but also other facets of their lives, such as their social interactions, career and education. However, some people are self-assured regardless of their hair condition. Having a positive appearance is crucial to feeling good about oneself."

The main cause of hair loss, particularly as we age, is genetics. Younger individuals who are losing their hair, however, can also be coping with underlying medical conditions. Another important factor is stress. It may cause telogen effluvium, a condition in which a lot of hair goes through the shedding phase. Stress can hasten hair loss, whether it comes from interpersonal disputes or other causes. Therefore, lifestyle factors like stress and heredity both have a big impact on hair health. He has revealed the profound causes of hair loss!

"It's a good



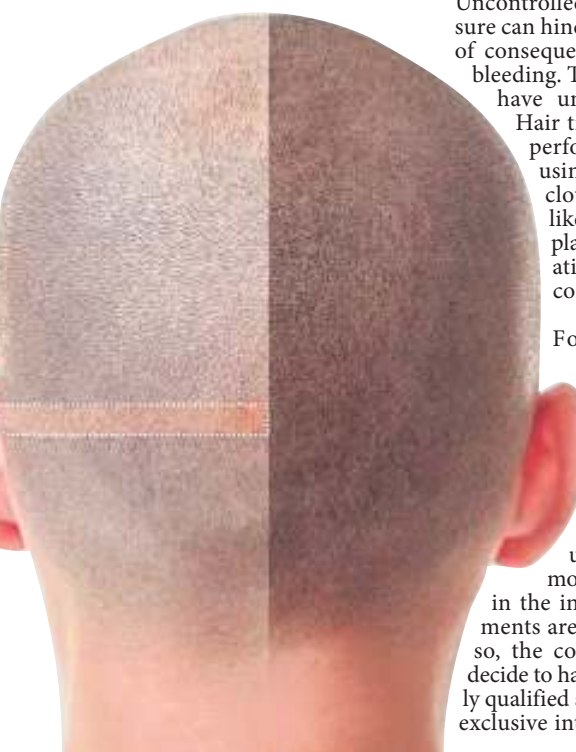
idea to consult a professional if hair loss persists for more than three months and doesn't seem to be improving," the spokesman goes on. "One easy test is the 'basin test,' which involves combing your hair while it's damp. It may indicate more serious hair loss and you should consult a specialist if you lose more than 80 to 90 hairs throughout the procedure or if the hairs that fall out are short and thin." Blood tests can also yield important information, but a comprehensive clinical evaluation is crucial. Tests may involve measuring thyroid, vitamin D, vitamin B12, hemoglobin, iron,

testosterone and dihydrotestosterone levels, which are associated with hair loss. Treating these imbalances early on can help stop additional hair loss because they can contribute to hair loss. Excellent observa-

tions! The big question now is: when is the best time to think about getting a hair transplant? The hair transplant surgeon continues, "When large bald patches have appeared, especially if little to no hair remains in the affected areas, a hair transplant is usually advised. Treatments such as medication or non-surgical techniques are preferred for modest hair thinning or the early stages of hair loss. When hair loss is obvious and has persisted over time, a transplant is typically more appropriate." Yet, "Indeed, there are a number of misconceptions about hair transplants. One widespread misunderstanding is that the process is extremely risky or that it may result in memory loss or brain damage, which is just untrue! Although there is some risk associated with any medical procedure, the likelihood of major problems, including death, is very low. A small number of deaths have been reported; however, they are anomalies given that millions of procedures are carried out safely. Making sure the transplant is carried out by a skilled surgeon who adheres to the right safety procedures is crucial."

Hair loss can also be caused by smoking, particularly in people who are already genetically prone. For most people, smoking exacerbates their condition, but for some people, such as celebrities with naturally thick hair, smoking may not have a substantial impact. Because smoking decreases blood flow to the scalp, it can harm hair follicles and hasten thinning. In the same way that smoking raises the danger of lung cancer, the likelihood of developing the disease is increased even if not all smokers will. Over to Gaurang, he says, "There are a few circumstances that can make getting a hair transplant unwise. Uncontrolled diabetes or high blood pressure can hinder recovery and raise the risk of consequences like infection or severe bleeding. The same is true for those who have untreated thyroid conditions. Hair transplants should also not be performed on patients who are using blood thinners or who have clotting-related blood illnesses like thalassemia. Before contemplating the treatment, it is imperative that these conditions be controlled."

Permanent and Real-Time Follicular Extraction and Implantation, or Perfect-I, is a novel and cutting-edge technology that makes these clinics stand apart. It uses a more accurate and effective method, guaranteeing a smoother and more natural result than many clinics that use large implanters! "With more than five years of experience in the industry, hair transplant treatments are now far less expensive. Even so, the cost can still be higher if you decide to have surgery performed by highly qualified specialists." This concludes his exclusive interview.



## The surge in women's health and wellness: A movement, not a trend

Women's health and wellness is changing in big ways, and it's about time. For years, women's specific health needs were either ignored or generalised. But today, that's shifting. There's more demand for products that actually fit women's real lives, and there's more understanding and support for their needs than ever before.

Take menstrual products, for example. A lot of women experience discomfort, rashes & irritation from traditional products—70%, in fact. This shows a serious flaw in how these products were made—without really thinking about how they affect women in the day-to-day. Now, women aren't willing to just accept discomfort as the norm. They want products that work better, fit into their busy lives, and actually feel good to use.

This demand for better products is happening alongside a bigger shift in how we talk about menstruation and women's health. Topics that used to be considered taboo are now slowly but openly being discussed. Women are sharing their experiences on social media, talking about the problems with existing products, and calling for safer, more thoughtful options. This has pushed the industry to take a hard look at what's being offered and step up with smarter, more user-friendly solutions.

Digital platforms have played a huge role in making this change happen. They give women a space to connect, share their stories, and take collective action. This has led to a wider variety of products that are better suited to different women's needs—products that understand that not all women are the same.

The rise of e-commerce and quick-commerce services has also made a big impact. It's easier than ever for women to get high-quality products across most pincodes. This is helping to level the playing field and bring better health products to more women, everywhere. Looking forward, women's health and wellness is built on three key things: quality, transparency, and community. Today, women want to know exactly what's in the products they use, where those products come from, and how they're made. Products need to work well, feel safe, and actually improve women's lives. Community matters, too. Women want to connect with each other, share advice, and support one another in making healthier choices. This isn't just a trend—it's a real shift in how women are thinking about health and wellness.

With more options available, women now have the power to choose products that work for them—whether it's rash-free period products, intimate care items like lubricants & condoms that are specifically made for them & actually feel good, or other hygiene products that suit their lifestyles. They don't have to settle anymore. They can pick what actually works for their bodies and their lives.

As the market keeps evolving, it's important for companies to really listen to women, respond to their needs, and create products that make a real difference. This change in women's health and wellness is about more than just business—it's about making women feel heard & understood.

(The author, Ketan Munth, is the co-founder of Plush.)



# Tilak Varma rises to second spot in ICC T20I Rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Talented India batter Tilak Varma climbed one spot to second, while mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy made a massive leap of 25 places to break into the top five in the latest ICC men's T20I rankings released on Wednesday.

Varma now sits just behind Travis Head in the batters' list, with the Australian maintaining a 23-point lead at the top.

The young Indian left-hander has been in sublime form, posting scores of 19 not out, 72 not out, and 18 in India's ongoing T20I series against England.

With two matches remaining in the series, Varma has a chance to overtake Head and become the youngest-ever player to top the rankings -- a record currently held by Babar Azam, who reached No. 1 at the age of 23 years and 105 days. Varma's current rating of 832 points is the fourth-highest ever achieved by an Indian batter in T20I history, behind only Suryakumar Yadav, Virat Kohli, and KL Rahul. India's Abhishek Sharma also made



significant strides, jumping 59 places to 40th, while England's Liam Livingstone (up five spots to 32nd) and Ben Duckett (up 28 places to 68th) were the biggest gainers from the visiting team.

Chakravarthy's rise Chakravarthy's magical 5/24 in India's 26-run loss in the third T20I

propelled him to top five in the T20I bowling rankings. Meanwhile, fellow spinner Axar Patel moved up five places to 11th, just outside the top 10.

England's Adil Rashid has reclaimed the No. 1 spot among T20I bowlers.

Rashid first claimed the top position at the end of 2023 and held it for much of last year until West Indies' Akeal Hosein briefly surpassed him before Christmas.

**Bumrah continues to dominate Test rankings**

India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah remains the top-ranked Test bowler following his sensational performances in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia.

His dominance across formats also earned him the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year 2024.

Among Test all-rounders, West Indies' Jomel Warrican has climbed to 24th, while Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan moved up two places to 15th in the Test batters' rankings, which continue to be led by England's Joe Root.



## We will be ready: PCB on Champions Trophy readiness

PTI ■ KARACHI

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) insists that the National Stadium here will be ready to host matches of the upcoming Champions Trophy despite mounting concerns around the venue's preparedness for the marquee event starting February 19.

Pakistan's respected leading English daily 'Dawn' on Wednesday carried a story which stated that "it seems absolutely impossible to contemplate the renovation work being completed within the deadline, but the personnel handed the responsibility are beaming with confidence."

"The board would either be hero or zero for taking up such a mammoth task," the newspaper commented.

Although PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi inspected the Rawalpindi stadium on Tuesday and assured that the Champions Trophy would be held as planned, it seems unlikely that the Board would get control of the renovated venues in Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi by the January 31 deadline.

The other upcoming major international matches at these venues include the four-match tri-series with New Zealand and South Africa from February 8 to 14 with the first two games in Lahore and then two matches, including the final, in Karachi.

"Look, the stadiums will be in a shape to host matches but the question is the PCB has promised everyone a world-class experience at these renovated venues for the Tri-series and Champions Trophy and whether they can deliver on that promise remains to be seen," a source, who is following the construction work, said.

Bilal Chohan, the man responsible for the renovation work, is reportedly complaining about not getting required equipment and clearances on time to complete the work in Karachi.

The panels to be installed on the new building were to be released from the Karachi Port only on Sunday night, with its installation scheduled for the next morning.

"These are the kind of things we are dealing with, but sometimes it's sad to see people bashing us," Chohan complained.

The PCB has spent around PKR 12 billion on renovation, constructions and installation of equipment at all three venues in Lahore and Karachi.

Tickets have already gone on sale but until the PCB announces they have possession of the new-look stadiums, concerns will remain.

On Tuesday, ICC CEO Geoff Allardice resigned with a board member of the world body indicating that his failure to give a clear picture of Pakistan's preparedness was among the reasons for his departure.



## Jerry Holness joins as Indian women's 400m relay coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Renowned Jamaican Athletics coach Jerry Lee Holness, who has mentored the likes of multiple Olympics and World Championships gold medalist sprinters Elaine Thompson and Nesta Carter, has taken charge of the Indian women's 400m team ahead of some high-profile events coming up this year.

Holness, a highly experienced and much travelled coach, joined the National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) at the Lakshmi Bai National College of Physical Education in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, on Monday.

"Holness has joined at NCoE Thiruvananthapuram. He is a highly experienced World Athletics Level 5 coach. He has coached some of the best in Jamaica including Olympic and World Championships medallists," Indian athletics chief coach Radhakrishnan Nair told PTI.

"He will take charge of the Indian women's 400m and 400m hurdles team which is currently based in Thiruvananthapuram," he added.

Holness' tenure will be up to 2026 initially and can be extended after an evaluation of his performance.

He will be coaching the likes of Hima Das, Subha Venkatesan Rupal, Kiran Pahal and Vithya Ramraj at

L N C P E Thiruvananthapuram.

The 65-year-old Jamaican replaced Stashuk Valerii who was Indian women's 400m and 400m hurdles coach till the Paris Olympics.

"Since the Indian women's 400 team did not do well in the Paris Olympics, SAI did not want to renew his contract. Valerii has left after the Paris Olympics, so SAI wanted a new coach," Nair said from Thiruvananthapuram.

"We have important assignments this year like the Asian Championships, World Relays and World Championships, so Holness coming in will be a big boost," he added.

Holness joining the Indian athletics set-up came just days after the hiring of Russian legend Sergey Makarov Aleksandrovich as javelin coach. It is, however, learnt that double Olympic medallist javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra will primarily train with his own coach Jan Zelezny, a three-time Olympic gold medalist and world record holder in javelin throw.

Holness was part of the coaching staff of his country during the Paris Olympics. As track and field head coach at the famous Manchester High School at Mandeville in Jamaica, Holness has guided top athletes like Elaine Thompson, Nesta Carter, Sherone Simpson and Natoya Goule.

## Presence of Shreyas Iyer will make it easier, says Suryansh Shedge

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Young Mumbai all-rounder Suryansh Shedge, who was picked by Punjab Kings in the IPL mega auction, is eager to carry forward his chemistry with skipper Shreyas Iyer as he gears up for his maiden IPL season.

The 22-year-old has already shown his finishing prowess in domestic cricket, playing a crucial role in Mumbai's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy triumph under Iyer's captaincy.

In the final, he smashed an unbeaten 36 off just 15 balls and also contributed with the ball, taking 1/32, earning the Player of the Match award in their five-wicket win over Madhya Pradesh.

Shedge, who made his senior Mumbai debut this season, believes Iyer's presence will help him settle in quickly at Punjab Kings.

"If you track the record of Punjab Kings over the past



few years, they always invest in new talent, and they scout the domestic circuit closely," he stated in a release.

"I am really excited to be a part of the franchise. Shreyas bhैया being the Captain makes it easier because he is a familiar face."

He is particularly excited about working under legendary Australian cricketer Ricky Ponting. "Ricky Ponting is a legend. He

is beyond words. After retirement, he gave back to cricket and has been constantly involved with the community.

"He has been a part of IPL for many years - so he knows ins and outs. Aussies are known for their fearless attitude and that's what he personifies. We are hopeful that under his guidance, we will lift the trophy this year,"

Shedge will also reunite with his Mumbai teammate Musheer Khan at Punjab Kings as both were picked by their base price of Rs 30 lakh. On the second day of the IPL mega auction, the all-rounder was on a bus to the team hotel after a training session when he began streaming the auctions on his phone.

## KL Rahul perfects cuts and drives in Karnataka nets

PTI ■ BENGALURU

KL Rahul's net session is all about meticulousness. Right from picking his gears out of a natty packed kitbag to facing bowlers, his every movement is measured.

There was no exception at the KSCA (B) grounds here on Wednesday as he readied himself for Karnataka's crucial Ranji Trophy match against Haryana.

During the 40-minute nets, Rahul never looked hurried against throw-downs, pace or spin, and even found time to sign some autographs and pose for a couple of selfies with the waiting fans.

But the zero theatrics masked the enormity the next month holds in his career that has entered its second decade.

The cycle starts from Wednesday at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, as

hundreds and nine fifties, his best figures across the batting positions.

Now, batting at that position in India and in Dubai will require him to negate spinners and Cricket 21 metrics show favourable stats.

Rahul averages 47.6 at a strike-rate of 89 against leg-arm spinners (381 runs in 31 innings), while he makes



runs at 53.9 against off-spinners at an average of 47.6 - 377 runs from 35 innings.

In the Champions Trophy, Rahul will come up against a plethora of quality left-arm spinners from Bangladesh and New Zealand such as Mitchell Santner.

The 32-year-old has excellent figures against the orthodox variety - 342

from 29 innings at an average of 68.4 and made runs at a strike-rate of 95.

It also means that Rahul will have to play late, opposite to what he had done in Australia while standing a bit outside the crease to negate the swing.

The Karnataka man will have to bring out his cuts and drives more often during those upcoming assignments.

Coming from the city of GR Viswanath and Rahul Dravid, it's not quite surprising then that Rahul has immense success with square cuts against spin - 12.1 per cent of his 2851 runs have come through that shot.

The drives - cover and off - have accounted for 10.7 per cent runs each while runs through the on-drive is a close fourth on the list with 10.2 per cent.

It was then of little wonder

that Rahul asked the Karnataka throw down specialist and spinner Hardik Raj to keep the line outside the off-stump, as he played a few withering cuts and flowing drives off them.

However, if the ongoing T20Is can be taken as a portent, the England bowlers will not shy away from using a few snorters against him.

But pull is his most productive shot against pace as 15.9 per cent of his runs have come through it while getting out seven times, and he strikes at 164 while playing that particular shot.

So, there was some focus on it too during the nets.

Now, the Ranji Trophy match here will give Rahul a chance to further perfect those shots against a relatively less intense opponent and atmosphere before travelling into a tough summer.

## Virat Kohli boost for Ranji Trophy as Delhi aim to end on high

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli's magnetic presence has not only lifted the profile of Ranji Trophy but also the Delhi team's sagging spirits as it eyes a winning end to an otherwise listless campaign in the final group D game against Railways starting here on Thursday.

Interestingly, Railways (17 points from six games) have more than a fair shot at making the knock-out stages if they beat Delhi with bonus points and take their tally to 24.

Delhi (14 from six games) only have mathematical impossibility to rely upon but the 10,000 odd crowd expected to watch isn't bothered about the results.

Tamil Nadu (25 points from six games), Chandigarh (19 from six games) and Saurashtra (18 from six games) are in a better position compared to these

two teams in terms of probability of qualification.

If Delhi bowl first, the turnout is not going to exceed 3000 but in case Delhi is batting first, the crowd would prefer a Sanat Sangwan or Arpit Rana to get out quickly and make way for Kohli.

But what would happen if the 'King' gets out early? For starters, Ranji Trophy will go back to being 'Ranji Trophy' with four-five journalists and 200 odd spectators taking interest in the proceedings.

Such has been the interest level in Kohli's comeback that the Feroz Shah Kotla ground will have broadcasters joining the festivities gearing up for the live stream of the match, which is the star batter's first Ranji outing in 12 years and three months.

"I have played against Virat bhaiyya in the IPL. It is an honour that in back to back matches I have now led Rishabh and Virat bhaiyya."



Delhi skipper Ayush Badoni told reporters on the eve of the game. It is expected that Kohli will

come in place of left-hander Jonty Sidhu, whose form has tapered off in past few games as he didn't get enough

chances. The skipper would be vacating his own batting slot so that Kohli can bat at his

usual position. "He will bat at No. 4. He has told us to be positive and express ourselves

confidently," Badoni said. Kohli wouldn't mind getting a big one before the Champions Trophy which actually solves his purpose of playing this particular game.

While the BCCI has made it mandatory for all players to turn up in Ranji Trophy, the result of this particular game will have no bearing on whether Kohli will be picked in the Indian team after the Champions Trophy.

The Kotla track has a greenish tinge to it and Badoni indicated that they will play an extra pacer looking at the conditions.

Money Grewal looks set for a comeback in the playing XI as he provides extra pace. One of the two left-arm spinners among Sumit Mathur and Harsh Tyagi will be cooling his heels.

The Railways team has always been a banana peel for Delhi with their battle-hardened domestic pros always bringing their A game

to the fore. Karn Sharma had made his Test debut at Adelaide under Kohli 11 years back, incidentally the same game where the legend led India in red ball cricket for the first time.

There is keeper-batter Upendra Yadav, who till a year back was in India A scheme of things and is considered more than a decent batter.

There is B Vivek Singh, an attacking left-handed opener and handy medium pace bowler.

In the pace department, Himanshu Sangwan is his strike bowler and if he can get that outside edge of Kohli's bat, it will be one for posterity.

Even the Railways team seemed to be smitten by Kohli as some of their players were seen taking selfies on the first day of training with the megastar of Indian cricket.



# TOO SLOW NARRATION, BUT THE LAST FEW EPISODES ARE GOOD

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**H**indi web series 'Panchayat' is a huge success on Amazon Prime Video. So, they came with season 2 and 3. The makers officially remade this web series in Telugu as 'Sivarapalli' and it was directed by Bhaskar Maurya. Shanukha Prashanth wrote the story for the Telugu version. This web series consists of eight episodes and Rag Mayur, Murali Dhar Goud, Rupa Lakshmi are playing the major roles in it.

## Story:

Shyam (Rag Mayur) is an Engineering graduate who applies for a government job and is posted as Sivarapalli Gram Panchayat Raj secretary. After reaching the village, he is received by sarpanch Sudhakar (Muralidhar Goud) and deputy sarpanch Mallikarjun (Uday Gurrula). Sarpanch misplaces the key to the panchayat office and they break the lock. After seeing the panchayat office, Shyam wants to leave the job and go to the USA. To settle in that village, Shyam has to get accustomed to the local villagers, politics and to deal with them in a proper way. He is a government official, but the villagers do not take him seriously and make him do their personal work. As per a Government Order, a few slogans are written on the village walls that women should be edu-



cated. But some villagers object to those slogans. How Shyam explains to the villagers that women also need education and they should not be confined to homes, how he overcomes the hurdles he is facing and what happens to his CAT exam? Are part of the story. Who hoists the flag, actual arpanch Susheela (Rupa Lakshmi) or her husband Sudhakar? Big drama occurs on the Republic Day and how it ends is the crux of this web series.

## Analysis:

The Hindi web series 'Panchayat' is a super success and now they remake it into Telugu as 'Sivaripalli'. This is supposed to be a comedy-drama with an internal message. Director Bhaskar Maurya roped in some good actors like

Rag Mayur, Muralidhar Goud and Rupa Lakshmi for the major roles, but the only problem with this web series is that the narrative is too slow.

The village, the people and every scene looks realistic and parts of the web series can really be enjoyed, but the director dragged a few scenes unnecessarily. When you watch the whole eight episodes, you feel that you are watching it for the entire day. Starting with the key which the sarpanch misplaces and the search is really tedious to watch in the first episode. There are a few like this in the first few episodes. The web series becomes interesting when the original sarpanch Sudha played by Rupa Lakshmi wants to show her real power.

There is also a message in this web



series when they insist that women should be educated in the villages and that they should send their girl child to schools. How it is conveyed to the villagers has come out nicely. The villagers threaten not to vote for the present sarpanch, if she insists that the girl child should be sent to school, but the sarpanch is reluctant, sticks to the rule and is even ready to lose the sarpanch post. The last few episodes are actually very interesting. The good thing about this web series is that the cinematography showed the village in a beautiful and realistic way. Actually, cinematography blends very well with the narration of the story. Shanmukh Prashanth's dialogues are good and the music is also carried well. Emotional quotient is also missing in the web series.

When it comes to the performance, every artist played his part well. Rag Mayur, who is already proven as an actor with his earlier work, did a fantastic job as the secretary. He is once again at his best and the highlight of the web series. In recent times, his work is being noticed from his films and this web series. Muralidhar Goud is perfect as sarpanch's husband and he steals the show. He is almost there in every Telugu film. He played a major role in 'Sivarapalli' web series and did his job with flying colours. Rupa Lakshmi became popular with the film 'Balagam' and got a major role in this web series. She is a natural actress and carried the role throughout, especially in the final episode, her performance is on the high. Uday Gurrula and Anji

Valguman also played their part well. In this web series, they got very good actors and everyone took their roles seriously and did it very well. Pavani Karanam of 'Pushpa 2' fame appears in the end. She leads to the second season.

Finally, 'Sivarapalli' is a good web series with a thought-provoking message in it. Though there are a few dragged scenes and episodes in the beginning, you need to have patience to watch the series. But the last few episodes, especially the flag hoisting scene come out well. This web series is supposed to be a comedy-drama with a message and when compared to the original Hindi web series, the Telugu director and writer focus more on their narration and writing.

**Web series:** Sivarapalli

**Cast:** Rag Mayur, Muralidhar Goud, Rupa Lakshmi, Uday Gurrula, Anji Valguman, Pavani Karanam and others

**Writer:** Shanmukha Prashanth

**Producer:** Arunabh Kumar

**Director:** Bhaskar Maurya

**OTT platform:** Amazon Prime Video

**Rating:** 2.5/5

## Mohan Babu and his son meet Gujarat CM



**M**ohan Babu and Vishnu Manchu are promoting their film 'Kannappa' all over India. The other day, Vishnu was in Kerala and now, he, along with his father and senior actor Mohan Babu are in Gujarat and met Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel. As part of the promotional tour, the Kannappa team is visiting various locations across the country. Actors Sarath Kumar, Mukesh Rishi and executive producer Vinay Maheshwari also met the CM along with Vishnu and his father.

The team expressed their sincere gratitude for the warm hospitality extended by the Chief Minister and conveyed their best wishes for his good health and continued success. As a gesture of goodwill and prosperity, Vishnu Manchu presented a beautiful painting by renowned Telugu artist Ramesh Gorjala to the Chief Minister.

They are very confident about their film. So, they are promoting it like never before. Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, the film is at present in post-production and promotional activities. It is scheduled for release on April 25, marking one of the major summer attractions in Indian cinema.

## 'Shake the records of Thandel in Vizag, otherwise I will lose respect at home'

**N**aga Chaitanya Akkineni and Sai Pallavi are playing the lead in their upcoming film 'Thandel'. It is releasing on February 7 and it is directed by Chandoo Mondeti. The trailer of this film has been released at Visakhapatnam with a lot of fanfare. Top producer Allu Aravind is presenting it, while Bunny Vasu is the producer. On this occasion, Allu Aravind stated that he saw the film and he is speaking from his heart that the movie will be a big blockbuster.

Allu Aravind praises Naga Chaitanya and he says his performance is one of his best. He also remarked that Chaitanya has elevated the film with his acting skills and each scene came out very well. He also praised director Chandoo Mondeti. The producer gave an explanation about Sai Pallavi's absence, saying she couldn't come due to a health issue.

Naga Chaitanya said that he is indebted to Allu Aravind for life as for a year-and-a-half, Aravind guided them in making the film 'Thandel' (leader). He is thankful to Visakhapatnam, as he got inspiration to play 'Thandel' Raju character by visiting Jalaripeta. "I used to get the talk of any film first from Vizag. If it is hit here, it is going to be successful everywhere. So, Vizag people's verdict is very important to me," said Naga Chaitanya. "I love a Vizag girl and married her and now she is the ruling party at my home. I request all Vizag people, please shake the collections of 'Thandel' in Vizag. Otherwise, I will lose my respect at home," said Naga Chaitanya, in a lighter vein.



## VIJAY ANTONY'S 25TH FILM TITLED PARASHAKTHI

**P**opular Tamil actor Vijay Antony is also a known actor in Telugu as his previous films like 'Bicchagadu' became a sensational hit here. From then onwards, all of his films were released in Telugu, simultaneously. His last two films are action based and now the actor is coming up with another one and they unveiled the title as 'Parashakthi'.

Vijay Antony is not just an actor, he is an all-rounder with so many hats like producer, editor, music director and so on. He provided music for the film 'Madha Gaja Raja' which was released recently during Sankranti, and was a surprise hit. The film delayed its release for nearly 12 years. Though it was released late, it was a success.

His upcoming film 'Parashakthi' is a landmark one in his career, because this is his 25th film. Directed and written by the acclaimed Arun Prabu, known for his notable works 'Aruvi' and 'Vaazhi', 'Parashakthi' promises to showcase Vijay



Antony's exceptional range and dedication as an actor. The film has all commercial ingredients like a mix of mass appeal, intense action, and heartfelt family drama.

Vijay Antony Films Corporation is producing it, while Vaagai Chandrasekar, Sunil Kriplani, and Trupthi Ravindra, are playing other important roles. The team is currently in post-production, working to ensure the film's summer 2025 release. It will be nothing short of a spectacular one.

## Varun Tej is on location scouting in Vietnam

**A**fter a series of flops, actor Varun Tej is now gearing up for his upcoming film with director Merlapaka Gandhi. Tentatively titled as VT15, the film's pre-production is underway at present as Varun and the team are scouting for locations in Vietnam. The story backdrop is an Indo-Korean horror-comedy. So, the team is in Vietnam doing pre-production work. The film was announced on Varun Tej's birthday, but they didn't announce the other cast.

UV Creations and First Frame Entertainment is producing this film. Meanwhile, the pre-production formalities are underway for the movie in Vietnam, with Varun Tej, director Merlapaka Gandhi, and producers scouting some stunning locations in the country. They are also busy fine-tuning the script, as they are planning to begin the regular shoot from the first week of March.

Merlapaka Gandhi, who has crafted a unique storyline, is set to bring something fresh to the genre. Varun Tej will also undergo a major makeover for his role. SS Thaman will be composing the music. The full cast and crew details are expected to be announced soon.



## Rao Ramesh dances with Sundeep in Majaka

**D**irector Nakkina Trinadha Rao and writer Prasanna Kumar are now joining for 'Majaka' which is going to be another sure success, say the unit members. This director and writer combination earlier delivered many successful films, but now they put a high entertainment dose in 'Majaka', according to a source. Rao Ramesh and Sundeep Kishan are playing the lead actors, while Ritu Varma and Ashu of 'Manmadhudu' fame are the female leads. This is also Sundeep's 30th film.

Jointly produced by Razes Danda and Umesh KR Bansal, they released the bachelors' anthem from the film on Wednesday and started the musical journey. The interesting point about this anthem is that Rao Ramesh is shaking his legs along with Sundeep Kishan, which is entertaining. He is one of the

highly acclaimed actors in Telugu cinema, and is now playing a major role in this one along with Sundeep Kishan, added the source.

This track is a quirky, yet heartfelt tribute to the joys and struggles of bachelor life, making it an instant hit with single guys everywhere. Ramajogayya Sastry penned the lyrics, while Leon James provided the music.

Filed on the stunning Visakhapatnam beach, the song features Sundeep Kishan and Rao Ramesh as a father-son duo navigating the ups and downs of bachelorhood. Their on-screen chemistry is both endearing and entertaining. The film is set to hit the screens on February 21.

