

'Modern tech adding lethality in warfare'

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said critical, cutting edge and frontier technologies have been adding new dimensions of lethality as well as unpredictability in modern warfare. He also said, "If we want to remain strong and secure in adverse situations, we need youth trained in these technologies, who can provide solution to the critical technological challenges" Speaking at National Science Day celebrations, 'Vigyan Vaibhav 2025', organised by ...

India 3rd largest startup ecosystem

-PAGE: 3

Union Education Minister Dharmendrra Pradhan on Friday said India has emerged as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem with a combined valuation exceeding USD 354 million. The minister was virtually addressing the inaugural session of the third edition of IINvenTiv, a national research and development expo being hosted by IIT Madras. IInvenTiv is a flagship event of the Ministry of Education, which was first held in 2022 at IIT Delhi featuring exhibits only from Indian Institutes of. -PAGE: 5



Investors' wealth tumbled by Rs 9 lakh crore on Friday, in tandem with a sharp decline in the domestic equity market, where the benchmark Sensex plunged 1,414 points following a bearish trend in global equities. Fresh tariff threats that ignited global trade war fears and relentless foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiment, analysts said. The 30share BSE benchmark gauge tumbled 1,414.33 points or 1.90 per cent to settle at 73,198.10. During the day, it cracked 1,471.16 points or 1.97 per cent.. -PAGE: 8

Avalanche buries BRO camp in Uttarkhand 32 workers rescued, 25 still trapped

PNS DEHRADUN

Thirty-two of the 57 BRO workers trapped under an avalanche in the highaltitude village of Mana in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district have been rescued, concern over the safety of the other 25 mounting as night fell on the snowbound slopes and rescue efforts came to a temporary halt. The snowslide, which buried a Border Roads Organisation camp between Mana and Badrinath, rolled down early on Friday morning. Multiple teams battled through tough

terrain, heavy snow and icy temperatures through the day to reach the men. They initially pulled out 10 workers and then the others, sources said

said. All 32 have been taken to the ITBP camp in Mana for treatment the sources said. Four of those rescued are reported to

Mana, three kilometres from Badrinath. is the last village on the India-Tibet

be in a critical condition, the Army PRO

a grim landscape bathed in white. Rescue operations were stopped in view of continuing bad weather and the

impending danger of more avalanches in Mana. Two mild Its swift response teams, especially trained in high

border at a height of 3,200 metres. Visuals from Mana showed rescuers trudging through high piles of snow in

avalanches had followed the main one. The avalanche hit around 7.15 am, burying the workers inside eight containers and one shed, the Army said. comprising more than 100 people from the Ibex Brigade altitude rescue

Centre okays construction of Warangal Airport

CM Revanth thanks PM Modi

PNS HYDERABAD

In a major boost to Telangana's aviation infrastructure, the Centre has officially approved the development and operationalization of the Mamnoor Airport in Warangal district. Civil Aviation Ministry Secretary

Amit Kumar Jha and the Airport Authority of India (AAI) Chairman had conveyed the decision via an official letter to the state government. The approval comes as a break-

through for the Warangal region, where the airport's operations had been stalled for over a decade.

P2

One of the major obstacles to the project was the No Objection Certificate (NOC) restriction imposed under the Hyderabad International Airport Limited (HIAL) agreement, which barred the development of any new domestic or international

airport within a 150-km radius for 25 years. **Continued on Page 2**

CM calls for Hyd–B'luru Defence Industrial Corridor

Says Hyd is home for crucial defence establishments

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy stressed Telangana's vital role in the country's defence, calling for the declaration of a Hyderabad-Bengaluru Defence Industrial Corridor to attract investments and boost indige-

nous military manufacturing. Speaking at the Vigyan Vaibhav-2025 programme on Friday at Gachibowli, he highlighted Hyderabad's decades-long contribution to India's defence manufacturing. Addressing students and industry experts, Revanth said that

Hyderabad is home to major defence establishments like the Bharat



Research and Development Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Organisation (DRDO), Mishra (HAL), which have been manufac-Dynamics Limited (BDL), Defence Dhatu Nigam (Midani), and turing rockets **Continued on Page 2**

Rescue efforts on war footing

Positive outcome unlikely in SLBC tunnel rescue ops: Collector

PNS NAGARKURNOOL

The rescue operation doesn't indicate a positive outcome, said Collector Badavath Santosh. Eleven top agencies specialising in tunnel disasters are leading the operation working with unmatched coordination and expertise.

District Collector Badavath Santosh has refuted false reports circulating on media channels and social media claiming that five bodies were recovered from the SLBC tunnel accident site.

Santhosh dismissed reports that NGRI's ground penetrating radar (GPR) captured images of human bodies in the debris of the SLBC tunnel where eight persons were trapped. "We have noticed that some

fake news is going on that bodies have been found. That news is not

true. I request the media also. If there is any such news, we will inform from the Collector's office," he told reporters. Officials said rat miners are trying to penetrate and confirm where they are.

"The rescue operation is still going on, and any official updates will be communicated through the District Public Relations Officer (DPRO). I request media outlets to refrain from spreading unverified information," he urged. Collector Santosh chaired a review meeting at the JP Base Camp Office, assessing rescue operations. The meeting was attended by senior officials, including Irrigation Special Secretary Prashant Jeevan Patil, NDRF officer Sukhendu, TSSPDCL CMD Musharraf Ali, Army officials Colonel **Continued on Page 2**



| Delimitation of LS seats must be done on pro-rata basis: CM

Hockey India unveils new format

Hockey India on Friday unveiled a new format with a promotion and relegation system for the Senior Women's National Championship to be held in Panchkula from March 1 to 12. The competition will feature 28 teams divided into three divisions titled 'A', 'B' and 'C'. The new format aims to enhance competition but also provides intends to provide a pathway for teams to ascend to higher divisions or risk relegation based on their performances. "The introduction of the promotion and relegation system. -SPORTS

A leadership that sans grandeur

AICC TG In-charge Meenakshi comes by train

PNS HYDERABAD

In an era where politicians are often surrounded by grandeur, the Congress's Telangana in-charge, Morachtei Niterrien is Meenakshi Natarajan, is known for her minimalist lifestyle and discipline. A former NSUI president and ex-MP, Meenakshi follows Gandhian principles, avoiding luxuries and

public displays of grandeur. This is contradictory to her predecessor Deepadas Munshi, who wouldn't reportedly travel in anything less than business class. She had even rented a home in Banjara Hills for around Rs 3 to 4 lakh a month. Meenakshi is totally different from her.

owns and

Congress insiders say Meenakshi wns and Continued on Page 2

CM to meet PM on BC quota Bill

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is going to New Delhi on March 9 to meet Prime Minister Modi to ask him to approve the 42 per cent Reservations Bill in Parliament and subsequently to go for local body elections.

The Chief Minister would also meet leaders of various political parties and appeal to them to sup-port the BC Reservations Bill.

It is learnt that the Telangana government will hold a Cabinet meeting on March 6 on the BC Reservations Bill, approve it and pass the Bill in the special Assembly session being held soon.

The Chief Minister while addressing the TPCC's extended executive committee meeting held on Friday on the Gandhi Bhavan premises said that he would go to New Delhi any number of times to protect the rights of the state.

State to launch Rs 6,000 cr self-employment scheme

PNS HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government will prioritise self-employment schemes through SC, ST, BC and minority corporations to provide livelihood to unemployed youth, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu said.

Speaking at the quarterly review meeting with bankers on Friday, he said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy would launch the Rs 6,000 crore self-employment initiative at Wanaparthy on March 2.

Bhatti criticised the BRS admin for neglecting welfare corporations and asserted that the government considers social welfare a priority sector. He assured that the state is ready to provide subsidies and margin money and called upon bankers to support these schemes

Telangana,' and that the govern-

global attention. Bhatti highlighted the state's investment-friendly environment, which provides skilled human resources, uninterrupted quality power supply, and a strong law and order framework. These factors, he said, helped Telangana bag investments of Rs 1.8 lakh crore at the World Economic Forum in Davos,

he added. He said the government's commitment to agriculture was evident in the Rs 52,000 crore budget allocation. In just three months, Rs 22,000 crore was credited into farmers' bank accounts as per the farm loan waiver scheme, a record in the country. He said the decision helped both farmers and bankers, allowing

loan recovery in a single stroke. He also detailed major allocations like the Rs 11,500 crore by extending financial aid. He emphasised that bankers crore under Rythu Bina, Rs 11,000 crore under Rythu Bina, Rs 11,000 play a crucial role in 'Rising crore as subsidies for free power supply to farmers, and Rs 1,800 ment has devised policies to attract crore paid as **Continued on Page 2**

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that the delimitation of LS seats should be done on a pro-rata basis. The CM criticised Union Home Minister Amit Shah for stating that LS seats will not be reduced in South India. He demanded that the Centre should tell on what basis it will do delimitation.

"Amit Shah is saying that LS seats will not be reduced. However, Amit Shah is not saying that LS seats will increase in South India. The BJP is trying to do 'injustice' to South India through LS delimitation. The BJP is trying to stay in power perma-nently by increasing LS seats in North India," Revanth said. Addressing the media on

Gandhi Bhavan premises on Friday after the TPCC's extended executive committee meeting, the CM said the BJP is trying to increase LS seats in Bihar, **Continued on Page 2**

'Govt ignoring students welfare'

PNS HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KTR launched a scathing attack on the Congress Government, accusing it of ignoring students' welfare after reports came that hostel students in Nagarkurnool district were forced to go hungry on Maha Shivaratri day.

Taking to social media, KTR criticised ministers for rolling in luxury

calling it the "peak of Praja Palana." "Ministers are busy with helicopter tours and fish feasts while hostel students are starving. This is the

state of Revanth Reddy's so-called Praja government," KTR posted. He highlighted a shocking inci-dent at the ST Boys Hostel in Vondengrula in Ashempt.con Kondanagula in Achampet constituency, where hostel staff allegedly told students to walk km to tem-

ples for free meals instead of cooking for them.

Reports said that of the 380 students, only 200 were present at the hostel on Shivaratri. Instead of providing them lunch, the hostel authorities directed them to a community meal at the Gudibanda Shiva Temple.

in Veeramrajpally.

while students struggled for food, Parents and local people fumed at the administration, questioning how students could be forced to trek long distances for food on a festival day. "Is starving students on a festival day Congress governance?" KTR asked, warning that the Telangana people would not remain silent. He called on the public to wake up to the failures of the Congress Government using the hashtag

HC stays Tribunal order on Bhagya Laxmi **Temple takeover**

PNS HYDERABAD

In a significant relief to the current temple management, the Telangana High Court on Friday stayed the Telangana Endowments Tribunal's order directing the Endowments Department to take over the Bhagya Laxmi Temple at Charminar and its day-to-day activities.

The tribunal's order, dated February 21, 2025, had directed the appointment of an Executive Officer to manage the temple. The order was challenged by the appel-lants, represented by senior counsel Ashok Anand Kumar, who argued that the tribunal had overstepped its jurisdiction and ruled beyond the issues filed before it. Continued on Page 2

Telangana expects 17,500 MW peak summer power demand

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana's power utilities are gearing up to handle record peak electricity demand this summer, with projections indicating that demand may cross 17,500 MW.

The Principal Secretary for Energy, Sandeep Kumar Sultania, reviewed the implementation of the Summer Action Plan by the Northern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (TGNPDCL) during a teleconference on Friday and asked engineers to be on alert in the coming months.

During the meeting, Sultania expressed satisfaction with the current power supply situation and hailed power sector employees for ensuring quality, uninterrupted electricity sup-



tributions in meeting the highest loads. The completion of 33 new subpeak demand of 16,601 MW on February 26

TGNPDCL CMD K. Varun Reddy reported that infrastructure upgrades ply. He acknowledged the sector's con- have been executed to reduce over-

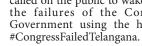
stations, 83 new 33 KV feeders, 341 new 11 KV feeders, and 98 interlinking lines have ensured alternative wer supply readiness.

Of the 105 overloaded power trans-

formers, 99 have been upgraded, and 4,530 of the 4,850 overloaded distribution transformers have been replaced, with the remaining work set for completion by March 10.

D. Krishna Bhaskar, the CMD of TGTRANSCO, said the augmentation of 16 power transformers had been completed, with six remaining works in the NPDCL area prioritised for completion before March 10. Principal Secretary Sultania directed officials to deploy Émergency Response Team (ERT) vehicles for quick resolution of distribution transformer failures to protect crops during peak summer. He also stressed the need for cre-

ating consumer awareness regarding the 1912 helpline for grievance redressal and emphasised completing maintenance works efficiently by availing necessary clearances in advance.



For dinner, they were told to walk even further to the Gangamma Temple the

hyderabad 02



Revanth silenced by Modi's helping hand

hat's the most trust-ed method for flail-ing Chief Market ing Chief Ministers of non-NDA (National Democratic Alliance) ruled states to divert public attention from their failures? Seek an appointment with the Prime Minister - which the Prime Minister usually grants as he believes in cooperative federalism, submit him a wish list, come out of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), organise a press conference, and claim Prime Minister Modi and the central government discriminate against their state because an opposition party rules it. This tactic always succeeds because Prime Minister Modi does not stoop to issue a direct rebuttal to the Chief Ministers' false accusations. Former Telangana Chief Minister Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and current

Congress Chief Minister Revanth Reddy have repeatedly used this script to their satisfaction.

But to the utter shock of Revanth Reddy, this tried and tested script failed him this time. The Chief Minister's silence for two days after meeting PM Modi on Wednesday proves that the Prime Minister has called his bluff. Though the Prime Minister quickly granted an appointment and received Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and his ministerial colleague Sridhar Babu with the usual grace, he did not let Revanth Reddy turn the meeting into a political stunt. While accepting Revanth Reddy's wish list for consideration, Modi presented him with a list of projects the central government had already approved for the state but faced hurdles and delays in implementation due to a lack of cooperation from the state government.

Prime Minister Modi had always treated his meetings with the Chief Ministers as opportunities to foster cooperative federalism. He saw them as a way to improve coordination and goodwill between the central and state governments. Modi never saw these meetings through a politically partisan prism

The Prime Minister subtly projects in the state, provided by the PM to Revanth, stands conveyed two messages to as testimony to both. Revanth Reddy. First, the cen-

A quick glance at the list of tral government has always been proactive regarding Telangana's development and central projects suffering from the state government's noncooperation exposes the disre-gard for Telangana's security, welfare needs. Second, KCR then and Revanth now are welfare, and development by both the earlier BRS and the insincere about the state's needs. Their only purpose in meeting with the prime mincurrent Congress rulers. The list ister was to serve their politiincludes three irrigation procal needs, not the needs of the jects: the Devadula and Bhima lift irrigation schemes and the citizens of Telangana. The list of sanctioned but pending Sri Ram Sagar Project Stage II.



nectivity projects in Left Wing

Extremism (LWE) or Naxalism-

affected areas of the state.

Two mega, world-class hospi-tals: the Shamshabad ESI and the Bibinagar AIIMS. Two rail-way projects: Manoharabad to Kothapalli new line and Kazipet-Vijayawada third line with electrification. Mobile con-

governments deceived the homeless poor in the state. The Prime Minister pointed out that the central government had granted 70,674 houses under the Awas Yojana scheme when KCR was in power. But instead of utilising the funds provided by the Center under the scheme, KCR returned the funds, depriving Telangana's poor of a pucca house. He also pointed out that the Revanth government requested funds under the same scheme for the 2024-25 financial year, which the central government approved. However, even as the end of the financial year looms, it has not taken steps to identify beneficiaries, thus letting the funds for the year go to waste. The Prime Minister had

always treated his meetings with the Chief Ministers as tunity to prove his sincerity and

census? Kishan, Sanjay and others should point out the

mistakes in the caste census. Kishan is levelling allegations only to do injustice to BCs,

"We will expose the secret deal between the BJP and the

BRS. We will strengthen the party organisation," the CM

Speaking on going to New Delhi repeatedly, the CM said

that they are not going to New

"We are going to Delhi again and again to ask the Centre to

give the needful to the state.

The Mamunur Airport and

Delhi to do liquor business.

Revanth said.

said.

Even more egregiously, both opportunities to foster cooperative federalism. He saw them the BRS and the Congress as a way to improve coordination and goodwill between the central and state governments. Modi never saw these meetings through a politically partisan prism. He meets the Chief Ministers of opposition-ruled states more often than the CMs of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ruled states. One can easily verify this by counting the times he met opposition Chief Ministers like Revanth Reddy, KCR and Jagan Mohan Reddy, KCK and Jagan Mohan Reddy during their tenures. Yet, Revanth and KCR, especially during his second term, only saw the meetings with the PM as a tac-tic to deflect attraction form tic to deflect attention from their failed promises and the resulting anti-incumbency. Taking the Prime Minister's request to cooperate on pend-

ing central projects as an oppor-

ability would have encouraged a result-oriented Prime Minister to take up Revanth's new requests enthusiastically. Given the dire financial straits of Telangana's coffers, this becomes even more important now. But instead of accepting his failures, he tried to deflect the blame onto Kishan Reddy, a senior minister in the Modi cabinet, falsely accusing him of not working for the state's cause.

Revanth's silence for almost two days after meeting the PM and his belated public letter to Kishan Reddy prove that he is more focused on playing politics than on governance. Voters elected Revanth so that he could work to better their lives, not to provide excuses and divert their attention. If he does not heed, they will teach him the same lesson they taught KCR.

> (The author is BJP Telangana spokesperson.)

Inform public about Congress

Govt's programmes: Meenakshi

Says Cong workers have a lot of fighting spirit

Kavitha warns those harassing BRS workers

PNS NAGAR KURNOOL

BRS MLC Kavitha issued a strong warning against harass-ment of BRS activists stating that those responsible - be they politicians or officials would not be spared.

Addressing a gathering in Nagar Kurnool, she empha-sised that a 'Pink Book' was being maintained to record all such incidents. "We will note everything down. Our time will come, and then we will settle scores," she declared.

Kavitha, who was in Nagar Kurnool to attend a roundtable discussion organised by the Telangana Jagruthi with BC organisations, visited the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple at Singot before addressing the media.

She accused Minister Jupally Krishna Rao of targeting BRS workers, alleging that even minor criticisms were met with false cases. She cited

A leadership ...

Continued from page 1

the murder of BRS worker,

Sridhar Reddy, and said that the police have derailed the investigation while Congress leaders are shielding the suspect.

"Jupally ordered an attack on our activist Parameshwar for just displaying our flex banners. Is this democracy? Why are Congress leaders afraid of us?" she asked. Kavitha criticised the

Congress leadership for neglecting the relief operation at the SLBC tunnel disaster site, where several workers are trapped. She pointed out that while the situation demanded immediate action, ministers instead attended a Congress party meeting, showing their total disregard

for workers' lives. "Not even a single minister stayed at the disaster site. Their absence proves that Congress does not care about people's lives," she said.

'Kishan playing 'Saindhva' role' Alleges Central Minister is blocking TG projects

Challenges him to cancel 4 per cent quota for minorities in AP

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy challenged BJP leaders, partic-ularly Telangana BJP President Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy, to scrap the four per cent quota for minorities in Andhra Pradesh where the NDA is in power.

Addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan after the TPCC's extended executive committee meeting on Friday, the CM said that Muslims are enjoying BC reservations in Andhra Pradesh, where the BJP alliance is in power.

Kishan should make Andhra Pradesh cancel the four per cent reservation for minorities if he has the guts. He said that

Muslims also enjoy reserva-tions in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The CM said that Kishan is

'blocking' the development of the state by not allowing the Union Cabinet to approve Metro Rail and RRR. The CM said that Kishan is 100 per cent playing a 'Saindava' role.

"Is it not right that Modi made a clear statement on the Regional Ring Road (RRR)? Why did the Union Cabinet not put the Metro Rail issue on its agenda? Who exerted pressure on the Union Cabinet to ensure that the Metro Rail and RRR are not included in the Union Cabinet's agenda?" the CM said. "We are not asking for the

personal assets of Modi or Kishan Reddy. We are asking the Centre to give the state's share," the CM added.

Modi is sending bundles of money in trains from Gujarat. Kishan should explain which project he brought to the state, evanth said

'No one here is afraid of Kishan. He has not brought even a single paisa to the state. Kishan's Cabinet colleagues told me that he never raised state issues before the Cabinet when I submitted memorandums to them. Kishan is in pain as his friend KCR lost the elections. Kishan cold shouldered us when we asked funds

for the Musi Project. However, the same Kishan speaks about Sabarmati, Ganga and Yamuna clean-ups," Revanth said. The CM said that Kishan has

the Kazipet Coach Factory been criticising the caste cen- came to the state because of sus as he has no sincerity. me. Kishan is not the owner of

Three killed in Puppalaguda fire mishap

The deceased were identified as Jamila Khatun (65), Shahana Khatun (30), and Shirja (4). They were on the first floor when smoke engulfed the building. In a desperate attempt to escape, they locked themselves inside a room, but lack monoxide inhalation, stressing of ventilation led to them becom- that even a small quantity of ing unconscious and eventually dying.

Fire and HYDRAA Disaster Response Force (DRF) teams rushed to the spot for rescue operations. Regional Fire Officer Jayaprakash confirmed that the victims died due to carbon that even a small

AICC incharge to Telangana Meenakshi Natarajan addressing the TPCC extended executive committee meeting on Friday at Gandhi Bhavan premises

explain what we have done

Meenakshi was addressing

PNS HYDERABAD

for them. The new AICC in-charge General Secretary for the extended executive commit-Telangana, Meenakshi Natarajan, said that Congress tee meeting of the TPCC held at the Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad on Friday. TPCC workers have a lot of fighting spirit. "They fought in many Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud, ways in the past. That is why Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the party came to power in Telangana," she said. Ministers, MLAs, MPs, MLCs

She said that the Congress Government in Telangana has undertaken many programmes in the state under the leadership of Revanth Reddy and asked Congress activists to inform the people about that properly.

"Congress workers worked very hard for 10 years and justice would be done for them," she said. She also called on those who got posts to work for the people and

and others attended the meeting. Addressing party leaders on the occasion, Meenakshi said, We are in the government. We should work for the poor so that we can see the smiles on their faces. Only then will we have done our work.

Meenakshi said that opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said that he organised the Bharat Jodo Yatra to 'protect' the Constitution. Rahul said that we have to fight the BRS and the BJP in Telangana.

State to ...

Continued from page 1 bonus for fine variety paddy. He stressed that farmers are now receiving multiple benefits through both state and Central schemes.

Bhatti reiterated that rural evelo

PNS HYDERABAD

Three people died in a fire accident at Puppalaguda in Manikonda area due to smoke inhalation. The fire, reportedly caused by a short circuit, broke out in the parking area of a

two-stores

The CM said that Kishan is Why didn't Kishan and Sanjay speaking as if Prime Minister ask KCR, KTR and Harish Rao to participate in the caste

rrival in Telangana on Friday was by train and was received by TPCC Mahesh Kumar Goud at the Kacheguda Railway Station.

uses only two sets of clothes and follows

an extremely simple diet - idli being her

breakfast, lunch and dinner. She avoids

flights unless necessary, particularly when

responding to emergency calls from Rahul

Gandhi while he is in other states. Her

She was seen carrying her backpack and handbag. While she was asked to come in his car, she opted for a karyakarta's car. Even her trip to Gandhi Bhavan was on a cab she had booked for herself.

Unlike most political leaders, Meenakshi distances herself from formal welcomes, bouquets and lavish receptions. Her disciplined routine also includes observing silence (mauna vrat) every Saturday, in line with Gandhian philosophy. On that day, she reportedly communicates only through gestures and refrains from verbal interaction. Despite her stature as a former MP, she prefers travelling in auto-rickshaws. When required to stay overnight in a city, she books government guest houses at her own expense rather than opting for luxury accommodation. Sources confirmed that she booked a room at the Dilkusha Guest House for tonight by paying Rs 50 online.

TODAY ALMANAC Month & Paksham Sukla Paksha Tithi: Mar 01 03:16 AM Dwitiya to Mar 02 12:09 AM Tritiya: Mar 02 12:09 AM to Mar 02 09:02 PM Nakshatram: Feb 28 01:40 PM Purva Bhadrapada: to Mar 01 11:22 AM Uttara Bhadrapada: Mar 01 11:22 AM to Mar 02 08:59 AM 9:33 AM to 11:00 AM Rahukalam: 1:56 PM to 3:23 PM Yamagandam 08:01 PM to 09:27 PM Varjyam: 6:38 AM to 8:05 AM Gulika: 04:40 AM to 06:06 AM Amritakalam:

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:05 PM to 12:51 PM

Forecast: Sunny **Temp:** 33° Humidity: 52% Sunrise: 6:34 AM Sunset: 6:23 PM

Updated: February 28, 2025 5:00 PM

for the state and urged bankers to support initiatives aimed at women's empowerment.

He said that under the Indira Mahila Shakti Scheme, the government has signed an MoU with solar power companies to generate 1,000 MW. He called on bankers to facilitate investments for women entrepreneurs in the renewable energy sector.

Highlighting the government's vision for Hyderabad, he said that the Musi River Development Project aims to rejuvenate the river and safeguard the health of residents nearby. He urged bankers to assist those displaced due to the project and announced that interest-free loans would be extended to affected women. Rs 20,000 crore has been allocated for women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs), he said.

CM calls for ... Continued from page 1

and missiles for the nation. "Defence manufacturing units have flourished in and around Hyderabad strengthening the country's security," he said.

The Chief Minister emphasised that the exhibition aimed to instil patriotism and a sense of responsibility in students towards national security.

He pointed out that while over one lakh engineering graduates from Telangana, particularly in computer science, migrate to the United States each year, the government is now trying to channel more engineers into the country's defence sector. "We are working to provide the skilled engineers required for Îndia's security forces along with the IT professionals heading to the US," he added.

Highlighting Hyderabad's legacy in defence production both before and after Independence, Revanth said that the city, along with Bengaluru, serves as a crucial hub for manufacturing defence equipment.

He urged stakeholders to support the pro-posal for a Defence Industrial Corridor connecting the two cities, which he said would bring in substantial investments and foster the growth of start-ups like Skyroot involved in rocket manufacturing.

cars and filling the structure with thick smoke.

hurning two

Centre okays ...

Continued from page 1

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy revealed that after talks with the GMR Group, which manages HIAL, the matter was placed before their Board of Directors, leading to the lifting of the restriction. The Centre has now officially approved this decision, removing the last major hurdle for reviving Mamnoor Airport. Citing official communication

from AAI (UO Note No. PLG/501/Warangal/2025/80 dated 03.02.2025), he said that Telangana had submitted many representations to the Centre on December 5, 2024, and November 17, 2024, seeking the tional airport within a 150-km radius

Delimitation ...

Continued from page 1 Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (BIMARU) states.

He said that South Indian states accepted family planning resulting in a decrease in its population growth rate. But North Indian states did not accept family planning and so their population increased, the CM said.

He said that he would definitely take the initiative to unite South Indian states and demand that the Centre implement delimitation on a pro-rata basis.

The CM said that already the Centre has been doing 'injustice' to South Indian states by allotting huge funds to North Indian states, particularly Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The Centre is trying to weaken South Indian states as the BJP did not get many LS seats in the south.

The CM said the Centre should not impose any language on any state forcibly. "We are determined to protect Telugu. The government is already issuing GOs in Telugu," the CM said, demanding that UPSC exams should be conducted in Telugu too.

airport's clearance. The approvals gained momentum after HIAL issued its NOC which was subsequently ratified by the Centre.

Announcing the decision on Friday, Telangana Roads, Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy credited the efforts of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy stating that continuous discussions with the Centre had paved the way for securing longpending approvals.

During the construction of the Hyderabad Greenfield Airport, an agreement was signed between HIAL and the Centre, specifically Clause 5.2, which prevented the construction of any new domestic or interna-

HC stays ...

Continued from page 1

The case, which stems from a petition (O.A. No. 603 of 2012) filed by Shashi Kala Ji, sought recognition as a member of the founder's family of the temple while contesting an earlier declaration favouring

the appellants. The appellants' counsel pointed out that the tribunal's directive for the Endowments Department to take over the temple was beyond its purview, as the issue at hand was limited to the recognition

of founder family members. The High Court, after hearing the arguments, issued an interim stay on the tribunal's order and scheduled the next hearing for March 21, 2025. The court also directed the Government Pleader representing the Endowments Department to inform concerned officials immediately.

smoke can cause unconsciousness and death.

for 25 years. As a result, Mamnoor Airport and other potential aviation projects remained stalled.

However, following a special request from Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, the HIAL Board of Directors reviewed the matter and gave their consent for Mamnoor Airport's revival. He reiterated that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's many rounds of discussions with the Centre played a key role in securing the approval. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy thanked PM Modi. He said, "On behalf of all people of Telangana. With all necessary permissions in place, the Telangana Government now plans to fast-track Mamnoor Airport's construction and operationalization

> Avalanche ... Continued from page 1

operations, were immediately mobilised. The team included doctors and ambulances. According to Disaster

Management and Rehabilitation Secretary Vinod Kumar Suman, the situation is critical with the containers buried under six to seven feet of snow. The

bad weather continues. Teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and SDRF left for the spot, about 300 km from the state capital Dehradun, amid continuing snowfall and rain.

Home Minister Amit Shah said rescuing the trapped people is the government's priority. In a post on X, he said he had talked to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and the DGs of the ITBP and the NDRF.

Place: Hyderabad

Rescue efforts

Continued from page 1

Parikshit Mehra and Colonel Amit Kumar Gupta, Singareni Mines Rescue Officer Balaram, HYDRA representatives and JP Company officials. The Collector said that the authorities are doing everything possible to rescue those trapped inside the tunnel. Medical teams have kept oxygen supplies ready, and 12 specialized rescue teams including the Army, NDRF, SDRF, Singareni Mines Rescue, Fire Services, National Geophysical Research Institute, HYDRA, South Central Railway Plasma Cutters and RAT Miners are working around the clock.

DECLARATION

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City Pioneer

03 HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath reviewing lake bodies in Hyderabad on Friday

HYDRAA facilitates **TDR compensation** for landowners in **buffer zones**

PNS HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Commissioner AV Ranganath has said that the government has announced compensa-tion under the Transferable Development Rights (TDR) scheme for those who have lost land in the buffer zones of lakes. However he did not mention the amount.

Addressing the inspections while visiting lake bodies, AV Ranganath said that they are assessing the progress of lake restoration and

beautification works in the city. As part of the first phase of HYDRAA's restoration initiative, the Commissioner visited six lakes, including Sunnam Cheruvu, Thammidikunta, Kukatpally Nalla Cheruvu, Uppal Nalla Cheruvu, and Bhumrukh Uddin Doula Cheruvu.

The Commissioner urged local communities to support lake restoration efforts and said that state government's commitment to rejuvenating city lakes.

He highlighted that HYDRAA has been entrusted with the responsibility of lake restoration, working in collaboration with other government departments.

The government has announced compensation under the Transferable Development Rights (TDR) scheme for those who have lost land in the buffer zones of lakes. Existing residential houses will not be demolished, and the Commissioner reassured the public that there is no reason for concern.

He clarified that lake protection and beau-tification efforts will not lead to residential evictions but rather enhance the significance of these areas.

HYDRAA has allocated Rs 58.50 crore for the restoration of Sunnam Cheruvu, Thammidikunta, Kukatpally Nalla Cheruvu, Uppal Nalla Cheruvu, Bhumrukh Uddin Doula Cheruvu (Rajendranagar), and Bathukamma Kunta Cheruvu said HYDRAA.

Currently, dewatering operations are underway, where wastewater is being drained and lakes are being dried as part of the multiphase restoration plan. HYDRAA aims to complete lake restoration and beautification by June 2025, added.

Canines show their skills at passing out parade

PNS HYDERABAD

Newly trained canines and their handlers showcased impressive performances, including the namaste drill, obedience drill and seek far find during the 24th batch of the All India Level Canine Basic Induction Course at the Integrated Intelligence Training Academy (IITA) in Moinabad on Friday. Director General

Intelligence B Shivadhar Reddy presiding as chief guest noted that 72 canines and 101 handlers from various state and central police units had passed out on Friday.

Addressing the gathering Shivadhar Reddy said that highly trained canines and their handlers were playing a crucial role in safeguarding society. He extended his heartfelt congratulations to all the trainees, appreciating their dedication, discipline, and commitment to duty.

This year's batch comprised 72 canines and 101 handlers from various state and central police units, including Telangana, Bihar, Goa, Tripura, CISF, RGIA, and RPF



Director General Intelligence B Shivadhar Reddy presiding as chief guest at 24th batch of the All India Level Canine Basic Induction Course at IITA Moinabad on Friday

and (Secunderabad

Vijayawada). The canines—36 Labrador Retrievers, 8 German Shepherds, and 28 Belgian Malinois—were rigor-ously trained in specialised areas such as explosives detection, narcotics detection, liquor detection, tracking, and assault operations.

Since its inception in 2004, the Canine Training Centre at IITA, Moinabad, has successfully trained 843 canines and 1,205 handlers. These welltrained canine units play an

indispensable role in anti-sabotage operations, VIP and VVIP security, bomb threat responses, narcotics control, and crime investigations.

Telangana Police's canine teams at the 68th All India Level Police Duty Meet 2024-25 in Ranchi, Jharkhand secured six gold, four silver, and eight bronze medals, topping the medal tally and win-ning the prestigious Charminar Trophy for overall

championship. Notably, Teja, a narcotics detection dog from Cvberabad trained at IITA, won a Bronze Medal and contributed to securing the Runner's Trophy.

solutions to the critical technolog-ical challenges," he said. From this point of view, education in modern science and technology is even more important for the safety and security of

ne pioneer

PNS HYDERABAD

have been adding new dimen-

dictability in modern warfare.

critical technological challenges".

years have an increasingly high-

War is increasingly moving

"If you want to remain strong

from hardware-oriented to soft-

and secure in adverse situations,

we need youth trained in these

compared to the past.

ware, he said.

the nation, Singh said. Addressing the audience, largely comprising school and college students, he urged the younger generation to adopt scientific outlook and critical thinking to delve into the questions of "how and why" and go beyond ordinary.

Each of the youngsters has a spark of brilliance and capacity to move the world. "It is only a question of recognising it and com-



'Modern technologies

adding lethality in warfare'

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MARCH 1, 2025

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh speaking at at National Science Day celebrations in Hyderabad on Friday

technologies who can provide mitting yourself to achieve it," Singh said.

The Central government, under the illustrious leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is fully committed to harness modern technology for the welfare of the people, he said.

As education is in the concurrent list of the Constitution, it is the joint responsibility of the Centre and states to ensure that future generation get the best of education and that the generations ahead are not only future ready but also globally ready, he tem by introducing dynamic éle-ments like field work, practicals and research, Rajnath Singh said.

This is the line with which Swami Vivekananda had said: the very essence of education is the concentration of mind, not of collecting facts, he further added. Bringing up our young gener-ation as future ready and globally ready must be a joint effort, a national effort and nothing less than that, he said.

Singh further said the National Science Day is one such occasion which not only commemorates the achievements of the scientists but also encourages the younger

CS reviews arrangements for Vice-President's visit

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Secretary A

The Police Department was directed to ensure proper security and law enforcement. Santhi Kumari held a meeting The Road and Buildings with senior officials to review Department was asked to dinate with the pol

generations to take up science and innovation for national development.

Recalling the significant contributions of ancient Indian schol-ars like Aryabhatta and Bhaskaracharya, he said when India prospered in science, its

economy also prospered. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited DRDO's Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Missile Complex, the nerve centre for design and development of indigenous missile systems, in Hyderabad, Telangana on Friday.

He was briefed about the missile technologies and related programmes being carried out by Research Centre Imarat (RCI) Secretary, Department of Defence R&D and Chairman DRDO Dr Samir V Kamat and senior scientists and officials of RCI were present on the occasion.

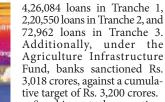
Rajnath Singh also felicitated the team of the Long-Range Hypersonic Anti-Ship Missile project, successful flight-trials of which took place in November 2024. Interacting with the sci-entists, Minister Rajnath Singh commended them for their unparalleled contribution to India's defence capabilities and exuded confidence that, with concerted efforts, India will find itself among the top-three economies by 2027.

Rajnath Singh also paid glowing tributes to Dr APJ Abdul Kalam on the occasion. He stated that the former President's contributions to science and technology, missile development in particular, can never be forgotten

TG banks disburse Rs 2.16 L cr under priority sector

PNS HYDERABAD

The 44th State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC) Quarterly Review Meeting was held on February 28, 2025, at Hotel Marigold, Hyderabad, to review the performance of banks in ana for th Decen



72,962 loans in Tranche 3. Additionally, under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, banks sanctioned Rs. 3.018 crores, against a cumulative target of Rs. 3,200 crores. ing at the meeting

show inaugurated PNS HYDERABAD

'Living Temple' cultural

'Living Temple,' a three-day cul-



said. The New Education Policy (NEP) has endeavoured to change

the nature of our education sys-

Indian temple art and heritage, was inaugurated at T-Works on Friday. The exhibition will be open from 11 am to 8 pm and features over 100 artworks.

Curated by Annapurna Madipadiga and supported by Telangana Tourism, 'Living Temple' brought together 30 renowned artists from across India to showcase the rich legacy of Indian temples. The exhibition blends traditional temple art with contemporary artistic expressions.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by Smita Sabharwal, Principal Secretary of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, and Youth Affairs, Telangana, Mamidi Harikrishna, Director of the Culture Department, and eminent archaeologist KK Muhammed, former Regional Director (North), Archaeolo gical Survey of India.



Smita Sabharwal emphasised the need to make this an annual event, bringing together both young and experienced artists, assuring continued government support. Archaeologist KK Muhammed highlighted the importance of innovative heritage tours, sug-

place? gesting that monuments should offer immersive experiences like those in Singapore

and China. Artist and art director Thota Tharani stressed the need to preserve heritage and nature.

He shared his practice of ensuring no debris is left behind when dismantling sets, stating, "You must respect the

The event also included panel discussions on "Art, Heritage Tourism – The Missing Link," cultural performances, and expert insights. Featured artists included Thota Tharani, Amar Ramesh, Drdha, Charanjeet, Parnavi Bangar, and others, whose

works celebrate temple art and its preservation.

ients for the Vice President of India's visit to the state on March 2.

At the State Secretariat on Friday, she instructed officials to work closely across departments to prevent communication gaps and ensure smooth arrangements.

The Chief Secretary stated that during his short visit, the Vice President will visit IIT Hyderabad, where he will interact with faculty, staff, and students. He will also attend a private event in the city before returning to New Delhi the same day.



Chief Secretary A Santhi Kumari holding a review meeting at the State Secretariat in Hyderabad on Friday

2024 quarter. The meeting was for necessary arrangements. attended by Deputy Chief The Health Department was Minister Bhatti Vikramarka instructed to provide doctors and medical facilities, while Mallu, Agriculture Minister the Energy Department was Tummala Nageswara Rao, told to ensure an uninterrupt-Special Chief Secretary ed power supply. Special Chief Secretary (Finance) K Ramakrishna Rao, and senior banking officials.

During the meeting, State Bank of India (SBI) Chief (Home) Ravi Gupta, Special Chief Secretary (R&B) Vikas Raj, Political Secretary General Manager Rajesh Kumar presented the banking sector's Raghunandan Rao, I&PR Commissioner Dr. S. Harish, performance, highlighting key the Collectors of Hyderabad statistics. The total deposits in and Sanga Reddy, and police Telangana banks grew by Rs. officials attended the meet-36,915 crores, reaching Rs.

8,16,868 crores, while total advances increased by Rs. 74,865 crores, taking the total bank credit to Rs. 10,53,924 crores. The Credit-Deposit (CD) ratio remained above 100%, standing at 129.53%, demonstrating a strong lending environment.

Health challenges require integrated

approach: GHMC Commissioner

Under agricultural credit,

Agriculture Minister Tummala banks disbursed Rs. 58,791 crores as short-term production loans, achieving 64.75% of the annual target. Investment credit for agriculture, allied activities, agri-infrastructure, and agriancillary activities stood at Rs. 49,964 crores, covering 81.56% of the target. The MSME sector received Rs. 1,00,862 crores, achieving 77.80% of the set goal, while education loans stood at Rs. 487 crores and housing loans amounted to Rs. 2,781 crores. Under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), banks sanctioned Rs. 8,441 crores, meeting 61.01% of the annual target. Överall, banks in

Nageswara Rao emphasized the need for banks to increase credit flow to agriculture and allied sectors, particularly under schemes like PMFME, loans against warehouse receipts, support for Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and oil palm cultivation. He urged banks to explore the abundant potential available in Telangana for agricultural development.

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu lauded the banking sector for achieving financial targets but stressed the need to prioritize credit access for agriculture, weaker sections, and self-help groups (SHGs). The meeting was attended by senior officials, including NABARD CGM Uday Bhaskar, RBI DGM T Jagdish Kumar, and officials from SC and BC

For street vendors under PM SVANidhi, banks sanctioned

Telangana disbursed Rs.

2,16,112 crores under Priority Sector Lending (PSL), achieving 72.41% of the set target. Welfare Departments.

Warangal Railway Station to be redeveloped with expenditure of Rs 25.41 crore

PNS HYDERABAD

Warangal Railway Station will be redeveloped with an expenditure of Rs 25.41 crore under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme.

Indian Railways is undergoing a major transformation, upgrading stations to provide world-class facilities. Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS), 40 railway stations in Telangana are being redeveloped at a cost of Rs 2,737 crores to improve passenger ameni-

ties and boost regional growth. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for this project in August 2023 and February 2024. Located on the Delhi-Chennai main line under South Central Railway (SCR), the station features Kakatiya-

inspired architecture. It

serves Warangal, Hanam konda, and Kazipet, handling about 31,887 passengers dailv

Key upgrades of the station include a new station façade and entrance portico, a 12m-

wide Foot Over Bridge (FOB) with three lifts and four escalators, improved platform surfaces with additional cover, new waiting halls and toilets, including Divyangjan facilities, landscaping, and better traffic circulation. Modern signage and train information boards are also included.

financial year. The upgrades aim to enhance passenger comfort and connectivity.

PNS HYDERABAD

Hyderabad is witnessing a surge in mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, chikungunya, and malaria, largely due to stagnant water accumulation, poor drainage, and rapid urbanisation. Addressing these public health challenges requires an integrated approach that considers human, animal, and environmental health, said Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner Ilambarithi on Friday

GHMC Commissioner K Ilambarithi said the importance of One Health-a holistic framework connecting urban governance with public health. He highlighted GHMC's efforts in stormwater

solid waste disposal, and pollution control to curb disease outbreaks.

management, vector control

urban flooding caused by inadequate stormwater drainage has become a recurring issue in Hyderabad, leading to waterlogging, infrastructure damage, and mosquito breeding.

working on a comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan that includes clearing and maintaining existing drains, developing new drainage systems in highrisk areas.

nation.

disease-carrying pests and

Dr Ilambarithi noted that

To address this, GHMC is

Improving rainwater harvesting to prevent urban flooding and minimise water stag-

Improper waste disposal is another major factor contributing to public health crises. Accumulated garbage attracts



GHMC Commissioner K Ilambarithi at NIAB on occasion of National Science Day in Hyderabad on Friday

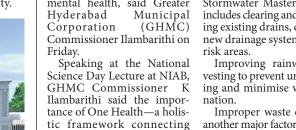
worsens air and water pollucollection across the city. Dr Ilambarithi stressed that tion. GHMC has taken steps such as: Door-to-door garbage air pollution from construction

dust, the urban heat island effect, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) are emerging public health threats. Measures such as strict pollution control, green cover expansion, and responsible antibiotic use are essential for a healthier city.

"No single department can tackle these challenges alone," Dr Ilambarithi stated, calling for interdepartmental coordination between GHMC, the Health Department, Animal Husbandry, and the Pollution Control Board.

Partnerships with research institutions like NIAB will help shape evidence-based policies.

On National Science Day, he urged policymakers, scientists, and citizens to work together for a safer, healthier, and more resilient Hyderabad, emphasizing that science, collaboration, and sustainability should drive urban health policies.



Over 50% of the work is completed, with full completion targeted within this



lelangana he pioneer 04



What all remains of the cars after colliding head-on with a bus on Pebberu national highway in Wanaparthy district on Friday

One dead, two injured in buscar collision

PNS WANAPARTHY

One person was dead and two others were injured in a head-on collision between a bus and two cars on the Pebberu National Highway in Wanaparthy district on Friday. The injured were shifted to Wanaparthy District Hospital, according to Pebberu Sub-Inspector Hari Prasad Reddy.

The accident happened near the Pebberu bypass on National Highway 44. A private bus travelling from Hyderabad to Tirupati collided head-on with by two cars. The cars were on their

way from Kurnool to Hyderabad.

SCCL rescue, relief teams

earn nationwide recognition

rescue teams, investing significant resources in training them for varfor their expertise in rescue and ious aspects of emergency relief operations.

In addition to training its own Currently, SCCL has 483 trained teams, SCCL imparts training to rescue and relief workers. These rescue and relief workers from personnel, employed primarily in Hindustan Zinc Limited, Hatti underground coal mines, are also Gold Mines Limited, and Uranium specially trained to serve as rescue Corporation Limited. The team workers during emergencies. Despite SCCL's coal production has received several accolades in international rescue and relief capacity being only 10% of Coal India Limited's output, the comcompetitions.

Key figures in the training of the rescue teams include SCCL's General Manager (Rescue) K pany is a member of the (IMRB) since 2002. In times of cri-sis, SCCL's teams are looked upon Srinivasa Reddy, Superintendent B Madhava Rao (DGM), Additional

Manager Bhaskar Reddy (trainer), and DYSE Narsimha Murthy, who have all played pivotal roles in honing the skills of the rescue teams at Godavarikhani.

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MARCH 1, 2025

Over the years, the SCCL rescue team has handled numerous critical incidents. For example, eight years ago, in a mining accident, a valuable continuous miner was trapped when a coal mine's roof collapsed. The SCCL team used state-of-the-art pneumatic hydraulic cutters to safely excavate the machine. In another instance, a fire at the

Kothagudem Thermal Power Station in Kothagudem created thick smoke, obstructing the fire brigade's access. The SCCL rescue team took charge, bringing the flames under control. Additionally, the team has suc-

cessfully rescued workers trapped under boulders in a granite mine explosion in Cheemakurti, Prakasam district. They have also been instrumental in saving children trapped in bore wells, alongside executing effective rescue and relief operations during mining accidents.

The following is the breakdown of relief and rescue workers in various SCCL coal mining

areas: The following is the strength of relief and rescue workers in various coal mining areas of the SCCL: Srirampur -89. Mandamarri- 69, Ramagundam-1-69 workers, Ramagundam 2-74, Adriala project- 31, Bhupalapalli-72, Manuguru -20, Manuguru-20, Bellampalli-8, Kothagudem-6 and Illendu-5



Vomen staging a protest over cancellation of bus services in Siddipet on Thursday nigh

Commuters put to hardship due to lack of adequate bus services

PNS SIDDIPET

Emotions are running high as women and girls are left in tears as they face long waits for bus rides back to their homes. Passengers have voiced their concerns, questioning, "How will we reach our destination if there are no

buses at night?" At the old bus station in Siddipet town, many have expressed dissatisfaction over the buses not adhering to their schedules. Uncertainty looms as passengers are left unaware of when the next buses will arrive. Commuters, who travel daily from approximately 50 kilometres away, have highlighted

that both the elderly and students depend on these services for their daily iournevs.

On Thursday night, even after 10 pm, the absence of buses prompted protests from women and girls, who pleaded, "How will we reach our destination?

When passengers sought informa-tion about bus arrivals, they discovered that no staff members were present in the control room. Compounding the issue, auto drivers were charging exorbitant fares, further exacerbating the distressing situation. Passengers, feeling helpless, remained seated at the bus stand in despair.

Over 2.60 crore visited Vemulawada temple on Sivaratri day

PNS VEMULAWADA

Over 2.60 lakh devotees had the darshan of Lord RajarajeshwaraSwamy at the Vemulawada pilgrimage centre on Feb 27 in connection with Maha Siva Ratri festival, according to the temple officials here on Friday. The Siva Ratri celebrations were conducted on a grand scale for three days in Vemulawada, which is regarded as Varanasi of the South.

Further, the officials said that the tem ple earned a revenue ofRs 1,31,89,000 on the festival day. Giving the break-up, they said that the temple earned Rs 45.83 lakh by way of fulfilling KodeMokku by devotees and Rs 57.12 lakh byway of sale of temple prasadam to devotees.

Two members of Maoist party surrender to police

PNS MANCHERIAL

The Singareni Collieries Company

Limited (SCCL) rescue team has garnered nationwide recognition

for its participation in various res-

The 60 rescue personnel, hail-

ing from Srirampur, Mandamarri,

and Bellampalli areas, are active-

ly involved in such efforts. The

SCCL management has been ded-

icated to developing its in-house

International Mines Rescue Body

cue and relief operations.

response.

Kamareddy District Superintendent of Police Sindhu Sharma expressed the hope that the remaining five ultras, who hailed from Kamareddy too will surrender to the police

PNS KAMAREDDY

Kamareddy District Superintendent of Police Sindhu Sharma has revealed that two members of the banned Communist Party of India-Maoists, known as the Maoist party, surrendered to the police seeking to lead a peaceful life.

At a media conference held at the police headquarters in Kamareddy on Friday Sindhu Sharma stated that Gurla Vijav Kumar Akash and Balakrishna, who were active members of the Maoist party, had surrendered to the police. She mentioned that they chose to surrender to lead a peaceful life with their families. Gurla Vijay Kumar joined the Maoist party in 2022 under the leadership of Hidma. He was responsible for supplying necessary materials for the party, and in 2024, he was inducted into the party as a technical team member. It was revealed that in June 2024, he attempted to attack the CRPF camp in Pusuguppa to steal weapons.





'Eligible families miss out on LPG subsidy'

PNS RANGAREDDY

Despite the Congress government's promise under the Mahalaxmi scheme to provide cooking gas at Rs 500 per refill, beneficiaries in Ranga Reddy district are facing delays in receiving their subsidy. With 13,39,852 LPG connections in the district and 2,08,203 benunder the scheme nearly 90 per cent of the eligible consumers are reportedly not receiving the subsidy, leaving them frustrated. They are being pushed from pillar to Initially, the government deposited the subsidy amount into beneficiaries' accounts based on applications received at Prajavani programmes, using the white ration card as the eligibility criterion. However, payments have since stopped, forcing consumers to visit Mandal Parishad offices repeatedly.

money is reflecting in their accounts. The Central government currently provides a sub-sidy of Rs 40.71 on cooking gas, but the promised state subsidy is missing. Frequent disputes between consumers and officials have been reported at MPDO offices, where staff members are struggling to provide clear answers. Civil

pplies



Two children drown in reservoir

PNS NALGONDA

In a heartbreaking incident near Nakkalagandi Project under Chandampet mandal in the district, two young children drowned in the reservoir.

The deceased were identified as Marulu Hari Prasad (8) and Bittu (5) They were the sons of K Saro

TGNPDCL to focus on customer-centric approach

PNS WARANGAL

Northern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Limited (TGNPDCL) is committed to bringing electricity services closer to consumers and ensuring innovative solutions for their needs.

As part of this initiative, the TGNPDCL has introduced a Vidyut Prajavani" (Electricity Public Grievance Programme) every Monday, where consumers can directly voice their concerns. Additionally, Consumer Reception Desks have been established at all circle, division, and section offices to address consumer complaints promptly. These initiatives will help resolve issues either immediately or within a stipulated time based on their severity.

Furthermore, these efforts will



conducting widespread awareness campaigns to educate consumers about electrical safety.

Farmers and consumers are advised not to undertake any unauthorised electrical work and instead use the toll-free number 1912 for assistance, the officials said. To interrupted power su ensure un

He had been involved in

Kamareddy District Superintendent of Police Sindhu Sharma speaking at a media conference in Kamareddy on Friday

He was actively involved in about eight encounters attacks against the police durbetween the police and Maoists.Sodi Balakrishna ing encounters and joined joined the Maoist Party in the party due to his attraction 2018 as a member of the to the banned Maoist party's ideology. The SP also men-Charla Area Committee under the leadership of Arun tioned that five Maoists from DVC. He worked in the the Kamareddy district are Manugu Area Committee as still in hiding. She expressed hope that they would return an ACS member from 2022 to to the mainstream and con-2023. Until his surrender, he had been working as a memtribute to the development of ber of the Charla Committee. Telangana.

While officials claim the subsidies are being disbursed, consumers argue that no

have been inconsistent in their responses, sometimes attributing the subsidy delays to the lack of a white ration card... Adding to the confusion, district civil supplies officials do not have clear records on

Department officials

the gas companies operating in the region or whether the Rs 500 subsidy will be consistently implemented. According to department records, Rs 17.57 crore in subsidy funds had been deposited in beneficiaries' accounts as of January 28. However, consumers report receiving messages stating that only Rs 40.71 has been credited for three days' worth of gas supply.

from Nakkalagandi Gram Panchayat.

Their parents had gone to Devarakonda to purchase groceries, and upon returning home, they realised their children were missing. Distressed, they searched for them with the help of villagers, but their whereabouts remained unknown.

After some time, villagers received information that two children were found in reservoir the Nakkalagandi Project. Upon reaching the site, they confirmed that the children had drowned while playing and attempting to swim in the flowing waters.

nance trust and strengthen rela 33/11 KV interlinking lines have tionships with consumers, according to officials.

To address farmers' concerns, TGNPDCL has launched the "Vidyut Adhikarula Polam Bata" (Electricity Officers' Field Visit) Programme, which has shown promising results. As part of this, the company is replacing damaged poles, tightening loose power lines, and installing intermediate poles to

improve power infrastructure. To mitigate power disruptions caused by heavy rains, strong winds, or technical failures, Emergency Power Restore Team (ERT) vehicles have been deployed. These vehicles are equipped with all necessary materials and GPS tracking systems, enabling teams to respond quickly to restore power in affected areas.

With the aim of achieving zero electrical accidents, TGNPDCL has appointed Technical Divisional Engineers as Safety Officers and is

A parpers

ace:

been established to provide an alternative power source in case of technical issues. Additionally, old substations are being renovated, and AB switches and fault passage indicators are being installed to quickly identify and resolve power faults. To streamline the approval rocess for new service connections, TGNPDCL ensures that applications are not rejected outright without giving consumers a chance to respond. Consumers will also

receive real-time status updates via SMS throughout the application process to avoid unnecessary delays. TGNPDCL has further strengthened its digital services by enhancing the TGNPDCL mobile app, which now includes 19 new features for customer convenience. Consumers can use the app to download and pay monthly electricity bills safely and easily within just two minutes.



Congress leaders paying tribute to Dr Rajendra Prasad's portrait at the DCC office in Khammam on Friday

Tributes paid to Babu Rajendra Prasad on his death anniversary

PNS KHAMMAM

On the occasion of the 62nd death anniversary of Dr Babu Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India and a freedom fighter, the District Congress Committee paid rich tributes to him. The meeting, organised by District Congress Committee president Puvvalla Durgaprasad and chairman of the State Warehousing Corporation Royal Nageswara Rao, was held at the DCC office, Sanjeeva Reddy Bhavan. Leaders participated in the event by offering floral tributes to his portrait.

During the event, they emphasised Dr Rajendra Prasad's significant role in India's freedom struggle. They

remembered his active participation in the 1931 Salt Satyagraha and the 1941 Quit India Movement, both under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, during which he was imprisoned. They also noted his role as the President of the Constituent Assembly that the drafted Indian Constitution. He became the first President of independent India in 1950 and held the position until 1962. They lauded his impartial approach during his tenure as President and his sub-

stantial contributions to the nation's development. It was stated that walking in the footsteps of such great leaders is the true tribute we can offer.

Illegal sand extraction continues unabated in Charla mandal

PNS BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM

The Godavari and Taliperu rivers are in close proximity to the Charla mandal. In the agency areas, accidents being caused by illegal sand transportation during the night have been leading to fatalities. Recently, two young migrant labourers from Chhattisgarh were run over by a sand tractor in the early morning. One of them died, while the other sustained severe injuries. Despite all this, the inaction on the part of the officials and the lethargy of the authorities has allowed the illegal sand mining mafia to operate freely. While ordinary people are struggling due to the shortage

of sand for house construction, sand mining is continuing unabated during night hours.

Despite the government directing the officials to take strict action against the sand mafia, a small gang of influential people has been operating in the area and extracting



A tractor-load of sand being transported from Chala mandal in Bhadradri Kothagudem district

sand, besides deploying tractors to transport them to towns. Each load of sand is reportedly being sold at the rate of Rs 2,000.

Earlier, sand extracted from the Godavari river was available at Rs 1,000 per tractorload sand was made available at Rs 1,000 and sand from

Taliperu at Rs 600. Under the guise of government developmental works,

contractors are transporting hundreds of truckloads of sand without paying seigniorage. Despite the illegal transportation, there has been no action by the officials. Tribal organisations and

human rights advocates are calling for compensation for the family of the deceased and improved medical care for the injured.

They also insist that the government take a strong stance against illegal sand extraction and hold those responsible accountable.

GAYATRINAGAR- MALIKAJG 42-482/53/A. SEETHARAMA NILAYA BESIDE RADHIKA THEATRE MOULAL ANKING THAT'S # TWICE AS GOD

APPENDIX IN

(Bula-3(1)) POSSESSION NOTCE (for immovable property) (Reveals The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the Indian Bank, GAVATRINAGA) WALKAJGIRI under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcemen Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule and 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice date 2410/2024 Calling upon the Borrowens:1.Mis ELECTRO WWE TECHNOLOGIES Prop Chandrapalika Samul 1-1-245/254, 1st floor, Srinivasa Nagat;Kapra, Hyderabad-500062, 2 Mr. Chandrapelka Samul Sio Mr. Chandraiah (Proprietor) H.No.1-1-32/2252, Salbaba Nega Kapra, Hyderabad 500062. Guarantor cum Nortgager:3.Mrs. Yellala Sivarrma wo Late Yellal Narsimulu HNo.1-1-32/2251, Kapra, ECIL, Hyderabed-500062. Guarantors:4.Mr Chandrapalk Chandralah Sio Padma Rao H.No. H No.1-1-32/2251, Kapra, ECL., Hyderabad-600062, 5M Chandrapalika Vajramma Wio Chandralah H No.1-1-32/2251, Kapra, ECL, Hyderabad-600062 5.Nr Chandrapalka Pramed S/o Chandraiah H No.1-1-32/2251, Kapra, ECIL, Hyderabad 00062. 7.Mr Chandrapalka Praveen S/o Chandraiah H No.1-1-32/2251, Kapra, ECII. tyderabad-500062. With our GAYATRINAGAR- MALKAJGIRI Branch to repay the amount rentioned in the notice being Rs. 19,02,009.00 (Rupees Nineteen Lacs Sixty-Two Thousand Nin only) together with interest, cost & charges from 24/10/2024 till date of payment within 60 days from he date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the ublic in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property desorbed herein bein exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 and of the said rules on this 24th day of February of the year 2025.

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the proper and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank for an amount Rs.20.73.612- (Ruppes Twenty Lakhs Seventy Three Thousand Six Hundred Twelve only) as o 23/02/2025 and interest thereon.

We draw attention to the provisions of Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act and the Rules fram here under which deals with your rights of redemption over the securities

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOWABLE PROPERTY

All that the piece and parcel of Open Plot bearing No 64, admeasuring 200.00 Sq. yards or 167.20 Sq. Mits in Survey No 460 of SRI LAXMI NAGAR", Situated at Dammaiguda Hia Nagaram Vilaga Gram panchyat Dammaiguda, Kaesara Mandal, Madshai Malkaigiri District and TELANGAN STATE within the boundaries of North: Open Plot No: 63, South: Plot 65, East: Plot Na 61, West 30 Vide Road

Note: Earlier notice dated 03.02.2025 & 14.02.2025 stands cancelled



Nation 05

ACROSS THE STATES



NIA arrests top leader of Naxal frontal organisation

top leader of a frontal organisation linked to the banned ACPI(Maoist) has been arrested by the National Investigation Agency, according to a statement issued on Friday. Raghu Midiyami, a leader of Moolwasi Bachao Manch (MBM), was taken into custody by the NIA on Thursday in connection with its probe into the Chhattisgarh terror funding case. MBM is also banned by the Chhattisgarh government. "The outfit has been engaged in collection, storage and disbursal of funds for CPI (Maoist) to further their anti-India agenda. NIA probes revealed that Raghu Midiyami was the nodal person for the distribution of the funds at the local level for staging and sustaining CPI(Maoist)-led protests," said the statement issued by the probe agency. Subsequent investigations revealed Midiyami to be a leader of MBM, it said. The Chhattisgarh Police in November 2023 arrested two accused in the case that was taken over by NIA in February last year

India 3rd largest startup ecosystem worth over \$354 million: Pradhan

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MARCH 1, 2025

PNS CHENNAI

Union Education Minister Dharmendrra Pradhan on Friday said India has emerged as the world's third-largest startup ecosys-tem with a combined valu-ation exceeding USD 354 million million.

million. The minister was virtual-ly addressing the inaugur-al session of the third edition of IINvenTiv, a nation-al research and development expo being hosted by IIT Madras.

III Madras. IInvenTiv is a flagship event of the Ministry of Education, which was first held in 2022 at IIT Delhi featuring exhibits only from Indian Institutes Technology (IITs).

Pradhan also extended invitations to international representatives and sought to strengthen research ties to foster global start-up opportunities. "As of 2025, India has emerged as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem, with a combined valuation exceeding USD 354 million. Tamil Nadu has always been a



as an iconic brand in the

'I am sure that the industry leaders attending the event will find many of the technologies on display useful, leading to further

of NIRF, apart from IITs, NITs, IISc and IISERs, was together a platform in which industry leaders can look at technology transfer, investors can look at avenues for funding and foster future collaboration. We have more than 180 exhibits from 39 participat-ing institutions," said IIT Madras Director V Kamakoti.

"These feature the latest Research and Development that have been happening in these institutions, startups that have arisen out of the R&D done at these institutions as well as technology that is now available for commercialisation in the industry," he added.

The thematic areas that would be covered during the two-day event include Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning tech-nologies; Aviation, Defence and Space, Marine Technology; Medical and Healthcare Engineering; Rural Technology; Smart Cities and Infrastructure; Advanced Manufacturing (Industry 4. and 5.0) and Circularity and Sustainability (Energy and E-mobility).

A coffee table book on



'Take action against networks helping Bangla, Rohingya intruders'

PNS NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday directed the Delhi Police to take stringent action against the networks that help illegal Bangladeshis and Rohingyas entering India, saying it is an issue of national security and should be dealt with strictly.

Chairing a meeting to review the national capital's law-and-order situation, he said strict action should also be taken against police stations and sub-divisions that consistently perform poorly. Shah said it should be the

Fire erupts in Mumbai

high-rise; over 50 people rescued

Delhi Police's priority to eliminate interstate gangs in the city ruthlessly. Action must be taken with "top to bottom Sanjay Arora and other senior officials.

and bottom to top approach" in narcotics cases, and such drug networks should be dismantled, he said. "Strict action should be

taken against the entire network that helps Bangladeshi and Rohingya intruders enter the country, get their documents made and facilitate their stay here. The issue of illegal intruders is also related to national security, and it should be dealt with strictly.

They should be identified and deported," he told the meeting. The meeting was also attended by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Delhi's Home Minister Ashish Sood, Delhi Police Commissioner

Mann sets deadline to make **Punjab drug-free state**

unjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday P convened a meeting with senior officials and set a deadline of three months to make the state drug-free To give a renewed push to the state's anti-drug campaign, Mann said the government will set up special courts that will ensure speedy trial in drug cases and conviction of those found guilty. The meeting was held a day after a five-member sub-committee of Cabinet ministers was formed to monitor the ongoing drive against drug menace in the state. The sub-committee -- headed by Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema and comprising state ministers Aman Arora, Balbir Singh, Laljit Singh Bhullar and Tarunpreet Singh Sond -- has been tasked with overseeing the measures taken by the police and the health department to tackle the menace of drugs and implement de-addiction programmes.

India's foundation lies in 'Sanatan Dharma': Dhankhar

Saraswati

Gaudiya Mission here.

economic divisions.

'EXTREMELY UNFORTUNATE'

SC laments suicides in IITs,

IIMs, assures robust steps

PNS KOLKATA

Underscoring India's deep spirituality and ancient civilisation, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday said that the country's foundation lies in Sanatan Dharma.

India, which has long been a guiding force for the world through its preachings of nonviolence, peace and brotherhood, will one day become the 'vishwa guru' (world leader), Dhankhar said.

Reflecting on India's her-itage, he asserted, "No other country in the world has a He was addressing a gathering at the closing ceremony of the 150th birth anniversary celebration of spiritual leader 5,000-year-old 'sanskriti'. India Acharya Srila Bhakti Siddhanta has been the spiritual centre of Goswami the world, and we have to carry Prabhupad, organised by this momentum forward."

Dhankhar, however, Emphasising the unifying expressed regret over the setpower of Sanatan Dharma, backs India faced around Dhankhar said, "Sanatan 1,000-1,200 years ago when stands for inclusivity, univerrenowned universities like sal values, patriotism and ris-Nalanda and Takshashilaing above caste, creed and once attracting scholars from across the world-were

PNS MUMBAI

More than 50 people stranded on the upper floors of a 57storey residential building were rescued after a fire broke out in the high-rise in south Mumbai's Byculla area on Friday morning, officials said.

There was no report of casualty in the blaze that erupted around 10.45 am on the 42nd

floor in one of the twin buildings of Salette 27 on Babasaheb Ambedkar Road, an official from the fire brigade said.

were mobilised immediately, an official said, adding the cause of the blaze was yet to be ascertained.

After more than two-and-ahalf hours of efforts, the Fire Brigade doused the blaze on the 42nd floor of the high-rise building around 1.10 pm, he informed.

They also rescued 50 to 60 people who were stranded on the upper floors of the highrise with the help of the building's security guards, said the official.

Teams from the Fire Brigade, Mumbai civic utility BEST, police, 108 ambulance services, and other agencies

Cong brass discuss strategy with Kerala party leaders

The Supreme Court on Friday PNS NEW DELHI

land of innovation, entrepreneurship and excellence and has given India some of the brightest entrepreneurs, innovators, scientists and researchers who have made significant contributions to nation building," the minister said.

Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar, who was here to attend the inauguration, said with the significant participation of representatives from higher education institutes and the industry, IINventiV is set to emerge

innovation sector.

technology transfers in the near future," he said. The second edition of the event with participating institutions from the top 50 held at IIT Hyderabad last year. "We are now bringing



BSF nabs 15 Bangladeshis from Tripura border

he Border Security Force (BSF) held 15 Bangladeshis, including seven children, along with three Indian touts in two separate operations in Tripura, officials said on Friday. Acting on a tip-off, the BSF laid a trap in the border areas and managed to nab the Bangladeshis hailing from Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Netrakona and Barisal districts of the neighbouring country. In an operation, three men, three women and seven children, all from Bangladesh, were arrested on Thursday from the international border at Kailashahar in Unakoti district, the officials said. BSF personnel also nabbed three Indian touts for facilitating the Bangladeshis to enter Indian territory, they said. The BSF also held two Bangladeshis in another raid on the same day when they were attempting to cross the border to return to their home country. In another operation, the BSF along with the Government Railway Police (GRP) raided the Agartala station and managed to apprehend two Indians, who were allegedly engaged in the illegal transportation of goods to the neighbouring country

PUNE BUS RAPE INCIDENT

Request for water, food led to accused's arrest

PNS PUNE

A request for food and water from a house led to the arrest of a 37-year-old man on the run after allegedly raping a woman inside a bus at Swargate bus station in Pune, police said on Friday. The police used drones and sniffer dogs to track down the accused, Dattaray Ramdas Gade, who was hiding in a paddy field in his native Shirur tehsil and apprehended him around midnight, an official said. A senior police officer said, "Gade was brought to Pune by 2 am. He was sent for a medical examination and formally arrested. The accused will be produced in court later in the day." Gade, a history-sheeter, fled to his native place in Shirur after allegedly sexually assaulting a 26-year-old woman inside a state transport bus at Swargate bus station in Pune in the early hours of Tuesday.

said incidents of suicides in IITs and IIMs were "extremely unfortunate" and assured a robust mechanism to check such cases.

PNS NEW DELHI

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh was informed by senior advo-

cate Indira Jaising that in past 14 months, 18 suicides took place in Indian Institutes Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). "It is extremely unfortunate what is happening. We will create a robust mechanism to check this situation. We will take this issue to the logical conclusion," it said.

Jaising, appearing for the mothers of students Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, who allegedly died by suicide after facing caste-based discrimination, said universities and colleges hadn't given entire data on suicides taking place in their campuses despite a court

order. While Vemula, a PhD scholar at Hyderabad Central University died on January 17, 2016, Tadvi, a student at TN Topiwala National Medical College, died on May 22, 2019, after she was subjected to purported discrimination by three doctors in her college. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the University Grants Commission (UGC) had formulated draft regulations, which took care of majority of the concerns raised by the petitioners, and were uploaded on its website invit-

ing suggestions and objec-

tions from the public.

Top brass of the Congress along with party leaders from Kerala on Friday held a brainstorming session to discuss a strategy and the way forward ahead of next year's assembly elections, with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge asserting that the people will defeat the "oppressive" and "communal" fronts in the state.

The steps to be taken for strengthening the organisation and preparations for the in a post on X. assembly elections to be held next year were also discussed during the meeting, sources said. "Change is inevitable in Kerala. state," he also said.

Congress has built the development paradigm and welfare model of Kerala, and we will do everything possible to bring our UDF to power. Next year, people will defeat both the oppressive and communal fronts in the state," Kharge said

in-charge Deepa AICC We held a meeting of Kerala Dasmunshi were present at Congress leaders where we the meeting.Senior party leader Ramesh Chennithala, party's chief whip and MP K Suresh, deliberated on our political strategy and the future of the besides MP Shashi Tharoor Besides Kharge, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, and Kerala Mahila Congress president and MP Jebi Mather also participated in the delib-

AICC general secretary K C Venugopal, Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Kerala erations. The meeting with senior leaders from Kerala comes Congress chief K Sudhakaran and CLP leader in Kerala amid a row Thiruvananthapuram MP assembly V D Satheesan, and

newspaper that drew criticism from some party leaders over his "praise" of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in the state for boosting the investment climate.

Tharoor has also hit out at the media for 'misrepresenting' his remarks made in Malayalam in a podcast.

The Congress is the main opposition party in Kerala and is seeking to wrest power from the LDF. Assembly elections are set to take place in Kerala in March-April next year.

Tharoor's article kicked off a political storm in the state a week ago, with the Congress questioning the basis of it while the CPI(M) welcomed it. Later, Tharoor's remarks in

a Malayalam podcast were seen by many as pitching himself for leadership in the state, which did not go well and upset a section of the state leadership.

over

China increasing presence in IOR but India knows who goes where: Navy chief

PNS NEW DELHI

China has been increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean Region over the past few decades with 6-8 naval ships of the People's Liberation Army Navy present there at any point of time but India knows "who goes where", which is more than half the battle won, Navy chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi said on Friday.

Speaking at The Chanakya Dialogues conclave here on the theme 'Bharat 2047: Aatmanirbhar in War', the Navy chief said India has not allowed China to come anywhere where "we don't want them to come"

"China has been increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) for some decades now, not only in the oceans but even on land. And the PLA Navy, which is now the largest navy going by numbers, has



been putting 6-8 very capable combatants at any point of time in the IOR, despite piracy having been obliterated. It is no longer there," Admiral Tripathi said.

A lot of things are happening. The

good part is that we as the Indian Navy are fully aware of what is happening, and who is doing what, where and why," he added.

India has got the kind of maritime domain awareness where both

manned and unmanned technologies are being used, along with space-based monitoring and international linkages with various agencies through which information is received, the Navy chief said. "And that is more than half the battle won because we know who goes where," he said.

Stating that China had been claiming that their ships were in the Indian Ocean Region for anti-piracy opera-tions, Admiral Tripathi said, "Their initial ruse of coming to the Indian Ocean Region was that 'we are fight-ing the anti-piracy battle'. But all that is history. Apart from that, they have also been putting a large number of research vessels.

'Again, we know what they are doing. Satellite tracking vessels, deepsea fishing vessels... All of us are aware that they are doing something which they should not be doing, such as unregulated, irregular fishing. But all that we cannot stop," the Navy chief said

He added that India can only ensure China doesn't do anything in our areas of interest".

"And that we have been doing very effectively. We have not allowed them to come anywhere where we don't want them to come," he said. Admiral Tripathi added that China

has been supplying maritime equip-ment and systems to Pakistan for over two decades now.

"Since 2009, China has supplied Pakistan with three frigates, F-22s, Type 054... Four of them they supplied. They also supplied a satellite tracking ship, among others," the Navy chief said, adding that a recent deal between the two nations for eight submarines was a continuation of the process

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MARCH 1, 2025

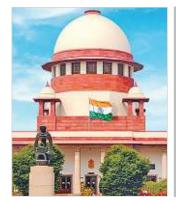
ne pioneer

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Lawbreakers as lawmakers

Eradication of the influence of criminality in politics must be taken up on priority

n recent years, the issue of criminalisation in politics has increasingly come under scrutiny. With more politicians facing criminal charges and convictions, questions have arisen about whether the legal framework governing their disqualification from contesting elections is adequate. The ongoing debate, highlighted by a recent Supreme Court case challenging the constitutional validity of limiting disqualification periods, brings to the fore not only legal interpretations but also the broader menace of criminal influences in our political system. A petition filed before the Supreme Court has argued for a lifetime ban on convicted politicians from contesting elections. The petitioner contends that limiting disqualification to a fixed period—currently six years after release for offenses under Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951-undermines constitutional provisions designed to keep criminals away from power. In response, the Centre has defended the existing provisions, arguing that a lifetime ban is "unduly harsh" and



that it would amount to directing Parliament to frame a law in a particular manner-an overreach of judicial power. The government's counter-affidavit emphasises that there are numerous penal laws that operate within a time-bound framework, ensuring that deterrence is balanced against the need to avoid undue severity.

This legal tussle highlights a crucial policy debate: should convicted politicians face an indefinite prohibition from electoral participation, or is a fixed term of disqualification both constitutional and proportionate? The government argues that the current system, which temporarily excludes convicted individuals,

respects the principles of proportionality and reasonability. In its view, the legislative choice to limit the disqualification period is designed to offer both a punitive and rehabilitative measure while preserving democratic participation. Beyond legal debates, the deeper issue remains the rising tide of criminality within political circles. Criminal elements entering politics not only threaten the integrity of democratic institutions but also erode public trust. Politicians with a history of criminal behaviour may be more likely to engage in corrupt practices, undermining the rule of law. As criminalisation in politics becomes more pronounced, the call for stringent measures intensifies. Addressing the criminalisation of politics requires a multi-pronged approach that extends beyond the question of lifetime bans. Parliament could consider revisiting and potentially tightening the eligibility criteria for political candidates. Whether through a longer ban or additional restrictions for those convicted of certain serious crimes, legislative reforms should aim to disincentivise criminal conduct. There may be strong arguments for and against the life ban of convicted persons becoming lawmakers but one thing all can agree upon is that we do not need them in our parliament or state assemblies. How to do it is not difficult but who will bell the cat?



Strengthening public

institutions in the digital age



pinion 06

Digital transformation is reshaping public policy, it is imperative that we embrace it without compromising our enduring commitment to integrity



ate about governance, institutional resilience and public policy, exploring how institutions can adapt to the digital age. Imagine a world where policies are debated, revised and reshaped in real time-governance moving as quickly as a trending hashtag. That world isn't coming; it's already here. Public institutions, once the reliable backbone of governance, are now transforming rapidly.

Social media, instant communication, and shifting public expectations have redefined how governments interact with citizens. Decision-making, once a structured process guided by expertise and long-term planning, now occurs in an environment where public sentiment can change overnight. This new landscape offers both opportunities and challenges. Increased public engagement promotes transparency and participation but also demands rapid responses. Today's challenge isn't just about efficient policy implementation—it's about balancing speed with thoughtful deliberation and adaptability with estabshed structure

A New Era of Governance

Historically, governance fol-

lowed a deliberate, structured

path. Political leaders set broad

directions, while institutions

provided continuity, expertise,

and safeguards. Decision-mak-

am a civil servant passion- ing was data-driven and refined through expert consultation with a focus on long-term national interests. Then the digital revolution changed everything. Social media now plays a central role in shaping public discourse, often setting the agenda before formal institutions can respond.

A 2023 Pew Research study noted that nearly two-thirds of adults in democratic nations now rely on social media for political news. This shift has empowered citizens and made governance more transparent and participatory, but it has also heightened expectations and pressured institutions to act swiftly. Adapting Without Losing

Purpose The solution is not to resist change but to adapt strategically. Governments worldwide are using digital platforms to improve service delivery and civic engagement. For instance, India's Digital India initiative has streamlined public services online, while Singapore's Smart Nation program uses data analytics to enhance



DECISION-MAKING, ONCE A STRUCTURED PROCESS GUIDED BY EXPERTISE AND LONG-TERM PLANNING, NOW

Trust

and

OCCURS IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE PUBLIC SENTIMENT CAN CHANGE **OVERNIGHT**

ital tools-it requires main-**Finding the Right Balance** taining the integrity of gover-The digital age demands a nance. Institutions must pribalance between responsiveoritise expert-driven deciness and deliberation. sion-making to ensure that Institutions must embrace policy shifts are well-considinnovation without becoming ered rather than merely reacreactionary, listening to pubtive. Preserving institutional lic sentiment while ensuring memory through thorough that policies are grounded in documentation and continudata, analysis, and long-term ous training ensures that experienced civil servants planning. Quick decision-making should never come at provide continuity, anchoring the expense of depth and governance in expertise foresight. This balance distinrather than short-term trends. guishes effective governance The Importance of Public from mere administration. Institutions that thoughtful-At its core, governance ly adapt are not just keeping depends on public trust. pace with change-they are Institutions thrive when they actively shaping the future of are seen as credible, reliable,

governance. and fair. Trust is built through Looking Ahead

Public institutions are more than policy enforcers; they are the foundation of national stability and progress. As governance continues to evolve, these institutions must lead through innovation, efficiency, and an unwavering commitment to public trust. gives citizens real-time access The digital age presents both to government records, is a prime example. Efficiency is challenges and opportuniequally critical. Reducing ties. Institutions that adapt administrative delays, stream- wisely will define the future lining processes, and making of governance—not solely through speed or efficiency, but with foresight, trust and enduring strength. (The writer is DGP & Head of Harvana State Narcotics Control Bureau; views *expressed are personal)*

Tourists at the Tai Mahal, in Agra

Rupee depreciation calls for structural reforms



P GUPTA

Despite notable gains such as a reduced trade deficit, emerging challenges including global tariff tensions highlight the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms

ver the past decade (2014-2024), the com-pounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of India's exports of goods and services in USD terms has fallen sharply to about 5 per cent, compared to 17.9 per cent during 2004-2014 and 12.7 per cent in the period 1994-2004. This decline in export growth has coincided with a significant depreciation of the Rupee, which now trades at roughly Rs 86/87 per USD, a stark contrast to the Rs 60.50 per USD seen in 2013-14. In contrast, between 2000 and 2012, the Rupee remained relatively stable-with occasional appreciation driven by robust export growth at an impressive 19.5 per cent CAGR in USD terms.

This historical perspective demonstrates that a strong, stable Rupee is not an inherent barrier to export performance. In fact, the key to sustained export growth lies in enhancing overall economic efficiency. This efficiency is shaped by a broad range of policies and regulations that affect factors such as capital, energy, logistics and raw materials. By improving these inputs, India can propel



exports forward while maintaining Rupee stability. A weak Rupee, however, tends to deter global investors. Given that domestic savings alone cannot fulfill India's vast investment requirements, a steady inflow of global funds remains essential until the country transitions into a "Trade-Surplus Nation." Recent changes in US leadership have sparked a tariff war, adding another layer of complexity to India's export

environment. Despite the sluggish export performance in the past decade, the country achieved a notable reduction in its trade deficit-from 4.3 per cent of nominal GDP in 2004-2014 to an average of 2.5 per cent in 2014-2024-primarily due to lower import volumes. In 2024, inward foreign remittances surged to \$129 billion, the highest globally, which

ing the current account deficit (CAD) from 1.7 per cent of GDP in 2013-14 to about 0.7 per cent. Consequently, Forex reserves swelled to 18.3 per cent of nominal GDP, underscoring the positive impact of these remittances. Looking ahead, potential chal-

deportation policies by the US could discourage migration, thereby diminishing remittance flows. Moreover, if India shifts its oil and gas import sources from Iran, Gulf nations, and Russia to the US, the resulting higher import bill may widen the trade deficit. In response, India must marshal all available policy tools to boost exports, reduce imports, and eventually become a trade-surplus nation. Facilitating legal

migration remains crucial until domestic job creation can sustain remittance inflows, which are vital for curbing the CAD.

To further stimulate export growth, targeted export incentives for manufactured and agro-based goods should be implemented, while the untapped potential of service exports-ranging from

played a crucial role in reduc- tourism and healthcare to education and professional consultancy-must be unlocked through dedicated policies. Additionally, reducing petroleum imports requires massive investments in railway infrastructure and expanded public transportation to lower fuel demand, lenges loom. Aggressive and increased spending on petroleum exploration is the need of the hour.

> Enhancing domestic production of thermal coal and adopting innovative measures to reduce gold imports, such as a revised gold deposit scheme, are also essential steps. Finally, attracting global funds through measures like reducing capital gains tax on foreign portfolio investments (FPIs) and encouraging long-term borrowing via bonds backed by sovereign guarantees will help meet India's investment needs. Overcoming outdated colonial-era business and taxation laws remains critical. A second wave of structural reforms is needed to stabilise the Rupee, secure higher GDP growth, and elevate India's stature on the global stage. (The writer is an industrial*ist; views are personal)*

urban planning and governance. These examples show that when technology is integrated thoughtfully, it can boost both effectiveness and accessibility. Adaptation goes beyond dig-

LETTERS

governance accessible are key to maintaining public trust. When institutions deliver results fairly and efficiently, they not only function better-they strengthen democracy.

transparency, efficiency, and

Governments that openly

communicate their policies

processes foster confidence

among citizens. Estonia's e-

Governance model, which

decision-making

ethical practices.

TRUMP'S GOLD CARD PLAN

Madam — US President Donald Trump has announced a new visa program that will offer a 'gold card' with a potential pathway to US citizenship for \$5 million (approx Rs 43 crores), which could significantly benefit Indian graduates and investors. It seems like a sale of citizenship for money. He is not even asking them to start a business, create jobs, or anything. Moreover, why should one spend 5 million dollars to go to the USA? With that money, they can lead a royal life (invest 5 million in India and get 14 per cent annualised ROI compared to 5 per cent in the US) in India itself, with their own thriving business and stay close to near and dear ones, which is a much better place now than the US.

This is a simple sale of citizenship. This is nothing, but this Trump statement looks a bit stupid! Because, how many students in India will have 5 million dollars to buy a gold card? And which company will be ready to pay 5 million dollars for hiring an Indian employee in the US on a gold card? Is Trump thinking logically, or is he just high on the dose of fake nationalism? This far-right politics is turning the politicians into real fools. Whatsoever, Golden Visa is very expensive.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

BRUTAL MURDERS SHOCK NATION

Madam- The nation is shocked at the brutal and spine-chilling crime of a 23year-old man, who killed as many as five people, including his close relatives and girlfriend, within a few hours at various places in a radius of 15 kilometres in Thiruvananthapuram. By using a simple mallet, he has repeatedly hammered and finished the victims and then coolly surrendered at the police station on his own. It was by sheer luck that the sixth victim, his own mother, survived the attack, though she is still in serious condition. Even though the family was reportedly facing financial hardship, what prompted the man to commit such a heinous

CBSE clarifies language policy



efers to Editorial 'Simmering Ringuistic Tension' (February 28), first Tamil Nadu and now Punjab is raising unnecessary controversy over regional languages, that too owing to the CBSE draft norms (not final) for conducting the 10th class board exams. The Punjab government's hasty decision of imposing the Punjabi language on all 10th class examinations in the state of all

crime was nothing but the grave impact of drugs. In fact, Kerala has been reeling under the threat of drugs for quite some time now.

All kinds of drugs have been flowing into the state purportedly with the connivance of those in authority. It is a painful truth that a large number of youngsters, including students, are under the influence of drugs. However, the government has not taken any concrete steps to contain this serious menace. The present situation in the state is bound to ruin the young generation completely. As such, the government must take prompt and stern action against the drug mafia. T T Sakaria | Delhi

AFGHANISTAN STUNS ENGLAND

Madam — Afghanistan pulled off a historic eight-run victory over England, proving once again that cricket is a game of glorious uncertainties. The hero of the night was 23-year-old Ibrahim Zadran, who played a breathtaking knock of 177 off 146 balls, the highest individual score by any Afghanistan batsman in ODIs. His

boards, whether Central or State, is uncalled for. This irrational decision has been announced without taking stakeholders-students and teachers-into confidence. It is nothing else but the imposing of the state's will and Punjabi language on innocent students.

How can a student who has never studied Punjabi suddenly take an examination of the same language in the 10th class? It is impossible and irrational. The CBSE was quick to clarify and assure that all regional languages, including Punjabi, will be included in the class 10 board exam. After this clarification and assurance, the Punjab government should immediately withdraw its decision of making Punjabi a mandatory language in all boards' examinations in Punjab.

Vinay Kr Malhotra | Ambala Cantt

fearless stroke play propelled Afghanistan to a challenging total of 325 for 7 despite England's experienced bowling attack.England's chase was anchored by Joe Root, who counterattacked with a brilliant 120 off 111 balls, keeping his team in the hunt.

However, Afghanistan's fiery fast bowler Azmatulla Omarzai turned the game on its head with a sensational 5/58. This is the second time in a row that Afghanistan has beaten England in an ICC tournament. This and Zadran's pedigree once again advertised Afghanistan's evolution as a rapid cricketing force.Despite a late fightback, England fell short by eight runs, handing Afghanistan one of their most significant victories in cricket history. This match will be remembered as a testament to Afghanistan's rising stature and the sheer unpredictability that makes cricket a thrilling spectacle. Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MARCH 1, 2025



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Beyond our inner self, natural and material limitations shape our behaviour and outcomes



AJIT KUMAR **BISHNOI**

e, human beings, are under control at three levels. The first one is at the level of self. We have been blessed with faculties such as mind, intelligence, etc. And we have free will to decide what we would like to think, decide and do. However, thinking and deciding are in our control, but being able to do is not. Our actions are limited by circumstances, instruments we have, how much we can apply ourselves and providence of course.

Then, there are constraints like limited knowledge, facilities, nature, etc. Knowledge is unlimited, but we can have very limited knowledge only. Even good knowledge of a subject is difficult, never mind of countless subjects. This restricts us greatly. Nature is another limiting factor. The three modes of material nature, which are goodness, passion and darkness, determine how we would act manner. For example, a man predominantly in the mode of goodness will generally act wisely.

The same cannot be said about persons under the control of the modes of passion and darkness. They make many mistakes. And we all generate 'karmas' (deeds) by minds, words and bodies (senses). These actions of ours, both good and bad put us in the control of the Divine Authority, appointed by God; it works under the superintendence of God. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 9.10) Imagine the extent of their work.



They have to be alert to record all our actions 24x7. This is nothing compared to what they have to do to decide our rewards and punishments, their timings, etc. In this, they have to correlate how these will impact others associated with us. Therefore, the Divine Authority may delay the punishment to make its effect on the family a little less harsh.

But the guilty person has no hope of reprieve even if the punishment is to be delayed to the next life. Our 'karmaphalas' (fruits of actions) are carried from life to life. If the job of the Divine Authority is mind-boggling, what God does is simply unimaginable. God has to watch the interest of all His devotees, no matter where they are. Then, He must appropriately respond to our prayers every time. He must also guide us if we sincerely seek it. Additionally, God must help if we deserve to come out of troubles we have gotten into due to our past 'karmas'. This is nothing compared to what God does for the Creation; He has to keep it going for millions of years for us souls. Imagine if there was dissolution every hundred years or so. How will we feel? Then, God has innumerable galaxies to control. He has many planets where we can go to from the earth planet. There is heaven, where pious acts take us for limited periods. This is like going on a vacation to a dream place. There are many such planets which are higher and higher ending in the 'Vaikuntha' planet, which is the abode of God. Only those, who have been liberated reach there. They get freed from the cycle of birth and death. They remain there for good.Knowing all this, we must become wise, really wise. We must seek the shelter of God beginning now, not later. We must follow dharma to please God. God will guide and help. The divine Authority will be giving us more rewards than punishments, which we can tolerate easily. And we will be our best friends.

Finding money for 'freebies': BJP faces an uphill task



analys \$ 07

The challenge now is not just about delivering on electoral promises but also about balancing an already precarious fiscal equation that could see deficits skyrocket



aving swept the polls in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi with a clinch-ing 2/3rd majority, Rekha Gupta-led BJP - government faces the daunting challenge of having to find money to fulfil its poll promises. Amongst others, the BJP had promised Rs 2,500 a month to women under Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY); Rs 21,000 to preg-nant women; LPG cylinders for Rs 500 and nant women; LPG cylinders for Rs 500 and free cylinder on Holi and Diwali; a stipend of Rs 1000 a month to SC students pursuing technical and vocational courses; free education for needy students from KG to PG; free travel for students on Delhi Metro; Atal Canteens in Jhuggi Basti clusters providing nutritional meals for Rs 5 only; implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme and additional cover of Rs 5 lakh for senior citizens. BJP had also vowed to continue all existing schemes such as free electricity and free water (for monthly consumption up to a specified threshold) run by the erstwhile AAP – dispensation under the then Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal. How much will these freebies cost? Let us look at the Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) under which the party has promised BE DISCONTINUED. to give cash assistance of Rs 2500 per month to every woman. The number of women above the age of 18 years in Delhi is around 6700,000. @ Rs 2500 per month or Rs 30,000 annually to each woman, giving cash assis-tance to them all will require Rs 20,100 crore per annum $(0.67 \times 30,000)$. The assistance to pregnant women @Rs 21,000 per woman, taking a total of about 1500,000 pregnant women will cost around Rs 3150 crore annu-As for subsidy on LPG, take consumption of 4 cylinders (14 kg each) per household (HH) in a year. The current cost of supplying a cylinder is around Rs 1000. For two WHICH WOULD BE cylinders (Holi and Diwali) promised to be given free, the subsidy will be Rs 2000 whereas for the other two to be given @ Rs 500 each, the outgo will be Rs 1000. This gives an annual subsidy of Rs 3000 per HH. The current population of Delhi is 330 lakh. Taking an average of 4 members per HH,

we get a total of over 82.5 lakh HHs. Multiplied by Rs 3000 being the sub-sidy per HH, the annual outgo comes to Rs 2500 crore. Look at free education for needy students from KG to PG. According to the latest data available, around 10 per cent of Delhi's population was considered below the poverty line in 2011-12. On this basis, the number of poor persons comes to 33 lakh (330x0.1). About one-third of this or 11 lakh would be persons in the studying age 4 - 25 years. Taking the average expense of educating a child in India at the bare minimum of Rs 20,000 per annum, the total annual expense

NOW, CONSIDER on "needy students" in the city would be about Rs 2200 crore (0.11x20,000). The additional bur-THE IMPACT OF **BJP PROMISES.** den of these four promises alone on the Delhi government's budget is Rs MODI HAS 27.950crore GUARANTEED (20,100+3150+2500+2200). Other freebies would bloat this figure by THAT EXISTING several thousand crore. Let us take the total to be around Rs 30,000 SCHEMES WON'T crore.

come under the Centre's jurisdiction hence, the latter foots the bill for expenses on those functions. Second, Delhi being a major hub of economic activity, its propensity to garner its tax revenue in terms of higher GST collection besides VAT on petrol and diesel and excise duty and VAT on alcohol (these products are outside the GST regime) is greater.

The RD will increase drastically when we consider the cost of servicing the loans taken by various departments of the Delhi government such as the Delhi Jal Board (DJB): over Rs 70,000 crore and Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC): Rs 60,000 crore (according to the CAG, these are cumulative losses of DTC as at end of FY 2021-22 and would have ballooned further during the following three FYs till end March 2025). to Rs 91,000 crore during FY 2025-26 (assuming all other things remain The liability for servicing those debts unchanged). The RR is Rs 58,000 is vested entirely in the NCT government and should be reflected in crore, we get RD of Rs 33,000 crore its balance sheet. Look at the fiscal - up from Rs 3000 crore budgeted for FY 2024-25. deficit (FD) which is the excess of The incumbent government has total receipts over total expenditure. For FY 2024-25, it is estimated at Rs also promised to clean Yamuna River, clean the air, renovate/build 18,000 crore which is 80 per cent higher than the FD during FY roads, cleanse the drainage systems, 2023-24 at Rs 10,000 crore. The build and renovate hospitals and schools in fact, take up and complete surge is despite a steep reduction of a host of physical and social infraover 30 per cent in CE from the budget estimate (BE) of Rs 22,000

crore for FY 2024-25

crore from the National Small

Savings Fund (NSSF). The precar-

iousness of the state's finances has a lot to do with the galloping freebies and irregularities and mismanagement in running various schemes and overall governance on a monumental scale. During 2024-25, the cost of free electricity and free water alone is estimated to be about Rs 11,000 crore. According to CAG, during 2015-16 and 2021-22, the losses of DTC went up by Rs 35,000 crore and that was due to both free bus rides and misgovernance.

Now, consider the impact of BJP promises. Modi has guaranteed that existing schemes won't be discontinued. So, free electricity/water costing Rs 11,000 crore will stay. Add to this, the fresh guarantees which would be at least about Rs 30,000 crore. This takes the RE from Rs 61.000 crore during FY 2024-25

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

What is the current state of Delhi's finances?

SO, FREE For the current financial year (FY) 2024-25, the total expenditure of the ELECTRICITY/ Delhi government is estimated at Rs WATER COSTING 76,000 crore. This includes revenue expenditure (RE) of Rs 61,000 crore RS 11,000 CRORE and capital expenditure (CE) of Rs 15,000 crore. Against this, the total WILL STAY. ADD revenue receipts or RR (tax plus TO THIS, THE non-tax receipts including transfer from the Central government) is FRESH estimated at around Rs 58,000 crore. That leaves a revenue deficit GUARANTEES or RD (RR - RE) of Rs 3000 crore. This is disconcerting when seen in he backdrop of Delhi's potential to AT LEAST ABOUT generate substantial surplus given two fundamental factors working to RS 30,000 CRORE its advantage.

First, due to its special status of being NCT, three major functions name-ly law and order, police and land

structure projects needed for ensurcrore for FY 2023-24 to Rs 15,000 ing a good quality life for Delhiites. That means even if CE is restored to 2023-24 level Rs 22,000 crore, that If interest payments on loans taken by DJB and DTC (Rs 130,000 crore won't be enough. Even with this plus) which are merely adding to the insufficient level, the total expendimountain of debt on the books of ture will be Rs 113,000 crore. Minus those departments year after year RR of Rs 58,000 crore, we get FD of are also included, the FD would be Rs 55,000 crore. Put simply, the much higher. The situation had Centre will have to arrange for at come to such a pass that the then least Rs 55,000 crore to enable the CM Atishi had approached the BJP to live up to its promises for Centre seeking a loan of Rs 10,000 Delhi.

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

India's solar surge: Powering the journey to net zero 2070 India is charting an ambitious course toward Net Zero 2070, with solar energy emerging as the mainstay of its renewable revolution

ment to achieving Net Zero by 2070 is catalysing a dramatic shift in its energy sector, with solar power emerging as the principal driver of this technology costs, strong gov-ernment support, and an expanding skilled workforce have combined to place solar energy at the heart of India's renewable strategy. While the country has celebrated significant milestones in solar adoption, it also faces multifaceted challenges that require innovative policy interventions and strategic foresight to sustain its

momentum. Over the past decade, India has achieved remarkable progress oping countries. National in solar energy. The nation not only met its ambitious renew-

ndia's steadfast commit- able targets but exceeded them, with solar power now accounting for over 60 per cent of its renewable energy mix. By 2024, India surpassed the 100 GW milestone, establishing transformation. Abundant itself as a global leader in sunlight, rapidly decreasing technology costs, strong gov-Rajasthan's solar capacity exceeds 24 GW. Rapid expansion is evident in a 19 per cent increase in solar generation from 2023 to 2024, with solar installations making up over

two-thirds of new renewable capacity. India's role in the International Solar Alliance underscores its commitment to global solar collaboration, as the initiative seeks to mobilise over \$1 trillion in investments for devel-

agencies, particularly the Solar



have been vital in driving the development and implementation of solar projects under the National Solar Mission.

Despite these impressive achievements, significant obstacles remain on the path to full solar integration. One major challenge is the limited connection of solar installations to the national grid, with only 16 per cent of capacity Energy Corporation of India, currently integrated. This gap

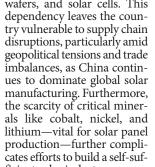
restricts the country's ability to fully exploit its vast solar potential. Moreover, there are stark regional disparities in solar development. While states like Rajasthan and Gujarat lead the charge, many eastern and northeastern regions lag behind, resulting in an uneven distribution of renewable resources. Financial hurdles also pose

serious challenges. Although government subsidies help reduce costs, the high initial capital required for large-scale installations, coupled with elevated interest rates and delayed payments, discourages private investment. Manufacturers struggle with a shortage of competitively priced solar cells, a problem compounded by strict Domestic Content Requirements that strain pro-



duction capabilities. These financial constraints not only hinder current project deployment but also threaten future expansion in the sector.

Another critical issue is India's heavy reliance on imported components. Despite having a domestic module production capacity of around 11 GW, India still depends on global supply chains for essential items such as polysilicon,



ficient solar industry

Local challenges add another layer of complexity. Land acquisition for solar projects often faces resistance from local communities and farmers, leading to protests, legal disputes, and, in some cases, violent confrontations. In Rajasthan, disputes over land rights have led to project cancellations, highlighting the

wafers, and solar cells. This need for transparent and inclusive processes that respect local interests and ensure fair compensation. Addressing these local concerns is essential for fostering community support and facilitating smoother project implementation.

To overcome these challenges, India must adopt a multifaceted strategy. Strengthening policy frameworks to provide long-term stability is crucial, as is enhancing inter-state cooperation and ensuring reliable access to energy data for effective monitoring. Public-private partnerships can expand solar adoption in underserved regions by providing risk mitigation instruments to attract investment. Promoting domestic manufacturing of solar panels and key components will reduce import dependency and bolster energy security. Additionally, investing in workforce development to build a skilled labor pool for solar installation, maintenance, and manufacturing will be vital for sustaining industry growth. By focusing on robust policy support, financial innovation, domestic manufacturing, and community engagement, India can significantly unlock the full potential of its solar resources. With sustained government backing and strategic collaboration between public and private sectors, the nation is wellpositioned to lead the global solar revolution. (The writer is assistant pro-

fessor IIM Mumbai; views are personal. Inputs from Supriya Kaushik and Asmita Tewari)





Money 08

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | MARCH 1, 2025

IN BRIEF



Forex reserve jumps to USD 640.479 billion

ndia's forex reserve jumped by USD 4.758 billion to USD 640.479 billion in the week ended February 21, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped by USD 2.54 billion to USD 635.721 billion. The reserves have been on a declining trend for the past several weeks due to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatility in the rupee. The forex kitty had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September 2024. For the week ended February 21, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by USD 4.251 billion to USD 543.843 billion, the latest data showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by USD 426 million to USD 74.576 billion during the reporting week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 73 million to USD 17.971 billion, the central bank said.



FretBox aims to reach 100 universities

ostel management solutions provider FretBox on Friday said it is targeting to triple operations to over 100 universities in 2025 and assist around 1.25 lakh students. FretBox provides AI-driven hostel management solutions to enhance convenience and security for students while streamlining administrative tasks for university staff. Since its inception in 2023, FretBox has seen rapid adoption across 13 states, with 35 universities using the platform. The user base has grown significantly, increasing from just 5,000 users in March 2024 to 60,000 in February 2025. The platform enables faster resolution of student complaints, allows students to share direct feedback with university administrators, and provides automated leave approvals, late entry tracking, and security alerts.

"FretBox aims to expand to 100 plus universities by 2025, i an ecos

'India needs to grow at average 7.8 pc to become high-income economy'

PNS NEW DELHI

India will need to accelerate reforms to achieve an average annual growth rate of 7.8 per cent for becoming a high-income economy by 2047, a World Bank report said on

Friday. To achieve this goal India would require reforms in financial sector as well as in land and labour market, the World Bank said in its India bolstering macroeconomic Country Memorandum titled stability. 'Becoming a High-

Income Economy in a generation'. Recognizing India's fast pace of growth averaging 6.3 per cent

between 2000 and 2024, the report notes that India's past achievements provide the foun-

dation for its future ambitions. "However, reaching the ambitious target of becoming a high-income economy by 2047 will not be possible in a business-as-usual scenario... for India to become a highincome economy by 2047, its GNI (gross national income) per capita would have to increase by nearly 8 times over the current levels; growth would have to accelerate further and to remain high over the next two decades, a feat

that few countries have achieved. "To meet this target, given

deepening their integration into the global economy. the less conducive external

environment, India would need to not only maintain ongoing initiatives but in fact expand and intensify reforms," the World Bank report said.

In recent years, India has introduced a host of structural reforms to transform the country into a global manufacturing hub, to boost infrastructure, improve human capital, and leverage digitization, while at the same time

"To reach high income by

2047, India's growth rate needs

to average 7.8 per cent, in real

terms, over the coming

decades... Only an 'accelerat-

ed reforms' package would put India on track to become

high-income by 2047," the

director Auguste Tano Kouame said lessons from

countries like Chile, Korea

and Poland show how they

have successfully made the

transition from middle to

high-income countries by

World Bank India country

report said.

ly impact the global economy. In their talks, both the leaders also decided to expand

with India in line with its partnerships with close allies Japan and South Korea. The deadline for concluding the trade deal that would be the largest of its kind globally

came over 17 years after the two sides first began negotiations for it. The negotiations for the pact was relaunched in June 2022 after they were suspended in 2013 due to a gap in ambition.

create a bold and ambitious roadmap for the India-EU partnership for the period beyond 2025. It will be launched during the next India-EU summit," Modi said. India is set to host the sum-

mit later this year.

India, EU set deadline to conclude mega FTA

PNS NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Friday agreed to conclude an ambitious India-EU free trade deal by this year amid fears that the Trump administration's threat of higher tariffs could adverse-

two-way defence cooperation, especially in the Indo-Pacific with Vonder Leyen announcing that the European Union (EU) was looking at firming up a security and defence pact

ucts.

"Today, we have decided to

The negotiations for the deal were not moving forward ostensibly in view of the EU's persistent demands that New Delhi cut tariffs on cars, wine and agricultural prod-

"We have prepared a blue-print for collaboration in the The EU Commission president, accompanied by the investment, innovation, green growth, security, skilling and mobility," he said. College of Commissioners or senior political leaders of the bloc's member nations began her two-day India visit on Thursday. It is the first such visit after the European parliamentary elections in June last. he said. In his media statement,

Echoing Modi, Von der Leyen said: "We have tasked Modi indicated resolve by the our teams to build on this two sides also to move forward

momentum and finalise our free trade agreement before the end of this year."

"We are expecting a lot of our trade negotiators, we told them they should surprise us," she said.

The prime minister described the growing India-EU cooperation on defence and security as a symbol of "mutual trust" and that both sides will take forward the engagement in areas of cyber security, maritime security and counter-terrorism.

"Both sides agree on the importance of peace, security, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region," he said, welcoming the EU's decision to join the India-backed 'Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative'.

on negotiations for an invest-"We will work together on ment protection pact as well as triangular development projects for sustainable and incluon geographical indications as part of broader efforts to sive development in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa, Modi said.

Von der Leyen argued that areas of trade, technology, now is the time to step up India-EU security and defence cooperation on land, sea and in space.

"We have directed our teams She called the Indian Ocean as a "lifeline for global trade" to conclude a mutually beneand said ensuring its security is vital, not just for India but ficial bilateral free trade agreement by the end of this year," for the whole world.

The remarks came amid China's increasing forays into the region.

'Agri water tech startups need Rs 500-600 cr investment'

PNS NEW DELHI

registered a growth of 12.2 per cent (y-o-y) as on the fortnight India's agriculture water ended January 24, 2025 (20.0 technology sector requires per cent for the corresponding investments of Rs 500-600 fortnight of the previous year). crore to achieve widespread Bank advances to industry adoption of smart irrigation recorded a growth of 8.2 per solutions even as the country faces a deepening water crisis, according to the latest report.

The study by DCM Shriram on "The Investment Mismatch in AgWater" highlights that despite agriculture consuming the largest share of water resources while contributing 16 per cent to GDP and employing 55 per cent of the work rce



dropped 4,152.65 points or

15.80 per cent from its lifetime

high of 26,277.35 hit on September 27, 2024. The market capitalisation

of BSE-listed firms eroded by a whopping Rs 93.91 lakh

PNS NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth tumbled by Rs 9 lakh crore on Friday, in tandem with a sharp decline in the domestic equity market, where the benchmark Sensex plunged 1,414 points following a bearish trend in global equities.

Fresh tariff threats that ignited global trade war fears and relentless foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiment, analysts said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark gauge tumbled 1,414.33 points or 1.90 per cent to set-tle at 73,198.10. During the day, it cracked 1,471.16 points

or 1.97 per cent to 73,141.27. ving the sharp decline

(USD 4.39 trillion).

economic growth, earnings coming in below expectations, and lingering foreign investors selling have been driving bearish trends at regular intervals," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra slumped over 6 per cent followed by IndusInd Bank which tanked more than

5 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Infosys, Tata Motors, Titan, Nestle, Tata Consultancy Services and Maruti were also among the major laggards.

HDFC Bank emerged as the only gainer from the pack. In markets

Growth in personal loans slows down to 14.2 pc: RBI data

PNS MUMBAI

Personal loan growth slowed down to 14.2 per cent in the fortnight to January 24, 2025, mainly due to subdued credit offtake of vehicle loans and credit card outstanding, according to the Reserve Bank data.

The RBI on Friday released data on sectoral deployment of bank credit for

January 2025 collected from 41 select commercial banks, accounting for about 95 per cent of the total non-food credit deployed.

On a year-on-year (y-o-y) basis, non-food bank credit as of the fortnight ended



agriculture and allied activities

boost investments.

for students, wardens, and administrators," Fretbox CEO Ashish Gupta said.



India, Japan renew currency swap agreement

ndia and Japan have renewed the USD 75 billion bilateral currencies swap agreement, the Reserve Bank said in a statement on Friday. The Bilateral Swap Arrangement (BSA) is a two-way arrangement where both authorities can swap their local currencies in exchange for the US dollar. The Bank of Japan, acting as agent for the Minister of Finance of Japan, and the Reserve Bank of India signed the Second Amendment and Restatement Agreement of the BSA, the central bank said. The renewed BSA is effective Friday (February 28, 2025). The size of the BSA remains unchanged up to 75 billion US dollars, the RBI said. It further said that Japan and India believe that the BSA, which aims to strengthen and complement other financial safety nets, will further deepen financial cooperation between the two countries and contribute to regional and global financial stability.

crore from last year September's record high of Rs in equities, the market capital-4,77,93,022.68 crore.

isation of BSE-listed firms "Domestic investors went eroded by Rs 9,08,798.67 crore into a panic mode and offloaded equities at will, as to Rs 3,84,01,411.86 crore weak global market cues Falling for the eighth straight day, the NSE Nifty sparked a major sell-off causing benchmark indices to crash slumped 420.35 points or 1.86 nearly 2 per cent. There is a lot per cent to 22,124.70.

of discomfort amongst the From its record peak of investors over Trump 85,978.25 hit on September 27 announcing imposition of last year, the BSE benchmark import levies on several index is down 12,780.15 points nations.

"Also concerns over slowing or 14.86 per cent. The Nifty

Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with deep cuts. European markets were trading mostly lower. US markets ended sharply lower on Thursday. "US President Donald

Trump's announcement of a 25 per cent tariff on imports from Canada and Mexico, effective March 4, along with additional proposed tariffs on China, intensified fears of escalating trade tensions.

BAND January 24, 2025, grew at 12.5 per cent (a three- cent (y-o-y) as on the fortnight

month high) as compared to ended January 24, 2025, com-16.2 per cent for the corresponding fortnight of the previous year (January 26, 2024), the previous year. the RBI said.

"Credit to personal loans segment registered a growth of 14.2 per cent (y-o-y) as on the product', 'chemicals and chemfortnight ended January 24, 2025, as compared with 18.2 per cent a year ago, largely due ing' recorded an accelerated to decline in growth rate in growth, RBI said.

sector struggles with efficiency and adequate fundpared with 7.5 per cent for the India has between 70-100 corresponding fortnight of active AgWaterTech star-

tups, but many risk closure Among major industries, due to investment hurdles, outstanding credit to 'petroleaccording to the report. "Limited data, long gestaum, coal products and nuclear fuels', 'basic metal and metal tion periods, and the high

proportion of small and marginal farmers make AgWaterTech less attractive to investors," it added.

EPFO retains 8.25 pc interest rate on deposits

PNS NEW DELHI Retirement fund body EPFO

on Friday decided to retain an interest rate of 8.25 per cent on employees' provident fund (EPF) deposits for 2024-25, as provided in the previous fiscal, benefitting over seven crore subscribers.

In February 2024, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) had increased the interest rate on EPF marginally to 8.25 per cent for 2023-24, from 8.15 per cent in 2022-23.

A labour ministry statement said,"CBT (Central Board of Trustees) recom-

mended 8.25 per cent annual rate of interest to be credited on EPF accumulations in members' accounts for the financial year 2024-25."

The ministry informed that the interest rate would be officially notified by the government, following which EPFO would credit the rate of interest to the subscribers' accounts

According to the statement, the decision on interest rate was taken at the 237th meeting of the CBT of the EPFO chaired by the Union Minister for Labour & Employment

Mansukh Mandaviya in New Delhi on Friday. The ministry

stated that compared to many other fixed-income instruments, the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) offers relatively high and stable returns, ensuring steady growth of savings.

The interest earned on EPF deposits is tax-free (up to a specified limit), making it a highly attractive investment option for salaried individuals.

The CBT, under the chairmanship of Mandaviya, took a series of decisions including enhancement of insurance benefits under Employees' Deposit-Linked Insurance (EDLI) Scheme.

Following the actuarial val-

uation of the EDLI scheme, the Board approved key modifications in scheme to provide greater financial security and support to the family of members. The ministry stated that the CBT approved the intro-duction of a minimum benefit for death within one year of service. A minimum life insurance benefit of Rs 50,000 will be provided in cases where an EPF member dies without completing one year of contin-

This amendment is expected to result in higher benefits for more than 5,000 cases of deaths in service, every year, it stated.

Govt says achieved goal of setting up of 10,000 FPOs

PNS NEW DELHI

The government on Friday said it has achieved the target of establishing 10,000 farmer pro-ducer organisations (FPOs) under a flagship central scheme. The 10,000th FPO, regis-

ical products' and 'all engineer-

tered in Khagaria district in Bihar, focuses on maize, banana and paddy and was launched recently by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The central scheme for "Formation and

Promotion of 10,000 FPOs was launched on February 29th 2020 with a budget outlay of Rs 6,865 crore till 2027-28. According to the agriculture ministry, the successful formation of 10,000 FPOs marks a "transformative milestone for the agriculture sector." This achievement not only boosts agricultural productivity and income but also contributes to rural job creation and economic resilience.

OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT, GOVERNMENT GENERAL HOSPITAL, JANGAON, TALANGANA TRADER NOTIFICATION Lr. No: 336LH IGGHUGNIZ23 Seeled Tenders are invited from the reputed firms to supply the (125) KV Generator by the

'India a beacon for confidence in global trade'

PNS MUMBAI

India is not just a key market but a beacon and an opportunity for confidence in global trade, shipping giant Maersk said on Friday amid its plans to invest around USD 5 billion in ports, terminals, and landside infrastructure development.

The Danish firm, which for the first time named one of its vessels, Albert Maersk, at an Indian port, also said that it was ready to invest more in developing ports with low emissions and great efficiency. The name-giving ceremony

of the newest dual-fuel

methanol container vessel took place at the APM Terminal at Ĵawaharlal Nehru port as a part of the vessel's maiden voyage to India.

Albert Maersk is the eleventh vessel in Maersk's fleet capable of operating on methanol.

"India is the world's fastestgrowing major economy, with a thriving manufacturing sector, a booming e-commerce industry, and expanding exports. This economic momentum stands in contrast to the stagnation of many other parts of the world, mak-



ing India not just a key mar-Union Ports, Shipping and Vaterways Minister Waterways ket, but a beacon and an opportunity for confidence in Sarbananda Sonowal, Raksha global trade," said Vincent Khadse, Minister of state for Clerc, CEO, A.P. Moller -Youth Affairs in the Maersk at the event here. Maharashtra Government and

Svendsen, Chief Keith Executive Officer at APM Terminals were also present at the event.

Stating that India has a 1.40-billion population and an "unmatched" geographic strength, and depends on a strong supply chain network to keep every corner of the coun-try connected, he wondered that how the company could not be fully committed to a

country that has such immense potential to shape the future of global commerce. Over the years, Maersk has made significant investments in India, in ports, terminals,

warehouses, offices, technology, and global capability centres, he said, adding recent expansion at this very important port terminal (Jawaharlal Nehru Port) here now allows us to accommodate larger vessels, while new developments at the company's APMT facility in Kerala will enhance capacity and efficiency, he said.

"Looking ahead, our commitment to India will only grow. We see an investment pportunity pipeline of around USD 5- billion in ports, terminals, and land-side infrastructure development," Clerc said.

Medical Superintendent, Government General Hospital, Jangaon, Telangana State. The tender forms along with schedule can be obtained from Olo. Medical Superintenden Government General Hospital Jangaon (Teaching) on payment of Rs.2000-00 through Demand Draft in favour of Medical Superintendent, Government General Hospital Jangson The sale of tender application will be from 10-03-2025 to 15-03-2025 by 3.00 PM during working days at Olo. Medical Superintendent, Government General Hospital Jangaon. The last date for submission of filed tender forms will be on 15-03-2025 at 3.00 P.M. The tenders ill be opened on 17-03-2025 at 11.00 AM in the chamber of District Collector, Jangaon. Sdi- Medical Superintender R.O.Me: 18757-PPICL/ADVT1/2824-25, Date: 28-02-2825 Gov ent General Hospital, Jangao



fotal value of Works: Rs.260.00 Lakhs.

Fender documents will be available in e-procurement market place in between Dt 01-03-2025, 10.30 AM to 10.03.2025, 4.30 PM. The tender detail can be seen by login into @ www.tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer (PH) Unit-III, Mahabubnagar @ Hyderaba R.O.Me: 18748-PPICL/ADVT/1/2824-25, Date: 28-62-2825

uous service, it informed.



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Saturday March 1, 2025

'Hyderabadis are slow to act, which affects promotion of MMA'

In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, Shaikh Khalid, the head coach of the MMA India team, shared his journey from a passionate martial arts enthusiast to one of the key figures in India's MMA landscape. He also reflected on the lack of awareness and infrastructure for MMA in Hyderabad

TEJAL SINHA tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

> haikh Khalid, the head coach of the MMA India team, has been an influential figure in the growth of mixed mar-tial arts (MMA) in India. His journey into the sport began in his childhood when he was captivated by martial arts movies, particularly those starring Mithun Chakraborty.

Despite his growing passion, Khalid's parents, like most, wanted him to focus on academics. But his love for martial arts only intensified, eventually leading him to make the bold decision to leave school and train full-time. He started his martial arts jour-ney with Indian mud wrestling before transitioning to Karate, where he trained for nearly eight years. Over time, he also picked up Judo, Muay Thai and Kickboxing, participating in several national-level competitions. However, it was Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) that truly sparked a transformative change in his career. Shaik Khalid, based in Hyderabad, India, is a highly accomplished martial artist and MMA

coach with 24 years of expe-rience. As an IMMAF Black Belt and one of the world's top 10 MMA coaches, he has dedicated his career to shaping the future of Indian MMA. Khalid is the founder and head coach of TAMMA and serves as Joint Secretary and Board Director of MMA India,

playing a pivotal role in the sport's development nationwide.

MMAF

Leading one of India's most dominant MMA teams-known as the "House of Champions" —Shaik Khalid has consistently guided his fighters to remarkable success. His team is a top contender at national events, frequently securing top-three rankings and clinching first-place finishes multiple times. Under his leadership, the team has produced numerous national and interna-tional champions, including gold medalists at the IMMAF World and Asian Championships. Since 2015, Khalid has represented India in various IMMAF

events as a coach and not long ago, as an official Cutman after com-pleting the IMMAF Cutman course in 2024. His debut as a Cutman



at the MMA India National Championship 2025 showcased his versatility and commitment to the sport. Recognised with the MMA India Best Coach Award for 2023-

2024, Shaik Khalid continues to lead and inspire, cementing his legacy as a driving force in Indian MMA.

For Khalid, MMA is more than just a physical sport. "MMA isn't just about fitness or fighting—it builds disci-pline, resilience, and self-defense skills," he explains. It's precisely these aspects of the sport that motivated him to make MMA more accessible to people, especially in a region where awareness of the sport was still limited. Being a proud Hyderabadi, Khalid takes immense pride in his city's growth and transformation over the years. "We are a generation that has wit-nessed tremendous development in the city. We've seen everything grow—from infrastructure to the attitude of people. The 'Nawaabi' vibe that once defined Hyderabad is now more educated, and people are participating in sports." However, he also notes some challenges in the local promotion of MMA. "Compared to other states, there's not much awareness of MMA in Hyderabad and Telangana. Other states conduct several MMA events, but that's not the case here," he adds. Despite this, he acknowledges the role that social media has played in increas-

ing awareness of MMA. "I would say that social media's cred-it is 70% for the growth of MMA," he affirms, recognizing the potential of online platforms to spread knowledge about the sport. Khalid also shares a lighthearted reflection on the Hyderabadi

approach to work. "Hyderabadi's never do their work on the same day and try to do it by the time," he laughs. "We wait a lot for the time. I believe this could also be a reason why MMA is not

much promoted or recognized here. Everyone thinks they'll do it at some point, but not right now."

it at some point, but not right now." Despite these challenges, there are aspects of Hyderabad that Khalid misses dearly when traveling. "One thing I always miss is the 'sukoon', the 'apnapan' and the culture. It's something we don't find in other places," he says with affection. He also shares his fondness for the local cuisine, although he notes that the citty's food culture is evolving. "Over time, there's been a shift from Biryani to Mandi. The Hyderabadi way of eating food and a lot of things have changed," he reflects, noting that there's now a vari-ety of food options available in the city. Khalid's concerns extend beyond just MMA; he believes there's a lack of support for sports in Hyderabad. "In other states, MPs and MLAs, no matter which party they belong to, put their best efforts into supporting sports. But in Hyderabad, I haven't seen anyone step forward to provide that kind of support," he observes. This lack of infrastructure and government backing is some-

This lack of infrastructure and government backing is some-thing that affects all sports, not just MMA. "Many of the sta-diums are in poor condition. Take LB Stadium, for instance—it has been around since the time of the Nizams, instance—it has been around since the time of the Nizams, but today it's in a pathetic state," he laments. Khalid empha-sises that proper development is needed to bring sports in Hyderabad up to par with other states and countries. "If young-sters get into sports, they won't fall into bad habits," he adds. On the global stage, MMA continues to gain recogni-tion. Khalid points out that MMA has even been included in the Youth Asian Games, a feat that many are unaware of. "Recently, MMA was included in the Youth Asian Games, but not many people are aware of it. It doesn't even included

but not many people are aware of it. It doesn't even include Karate, but it includes MMA," he points out. As someone who has represented India as a coach in about 14 countries, Khalid has witnessed firsthand the immense support and infrastructure these nations provide to their athletes. "The infrastructure and support from governments abroad are immense, but here in Hyderabad, it's almost nonexistent," he says, highlighting the disparity in sports development between India and other countries.

Despite these challenges, Khalid remains hopeful about the future of MMA and sports in Hyderabad. He believes that if the sport receives proper support and recognition, it can help shape the future of many young individuals. "There's a saying in Lucknow—'Muskuraiye, aap Lucknow mein hain," Khalid smiles. "Similarly, I would say for Hyderabad, 'Hyderabad aaye aur yahan ki Biryani aur chai zaroor pee ke jaayein.' I love Hýderabád," he concludes, proudly reiterating his deep connection to his city.

DIL DOSTI AUR DOGS: A HEARTFELT TALE THAT WAGS BUT DOESN'T HOWL Plot

et in Goa, Dil Dosti Aur Dogs follows multiple interconnectstories revo ing around the



weakness lies in the screenplay,

which lacks polish and often resorts

to cliché storytelling. If the writing had been more refined and the

emotional beats more naturally inte-

grated, the film could have been far

Dil Dosti Aur Dogs is an emotion-ally driven film that has its share of

touching moments but ultimately

lacks the storytelling finesse needed

to make a lasting impact. While dog

lovers will find certain scenes deeply

moving, the film's inconsistent tone,

unnecessary melodrama and scat-

The heart of the film is in the right

DIRECTED BY:

Viral Shah

PRODUCED BY: Jyoti

Deshpande, Masumeh Makhija,

and Viral Shah

CAST: Neena Gupta, Masumeh

Makhija, Sharad Kelkar, Kunaal

Roy Kapur, Keerti Kelkar, Tinu

Anand, Ehan Bhat, and Tridha

Chaudhary

Streaming on: JioHotstar

RATING: 2.5/5

more effective.

Verdict

Navigating new tax landscape

he government of India has presented the Income Tax Bill 2025, which has significantly changed India's taxation system. The amendment seeks to simplify tax laws, minimise confusion and promote economic growth. Under new regulations and amendments, taxpayers must be aware of these amendments to comply well with the new system.

Among the bill's most innovative aspects is streamlining taxation law by removing obsolete provisions and restructuring sections to facilitate better comprehensibility. It also introduces one "Tax year" in place of the current financial year and assessment year arrangement, with the advan tage of compliance ease for companies as well as taxpayers. The bill extends the renovated tax slabs of the Union Budget 2025-26



bond between humans and their pet dogs. A struggling couple, played by Sharad Kelkar and Keerti Kelkar, adopt a female dog, hoping it will bring joy into their lives after years of failing to conceive. Their world changes when the dog unex-pectedly gets pregnant, giving them a new perspective on parenthood. Meanwhile, hotel manager, played by Kunaal Roy Kapur insults a dog, which later drowns, leaving him guilt-ridden. In an attempt to make amends, he grows close to Tridha Choudhury's character, who runs a pet adoption center. Elsewhere, a lonely young girl played by Aarohi Patel, is searching for her lost dog, struggling to connect with her step-father, played by Ehan Bhat, in the process. Their journey of finding the dog helps them bridge their emotional gap. There's also a subplot about a dog-smuggling racket, adding an element of suspense. Finally, Neena Gupta's character, a traumatised elderly woman, finds comfort in adopting a stray dog, only to later face the heartbreaking realisation that it won't be with her forever. These lives cross paths throughout the film, each reflecting different aspects of companionship, love, and loss.

Highlights

The film's strongest moments are those that explore the unconditional love between humans and their pets. The emotional depth, especially the traumatised elderly woman's storyline is especially moving, as Neena Gupta brings grace to her role of a woman who finds new meaning in life through her dog, only to later deal with inevitable grief. Similarly, the bond of Arohi's character with her missing pet tugs at the heartstrings, as does the couple's journey of redis-covering happiness through their adopted dog. The Goa setting adds visual charm, and the film's heartfelt intent is evident throughout. Most importantly, the dogs themselves steal the show with their natural, unfiltered presence, making every scene featuring them delightful to watch.

Drawbacks

Despite its emotional core, the film suffers from weak execution and an inconsistent tone. Kunaal's character redemption arc feels rushed, and his

romance with Tridha's character lacks depth. Some storylines are unnecessarily exaggerated, such as the over-the-top action sequence in the climax, which feels completely out of place in a film centered on humananimal relationships. The screenplay struggles to balance realism with dramatisation, often leaning into outdated tropes that make certain moments feel forced. Additionally, the film's attempt to blend multiple genres-romance, drama, suspense-results in an uneven narra-

Performances

tive.

Neena Gupta stands out with a tered execution prevent it from being truly memorable. heartfelt performance, elevating the film's emotional quotient. Sharad place, but its narrative flaws dilute its emotional potential. If you're a pet Kelkar brings sincerity to his role, while Keerti Kelkar matches his lover looking for a feel-good watch, energy. Kunaal Roy Kapur's portraythis film offers some sweet and senal is decent, though his character arc lacks depth. Tridha Choudhury and timental moments-but don't expect Ehan Bhat are charming but don't get it to match the emotional depth of enough screen time to fully develop their characters. Aarohi Patel is classics like Hachi: A Dog's Tale or Old Yeller. impressive, capturing the innocence and determination of a child longing for her lost pet. Tinnu Anand makes an appearance but is underutilised. Ultimately, the real stars of the film are the dogs, whose presence brings authenticity and warmth to the narrative.

echnical Aspects

The cinematography captures Goa's scenic beauty well, but the film's overall visual appeal is hampered by average production quality. Editing is inconsistent, with some scenes stretched unnecessarily while others feel abruptly cut. The background score attempts to heighten emotions but is forgettable, and the songs fail to leave a lasting impact. The biggest

and provides more enhanced income tax exemptions and reliefs to salaried taxpayers. Certain other significant modifications include the modifications in HRA tax relief, enhanced TCS limits and relief on education loans.

With such modifications, taxpavers need to be alert while making wise financial choices. As a worker, a freelancer, or an entrepreneur, if you are aware of the 2025 income tax regime, you will be able to plan and optimize tax savings.

Simplification of tax laws

Another of the major objectives of the Income Tax Bill 2025 is simplification of tax laws and making them less complex to adhere to. The bill abolishes obsolete provisions and repeals comparable sections, thereby making the tax code simpler. Unlike the archaic Income Tax Act of 1961, which was a colossal 52 chapters and 823 pages long, the new law is relatively short, with only 23 chapters and 16 schedules on 622 pages. The new structuring aims at dispelling misunderstandings and alleviating the stress on individuals and businesses to lodge their taxes.

Standard tax year enforced

The important change includes enacting a uniform "Tax Year," which shall replace the former financial and assessment year configuration. The new 12-month block makes it easy for business enterprises and individuals to keep accounts and taxes. In the case of new entrepreneurs or professionals, the tax year would begin from when they set out or commence earnings, and thereby tax filing would become easy.

Updated tax slabs and rates

The new bill keeps the tax slabs and rates that were introduced in the Union Budget 2025-26, providing some stability for taxpayers. Now, individuals earning up to INR 12,00,000 won't have to pay any income tax. Plus, salaried taxpayers will get a standard deduction of INR 75,000, rais-ing the non-taxable income limit to INR 12,75,000. Taxpayers can pick between the old and new tax systems based on what works best for them.

Eyes on the new tax regime: FY 2024-25 vs. FY 2025-26

When we put side by side the income tax you will pay under the new tax regime in FY 2024-25 and FY 2025-26, it's quite clear that the latter holds the guarantee of paying less tax. For the ones with incomes up to INR 12 lakh, there will be no tax to pay in FY 2025-26, that is, more savings in your pocket. However, even if your income is more than that, you'll gain the tax savings ranging between INR 36,400 and INR 1,43,000.

Optimising tax with HRA: A strategy for couples

With the new tax slabs, the taxpayer has to analyse which regime provides the most savings. Married couples can employ tactical tax planning to avail themselves of the maximum benefits. A couple can select the old tax regime for claiming HRA and deductions by one spouse and the new regime by the other.

For instance, Disha and Rohan, a couple working in Mumbai, pay INR 60,000 as rent and earlier divided the amount equally to avail HRA deductions. By moving Rohan to the new regime and allowing Disha to claim the entire HRA deduction under the old regime, they can save INR 1.13 lakh in taxes. Such planning optimizes the use of exemptions and deductions.

Increase in TCS limits & education loan benefits

In an attempt to make compliance with tax smoother, the government has enhanced TCS ceilings as well as presented relief to loan repayments

Prime TCS revisions:

• Higher TCS level for foreign remittances: The LRS-driven threshold of TCS has increased from INR 7 lakh to INR 10 lakh, reducing tax consequences in the event of regular overseas transactions.

• Relief on education loan: Return of education loans availed from recognized financial institutions is exempt from TCS, thereby encouraging overseas education.

IMPACT ON PERSONAL FINANCES

Salaries and disposable income

The new tax system is meant to raise take-home pay for a wide range of taxpayers. Through the increase in non-taxable income levels and the scaling down of tax rates, individuals will feel lower tax burdens, which might boost spending and economic growth as a whole.

Housing and real estate benefits

Relief from tax on multiple houses: Two self-occupied houses can now be claimed by homeowners as tax-free. The tax was earlier levied on the notional rent of the second house.

• Higher TDS Limit on Rent: The TDS limit on rental income has been raised from INR 2,40,000 to INR 6,00,000 per year. Tenants should deduct TDS only when rent is higher than this amount, lessening the compliance burden for both landlords and tenants.

Investment and capital gains revision

The Income Tax Bill 2025 continues with the current capital gains tax structure but makes certain revisions:

Taxing High-Premium ULIPs: ULIPs with premium payments of over INR 2,50,000 in a year will now be subject to capital gains taxation. Long-term gains (over one year) are taxed at 12.5% after an exemption of INR 1,25,000, while short-term gains are taxed at 20%. This aligns the taxation of high-premium ULIPs with that of equity mutual funds.

• Debt Mutual Funds: Investors in debt mutual funds purchased after April 2023 can claim a tax rebate of up to INR 60,000 under the new regime, reducing tax burdens on fixed-income investments.

Cryptocurrency regulations

The Union Budget 2025-26 did not extend tax relief to crypto investors. The 30% tax on virtual digital asset (VDA) profits and the 1% TDS on transactions remain in place. However the Income Tax Bill 2025 makes reporting of cryptocurrency transactions obligatory on designated reporting entities for greater market transparency and compliance.

Other Tax Updates

• NPS Vatsalya: A taxpayer can now claim exemption of tax on NPS Vatsalya, along with a further INR 50,000 deduction under Section 80CCD(1B) in the previous tax regime. Withdrawals continue to be 60% tax-free, with 40% compulsorily utilised for annuities.

• NSS Withdrawals: From August 29, 2024, withdrawals from the National Savings Scheme (NSS) will be tax-free, including principal and interest, even if previous deductions were claimed.

• Extended ITR Filing Deadline: Taxpayers now have four years instead of two to file updated Income Tax Returns (ITRs).

(The author, Ajay Kumar Yadav, is the CEO and CIO of Wise Finserv.)

against education.



what's brewing?



The Young FICCI Ladies Organisation (YFLO) hosted a power talk titled "Redefining Glamour & Influence—A Power Talk for the Next Generation," featuring Shalini Passi, a visionary art patron, collector, and philanthropist. The event took place at The Leela in Hyderabad, providing a platform for insightful discussions on the evolving concept of glamour and influence in contemporary society. Shalini Passi shared her experiences and perspectives, offering valuable inspiration to the next generation.





Sanrakshan Kshamatha Mahotsav – SAKSHAM 2025, an annual campaign focused on raising awareness about fuel conservation, was successfully concluded at the N.T. Rama Rao Auditorium, Telugu University, Nampally, Hyderabad. The fortnight-long initiative, organized by the State Level Coordinator for the Oil Industry in Telangana under the aegis of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, was attended by esteemed dignitaries, including VSNV Prasad, IFS, Director - Civil Supplies, Government of Telangana.





The Telangana Handicrafts Development Corporation Limited, a state government undertaking, in order to provide marketing support to artisans, is organizing various events, including the Crafts & Textiles Mela", which will take place at NTR Stadium, Hyderabad. The event will end on March 9, 2025. This event, jointly organised with NABARD, was inaugurated by Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao, Shailaja Ramaiyer, IAS, Principal Secretary to Government, I&C (H, T&H), Vice Chairman, B.Uday Bhaskar, Chief General Manager (Nabard, T.S).





Quadric IT has unveiled a cutting-edge innovation at BioAsia, including the Reusable Smart Al-Based Notebook. Co-invented by Suman Balabommu, Kesari Sabniveesu, and Raghu Ram Thatavarthy, this revolutionary notebook combines Al-driven technology with sustainability, transforming the way we take notes while reducing environmental impact.



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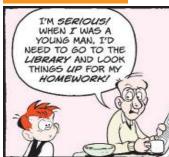
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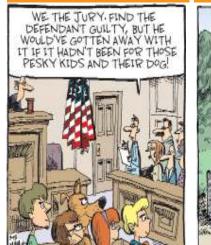
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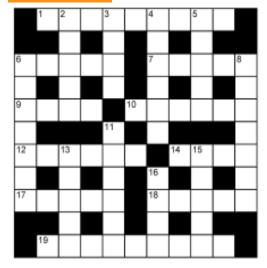
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tollywood

Sabdham is nothing but noise pollution in disguise

SURESH KAVIRAYANI sureshkaviravani@gmail.com

ctor Aadhi is well-known to both Telugu and Tamil audiences, having played lead roles in several Tamil films before taking on character roles in Telugu films like Sarrainodu, Ninnu Kori, Rangasthalam and Warrior. His first commercial breakthrough came with Eeram (2009), a Tamil supernatural thriller directed by Arivazhagan, which was later released in Telugu as *Vaishali* and became a hit. Eeram used water as its central supernatural element, and now, 16 years later, Aadhi and Arivazhagan reunite for Sabdham, where sound takes centre stage as the film's supernatural force. Released simultaneously in Tamil and its Telugu-dubbed version, *Sabdham* attempts to create a gripping horror-thriller but falls short.

STORY:

Three medical students from a college in Munnar commit suicide, but the college authorities try to cover it up, avoiding media and police intervention. The students suspect supernatural involvement behind these deaths. To dispel these fears, the college dean hires paranormal investigator Vyuma Vaidyalingam (Aadhi Pinisetty), known for using a special sound kit to communicate with spirits and solve cases.

During his investigation, Vyuma suspects a lecturer and house surgeon, Avanthika

(Lakshmi Menon) and discovers a disturbing history—42 mysterious deaths in the college library. Avanthika, who does not believe in ghosts, somehow has a deep connection to these events. Meanwhile, former chairman Diana (Simran) remains in a coma, adding another layer of mystery. Who is Nancy Daniel? What dark past is hidden within the library walls? And how are these deaths connected to Avanthika? To find out, you'll have to watch Sabdham.

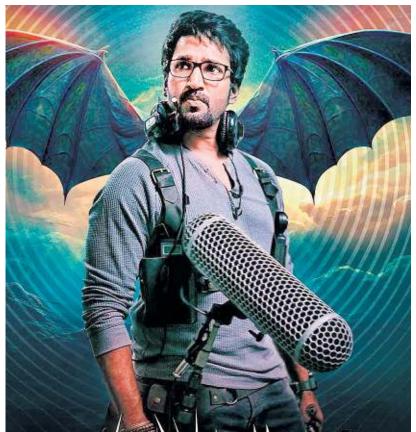
ANALYSIS:

Arivazhagan, who made a strong debut with *Eeram*, once again explores the super-natural genre, this time using sound as the key element. While there have been studies on the impact of sound in warfare and its therapeutic use in medicine, Sabdham takes the concept further, using it as a medium for paranormal investigation.

The first half is engaging, even though there are no chilling horror moments. The concept of a paranormal investigator communicating with spirits using sound might seem odd at first, but Aadhi's performance makes it somewhat believable. However, the film takes a predictable turn in the second half. As the mystery unfolds, the suspense vanishes, making the plot feel repetitive and uninspired.

PERFORMANCES:

Aadhi delivers a convincing performance as the paranormal investigator. Although the concept of such a character



might seem unrealistic, his portrayal adds credibility to the role. Lakshmi Menon as credibility to the role. Lakshmi Menon as Avanthika gives a solid performance, while Simran and Laila appear in brief but notable cameos. Redin Kingsley provides some comic relief, offering a few laughs in between the tension. The supporting cast, primarily from the Tamil industry, does well in their respective roles.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS:

Thaman's music, while effective in parts, becomes overwhelming in several scenes, diminishing the intended impact. A horror-thriller does not always need loud, jarring sounds to create fear—sometimes, a subtle score or silence works better. Arun Bathmanaban's cinematography is commendable, capturing eerie visuals well, but the film's overall execution doesn't do justice to its concept.

For a film titled Sabdham (which translates to "sound"), the excessive use of loud background music ironically becomes its biggest flaw. While thrillers and horror films

rely on sound to build tension, sometimes silence can be far more effective. Unfortunately, in Sabdham, the overuse of sound effects leads to irritation rather than suspense. The screenplay falls apart in the second half, with the linking of the deaths, suicides and the library's past executed in a routine and outdated manner. The antagonist's introduction just before the climax feels abrupt and forced. Despite an intriguing premise, Sabdham ultimately suffers from weak storytelling and missed opportunities.

VERDICT:

While Sabdham attempts to deliver a supernatural thriller with an innovative concept, it fails to maintain suspense and originality. The excessive use of sound, a predictable second half and outdated storytelling weigh the film down. Although Aadhi's performance is commendable, the film does not match the gripping ten-sion of Eeram. Sabdham ends up as a routine supernatural thriller with only a few genuinely engaging moments.

Cast: Aadhi, Lakshmi Menon, Simran, Laila, Redin Kingsley, Rajiv Menon, and others **Cinematographer:** Arun Bathmanaban Music Director: S. Thaman Producers: Siva, S. Banupriya Siva Director: Arivazhagan Rating: 2/5

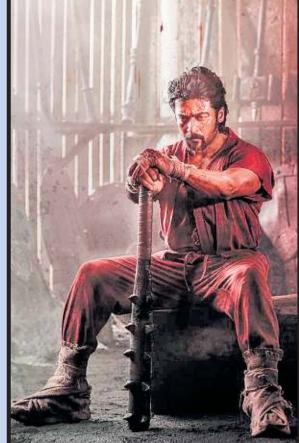


Kiara Advani, Sidharth Malhotra to welcome their 'greatest gift' soon pleased with the decision, citing

Anurag Kashyap's makes his Telugu debut with Dacoit



Rollywood director and actor Anurag Kashyap has been actively appearing in South Indian films



n a joyful revelation, Bollywood power couple Kiara Advani and Sidharth Malhotra took to social media on Friday to share some wonderful news: they are expecting their first child. The couple posted an adorable picture of baby socks held in their hands, accompanied by a heartwarming caption that read, "The greatest gift of our lives. Coming soon." Their announcement was met with an outpouring of love and congratulations from celebrities and fans alike. Shilpa Shetty expressed her excitement with a sweet "Awwwww congratulations are in order," while Rakul Preet Singh couldn't contain her happiness, commenting, "Omggggggg congratulations guys. so so happpy." Ekta Kapoor also joined in on the celebration, humorously sharing, "Raaaataaan will truly be lambiyaaan, sleepless nights r here." Kiara and Sidharth, who tied the knot in a beautiful ceremony in February 2023 in Rajasthan, have been one of the most loved couples in Bollywood. The pair, who

had been

dating for

several

years

before their wedding, first

crossed paths at a

party after Kiara wrapped up filming for Lust Stories. During a memorable appearance on Koffee with Karan, Kiara shared a heartfelt and romantic story about Sidharth's proposal. She revealed that he popped the question during a special dinner at a Michelin-star restaurant in Rome. "He planned the works. He had done this candlelight dinner. We go back after dinner and he takes me up for a walk. We go up and suddenly the violinist comes out of the bushes playing and sweetly, his little nephew is taking our video from behind the bushes. He then goes on one knee and proposes. I was not expecting it that night, so I was so overwhelmed, I didn't say anything," Kiara

> recalled. With their exciting news, Kiara and Sidharth are undoubtedly entering a new chapter in their lives filled with love. joy and the thrill of parenthood. Fans and friends alike eagerly await the next steps in their beautiful journey together.

Sethupathi's Tamil film Maharaja and also appeared in Viduthalai Part 2 (Tamil) and a Malayalam film. Now, Kashyap is set to make his Telugu debut with Dacoit, starring Adivi Sesh in the lead role. The film is being made simultaneously in Hindi, prompting the makers to cast Kashyap in a key role. Mrunal Thakur plays the female lead

Anurag Kashyap has joined the project in a powerful role, portraying a fearless police inspector who is a staunch Ayyappa devotee and has zero tolerance for corruption. According to the makers, his character is sharp-minded, witty and sarcastic, adding depth to the film's intense narrative filled with action, emotion and drama. Dacoit follows the journey of a convict seeking revenge on his ex-girlfriend, who betrayed him. As he devises a dangerous plan to trap her, the story unfolds into an emotionally charged saga of love, betraval, and vendeance.

"Playing a police officer who is an Ayyappa devotee is both fun and challenging. The conflict between duty and dharma, and his approach to the job with a dry sense of humor, makes the character fantastic," said Kashyap about his role in *Dacoit*. He also expressed excitement about the bilingual shoot, saying, "Getting the same impact in both languages is a challenge, but I'm thoroughly enjoying it."

The film marks the directorial debut of Shaneil Deo, with Supriya Yarlagadda producing and Suniel Narang co-producing. The story and screenplay have been jointly crafted by Adivi Sesh and Shaneil Deo.

Sithara Entertainments acquires Telugu rights for Suriya's Retro

Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada industries. Some dubbed films are even securing major theatrical releases, sometimes clashing with multiple new releases on the same day. In response to this growing demand. Sithara Entertainments has acquired the Telugu theatrical rights for Retro, the much-anticipated Suriya-starrer. The film, which has already garnered attention with its powerful teaser, is set

to release on May 1.

Not long ago, Sithara Entertainments has distributed

f late, Telugu audiences (Telugu) and *Brahmayugam* (Malayalam), further expand-ing its reach across industries. Now, with Retro, the production house is bringing another high-profile Tamil film to

Telugu audiences. Directed by Karthik Subbaraj, *Retro* stars Pooja Hegde as the female lead, with music composed by Santhosh Narayanan. The film is produced by Suriya and Jyotika under their production banner. With Sithara Entertainments

backing the Telugu release, *Retro* is expected to make a strong impact in both Tamil and Telugu markets. Fans are eagerly waiting to see Suriya in films like Leo (Tamil), Devara this much-hyped project.

Sankranthiki Vasthunn<mark>am</mark> to stream on ZEE5 from March 1

mong recent Telugu releas-es, Sankranthiki Aes, Sunkrumman Vasthunnam stands out as the only unanimously declared blockbuster. Starring Venkatesh, the film became the highestgrossing Telugu film at the regional level, marking a major milestone for the veteran actor at the age of 65. Directed by Anil Ravipudi and produced by Dil Raju, the film not only earned critical acclaim but also helped the producer recover losses from Game Changer.

Now, this family entertainer is gearing up for its OTT and satellite premiere after a sensational theatrical run. It will have a unique dual premiere on Zee Telugu and ZEE5 on March 1 at 6 PM. Additionally, the film will be available in multiple languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam.

Aishwarya Rajesh and Meenakshi Chowdhary play the female leads, while child artist Revanth delivers a hilarious performance, which is considered one of the film's highlights.

The story revolves around retired police officer YD Raju (Venkatesh), who leads a peaceful life in the Godavari region with his wife, Bhagyalakshmi (Aishwarya Rajesh). However, his quiet life is disrupted when his ex-girlfriend, Meenakshi (Meenakshi Chowdhary), reenters his life, pulling him into a high-stakes rescue mission involving a renowned entrepreneur.

Blending family emotions with Sankranthiki comedy, Vasthunnam has been widely praised for its engaging narrative and humor.





sports 12

Hockey India unveils performance-based system for national championship

PTI NEW DELHI

ockey India on Friday unveiled a new format with a promotion and relegation system for the Senior Women's National Championship to be held in Panchkula from March 1 to 12.

The competition will feature 28 teams divided into three divisions titled 'A', 'B' and 'C'. The new format aims to enhance competition but also provides intends to provide a pathway for teams to ascend to higher divisions or risk relegation based on their performances.

The introduction of the promotion and relegation system is a significant step in raising the standard of hockey across the country," Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey said.

"It ensures that every match in the Championship holds importance, whether it's a battle for the title or to avoid relegation. We look forward to an exciting tournament where teams can showcase their skills and aim for the

top." The top 12 teams will compete in Division A which will be further split into four

WPL: RCB looks for

heel.

parting victory over a fatigued inconsistent, while Australian

Delhi Capitals (DC) outfit veteran Ellyse Perry, despite

here on Saturday, before the being in sensational touch,

Women's Premier League suffered a rare failure with a

(WPL) moves to Lucknow for maiden WPL duck against

season of WPL with two wins been equally underwhelming.

in Vadodara, but their Frontline pacers Renuka

victory against DC

pools of three teams each and will play in a league format within their respective pools. The top two teams from each pool will advance to the quarterfinals, scheduled for March 9, followed by the semifinals on March 10 and the final and 3rd/4th place play-off on March 12.

next edition. earning Pool B.

The bottom two teams will be

relegated to Division B for the bottom two will be relegated to Division C. No knockout Nine teams will compete in rounds will be held in Division B, with the goal of Division B; the league earning promotion to Division A. Here, five teams standings will determine promotions and relegations," are in Pool A and four are in ĤI said.

Seven teams in Division C "The top two teams will earn will vie for promotion to promotion to Division A for Division B which will have the next season, while the three teams in Pool A and

four in Pool B. Division C will also only play league matches, with the top

securing teams two promotion to Division B. During the league stage, teams in all three divisions will earn points based on their performance. Each team will be awarded three points for a

win, one point for a draw, and

no points for a loss. In Division A, the league stage will culminate with the knockout rounds, while Divisions B and C will conclude with final standings determined solely by league matches.

Division A Pool A: Hockey Haryana, Hockey Association of Odisha, Hockey Karnataka Pool B: Hockey Maharashtra, Manipur Hockey, Hockey Puniab Pool C: Hockey Jharkhand,

Hockey Mizoram, Hockey Unit of Tamil Nadu **Pool D:** Hockey Madhya Pradesh, Hockey Bengal,

Uttar Pradesh Hockey Division B

Pool A: Telangana Hockey, while Hockey Uttarakhand, Assam Chithambaram Hockey, Hockey Rajasthan, Hockey Association of Bihar Pool B: Delhi Hockey, Chhattisgarh Hockey, Hockey the second round of the Prague Masters here. Chandigarh, Hockey Himachal

Division C Pool A: Kerala Hockey, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu Hockey, Hockey Gujarat Pool B: Hockey Andhra Pradesh, Le Puducherry Hockey, Hockey Arunachal, Hockey Jammu and Kashmir.

Dai Van drew his second game on the trot with Sam Shankland of the United States, top seeded Wei Yi from China opened his account after splitting the point with Dutchman Anish Giri, and Quang Leim Le of Vietnam achieved the same result against Navara David from Czech Republic.

Chithambaram Shankland in lead on 1.5 points out of two games. They are followed by Giri, Le, Dai Van, David, Keymer and

Ediz and Wei Yi share the last spot on a half point apiece from their two games. On a day when world champion Boris Spassky breathed his last. Chithambaram's victory had traits of the Russian's style of play to go for the kill at the first opportunity and not let it slip. The Queen's gambit accepted may have a solid reputation with black pieces but the young Indian cavalry is all out humiliating 3-0 Test defeat on to breakout of that stereotype. India, becoming the first How else could one explain Chithambaram's choice of touring side to seal a series

New Zealand excited to play in different conditions: Bracewell

PTI DUBAI

New Zealand off-spinner Michael Bracewell on Friday brushed aside any talks about India getting an unfair advantage in the ongoing Champions Trophy by playing all their games in Dubai, simply saying that his team was "excited to try and play in different conditions". Rohit Sharma's team is playing all its matches in Dubai, and even the final will be held here if India goes the distance.

tournament here – against India on Sunday – after their last two games were held in Pakistan.

Some cricketers, including South African top-order batter Rassie van der Dussen and former Australia skipper Pat Cummins, have said India are in an advantageous

New Zealand will be playing their first match of the



position as they have played all their games at one venue while other teams have had to travel to different venues in Pakistan. India had refused to travel to

Pakistan for the tournament citing security reasons. "Look, it is what it is. It's been

decided, and that's the way it is, and there's no point dwelling on that," said Bracewell, when asked if India have unfair advantage in Dubai.

"It's part of what makes it exciting. I personally think it's coming to a different ground and trying to figure out those different conditions. Yeah, not much more to say on that other than we're excited to try and learn and play in different conditions," added the 34-year-old off-spinner.

good idea to train hard before

Chithambaram, who has been knocking hard on the doors of elite circles, scored his first victory with black pieces after squeezing himself out of Dai Van.

danger zone in his first-round game against Czech Grandmaster Nguyen Thai The Indian was involved in the

sole decisive game of the day in the 10-players round-robin format, while the other matches ended in draws.

With seven rounds to go, joined

Praggnanandhaa.

Praggnanandhaa draws against Gurel Ediz

R

PTI PRAGUE **n**randmaster

luxury of a dynamic centre? It was an inch-by-inch invasion that won GPraggnanandhaa played out a second straight draw Chithambaram a pawn in the middle game and the trade of against Turkey's Gurel Ediz queens was later forced by the Indian to harp on the better possibilities for his troupe. Aravindh crashed through the defences of Germany's Vincent Keymer in Chithambaram was quite unstoppable as he kept

increasing the pressure till Keymer walked in to a lost rook and pawns endgame - it took 45 moves in all.

Praggnanandhaa has shown his ability to play all openings with either colour and his choice of French defence turned out to be a good one guaranteeing an equal game.

The lone problem was to make something out of an equal position and the 16-year old Turk proved why he is hailed as one of the brightest among young Europeans, as he gave a little away.

The players signed the peace on move 46 when it was evident the rook endgame did not offer chances for either of them.

In the challengers' section which is being held simultaneously, Divya simultaneously, Divya Deshmukh broke out of her shackles to score an impressive victory over Richard Stalmach

of Czech Republic. The adage about the King being a strong piece in the endgame came right for Divya, even though her position oscillated between better and

winning. In the end, Divya had two connected passed pawns in the middle of the board, well aided by her marching king. The game lasted 50 moves.

Results (round 2): Vincent Keymer (GER, 1) lost to Aravindh Chithambaram (IND, 1.5); Wei Yi (CHN, 0.5) drew with Anish Giri (Ned, 1); Nguyen Thai Dai Van (CZE, 1) drew with Sam Shankland (USA, 1.5); Gurel Ediz (TUR, 0.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (IND, 1); David Navara (CZE, 1) drew move order that gave white the with Le Quang Leim (VIE, 1).

He said New Zealand doing

consistently well against India in ICC tournaments was because of his players not putting themselves under pressure. New Zealand recently inflicted a

The New Zealander opined that the pitches here would aid spin and it would be a win in India in 13 years.

the game against India. "The wickets here have looked like they've taken a bit

of a spin. So, it'll be good to try and get used to the wickets as quickly as we can. We've obviously enjoyed the pitches in Pakistan.

"And I think we've got a pretty well-balanced side to play in any condition. So hopefully, we can continue to do that and adjust to what's in front of us. I think that's been the strength of our side, adjusting to the surface. So, hopefully, we continue to do that as a side," he added.

tournament caravan the shifted to their home ground M Chinnaswamy here. Three consecutive defeats, including a heartbreaking loss in the Super Over to UP Warriorz, have left them reeling. Placed third on the table and

PTI BENGALURU

Defending champions Royal Challengers (RCB)

Bengaluru will be determined

to give their home fans a

its third leg. RCB had begun the third

fortunes have nosedived since

winless at home so far, RCB will be desperate to bounce back against a Delhi Capitals side facing the challenge of playing back-to-back games before the WPL heads to Lucknow.

The Meg Lanning-led Capitals will have little recovery time as they take on Mumbai Indians in a top-of-the-table clash on Friday before locking horns with RCB the very next dav.

day. RCB's struggles have been glaring in both batting and bowling. Their batting unit collapsed in the defeat against Gujarat Giants on Thursday, with skipper Smriti Mandhana's form being a main concern Her 81 against major concern. Her 81 against DC remains her only notable their inconsistencies.

lacked consistency, often erring in line and length. Spinners Georgia Wareham, Ekta Bisht, and Kanika Ahuja have struggled to exert control in the crucial middle overs, compounding RCB's woes further.

Guiarat Giants.

Singh and

knock in five innings, as spin

continues to be her Achilles'

Her opening partner, England's Danni Wyattopening

Hodge too has been

The bowling department has

im Garth have

Delhi Capitals, too, have endured an inconsistent campaign, with two losses sandwiched between three wins. Their batting lineup has finally started firing with Shafali Verma and Jess

Jonassen finding form. However, skipper Lanning continues to struggle at the top. Jemimah Rodrigues and Annabel Sutherland have provided occasional fireworks in the middle order, but DC

in the middle order, but DC will seek more consistency from their batting unit. In Shikha Pandey, Marizanne Kapp, young Titas Sadhu, Sutherland, and Minnu Mani, DC boast a formidable bowling attack, making them a dangerous opponent despite

UTT sixth season to West Ham beats Leicester in Premier League begin from May 29

PTI NEW DELHI

The sixth edition of Ultimate Table Tennis (UTT), the sport's premier league in India, will be held from May 29 to June 15 in Ahmedabad, the organisers announced on Friday. The state-of-the-art EKA

Arena, a venue that has staged said. the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup and 2019 Intercontinental Cup (football), will be the venue for the event that will be in Ahmedabad for the first time.

As UTT continues to grow, eight teams featuring top Indian and international table tennis stars will battle for the crown, with defending champions Goa Challengers looking to claim a historic

PTI 📕 LONDON

third title. "Ultimate Table Tennis has been instrumental in transforming the table in transforming the table tennis landscape in India, providing our players with an unparalleled platform to compete against top international talent," Table Tennis Federation of India Secretary Kamlesh Mehta

The upcoming season will feature eight teams split into two groups of four for the draw, with each team playing five ties in the league stage -facing all three opponents in their group once and two randomly drawn teams from

the other group. The top four teams at the end will advance to the knockout rounds, leading to the grand finale on June 15.

West Ham handed relegation-threatened Leicester its fourth straight Premier League loss by beating Ruud van Nistelrooy's team 2-0. Leicester failed to score in each of those defeats — and Ruud

allowed a total of 12 goals to remain 19th in the standings, five points from safety. The Foxes have lost 11 of their past 12 league games.

Tomas Soucek scored in the 21st minute for the home team at London Stadium and the Hammers doubled the lead when Jarrod Bowen's strike deflected off Jannik Vestergaard for an own goal just before halftime. Leicester shook up

Nistelrooy in charge. In 14 Premier League games its coaching staff after last Friday's 4-0 home loss to under the Dutch manager,

Brentford but kept Van



first time this season. Graham Potter, who replaced the fired Julen Lopetegui as manager seven weeks ago, said Thursday's victory was a "professional performance," following up from a 1-0 victory at Arsenal

last Saturday. "For us, we're just delighted with two wins, two clean sheets and six points," he said of the mini-run.

Champions Trophy: South Africa eyes semifinal spot against England

PTI KARACHI

 $A^{\,\rm s}$ the battle for the semifinals intensifies in Group B, top-ranked South Africa will aim to assert their dominance and secure a spot in the final four when they a spot in the final four when they face a struggling England in a high-stakes Champions Trophy (CT) clash here on Saturday. Unlike Group A wherein two best sides – India and New Zealand –

have sailed through with ease into the knockouts, Australia, Afghanistan and South Africa in Group B are locked in for an intense battle over the two days for the remaining two semifinal berths.

A crushing loss by eight runs to Afghanistan not only sent England out of the contention for the semifinals but also kept the Asian team's hopes alive of making to the final four, which has kept both South Africa and Australia on tenterhooks.

Afghanistan will take on Australia on Friday in Lahore riding on the big wave of confidence from their

last outing between the two teams in the 50-over format.

The Afghans had pushed Australia to the brink in their last meeting in the 2023 ODI World Cup before Glenn Maxwell's sensational 201 not out turned the tables.

While there are possibilities of the contest being affected by rain, a win for Afghanistan will be enough for them to seal a spot in the semifinal, as Australia's defeat will leave the Steve Smith-led side locked in for a battle with South Africa for the second and final

Arrica for the second and final spot from this group. South Africa (3 points, 2.140 NRR) are likely to progress if Australia (3 points, 0.475 NRR) beat Afghanistan (2 points, -0.990 NRR), even if the Proteas lose to England because of their healthy NRR.

A favourable result should not be too difficult for South Africa who have all their bases covered and more importantly, have their key players in-form compared to a misfiring England, who are overly with Australia after a washout in



dependent on Joe Root.

Rawalpindi — the Proteas had

Bavuma, Rassie van der Dussen crushed Afghanistan by a massive and Aiden Markram hit a half-107 runs. Ryan Rickelton struck a century each to power South century while skipper Temba Africa to a formidable 315/6

to bundle out Afghanistan for a mere 208.

Leicester has two wins, one

"We were way too passive,"

Van Nistelrooy told TNT

draw and 11 losses.

While on-paper, South Africa are a formidable unit and have been the team to beat in recent ICC events, their overall form over the last one year or so doesn't inspire confidence as South Africa have lost eight of their last 12 ODIs and won only four since January 2024. South Africa had also failed to make the tri-seires final in Pakistan also involving New Zealand, prior to the Champions Trophy, and Bavuma's side will be required to find consistency against a hurting England who will be determined to sign off on a high. Barring Root, England do not inspire much confidence as they are amid a losing streak which began with a 0-3 hammering by India before this tournament.

Root's 120 was the only bright spot for England against Afghanistan as the venerable batter was the only one to convert

batting first, following which the bowlers produced a unified show his start and show the promise to do the job for his side, which do the job for his side, which ideally should have been completed but the 2019 World Cup winners lacked the gumption. England, who had begun the tournament with a defeat to Australia, are likely to go through changes in terms of leadership but before all that unfolds, Jos Buttler would be keen to rally his troops around for one final laugh. Teams (from):

England: Jos Buttler (c), Jofra Archer, Gus Atkinson, Tom Banton, Harry Brook, Rehan Ahmed, Ben Duckett, Jamie Overton, Jamie Smith, Liam Livingstone, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Saqib Mahmood, Phil Salt, Mark Wood.

South Africa: Temba Bavuma (c), South Africa: femba Bavuma (c), Tony de Zorzi, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs, Rassie van der Dussen, Corbin Bosch.