development"

- K Rammohan Naidu, **Union Civil Aviation Minister**

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EX-SEBI CHIEF, 5 OTHERS



'Cinema should inspire, not disgust': Former vice president urges FILMMAKERS

Gaddar Film Awards from Ugadi

The Congress government has now decided to present Gaddar Film Awards from Ugadi and support theatre artistes, said Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu. He attended the Bhakta Ramadas Jayanthi celebrations organised by the Telangana Sangeetha Nataka Academy at the LB Stadium Indoor Stadium on Sunday, along with Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar and ...

Bodies of 3 more workers recovered

The bodies of three labourers were pulled out from the avalanche-hit Border Roads Organisation (BRO) camp in Chamoli on Sunday, bringing the death toll to seven, while efforts were on to rescue another missing worker on the third day of the operation. Army doctors said 46 workers who were earlier rescued have been brought to the military hospital in Jyotirmath while one with a spinal cord injury was airlifted to AIIMS, Rishikesh. Three

Goyal's US visit for trade talks today

With India and the US gearing up to start negotiations for a proposed bilateral trade agreement Commerce and Industry Minister Pivush Goval's Washington visit will begin on Monday according to an office Goyal is likely to hold talks with US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, the official said. During the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, India and the US announced their commitment to more...

Praggnanandhaa scores second win

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa scored his second victory on the trot, outwitting Vincent Keymer of Germany to join compatriot Aravindh Chithambaram at the top on three points after the end of the fourth round of the Prague Masters here. Aravindh survived some initial hiccups before signing peace with Sam Shankland of the United States, while top seed Wei Yi of China finally found his form at the expense of local star David Navara. Anish Giri of Netherlands played out his fourth draw in as many games with...

Modi wants to do good to TG; kishan opposes it

PNS HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to do many things for Telangana but the Union Minister of Coal and Mines, G. Kishan Reddy, is playing the role of a 'Saindhav,' Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said.

"Modi is good...he wants to do something...but Kishan Reddy is playing the role of a Saindhav ...the problem is not there, it is here...the crookedness, the deceit is here...that is why Kishan Reddy was targeted...The problem is not Modi...the problem is Kishan Reddy..Modi is sympathetic to Telangana but Kishan Reddy is resentful...Kishan Reddy is in pain as his 'secret friend' KCR lost the elections...I don't understand Kishan Reddy's sadness...Shouldn't we be here? Shouldn't we win, shouldn't we



CM Revanth Reddy addressing the public meeting at Wanaparthy on Sunday

social welfare schemes," the CM said.

'Use robots to locate trapped workers'

Wanaparthy on Sunday, the CM said do good for the people? It is not good for Kishan to be impatient seeing our that Kishan had claimed that the Centre had sanctioned the Warangal that Kishan had claimed that the

Addressing a public meeting at

Airport due to his efforts. "However, Kishan is 'blocking' permission for the Metro Rail Project, the Musi Project, the Regional Ring Road, water allocation for the Palamuru Ranga Reddy Lift Irrigation Project and the Kaleshwaram Project," the CM said.

Kishan is taking credit for all development projects in Telangana,

CM, DCM going to **Delhi today**

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka are going to Delhi on Monday. It is learnt that they will discuss with the Union Ministers on funds to be given to the State. It is also learnt that the CM and DCM would also meet the leaders of various political parties on 42 per cent BC reservations issue as the government is going to introduce it in Telangana Assembly and pass it and send the same to the Centre for approval of Parliament.

two crore jobs every year and by now he should have given 24 crore jobs.

"How many jobs has Modi given to Telangana? Kishan should disclose the job details. Modi gave only two jobs. One for Kishan Reddy and one for Sanjay as Union Ministers from Telangana," he said.

The CM said the Centre did not ne CM said. give even a single Rupee when He said Modi promised to create Secunderabad Continued on Page 2

Harish was partying in Dubai during SLBC tragedy: CM





Rammohan PNS HYDERABAD

Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu said Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had advised him to develop Telangana on par with Andhra Pradesh.

"Chandrababu told me that as a Union Minister, I must work for the people of both Telugu states. Develop Telangana as you develop Andhra Pradesh. The NDA Government is sincerely working for the development of Telangana. We are using every opportunity available to develop Telangana," Rammohan said.

He said the Centre will set up manufacturing units for the aviation and half years," he said. **Continued on Page 2** BRS not cooperated for Warangal airport:

"The Centre is focused on

Telangana's development. The only thing is that the state should ensure land acquisition. The Centre is

waiting for land. Usually, the construction of an airport takes 36

months. However, the Centre is

focused on the Mamnoor Airport

and will complete it in two-and-a-

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

Rammohan Naidu

It is the people who achieved Mamunur Airport and not any political party, Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan

Naidu said here on Sunday. He said the delay in the construction of the Mamunur Airport is due to the BRS admin's non-cooperation with the Centre. The Centre will complete. the construction of the Mamunuru Airport in two-andfor it, he added.

Rammohan said that metropolitan cities like New Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai are going to have two airports due to the heavy rush. Similarly, the Begumpet Airport will become a second airport for Hyderabad soon if air traffic increases. Continued on Page 2

Meenakshi to start 'cleansing' Congress from tomorrow

Natarajan, swung into action declaring to start

ing' the Telangana Congress unit. Meenakshi is going to hold a meeting with the leaders of Parliament constituencies on

Tuesday. She would have a meeting with the Congress leaders of Medak Parliament constituency at 2 pm and with Malkajgiri constituency leaders at 5 pm at the Gandhi Bhavan. The Congress had lost the election in both Medak and Malkajgiri. TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar

The newly appointed AICC's would head these meetings and Telangana in-charge, Meenakshi Meenakshi would attend as the chief guest. Ministers, the in-charge minister. MLCs. MLAs. DCC president to attend the meeting at any cost. However, it is learnt that mer MLAs, former MLCs, official tions.

spokespersons, leaders from national, state-affiliated unions and other senior leaders would attend the meeting. Mahesh asked the invitees

dents, candidates who contested on Meenakshi has taken up this exer-Cong ticket, TPCC office bearers, cise to discuss how the party had lost affiliated union chairmen, corpora- elections in these constituencies tion chairman, former ministers, for- and how to win the local body elec-

Meenakshi sore over Munnuru Kapu leaders' meeting



Guv prorogues TG Assembly & Council Budget session may begin on March 12

CM Revanth Reddy examining the SLBC tunnel along with Irrigation Minister N Uttam

PNS HYDERABAD

PNS HYDERABAD

the rescue operation.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

said the exact location of the eight

persons trapped inside the partial-

ly collapsed tunnel of the SLBC

project is not known and that the

government is trying to speed up

He said the government had

suggested to officials leading the

rescue operation to use robots

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma prorogued the Telangana Assembly and Legislative Council on Sunday. The Governor issued a notification regarding this.

It may be recalled that the government continued the special session without proroguing the Assembly which started in December and

passed a motion paying tributes to former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. The government also issued statements on SC categorisation and caste census. However, on Sunday a decision was taken proroguing both the Houses.

inside the tunnel if necessary to

The government is determined

to resolve the issue and is also ready

to support families who suffered

Revanth, who spoke to reporters

after visiting the accident site in

Nagarkurnool district on Sunday,

said the rescue operation would

gain speed after the damaged con-

veyor belt is

due to the accident, he said.

The Governor has to address both the Houses during the budget session and the government may issue a notification **Continued on Page 2**

Harish asks CM to declare 'war' on CBN for Krishna waters

The BRS's Siddipet MLA, T. Harish Rao, said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should declare 'war' if he can on Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu over the Krishna water issue and protect Telangana's interests.

Reacting to the comments of the CM at Wanaparthy on Sunday, Harish said, "Wherever Chief Minister Revanth goes, he tells the same old stories. Apart from cursing KCR, the CM does not say anything useful for the people," Harish said.

speak about his party's guarantees implement them in 100 days.



He said that Revanth is unable to and his promise that he would

things like Musi cleansing. The CM has not done anything for Palamuru except repeatedly calling himself a child of Palamuru and reciting dry sentiments. The children of Palamuru are workers who toil hard, but Revanth talks more and

works less," Harish said. He said Revanth and the Congress have no moral right to talk about projects or projects on the Krishna basin. Whose fault is it that Telangana, which has 68 per cent of the Krishna catchment area, has been going without Krishna water for 60 years, Harish asked. "Aren't the crooks who turned Palamuru district which has will work.

gold-bearing black soil into a distress migration district your Congress Chief Ministers," he asked.

'The Congress created a terrible situation for 60 years by subjecting Telangana to droughts. Revanth, who used to insult Chandrababu while the Telangana Movement was going on, now wants to talk about Krishna districts without offending CBN," he pointed out.

"If you are honest, hold an inquiry into the SLBC tunnel accident by a sitting judge. Find out who the culprits are. Stop spreading lies and crazy sentiments. If you are lazy, things will not work, but if you work hard, things Continued on Page 2

PNS DUBAI

Shreyas Iyer's pressure-defying fifty and Varun Chakravarthy's spin masterclass helped India script a 44run win over New Zealand here on Sunday to top Group A, setting up the semifinal against Australia in the Champions Trophy.

Iyer made a composed 79 off 98 balls under pressure but New Zealand, led by pacer Mark Henry (5/42), managed to stifle India to an under-par 249 for nine.

Chasing 250 was not a tall order for New Zealand's capable batting unit but they struggled against India's spin quartet led by Chakravarthy (5/42) to be all out for 205 in 45.3 overs. Kane

Williamson's gritty 81 went in vain. India will face Australia, who finished second in Group B, in the first semifinal here on Tuesday while the Kiwis play South Africa in the other semifinal in Lahore on Wednesday

As they have been doing throughout this tournament, the Indian

AUSTRALIA AWAIT IN SEMIFINALS

India beat NZ by 44 runs



spinners placed efficiency ahead of wizardry, and bowled in a manner suited to the conditions.

Ravindra Jadeja found massive turn off the pitch but the New Zealand batters were done in by the effort from Chakravarthy who relentlessly targeted the stumps.

Spinners took over once Hardik Pandya got rid of Rachin Ravindra early. Williamson, who was dropped on 17 by stumper KL Rahul off Axar Patel, played a refined innings full of placements and elegance, but there hardly was any support for him from the other end.

There was a 44-run alliance between him and Daryl Mitchell for third wicket, but just as it was blooming Kuldeep Yadav trapped the latter in front.

They lost Tom Latham (14), Glenn Phillips (12) and Michael Bracewell (2) in quick succession, however, Williamson remained unruffled by the rumblings.

He used soft hands for deft placement of balls through the gaps, but two lofted cover drives off Jadeja for fours adorned his innings like bright diamonds.

But Axar deceived an on-charge Williamson with a slightly fuller and slanted delivery, and Rahul just had to remove the bails from the stumps. The dismissal effectively sealed the match in favour of India.

Earlier, Iyer shared a well-paced 98 runs alliance with Axar (42 off 61 balls) for the fourth wicket and Hardik (45 off 45) played a quickfire innings towards the end to help India survive a top-order melt-

It was a slightly different situation for Iyer as in the last few matches, the top three batters had given him the cushion of runs. It had enabled him to bat with some degree of freedom in those matches.

UK, France, Ukraine agree to work on ceasefire plan

PNS LONDON

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer told world leaders on Sunday that they need to step up to a "once in a generation moment" for the security of Europe, at a summit in London to discuss ending Russia's war in Ukraine.

Starmer said that getting a good outcome for Ukraine was "vital to the security of every nation here and many others too.

He was flanked by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and French President Emmanuel Macron during the official photo to mark the start of talks.

Earlier Sunday Starmer said Britain, France and Ukraine had agreed to work on a ceasefire plan to present to the United States.



The summit is taking place two davs after talks broke down between US President Donald Trump and Zelenskyy, when Trump blasted Zelenskyy for not being grateful enough for US support.

Sunday's summit is likely to include talks on establishing a European military force to be sent to Ukraine to underpin a ceasefire.

Meenakshi sore over

Munnuru Kapu

leaders' meeting

No Munnuru Kapu leader spoke

against Govt: VH

Monday Mirchi

If you've been keeping an eye on key postings in the city, a pattern is noticed that Karnataka- native IPS officers are making their presence felt in top spots. At least four officers are holding prominent DCP-level positions, and let's not forget Sajjanar, who continues to be in the limelight at RTC. The buzz in power corridors? Under BRS, it was Bihari officers who held sway, and now, in the Congress regime, Karnataka officers seem to be calling the shots. Coincidence or a quiet reshuffling of the power deck? Either way, Corridors of powers is clearly keeping score only waiting for the opposition to pick it up

HARISH RAO'S SLBC BLOCK— INTELLIGENCE MISFIRE

If intelligence is supposed to be sharp, someone forgot to sharpen their tools. Harish Rao's SLBC tunnel episode is turning out to be a textbook case of bad decisionmaking. If he wasn't to be allowed, why let him step out of his house in the first place? And if he was allowed to leave, what was the point of stopping him at tunnel location? Even Harish Rao himself didn't hold back, directly naming the Intelligence DG for this half-baked handling. Now, the corridors of power are abuzz with whispers - was this a miscalculation, poor coordination, or just another case of intelligence failing to live up to its name? Either block him outright or let him go through, but this neither-here-northere approach only makes the system look

WEEKEND GETAWAYS—SPS

MISSING FROM DISTRICT HQS Law and order might be a daily affair, but for many Telangana district SPs, weekends seem to be a different story. A quick check reveals that a majority of them are nowhere near their headquarters, opting instead for the city or other destinations. With so many top cops on a weekend break, one can only assume either crime has decided to take a holiday too, or district policing runs on autopilot. If law and order isn't an issue on weekends, maybe someone forgot to inform the criminals.

PEOPLE'S OFFICERS OR AC OFFICERS? THE **GURUKUL STAY DILEMMA**

Telangana Chief Secretary's directive was clear—women IAS officers were to visit Gurukul schools and even stay overnight at girls' hostels. A move meant to ensure

first-hand experience of the conditions bridge the gap, and prove that 'People's Officers' are, in fact, for the people. But guess what? Not everyone is lining up to pack an overnight bag. For all the grand talk of being connected to the grassroots, some officers seem quite comfortable in their airconditioned bubbles. Now all eyes are on officers who claimed that differently abled officers cannot do field work. Interestingly physically fit officers conspicuously avoided the visit, sparking murmurs about fancy taglines they give themselves. If stepping into the field is such a task, maybe it's time to rethink the slogans.

ARVIND KUMAR'S LOOPLINE POSTING TURNS INTO A FRONTLINE MISSION

When disaster strikes, some people sit in air-conditioned rooms, and some hit the ground running. Special CS Arvind Kumar, who was conveniently packed off with dis-aster response as a so-called loopline posting, seems to be doing exactly what the job title suggests—responding to disasters, and how! From the SLBC tunnel rescue to flood crises, Arvind has been right there, boots on the ground, proving that no amount of political maneuvering can keep a thorough professional down. Even after being made to take rounds of the ED and ACB offices, he never lost his cool, always keeping the Chief Minister in the loop with necessary explanations. No complaints, no drama - just work. And now, with TGSPDCL MD Musharraf Faruqui and Collector Santosh Bhadavath in the mix— the trio previously were in GHMC—the whole team looks like a serious, well-oiled machine.

JAYESH RANJAN'S SPORTS PLAY— **TELANGANA MEANS BUSINESS**

When Jayesh Ranjan was given the Sports portfolio a few months ago, some thought it was just another routine appointment. But turns out, both he and the sector are being taken very seriously. His presence at the helm signals that Telangana isn't just ticking boxes—it's making a statement. Even consulate officials have taken note, with one of them pointedly asking yours truly about the government's emphasis on sports, considering Jayesh's appointment. If his track record in IT and Industries is anything to go by, he knows how to put Telangana on the global map. Now, with foreign eyes watching, it's time for him to do the same for sports. The stakes are high, and so is the game!

--Yours truly

Harish was partying in Dubai during SLBC tragedy: CM

PNS HYDERABAD

Reacting to the comments of BRS MLA T. Harish Rao, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that Harish is criticising him for going on an election cam-

paign. "Wasn't Harish in Dubai partying when the accident happened in the tunnel? His passport should be checked to know the details. Otherwise, I will reveal those details. Harish was busy partying in Abu Dhabi two days after the accident," the CM said.

He said that after the formation of Telangana, the BRS government neglected work on

The BRS admin did not release funds to the company doing the tunnel work. Moreover, the company did not pay electricity dues and the electricity supply was stopped. Due to the lack of electricity work on the tunnel was stopped in some places. As soon as Congress came to

power, we took steps to complete this project," the CM said.
"We paid bills to the company, discussed problems with technical experts and resolved them. We brought spare parts for the machinery from the US. We were working sincerely to complete the work and provide

Nalgonda water problem. This accident happened unexpectedly. When such disasters happen, keep politics aside. We have to unite and solve the problem. Whether it is the government or the opposition... We should show sympathy to the affected families and help them. 11 departments including the Army and tunnel experts are working on relief operations. We appreciate them. The condition of the eight people trapped in the tunnel is still not known. Officials say it will take another two to three days to resolve this issue,

I went to Abu Dhabi to attend Kotha daughter's marriage: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA T. Harish Rao said the Chief Minister who forgot his duty and immersed himself in election politics, is trying to dispute my close friend Dubbaka MLA's daughter's wedding function for attending which I went to Abu Dhabi.

Revanth is the one who is running the government. He should have gone to the tun-nel accident site immediately. The CM forgot his responsibility and gave priority to electioneering and is now trying to slander the opposition and me," Harish said.

"I went to Abu Dhabi not to watch cricket, or for vacationing or to enjoy luxuries. I went to attend the wedding of my close friend Kotha Prabhakar Reddy's daughter. I went on February 21. The accident occurred on February 22. Who took the helicopter and went for electioneering

without going to the accident site? The Irrigation Minister was in Hyderabad instead of going to the accident site as there was no helicopter to go to the accident site. Those who behaved irresponsibly while in the government, those who have behaved without respecting minimum human values are now trying to get me, an opposition legislator,"

Harish said. "When I went to Abu Dhabi with my family to attend the wedding of a friend's daughter they made distorted comments and showed their maliciousness. The Chief Minister who neglected his duty is now saying that it is not appropriate and is now trying to cover up his failure after nine days," he

"As an opposition legislator, I acted responsibly. After giving adequate time for relief operations, I went to the accident site. This Chief Minister is now engaging in politicking at the accident site to mislead the people. This is a government that has not been able to save its workers who have been trapped for nine days, let alone retrieve their bodies. Are you in the government or me? How can those in the government justify luxuriating in Dubai? How can you justify going to the election campaign forgetting human val-ues?" he asked.

"You, your cabinet and your colleagues have indulged in luxuries and gone on vacations forgetting your responsibilities. People are watching what you are and what I am. As the Chief Minister, instead of focusing on security, you are using the Intelligence machinery to track opposition leaders. You should focus on public interests and not on our private trips. If you are spying on us, it means that you are insecure," Harish

Rao and T. Harish Rao of the BRS are speaking rudely,

KTR & Harish speaking rudely: Bhatti

PNS HYDERABAD

PNS HYDERABAD

AICC in-charge secretary

Meenakshi Natarajan reacted angrily to the meeting of

Munnuru Kapu leaders held at

senior Congress leader V.

Hanumantha Rao's residence

on Saturday. It is learnt that Meenakshi seriously objected to conduct-

ing the meeting. She asked

Congress leaders how they

had invited opposition leaders and how they had allowed the

opposition leaders to criticise

the caste census. Instead of

supporting the government,

how can they criticise the

government which conducted

a caste census, she said. In fact, the meeting revealed

Former Ministers KT Rama Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said.

He said that KCR was a hermit who ruled for 10 years and he was not able to solve the problems of the public. He appealed to the people to reject BRS leaders if they come to them speaking in an

uncivilised manner.
Addressing a public meeting at Wanaparthy on Sunday,
Bhatti said the Congress Government will deposit Rythu Bharosa money in the accounts of farmers by March 31.

"Rs 6,000 crore will be allotted for self-employment schemes by Ambedkar Jayanti

which falls on April 14. KCR's family cannot stop Telangana's progress," he said.

the Munnuru Kapu leaders'

unhappiness with the

Congress. It is learnt that the

AICC made it clear that

Congress leaders who are

committed to the party should

come forward and follow

that no one criticised the government and the Chief

Minister. Munnuru Kapu

leaders said that their popu-

lation percentage is shown

less than the actual in the

caste census. VH said that he would talk to the CM on this

issue. He also said that they

would finalise the date of

Munnuru Kapus' public meeting after discussing with

However, VH made it clear

party rules.

He said the Congress Government would run a people's government so that the country would look towards Telangana. Development projects are being undertaken keeping the welfare of all communities in mind, he added. He said that it is sad that KTR, Harish and a gentleman who never comes out of his house are speaking

without civility. "BRS leaders, who were accustomed to looting for 10 years, are now unable to accept the fact that the state is developing. The BRS which ruled for 10 years could not give the promised three acres to

Dalits," Bhatti said.

'Use robots ...

Continued from page 1 repaired. The conveyor belt which would help in carrying silt is expected to be restored by Monday. "They (rescue personnel) are not able to come to a full understanding on where the humans and the machinery got stuck. They have only a preliminary estimation," he said.

Although the rat miners carried out digging at the places identified by the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI) as possible locations of the humans i not reveal any human presence, the Chief Minister said. The slush and water emerging inside the tunnel hampered the rescue operation, he said. The conveyor belt would be useful to remove the silt once it is repaired. Eight persons - engineers and labourers - are trapped under the collapsed roof of the Srisailam Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel since February 22 and rescue operations are in full swing to bring them to safety.

Guv prorogues ...

Continued from page 1

to the Assembly and Council. The government may approve the BC Reservation bill in the budget session. However, it is learnt that the government may commence the budget session on March 12, it is learnt.

TODAY **ALMANAC** Month & Paksham Sukla Paksha Chaturthi Mar 02 09:02 PM to Mar 03 06:02 PM Panchami: Mar 03 06:02 PM to Mar 04 03:16 PM Nakshatram Mar 02 08:59 AM Revati: to Mar 03 06:39 AM Ashwini Mar 03 06:39 AM to Mar 04 04:29 AM 8:04 AM to 9:32 AM Rahukalam 11:00 AM to 12:28 PM 01:20 PM to 02:49 PM Varjyam: 1:56 PM to 3:23 PM Gulika: 09:56 PM to 11:23 PM Amritakalam: Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:04 PM to 12:51 PM HYDERABAD WEATHER Forecast: Partly Cloudy **Temp:** 35°° Humidity: 42% Sunrise: 6:33 AM Sunset: 6:23 PM **Updated:** March 2, 2025 5:00 PM

Modi gave written assurance to UNESCO about Mamnoor airport: Kishan

PNS HYDERABAD

Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy said that Prime Minister Modi had assured in writing to UNESCO that the Mamnoor Airport would be constructed when it refused to recognise the Ramappa Temple at first saying that the Rammappa Temple has no flight connectivity.

Mamnoor Airport. There were many tem-Andhra Pradesh, ho UNESCO gave recognition only to Ramappa

with Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan

Naidu, he said that Warangal is a big city and there is a need for an airport there. So the Centre decided to construct a brownfield airport in Mannur. Former Civil Aviation Minister Jyothiradithya Scindia came to Hyderabad and discussed the matter with KCR. However, there was no response from KCR, Kishan said.

He said that Mamnoor Airport was the Sticking to his word, Modi sanctioned the biggest one in South Asia before Independence and it was very useful. "I am happy that the Centre is const

ing Mamnoor Airport now at the place connected to the Kakatiyas. AP has seven air-Addressing the media on Sunday along ports and Mamnur is Telangana's second airport," he added.

Inspired by film, 13-year-old Palghar boy kills child

A teen boy was detained on Sunday for allegedly murdering a 6-year-old girl in Maharashtra's Palghar district out of jealousy, with a senior police official claiming he took inspiration for the act from a Hindi film about a serial killer, a police official said.

around 4.30 am, the Pelhar

tion told PTI.

police station official said. "We have detained a 13boy from

Nalasopara. The deceased is his cousin. He allegedly killed her out of jealousy since he thought everyone pampered her," senior inspector Jitendra Vankute of Pelhar police sta-"The girl had gone miss-

The girl's body was found on Sriram Nagar hillock at after which her kin

approached police. CCTV footage from the vicinity of a nearby company showed the boy taking the girl somewhere. The boy first tried to mislead police but later confessed," he said.

The official said the juvenile strangled the girl and then smashed her face with a stone after being inspired by Hindi film 'Raman Raghav', which is about a serial killer.

BRS MLAs who joined Congress will return to BRS: Raghunandan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Medak MP, M. Raghunandan Rao, said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is not in a position to protect the 10 BRS MLAs who joined the Congress and that they would return to the BRS. He also criticised Revanth for his inefficiency in developing the state.

Addressing the media at the tate RIP office here on Sunday, Raghunandan said between Union Minister G. that the CM has been saying irrelevant things to divert public attention

He said the Congress suspended MLC Theenmar Mallanna for speaking up for BCs and that the Congress has no connection to the Mamnoor Airport. The Mamnoor Airport was sanctioned by Modi and the Central Government, Raghunandan said.

He said that the CM is going to New Delhi again and again just to save his chair. Kishan Reddy and Revanth. Kishan is working for the ideals he believes in

Fadnavis denies 'cold war' with Shinde

PNS MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday scoffed at speculations of a "cold war" between him and his deputy Eknath Shinde, and mocked Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut, quipping he wants to compete with Salim-Javed, the legendary screenwriting

He was addressing a press Shinde and Ajit Pawar after a NCP – are working unitedly, cabinet meeting and customary tea party ahead of the four- "Everything is thanda thanda, week budget session of the

assembly, which begins on Monday.

"There is no war. Those who know both of us will remember what we do when we are together," said Fadnavis, pointing to their meetings before Shinde's rebellion split the undivided Shiv Sena and sunk the Maha

Vikas Aghadi government

in 2022. While Fadnavis maintained that all partners of ruling Mahayuti – BJP, Shiv Sena and Shinde chipped cool cool.

Gujarat court allows govt's plea to withdraw sedition cases against Hardik Patel, 4 others

PNS AHMEDABAD

sessions court in Ahmedabad has allowed the Gujarat government's plea to withdraw sedition cases against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA Hardik Patel and four others related to the 2015 Patidar quota agitation.

In its order passed on Saturday, the court of addi-

Purohit allowed the application filed by special public prosecutor Brahmbhatt for withdrawal from prosecution the sedition cases against Hardik Patel, Dinesh Bambhaniya, Chirag Patel, Ketan Patel and Alpesh Kathiriya.

The court discharged the five accused persons from all the

tional sessions judge MP charges levelled against them as withdrawn from prosecution under section 321 (a) of the Code of Criminal Procedure

> While charges against three accused were framed, the one against Ketan Patel was not framed as he was granted pardon subject to his deposition as

witness in the case. At the same time, the case

was pending against Kathiriya at the stage of framing of charges after the investigating officer filed a supplementary chargesheet against the

accused. The Gujarat government had last month decided to withdraw nine cases filed in connection with the Patidar quota agitation of 2015, including two sedition cases.

BRS not cooperated ...

Continued from page 1

Addressing the media at the CGO Towers in Hyderabad on Sunday along with the Union Minister of Coal and Mines, Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu said that Mamunur Airport was a big airport before Independence. However, it shut down in 1981 due to the development of Hyderabad.

He said there were only 76 airports in the country till 2014. The number increased to 159 after Modi became the Prime Minister. Civil aviation has now expanded to small cities due to the UDAN scheme, he added.

He said the Airport Authority of India has 696 acres at the Mamunur Airport and it has a 1,800-metre runway. But airports need 2,800-metre runways to handle planes like the Air Bus and so 280 more acres are needed for the airport.

"Land acquisition could not be taken up due to the non-cooperation of the BRS government. Union Minister Kishan Reddy tried to develop Mamunur Airport under the

UDAN scheme, but the BRS government did not cooperate," he said.

Rammohan said the Centre will construct a modern airport at Mamunuru. "The Airport Authority of India (AAI) will construct it. The AAI has prepared a master plan and a terminal building will be constructed reflecting the history of the Kakatiya dynasty. The Mamunur Airport will be constructed fast if the TG government acquires land for it,"

He said that another airport is located at Bhadradri Kothagudem. However, it is not feasible due to the hills nearby. Another place was shown for it, but it has some defects. The AAI will check its specifications, he said.

"Airports can lead to the development of tourism, manufacturing, textile industries and education institutions. Airports will speed up development. The RGI Airport was a seed sown by Chandrababu. An airport is not only for connectivity but for development. The Mamunur Airport will cost around Rs 500 crore. GMR did not object to Mamunur Airport. We will construct a UDAN Yatri Café soon in Hyderabad," Rammohan said.

Modi wants to...

Continued from page 1

was hit by floods. "Why did Kishan stay away from the review meeting conducted by a Union Minister in Hyderabad? The people of Telangana are aware of Kishan's intentions. Bhatti will hold a review with the MPs of all parties on state projects and funds. Let's all go to the Centre and demand funds," the CM

"Nirmala Sitharaman 'brought' Metro to Tamil Nadu. Union Minister Shobha 'sanctioned' Metro for Bengaluru. Why is Kishan not bringing the Metro to his state Telangana? How long will Kishan frighten us? I have no differences. I visited Kishan's house and explained the prob-

lems of Telangana," the CM said. He said the Centre sanctioned thousands of crores for river cleaning projects in BJP-ruled states.

"Why is Kishan not bringing funds for the Musi Project? Kishan is hissing like a snake for vengeance against Telangana. He was dejected after his friend KCR lost power. Shouldn't I develop Telangana? I will not tolerate anyone who blocks the development of Palamuru," Revanth warned.

The KCR government weakened women's self-help groups by not providing interest-free loans.

Today Wanaparthy women received interest-free loans amounting to Rs 1,000 crore. We are trying to promote 65 lakh women self-help groups," he said.

"It is my responsibility to support selfhelp groups. We established 150 stalls for self-help women near Hi-Tech City at Shilparamam," the CM said.

"KCR was in deep slumber in his farmhouse during his 10-year rule. The people of Palamuru would not have migrated in distress for livelihood if irrigation projects had been completed during KCR's rule. Has KCR ever thought about the migrating people of Palamuru? Why were Palamuru Bima, Kalwakurthi and Nettampadu not completed? Why did RDS dry up? The SLBC tunnel collapsed as it was neglected for 10 years. Isn't that KCR's fault? What was KCR doing when AP took water to Rayalaseema? Didn't KCR call Jagan to Pragati Bhavan and lay the foundation stone for Rayalaseema by hosting a party? Didn't KCR say he would make Rayalaseema 'Ratanala Seema' after having lunch at YSR Congress leader Roja's residence?" the CM said.

CBN asked ...

Continued from page 1

Rammohan said the BRS admin made Telangana, a surplus budget state, debt-riddled. "How did the state with a surplus budget before bifurcation become debt-riddled," he said and added that TG became debt-riddled due to its rulers. The BRS destroyed Telangana, he said. He said the Centre will complete the Warangal Airport fast if the TG government acquires land. The state should complete land acquisition as soon as possible, Rammohan said.

Harish asks ...

Continued from page 1

It is unfortunate for Telangana that you have not been enlightened even after 15 months. It is not because you do not know the facts, but because you are trying to mislead people. Why are you hiding the fact that the BRS admin spent Rs 3,900 crore from 2014 to 2023 to dig 11.48 km of the SLBC tunnel? Was the work on the 11.48 km of tunnel done without spending money? Not a single Rupee was spent on the Dindi Project during your tenure. That is the truth. The work on projects did not stop during KCR's tenure. That is why Revanth did not say anything then. The people clearly understood that KCR means green crops and Revanth means lies," Harish said.

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Vice Prez Dhankhar favours nuturing every Indian language

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amid the language row, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday spoke against confrontational stance over language in the country and favoured nuturing every

Indian language.
Addressing the students of IIT, Hyderabad, he said India is a land of rich languages. Even in parliament, simultaneous translation takes place in 22 languages, he said.

"Let me refer to some changes that are worrisomely alarming, concerning... Our civilisational ethos tells us inclusivity. Should there be a confrontational stance on language in the land of Bharat," he said.

What a moment of pride it was for everyone when languages were included in the classical language status recently, he said.

Emphasising that the languages of the country are a gold mine of literature with profound knowledge and wisdom, he said every language should be nur-

Therefore, I call upon the youth of the country. Social media have given you the power to take a call. If there is deviation from our commitment to nationalism, if there is assessment of development through partisan prism, we need to be watch-dogs," Dhankhar said.

City Pioneer



HYDERABAD | MONDAY | MARCH 3, 2025

Gaddar Film Awards from Ugadi: Dy CM

PNS HYDERABAD

The Congress government has now decided to present Gaddar Film Awards from Ugadi and support theatre artistes, said Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu. He attended the Bhakta Ramadas Jayanthi celebrations organised by the Telangana Sangeetha Nataka Academy at the LB Stadium Indoor Stadium on Sunday, along with Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar and Seethakka. He lit the lamp to mark the inaugura-

On this occasion, Bhatti Vikramarka said that the government supports fine arts and provides necessary facilities for artistes. He felicitated classical musicians and announced that the State government will now organise Bhakta Ramadas Jayanthi annually, similar to Tyagaraja Aradhanotsavalu in Thiruvaiyaru.

He expressed pride in representing the district where Bhakta Ramadas was born. Recalling history, Bhatti said Ramadas, a Tahsildar under the Tanisha rule, used tax money to renovate Sri Sitaramachandra Swamy temple



Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu along with Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar Goud and Seethakka lighting the lamp on Sunday.

in Bhadrachalam, which led to his imprisonment. Despite being tortured, Ramadas remained devoted and composed timeless

Bhatti Vikramarka also urged musicians to draw inspiration from Ramadas and promote devotional music. He noted that film artistes were ignored for 10

years, and the previous govern-

ment neglected Nandi Awards. The Deputy Chief Minister assured full government support for artistes and announced statewide drama competitions, with

awards for the best performers. He conveyed Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's commitment to encouraging artistic talent.

BC panel urges govt to fill 30,000 teacher vacancies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The National BC Welfare Association has appealed to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to take immediate action in filling vacant teacher posts across government schools, Gurukuls, and other educational

Expressing it in a letter R Krishnaiah, Member of Rajya Sabha, President, National BC Welfare Association said "Assess the exact number of vacancies by reviewing retirements, promotions, and other causes of vacancies over the last ten years and fill all teacher vacancies urges."

He asked the government to implement a centralized recruitment system to prevent candidates from being selected in multiple cat-egories but only joining one, leaving other vacancies unfilled, he added.

vacancies unfilled, he added.

Despite a recruitment drive last year, thousands of teaching positions remain unfilled, severely affecting the education system. The association highlighted that 12,000 government schools currently lack teachers in key subjects like English, Mathematics, and Science putting students at a disadvantage, especially in competitive exams like NEET and engineering entrance tests. A large number of vacancies have arisen tests. A large number of vacancies have arisen due to candidates not joining after selection, retirements, and unfilled positions in previous recruitment drives. It is estimated that nearly 30,000 teacher posts remain vacant in the following institutions.

With no permanent faculty, many of these positions are being temporarily filled by guest and part-time teachers. Meanwhile, around 1.6 million unemployed youth with B.Ed. and D.Ed. qualifications are still waiting for job opportunities, leading to a massive waste of

The association emphasized that investing in teachers is investing in the future and called for immediate action to prevent further decline in public school education standards. They stressed that filling all vacancies would strengthen Telangana's education system and ensure that students receive proper guidance to excel in academics and careers.

T-Hub incubated Quadric IT offers AI-powered solutions

PNS HYDERABAD

Empowering organisations with AI-driven business intelligence solutions, T-Hub-incubated Quadric IT offers four products: Tendroix, Clofast, ReNoteAI, and LMS Solutions for enterprise operations. Founders Raghuram Thatavarthy and Kesari Sai Sabnibeesu highlighted that Quadric IT has deep expertise across various sectors, aiming to meet the unique challenges of each industry by providing efficient, reliable and scalable solutions that drive transformation. Raghuram said that Quadric IT is based on the 7th

explained that one key application is ReNoteAI, a smart, reusable notebook with an AIpowered app designed to enhance productivity sustainably. He noted that it captures handwritten notes, converts them into digital format, and

The Each sheet is reusable up to 100 times. Smart templates include To-Do lists, meeting schedules, and minutes of meetings.

integrates seamlessly with third-party apps. It scans text and uses digital convenience to simplify life. It is available on Google Play Store and iOS.

When asked, Raghuram non-tearable, waterproof pages made from FSC-certified recycled paper. Each sheet is reusable up to 100 times. Smart templates include To-Do lists, meeting schedules, and minutes of meetings.

Raghuram also introduced AI-based LMS Solutions, a learning management system integrating automation, personalization, and real-time analytics. He noted that by supporting web and mobile platis currently used in AstraZeneca for training. Raghuram stated that it can create the learning content as well as consume the content. Features include AI-driven course recommendations, interactive content support, automated notifications, and

Meanwhile, Kesari Sai described the Integrated Business Planning Calendar, a web-based tool for event planning and collaboration with real-time synchronization, role-based access, and governance controls.

He also introduced Clofast, an AI-powered platform for financial, supply chain, contract, and compliance automation, ensuring accuracy and eliminating manual reconciliation. He noted that the platform leverages Al/ML technologies for decision-making and has context menu.

Lastly, he presented Tendroix, an AI-powered tenoptimizing bid management, vendor selection, contract evaluation, and compliance processes through automation and AI/ML technologies. He noted that Tendorix also has real-time status tracking for complete visibility on the tender and orders.

SCR announces special trains to clear Holi rush from Cherlapally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) has announced special trains from Charlapally to manage the extra rush of passengers during the Holi festival.

Train No. 07703 will run from Charlapally to Shalimar, departing at 7:45 pm and arriving at 2:00 am on the second day. It will operate on March 9 and 16. Train No. 07704 will return from Shalimar to Charlapally, departing at 5:00 am and reaching at 8:10 am the next day, running on March 11 and 18. Train No. 07705 will run

from Charlapally to Santragachi, leaving at 7:15 am and reaching at 10:30 am March 7 and 21. Train No. 07706 will return from Santragachi to Charlapally, leaving at 12:35 pm and arriving at 4:40 pm the next day, running on March 8 and 22.

These trains will stop at several stations along the route in both directions.

Intra-Collegiate flower arrangement contest held at IHM-H

PNS HYDERABAD

An Intra-Collegiate Flower Arrangement Competition was held at The Institute of Hotel Management-IHM-Hyderabad, a Central government institute under the Ministry of Tourism.

On Sunday, the institute transformed into a floral wonderland as students and professionals showcased their creativity. This year, a new Professional Category welcomed skilled florists from top hotels, inspiring students and bridging the gap between academics and industry standards.

Participants from various institutes, including the Culinary Academy of India, Regency College, and International Institute, competed in Freestyle, Flower Decoration, Ikebana, and Bouquet Making. Judges evaluated entries based on creativity, color harmony,

and presentation. The event featured an esteemed panel of judges,



including Ikebana Master Ho-Kiku A. Vineetha Sunil Kumar and Hoka Sukanya Reddy. IHM-Hyderabad Principal Sanjay Thakur emphasized the importance of floral artistry in hospital-

He noted that this compeplatform for students to hone their artistic skills, which are essential in creating memorable guest experi-

The competition ended with a celebration, and winners were honoured with certificates.

PNS HYDERABAD In a major crackdown on drug trafficking, Choutuppal Police have busted an interstate ganja smuggling racket, arresting one accused and seizing 102 kg of ganja along with a vehicle and mobile phones, all worth

Inter-state drug

racket busted:

One arrested

smuggling

approximately Rs 51 lakh. Choutuppal Police intercepted a drug transporter near Panthangi Toll Gate and apprehended the accused, identified as Nakul Kailash Gaikawad (36), a resident of Beed, Maharashtra. He was found in possession of 102 kg of ganja, A Maruti Suzuki Dzire and Two mobile phones (one smartphone and one keypad

The accused has been remanded to judicial custody. Gaikawad, involved in ganja smuggling for the past five years had detailed knowledge of transportation routes, police checkposts, and methods to evade law enforcement.

He was previously engaged in drug trafficking with his associates, Pramod and Sachin, a truck owner. Following disputes with them, he partnered with Setu, a drug supplier from Uttar Pradesh and Veerababu from Andhra Pradesh.

As per their arrangement, Setu provided Gaikawad with Rs 32,000 and a Swift Dzire vehicle fitted with fake number plates to transport ganja. Gaikawad then traveled to Kannuru Palem village in Anakapalli district and collected 51 packets of ganja from Veerababu. He then set off towards Maharashtra via Vijayawada, Suryapet, Narketpally, Choutuppal, and Hyderabad.

ADMISSIONS OPEN TILL GRADE 5

Young India Police School appoints Vijaya Lakshmi as Principal

DEEPIKA PASHAM deepikapasham2015@gmail.com

■ HYDERABAD

Vijaya Lakshmi, an experienced academician with 15 years in CBSE schools, has been appointed as the principal of Young India Police School, a first-of-its-kind institution in Telangana that prioritizes education for children of police officers while maintaining international standards.

The school is currently in the process of recruiting faculty through multiple rounds of interviews to ensure high-quality education. According to sources, Vijaya Lakshmi was hired two weeks ago, as confirmed through her LinkedIn profile. She previously served as the Principal of Ryan International School, Kondapur (January 2023 - August 2023) and Laurus The Universal School (May 2019 - February 2023). She also worked as a Principal Academic Auditor for Narayana Group of Institutions for six years. A source told The Pioneer that Vijaya Lakshmi has been appointed as Principal and General Manager, alongside a Security Manager. The school is ensuring rigorous teacher recruitment to maintain high standards. With these advancements, Young India Police School is set to become the first institu-



India Police School

tion of its kind in India.

Admissions are currently open for grades 1 to 5 under the CBSE board as of March 1. The school offers a reasonable fee structure, and the management is considering introducing a transport facility within a 20-kilometer radius from its interim campus in Manchirevula, Ranga Reddy District. The main campus, which will be built on 50 acres, is expected to take nearly two years to complete and will include residential facilities.

Since the launch of the school's brochure and website, there has been a significant number of inquiries from parents. Applications submitted on the website for grades 1 to 5 are being reviewed, and the school's team is following up with interested parents.

BRS leader criticises **Cong govt's early** exam centre closures

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

real-time tracking.

BRS leader Kuruva Vijay Kumar has criticised the Congress government's decision to close the examination centres of Intermediate Board Public Examinations that are set to begin from the 5th of

this month, 15 minutes early. He said that lakhs of students are likely to suffer due to this rule.

Students in rural areas are facing difficulties due to the lack of timely bus services, while those in urban areas are struggling with traffic congestion. As a result, many students may be unable to reach their examination centres on

Adding to their stress, exam center gates are being closed 15 minutes before the exam, which could lead to extreme mental pressure among students. This situation has the potential to drive students to suicides, and their parents may also suffer from severe stress, warned Dr Vijay Kumar.

He further stated that such strict regulations have never been enforced in the state's history, and if this continues, many students may be deprived of the opportunity to appear for their Intermediate exams.

Dr Vijay Kumar urged the government to immediately revoke the 8:45 AM reporting rule and restore the previous system, allowing students more flexibility in reaching their exam centres.

Hyd Cyber Crime Police arrest man for online gold fraud

Cyber Crime Police have apprehended a man accused of defrauding innocent individuals by falsely promising gold at significantly lower rates. The accused, identified as Jale Chandra Shekhar Reddy (32), a resident of Saroor Nagar, Ranga Reddy district, was arrested for his involvement in an online scam.

A 75-year-old resident of Koti, Hyderabad, fell victim to the fraud in December 2024. The accused contacted the victim via



WhatsApp, claiming he was traveling from Mumbai to Hyderabad and had access to gold at a discounted rate-offering 10 grams for Rs 50,000 instead of the market price of Rs 80,000. To gain the victim's trust, the fraudster referenced known acquaintances and urged

genuine, the victim placed an order for six tolas of gold and transferred Rs 5 lakh to multiple bank accounts provided by the accused. However, the promised delivery was repeatedly postponed, citing various excuses, including the Christmas holiday. On January 15, 2025, when the victim attempted to collect the gold, the accused stopped responding, leading the victim to realize he had been duped.

A case was subsequently registered invoking Sections 66C and

evant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), for further investigation.

Investigations revealed that Reddy was addicted to online betting and alcohol, leading him to orchestrate the scam for financial gain. He would contact potential victims via WhatsApp, posing as a gold seller who sourced gold at lower prices from Mumbai. After securing advance payments, he would cut off communication, leaving victims without their promised gold.

Over 4,000 runners take part in Mindspace REIT EcoRun

PNS HYDERABAD

Over 4,000 runners took part in the Mindspace REIT EcoRun: Hyderabad Runs Bold for a Better Planet on Sunday. The race started and ended at Mindspace Business Park, Madhapur. Elite athletes from Rajasthan, Pondicherry, Madurai and Tirunelveli also participated.

The event promoted environmental action by reducing waste, planting trees, and proving that running can drive change. Hyderabad came together for a planet-first future.

Dr E Vishnu Vardhan Reddy, Vice-Chairman & Managing Director of TSIIC, flagged off the 21K run. Jayesh Ranjan, Special Chief Secretary of the IT Department, and Shrawan



Jayesh Ranjan, Special Chief Secretary of the IT Department, and Shrawan Kumar Gone, COO of AP & Telangana, flagging off the Mindspace REIT EcoRun on Sunday

Kumar Gone, COO of AP & Telangana, flagged off the 10K run. RJ Swathi and RJ Gaurika from Radio Mirchi kept the energy high. Celebrities Chandini Chowdary and Vikranth Reddy also attended. The CEO of Mindspace REIT, Ramesh Nair said that this run

was not just for medals but for a healthier planet. Together, we made a difference.

The event included 21K and 10K runs for adults and a 5K run for ages 8+. It welcomed everyone from corporates, fitness lovers, senior citizens, and professional athletes.

Crack down on illegal activities of transgenders, 10 arrested

PNS HYDERABAD

Acting on complaints from local residents, the Saroor Nagar police conducted a latenight operation on Saturday and arrested 10 transgender individuals for allegedly engaging in unlawful activities in the P&T Colony.

Inspector Saidireddy of Saroor Nagar Police Station, there were multiple reports of transgenders attracting passersby at night and engaging in activities that disturbed the peace in the locality. In response, a team led by SOT Inspector Venkataiah and AHTU Inspector Devender conducted surveillance before taking action.

During the operation, police seized 12 mobile phones and 23 condom packets from those arrested. Inspector Saidireddy stated that the individuals will be presented before the Saroor . Nagar MRO office for further legal proceedings. He warned that strict action would be taken against anyone involved in such activities in the future.

The arrested individuals include: Polloju Sindhu -Resident of Miryalaguda, Tiyas (20) - Resident of Kolkata, West Bengal, Julie, Shankar Praman (27), Mahi Ghosh (26), Sonabival (31), Butiy (27), Diya Shankar (27), Amrita Bail (26), Punya Bairagya (33).





Farmer dies by suicide due to debt burden

PNS KHAMMAM

A farmer named Thupakula Aggiramu, aged 42, reportedly took his own life in Chinnamandava village in the Chintakani maldal due to overwhelming debt.

Family members revealed that Aggiramu had been cultivating maize on his three acres of land, but insufficient water supply led to a poor harvest, causing substantial financial strain.

Faced with mounting debts and feeling hopeless about repayment, he tragically

decided to end his life. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

Chintakani Sub-Inspector Sheikh Nagul Meera has initiated an investigation and has sent the body for a postmortem examination at the local government hospital.

Four masked men loot SBI ATM in four minutes, make off with Rs 30 lakh

Miscreants targeted ATM kiosks at several places in the State

PNS RANGAREDDY

the pioneer

Four masked men carried out a daring heist at a State Bank of India (SBI) ATM kiosk in Rangareddy district, stealing nearly Rs 30 lakh in just four minutes. The robbery took place in the early hours of Sunday.

At around 1:56 am, one of the robbers was seen exiting a car and casually approaching the ATM kiosk. He damaged the CCTV camera at the gate to disable it and also cut the emergency siren wires.

However, the CCTV camera inside the kiosk captured the entire operation by the burglars. It seemed that the miscreants did not find the CCTV camera inside the ATM kiosk.

Inside the kiosk, three men, armed with an iron rod and a gas



Four masked burglars inside the SBI ATM kiosk in Rangareddy on Sunday

cutter, were seen breaking open off with Rs 29.69 lakh and quickthe cash machine while one man ly left the scene at 2 am, rolling stood guard outside. They made down the shutter behind them.

The entire operation took just

Reports suggested that the assailants arrived in a car, executed the robbery within minutes, and fled the scene before anyone could intervene.

Upon receiving information, the Adibatla police registered a case and launched an investigation. Authorities are reviewing CCTV footage and gathering evidence to identify and apprehend

The police said that they have been examining the CCTV footage to identify the criminals. With the CCTV cameras being installed on a massive scale in Hyderabad city and outskirts, the police always depend upon the CCTV camera footage to identify the offenders.



Truck driver K Jeevan Kumar undergoing treatment in hospital in Khammam

'Custodial torture' drives truck driver to suicide attempt

PNS KHAMMAM

A truck driver has suffered severe injuries in a suicide attempt, reportedly after custodial at the VM Banjar police station here.

Family members of the driver, K Jeevan Kumar, who hailed from Ananthagiri from Kodad mandal in Suryapet district, stated that he was apprehended during a latenight drunk driving check while transporting a load of cement from Sathupalli to Khammam. After being taken to the VM Banjar police station, he allegedly faced excessive physical abuse from the constables.

In an effort to escape the alleged torture, he reportedly fled to the first floor of the police station, where he was further assaulted, with police allegedly making derogatory remarks related to his caste. Overwhelmed by the abuse, he jumped from the building. Subsequently, the police shifted him to a government hospital in Khammam, where they left him after notifying his family. The fall resulted in broken vertébrae and a fractured hip bone,

leaving his condition critical. The distressing incident sparked outrage in the city. The family members demanded that action be taken against the guilty and render justice to the victim's family. The driver's condition remains critical.

Farmers forced to depend on water tanks to meet irrigation needs

PNS SIDDIPET

Even before the start of the summer season, there are already issues with irrigation and drinking water. Due to the decline in groundwater levels and the failure to release water from reservoirs into lakes and ponds, crops are drying up. Farmers are worried. With such water scarcity in rural areas even before the summer season, farmers are concerned about what the situation would be like during the sum-

PNS RANGAREDDY

MLC Nagarkunta Naveen

the youth, urging them to



A farmer irrigating his field with the help of a water tanker in Komuravelle mandal in Siddipet district

villages in the Komuravelle, already facing water issues

Kondurgu Mandal Centre. Attending the event as the chief guest, MLC Naveen

management. As part of the

achieve economic growth. He made these remarks while inaugurating V-Cafe at made these remarks while inaugurating v-Cafe at made these remarks while als before officially opening the café. Extending his best made in the puja rituincluding former Kondurgu Mandal Vice MPP Rajesh Patel, PACS Vice Chairman

Reddy emphasised the importance of self-reliance among and honored by the V-Cafe

Cherial, Maddur, and In Siddipet district, several Doolmitta mandals are

wishes to V-Cafe owner Vinod, he expressed hope that

the business would earn the

trust of the people and expand

successfully.

before the summer season begins. Venkatesh, a farmer from Guruvannapet village in the Komuravelle Mandal, said that his paddy crop is drying up due to a lack of water. To save the crop, they are paying between Rs 2,000 and 2,500 for water tankers to meet irrigation needs.

In the past, water from the Devadula project was filled in the Tapaspally reservoir, which supplied water to lakes and ponds in four manuals,

sarpanchs Bandhu Lal and

Umental Narsimulu, along with BRS leaders Chandu,

Umental Krishna, Srikanth,

Dinesh, Sudheer, and Gutta

Ramakrishna,

The event saw the presence Prashanth, Srikanth, Goud f several prominent leaders, Bal Raj, Karate Ramesh,

ferent cultures. SpringSpree, NIT Warangal's annual cultural festival, started in 1978 as a refreshing break from classes. Now, after 47 years, it is MLC Naveen Reddy stresses importance of self-reliance renowned as one of the nation's best cultural festivals, attracting participants from Srinivas Reddy, ZPTC son all corners. Over time, they have hosted famous artistes,

PNS HANAMKONDA

National Institute of

Technology Warangal (NITW) cultural fest,

SpringSpree 25, concluded on Sunday. The festival was

held from February 28. The

festival is a platform for cul-

tural exchange, creativity,

and talent. It also aimed to

promote inclusivity and a

deeper appreciation for dif-

performances. On day 1 the festival was actor and comedian. On Day 2. the stunning setup of lights on Day 3. The evening culmi-

enriching the festival with

their esteemed presence and

Students at NITW @ SpringSpree 2025 in Hanamkonda on Sunday

and screens created a grand ambiance, elevating the excitement of the night.

NITW @ SpringSpree 2025

concludes on grand note

As Geetha Madhuri sang some of her most popular hits, the electrifying crowd matched her energy, singing along in unison. The air was filled with thunderous Brahmanandam, a legendary a truly unforgettable experience for all in attendance and

nated with a mesmerizing per-formance by singer Nikhil D'Souza, who enchanted the audience with his soulful melodies. This was followed by Allure, the much-awaited fashion show, where students showcased creativity and ele-

gance. an electrifying DJ Night, ensuring that the crowd danced the

Tribal people protest over land grabbing in thanda

PNS MAHABUBABAD

In an incident that took place in the East Thanda village of Mahbubabad district, tribal farmers staged a protest and held a demonstration demanding action against land encroachers who have illegally occupied government land and converted it into fish ponds.

The tribal farmers raised slogans asking for action against those who had encroached upon government land.

During the protest, trib-al farmer Nagarjuna stated that during the previ-ous government, 6 acres and 10 guntas of government land were allocated to the tribals in the Sual nanda for the tion of two-bedroom houses. However, the land was illegally encroached upon, and fish ponds were

Furthermore, the encroachers installed CCTV cameras in the area, preventing the women from going outside and causing severe

difficulties for them. Nagarjuna expressed concern that the fish ponds were continuously filled using electric motors from govern-

ment wells. He lamented that the authorities who should protect government land have been supporting the encroachers.

The tribal people of Sual Tanda are now requesting higher authorities to respond promptly, ensure continuous monitoring of government lands, and take strict action against the land grabbers.

2 youth die in multi-vehicle collision on highway

PNS NALGONDA

Two persons were killed and two others were seriously injured in a horrific multivéhicle collision on the national highway 65 at Chityal on Sunday morning. The accident involved multiple vehicles, including a private bus, two cars, a container truck, and another private bus. The incident took place when a a private bus traveling from Hyderabad to Vijayawada suddenly applied the brakes, causing a chain collision with the vehicles behind

The deceased were identi-



fied as Sved Nawaz (25) and Mohammed Zubair (28). The vehicles involved

included a car traveling towards Nalgonda, which was hit by a container truck from behind. Another car rammed the container from behind.

The tragic which near Chityala in Nalgonda district.. Upon receiving the information, the police reached the accident site and took up rescue operations.

The injured were shifted to the hospital.

Grandeur marks Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple Brahmotsavams at Yadadrigutta

PNS YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

The renowned Yadadri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple, a prominent religious site, has begun its grand annual Brahmotsavams. The temple, one of the most revered pilgrimage destinations in Telangana, is famously known for its association with the sage Yad Maharshi, who is believed to have performed penance here. The hilltop, known as Yadagirigutta, derives its name from the sage and has remained a sacred site for centuries.

The Brahmotsavams commenced, on March 1, with a



series of rituals that began early in the morning with special prayers and divine invocations. The day's events included the 'Swasti Vachakam', Raksha Bandhan, and other significant ceremonies. This

year, the temple has been adorned with a golden vimana (dome) at the sanctum sanctorum, adding extra grandeur to the festivities, with devotees and visitors from across the state flocking to the temple.

On Sunday the second day of the festival, the temple's priests performed the Dwajarohanam' at 11 am, hoisting the sacred flag as part of the ceremonial rituals. The temple administration has ensured meticulous arrangements to make the proceedings smooth and serene, with a heavy influx of pilgrims arriving to participate in the sacred rituals. The temple will host a several spiritual events in the coming days. Tomorrow, on March 3.

The Brahmotsavams will continue in full swing, with each day dedicated to different divine incarnations and festivities

Decline in number of devotees to Bhadrachalam temple

PNS BHADRACHALAM

The Bhadrachalam Rama temple is one of the most famous pilgrimage centres in Telangana. Known as the Southern Ayodhya, this temple attracts devotees not only from the Telugu states but also from other states and even foreign countries. Devotees come to have a glimpse of Lord Rama and offer their prayers. However, according to temple authorities in recent days, the number of devotees visiting Bhadrachalam has seen a slight decline.

From January to December 2024, a total of 23,74,215 devotees visited the Bhadrachalam Rama temple. In January of that year, 2,74,864 devotees visited



the temple, and in February, 2,00,122 was an unexpected decrease in the number of devotees. Only 1,97,860 devotees offered their prayers. In January 2025, 2,72,335 devotees visitdevotees visited the temple that month. ed the temple, but in February, there Compared to January 2025, the num-

by nearly 75,000, and compared to February of the previous year, it reduced by about 4,000. The temple authorities have revealed the reasons for this decline. The Maha Kumbh Mela was held recently. The event lasted for 45 days, until February 26, and approximately 65 crore devotees attended the mela. A large number of devotees from the Telugu states also attended the Kumbh Mela, which resulted in a slight reduction in the number of visitors to Bhadrachalam. Additionally, the temple authorities believe that the devotees' attendance at major festivals in other temples across the state has contributed to this decline.

ber of devotees in February decreased

Kidney racket comes to light in Mahabubabad district

PNS MAHABUBABAD

A kidney racket has been uncovered in Mahabubabad district. Dharavath Chitti Babu, a resident of Polampalli Thanda in Kuravi mandal, is currently receiving treatment at the Government General Hospital in Mahabubabad.

Chitti Babu had entered into an agreement a year and a half ago to donate a kidney to a person named Chandra from Dharavath Thanda in the Nallella suburb of the same mandal. The agreement stipulated that Chitti Babu would be compensated with a house and two acres of agricultural land in the presence of three mediators.



Mahabubabad District Health and Medical Officer Muralidhar examining Dharayath Chitti Babu in the ICU at Government General Hospital in Mahabubabad on Sunday

Following this arrangement, the kidney transplant was carried out at a private hospital. However, Chitti Babu's family alleged that after the surgery, he was given only some money,

which he claimed was borrowed. Initially healthy, Chitti Babu's condition began to deteriorate after the surgery due to a lack of proper post-operative

HYDERABAD | MONDAY | MARCH 3, 2025

ACROSS THE STATES



Trishul Yatra underway in UP to reach Lucknow today

Hindu organisation carrying out a yatra that aims to preserve religious places and connect youngsters with A Sanatan culture will halt in Lucknow on Monday. A 'Bhagva Trishul Yatra' is being taken taken out by the 'Antarrashtriya Mandir Prabandhak Parishad' (International Temple Management Council), an office bearer of the body said on Sunday. Speaking to reporters in Lucknow, Rajesh Yadav, its national executive president, said a campaign has been started to tie 120 temples, including 12 temples abroad, in one thread. "With the aim of reviving the Sanatan culture and connecting the young generation with the Indian heritage, 'Bhagwa Trishul Yatra' is being taken out... its aim is not only to preserve religious places, but also to connect the youth with the campaign of Sanatan culture, Indian history and modernisation of temples," Yadav said.



Two Indians, one Nepali held for trafficking drugs

hree people, including two Indians, were on Sunday arrested from Nepalgunj sub-metropolitan city for trafficking narcotic drugs, Nepal Police said. Jiyaul Haque Shesh, 38, and Kishore, 18, both from Kolkata in India, and Nafis Mohmad Kabadiya, 24, a resident of Nepalgunj, were arrested along with 5,000 tablets of Tramadol, a type of narcotic drug, a Nepal Police News Bulletin said. A team of police dispatched from Jayaspur police station arrested the trio with the drug during a security check on an Indian number plate motorbike headed towards Nepal from India, it said. The police have initiated an investigation into the matter, it said.



Grief-stricken over cat's death, woman hangs self in UP

36-year-old woman, reportedly in grief over the death of her cat, hanged herself in Mohalla Kot Hasanpur here, Aner cat, manged hersen in Montala (165) September 2016 Proposition of the Proposition of Kumar Pant said Pooja was mentally challenged and had undergone treatment for the condition in Moradabad. According to her family members, a few years ago, Pooja adopted a cat and raised it "like her own child." When she died, she became grief-stricken. They said Pooja had been sleeping with the cat's dead body for three days. Gajra Devi said that her daughter was an introvert and could not bear this loss. "She was not letting us bury the cat and was sleeping with it. When she realised that her cat would not come back, she went to the third floor of the house, where she killed herself," she said.

Bodies of 3 more missing workers recovered from avalanche site

PNS DEHRADUN (UTTARAKHAND)

The bodies of three labourers were pulled out from the avalanche-hit Border Roads Organisation (BRO) camp in Chamoli on Sunday, bringing the death toll to seven, while efforts were on to rescue another missing worker on the third day of the operation.

Army doctors said 46 workers who were earlier rescued have been brought to the military hospital in Jyotirmath while one with a spinal cord injury was airlifted to AIIMS, Rishikesh. Three of the workers are in critical condition, Lt Col DS Maldhya said.

Helicopters, sniffer dogs and thermal imaging technology were being used to expedite the rescue operation due to apprehensions about possible inclement weather on Monday, officials said. Three bodies of the missing labourers were found on Sunday, district administration officials said in Gopeshwar. With this, the number of workers who lost their lives in the Mana avalanche has mounted to



One person is still missing for whom the search is in progress, they said.

The bodies have been brought to Jyotirmath by heli-Kumar (21) from Rudrapur in

copter where the post-mortem was being done at the Community Health Centre. The deceased include Anil Nagar district, Ashok (28) from Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh and Harmesh from Una in Himachal Pradesh, the officials said. The lone worker who remains missing is 43-year-old Arvind from the Clement Town area in Dehradun.

The avalanche hit the BRO camp between Mana and Badrinath on Friday, burying 54 workers inside eight containers and a shed. Earlier, it was believed that the total number of trapped labourers was 55 but one of them was on unauthorised leave and had reached home safely.

UKD-AVALANCHE-SURVIVORS

Came to senses BRO worker Jagbir Singh came to his

next to dead senses surrounded by an endless expanse of white, next to a dead co**co-worker, spent** worker, his body stuck inside mounds of snow with a fractured leg and 25 hours more injuries to his head. Singh saw a hotel some distance away and took shelter in to be rescued, it for around 25 harrowing hours, eating snow when thirsty and battling says avalanche piercing cold with only a single blanket to share with over a dozen of his **SURVIVO** companions -- all of who were trapped

under an avalanche in the high-altitude village of Mana in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district. Jagbir Singh from Amritsar said he was sleeping in his container at the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) camp when the snowslide sent them tumbling several hundred metres down. "The container we were in went rolling down. By the time we could figure out what had happened, I found a colleague had died and one of my legs was fractured."



PM Modi offers prayers at Somnath temple

PNS GIR SOMNATH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday offered prayers at the revered Somnath temple in Gujarat's Gir Somnath dis-trict on the second day of his three-day visit to his home state.

Modi performed darshan and prayed at the Shiva shrine, the first of the 12 jyotirlings, located in Prabhas Patan after visiting Vantara, an animal rescue, conservation and rehabilitation centre, in Jamnagar

district during the day.

After the temple visit, Modi left for Sasan, the headquarters of Gir Wildlife Sanctuary, which is the only abode of the Asiatic lions, in the neighbouring Junagadh district.

go on a lion safari and chair go on a lion safari and chair a meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) at Sasan on Monday to mark World Wildlife Day, officials said. Currently, Asiatic lions inhabit approximately 30,000 square kilometres

30,000 square kilometres across 53 talukas in 9 districts of Gujarat, said a governmenť release. Additionally, as part of a central project, a National Referral Center for Wildlife is being established on over 20.24 hectares of land at New Pipalya in Junagadh district, it said. Moreover, a high-tech monitoring centre for wildlife tracking and a state-of-the-art hospital have also been set up in Sasan to strengthen conservation

efforts, added the release.

I'm loyal Cong worker, anyone questioning my dedication is in illusion: Shivakumar

PNS KARNATAKA

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday said he was a loyal Congress worker and anyone questioning his dedication to the party and the Gandhi family is in illusion.

He also asserted that the party will come back to power in the 2028 Assembly polls.

Shivakumar was reacting to speculation about his recent meeting with party central leaders in Delhi, and talks about in political circles, especially in the ruling party, about the chief minister change, later this year, under a "rotational chief minister" or "power-shar-



ing" formula.

I have not put any condition on any one and there is no need to put any condition. I'm a Karyakarta, I work according to what the party tells me. Putting conditions or blackmailing is not in my blood. I'm a loyal Congress worker," Shivakumar said, in response

to a question on speculation about his visit to Delhi and that he had apparently put some conditions on party leaders.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "If anyone, let them be from any party, questions my dedication to the Congress party and the Gandhi family, it is their illusion."

Asked whether speculation about the 2.5 years power sharing formula was false, Shivakumar merely said, "I can only say in 2028. The Congress party will come back to power.Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress chief, is a strong chief ministerial aspirant and has made no secret of his ambition to become the CM.

Illegal structures built by drug smugglers demolished

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

As part of its ongoing drive against the drug menace, Punjab Police in coordination with local authorities on Sunday razed unauthorised structures built by drug smugglers in Jalandhar's Phillaur, officials said. The illegal structures were built on the encroached panchayat land in Khanpur and Mandi villages of Phillaur, they said. The structures were occupied by two individuals with a history of narcotics smuggling, the officials said.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Jalandhar Rural, Harkamal Preet Singh Khakh said the demolition drive was carried out following request

from the block development and panchayat officer (BDPO) Phillaur, who sought police assistance for the removal of illegal encroachments.

The action was directed against Jasvir Singh alias Sheera, a resident of Khanpur, and Bholi, a resident of Mandi, for illegally occupying village panchayat land, the officials said. Police said Bholi is a notorious drug smuggler and has been facing multiple drugs cases, including recovery of 1.190 kg smack in 2005, a two-kg poppy husk seizure in 2015, and a significant quantity of drugs recovered in 2022. Jasvir Singh has also been named in multiple cases, including one involving a commercial quantity of 'charas' and intoxicated injections.



Omar Abdullah chairs meeting of alliance partners

PNS JAMMU

As Jammu and Kashmir is preparing for the first budget session in seven years, Chief Minister Ómar Abdullah on Sunday chaired a joint meeting of the alliance partners here and discussed various issues for the smooth functioning of the house. The 40-day budget session, having a total of 22 sittings, is scheduled to start on March 3 with the address of Lt Governor.

This will be the first budget of the government after it assumed power in October last year. Abdullah, who is set to present the budget on March 7, had held the charge of home and General Administrative Department among others during his previous stint as the chief minister in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir from 2009 to 2014. The previous five budgets were presented and passed by the parliament in the absence of the legislative assembly in J&K.

'Regional commander'

PNS CHATRA (JHARKHAND)

outfit arrested

of Maoist

A self-styled regional commander of a banned Maoist outfit, who was carrying a bounty of Rs 18 lakh on his head, was arrested in Chatra district, police said

A huge cache of arms and ammunition was also recovered from the Maoist belonging to the Tritiya Sammelan Prastuti Committee (TSPC), they said.
"He, along with three asso-

ciates, were arrested during a vehicle checking drive near Putsgiya bridge in Hunterganj area on Saturday," SP Vikas Pandey told reporters. The Jharkhand government had announced a bounty of Rs 15 lakh and the National Bureau of Investigation (NIA) Rs 3 lakh for information on the Maoist, the SP said. Pandey said he was wanted in over 75 cases related to Maoist activ-

"Arms and cartridges, including a US-made rifle, were also recovered," the officer added

Oppn to boycott of tea party on assembly session

PNS MUMBAI

Maharashtra on Sunday said they would boycott the customary tea party on the eve of the assembly's budget session, which begins on Monday, claiming the government has failed to address several pressing issues. They raised concerns over

Opposition parties in

allowing "tainted" ministers in the cabinet, rising attacks on women and comments from ruling party leaders about not releasing funds to areas that



elected opposition leaders as lawmakers. The Maha Vikas Aghadi, comprising the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT)

and NCP (SP), is the face of the opposition in the state, while the Mahayuti alliance of BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP is the rul-

Sena (UBT) legislator and leader of the Legislative Council, said, they have issued several suggestions to the state government but none has been accepted or discussed.

ing bloc. Speaking to reporters

"Be it the excess land allegedly given to the Adani Group for Dharavi slum redevelopment or French company Systra India accusing the MMRDA of 'severe harassment', the government shows little concern for people's problems," Danve said.

Activists of rival Shiv Sena factions face off in Thane

PNS ■ THANE

Activists of the Shiv Sena and Shiv Sena (UBT) came face to face and shouted slogans ahead of a rally in Maharashtra's Thane city on Sunday evening amid heavy police deployment.

Senior Sena (UBT) leaders Vinayak Raut, Sanjay Raut, and Chandrakant Khaire arrived in Thane to pay their respects to late Shiv Sena leader Anand Dighe, and as they gathered at Dighe's bust outside Anand Ashram, members of the rival factions, including women, confronted each other, lead-

Build hospitals along expressways: UP CM to officials commissioners, district magis-

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday directed officials to take comprehensive measures to reduce road accidents.

He emphasised the need for building hospitals on both sides of expressways -- similar to food plazas -- to provide immediate medical aid to accident victims.

The chief minister issued the



directions during a meeting of the State Road Safety Council that was attended by ministers, senior bureaucrats, divisional

46,052 road accidents, leading to 34,600 injuries and over 24,000 deaths.

He termed the figures "extremely tragic" and stressed the need for multi-departmental coordination to reduce accidents.

trates, police commissioners,

and superintendents of police.

According to an official statement, Adityanath said in

2024, Uttar Pradesh recorded

The incident occurred near Anand Ashram, where the Shiv Sena (UBT) organised a rally in preparation for the upcoming civic elec-

ing to a heated exchange of

Private lunar lander Blue Ghost aces moon touchdown

A private lunar lander carrying a drill, vacuum and other experiments for NASA touched down on the moon Sunday, the latest in a string of companies looking to kickstart business on Earth's celestial neighbour ahead of astronaut missions.

Firefly Aerospace's Blue Ghost lander descended from lunar orbit on autopilot, aiming for the slopes of an ancient volcanic dome in an impact basin on the moon's northeast-

ern edge of the near side. Confirmation of successful touchdown came from the company's Mission Control outside Austin, Texas, follow-



"You all stuck the land-

ing. We're on the moon," Firefly's Will Coogan, chief

engineer for the lander, report-

ed. An upright and stable land-

ing makes Firefly — a startup founded a decade ago — the first private outfit to put a spacecraft on the moon without crashing or falling over. Even countries have faltered, with only five claiming success:

and Japan. A half hour after landing, Blue Ghost started to send back pictures from the surface, the first one a selfie somewhat obscured by the sun's glare. The second shot included the home planet, a blue dot glimmering in the blackness of space. Two other companies' landers are hot on Blue Ghost's heels, with the next one expected to join it on the moon later this week. Blue Ghost — named after a rare US species of fireflies -

had its size and shape going for

it. The squat four-legged lan-

der stands 6-foot-6 (2 metres)

tall and 11 feet (3.5 metres)

wide, providing extra stability,

Launched in mid-January from Florida, the lander carried 10 experiments to the moon for NASA. The space agency paid USD 101 million for the delivery, plus USD 44 million for the science and tech on board.

It's the third mission under NASA's commercial lunar delivery programme, intended to ignite a lunar economy of competing private businesses while scouting around before astronauts show up later this decade.

Firefly's Ray Allensworth said the lander skipped over hazards including boulders to land safely.

Gangster held, weapons seized: Punjab Police He said the accused was to

PNS CHANDIGARH

Punjab Police on Sunday said it has arrested a gangster and seized from him three sophisticated weapons sourced from Pakistan.

The accused was identified as Hardeep Singh alias Deepa, a resident of Ferozepur.

Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said police seized a 9 mm Glock pistol, a .30 mm Beretta pistol and a pump action gun, along with three magazines and 141 cartridges, from Hardeep

Besides, 45 grams of heroin was also recovered from his



possession, he said.

the state.

Yadav said preliminary investigation revealed that these weapons were sourced from Pakistan through an unidentified foreign-based entity, intended for use in terror and criminal activities in

supply these weapons to the ground operatives of terror and criminal groups. The identity and role of the

foreign entity, along with its broader network, are under comprehensive investigation. Efforts are on to identify

other members involved in this module and track the origins of the smuggled weapons, he said. Assistant Inspector General,

Ferozepur, Lakhbir Singh said police teams had received a reliable intel-input about the involvement of the accused in weapon and drug smuggling operations.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

A clash of diplomacy and dignity

A dramatic Oval Office face-off between Trump and Zelensky, marked by sharp exchanges, underscores global political instability

n a high-stakes meeting that captured global attention, President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky clashed in a dramatic showdown at the White House. What began as cordial greetings quickly spiraled into an explosive exchange, leaving Zelensky visibly humiliated on the world stage—even as his defiant stance earned him renewed backing from European leaders. The encounter marked the first in-person meeting between Trump and Zelensky since Trump's return to power in January. Early on, smiles and handshakes gave way to heated words as US Vice President JD Vance pushed for a diplomatic resolution to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. Vance's remarks underscored a fundamental point: the need for serious diplomacy to end the war, while also implicitly contrasting Trump's previous approach with that of past administrations. However, as the dialogue unfolded, Zelensky's pointed references to the long history of inaction—citing the annexation of Crimea and subsequent military struggles—sparked



a vehement rebuttal. In a sequence of rapid-fire exchanges, Trump dismissed Zelensky's critiques and reminded him of the overwhelming military support provided by the United States, arguing that without this aid, Ukraine's resistance could have crumbled in days. Despite the abrasive tone and what many saw as a public humiliation, Zelensky's resistance during the meeting resonated far beyond the confines of the Oval Office. While Trump's unconventional style and bombastic rhetoric further alienated many European policymakers, Zelensky's defiant posture emerged as a symbol of unwavering national resolve. European leaders, long critical of Trump's erratic diplomacy, viewed

the exchange as evidence that Ukraine needed to assert its own dignity in the face of American grandstanding. Moreover, Trump's harsh social media post demanding Zelensky "come back when he is ready for peace"—served not only as a dramatic moment of political theatre but also as a catalyst for European unity in support of Ukraine. Zelensky's refusal to be cowed sends a powerful message to both his domestic audience and international supporters. The Zelensky US visit might strengthen Ukraine's negotiating position and ensure a more coordinated effort to counter Russian advances. Trump's return to a more unpredictable form of diplomacy has underscored deep-seated divisions within the international community. His blunt dismissals and confrontational tactics risk undermining the credibility of traditional US diplomatic channels, potentially destabilising longestablished alliances. In contrast, Europe's reaction suggests a pivot towards a more measured, collective response that prioritises multilateral engagement over unilateral posturing. This divergence could reshape how global conflicts are addressed in the future, signaling a shift away from "big talk" and towards pragmatic, alliance-based strategies. The Oval Office showdown will likely be remembered as a defining moment in the ongoing Ukraine war and in the evolution of American foreign policy.



A farmer prepares an agricultural land for paddy cultivation, in Nadia

A new era for rural revival and inclusive growth

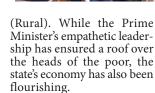


With a sharp focus on strengthening infrastructure and boosting holistic rural development, the UP budget underscores a visionary and inclusive agenda

he Budget presented by the BJP's doubleengine government in Uttar Pradesh will go a long way in strengthening infrastructure and further boosting the holistic development of rural areas. The state government's mammoth budget of Rs 8,08,736 crore for the all-round development of the state reflects the inclusive and visionary approach of the government, taking full care of the poor, disadvantaged, youth, women empowerment and Annadatas. This budget is 9.8 per cent higher than last year's, indicating the government's pro-development agenda. Under the Prime Minister's vision of a developed India, special emphasis has been placed on rural areas. The mainstay of the economy of

the state is the rural sector and the government has been continuously working towards ensuring that the benefits of the schemes reach the deprived sections of the society. Believing in the credo of selfreliance, the government has been focusing on fortifying the development arcs of villages to make them self-reliant as they will play an important role in creating a strong Uttar Pradesh. While over 96 lakh rural families have benefitted under the State Rural Livelihood Mission (UPSRLM), on the other hand, financial transactions worth Rs 31,103 crore have been facilitated through 39,556 Banking Correspondent Sakhis. Until now, more than two lakh women have become "Lakhpati Didi," helping them become self-reliant. Uttar Pradesh is also the first state in the country to guarantee concrete houses to

Fulfilling Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', the state government has already constructed more than 3.6 million houses in resolution. nectivity and highway Providing further impetus to the cause, a provision of Rs 4,882 crore has been made in the Budget for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural). Also, an amount of Rs 1,200 crore has been proposed under the Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana



The government's efforts have ensured the economic growth rate of the state has been recorded at 11.6 per cent, which is higher than the national GDP growth of 9.6 per cent. Once considered a 'BIMARU' state, the estimated gross domestic product (GSDP) of the state has now risen to Rs 27.51 lakh crore, doubling from 2017-18. In line with this momentum, Uttar Pradesh's economy is expected to reach Rs 30 lakh crore in the next fiscal, which will significantly contribute towards making the state a \$1 trillion econo-

Along with the ramping up of infrastructure, Uttar Pradesh is now witnessing a revolution in the transportation sector.

The North-South Corridor Plan will be implemented keeping in view road conexpansion. Under this, Rs 200 crore has been provided for the widening and construction of roads. A budget of Rs 2,900 crore has been proposed for the widening of roads. Also, a provision of Rs 1,450 crore has been made



THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY CONSTRUCTED MORE THAN 3.6 MILLION HOUSES IN RESOLUTION. PROVIDING FURTHER IMPETUS TO THE

CAUSE, A PROVISION OF RS 4,882 CRORE HAS BEEN MADE IN THE BUDGET FOR THE PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA (RURAL)

bridges and railway overbridges to ease traffic congestion. The incredible growth has taken into account the need to further bolster youth empowerment and job creation. A budget of Rs 1,000 crore has been allocated under the Chief Minister's Youth Entrepreneur Development Ŝcheme. Under Vivekananda

Sashaktikaran Yojana, 49.86 lakh smartphones/tablets have been distributed to promote smart education.

Free coaching is also being provided to the youth through the Abhyudaya Yojana. Renewable energy and artificial intelligence have been given special emphasis to ensure that youngsters do not fall behind. While the Artificial Intelligence City will be set up in Lucknow, plans are underway to set up a 500 MW solar power plant which will entail a cost of Rs 2,500 crore. Prime Minister Narendra Modi places special emphasis on ensuring the wellbeing of farmers and wants to ensure they do not fall behind in these changing times. In line with this, Annadatas have been placed at the top of the priority list in the mission of achieving the goal of 'Viksit Bharat'.

for the construction of Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, Rs 79,500 crore have been distributed to farmers while Rs 496 crore have also been disbursed under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. The state's sugarcane production capacity has also increased from 72 tonnes to 85 tonnes per hectare, boosting the income levels of farmers.

The recently presented Budget will not only take the development of the state to new heights but will also transform rural India. From roads to digital infrastructure, farmers to industry, and women empowerment to a bright future for the youth, this Budget has been able to ensure that the needs of every section of society are taken care of.

With the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and schemes aimed at boosting the rural economy and infrastructure, Uttar Pradesh is rapidly moving towards fulfilling the dream of a self-reliant India. I am confident that this Budget will realise the vision of 'growth and progress' of UP and propel the state towards the exalted status of the most developed state in the country.

The writer is Deputy Chief Minister of UP; views are personal)

Breakthrough 'Bedi cooling turban' a glimmer of hope for brain stroke



This innovative device selectively cools the brain—bypassing the complications of whole-body hypothermia—and comes in handy in the treatment of brain stroke

t the recently concluded 71st Annual Conference of the Indian Association of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Sciences, Dr Harinder Singh Director Cardiovascular and Thoracic Sciences at Park Grecian Hospital in Mohali, presented a groundbreaking technique designed to protect the brain from oxygen deprivation during surgery. Nicknamed the "Bedi Cooling Turban," this innovative method is a trailblazer in more ways than one.

It is well known that lowering the temperature of an injured organ can help reduce damage. However, the brain presents a unique challenge because whole-body cooling introduces its own set of complications, and in brain surgery, only the brain needs to be cooled. Even a brief period of oxygen deprivation can result in devastating consequences, such as a massive

stroke. Dr Bedi conceived the idea during intensive brainstorming sessions and set out to cool only the brain. Drawing on his vast experience, he designed a unique cooling turban made of plastic tubes arranged in a coil. Once the patient is anesthetised, the device is placed around the head and cold, sterile water is pumped through the coils using a specialised machine, cooling the brain while leaving the rest of the body unaf-

To date, this device has been successfully used in 48 cases function throughout.

to repair blockages in brain arteries, preserving brain Dr Bedi refined his surgical skills in advanced cardiovascular techniques at Escorts

Heart Institute and St Vincent

Hospital in Sydney, where he managed cases using wholebody cooling (hypothermia) to preserve organ function. At the conference, the technique received an enthusiastic response from 1,700 national and international expert

Dr Rajneesh Malhotra, Cardiac Director at Max Hospitals, expressed particular enthusiasm, suggesting that the technique be applied to more clinical cases to further safeguard patients' brain function. He noted that innovations like this empower Indian surgeons to tackle

cases that might otherwise

seem hopeless. Dr Bedi confirmed that he plans to patent the technique and publish his findings so that it can be adopted worldwide to benefit similar cases. In conclusion, Dr Harinder Singh Bedi's innovative "Cooling Turban" technique represents a significant advancement in brain-protective strategies during cardiovascular and thoracic surgeries. By focusing cooling efforts solely on the brain, this breakthrough minimises the risks associated with wholebody hypothermia and opens new avenues for treating oxygen deprivation during

surgery. With successful application in 48 cases and enthusiastic endorsement from leading experts, this pioneering approach underscores the ingenuity of Indian medical innovation. Dr Bedi's commitment to patenting and sharing his findings promises to influence global surgical practices, ultimately saving countless lives and setting a new standard in patient care with excellence.

(The author is a columnist; views are personal)

FINDING FUNDS FOR FREEBIES

Madam — Apropos of the article 'Finding money for freebies: BJP faces an uphill task' (March 1), the statistical analysis and approach towards the funding of freebies is very realistic and compels the new BJP government to salvage the economy of the Capital. It is really challenging to mobilise the whopping revenue expenditure of Rs 20,100 crores on the promised direct cash transfer of Rs 2500 per month to women, Rs 3150 crores on cash assistance to the pregnant women, Rs 2500 crores on LPG cylinder subsidy, and Rs 30000 crores on education. Central funding of Rs 55000 crore is imperative. These figures are staggering and more than half the revenue expenditure budget of the Delhi state government. Many of the beneficiaries may not be deserving and needy of the freebies, but it can't be debated now and one section of people is providing resources for the others. Since it is a double-engine government, the central funding is a certainty.

However, the other state governments will expect the same level of funding from the Union government. However, the local municipal corporations must be asked for self-reliance and mobilise their own resources. There should be separate autonomous development authorities for Dwarka, Rohini and East Delhi. Earlier arrangements of separate MCDs for North, South and East Delhi were doing well and should be restored. The Delhi government should raise circle rates and stamp duties for properties as the market values have risen phenomenally. Liquor shops should be under government control without any licenses to private vendors and more taxes should be imposed on liquor consumption. New mandis, commercial, and industrial complexes should be constructed for raising additional resources.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

SEBI GETS NEW CHAIRMAN

Madam— Tuhin Kanta Pandey, the former Finance and Revenue Secretary, was appointed as the new chairman of the SEBI. The new appointment is crucial as the for-

Decriminalise Indian politics



t is with reference to the editorial 'Lawbreakers as Lawmakers." It is time to eradicate the influence of criminality in Indian politics. The rising number of elected representatives with criminal backgrounds in Parliament and State Assemblies is a matter of deep concern to all law-abiding and right-minded citizens. The increasing trend is dangerous and has steadily been eating into the vitals of democratic polity along with the growing corruption of a humongous

mer head was entangled in so many controversies due to her own financial favours along with her husband's investmentrelated vested interest.

The Buch couple controversy was highlighted by Hindenburg Research, which accused the couple of misusing their governance power for self-interest. Her harsh and unprofessional approach to handling the SEBI key staff, mishandling of her regulatory position, and controversial connections with the Adani grouping make SEBI a body not so trustworthy. Despite all her flaws, it was shocking that she held her position for the entire duration of three years. The new appointment of Tuhin Kanta, an Odisha cadre IAS officer, brings a ray of hope for the security market regulation body. We hope that Tuhin will secure public confidence once again and he will improve the SEBI free from all materialistic controversies. SEBI deserves fairness and transparency so that security market investors gain confidence in the working of the market and grow their invest-

ment with market evangelism. **Kirti Wadhawan** | *Kanpur*

nature. Good governance gets seriously undermined when, for instance, criminals, gangsters, or mafia dons become the political bosses of bureaucrats and subvert the system to serve their interests. In 2005 the Supreme Court ruled that a sitting MP or MLA will be disqualified from contesting the election if convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for two years

or more by a court of law. The growing dependence of political parties on criminals for muscle power and electability must be stopped. It is high time all political parties came together and developed a consensus on keeping criminals-some with serious charges including kidnapping, rape, murder, grave corruption and crime against women-out of the system.

P Victor Śelvaraj | Tirunelveli

US-UKRAINE TALKS FAIL

Madam — The abrupt failure of US-Ukraine talks underscores a troubling low in American diplomacy. Trump's insistence on securing indefinite rights to Ukraine's rare minerals in exchange for past aid—while rejecting Zelensky's request for security guarantees—was a blatant betrayal of trust. The talks' undiplomatic nature, with raised voices, Trump walking out and Zelensky skipping lunch, further damaged

This shift signals that US commitments are now transactional, undermining credibility and emboldening adversaries like Russia. Such treatment of a war-torn ally weakens global trust in the US, proving that administration changes do not necessarimaintain the nation's moral or strategic responsibilities or commitments. The fallout from this episode will have lasting consequences on international alliances and geopolitical stability.

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

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FIRST COLUMN

DEALING WITH EXAM ANXIETY

Embracing positive thinking, smart study habits and relaxation can make exams a breeze



SAKSHI SETHI

xaminations are integral to the educational system and are designed to assess students' knowledge, understanding and skills. However, for many students, exams are a source of significant anxiety, leading to stress, reduced performance, and even physical or emotional distress. Overcoming exam anxiety requires a combination of psychological strategies, effective study techniques, and a supportive environment. By adopting a proactive approach, students can transform their exam experiences from overwhelming to manageable.

There is no denying that exam anxiety is real, but so is one's resilience. The anxiety can stem from various factors, including fear of failure, high expectations from parents or teachers, past negative experiences, or inadequate preparation. Symptoms of exam anxiety range from nervousness, restlessness and even difficulty concentrating to physical manifestations such as headaches, nausea and rapid heartbeat. Recognising these symptoms is the first step in overcoming exam-related stress. Dealing with exam stress can be a heavy load and can often make an individual feel lonely. A crucial aspect of managing exam anxiety is cultivating a positive attitude toward examinations. Students need to view exams as opportunities to demonstrate their learning rather than threats to their self-worth. A growth mindset can improve only through effort and practice and can significantly reduce anxiety. Use of positive affirmations such as "I am prepared" or "I can handle this challenge" can boost confidence. Additionally, normalising mistakes and failures as part of the learning process can help students overcome the fear of underperformance. One of the primary reasons for exam anxiety is inadequate preparation. Implementing effective study strategies can enhance confidence and performance. Creating a well-structured study schedule can help prevent last-minute cramming and ensure thorough coverage of subjects. Active



learning techniques, such as summarisation, mind mapping and teaching concepts to peers can also help retain information better. Practicing with past exam papers and taking mock tests can familiarise students with the exam pattern, reducing uncertainty and nervousness. Relaxation techniques can significantly reduce exam-related stress and improve focus. Deep breathing exercises, mindfulness meditation, and progressive muscle relaxation can help calm the mind before and during exams. Engaging selves in physical activities such as yoga, stretching, or even a short walk can release tension and improve concentration. Ensuring adequate sleep, maintaining a balanced diet, and staying hydrated contribute to overall wellbeing, making students more resilient to stress. A supportive environment at home and school plays a vital role in alleviating exam anxiety. In today's competitive environment, it becomes important for parents to encourage their children rather than pressurise them with unrealistic expectations. Study groups and discussions with peers can provide moral support and motivation, making exam preparation a less iso-

What plays the most vital role is on the day of the exam, where students, by following simple yet effective strategies, can stay calm and focused. Following strategies such as arriving early, taking deep breaths, and engaging in light stretching before entering the examination hall can help reduce nervousness. Managing time effectively by allocating specific minutes to each question can help prevent panic. If anxiety arises during the exam, taking a few moments to pause, taking deep breaths, and refocusing can help prevent stress from escalating. Exam anxiety is a common challenge faced by students, but it can be effectively managed through selfawareness, positive thinking, strategic preparation, relaxation techniques, and a supportive environment. Ultimately, overcoming exam anxiety is not just about securing good grades but also about developing resilience and lifelong learning skills.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Is Forest Rights Act driving deforestation?



Despite its noble intent to secure the livelihoods of tribals, the Forest Rights Act has inadvertently opened the door to rampant deforestation and widespread encroachment

he law has been enacted to confer rights over the use of forest lands by individual tribal or forest dwellers under their occupation on the prescribed cutoff date. Besides the individual rights, there is also provision for community rights over certain forests for benefits of collection of usufructs like beedi leaves, minor forest produces, grazing, fishing etc. and rights can also be conferred to the communities for sustainable management of forest

But the rights can be granted only when they are in actual possession of the forest land or have been enjoying the usufructs or sustainably managing the forest resources on or before 13-12-2005 for tribal and three generations (75 years) before this date for other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs). Despite opposition from foresters, conservationists and environmentalists the law was enacted by the UPA government supported by left parties in 2005. This was followed by notifying the rules and the implementation from January 1, 2008.

Dipak Sarmah who succeeded me as the head of Karnataka Forest Department on my superannuation has observed on page 154 of his book titled, 'Forests Of Karnataka - Why And How Of Where They Are,' "Most of the benefits that had accrued in the forests since the 1980s by way of forest consolidation due to implementation of Forest (Conservation) Act appear to have been nullified as a result of the implementation of the Forest Rights Act. The ominous signs of fragmentation and loss of forests are already discernible in a number of states as evident from the biennial India State of Forest Reports published by the Forest Survey of India,

A clearer picture will emerge in about a decade or so, by which time we would come to realise the true impact of the Forest Rights Act on our forests. But it may be then too late to retrieve the losses. Foresters alone cannot prevent the unauthorised removal of trees and the destruction of forests. Villagers set fire to burn the wood and grab the land. Forests are perpetually subjected to encroachments with the support of local leaders. Even if police presence is ensured and the community's resistance is bulldozed while removing encroachments, the problem resurfaces and lands are again grabbed. Political leaders question the removal of cultivation when land is devoid of tree growth. Fresh plantations are damaged and the forest area is re-encroached. Practically all encroachments till 25th October 1980, when the Forest (Conservation) Act came into operation were already regularised by the Union Government.

The Act was operational from 2008 with the new cutoff date of 13-12-2005. It was only the vote bank; the OTFDs were brought in to benefit from the legislation though their encroachments till 25th October 1980 were regularised. It can be understood that OTFDs cannot have more than a generation-old encroachment on the new cutoff date, yet a floodgate of forest destruction was opened for them. Without having any consideration for the ecological security of the country, OTFDs went on a rampage, cleared the fresh tree growth, occupied lands and claimed rights. Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the nodal agency for implementation took up several reviews to monitor the progress of the



FOREST AREAS **GIVEN FOR THE** SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF GRAM

SABHAS DEVASTATED, DEGRADED AND FRAGMENTED. THERE ARE FORESTS IN MEDHA LEKHA GRAM SABHA WHERE **ALL BAMBOO**

CLUMPS WERE CLEARED IN ONE STROKE IN 2012

states, further diluting the provisions in 2012 to ignore the only scientific evidence of satellite imagery interpretation among the evidence to be relied on in support of the claim. The claims of the tribal community, who had only to prove the occupation as of December 2005 were easily acceptable initially, but follows: now two decades old. Left-leaning forces and NGOs fought for claim cases of individual forest rights (IFR), community forest rights (CFR) and rights to manage the forest resources sustainably.

This has accelerated the deforestation. IFRs have already been granted to 2.2 million tribal and OTFDs, covering nearly 5 million HAVE BEEN ha of forest land. Several activists have written articles in newspapers and magazines showing a satisfactory performance over the grant of IFRs and suggesting the states focus their attention on CFRs and grant of forest rights for sustainable management to avail PATCHES OF the provisions that have been neglected by the states so far. The estimates of the activists suggest that 30 million hectare forest lands comprising more than 40 per cent of the total forest area can be granted for CFRs and sustainable management.

They further argue that if this is done, it has the potential to secure the rights and livelihood of 200 million people including 90 million tribal. Local press in Hyderabad has recently brought out that seven lakh acres of forests have been occupied in 2022-23 and claims over four lakh acres for tribal were approved in Telangana before the 2023 Assembly election. State machineries have accepted the claims overlooking the reports of the concerned divisional forest officer. J Ramesh, Nature Friends

Environmental Development essential for the grant of rights i.e. Society, Hyderabad, accused the state of pressurising officials for recognition of rights to ineligible individuals resulting in largescale deforestation leading to the scam of unprecedented propor-

There are reports from Rampachodavaram Forests division, Rajamundri (AP) that tribal department officials are granting rights in Papikonda National Park for money. A retired IFS M Padamanaba Reddy has filed a PIL for the scam. In February 2019, just before the Lok Sabha polls, states moved the Supreme Court to review its order of eviction of rejected IFR claims and allow them to re-verify. The court accepted it, but so far the states have not concluded and continue to accept the fresh claims. What signal does it send down the

The Act has provided unlimited time for filing claims and deforestation and bringing the land under plough can continue. No one has any concern about the ecological security of the country. It is to be understood that all rejected claimants are in occupation of the forest land, where they have already been successful in deforesting and clearing the area. More rejected claims are encouraged, and more deforestation takes place.

The only place where the CFRs and rights to manage the forests sustainably have been granted is the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. Section 3-1 (i) of FRA 2006 is relevant here, where rights can be granted to villages of Gram Sabha who have the experience of managing the area sustainably. Further the requirement of Section 4 (3) of the Act is also

they should have the resource as on 13-12-2005 for tribal and 75 years before this date for OTFDs. Management rights have been granted in many Gram Sabhas of Gadchiroli overlooking both the provisions.

Activists are taking this example all over the country and pressing for a repeat of this. This has been frequently quoted example in articles and papers. What these authors have been hiding is the destruction of forests. Forest areas given for the sustainable management of Gram Sabhas have been devastated, degraded and frag-

There are patches of bamboo forests in Medha Lekha Gram Sabha where all bamboo clumps were cleared in one stroke in 201 Forest officers were physically prevented from entering the area. Bamboo has not responded well to the clear feeling. The fresh regeneration is bushy and does not yield any usable bamboo culm. It yielded certain culms every four years when it was managed by the Forest Department.

The management of Medha Lekha Gram Sabha has not been sustainable and the area has not yielded culms in 2016, 2020 and 2024. Taking a cue from Madha Lekha, other Gram Sabhas have also started clear felling and overexploitation of the resource. Further, the revenue realised from the sale proceeds has not been ploughed back for fresh regeneration activities and the management has become completely unsustainable.

(The writer is Retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of Forest Force, Karnataka; views are personal)

The integral role of phygital in shaping India's rural economy

The emerging phygital model—merging the tangible strengths of traditional systems with the efficiency of digital innovation—is redefining growth

Tith over 1.4 billion inhabitants, India's economic landscape has evolved dramatically in recent years. Yet, while urban centres boom, the nation's rural heartland-home to around 908.8 million people as of 2022—continues to play a pivotal role in shaping the country's potential. Although initiatives like Digital India have ushered the country into a digital era with 806 million active internet users by February 2025, technology alone cannot resolve deepseated infrastructural challenges. This is where the phygital model—a fusion of physical and digital elements-steps in to bridge the divide and

ensure balanced growth. A New Era: The Phygital Approach



SAMEER MATHUR

Phygital combines the tangible benefits of traditional systems with the efficiency of digital technology, creating a hybrid framework that enhances accessibility, empowers local businesses, and fosters inclusive growth. In rural regions, where infrastructural deficits and resource limitations persist, phygital strategies are not about replacing established

methods but rather integrating them with modern digital solutions. This approach is proving transformative across key sectors such as banking, commerce, agriculture, healthcare, and public services.

Driving Financial InclusionFor years, traditional banking models have struggled to serve India's vast rural expanses. High operational costs, challenging geography, and low financial literacy have hampered efforts to bring modern financial services to remote communities.

While FinTech has broadened access through digital banking, a fully digital approach can alienate those who lack familiarity with smartphones or online transactions. The phygital model addresses these gaps by merging digital convenience with physical touch-

Systems like Aadhaar-enabled Payment Systems (AePS), micro-ATMs, and local banking correspondents empower rural residents to conduct transactions, access credit, and secure subsidies without the need for continuous internet connectivity. In many villages, Customer Service Points (CSPs) provide essential inperson support, guiding users as they gradually transition to digital financial solutions. Furthermore, partnerships between FinTech companies and local kirana stores or post offices have effectively transformed these outlets into mini banking hubs.

This integration allows people to withdraw cash, pay bills, and transfer money within their



locality, bypassing the need to travel long distances to bank branches and operating beyond standard banking hours. The result is a significant leap forward in achieving comprehensive financial inclusion.

Reinvigorating Rural Commerce

E-commerce has revolutionised urban shopping by altering customer habits and payment methods, but rural

consumers still rely heavily on cash transactions. A completely digital model often fails to resonate with these communities. Instead, the phygital model has emerged as an effective alternative by combining the reach of online platforms with the trust of local, physical commerce. Local kirana stores are increasingly functioning as pick-up points for online orders, ensuring that digital transactions are accessible even to those without digital payment capabili-

Assisted commerce kiosks further support rural shoppers by helping them browse products, place orders, and make payments-often in cash-thereby bridging the gap between digital platforms and traditional

Transforming Agriculture Agriculture remains the backbone of India's rural economy, providing livelihoods for more than 42 per cent of the population and contributing around 18.2 per cent to the nation's GDP. However, farmers have long contended with issues such as limited market access, dependence on intermediaries, and unpredictable weather. Phygital solutions are beginning to address these challenges by integrating digital tools with conventional agricultural practices.

Platforms like eNAM enable farmers to compare prices and market their produce directly, thus reducing reliance on middlemen. At the same time, traditional mandi networks continue to play an essential role in the trading process.

By ensuring that digital marketplaces and physical trading hubs operate in tandem, the phygital approach provides farmers with a more balanced and effective route to market. **Enhancing Essential Services** Beyond commerce and agriculture, phygital innovations are making significant strides in healthcare and public service delivery. Rural communities have traditionally faced barriers to accessing quality healthcare. Now, telemedicine kiosks supported by trained health workers enable remote consultations with specialists, while mobile health units equipped with diagnostic tools bring medical care directly to remote areas.

(The writer is Managing Director and Founder of Roinet *Solution; views are personal)*

HYDERABAD | MONDAY | MARCH 3, 2025

MONEY MATTERS



Purabi Dairy inks pact with NDDB, to double output

he West Assam Milk Producers' Co-operative Union Ltd (WAMUL), which operates under the brand Purabi Dairy, on Sunday said it has joined hands with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) to double production to 3 lakh litres per day. The two organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the recent 'Advantage Assam 2.0' business summit for the Guwahati based milk producer's expansion exercise. "The expansion project, estimated at Rs 100 crore, will increase Purabi Dairy's Panjabari plant's capacity from 1.5 LLPD to 3 LLPD, ensuring a steady supply of quality dairy products to meet growing consumer demand," WAMUL said in a statement. It will also see an increase in fermented milk product capacity from 20 metric tonnes per day (MTPD) to 50 MTPD and the establishment of a new ice cream plant with a capacity of 20 TLPD. Along with enhancing the supply chain, this will also ensure better returns for dairy farmers through value-added products, the company said. In July last year, WAMUL had entered into an agreement with the Assam government to operate a 5,000-litre daily capacity plant in Dhemaji district.



Excelsoft Tech files papers with Sebi for Rs 700- cr IPO

xcelsoft Technologies Ltd, a vertical SaaS (software-asa-service) company focused on the learning and assessment market, has filed draft papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 700 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). The proposed IPO of the Karnataka-based company is a combination of a fresh issue of shares valued Rs 210 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of shares worth Rs 490 crore by the promoters -- Pedanta Technologies and Dhananjaya Sudhanva, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The company may consider mobilising up to Rs 270 crore in pre-IPO round. "If the pre-IPO placement is undertaken, then the amount raised from the pre-IPO placement will be reduced from the fresh offer size and/or the Offer for Sale portion," the company said in the draft papers filed on Friday. The company has proposed to utilise the proceeds of the fresh issue towards purchase of land and construction of a new building and for upgradation and external electrical systems of its existing facility in Mysore; funding upgradation of the company's IT infrastructure and for general corporate purposes.



Wave Group, Agristo to invest Rs 750 cr in UP

ave Group and Belgium's Agristo NV will invest around Rs 750 crore to expand their potato processing plant in Uttar Pradesh to make premium french fries, amid rising global demand for processed food. In 2019, Wave Group firm Masa Global Food Pvt Ltd and Agristo's subsidiary firm IMSTO NV, Belgium had formed a 50:50 joint venture firm to establish a potato processing plant at Bijnor to make dehydrated potato flakes. The name of the joint venture firm is Agristo Masa Pvt Ltd. The plant started operations in 2022 with an annual capacity of 7,500 tonnes. In an interview with PTI, Wave Group Chairman Manpreet Singh Chadha noted that there is an immense growth potential in Indian food processing sector. He also stressed on the need to boost crop yields and processing capacity for augmenting farmers income. "We are setting up a new production line for export quality french fries at Bijnor," Chadha said. He said the total investment on this expansion will be around Rs 750 crore, which will be financed through equity and debt. The joint venture had invested around Rs 300 crore on setting up the existing plant, taking the total investment commitment to more than Rs 1,000 crore.

Court orders FIR against ex-Sebi chief, 5 others

A special court here has directed the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to register an FIR against former Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and five other officials in connection with alleged stock market fraud and regulatory viola-

tions. "There is prima facie evidence of regulatory lapses and collusion, requiring a fair and impartial probe," the special ACB court judge, Shashikant Eknathrao Bangar, said in the order passed on Saturday.

The court order also noted that the allegations disclose a cognisable offence, necessitating an investigation.

The inaction by law enforcement (agencies) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) necessitates judicial intervention under the provisions of the CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code), it added. Apart from Buch, the other officials against whom



the court has ordered registration of the FIR are BSE's Managing Director and Chief

Sundararaman Ramamurthy, its then chairman and public interest director Pramod Agarwal and Sebi's three whole time members Ashwani Bhatia, Ananth Narayan G and Kamlesh Chandra Varshney. The court said it will mon-

itor the probe, and sought a status report (of the case) within 30 days.

The Sebi said it "would be initiating appropriate legal steps to challenge this order and remains committed to ensuring due regulatory com-

pliance in all matters".

The complainant, Sapan Shrivastava (47), who is a media reporter, had sought an investigation into the alleged offences committed by the proposed accused, involving largescale financial fraud, regulatory violations and cor-

> economy.
> "I strongly believe in hard work. Indians must work hard, whether it's 80

hours or 90 hours a week. If your ambition is to move from a USD 4 trillion to a USD 30 trillion economy, you can't do it through entertainment or by following the views of some film stars," he said while speaking at Business Standard's Manthan

Currently, the size of the Indian economy is around USD 4 trillion.

'We have made it fashion-



Money 08

Indians must work hard to achieve US\$ 30 tn economy: Amitabh Kant

debate on working

hours, India's G20

Sherpa said Japan,

South Korea and

China have achieved

through a strong work ethic and suggested

economic success

that India must

cultivate a similar

mindset to build a

world-class economy

Indians must work hard to achieve the ambitious target of making India a USD 30 trillion economy by 2047, former Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant has said.

G20 Sherpa said Japan, South Korea and China have achieved economic success through a strong work ethic and suggested that India must cultivate a similar mindset to build a world-class

summit.

able to talk about not working hard. Why? India must work hard to deliver projects ahead of time, with world-class excellence, without time and cost overruns," he added.

Responding to a question on work-life balance, Kant Joining the ongoing debate emphasised that there is on working hours, India's enough time for personal

well-being within a disciplined Joining the ongoing work schedule.

"I work every day. I exercise. I play golf, and I still manage to work hard. Keep aside one-and-ahalf-hour for yourself, and you still have 22.5 hours in a day. There's plenty of time to manage work-life balance, but don't make it fashion

able to say people shouldn't work hard," Kant said. He also asserted that Indians must learn the art of delivering projects with world-class excellence without

time and cost overruns. "We are all sending wrong messages to the young generation of India that India can become a great nation without working hard. No, no country has been able to do this," Kant

Goyal's US visit for trade talks to start today Minister Narendra Modi to Washington, The visit is crucial as US President

With India and the US gearing up to start negotiations for a proposed bilateral trade agreement, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal's Washington visit will begin on Monday, according to an official.

Goyal is likely to hold talks with US Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer and US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, the official said.

During the recent visit of Prime

India and the US announced their commitment to more than double the two-way commerce to USD 500 billion by 2030 and

negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025. Last month, the minister stated that India and

the US are committed to increasing bilateral trade to USD 500 billion and negotiating a "strong" trade agreement Donald Trump has announced plans to impose higher tariffs against India.

Tariffs are import duties imposed and collected by the government and paid by the companies to bring foreign goods into the country.

Earlier, Goyal said the two countries can offer concessions and duty reductions as their economies complement each other.

Normally in a free trade agreement, two trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they ease norms to promote trade in services and boost

NCLAT dismisses Deloittes' plea on admissibility of SFIO's report on IFIN

PNS NEW DELHI

Appellate tribunal NCLAT has dismissed petitions by Deloitte Haskins and Sells and its two associates, challenging the admissibility of the second interim investigation report by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) Financial Services (IFIN).

The petitions also contested the compilation submitted by the government (MCA) to the tribunal.

The compilation included documents related to the IFIN investigation report and the

amended request regarding the proceedings against them to freeze their assets based on the second interim report by A two-member bench of

the NCLAT upheld an earlier order issued by the Mumbai Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal. On July 22, 2024, the

bunal ruled that the second interim SFIO report, along with the accompanying documents, could be considered for both interim relief and the final declaration.

that the second SFIO Report fully admissible and can be



as well as the compilation of documents filed by the Union "We, thus, are of the view of India before the NCLT was

looked into by the NCLT for proceeding under Section 212 (14A) and no error has been committed

Deloitte Haskins and Sells

LLP and its two associates, who were the auditors, contended that the second interim report is not admissible as legal evidence and cannot be relied on before the NCLT.

convinced and said the ground raised by Deloitte Haskins and Sells and its auditors for rejecting the compilation of documents and interim report submitted by the SFIO cannot

Adjudicating Authority be accepted at this stage as (NCLT) in rejecting IA No 65 they are yet to be examined of 2024," the NCLAT said. ed on merits.

"The issue as to what has been pleaded in the applica-tion or the petition and what is the material or evidence on the record are issues, which are to be examined when Company Law Appellate merits. Thus, on the submis-Tribunal (NCLAT) was not sion that there are no pleadings with regard to compilation of documents, it cannot be a reason to accept the prayers," the appellate tribunal said in a 44-page order

passed last week.

Coal India waives financial coverage charge for non-power sector consumers

PNS NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Limited on Sunday said that non-power sector (NPS) consumers will not have to pay the coal value worth ten days of supply as financial coverage for the dry fuel received via rail transport.

"With the waiver of financial coverage, CIL takes an important step towards reducing transactional complexities and fostering an environment that encourages smooth and efficient business operations," the PSU said in a statement.

The latest decision is one more step in Coal India Ltd's ongoing efforts to streamline operations under the broader ease of doing business initiative, the company said.

This also helps to reduce the financial burden for NPS



consumers and improve their cash liquidity," Coal India Ltd (CIL) noted.

The liquidity availability will allow consumers to use the capital for other operational needs and reduce the working capital pressure.

During the ongoing financial year, CIL supplied about output.

560 million tonnes (MT) of coal to the power sector and nearly 134 MTs to NPS consumers till February. The offtake through rail mode accounted for 55 per cent of

CIL's total supplies. Coal India accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal

CWC to play a key role in **India's logistics cost reduction** plan: Food Min Pralhad Joshi

PNS NEW DELHI

The government aims to reduce logistics costs from the current 13-14 per cent to global standards of around 8 per cent, with the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) playing a crucial role in this nationwide transformation effort.

"With the launch of the National Logistics Policy and the PM Gati Shakti Programme, we aim to bring down logistics costs from the existing 13-14 per cent to global standards of around 8 per cent.

"CWC, as a leading warehousing organisation, is poised to support these objectives through modern infrastructure development and efficiency enhancements," Food Minister Pralhad Joshi said while addressing the CWC's 69th Foundation Day.

The minister highlighted that CWC, established in 1957, has evolved into a dynamic logistics service provider with an extensive network of over 700 warehouses and an operational storage capacity of 148.29 lakh metric tonnes, an official statement said.

The government's push comes as part of broader iniunder tiatives Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliance India) Mission, which seeks to foster selfreliance through efficient supply chains by encouraging private sector participation and technological advance-

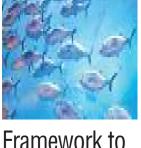


The minister also hailed CWC's successful asset monetisation at 18 locations, which mobilised an investment of Rs 820 crore under the government's asset monetisation

He also commended the corporation's efforts in improving operational efficiency, transparency, and accountability through digital

Joshi noted that with the rapid expansion of e-commerce and the government's focus on infrastructure development, the warehousing and logistics sector is seen as a key

driver of economic growth. He also emphasised CWC's crucial role in government initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) and Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA), ensuring efficient warehousing, handling, and transportation of essential commodities, including food grains, pulses, cotton, and groundnuts.



Framework to tap fisheries in A&N, Lakshadweep

PNS NEW DELHI

A post-budget webinar on agriculture and rural prosperity discussed the proposed framework to tap the fisheries potential of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep, the Fisheries Ministry said on Sunday.

The discussions focused on the need to train local communities and enhance infrastructure, an official statement said.

The proposed framework seeks to transform these islands into major fisheries hubs, driving economic growth, creating job opportunities, and ensuring sustainable development within the fisheries sector.

The day-long virtual event was held on March 1 to engage stakeholders in focused discussions on implementing the 2025 Budget's announcements for agriculture and rural development.

'Yawning wealth gap widening inequalities in China'

PNS BEIJING

China's wealthiest individuals continue to grow richer, widening economic inequalities in the country despite the ruling Communist Party's efforts to control private businesses and implement policies aimed at boosting people's incomes, a report here said.

The combined wealth of the 5.12 million families in China with over six million yuan (USD 824,000) in assets was stated to

be about 150 trillion yuan (over USD seven trillion) in 2024, according to a report published by the Hurun Research Institute. Of this, the wealthiest 130,000

families accounted for 58 per cent in 2024, which is up from 56 per cent a year earlier, the report said.

China's per capita disposable income was stated to be 41,314 yuan (over USD 41,314) last year, up 5.3 per cent from 2023, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported, citing the



Analysts have warned that Beijing needs to work harder to narrow the wealth gap in society more broadly as it tries to ignite a private sector-led economic recovery, the Post reported on Sunday.

The country is grappling with weak consumption and a languishing property sector, where the rich park most of their assets.

Much of the economic strain is being felt by those in the middle and lower-middle classes, it

As a result, the overall consumption essential to halt the economic slowdown grew by just 3.5 per cent last year, a rate that was slower than the 5 per cent rise in GDP, suggesting that the income and wealth gaps were holding back spend-

ng.

The growing inequality was reflected in the national Gini coefficient, which was 0.467 in 2022 when the National Bureau of Statistics last updated the

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> Monday March 3, 2025

"Crime beat wasn't just another project—it was great content I couldn't let go of

In a candid conversation with *The Pioneer*, **Saqib Saleem** opens up about his gripping new series *Crime Beat*, where he plays a rookie crime journalist caught in a web of ambition, ethics and survival. He reflects on the challenges of portraying a character with such a dramatic transformation, the moral dilemmas journalists face and the price one pays for seeking the truth

TEJAL SINHA tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

aqib Saleem has always been known for his versatility, taking on a wide range of characters that challenge him as an actor. From sports dramas to intense thrillers, he has left a mark with each performance. Now, with *Crime Beat*, he steps into the shoes of a rookie crime journalist navigating a dangerous world of ambition, ethics, and survival. In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Saleem delves into his role, the challenges of portraying the character's transformation and his aspirations for the future.

For him, *Crime Beat* was a project that immediately stood out. "It feels very exciting," he says, reflecting on the opportunity to work with a stellar ensemble cast and acclaimed filmmaker Sudhir Mishra. "As an actor, it was a great space to be in, collaborating with such talented people."

The show follows the journey of a struggling crime journal-ist trying to find his place in a world full of professional and personal conflicts. The *Dil Juunglee* actor reveals that his connection with the story began with the source material. "It's based on a book called *The Price You Pay* by Somnath Batabyal. I read the book and was completely drawn into it," he explains. Once he met Sudhir Mishra and co-director Sanjeev Kaul, he knew this was a project he had to be part of. "Everything from day one just felt right. It wasn't something I did because it was the best thing available—it was genuinely a great content piece that I didn't want to let go of."

Unlike traditional preparation, where actors immerse themselves in the real-world profession they are portraying, the *Kakuda* fame took a different route. "I watch so much journalism around me. As an actor, your job is to observe people, so I picked up from a lot of different sources rather than focusing on one particular journalist."

However, for him, the role was not just about getting the nuances of journalism right—it was about understanding the person behind the profession. "Him (Abhishek Sinha) being a journalist is just his job. He could have been a doctor, a police officer, or a restaurant owner. What mattered to me was understand-

ing his vulnerabilities, insecurities and ambitions," he explains. While the script ensured that the journalistic language and terminologies were accurate, Saqib was more concerned with the emotional depth of his character. "For me, the preparation was about exploring who this guy is at his core rather than just getting the journalist aspect right—that was the easy bit, trust me."

The biggest challenge, he admits, was portraying the character's transformation. "He starts as a stringer, becomes a print journalist fighting for his byline and then eventually moves into TV journalism. The whole arc was tricky because you don't often get to play such a big graph. As an actor, that was both exciting and nerve-wracking—I just hoped I could pull it off."

The show also explores the moral dilemmas journalists face—

The show also explores the moral dilemmas journalists face—truth versus ambition, ethics versus survival. When asked about how his character deals with these conflicts, the *Mere Dad Ki Maruti* actor keeps it simple: "He just tries to present the facts in the most honest way possible." Playing a character caught in such ethical dilemmas naturally made Saleem reflect on his own life. "I'm human, right?" he says with a laugh. "These thoughts come up now and then—you see what's happening in the world and wonder, 'Should I become like this to achieve that?" However, he credits his upbringing for keeping him grounded. "My parents always taught me to keep doing my work and keep moving forward. It might seem like there's no end to this long road, but trust me, consistency and diligence get you where you want in the long run. That's the principle I live by."

The show also highlights the price journalists pay for their pursuit of truth. The *Crackdown* fame acknowledges that his character experiences significant losses—both professionally and personally. "That's exactly why the book is titled *The Price You Pay*," he points out. "To put out your version of the truth, what is the cost? He has to make sacrifices, and you'll have to watch the show to see just how much he loses to get what he wants."

With journalism evolving rapidly in the digital and social media age, *Crime Beat* is deeply relevant. Saleem confirms this: "That's exactly what the show explores—how modern-day reporting works, the pressures journalists face and the ethical lines they sometimes have to cross."

Despite the intensity of the role, he insists that it wasn't emo-

tionally draining. "It is called acting for a reason. You try to be as authentic as possible between 'action' and 'cut,' but this wasn't the kind of character that I carried with me everywhere." He adds that detachment is key: "When you're playing a part, you have to not judge the character. You have to be the character. And when there's no judgment, you don't go through emotional dilemmas."

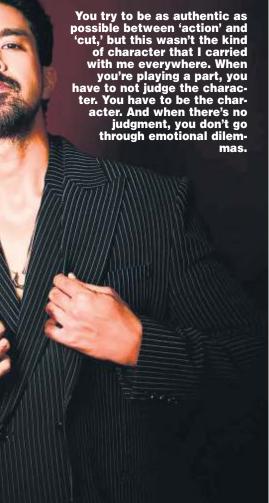
One of the highlights of the project was reuniting with famil-

One of the nightights of the project was reuniting with far iar faces and collaborating with new ones. "I got to work with Saba again after so long—we started our careers together, so that was special," the *Rangbaaz* actor says. "I also worked with Addinath again after 83, and this was my third collaboration with Rajesh Tailang. And then, I got to work with Sai, Danish and Vikrant for the first time. It was amazing to be surrounded by such fantastic talent." While he doesn't single out any specific behind-the-scenes moments, he fondly recalls the camaraderie. "We shared meals, we shared jokes—it was just a fantastic experience all around."

Having played a range of diverse roles, is there a specific genre he is eager to explore next? "I want to do an out-and-out romantic film," he says without hesitation. "Not a rom-com, but a proper, intense romantic film. That's something missing from my filmography and I'd love to find the right script for it."

As for upcoming projects, Saleem remains tight-lipped. "Nothing right now," he says. "I'm looking for exciting work. There are a few conversations happening, and when something materialises, you'll know."

As he continues to explore new horizons in his career, one thing is certain—whether it's journalism, crime, or romance, he is always ready to dive deep into his characters and bring them to life with authenticity and passion.



REVOLUTIONISING PARENTHOOD

The next frontier in IVF technology



In vitro fertilisation (IVF) has transformed reproductive medicine, offering millions of individuals and couples the opportunity to conceive despite fertility challenges. Technological advancements continue to enhance success rates, making IVF more efficient and accessible. Emerging innovations promise to further improve outcomes, reduce costs and minimise risks.

Artificial intelligence (AI) in IVF

AI is optimising embryo selection and treatment personalisation. AI-driven algorithms analyse embryo images and genetic profiles to predict implantation potential, reducing the need for multiple cycles and increasing efficiency. Personalised fertility treatments based on AI insights enhance success rates and minimise costs.

Non-invasive embryo assess-

Traditional embryo assessment involves invasive biopsy-based preimplantation genetic testing (PGT). Noninvasive methods, such as metabolomic and proteomic profiling of embryo culture media, analyse biochemical markers to assess embryo viability without disturbing development. These techniques improve selection and implantation success rates while reducing risks.

Advances in cryopreservation

Vitrification, a rapid-freezing method preventing ice crystal formation, has revolutionised embryo and egg cryopreservation. Future developments in cryoprotectants and freezing protocols will further enhance embryo viability and survival rates after thawing, improving delayed pregnancy success.

Stem cell and regenerative medicine

Stem cell research is exploring the creation of artificial gametes, offering hope to individuals unable to produce viable sperm or eggs. This innovation could benefit cancer survivours, individuals with genetic disorders and same-sex couples. Though in early stages, stem cell-derived gametes may redefine IVF.

Gene editing and CRISPR tech-

CRISPR gene-editing technology presents opportunities for preventing inherited genetic disorders. While ethical and legal concerns remain, future applications may involve correcting genetic mutations before implantation, reducing hereditary disease risks. Strict regulations will be necessary to guide responsible implementation.

Artificial wombs and uterine transplants

Artificial womb research aims to develop bioengineered environments for embryo growth outside the body. Though experimental, this technology could benefit individuals with uterine disorders or high-risk pregnancies. Uterine transplants have already enabled previously infertile women to carry pregnancies, with ongoing efforts to increase accessibility.

Microfluidics and lab-on-a-chip

technologies

Microfluidic technology, or "lab-on-a-chip," enhances sperm sorting, embryo culture and gamete handling. These miniaturised systems isolate healthy sperm with high motility and DNA integrity, improving fertilisation outcomes. Microfluidic embryo culture systems provide stable environments, increasing implantation success rates.

3D bioprinting in reproductive

reproductive medicine

3D bioprinting is being explored for creating artificial ovaries, endometrial tissue and

reproductive

structures.

Scientists

have success-

fully 3D-printed ovarian tissue that restored fertility in animal models. Future applications may offer personalized fertility solutions for individuals with ovarian failure or reproductive disorders.

Personalised medicine and hormonal optimisation

Genetic testing and biomarker analysis are enabling personalised IVF treatments. Customised hormone protocols, optimized endometrial receptivity tests, and advanced monitoring tools contribute to improved success rates and reduced side effects, making treatments more efficient.

Telemedicine and remote IVF monitoring

Telemedicine is enhancing IVF accessibility, particularly for individuals in remote areas. Wearable devices and smartphone applications enable hormone level tracking, ovulation cycle monitoring and medication adherence from home. Remote consultations reduce clinic visits and improve convenience.

Ethical and societal considerations

As IVF innovations progress, ethical and societal concerns must be addressed. Questions about accessibility, affordability, and genetic editing implications require careful examination. Regulatory frameworks must evolve to balance technological advancements with ethical standards.

Conclusion

The future of IVF is promising, with emerging technologies improving success rates, reducing costs and making fertility treatments more accessible. AI, stem

cell-derived gametes, artificial wombs and microfluidics are reshaping assisted reproduction. While challenges remain, ongoing research and ethical considerations will ensure IVF continues to evolve, offering hope to future generations.

(The author, Dr. Saarthak Bakshi, is a Healthcare Entrepreneur and CEO of RISAA IVF.)

Steering India's defense manufacturing sector

PNS|HYDERABAD

ahil Luthra's entrepreneurial energy is ingrained in his very soul, fostered by a family heritage that epitomises inventive commercial acumen. Raised in the vibrant world of enterprise, Sahil was the son of the late Karan Luthra, the visionary 'Lottery King of India' who ruled the 1970s and 1980s with his audacious business endeavours! As Sahil watched his father move into land banking with ease, he learned a great deal about flexibility, risk-taking and strategic thinking. His own entrepreneurial trajectory has been greatly impacted by these early experiences, as he currently leads Vijayan Trishul Defence Solutions with a pioneering spirit, fostering innovation and expansion in India's defense manufacturing industry. He is the epitome of a new breed of entrepreneurs that are changing India's economic landscape one innovative project at a time. He has over 15 years of varied business expertise. Sahil started his career in land banking with Karan & Co., his father's business, where he learned a lot about management and business strategy. He further refined his business acumen as a partner in S L INVESTORS & DEVELOPER LLP, preparing him to tackle the intricate realm of defense production. His work supports the government's 'Make in India' campaign, which seeks to increase the nation's defense manufacturing independence through creativity and workable solutions. Sahil's father, the late Karan Luthra, introduced him to entrepreneurship at a young age and his business sense has inspired Sahil's leadership style! In his spare time, Sahil keeps abreast of advances in the global defense industry and looks into new business ventures to keep his company on the cutting edge of industry trends and

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

Which standard entrepreneurial ideas have helped you navigate changes and how do they translate to the highly strategic field of defense manufacturing?

How do you strike a compromise between the need for technological

advancement and the limitations imposed by laws and defense procurement

be strategic. At VTDS, we'll make investments in R&D that support India's

Defense innovation cannot function independently of policy frameworks; it must

procurement and defense regulations, guaranteeing adherence while advancing

technology. Our strategy will entail tight coordination with defense installations,

policymakers and research and development organisations to close the gap

How do you want to establish India as a major participant in international

between state-of-the-art developments and practical regulatory requirements.

Any defense force's foundation is its ammunition, which guarantees operational

preparedness. The impact of ammunition manufacture is more immediate and

scalable than that of high-tech weapons, which require extensive R&D cycles.

ammunition, which would increase strategic exports and lessen reliance on

imports. By guaranteeing precision manufacturing, upholding international

India has the potential to develop into a major global center for the production of

standards and encouraging future international cooperation, I hope to establish

Prior to his successful transition to land banking, your father, Karan Luthra, was

I learned two important lessons from my father. The first is that while industries

referred to as the "Lottery King of India." What particular insights did you get

do they translate to the nighty strategic ne.

Understanding risk, regulation and long-term sustainability has been a prerequisite for every industry I have entered, including land banking, lottery and now defense manufacture.

Adaptability has served as my compass: as sectors change, so too must business owners. This flexibility will help defense manufacturers navigate intricate rules, promote innovation and stay in line with national security interests while upholding a sound business plan.

ammunition supply chains?

India as a reliable supplier.

from observing him handle company changes?



for greater cooperation between the public and private sectors are the main obstacles. Additionally, a large amount of money and technological know-how are needed for defense manufacture. Faster clearance procedures, stable policies, more funding for domestic R&D and more robust international collaborations to introduce best practices into the Indian ecosystem are all necessary to overcome these obstacles.

may change, the fundamentals of business—risk assessment, strategic foresight

and adaptability—remain constant. Second, the secret to success is seeing

opportunities where others see obstacles. His ability to move across industries

as a sector but also as a chance to make a significant contribution to national

What do you think are the main obstacles that Indian businesses still have to

The lengthy procurement process, regulatory impediments and the requirement

security while creating a long-lasting business.

overcome in this industry?

with ease served as inspiration for my own strategy, which saw defense not just

In a sector that changes at such a slow rate, how do you make sure Vijayan Trishul Defence Solutions stays competitive and flexible?

Although the defense sector is a long-term one, adaptability will come from staying on top of developments in technology and trends. Modular innovation—creating flexible goods that can be enhanced over time—will be main focus at VTDS. Diversifying holdings, working with up-and-coming digital firms and preserving an adaptable operating architecture that enables to change course in response to market and geopolitical developments are further components of our approach

In this field, how do you manage the nexus between diplomacy and entrepreneurship? Defense requires an understanding of the geopolitical environment. We will have

ongoing discussions with international stakeholders, defense professionals and policymakers because every commercial choice in this area has strategic ramifications. The objective is to make sure that it enhances India's standing as a trustworthy international partner in security cooperation while also assisting with its defense readiness!

Do you see chances for foreign collaborations in your work, considering

India's changing defense partnerships with international players?

Of course. International partnerships contribute technological know-how and "Make in India" guarantees independence. Whether through joint ventures, licensing agreements, or technology transfers, the strategy will be to establish alliances that improve domestic capabilities. The objective is for India to develop a defense ecosystem that is self-sufficient while blending in with international

What technical advancements or changes do you think will reshape modern warfare and defense tactics over the next ten years, as someone who keeps up with international defense trends?

Al-powered defense systems, self-governing drones, intelligent weapons and next-generation cybersecurity will be the main forces behind combat in the future. Hypersonic weaponry and quantum computers will also change offensive and defensive tactics. We will keep a careful eye on these advancements to make sure that our defense and ammunition options adapt to the needs of contemporary

Leaving a legacy is an ambition shared by many businesspeople. What type of influence do you think it will have on India's defense environment?

Our goal is to establish India as a major participant in the global defense supply chain and to make it self-sufficient in defense manufacture. Beyond business, I want it to further India's strategic strength by guaranteeing that our military personnel have top-notch gear, encouraging domestic innovation and building an environment where India leads the development of defense technology rather than merely consuming it.

what's brewing?





Villa Marie Degree College for Women, in association with the Government of Telangana's Department of Language and Culture, successfully staged two iconic plays, Macbeth and Pygmalion, at Ravindra Bharathi in Hyderabad. Designed and directed by Dr. Ram Hollagundi, the plays were performed to a distinguished











The Miss & Mrs Strong & Beautiful Telangana & Andhra Pradesh Auditions were held at JNAFAU in Hyderabad, celebrating the strength, beauty, and empowerment of women from diverse backgrounds. The event drew a talented and diverse group of over 100 participants, including professionals such as doctors, IT employees, fashion designers and homemakers, as well as aspiring models.







The 'Living Temple' exhibition was successfully inaugurated at T-Works in Raidurgam, Hyderabad, marking the beginning of a unique celebration of India's temple art, culture, and heritage. The inaugural ceremony was attended by esteemed guests, including Smita Sabharwal, IAS, Principal Secretary to the Government of Telangana, Mamidi Harikrishna, Director of the Culture Department and KK Muhammed, a renowned archaeologist. Curated by Annapurna Madipadiga and supported by Telangana Tourism, the exhibition features over 100 artworks by more than 30 acclaimed artists from across India, showcasing a stunning blend of traditional temple art and contemporary artistic expressions.





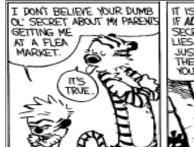
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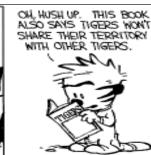




CALVIN AND HOBBES









GARFIELD







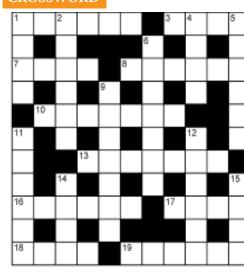


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- 10 Sets fire to
- 13 Courage

4 Rip

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- 18 Lines 19 A bird that is raced

2 As much as is needed

5 Draw with this

for sport DOWN Counterfeit



6 Watch

15 Sunrise

9 Female tiger

11 Tremble with cold 12 A bed for a baby

14 Cold winter flakes

GINGER MEGGS







Hyderabad | Monday March 3, 2025

'Cinema should inspire, not disgust':

Former vice president urges filmmakers

The former Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu, took a strong stand against the current trends in cinema, criticising filmmakers for promoting doublemeaning dialogues, excessive vulgarity,and portraying smugglers and traitors as heroes on the big screen.

ormer Vice President of India, M. Venkajah Naidu, has strongly criticised the glorification of smugglers and anti-social elements in films, stating that such portrayals send the wrong message to society. Speaking at a memorial event for veteran actress, playback singer and studio owner Krishnaveni, held at the Film Nagar Cultural Centre (FNCC) in Hyderabad, Naidu acknowledged the golden era of cinema while raising concerns about its current state.

Comparing past and present films, Naidu noted that smuggling and criminal activities have been glorified in recent years. "I agree that cinema is a business, but at the same time, it should carry a message," he said. Reflecting on Krishnaveni's illus-

trious career, he praised her versa-tility as an actress, singer and studio owner, highlighting her contribution as the producer of N.T. Rama Rao's debut film *Mana* Desam. He urged today's actors to learn from legends like Krishnaveni, emphasising that earlier films conveyed emotions through expressions

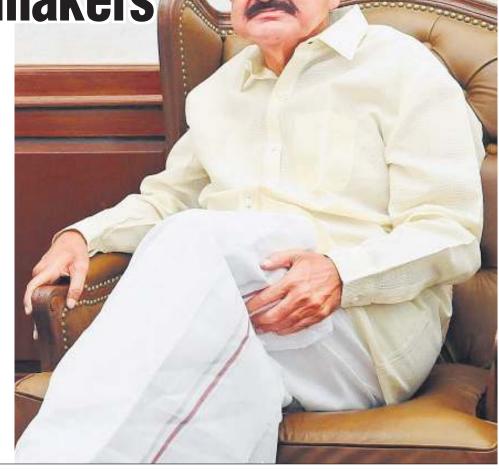


rather than physical intimacy.

Naidu also recalled how iconic actors NTR and ANR set high standards in filmmaking, with meaning-ful dialogues, soulful music and strong storytelling. He criticised the increasing use of double-meaning dialogues, saying, "Many assume that adding vulgarity will make a film successful, but that is completely wrong. If not meaningful, at least

dialogues should have good intent." He stressed the importance of quality comedy in films, stating that humor is an essential part of life. "A film should offer mental peace, not leave the audience disgusted," he remarked.

Naidu also reminisced about meeting Krishnaveni twice—once at an event for actress Jamuna and later in Vijayawada.



Bhagyashri Borse in talks to star opposite



Kishan's *Mazaka* struggles at theatres despite festival release

Sundeep Kishan and Ritu Varma's latest film Mazaka, released on February 26 on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, has turned out to be was appreciated, the film suffered from the property of t njor box-office disappointment. Directed by Nakkina Trinadha Rao and produced by Razesh Danda, the film was expected to open well due to the festival release. However, to everyone's surprise,

the festival release. However, to everyones surprise, theaters remained largely empty.

Adding to the woes, *Mazaka* had an unusual midweek release on a Wednesday, which further impacted collections on Thursday and Friday. Even the weekend failed to revive its prospects, with audiences outright rejecting the film.

Despite a strong supporting cast, including Rao Ramesh and the return of Anshu Sagar (Manmadhudu fame), the film had several shortcomings. The poorly received songs and last-minute

script by Bezawada Prasanna Kumar, especially in the emotionally disconnected second half. Trade analysts believe the father-son comedy track also did not work, leading to the film's failure. Despite the theatrical failure, the producer has managed to recover costs through OTT and satellite rights, with Zee Studios securing the film for a good price.
Following the massive success of *Dhamaka*, the underperformance of *Mazaka* raises con-

cerns about the future of the Nakkina-Prasanna collaboration. Fans are now eagerly waiting to see how they redeem themselves with their next project.



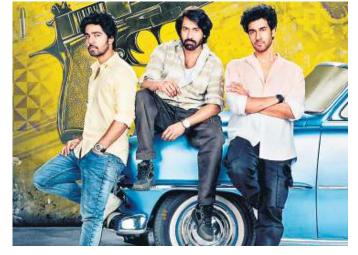
Kannappa teaser: Prabhas, Akshay Kumar, and others promise a grand spectacle

dhe much-awaited teaser of Kannappa is finally out, offering a visual spectacle packed with action, devotion, and high-stakes drama. The teaser features an ensemble of big stars, including Prabhas, Akshay Kumar and Mohanlal, alongside Vishnu Manchu and Mohan Babu.

Akshay Kumar takes on the divine role of Lord Shiva, while Prabhas appears as Rudra, promising an intense and visually stunning experi-

ence. Vishnu Manchu leads as Thinnadu, a fearless warrior who embarks on a journey of ultimate devotion to Lord Shiva. The teaser also gives a glimpse of Kajal Aggarwal and Preity Mukhundhan, adding more star power to the film. Shot extensively in the lush forests of New Zealand, *Kannappa* offers breathtaking visuals, blending mythology with cutting-edge action sequences and emotional storytelling.

Director Mukesh Kumar Singh described Kannappa as more than just a film—it is a tribute to faith, devotion, and transformation. Vishnu Manchu, who has been passionately working on this project for over a decade, shared, "This film is incredibly close to my heart. It brings to life a historical tale that is often mistaken for mythology." Produced by M. Mohan Babu, Kannappa is set for a grand worldwide release on April 25.



MAD Square & Robinhood set for March 28 clash?

⊣he 2023 film *MAD*, made on release date with Nithiin's a modest budget with newcomers, became a sensational hit. Now, its much-awaited sequel, *MAD Square*, was initially set to release on March 29, 2024. However, the makers have now decided to prepone the release by a day, with the film hitting screens on March 28 instead.

The decision to advance the release was influenced by the fact that March 29 falls on Ámavasya (New Moon Day), a date some distributors advised against for the film's release. Taking their concerns into account, the makers opted for an earlier premiere, ensuring an extended weekend and holiday advantage that could boost the film's box office prospects. Interestingly, MAD Square will now share its

Robinhood. However, the producer clarified that there is no competition between the two films. "Since March 29 falls on Amavasya, our distributors felt it was best to advance the release, and we were happy to oblige. There was never any intention to cause a last-minute rescheduling. We wholeheartedly wish that March 28 will be a memorable day for Telugu cinema, with both *Robinhood* and *MAD Square* lighting up the big screens," the producer stated on social media. MAD Square is produced by Harika Suryadevara and Sai Soujanya, with Kalyan Shankar directing. The film stars Narne Nithiin, Sangeeth Shoban and Ram Nithin in lead roles, while Reba John features in a special song.





After Pushpa 2, Allu Arjun prioritises Atlee over Trivikram?

A fter the much-anticipated release of *Pushpa* 2, Allu Arjun was set to collaborate once again with director Trivikram Srinivas. Reports suggest that their film has a mythological touch, revolving around Lord Subramanya Swamy. Though officially announced long ago, the project has been delayed due to Arjun's commitments to *Pushpa 3* and Trivikram's post-Guntur Kaaram developments.

Latest reports indicate that the Allu Arjun-Trivikram film may not commence this year. Instead, Arjun is considering working with Tamil director Atlee for his next project. Discussions regarding the budget are still ongoing, as the film is expected to be a high-budget

After the unprecedented success of Pushpa 2, especially in the Hindi market, Arjun is under pressure to maintain the momentum. Since *Pushpa 2* did not perform as expected in Telugu and other South Indian languages, but dominated in the Hindi belt, his next project needs to cater to a pan-India audience. Atlee is reportedly preparing a story that aligns with this vision.

Given the mythological aspects of Trivikram's script, Arjun feels it would require significant time to execute. Hence, he prefers to take on Atlee's project first. An official announcement regarding this collaboration is expected soon, according to sources.

Vidarbha wins third Ranji Trophy title

magnificent run in domestic cricket this season culminated in a third Ranji Trophy title for Vidarbha, who emerged champions on the basis of their first-innings lead in the summit clash, which ended in a draw at their home ground on Sunday.

The fate of the contest was all but sealed on the third evening when Vidarbha edged ahead with a slender lead of 37 runs in the first innings, having dismissed a doughty Kerala for 342 after putting on 379 runs batting first.

Kerala, the first-time finalists, fought hard but Vidarbha were rewarded for their incredible hard work and discipline throughout a season in which they not only clinched the Ranji Trophy but also ended as the runner-up in the 50-overs Vijay Hazare Trophy. It is for the third time that Vidarbha

have won the Ranji Trophy title, having done so earlier with their two consecutive wins in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons.

Vidarbha's win now also makes them one of the strongest outfits in the Indian domestic cricket, for they had also finished as the runner-up in the Ranji Trophy last season.

The team under the captaincy of Akshay Wadkar and head coach Usman Ghani produced dominant performances throughout the Ranji Trophy season which was, for the first time in its 90-year history, split into two halves.

Vidarbha emerged as the best team across all the four groups in the league stage with six wins in seven



Vidarbha players pose with the trophy after winning Ranji Trophy final cricket match against Kerala in Nagpur on Sunday

matches giving them 40 points. Unlike Kerala who also had luck on their side in the knockouts when they Kashmir Jammu and (quarterfinal) Guiarat and (semifinal) by barest of margins and progressed on basis of first-innings leads, Vidarbha grabbed outright

Vidarbha crushed Tamil Nadu, last year's semifinalists, by 198 runs in the quarterfinal and went on to pummel defending champions Mumbai by 80 runs in the semifinal.

Overall, Vidarbha won nine of the 10

matches they played in the Ranji Trophy this season, which reflects the dominance of the team in India's premier domestic competition.

On Sunday, Vidarbha did what they had planned — to bat, bat and bat and reached 375 for nine with Karun Nair making 135 (295 balls, 10x4s, 2x6s), Danish Malewar scoring 73 and Darshan Nalkande chipping in with a 51 not out.

Vidarbha resumed the final day's play with the contest completely in their control, having an overnight lead of

Even though Nair could only add three more runs to his overnight tally, Vidarbha batted for long enough — close to the tea break — taking their overall lead to 412 runs, far beyond

the reach of Sachin Baby's side. The triumph was achieved on the back of all-round performances, which had two of Vidarbha's youngest players taking charge of their team's showings on the field.

The 22-year-old left-arm spinner Harsh Dubey created the record for most wickets in a Ranji Trophy season with 69 dismissals, going past the previous record of 68 wickets which belonged to Bihar's Ashutosh Aman. Dubey also implemented the batting tips given by legendary Indian player Ravichandran Ashwin to make 476 runs in 10 matches with five fifties, perhaps to show early signs of another spin-bowling all-rounder in making for India.

The 24-year-old Yash Rathod, a bespectacled left-handed batter, amassed 960 runs at 53.33 in 10 matches with five centuries and three fifties to top the charts for batters, which had plenty of his teammates as

The veteran Nair, who had joined Vidarbha for this season, not only led their charge in the Vijay Hazare Trophy with five tons but also finished as the fourth highest rungetter in the Ranji Trophy, making 863 runs in nine matches at 53.93 with four tons and two fifties. In the final, Nair struck 86 and 135.

The 21-year-old Malewar, who struck 153 and 73 in the final, finished fifth with 783 runs at 52.20 with two tons and six fifties.

Nair and Malewar were the architects of Vidarbha's win in the final, for they forged partnerships of 215 and 183 runs in the two innings to steer their team out of troubled waters in both

the innings. Skipper Wadkar was not too far behind, at seventh position with 722 runs in 10 matches at 45.12 with two tons and as many fifties.

Wadkar told the broadcaster after the match. "Everyone worked hard throughout, and we're all very happy. Last year, we lost the final. So we prepared during the monsoon itself. Every individual worked on himself."

> Asia's major to my major collection," the New Zealander

World No. 2 Jeeno Thitikul fought hard to chase Ko down, but her charge fell just short. Ieeno fired a 70, finishing at nine under, tied for second with Japan's Ayaka Furue, who carded a closing 68. The Thai star made an early push with two birdies in the first four holes to trail Ko by a stroke at 9-under but couldn't maintain

the pressure. Charley Hull, just one shot behind Ko entering the final round, saw her title hopes fade after a frustrating 74, settling for a share of fourth at seven under alongside Im Jin Hee, who fired the day's best round of 67, and Gaby Lopez (70).

The Singapore tournament is the second of three events on the LPGA's first Asian swing of



India has 'strong case' in 2036 Olympics bid: Coe

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic nternational Committee (IOC) president's post contender Sebastian Coe feels India's bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games is a "strong case" but competition will be tough with several other countries throwing their hats in the

ring. India has already submitted a 'Letter of Intent' to host the 2036 Olympics and Paralympic Games to the IOC's Future Host Commission, taking the first

concrete step in an ambitious plan after months of informal dialogue with the global

sport's apex body.
"Well, you won't be surprised given my background to say that I'm obviously very happy that India is committed to global sport and particularly the Olympic movement. I'm

very happy to hear that.
"And look, it will be very competitive. It won't be the only bidder, but the case that it (Índia) can make is a very strong case," Coe told PTI in an exclusive interview. Poland, Indonesia, South Africa, Qatar, Hungary,

Turkey, Mexico and Egypt are among other countries which have expressed a desire to host the 2036 Olympics.

The 2036 Games host nation will not be known before 2026. But it is certain that the host will be chosen during the presidency of the winner of the March 20 election of the new IOC chief.

whose maternal Coe. grandfather is an Indian from Puniab, is considered the frontrunner among the seven candidates contesting for elections to succeed Thomas Bach as IOC president.

The 68-year-old Coe, a double Olympic 1500m gold medallist, also advised India to not end its ambition to organise the Olympics if it does not get the 2036 Games

hosting rights.
"Plenty of cities have bid and lost and come back. Interestingly, when London won in 2005 (for the 2012 edition), it defeated Paris. We all have just been to the Paris Olympic Games (in 2024)," said the Briton, who is currently heading World Athletics.

Rio was one of the cities that didn't make it past the initial evaluation for the 2012 bid. And they had the Games immediately after Britain in 2016.

"So it is by no means the end of the story. And even the legacy from bidding is an extremely strong legacy."

More than 100 members of the IOC will vote on March 20 in the Greek resort of Costa Navarino, where the 144th IOC Session will be held from March 18 to 21.

Besides Coe, the other six candidates are Prince Feisal Al Hussein of Jordan, David Lappartient of France, Johan Eliasch of Sweden, Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr of Spain, Kirsty Coventry of Zimbabwe and Morinari Watanabe of Japan.

Coe said South Asia, of which India is the major country, has the potential to help grow the Olympic movement further by bringing more young people to sport.

"I have witnessed in the last few years the growing importance of South Asia in athletics, and athletics is the centrepiece of Olympic movement.

"If you and I 10 years ago said to each other that the men's Olympic javelin title would be being fought between athletes from Pakistan and India, I think we both would have smiled at each other and moved on," he said referring to Arshad Nadeem and Neeraj Chopra winning gold and silver respectively in

Praggnanandhaa scores second victory in Prague Masters

PTI ■ PRAGUE

Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa scored his second victory on the trot, outwitting Vincent Keymer of Germany to join compatriot trade of queens and got his Aravindh Chithambaram at counter attack rolling. the top on three points after Keymer, meanwhile, ran low the end of the fourth round of the Prague Masters here. Aravindh survived some

initial hiccups before signing peace with Sam Shankland of the United States, while top seed Wei Yi of China finally found his form at the expense of local star David Navara.

Anish Giri of Netherlands played out his fourth draw in as many games with Gurel Ediz of Turkey, while Czech GM Nguyen Thai Dai Van also drew with Quang Leim Le of Vietnam in the other two games of the 10-player round-robin tournament. With Praggnanadhaa and

Aravindh in front, Shankland, Keymer, Giri and Le share the third spot a full point behind and it looks like the race for the title will be between the two Indians only with five rounds still to

Almost a month back Keymer had beaten Praggnanandhaa in the Tata Steel Masters and the Indian avenged his defeat fighting

from what looked like a shaky French defense with black.

Keymer was caught off guard in the middlegame. Praggnanandhaa went for the

on time and wasted moves moving his rook back and forth to just draw. The Indian obviously understood it better and used his pieces well to win a couple of pawns. The rest was easy and it was all over in 44 moves. Aravindh faced the Sicilian

defense and Shankland equalised quite easily.

An exchange spree led to a very slight advantage for Shankland but the endgame was always closer to a draw. The players eventually arrived at a theoretically drawn rook and pawns endgame where an extra pawn for Shankland did not matter much.

The next round will see the two leaders pitted against each other and Praggnanadhaa will play

with white. In the challengers' section, Divya Deshmukh played out a draw with Ma Qun of China and took her tally to 1.5 points from four games. This section is

Lydia Ko wins Singapore LPGA

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Lydia Ko finally conquered the LPGA's HSBC Women's World Championship, clinching her first title at her 11th attempt with a dominant four-stroke win over Ayaka Furue and Jeeno Thitikul in Sunday's final round.

The 2024 Olympic gold medalist and Women's British Open champion overcame a middling start before finding her rhythm with a birdie on the par-5 sixth. Ko added back-to-back birdies

on Nos. 7 and 8, seizing control of the leaderboard from then Despite dropping two bogeys after the turn, the world No. 3

13-under-par 275 total at Sentosa Golf Club. "I dreamt last night that I won

West Indies legend Sir Vivian Richards on

Sunday said Virat Kohli's

fighting spirit, energy, and

passion put him in the category of cricket's "great"

and "legendary" players. Richards, a long-time admirer

of Kohli's indomitable spirit

and passion for the game, also hailed the India batter for

silencing critics through performances on the field. "Well, I think he answers all of

us, really. Before the World Cup for the ODIs, where he

wasn't doing that well and then he came back in

magnificent form, so, that is

true testament to the

character that we are speaking

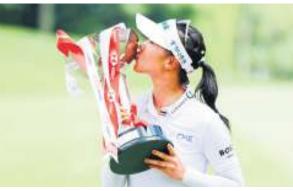
about," said Richards, a

governing council member for the International Master

League, during a virtual

PTI MUMBAI

closed with a solid 69, sealing a



Lydia Ko celebrates with the trophy after winning HSBC Women's World Championship 2025 at Sentosa Golf Club in Singapore

like, dang, it's not real yet," said Ko, who secured her 23rd LPGA title and her first victory since the Kroger Queen City Championship last September. "But I just wanted to focus on

interaction. "This is why I put

him in the category of being great and legendary... Not all the time that you get players

who can come back when they're down. His fighting

spirit, energy and passion to do well make him stand out."

Richards said if he was still

playing, he would love to have

"His energy reflects his passion. He goes to show you that his involvement in the

game all the time. There's a

passion for that. There's not a

moment that goes on that field that Virat Kohli doesn't miss.

He's just magnificent in that way," he added.

Kohli reminds me of myself

Asked about batters he admires, the former West Indies captain said Kohli

reminds him of himself.

Kohli's energy on the field.

my game." but then I woke up, and I was

you know, didn't really put myself in trouble that much. I think that was going to be the

key for today." Kos previous best finish here was a lone second place in 2015.

"I started off really steady, and "It's exciting to finally add



Tendulkar, who has retired,"

he said. "But presently, Virat Kohli. He reminds me of myself. He who dares, win. He believes in himself, 120 per cent confident at all times and whenever it needs to be aggressive, and confront opponents, you need guys like that."

"A lot of batsmen... Before you had people like Sachin "I appreciate seeing guys who,



especially when you're a captain, you defend your team and defend the people who you are representing so Virat Kohli, the modern day guy, I love," he added.

Richards said given his fitness and hunger, Kohli can go on to play ODIs for a long time.
"I'll tell you something. Just the way he is and the way how fit he is and the way he still from the fact that they saw

believes, very passionate some very good player," he about the game. You never said. know. He could still play when he's 50," he said. "You never know. But it's just

magnificent to see. Sometimes we see guys go on and maybe they come to an age and sometimes you look and you say, 'wow, he doesn't look as good as in the past."
"But he just scored 100 just

recently against Pakistan in Dubai so that says that, and this has just happened. This suggests that he's still very much at the very best, in the best of form," he added.

Richards, however, declined to compare Kohli with Tendulkar. "I do not believe in Tendulkar. I do not beneve in that. We should be quite thankful that the periods that everyone would have passed through, that the folks who saw these guys then benefited

will never make "I comparisons. They all did their time, their work for the time that they represented their countries. And we should appreciate that time because it's not just us alone who would be giving the answer, but all the folks, the fans who would be watching would pay tribute to that.

Richards said India should be patient with the form of their skipper Rohit Sharma, who has blown hot and cold with his form.

Backing Rohit

"You have got to give him all the opportunity. He would have failed in the past. I just believe that let's wait and see when we get to the semifinals and hopefully when you get to the semifinals, you're hoping to get to the finals," he said.

Real Betis defeats Real Madrid 2-1 in Spanish league

PTI BARCELONA

 $R^{\text{eal Madrid stumbled in the}}_{\text{three-way race for the}}$ Spanish league title as Isco Alarcón guided Real Betis to a 2-1 comeback win over the defending champion.

The former Madrid player delivered a corner kick that was headed in by fellow midfielder Johnny Cardoso in the 34th minute on Saturday, cancelling out Brahim Díaz's opener for Madrid.

Isco then put Betis ahead from the penalty spot in the 54th after he passed to Jesús Rodríguez and Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger knocked the Betis forward down in the area.

Madrid's loss left it level on points with Barcelona, which hosts Real Sociedad on Sunday. Atletico Madrid moved two points clear of them both at the

a 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao. Kylian Mbappé was back starting for Madrid after missing one game because of a problem with a tooth. Coach Carlo Ancelotti substituted him with 15 minutes left, saying that his dental issue had impeded him from training properly and that his star striker "was not 100 per cent."

We weren't able to keep our initiative and the result got away from us," Ancelotti said. This is a hard blow, and we have to react. Today we didn't play well."

Madrid had led the league but is now struggling with just one victory its last five rounds, a poor run that includes a defeat at modest Espanyol.
Next for Madrid: Tuesday's

Champions League round-of-16 game against Atletico. Isco torments old team

he lost his starting job and then struggled to get off the bench. But Madrid might wish it had Isco left Madrid three years ago, him back after the 32-year-old top of the table after substitute having helped it win five midfielder was the most Julián Álvarez scored to secure Champions League titles before decisive player on the field at

the Benito Villamarin. Isco, however, shared the credit for the win with his teammates. "Madrid has the best players and a million different ways it can hurt you, so if it weren't for

the hard work of the entire team we wouldn't have been able to do this," Isco said, before adding that he was still "grateful" for his time at Madrid.

The playmaker also showed he has not been slowed down by a leg injury that likely cost him a spot on Spain's European Championship side last summer. He returned to the field in December and is playing like he'd never been

"It is a dream of any player to play for his national team," Isco said after the win.

"I haven't played for Spain in six, seven years, so of course I would like to." Madrid has good start and little

Madrid started strong and looked ready to romp when Mbappé played Ferland Mendy through and the left back squared the ball for Brahim to score.

But Isco delivered a swerving corner kick for Cardoso, who was unmarked at the penalty spot to thump a header through the arms of Thibaut Courtois. Shortly after, as rain poured down. Courtois had to make a wonder save to palm another Cardoso header over the bar in first-half injury time.

Coach Manuel Pellegrini had to be satisfied with his team's defending as the hosts frustrated any thoughts of a Madrid rally after Isco put them ahead from the spot. "We went for the win and generated more scoring chances than they did," Pellegrini, a former Madrid

coach, said. "They played better in the first 15 minutes and deserved their

goal, but from there on it was our match." Madrid was without Jude Bellingham, who was serving

the second of a two-game suspension for cursing at a referee. Dani Ceballos was out with a leg injury, and Federico Valverde was recovering from an unspecified knock. Sixthplaced Betis likewise had several players on the injury list, draw with Rayo Vallecano.

including midfielders William Carvahlo and Marc Roca. Atletico takes advantage

Álvarez scored from a pass by Marcos Llorente in the 66th after both came off the bench to help break through Athletic's defense. It as the Argentine's 21st goal in

all competitions since joining from Manchester City in the summer, with 10 coming in the league. Fourth-placed Athletic came close to an equalizer with three efforts off the woodwork,

including two by Iñaki Williams. It was Athletic's first loss in league since October 6, ending an unbeaten run of 16 games. Lukebakio rescues point for

Sevilla Dodi Lukebakio continued to provide a bright spot in Sevilla's otherwise drab season by scoring his 11th league goal in

the 81st minute to secure a 1-1