

Telangana

the pioneer

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04

Farmer dies by suicide due to debt burden

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A farmer named Thupakula Aggiram, aged 42, reportedly took his own life in Chinnamandava village in the Chintakani mandal due to overwhelming debt. Family members revealed that Aggiram 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 post-mortem 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

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 the cash machine while one man stood guard outside. They made off with Rs 29.69 lakh and quickly left the scene at 2 am, rolling down the shutter behind them.

The entire operation took just four minutes. 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 culprits. 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 late-night 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 vertebrae 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 ■ SIDDIPEET

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-



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

mer. In Siddipet district, several villages in the Komuravalle, Cherial, Maddur, and Doolmitta mandals are already facing water issues

before the summer season begins. Venkatesh, a farmer from Guruvannapet village in the Komuravalle 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, making the area fertile.

NITW @ SpringSpree 2025 concludes on grand note

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 cultural exchange, creativity, and talent. It also aimed to promote inclusivity and a deeper appreciation for different cultures. SpringSpree, NIT Warangal's annual cultural festival, started in 1978 as a refreshing break from classes. Now, after 47 years, it is renowned as one of the nation's best cultural festivals, attracting participants from all corners. Over time, they have hosted famous artistes, enriching the festival with their esteemed presence and performances. On day 1 the festival was inaugurated by K Brahmaaramandam, a legendary actor and comedian. On Day 2, the stunning setup of lights



Students at NITW @ SpringSpree 2025 in Hanamkonda on Sunday

and screens created a grand ambiance, elevating the excitement of the night. 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 applause and cheers, making it a truly unforgettable experience for all in attendance and on Day 3. The evening culmi-

nated with a mesmerizing performance 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 elegance. The festival concluded with an electrifying DJ Night, ensuring that the crowd danced the night away.

Tribal people protest over land grabbing in thanda

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

In an incident that took place in the East Thanda village of Mahabubabad 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, tribal farmer Nagarjuna stated that during the previous government, 6 acres and 10 guntas of government land were allocated to the tribals in the Sual Thanda for the construction of two-bedroom houses. However, the land was illegally encroached upon, and fish ponds were set up. Furthermore, the encroachers installed CCTV cameras in the area, preventing the women from going outside and causing severe difficulties for them.

Nagarjuna also expressed concern that the fish ponds were continuously filled using electric motors from government wells. He lamented that the authorities who should protect government land have been supporting the encroachers. The tribal people of Sual Thanda are now requesting higher authorities to respond promptly, ensure continuous monitoring of government lands, and take strict action against the land grabbers.

MLC Naveen Reddy stresses importance of self-reliance

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

MLC Nagarkunta Naveen Reddy emphasised the importance of self-reliance among the youth, urging them to start their own businesses and achieve economic growth. He made these remarks while inaugurating V-Cafe at

Kondurgu Mandal Centre. Attending the event as the chief guest, MLC Naveen Reddy was warmly welcomed and honored by the V-Cafe management. As part of the inauguration ceremony, he participated in the puja rituals before officially opening the café. Extending his best

wishes to V-Cafe owner Vinod, he expressed hope that the business would earn the trust of the people and expand successfully. The event saw the presence of several prominent leaders, including former Kondurgu Mandal Vice MPP Rajesh Patel, PACS Vice Chairman

Srinivas Reddy, ZPTC son Ramakrishna, former sarpanchs Bandhu Lal and Umental Narsimulu, along with BRS leaders Chandu, Prashanth, Srikanth, Goud Bal Raj, Karate Ramesh, Umental Krishna, Srikanth, Dinesh, Sudheer, and Gutta Raju.

2 youth die in multi-vehicle collision on highway

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Two persons were killed and two others were seriously injured in a horrific multi-vehicle 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 private bus traveling from Hyderabad to Vijayawada suddenly applied the brakes, causing a chain collision with the vehicles behind it. The deceased were identi-



fied as Syed 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 'Dwajorohanam' 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 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.



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

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 Nallela 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 Dharavath 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 care.

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 Sanatan culture will halt in Lucknow on Monday.



Two Indians, one Nepali held for trafficking drugs

Three people, including two Indians, were on Sunday arrested from Nepalgunj sub-metropolitan city for trafficking narcotic drugs, Nepal Police said.



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

A 36-year-old woman, reportedly in grief over the death of her cat, hanged herself in Mohalla Kot Hasanpur here, police said on Sunday.

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.



One person is still missing for whom the search is in progress, they said. The bodies have been brought to Jyotirmath by helicopter where the post-mortem was being done at the Community Health Centre.

Uttarakhand's Udhm Singh Nagar district, Ashok (28) from Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh and Harmesh from Una in Himachal Pradesh, the officials said.

The avalanche hit the BRO camp between Mana and Badrinath on Friday, burying 54 workers inside eight containers and a shed.

Came to senses next to dead co-worker, spent 25 hours more to be rescued, says avalanche survivor

UKD-AVALANCHE-SURVIVORS

BRO worker Jagbir Singh came to his senses surrounded by an endless expanse of white, next to a dead co-worker, his body stuck inside mounds of snow with a fractured leg and injuries to his head.

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.

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.



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."

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.

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.



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 Omar Abdullah on Sunday chaired a joint meeting of the alliance partners here and discussed various issues for the smooth functioning of the house.

'Regional commander' of Maoist outfit arrested

PNS ■ CHATRA (JHARKHAND)

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 on Sunday.

A huge cache of arms and ammunition was also recovered from the Maoist belonging to the Tiritiya Sammelan Prastuti Committee (TSPC), they said.

"He, along with three associates, 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.

"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

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

ected 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 ruling bloc.

Build hospitals along expressways: UP CM to officials

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

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

commissioners, district magistrates, police commissioners, and superintendents of police. According to an official statement, Adityanath said in 2024, Uttar Pradesh recorded 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.

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.

tions. Senior Shiv 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, leading to a heated exchange of slogans.

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

Private lunar lander Blue Ghost aces moon touchdown

PNS ■ CAPE CANAVERAL

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 northeastern edge of the near side.

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:

Russia, the US, China, India 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.

according to the company. 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.

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 Singh.



Besides, 45 grams of heroin was also recovered from his possession, he said. 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 the state.

He said the accused was to 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

In 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 long-established 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.

PICTALK



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



KESHAV PRASAD MAURYA

The Budget presented by the BJP's double-engine 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 self-reliance, 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 benefited under the State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM), 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 the poor. 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. 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



(Rural). While the Prime Minister's empathetic leadership has ensured a roof over the heads of the poor, the state's economy has also been flourishing.

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 economy.

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 connectivity and highway expansion. 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)

for the construction of bridges and railway over-bridges 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 Scheme. Under the Swami Vivekananda Yuva 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'.

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)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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



It 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

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 Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

US-Ukraine talks fail

Madam — The abrupt failure of US-Ukraine talks underscores a troubling loss 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 relations.

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 necessarily maintain 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

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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

At the recently concluded 71st Annual Conference of the Indian Association of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Sciences, Dr Harinder Singh Bedi, Director of 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 anaesthetised, 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 unaffected. To date, this device has been successfully used in 48 cases to repair blockages in brain arteries, preserving brain function throughout. 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 whole-body cooling (hypothermia) to preserve organ function. At the conference, the technique received an enthusiastic response from 1,700 national and international expert delegates.

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 whole-body 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)



GYAN BHADRA





FIRST COLUMN

DEALING WITH EXAM ANXIETY

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



SAKSHI SETHI

Examinations 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 isolating experience.

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 self-awareness, 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?



B K SINGH

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

The 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 products, grazing, fishing etc. and rights can also be conferred to the communities for sustainable management of forest resources.

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, Dehradun.

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 HAVE BEEN DEVASTATED, DEGRADED AND FRAGMENTED. THERE ARE PATCHES OF BAMBOO 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 that too is 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 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 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 Society, Hyderabad, accused the state of pressurising officials for recognition of rights to ineligible individuals resulting in large-scale deforestation leading to the scam of unprecedented proportion.

There are reports from Rampachodavaram Forests division, Rajamundry (AP) that tribal department officials are granting rights in Papikonda National Park for money. A retired IFS M Padmanaba 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 line?

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

essential for the grant of rights i.e. 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 fragmented.

There are patches of bamboo forests in Medha Lekha Gram Sabha where all bamboo clumps were cleared in one stroke in 2012. 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 over-exploitation 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

With 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 deep-seated 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.



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 Inclusion** For 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 conve-

nience with physical touchpoints. 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 in-person 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 capabilities. 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 retail.

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)

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 audience.

PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary



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.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



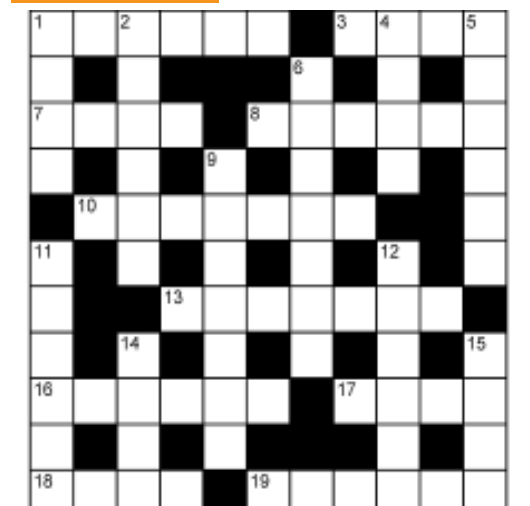
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

ACROSS

- 1 A sheep's coat
- 3 Halt
- 7 A tangle in your hair
- 8 Get
- 10 Sets fire to
- 13 Courage
- 16 Disappear
- 17 Thought
- 18 Lines
- 19 A bird that is raced for sport
- 6 Watch
- 9 Female tiger
- 11 Tremble with cold
- 12 A bed for a baby
- 14 Cold winter flakes
- 15 Sunrise

DOWN

- 1 Counterfeit
- 2 As much as is needed
- 4 Rip
- 5 Draw with this

SOLUTION

S	U	B	M	A	R	I	N	E
L	I	E	A					
A	T	D		F	I	T		
B	A	R	N	B	R	I	D	G
S	I	N	G	N	E			
S	I	N	G	L	E			
T	R	I	A	I	K	E	L	
L	E	L	R					
A	S	T	R	O	N	O	M	

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

SURESH KAVIRAYANI



Former Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah 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 illustrious career, he praised her versatility 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 meaningful 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.



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



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 a major 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, theaters remained largely empty.

Adding to the woes, *Mazaka* had an unusual mid-week 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

trailer release failed to generate buzz.

While Rao Ramesh's performance was appreciated, the film suffered from a weak 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 concerns about the future of the Nakkina-Prasanna collaboration. Fans are now eagerly waiting to see how they redeem themselves with their next project.



MAD Square & Robinhood set for March 28 clash?

The 2023 film *MAD*, made on 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 Amavasya (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

release date with Nithiin's *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 Nithiin in lead roles, while Reba John features in a special song.

Bhagyashri Borse in talks to star opposite Prabhas in Prashanth Varma's next



Despite the failure of her debut film *Mr. Bachchan*, actress Bhagyashri Borse is emerging as one of the most sought-after newcomers in Tollywood. She is now in talks to star opposite Prabhas in an upcoming film directed by Prashanth Varma.

A source close to the production revealed that Bhagyashri is the frontrunner for the female lead role in this high-budget film,

which is expected to begin production later this year. Director Prashanth Varma, who gained massive recognition with *HanuMan*, was initially set to direct Ranveer Singh. However, due to undisclosed reasons, that project was shelved, and Varma instead approached Prabhas, who agreed to collaborate. A look test was conducted and if all goes well, Bhagyashri will be cast in this ambitious project.

Meanwhile, Bhagyashri is keeping busy with multiple films. She is set to star in *Kingdom* alongside Vijay Deverakonda, an untitled project with Ram Pothineni and *Kaantha* featuring Dulquer Salmaan. She has also landed a role opposite Suriya in a film directed by Venky Atluri. With several big projects in her pipeline, Bhagyashri Borse is proving that one flop does not define an actor's career.

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

The 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 Mukundhan, 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.



After *Pushpa 2*, Allu Arjun prioritises Atlee over Trivikram?

After 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 venture.

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.

