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# SRM AP, AMARAVATI LANDMARK COLLABORATION WITH CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE, USA FOR AI RESEARCH LAB

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## 'Expedite verification of Indiramma Housing applications at Gram Sabhas'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Revenue, Housing, and Information Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has directed officials to immediately verify applications received during the Indiramma Housing Gram Sabhas held in January and proceed with the selection of beneficiaries. The Minister issued these instructions during a review meeting on Indiramma Housing held at the Secretariat on Monday. The meeting was attended by Housing Special Secretary Jyothi Budd Prakash and Housing Corporation MD VP Gautam. During the review, Ponguleti emphasised that the experiences and challenges faced during the selection of beneficiaries in 562 model villages on January 26 should be evaluat-

ed. He instructed officials to take stock of the difficulties encountered so far and ensure a meticulous and foolproof process for finalizing beneficiaries. "The selection process must be carried out with absolute diligence, ensuring that only eligible beneficiaries receive houses. Technology should be used wherever possible to prevent ineligible applicants from getting approvals. Even if construction has already started, any ineligible allotments will be canceled," he warned. The Minister insisted that officials must assess eligibility at the application stage itself, ensuring that only genuine beneficiaries make it to the final list. This will save time and ensure fairness in housing allocation. "The government's primary

objective is to provide houses to every deserving family. If there are complaints about eligible beneficiaries being left out, field inspections must be conducted to rectify such cases immediately. The poorest of the poor should be given top priority in the housing scheme," Ponguleti asserted. With thousands of poor families across the state waiting for Indiramma houses, he urged officials to work in a transparent and accountable manner to ensure that the final list includes only the most deserving candidates. "There should never be a situation where houses are allotted to ineligible persons," he reiterated, emphasising the government's commitment to fairness and social justice in the implementation of the Indiramma Housing Scheme.



## Chief Secy reviews preparations for Assembly session

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari held a meeting with senior officials on Monday to review preparations for the Assembly session commencing on March 12. She directed officials to coordinate closely with the Assembly authorities to ensure timely and comprehensive responses to all the queries of MLAs and Legislative Council Members. Emphasising the importance of accuracy in legislative proceedings, Santhi Kumari said the concerned secretaries must be present throughout the budget session to provide

precise information. She also stressed the need to appoint nodal officers for each department to streamline coordination. "The demands of all departments will come up for discussion in the coming days, and officials should be fully prepared with details," she added. The meeting was attended by Special Chief Secretaries Vikas Raj, Jayesh Ranjan, and Ravi Gupta, along with Principal Secretaries Sandeep Kumar Sultania, Shailaja Ramayyar, Sanjay Kumar, Dana Kishore, Sridhar, and SAM Rizvi. Secretaries Yogita Rana, Lokesh Kumar, Christina Z. Chongthu.

## Revanth is BJP's covert agent, betrayed TG: KTR

'What did CM discuss with PM in private'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) lashed out at Chief Minister Revanth Reddy accusing him of being a 'covert operative' of the BJP and for 'betraying' Telangana's interests. Addressing the media at the BRS office, KTR said that Revanth's actions over the last 15 months indicate a hidden agenda aligned with the BJP and pointed to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks about "BJP agents" within his party. "Rahul's comments in Rajasthan were a direct reference to Revanth," KTR said. Citing a post-budget meeting between Revanth and

Prime Minister Modi, KTR questioned the secrecy surrounding their talks. "Revanth met Modi with 11 proposals, but what was the real agenda? Why was Minister Sridhar Babu asked to step out? Telangana's people want to know that," he demanded. He accused Revanth of failing to secure any tangible benefits for Telangana despite his frequent trips to New Delhi. "Confirming that BRS Chief K. Chandrasekhara Rao (KCR) would attend the next Assembly session, KTR dismissed Revanth Reddy's stature in comparison. "KCR operates on a different level. Revanth isn't even a fraction of him," he quipped, reaffirming BRS's

commitment to fighting for Telangana's interests both within and outside the Assembly. Challenging the Chief Minister's commitment to BC reservations, KTR demanded that he take concrete action instead of making empty promises. "If Revanth genuinely cares for BCs, let him launch an indefinite hunger strike in Delhi for 42% reservations. Telangana's BC youth will ensure he doesn't back out," he declared. KTR accused both the Congress and the BJP of using BCs as vote banks while deliberately avoiding Constitutional amendments to increase reservations.

## Organisations engaged in similar ops must be under one umbrella: Tummala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao said that corporations set up as per the circumstances that existed in the past can survive only if they function according to the changing priorities of farmers and the government. Similarly, all institutions undertaking the same operations must be brought under one umbrella, he added. He said that a decision will be taken regarding the strengthening or merger of all the said institutions in the coming years as soon as a report is received on operations carried out by them and the financial status of the

institutions. Ultimately, the objective of the government or government-affiliated institutions is to provide efficient services to farmers, Tummala said. The Agriculture Minister was reviewing the progress of TG AGROs, HACA, TGRIC, TG Cooperative Union and TG Warehouse Corporations on Monday at the secretariat. Agriculture Secretary Raghunandan Rao IAS, Managing Director Chandrasekhara Reddy IAS, Managing Director Dr K. Lakshmi IAS, Chairman Rayala Nageswara Rao, Ramulu, Annapurna, and other officials attended the review meeting.

## Kishan walking in Sanjay's footsteps, says Kiran

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, said that the Telangana BJP President, G. Kishan Reddy, is walking in the footsteps of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, and that Kishan should stop spreading lies. "Kishan, if you look at yourself as a Union Cabinet Minister, you seem to be following in the footsteps of your fellow Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, acting like him and speaking in his style. You are spreading lies like the TG government is not interested in India winning a cricket match and criticising the action taken by the police to control law and order in the Dilskhannagar area. We found that you are spreading lies against the Congress although you are holding a responsible post," he said.

## Kavitha demands white paper on Rs 1.52 lakh crore borrowed by TG govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha launched a scathing attack on the Congress-led Telangana Government, accusing it of pushing the state into a financial crisis with reckless borrowing while failing to deliver on electoral promises. She demanded a white paper on the Rs 1.52 lakh crore borrowed by the government in the last 15 months, revealing where the funds had been utilized. Addressing the media at the Telangana Bhavan, Kavitha said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's administration had completely neglected the public while ensuring timely payments to contractors. "Women were promised Rs 2,500 per month. Brides were promised 10 grams of gold. Young women expected elec-



tric scooters. Farmers were assured loan waivers and bonuses. But not even a single promise has been implemented. The only people benefiting from the policies of this government are the big contractors while commoners are left waiting," she said. Dismissing the Chief Minister's claims that the state is facing a financial crisis, Kavitha presented data showing that Telangana is financially sound.

## Harish accuses govt of mismanaging irrigation facilities, triggering drought

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior BRS MLC Harish Rao launched a blistering attack on the Congress Government, accusing Chief Minister Revanth Reddy of failing Telangana's farmers by mismanaging irrigation resources and making excuses instead of delivering solutions. Addressing the media at the Jangaon MLA camp office, Harish asserted that the agricultural crisis was not caused by a natural drought but a crisis created by the Congress Government's inefficiency. He criticised the Chief Minister's remarks that crop losses were due to heat waves, questioning why similar conditions under the BRS government had not led to such widespread damage. "Even during peak summer, under KCR's leadership, water

was available in streams, lakes and reservoirs. Not a single acre went dry. Now, crops are withering across Warangal district because of the Congress Government's failure," Harish said. He accused the government of neglecting irrigation projects, particularly the Devadula Phase 3 scheme, which he claimed could have saved lakhs

of acres from drought if its motors had been operational. "The contractor of Devadula's Operation and Maintenance (O&M) has not been paid Rs 7,000 crore, resulting in motors being shut down for 33 days. Had they been running, reservoirs would have been full, and irrigation water would have reached the fields," he said.

## Saving standing crops govt's first priority: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Safeguarding standing crops is of utmost priority for the government, said Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy. He emphasised that all concerned departments must closely coordinate to ensure that farmers do not suffer losses due to water scarcity or power supply disruptions. Uttam directed officials to be proactive and address any challenges faced by farmers during the crucial final phase of the rabi crop season.

He pointed out that misinformation was being spread regarding irrigation water availability and called upon officials to counter such lies by personally visiting the affected areas. On Monday, Uttam Kumar Reddy, along with Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, Agriculture Secretary Raghunandan Rao and TSSPDCL CMD Musharraf, held a video conference with Collectors, SPs, agriculture officials and electricity officers all over the state.

## 'Fifteen flights received hoax bomb threats in 2025'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least 15 flights of various airlines have received hoax bomb threats this year, taking the total tally of such threats to 833 since 2020, according to official data. A total of 833 hoax bomb threats have been received by airline operators since 2020, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol told the Rajya Sabha on Monday citing data from the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS). This year, there have been 15 hoax bomb threats to flights -- IndiGo (7), Air India (4), Lufthansa (2), Malindo (1) and American Airlines (1), the data showed.

## PM says his visit to Mauritius will open 'new and bright' chapter in ties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As he embarks on a two-day trip to Mauritius, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the visit will open a 'new and bright' chapter in the ties between the two nations. Modi is visiting Mauritius on March 11 and 12 at the invitation of Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam primarily to grace the island nation's national day celebrations. In his departure statement, the prime minister said he was looking forward to engaging with the leadership of

Mauritius to elevate "our partnership in all its facets and strengthen our enduring friendship for the progress and prosperity of our peoples". A contingent of Indian armed forces will participate in the celebrations along with a warship of the Indian Navy and the Akash Ganga skydiving team of the Indian Air Force. "Mauritius is a close maritime neighbour, a key partner in the Indian Ocean, and a gateway to the African Continent. We are connected by history, geography and culture," Modi said. "Deep mutual trust, a shared

belief in the values of democracy, and celebration of our diversity are our strengths," he said. The prime minister said the close and historical people-to-people connection between the two sides is a source of shared pride. "I am confident that this visit will build on the foundations of the past and open a new and bright chapter in the India and Mauritius relationship," he said. The prime minister noted that "significant strides" have been made in the past 10 years between the two sides with people centric initiatives.

## AAP will go it alone in Goa, Gujarat elections: Atishi

PNS ■ PANAJI

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Atishi on Monday said that the party would contest the 2027 elections in Goa and

Gujarat alone without opting for an alliance with Congress. The former Delhi chief minister was on a day-long visit to the coastal state to inaugurate the party's office in Margao.

Talking to reporters, Atishi said, "We are getting ready to contest the elections (Goa and Gujarat) on our own. Till now, there are no talks of an alliance."

## 11 nominations ...

**Continued from page 3** Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Ministers Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, D. Sridhar Babu and many MLAs attended the filing of nominations by Congress candidates. CPI Secretary K. Narayana, CPI State Secretary Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao and others also attended for their candidate Nellikanti Sathyam's nomination.

However, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao and some others attended the nomination filing function of BRS candidate Dr Dasoju Sravan Kumar. The candidates submitted their nomination papers to Returning Officer Ch. Upender Reddy. The scrutiny of nominations will take place on Tuesday and withdrawal will be on March 13. Elections will be held on March 20. However, only five nominations are likely to pass scrutiny as the other nominations do not have proposers.

**TODAY**  
**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha  
Tithi: Dwadashi: Mar 10 07:45 AM to Mar 11 08:14 AM  
Trayodashi: Mar 11 08:14 AM to Mar 12 09:11 AM  
Nakshatram: Ashlesha: Mar 11 12:51 AM to Mar 12 02:15 AM  
Magha: Mar 12 02:15 AM to Mar 13 04:05 AM  
Rahukalam: 03:23 PM to 04:52 PM  
Yamagandam: 09:28 AM to 10:57 AM  
Varjyam: 03:10 PM to 04:53 PM  
Gulika: 12:26 PM to 01:55 PM  
Amritkalam: 12:33 AM to 02:15 AM  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:02 PM to 12:49 PM  
**HYDERABAD WEATHER**  
Forecast: Sunny  
Temp: 34°  
Humidity: 35%  
Sunrise: 6:30 AM  
Sunset: 6:21 PM  
Updated: March 10, 2025 5:00 PM

## 'BRS borrowed ...

**Continued from page 3**

that the Paleru Reservoir is fully replenished with Godavari water. The ministers instructed officials to review the canal networks from Baswapur to Singur in the Godavari basin and Yedula to Vattam in erstwhile Mahbubnagar district. With the Dindi Lift Irrigation Scheme reaching its final stages, officials were asked to ensure speedy completion of the remaining works. The ministers stressed that the next financial year's focus should be on land acquisition, maintenance of old projects, and capital works under various irrigation schemes. They also underscored the need for the modernisation of irrigation projects and the lining of canals, stating that such measures would extend project lifespans and enhance water utilization efficiency. Taking a swipe at the BRS administration, the ministers said the KCR government focused solely on the Kaleshwaram Project, neglecting older irrigation projects, which have now fallen into a state of disrepair. They emphasized the need for regular maintenance of old projects while simultaneously exploring Central funding options for irrigation schemes. The ministers directed officials to establish a special legal team to resolve land disputes connected to irrigation projects and ensure the completion of gate repairs for all medium and minor projects. Strengthening canal networks was also listed as a key priority.

## 'CAG report ...

**Continued from page 3**

Union Minister Kishan Reddy has been stating that he brought Metro Rail. However, Kishan should tell where is his Metro? Former Union Minister, the late S. Jaipal Reddy, brought the Metro train to the state, he said. Criticising Kishan for not attending the all-party meeting, Revanth said that Kishan did not attend the all-party meeting as he was afraid of KCR. The CM said they are asking Kishan to bring funds as Kishan has been saying that he brought the Metro. "Is it not Eatala Rajender who is blocking land acquisition for National Highways? Kishan should discuss with us as they are saying that land acquisition is the responsibility of the state government. Why did Kishan not attend the review meetings of his fellow Ministers? Why did he not

attend Union Urban Development Minister Manohar Lala Khattar's review meeting? Why is the Centre not sanctioning projects to Telangana? KTR and Kishan Reddy are roaming together," the CM said. "We are thinking of spreading the development of Hyderabad to other regions. However, the BRS thinks that Central funds should not be provided to Telangana. Kishan should come for a debate on Central funds. I and Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka will attend the debate. We will felicitate Kishan if he proves that the Centre gave more funds to Telangana," the CM said. The CM said that he would go to New Delhi 99 times for the funds. If the need arises I will stage a dharna in New Delhi for funds, the CM said. He said that there are limited allocations for projects. So we are asking the Centre for funds.

## KTR accuses ...

**Continued from page 3**

His associates are quietly securing TDRs while the government prepares to impose new FSI restrictions. This is a multi-thousand-crore scam in the making," KTR said. He called for an immediate investigation by Central agencies like the CBI and the ED into the matter. He challenged Revanth Reddy to prove his innocence by releasing a white paper detailing current TDR ownership and recent transactions in Hyderabad. "If there is nothing to hide, why not make these details public?" he asked. He demanded clarity on who had been purchasing TDRs in bulk and where they were being consolidated. "The people of Telangana deserve answers. If this scam goes unchecked, it will be one of the biggest frauds in the state's history," he warned.

He dismissed Revanth's expected justification that FSI restrictions were necessary to regulate Hyderabad's growth. "This is not about urban planning. It's about pocketing massive profits by manipulating land policies," KTR said. Providing historical context, KTR pointed out that past Congress governments, including that of YS Rajasekhara Reddy, had promoted unrestricted FSI to encourage development. "Now, Revanth is suddenly reversing that policy, but not for public welfare. He is doing it to ensure that his associates can cash in on skyrocketing TDR values," KTR said. He emphasised that TDR policies were originally meant to help the government acquire land for public infrastructure without financial strain. "Through TDRs, the GHMC acquired 400 acres of prime land worth thousands of crores for road widening and public projects.

## 42 Telugus ...

**Continued from page 3**

one such cyber scam centre. His plight gained media attention, prompting immediate action from the Union Minister. Upon learning of the situation, Sanjay Kumar directly appealed to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs and alerted Indian diplomatic missions in Myanmar and Thailand. The Myanmar government deployed its army to raid the cyber scam centres, successfully rescuing the trapped Indians. With diplomatic coordination, arrangements were made for their return to India, facilitated by the Indian government's emergency response efforts. As the first batch lands in Delhi, the nation watches closely as the remaining victims prepare to return home safely on Tuesday.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY The pioneer Revanth criticised the Rs 46 crore Formula E event, calling it a waste of money. But now, he is spending Rs 200 crore on the Miss World event. If Formula E was corruption, then what is this? What benefits will Miss World bring to Telangana? At least Formula E generated massive investments and created jobs. What will the Miss World event bring? If he thinks that the Rs 46 crore spent on Formula E was corruption, how will he arrange Rs 1 lakh crore for the Olympics? - KT Rama Rao, BRS MLA P2

Will push for comprehensive trade partnership with India

'WHAT WORKS ON STAGE ISN'T THE SAME AS WHAT WORKS ON SCREEN'

Sankalp Reddy of Ghazi fame joins hands with Gopichand for a period DRAMA

DON'T MISS... Teen has fatal fall into quarry pit

A tragic incident unfolded at Malkaram Gutta in Jawahar Nagar on Sunday evening when a college student drowned in a quarry pit while attempting to take a selfie. The deceased, CG Ethin Naidu, was accompanied by his younger brother and friends, all intermediate students. The group had visited the location after seeing reels on Instagram. Ethin, the only one among them pursuing graduation, accidentally slipped into the pit and drowned. The Jawahar Nagar Police, in a statement, confirmed, "Ethin Naidu, who went ...

CCTV cameras will help control crime

The CCTV cameras will play a crucial role in controlling crimes and identify the offenders, said District Superintendent of Police Ravula Giridhar. The district SP inaugurated the CCTV cameras and control points set up by the police department at the Sri Rangapur Police Station. Speaking on the occasion, he mentioned that with the changing times, modern technology, including CCTV cameras, is becoming available, and installing them in every village will be key to creating a crime-free ...

Massive AI talent gap looms in India

India is poised to become a global AI talent hub, but a looming skill gap threatens to hinder its progress, with a new study by Bain & Company revealing that the country's AI sector could face a shortfall of over a million skilled professionals by 2027. The report highlighted the urgent need for India to reskill and upskill its workforce to meet the growing demand for AI expertise. "India has a unique opportunity to position itself as a global AI talent hub. However, by 2027, the job openings in AI are...

'I am not retiring from ODI format'

India skipper Rohit Sharma has dismissed the speculations about his career after winning the ICC Champions Trophy (CT), saying that he is not quitting the ODI format anytime soon. Since the tour of Australia, speculations were rife about Rohit's future in the team as well as his position as captain but a match-winning 76 in the final against New Zealand on Sunday has given him a new lease of life. "I am not going to retire from this (ODI) format. Going forward please don't spread rumours," Rohit said...

Centre rules out Ramagundam airport

Cites terrain, airspace restrictions

PNS ■ HYDERABAD The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation has ruled out the possibility of constructing a domestic airport at Ramagundam in Peddapalli district due to terrain constraints and the restricted airspace used by the Indian Air Force (IAF).



Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu

In a response to Lok Sabha MP Vamsi Krishna Gaddam, Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu said that the existing Basanthnagar Airport is non-operational, lacking infrastructure apart from a small helipad. Pointing out the discrimination, Peddapalli MP Vamsi Krishna Gaddam asked why a once operational, heavily used airport is now suddenly considered unfeasible. The Minister said the Techno-Economic Feasibility Report (TEFR) on the potential of Basanthnagar Airport indicated that the project may not be viable. "The airport is surrounded by high hills, which pose obstacles in aircraft approach. It falls within restricted IAF airspace, which is extensively used for training operations. Any clearance for airport construction would require prior approval from the Union Ministry of Defence," the letter stated. The Greenfield Airports (GFA) Policy, 2008, provides a framework for the establishment of new airports, including stated initiatives. As per the policy, any airport developer or the state government interested in building an airport must identify a suitable site for the project, conduct a pre-feasibility study for airport construction and submit a formal proposal to the Centre for site clearance and in-principle approval. However, the ministry clarified that no proposal for a greenfield airport (GFA) at Ramagundam has been received from either the Telangana Government or any airport developer.

'CAG report will reveal everything'

Loans taken during KCR's regime and its misdeeds to come out: CM

'KTR is not afraid of cases as he is a criminal'

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has not done anything except take loans and commit misdeeds in the last 10 years.

The CM said that KCR showed wrong data regarding the debts he had run up. The debts contracted by KCR and his misdeeds will be exposed in the CAG report tabled in the Assembly, the CM added. "If KCR had completed all irrigation projects, there would have been no problem with Andhra Pradesh now. Who ate the prawn soup prepared by Roja? If KCR had completed the projects, these headaches would not have happened. Who called former AP Chief Minister Jagan to Pragathi Bhavan, offered him food and gave permission to the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme," the CM said.

- KCR has no stature to come to the Assembly as KTR said
● If the need arises, I will stage dharna in Delhi for funds
● I will go to Delhi 99 times for funds
● If KCR had completed irrigation projects there would have been no problem with AP: Revanth

fat but nothing. Who is KTR to talk about my stature? KTR is a wasted fellow. Is being caught in a drug party stature? KCR does not have the stature to enter the assembly as KTR said." Speaking during a chat with journalists at the CLP office on Monday, the CM said, "Criminals do not fear cases. If they have fear, they will not engage in crime. That is why KTR is saying that he is not afraid of cases. It is a waste of time speaking about KTR." Responding to another question, the CM said, "I am the CM. KCR is a former CM and what is his stature? I defeated KCR and made him a zero in the Parliament elections. KCR and KTR have



HONOUR KILLING Court hands death penalty to second accused, life imprisonment for six others

A boat has capsized in southwestern Congo and killed 25 people, many of them soccer players, authorities said Monday. The players were returning from a match in Mushie city in Mai-Ndombe province on Sunday night when the vessel capsized on the Kwa River, said Alexis Mputu, the provincial spokesman. Mputu suggested that the poor visibility at night may have been a factor. At least 30 other people survived, said Renacle Kwatiba, the local administrator of Mushie territory. Deadly boat accidents are common in the central African country, where late-night travels and overcrowded vessels are often blamed. Authorities have struggled to enforce maritime regulations. Congo's rivers are a major means of transport for its more than 100 million people, especially in remote areas where infrastructure is poor or nonexistent.

25 killed as boat capsizes in Congo; many of them soccer players

TSBIE awards full marks for ambiguous question

Following this, a thorough discussion was held with subject experts to assess the issue. In the interest of fairness and ensuring that students are not at a disadvantage due to printing inconsistencies, the Board has decided to award full marks for the respective question to all students who attempted to answer it. This decision has been made to uphold student welfare and ensure a just evaluation process. The Board remains committed to conducting transparent examinations. The examination was conducted under stringent supervision, marked by a notable absence of malpractice cases, which were reported as nil across all examination centres. Observers deployed by the board to various districts including Nizamabad, Warangal, Siricilla, Karimnagar, and Hyderabad confirmed that the exams proceeded smoothly.

'BRS borrowed funds at 10% interest while Congress cut it to 8%'

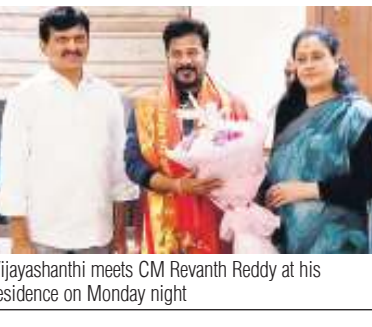
on Monday. On the state's financial situation, they blamed the BRS government for taking high-interest loans, burdening the state. "The KCR administration borrowed funds at an interest rate of 10%, while the current government has successfully reduced it to 8%," they stated. During discussions, officials were directed to treat the SLBC Project as a top priority and complete the installation of the fifth pump under AMRP (Alimineti Madhava Reddy Srisailem Left Bank Canal). They also emphasised the need for a detailed study of the Sitarama Project in erstwhile Khammam district to ensure

KTR accuses CM of engineering massive TDR scam

brokers have been aggressively acquiring TDRs at low prices, anticipating policy changes that would restrict the Floor Space Index (FSI) in Hyderabad. He claimed that the Congress Government headed by Revanth Reddy intends to impose these limitations to artificially inflate TDR demand, allowing select individuals to profit by selling acquired rights at exorbitant rates. "Revanth is setting the stage for an insider trading-style operation." Continued on Page 2

Congress High Command will decide Vijayashanthi on Cabinet berth

said she quit the BJP. Speaking to the media after filing nomination papers for MLA quota elections on Monday at the Telangana Assembly, Vijayashanthi said the Congress recognised the need for her as a BC woman and so the party had allotted her an MLC seat. "We are Telangana activists. The Congress gave me priority as a Telangana activist. We are not beggars like BRS leaders to beg for seats and posts. I thank the Congress high command for giving me an MLC ticket. I will fulfil all the responsibilities entrusted to me. This is an honour given to Telangana activists," she said.



Vijayashanthi meets CM Revanth Reddy at his residence on Monday night

11 nominations filed

Congress candidates Vijayashanthi, Addanki Dayakar, Shankar Naik, CPI candidate Nelikanti Sathyam and BRS candidate Dr Dasoju Sravan Kumar filed their nominations for MLA quota MLC elections on Monday on Assembly premises. However, four Independent candidates and two Shramajeevi Party candidates also filed nominations taking the number of nominations to 11. The Independents are Kante Sayanna (Independent) and Chandra Sekhar Chalika (Independent). The Shramajeevi Party's candidates are Jajula Bhaskar (Shramajeevi Party), Bhooraj Koylikar (Shramajeevi Party), Boga Tilak (Independent), Srikanth Silveru (Independent).

42 Telugus rescued from cyber slavery in Thailand

Hundreds of young Indians, lured by the promise of lucrative jobs abroad, found themselves trapped in cyber scam centres in Thailand. Thanks to the intervention of Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, the Indian government has successfully arranged for their rescue and repatriation. A total of 540 individuals were identified as captives in these cyber fraud operations, of which 42 belong to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The Indian authorities have now initiated special repatriation flights, each carrying 270 people. The first group of rescued victims was moved to Myawaddy district in Myanmar under Army protection before being transported to Mae Sot in Thailand. They were then put on a special flight to Delhi on Monday. The second flight carrying the remaining 270 victims is scheduled to arrive in India on Tuesday. Investigations have revealed that these victims were deceived by local agents promising jobs in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar. Upon arrival, they were sold to cyber scam centres, where they were forced to participate in online fraud operations. Those who refused to comply were subjected to brutal torture, including electric shocks. The victims were forced to engage in financial scams and online fraud under the threat of violence. A harrowing case that brought attention to the issue involved Madhukar Reddy, a young man from Rangapat village, Manakondur mandal, Karimnagar district, who was trapped in

Special teams set up to study tax admin, boost collections

In a move to revamp the Commercial Taxes Department, newly appointed Commissioner K. Haritha has set up multiple special teams to conduct a comprehensive study on various aspects of tax administration. These teams have been asked to submit detailed reports which are expected to contribute to increasing tax revenues. The Telangana Commercial Taxes Department plays a crucial role in generating revenue for the government, collecting over Rs 80,000 crore annually through GST and VAT. Focusing on strengthening the department, Haritha has ordered special attention on restructuring operations, resolving employee grievances, facilitating promotions, enhancing additional revenue streams, evaluating current audit mechanisms and strengthening the tax research unit. The Commissioner also asked officials to curb fraudulent registrations and comply with AG audit requirements. Haritha has set up specialised teams to examine 25 key areas, with a deadline of March 15 to submit their findings to streamline these efforts. The Commercial Taxes Department has observed a shortfall in GST revenues for February, prompting an investigation into the causes. Despite high business activity, the decline in IGT revenue is attributed to a higher outflow of goods from Telangana to other states than the inflow. Officials are now assessing which goods are being exported, the economic benefits accruing to other states, the volume of goods entering Telangana and the corresponding revenue impact.

Duplicate voter card numbers a legacy issue: EC sources

Amid opposition allegations of manipulation of electoral rolls, sources in the Election Commission Monday said the matter related to duplicate voter identity card numbers is a "legacy issue" with such cards being issued even between 2008 and 2013 when the BJP-led NDA was not in power. The EC had in the past during annual electoral roll updation also been directing states to remove all discrepancies in elector photo identity card (EPIC). The poll body had recently clarified that irrespective of EPIC number, an elector can cast a vote only at their designated polling station. To allay any apprehensions, all cases of duplicate EPIC number will be resolved within three months time by ensuring a unique EPIC number to the existing electors having duplicate EPIC number and for future electors as well, the EC had said. The issue of duplicate numbers found echo in Parliament on Monday with Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi demanding a discussion in the House on the issue of voter lists on which several political parties have raised certain questions. Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Gandhi said the entire opposition has been demanding a discussion on voter lists. Trinamool Congress member Kalyan Banerjee demanded action against the EC and alleged that the poll body had "failed" to conduct fair and transparent elections over the past few years.

# City Pioneer

## Teen has fatal fall into quarry pit while taking selfie in city

DEEPIKA PASHAM  
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com  
HYDERABAD

A tragic incident unfolded at Malkaram Gutta in Jawahar Nagar on Sunday evening when a college student drowned in a quarry pit while attempting to take a selfie.

The deceased, CG Ethin Naidu, was accompanied by his younger brother and friends, all Intermediate students. The group had visited the location after seeing reels on Instagram. Ethin, the only one among them pursuing graduation, accidentally slipped into the pit and drowned.

The Jawahar Nagar Police, in a statement, confirmed, "Ethin Naidu, who went missing at the quarry in Malkaram Gutta, was traced on Monday during a joint operation by the Disaster Response Force (DRF) personnel and Jawahar Nagar Police."

Following a complaint from the victim's mother, Geetha, a case has been registered, and an investigation is underway. Police urged parents to be cautious when their children visit unknown locations. The victim's family, gathered at the Jawahar Nagar police station, urged authorities to expedite the process of handing over the body. "Our

boy had gone to the quarry pit from Tirumalgherry. While taking a selfie, he fell into the pit. He knew swimming but still drowned," they said.

They alleged that despite raising an alarm, authorities refused to conduct a search operation at night, delaying the recovery until the next morning. "We alerted the locals and rushed to the site, but the DRF did not begin the search overnight. By morning, our child was already dead," a family member said.

Srinivas, DFO, Cherlapally, told The Pioneer that the location falls under Dammaiguda in Kapra mandal. "We received a distress call at 6 pm on Sunday. The quarry pit is filled with rocks, making it risky for night operations. Unless it's an emergency, search teams do not operate at night," he explained.

He added that the Fire Service and Disaster Response Force (DRF) teams arrived at the location and recovered the body by 8 am on Monday.

"The victim's mother insisted on searching for herself, claiming she knew swimming, but our team stopped her for safety reasons," he said.

The body was sent to Gandhi Hospital for post-mortem.



## CITY EVENTS

### Madapally United

Malayalam Movie  
Venue  
Lamakaan  
March 11, (7:30 pm)

### Live Telugu Musical Orchestra

By Rasamayi Cultural Organisation  
Venue  
Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha  
March 11, (5:30 pm)

### Tuesday Night

With DJ Hak  
Venue  
Sounds & Spirits  
March 11, (8 pm)

### Tuesday Night

With DJ Salman  
Venue  
36 Downtown Brew Pub (Vapour)  
March 11, (8 pm)

### Tuesday Open

Mic Comedy  
Venue  
Trailing Ivy Cafe  
March 11, (8 pm)

## SURPRISE VISIT TO WOMEN'S HELPLINE

### Minister Seethakka assures support for abuse victim

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Women and Child Welfare Minister Seethakka made a surprise visit to the Dial 181 Women's Helpline call centre on Monday and personally attending a distress call from a woman in Devarakonda who was facing domestic abuse. The helpline, set up under the Women and Child Welfare Department, received a call from a young woman named Lalitha, who tearfully narrated her ordeal. She told the Minister that her husband was harassing her for additional dowry and had thrown her and her two children out of their home. Listening to her plight, Seethakka assured immediate assistance and instructed officials to provide necessary support. "Do not worry, we are with you. No woman should suffer in silence," she reassured Lalitha, promising that her department would take necessary action.

The Minister directed officials to arrange counselling for the husband and warned that if the abuse continued, strict legal action would be taken.

She further informed Lalitha that Women and Child Welfare officers would reach out to her and take necessary steps for her safety and well-being. The complaint was immediately forwarded to the local Sakhi centre for follow-up, as per the Minister's instructions.

The Dial 181 helpline, established by the State government to support women in distress, has been playing a crucial role in addressing complaints related to domestic violence, harassment and other issues.

The helpline receives at least 100 calls daily, with trained staff promptly alerting local authorities, including the Women and Child Welfare Department, Sakhi centres, and police, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Minister Seethakka also highlighted the Congress government's commitment to empowering women, noting that the helpline centre has set an example by employing differently-abled individuals, providing them with stable jobs and an opportunity to serve society.



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## HMWSSB launches 'Med Flash' App for staff health services

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

To ensure quick and hassle-free healthcare services for its employees, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has launched a dedicated mobile application named 'Med Flash'. The app, designed for employees holding health cards, aims to simplify access to medical facilities and emergency healthcare services. Managing Director Ashok Reddy inaugurated the app at the board's headquarters in Khairatabad on Monday.

Speaking at the launch, Ashok Reddy expressed satisfaction over the initiative, stating that the app would significantly enhance the efficiency of health services for HMWSSB employees. He urged all eligible employees to make use of the new platform and suggested organizing a one-day training program for division-level health service personnel to ensure effective implementation.

The 'Med Flash' app provides real-time medical assistance, particularly in emergencies. Employees can register their health details, after which the system immediately alerts service providers. The app also helps in identifying the best hospitals for specific treatments and, if required, facilitates ambulance services to the employee's residence.

In a first-of-its-kind initiative in India, the app offers a cashless healthcare service exclusively for government employees. Currently, 6,685 employees, pensioners and family pensioners under HMWSSB are covered under the health card system, and their dependents can also avail up to Rs 3 lakh worth of free medical services annually through the app.

## 63 COMPLAINTS FILED WITH HYDRAA PRAJAVANI

# Fake passbooks used to encroach old layouts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has received 63 complaints in the Prajavani programme on Monday. The petitions were regarding the encroachment of old layouts by individuals who allegedly created land passbooks in their names, despite their fathers having previously sold the land. These encroachers are erasing old layouts and converting them into agricultural fields.

The allegations include encroachment of roads within layouts, merging of parks into private properties and misuse of power by former municipal councillors and ward members.

Several complainants have reported that local authorities have failed to take action despite repeated complaints, said HYDRAA in a release.

The residents of Avenue Nagar-2 complained that a wall built across the stormwater drainage leading



The complainants submitting their petitions to HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath

to Turkayamjal Lake has caused severe flooding in their colony during rains.

In Ghatkesar mandal, Pratap Singaram, a layout with 390 plots across 25.17 acres established in 1989, has witnessed encroachment on 88 plots, covering 6.14 acres.

The complainants claim that encroachers fraudulently created land passbooks through Dharani and took

over these plots. In some cases, individuals whose fathers had sold the land have now claimed ownership and even received benefits under the Rythu Bandhu scheme. Although authorities have ordered the repayment of Rythu Bandhu funds, the encroachers have not vacated the land, leaving original plot owners frustrated.

A complaint from Medipally mandal, Bodduppal Municipal Corporation,

**The residents of Avenue Nagar-2 complained that a wall built across the stormwater drainage leading to Turkayamjal Lake has caused severe flooding in their colony during rains**

alleged the illegal occupation of 1,200 square yards of government land in Devender Nagar Colony.

Local representatives have requested that the land be allocated to the adjacent government school, which could be developed into a playground.

In Sri Rangapuram, Ward 24, Turkayamjal Municipality (Rangareddy District), a former public representative has allegedly encroached on a 1,050-square-yard park, said residents.

## Self-employed training begins at Special Prison for Women

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Self-Employed Training Programme was inaugurated at Special Prison for Women, Hyderabad under the Sankalp Scheme.

The chief guests on this occasion were Sanjay Kumar, Special Chief Secretary to the Government, Labour Employment, Training and Factories and Dr Soumya Mishra, Director General of Prisons and Correctional Services, Telangana.

Sanjay Kumar, addressed the inmates regarding the commitment of the Government of Telangana to create a skilled and employable workforce by strengthening the State's skill development ecosystem in organising training programmes with market needs and boost employability.

During her message, Dr Soumya Mishra, DG Prisons, motivated and



Dr Soumya Mishra, DG Prisons, with inmates for self-employed training programme

**Sanjay Kumar said it was to create a skilled and employable workforce by strengthening the State's skill development**

encouraged the inmates to upgrade their skills by undergoing training for a better future and livelihood so that the inmates can lead a self-reliant life.

N Murali Babu, Inspector General of Prisons, Telangana, started the programme with his welcome address and advised the inmates to utilise the best from this opportunity.

## GMR Hyd Intl Airport wins ACI World's Best Airport Award

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

GMR Hyderabad International Airport has been recognized as the 'Best Airport in the 15 to 25 Million Passengers Per Annum (MPPA)' category in the Asia-Pacific region at the prestigious Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Awards 2024, presented by Airports Council International (ACI) World. The award reinforces Hyderabad Airport's commitment to delivering an exceptional passenger experience and maintaining high operational standards.

The ASQ programme, considered the global benchmark for measuring airport passenger satisfaction, evaluates over 30 key performance indicators based on real-time traveller feedback. More than 400 airports worldwide participated in the 2024 survey, with over 7,00,000 responses collected.

Expressing gratitude for the recognition, GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd. (GHIAL) CEO Pradeep Panicker said, "We are honoured that travellers consistently rate their experience at our airport so highly. Our investments in advanced technology and innovative solutions aim to make every jour-



ney seamless and memorable. This achievement is a testament to the dedication of our entire team and stakeholders, and we remain committed to delivering world-class service."

Congratulating the airport on its success, ACI World Director General Justin Erbacci remarked, "GMR Hyderabad International Airport has set a new standard for excellence. This award is a reflection of the dedication and hard work put into making every passenger's journey special. Your commitment to exceeding expectations is inspiring airports worldwide."

Hyderabad Airport has consistently ranked among the best in global service excellence. It was placed among the Top 3 Global

Airports for nine consecutive years (2009-2017) and achieved the World No. 1 ranking four times (2009, 2010, 2016, and 2017) in the 5-15 MPPA category of the ACI-ASQ Awards. The airport was also recognized as the 'Best Airport by Size and Region' in the Asia-Pacific region for 2019 and 2020 and continued this streak in 2022 and 2023 in the 15-25 MPPA category.

ACI World, the global body representing airports, works to enhance industry standards and facilitate knowledge-sharing among aviation stakeholders. The ASQ Awards, based entirely on passenger feedback, celebrate top-performing airports and drive continuous improvements in service quality and customer satisfaction.

## TGPSC releases Group-I mains marks, opens recounting window

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Public Service Commission (TGPSC) has released the paper-wise marks of candidates who appeared for the Group-I Mains examinations conducted between October 21 and October 27, 2024.

The marks have been made available in the respective candidates' logins from March 10 to March 16, 2025, until 5:00 pm. Aspirants can access their scores by entering their TGPSC ID, Mains hall ticket number, date of birth, and an OTP sent to their registered mobile number through the Commission's official website.

Candidates have been advised to download and preserve their Mains marks memorandum until the completion of the recruitment process. TGPSC has also announced that candidates



can apply for a recounting of marks from March 10 to March 24, 2025, with a fee of Rs 1,000 per paper.

Applications for recounting will only be accepted online, and no offline requests will be entertained at any stage.

As per Para 15 of

Notification No. 02/2024, disqualified, ineligible, or rejected candidates will not be issued marks memoranda, and any fees paid by such candidates will be forfeited.

TSPSC has clarified that requests for reevaluation will not be entertained under any

circumstances, as per Rule-3 (ix) (d) of the Commission's Rules of Procedure.

Following the recounting process, the total marks of all candidates will be hosted on the Commission's website. Candidates shortlisted based on the final General Ranking List (GRL) will be called for certificate verification. The Commission has urged candidates to keep all original documents ready as specified in Annexure-VI of the Group-I Services Notification No. 02/2024.

The marks of candidates who were admitted to the Mains examination based on court directions have not been displayed, in compliance with the High Court's orders.

For technical assistance, candidates can contact the TSPSC Help Desk at 040-23542185 or 040-23542187 or email helpdesk@tspsc.gov.in.

## Mayor Vijayalakshmi launches Shakti Canteen

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government is implementing various welfare programmes aimed at ensuring women's financial independence, stated Hyderabad Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi. On Monday, she, along with Deputy Mayor Mothe Srilatha Shobhan Reddy, inaugurated the Indira Mahila Shakti Canteen at the GHMC headquarters. The Mayor congratulated the members of the Sneha Self-Help Group for setting up the canteen.

Speaking at the programme, Mayor Vijayalakshmi said that the State government is not only introducing welfare schemes to help women achieve financial self-sufficiency but also encouraging them to become entrepreneurs. As part of this effort, the Indira Mahila Shakti scheme has been introduced, enabling women from self-help groups to establish canteens and become self-reliant. She noted that these canteens not only create employment opportunities for women but also provide affordable, high-quality and delicious meals to the city's residents.

## Call for global treaties for market expansion

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDTM), in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), organized a one-day international seminar on the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) and the Madrid System at Dr MCR HRD Institute. The event, held in association with the Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India, brought together industry leaders, start-ups, researchers and policymakers to discuss the evolving landscape of patents and intellectual property rights.

The seminar provided a platform for meaningful discussions on intellectual property rights, with experts stressing the need for businesses and start-ups to leverage international treaties for global market expansion.

Speaking at the inaugural function, Dr Shashank Goel, Director General of Dr MCR HRD Institute and EO Special Chief Secretary to the Government of Telangana, highlighted the importance of intellectual property in a



knowledge-driven economy. He emphasised that the platform would help innovators and businesses understand the strategic advantages of filing patents through the PCT route. "Intellectual property is the backbone of innovation and India's rapid rise in patent filings reflects its growing focus on research and development," he noted.

Dr Goel also commended the efforts of the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) under the CGPDTM in making the patent filing process more efficient and accessible. "With initiatives like digitization, expedited examination for start-ups and reduced filing fees for MSMEs, India is strengthening its intellectual property framework," he said.

David Muls, Senior Director of the Madrid

Registry at WIPO, Geneva, acknowledged India's growing role in the global innovation landscape. "India ranks 39th in the 2024 Global Innovation Index and leads in Central and Southern Asia. Over the past decade, patent applications have more than doubled, trademark filings have increased 2.5 times, and design filings have grown threefold," he said, attributing this surge to India's commitment to fostering innovation.

Other distinguished speakers at the seminar included Hanna Kang and Roberto Perez Gomes from WIPO, N Ram Chander, Joint Controller of Patents and Designs, Dr Pawan Kumar Pandey, Deputy Registrar of Trademarks and Geographical Indications, and Dr Gayathri, Deputy Director of Pharmexcil.



**Editor's TAKE**

## Veni, Vidi, Vici...

Team India lifts Champion's trophy after its convincing win over New Zealand

In a moment of glory that will be etched in the annals of cricketing history, Team India triumphed over New Zealand by four wickets to claim the prestigious ICC Champions Trophy in Dubai. It was a victory built on sheer determination, extraordinary skill, and unwavering composure under pressure. The win not only solidifies India's dominance in the white-ball game but also reaffirms cricket's role as a unifying force in the country.

From the very first match of the tournament, India exuded an aura of invincibility. The final against New Zealand was no exception. Restricting the Kiwis to a manageable 251-7, the Indian bowling attack—led by the mesmerising spin quartet of Kuldeep Yadav, Varun Chakravarty, Axar Patel, and Ravindra Jadeja—choked the opposition with relentless precision. Their 38 overs were a masterclass in control, stifling the run flow and forcing mistakes from the New Zealand batters.

Despite an early setback with Virat Kohli's dismissal, Rohit Sharma took charge, setting the tone with a swashbuckling 76. His aggression ensured that India never fell behind the asking rate. KL Rahul, displaying nerves of steel, finished the chase with calculated precision, epitomizing India's new-found ability to remain composed in high-pressure situations.

Cricket in India is more than just a sport—it is a cultural phenomenon that binds people across diverse backgrounds. From the bustling streets of Mumbai to the remote villages of Jharkhand, the game ignites passion, fosters a shared national identity, and transcends all barriers of class, religion, and language.

This Champions Trophy victory serves as yet another reminder of the unifying power of cricket. The entire nation erupted in celebration, as millions came together to revel in the team's success. This win is not just about silverware—it is about inspiring a generation, bringing people together in collective joy, and reinforcing the sport's unparalleled significance in the Indian ethos.

Winning an ICC event is always a morale booster, and this triumph will serve as a catalyst for greater success. For Team India, it instills belief and momentum as they gear up for future global tournaments. Rohit Sharma's leadership, the resurgence of spin dominance, and the depth in both batting and bowling ensure that India will remain a formidable force in world cricket.

Beyond the current squad, this victory will inspire countless young cricketers who dream of donning the blue jersey. Seeing their heroes lift the Champions Trophy will fuel aspirations across the country, encouraging budding cricketers to work harder and aim for the grandest stages.

Accolades pour from all quarters on team India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the Indian cricket team and said they have played wonderfully through the tournament. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said India's run in the Champions Trophy was marked by brilliant individual performances. Former Delhi CM and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal also extended his congratulations to the Indian team.

This Champions Trophy triumph is a testament to India's cricketing excellence and a harbinger of more success to come. The synergy between experienced stalwarts and young stars showcases a team that is built for sustained dominance.

As India basks in the glory of yet another ICC triumph, one thing is certain—this victory is not just about cricket, but about a nation united by its love for the game, standing tall on the world stage, and looking ahead to an even brighter future.

# India Braces for Impact as Trump's Reciprocal Tariffs Take Effect on April 2

With key sectors like pharmaceuticals and automobiles at risk, India could face an annual trade loss of up to \$7 billion. There is an urgent need to find a diplomatic solution before it escalates into a full-fledged trade war

US President Donald Trump's announcement of reciprocal tariffs on India, set to take effect on April 2, has caused serious concern in New Delhi. India's high import taxes on American goods have long been a contentious issue, now straining trade relations further.

This move is not without consequences. It puts key exports such as jewelry and pharmaceuticals at risk, potentially leading to a significant annual loss of up to \$7 billion for India. The looming question is: How much will this trade war cost India? Can New Delhi negotiate a way out before the damage is done? This million-dollar question keeps policymakers and trade experts on edge, underscoring the gravity of the situation.

India currently imposes much higher import taxes on US products than the US does on Indian goods, with a gap exceeding 10 percentage points. If the US lowers these tariffs, India's exports to the US could decline by \$2 Billion to \$7 Billion in the financial year 2025-26, according to India Ratings and Research.

India maintains a trade surplus of over \$36 Billion with the United States. The share of Indian exports to the US rose from 16.9 per cent in 2019-20 to 17.7 per cent in 2023-24, which may have prompted tariff actions by the Trump administration.

During his campaign, Trump criticised Indian tariffs on several US exports and suggested the possibility of imposing reciprocal taxes on Indian goods.

He believes it is time for the US to use tariffs to establish fairer trade. "Under the Trump administration, you will pay a tariff, and in some cases, the cost will be passed on to consumers," he stated, insisting that the US will no longer tolerate unfair trading practices.

India imposes tariffs as high as 100 per cent on certain US products, creating what the Trump administration views as an unfair trade system. On April 2, reciprocal tariffs will take effect, meaning that any tariffs imposed by India will be matched by the US.

Additionally, if India uses non-monetary barriers to limit US market access, the US will implement similar restrictions.

A report by Crisil Intelligence warns that



these reciprocal tariffs could significantly harm India's exports, which contribute about 22 per cent of the country's GDP. Coupled with the challenges posed by slowing global trade growth and rising economic uncertainties, this situation could further strain India's economy. In response, the Commerce and Industry Ministry has initiated stakeholder consultations to assess the potential impact of increased US tariffs.

According to a recent Crisil Intelligence report, India's wide tariff gap with the US could have serious consequences if the US moves to equalise tariffs. Bloomberg economists echo this concern, noting that India's economy may face significant setbacks.

Industry and trade experts in India argue that certain top exports—such as automobile parts, electronics, textiles, diamonds, jewelry, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals—could be severely affected if the US imposes restrictions. The most vulnerable sectors include chemicals, metal products, and jewelry, followed by automobiles, pharma-



KALYANI SHANKAR

ceuticals, and food products. Furthermore, if President Trump penalises US companies employing imported talent, India's outsourcing and IT services industry could face significant constraints.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal began his US visit on Monday to meet with the new US Trade Representative, Jamieson Greer, who is overseeing the implementation of Trump's tariff plan. Greer was also part of Trump's first administration, which targeted China and, in doing so, opened export opportunities for India, particularly in the electronics sector.

Despite these tariff disputes, the United States remains India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade reaching \$118.2 Billion in the 2024 fiscal year. India main-

tained a trade surplus of \$36.8 Billion during this period. Trump has criticised India for imposing 100 per cent tariffs on automobiles, claiming such trade imbalances have allowed foreign countries to take advantage of the US for decades.

Like with other trade partners, the Trump administration intends to use tariffs as leverage to expand market access for American goods in India. New Delhi must act quickly to address this challenge. One option is to engage in negotiations and lower tariffs. Both sides aim to increase market access, reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, and deepen supply chain integration.

India should focus on bilateral negotiations to lower tariffs and diversify its export markets. This strategy could help India navigate the impending trade challenges more effectively. A balanced, give-and-take approach will be key to overcoming this situation.

(The author is a popular columnist. Views expressed are personal)

## The Unmatched Multitasking Skills of Women

**SECOND Opinion**



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Accelerate Action, the theme of this year's International Women's Day is both timely and vital. It is of the utmost importance to take a moment to contemplate the unique skills that women possess, which even the most advanced AI-driven robots cannot replicate. Even though artificial intelligence (AI) has revolutionised sectors by simplifying jobs and increasing productivity, it is still incapable of matching the nuanced and deeply human multitasking talents that women easily demonstrate daily.

Women can accomplish several tasks with empathy, emotional intelligence, and adaptability, which are attributes that no algorithm can completely replicate. Women can perform multiple tasks simultaneously. Multitasking encompasses not only the simultaneous execution of many tasks but also the capacity to manage diverse jobs with effortless proficiency. In both professional and domestic settings, women manage multiple tasks, including swift decision-making, emotional acumen, and innovative problem-solving. In the professional environment, women frequently lead high-stakes projects, coach peers, and manage team relationships while also addressing personal obligations. Within the household, they effortlessly transition between roles as carers, financial strategists, educators, and providers of emotional support. Their capacity

to sustain equilibrium in these intersecting domains is a challenge that AI finds difficult to understand, much less to implement. One of the defining strengths of women's multitasking abilities is their agility in decision-making, even in the most unpredictable situations. AI operates within predefined parameters and algorithms, excelling in structured environments where data is abundant. However, real life is often chaotic, requiring decisions to be made with incomplete information, intuition, and adaptability—qualities that women exhibit daily.

Consider a nurse in a hospital emergency room who is simultaneously monitoring multiple patients, making split-second decisions, and comforting distressed families. Her ability to assess a patient's condition, liaise with doctors, and offer emotional support all at once goes beyond mere task execution—it embodies human instinct, prioritisation, and care. No AI-driven robot can truly replace such intricate decision-making layered with empathy. While AI can enhance efficiency, automate routine tasks, and provide data-driven insights, it lacks the human touch that is central to multitasking.

AI-driven robots may be able to perform designated tasks in controlled environments, but they do not possess the depth of human interaction, compassion, or intuition required in complex, real-world situations. Women's multitasking is not just about efficiency but also about the ability to connect, empathise, and inspire—traits that no AI can

replicate. While we are moving further into an era driven by artificial intelligence, the objective should not be to replace the multitasking abilities of women; rather, it should be to improve such abilities with technology while ensuring that their human strengths continue to be prioritised. India offers countless examples of women who exemplify unparalleled multitasking abilities in varied fields.

To cite a few, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, the founder of Biocon, Chanda Kochhar, the former CEO of ICICI Bank, Dr N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary, DSIR and Director General, CSIR, Dr. Tessy Thomas, the first woman to lead an Indian missile project and hundreds of others. As we celebrate International Women's Day 2025, it is essential to recognise that while AI can augment specific tasks, it can never replicate the intricate multitasking abilities of women. Women's ability to think, feel, and act simultaneously with an unparalleled blend of intuition, intelligence, and empathy remains their superpower—one that even the most advanced robots cannot match.

'Accelerate Action' should not be about replacing human capabilities with AI but about leveraging technology to enhance and support women's indispensable contributions to society. The future of progress lies not in automation alone but in the harmonious coexistence of human intelligence and technology, with women leading the way in shaping a world that values both efficiency and empathy.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)

### Leaderspeak



India charges us massive tariffs. Massive. You can't even sell anything in India... They have agreed, by the way, they want to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody is finally exposing them for what they have done.

DONALD J TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE USA



## Letters to the Editor

### Freebies or political bribes?

Madam — The newly formed Delhi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government approved the Mahila Samridhi Yojana on Women's Day, providing ₹2,500 to women from economically weaker sections. With a budget allocation of ₹5100 Crores, women earning up to ₹2.5 Lakh annually and aged 18-60 years are eligible. But one thing I am unable to understand is what crime those women have done who are above 60 years or those who earn more than ₹2.5 Lakhs. Why didn't you specify these conditions in the manifesto? Didn't you know it was a ploy to garner votes that wouldn't be fulfilled after you win the elections? Though we should not forget that PM Modi started this 'revadi' war of free LPG, free PDS, free housing, free MODI care, and free "Samman" of ₹6000 to Kissans. Actually, the freebie culture is the biggest drain on taxpayers' money. It is open bribery. The politicians are feeding parasites, which will harm the country. There will be no funds for development. Why not the Election Commission (EC) stop this malpractice for free and fair elections? Whatsoever, when the opposition distributes freebies, it's called 'loot' in the name of the Gandhi-Nehru family, but when the BJP distributes freebies, it's called 'seva'. In reality, all governments are going back, but how will the country progress? We will never be a developed nation as people make the nation, and our people vote for a five kg ration and ₹2500.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

### India wins Champions Trophy

Madam— Apropos to "Champions bring the trophy home! Jai Ho," published on March 10, 2025. India clinched a thrilling four-wicket win over New Zealand to clinch the marquee ICC event for a record-breaking third time. Under Rohit Sharma's captaincy, Team India has now won the Asia Cup, ICC T20 World Cup and ICC Champions Trophy and overall this is the seventh ICC white ball trophy for Team India. When pace sensation Bumrah was ruled out for the Champions Trophy, it was believed that it was going to be a huge setback for Team India, but without him and only Shami to spearhead the pace attack, our fast bowling arsenal looked really thin, but our spin quartet bowled like a well-oiled machine, turning the screws on opposition batsmen with relentless precision. Our batting line-up was versatile and reliable, and everyone chipped in to the tournament with four all-rounders; our team's balance was perfect. And just to remember that players like Pant, Jaiswal and Arshdeep could not even get a game in the tournament goes to show the depth of our talent pool. The Indian team is now second place in the ICC Trophies list behind Australia, with only the ICC WTC trophy missing from the cabinet. The men in blue have once again proved that they have what it takes to win!

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

### Conflict in Syria

Madam — At a time when Muslims around the world are observing the holy month of Ramadan, Syria has witnessed another wave of violence that has claimed hundreds of lives in just the last two days. The humanitarian situation remains critical with widespread displacement, heavily damaged infrastructure and nearly 15 million people in need of humanitarian support. Dead bodies lying in streets are suggesting a danse macabre in the coastal region of the country, particularly in Latakia and Tartus provinces. This is the deadliest sectarian conflict since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad in December 2024. Though the interim government has blamed the killing of two Syrian defence personnel in an ambush in Latakia province by Assad militia remnants for triggering the violence, the deep involvement of the army in violent retaliation against Alawites and Christians, who largely support Assad, proves that this violence has been engineered by the interim government led by Ahmed al-Sharaa itself. Besides this escalated violence being a serious jolt to peace efforts in the country, the way all ethnic groups are reluctant to shun violence, the future of stability and peace appears to be bleak in the country. Partitioning Syria into two separate nations based on the Sunni and Shiite populations holds the key to the solution to this problem.

MANOJ PARASHAR | GHAZIABAD

### OPPOSITION CRITICISES GOVERNMENT

The main opposition party, Congress, on Tuesday questioned the government's decisions and accused it of putting the economy in crisis. They said that the economy is being overtaken by a crisis created by the government. Congress launched a scathing attack on the government by targeting the increasing prevalence of gold loans in the country. Congress general secretary and communication in-charge Jairam Ramesh, citing the Reserve Bank of India's February data, said that a massive jump of 71.3 per cent has been seen in gold loans. Ramesh also said on X, "India's economy is caught in a crisis created by the government. The macroeconomic slowdown that continues till 2024 has led to a 300 percent jump in gold loans in the last five years. The gold loan figure has crossed the level of ₹1 Lakh Crore for the first time. Bank loans have slowed down in every sector from housing to cars, but crisis loans like gold loans are at their peak. Not only this, the report of Niti Aayog shows that gold loans account for 40 per cent of all loans issued to

women. The number of women taking loans by pledging gold has increased by more than 22 per cent in the last five years. Should it be considered that the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme, launched with great fanfare by the Narendra Modi government, has proved to be a 'complete failure' like demonetisation and the 'Make in India' initiative? Rising prices, falling private investment, and rising unemployment issues are badly affecting the common people. Perhaps due to these reasons, gold loans have become a big failure. The gold kept in homes is taken out only in case of emergency. This is not just an allegation of the opposition, but RBI also seems to be unhappy and concerned with this trend. That is why RBI is planning to implement a strict underwriting process for gold loans, to ensure ethical business practices and financial stability. This includes better background checks of borrowers and monitoring of the end use of funds to prevent irregularities found in recent audits. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

## Spiralling food subsidy: The urgent need for reform

**FIRST Column** India's food subsidy bill continues to rise despite budget projections suggesting otherwise. Without structural reforms in procurement and distribution, the financial strain on the exchequer is set to escalate, raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of India's food security programmes

In the Union Budget for 2025-26, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated ₹203,420 Crore for food subsidy which is a marginal three per cent increase from the revised estimate (RE) for the current financial year (FY) at ₹197,000 Crore. The RE for FY 2024-25 by itself is lower than the budget estimate (BE) of ₹205,250 Crore she had fixed while presenting that budget on July 23, 2024.

Food subsidy payments during FY 2023-24 and FY 2022-23 were ₹211,394 Crores and ₹287,000 Crore respectively. From these numbers, one gets a sense that since FY 2022-23, food subsidies have been on a downward trajectory. This may not reveal the true picture.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), the Centre asks the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other state agencies to procure food and organize its distribution to around 820 Million people for free. The entire cost i.e. MSP (minimum support price) paid to farmers plus handling and distribution cost (HDC) is reimbursed to the FCI or other state agencies as a subsidy. The money comes from the Union Budget's allocation for 'food subsidy'.

While, the PMGKAY has been in force since January 1, 2023, before that, the Centre was giving food to 820 Million persons (seven kg of cereals per person per month to 120 Million poorest of the poor persons covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana or AAY families and five kg of cereals per person per month to the remaining 700 million) at a heavily subsidized price of ₹2/3/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

In addition, since April 2020, it has been giving five kg of food per person per month for "free" to all 820 Million beneficiaries under PMGKAY to mitigate the consequences of Covid-19 pandemic. From January 1, 2023, it merged the free part of PMGKAY with the regular food security schemes under NFSA. This arrangement will continue for five years till the end of CY 2028 as per the announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2023. Against this backdrop, FY 2022-23 was an unusual year as 700 Million beneficiaries got five kg of cereals each per month for free under the PMGKAY. In addition, during April - December 2022, they got five kg of cereals each at a throwaway price of ₹3/kg and ₹2/kg for rice and wheat, respectively under the NFSA.

Likewise, beneficiaries under the AAY received five kg each per month under PMGKAY throughout the FY plus seven kg a month at ₹3/2/kg for rice/wheat during April - December 2022 under the NFSA. It was a doubling of the quantity supplied at throwaway/zero price during nine months of the FY that contributed to an unusually high subsidy outgo of ₹287,000 Crore. During FY 2023-24, the 'double quantity' effect was not present as



five kg a month supplies to all beneficiaries at ₹3/2 per kg under the NFSA were withdrawn. This should have led to a massive reduction in subsidy outgo from the FY 2022-23 level. But, that didn't happen. The payments during FY 2023-24 were substantial at ₹211,394 Crores. A hike in MSP of all 14 Kharif crops by 5-10 per cent announced in June 2023, besides an increase in HDC, led to higher subsidy payment.

Look at things from another angle. While, presenting the budget for FY 2023-24, Sitharaman had kept the BE for food subsidy at ₹197,000 Crore. Against this, RE turned out to be ₹14,394 Crore more indicating that the potential savings in subsidy due to dissipation of 'double quantity' effect were partially offset by increase in MSP and other costs associated with distribution of food.

Coming to FY 2024-25, the FM has put the RE for the year at ₹197,000 Crore which is even lower than the BE of ₹205,250 Crore. This is anomalous. Only a month before the presentation of the bud-



UTTAM GUPTA

get for FY 2025-26, the prevailing situation was pointing towards a slippage of around ₹20,000 Crore from the BE. The higher subsidy requirement of about ₹225,000 Crore was expected primarily due to the rising costs of holding on to a huge stockpile of rice, besides the increase in MSP of wheat and rice.

Then, as part of the central pool stock, the FCI was holding around 50 Million ton including 34 Million ton of rice and 16 Million ton of wheat (this stock excluded 34 Million ton of rice receivable from millers). The stock was against the buffer of 21.41 Million ton for January 1. Put simply, the stock holding was four times what was required.

At a fundamental level, the problem lies in the government using state agencies not just to meet

food requirements under the PMGKAY but also to extend price support to farmers. Under what has come to be known as 'open-ended' procurement, it buys from farmers unlimited quantities at MSP. For the last many years, the FCI has been procuring over 50 Million tons of rice every year even while supplying around 36 - 38 Million tons under PMGKAY to the states.

This mismatch has inevitably led to a huge pile-up of stocks and associated high carrying costs which bloats the subsidy bill. The Centre has pinned its hope of trimming subsidy (as per RE) on liquidating its burgeoning stocks. But, given the situation on the ground, this seems unlikely. Till about a month back, response to the open market sale of rice by FCI from its stocks was poor with only 0.7 million tons of rice sold at the subsidised rate of ₹28/kg (during 2023-24 also, the agency could sell only 0.1 million tons).

A recent order from the food ministry let state governments and their corporations purchase up to 1.2 million tons of rice, and ethanol distilleries

buy up to 2.4 million tons at a reduced rate of ₹22.55/kg - a 20 per cent discount from the earlier price of ₹28/kg - won't make any dent on the mammoth stocks.

The actual subsidy outgo during FY 2024-25 will be close to ₹225,000 Crore instead of ₹197,000 Crore being the RE given in the budget. Considering that the agencies will be saddled with high stocks even during FY 2025-26 and further annual increase in the MSP and HDC (in the past, MSP of paddy and wheat has been increasing 6 - 7 per cent in kharif and rabi seasons annually and this trend is expected to continue), it is unlikely that subsidy payments will be contained within the budgeted level of ₹203,420 Crore. Far from a declining trend that the figures mentioned in the budget would seem to suggest, food subsidy has actually been on a rising trajectory and this trend will continue in the future as well. How the Scheme has been crafted, an escalating trend is inevitable. The coverage of PMGKAY is 'universal' (820 Million beneficiaries and at least 100 Million waiting to be included), assurance of giving them 'free' food eternally, purchase of 'unlimited' quantum of food from farmers at MSP resulting in high stocks with FCI and agencies and associated high carrying cost, reimbursement of handling and distribution cost to them on 'actual' basis and pilferage of subsidised food.

### Conclusion

The trajectory of food subsidy in India is not on a downward slope, as the budget figures might suggest, but rather on a continuous rise due to the structural inefficiencies within the system. The universal coverage of PMGKAY, along with the open-ended procurement of food grains at MSP, has resulted in excessive stock accumulation, driving up costs related to storage, handling, and distribution.

Despite attempts to trim the subsidy bill through stock liquidation, market demand has remained weak, making a significant reduction in expenditure unlikely.

Moreover, factors such as annual increases in MSP and handling costs, as well as the Supreme Court's directive to include an additional 100 million beneficiaries under food security programs, will only exacerbate the financial burden.

While the budgeted estimate for FY 2025-26 has been set at ₹203,420 Crore, the actual expenditure is expected to exceed this projection, just as it has in previous years.

Unless the government undertakes fundamental reforms, such as rationalising procurement, improving targeting mechanisms, and curbing inefficiencies, food subsidy will continue to spiral upwards.

(The author a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal)

## Trump's reciprocal tariffs and the US trade deficit: A deeper look

During a recent meeting, US President Donald Trump praised Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling him "a great leader." However, in the same breath, Trump announced reciprocal tariffs on India, labelling the country as the "tariff king" and "a hard place to do business." He blamed India's high tariffs for the growing trade deficit between the two nations.

Trump's proposed reciprocal tariff policy means that the US will impose equivalent tariffs on countries that charge higher tariffs on American exports. He argues that the US trade deficit stems from high tariffs imposed by other countries on US goods. The US exports goods worth approximately \$2 Trillion globally while importing around \$3.3 Trillion, leading to a trade deficit of about \$1 Trillion. The US has a trade deficit with 57 countries, a trade surplus with 39, and negligible trade with 122. But is high tariffs the primary cause of this deficit?

### US Trade Deficit with Major Countries

The United States has significant trade deficits with several countries, with China leading the list at a deficit of \$300 Billion, resulting from \$148 Billion in exports and \$448 Billion in imports. Mexico follows with a trade deficit of \$157 Billion, as the US exports \$323 Billion while importing \$480 Billion. Vietnam ranks third, with a deficit of \$109 Billion, based on \$10 Billion in exports and \$119 Billion in imports. Other major trade deficit partners include Germany (\$86 Billion), Canada (\$78 Billion), Japan (\$75 Billion), and Ireland (\$66 Billion). South Korea (\$55 Billion), Taiwan (\$50 Billion), and India (\$47 Billion) also contribute to the overall trade imbalance. Additional countries with notable trade deficits include Italy (\$46 Billion), Thailand (\$43 Billion), Malaysia (\$28 Billion), Switzerland (\$25 Billion), and Indonesia (\$18 Billion). The remaining nations on the list are Austria and France, each with a \$14 Billion deficit, Cambodia (\$12 Billion), Sweden (\$10 Billion), and Slovakia (\$8 Billion). These figures highlight the countries where the US imports significantly more than it exports, contributing to its overall trade deficit.

### Is High Tariff the Reason for the US Trade Deficit?

China, the country with which the US has the highest trade deficit, has an effective tariff of just 3.07 per cent and a Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff of 3.09 per cent. Despite accusations of unfair trade practices and currency manipulation, China has successfully positioned itself as the "factory of the world," offering competitively priced goods.

Mexico, the second-largest contributor to the US trade deficit, is deeply integrated with the US economy. Under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), most US products enter Mexico duty-free, provided they meet rules-of-origin requirements.

Despite this tariff-free access, the US still records a \$157 Billion trade deficit with Mexico, showing that tariffs are not the root cause.

Vietnam has emerged as a manufacturing powerhouse, with its exports tripling from \$124 Billion in 2012 to \$384 Billion in 2022. Yet, its effective tariff rate stands at just 1.07 per cent, with an MFN rate of 4.98 per cent. The growth of Vietnam's exports is primarily due to low labour costs, streamlined supply chains, and favourable trade agreements rather than high tariffs.

Similarly, Germany, which exports and imports roughly \$1.6 Trillion worth of goods annually, has an effective tariff of 1.44 per cent, almost the same as the US's 1.54 per cent. Despite these comparable rates, the US still has an \$86 Billion trade deficit with Germany.

This raises the question: if high tariffs were the primary cause of trade deficits, why does the US have such a significant gap with Germany?

Among the 20 countries with which the US has the highest trade deficits, only South Korea (8.88 per cent effective tariff) and India (11.36 per cent effective tariff) impose relatively higher tariffs. However, many of these countries themselves have global trade deficits, meaning other nations successfully export to them—even when the US struggles.

### The Real Cause of the US Trade Deficit

The primary reason for the US trade deficit is not high tariffs abroad, but rather the changing structure of the US economy. Over time, the US has shifted away from low-cost, labour-intensive manufacturing, outsourcing these industries to other countries while focusing on high-tech and specialised production.

Moreover, many US multinational corporations manufacture abroad and re-import goods, which increases the trade deficit. However, the royalties and profits earned by these companies are not factored into trade deficit calculations.

Additionally, the US services trade is often overlooked. In 2022, the US exported \$900 Billion worth of services while importing \$671

Billion, resulting in a \$200 Billion services trade surplus—which offsets part of the goods deficit.

Economic research has shown that imposing high tariffs does not necessarily boost manufacturing or enhance economic integration.

While it may be a politically attractive move, trade wars often lead to long-term economic damage. Trump's decision to escalate tariffs will shape global trade dynamics in the coming years, and its real impact remains to be seen.

### Conclusion

The US trade deficit is a complex issue influenced by multiple factors beyond high tariffs. While President Trump has targeted countries like India for their tariff policies, data shows that the largest trade imbalances exist even with nations that have low tariffs, such as China, Mexico, and Germany.

This suggests that tariffs are not the primary cause of the deficit. Instead, the shift in the US economy toward high-tech industries, outsourcing of manufacturing, and global supply chain strategies play a more significant role.

Additionally, US multinational corporations manufacture goods abroad and re-import them, further widening the trade gap.

The services sector, which generates a trade surplus for the US, is often overlooked in trade deficit discussions. Economic research suggests that imposing high tariffs does not necessarily revive domestic manufacturing but can lead to broader economic consequences.

As Trump's tariff policies unfold, their long-term impact on global trade and the US economy remains uncertain.

In 2023, the US-India bilateral trade in goods and services stood at \$190.08 Billion (\$123.89 Billion in goods and \$66.19 Billion in services trade). That year, India's merchandise exports to the US stood at \$83.77 Billion, while imports were \$40.12 Billion, leaving a trade gap of \$43.65 Billion in favour of India.

The country's services export to America was \$36.33 Billion in 2023, while imports were aggregated at \$29.86 Billion. The trade gap (difference between imports and exports) was \$6.47 Billion in favour of New Delhi.

During 2021-24, America was the largest trading partner of India. The US is one of the few countries with which India has a trade surplus.

India has received \$67.8 Billion in foreign direct investments from America during April 2000 and September 2024.

Thus India will have to diversify its export basket and reduce its American-centric approach to tide over the losses that might result from the Trump imposed tariffs.

(The author is former Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce; views are personal)

## Holistic approach to overcoming addiction

Harilal Gandhi was addicted to alcohol. He tried in vain to give up drinking but could never kick the habit and eventually succumbed to the lethal disease called alcoholism. He became a quotidian smoker.

Gandhiji's son was also said to have committed adultery and for a brief turned an apostate as he got converted to Islam to be known as Abdullah Gandhi.

Tobacco and excessive consumption of alcohol lead to severe physical and psychological disorders. It has a deleterious and debilitating effect on the human body. Any individual can be addicted to sex, substance, food (bulimia), cinema, television, or even social media. Such addictions weaken our resolve diminish our aura and deplete our physical and mental energy.

Addiction is a compulsive, chronic, physiological, or psychological need for a habit-forming substance, behaviour, or activity having harmful physical, psychological, or social effects and typically causing well-defined symptoms (such as anxiety, irritability, tremors, or nausea) upon withdrawal or abstinence.

Talking of smoking, some lawmakers came up with outlandish theories stating that there is inadequate Indian evidence to correlate tobacco and cancer.

WHO estimates that tobacco caused 8.5 Million deaths in 2024 and over 100 million deaths over the 20th century. Similarly, the United States Centres for Disease Control and Prevention describes tobacco as "the single most important preventable risk to human health in developed countries and important cause of premature death worldwide."

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart attacks, strokes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) including emphysema and chronic bronchitis and cancer (particularly lung cancer, cancers of the larynx and mouth, and pancreatic cancer).

Cigarettes sold in underdeveloped countries tend to have higher tar content and are less likely to be filtered, potentially increasing vulnerability to tobacco smoking-related diseases in these regions.

Given this grim scenario, how does one quit smoking and/or those addicted to Bacchus, give up drinking? It is recommended to take up courses in the Art of Living to combat these addictions.

We need to breathe properly to increase our Prana level to combat these addictions. The pivot of the Art of Living Courses is the unique breathing technique called the Sudarshan Kriya.

Sudarshan Kriya harmonises the rhythms of the body and emotions and puts them back in tune with the rhythms of nature.

Being in sync, we feel positive about ourselves, love flows naturally in all relationships (say what was lacking between Gandhiji and his son Harilal Gandhi).

Sudarshan Kriya's technique enables us to skillfully use the breath to feel positive about ourselves and our lives and start having control over our emotions. It reinforces the default rhythm within an individual and negative emotions of discontent and unhappiness get purged.

Regular practice of Sudarshan Kriya, pranayama, yoga, and meditation brings about a 360-degree change in the personality of an addict or a person who is only looking back in anger.

A renowned cardiologist from Hyderabad, Dr Ramachandra of Sri Sri Holistic Hospitals recommends Sudarshan Kriya to all his patients for a quick rehab. Further, he opines this breathing technique is almost akin to hyperventilation and relaxes an individual tremendously. Regular practice of this breathing technique infuses energy, prana, and optimism and puts a person in an auto mode (default mode of nature).

We are cannonaded with almost 60,000 thousand thoughts a day. Most of them are negative in nature. Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says breath is like a string and your mind is like a kite. Proper breathing ensures you float and do not crash land in the journey of your life.

So let us breathe our problems away.

### Conclusion

In a world where addiction to substances and behaviors can erode physical and mental well-being, finding effective ways to reclaim control is essential. Harilal Gandhi's struggles serve as a stark reminder of how unchecked dependencies can lead to suffering, not just for the individual but for their loved ones as well.

The impact of smoking, alcoholism, and other addictions is undeniable, with grave consequences on health and longevity. Yet, amidst this challenge, hope lies in adopting holistic wellness practices. Sudarshan Kriya, pranayama, yoga, and meditation offer scientifically backed methods to counter addiction and regain inner harmony.

These techniques not only cleanse the body and mind but also foster emotional resilience, allowing individuals to break free from destructive habits.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS



Gold falls Rs 150 to Rs 88,750 per 10g

For the third day in a row, gold prices retreated by Rs 150 to Rs 88,750 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid a weak trend in the overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled lower at Rs 88,900 per 10 grams on Friday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped by Rs 150 to Rs 88,350 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 88,500 per 10 grams. Silver prices also declined by Rs 250 to Rs 99,250 per kg, snapping the four-day winning run. Comex gold futures for April delivery fell 0.32 per cent to USD 2,904.80 per ounce in the international markets. Meanwhile, spot gold also fell 0.13 per cent to USD 2,905.31 per ounce. Gold and silver saw profit-taking from recent highs due to a rebound in US bond yields. The US administration's decision to delay Mexico tariffs by a month added to the cautious sentiment. However, a weakening dollar, which fell to a five-month low and recorded its worst weekly decline since November 2022, provided tailwinds for gold and silver. Rahul Kalantri, VP Commodities, Mehta Equities Ltd, said. Silver futures for May delivery traded lower at USD 32.80 per ounce.



AI Express expands fleet to 100 planes

Air India Express now has 100 planes in its fleet by inducting another Boeing 737-8 aircraft, which operated its first flight on Bengaluru-Hindon route. In a release on Monday, the airline said it will be operating over 500 daily flights by the end of this month across a fast-expanding network of 54 destinations across India, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. From a fleet of 26 Boeing 737 NGs and 28 A320 aircraft in January 2022, when the airline was taken over by the Tata Group, the carrier's has almost doubled its fleet to 100 aircraft, according to the release. The 100th aircraft, featuring 'Chittara' tail art inspired by Karnataka's traditional mural painting, was flagged off by the airline's Managing Director Aloke Singh at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport.



Infosys Fincle modernises Chola's operations

Infosys Fincle on Monday announced the successful migration of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company's operations to the Fincle treasury solution. According to a release, the move will centralise treasury management on a unified web-based platform for Chola. It, however, did not divulge the financial details of the contract. Infosys Fincle is part of EdgeVerve Systems, a wholly-owned product subsidiary of Infosys. "This cloud-based transformation emphasises Chola's commitment to creating future-ready, digital-first treasury offerings that streamline treasury operations, enhance automation and effectively manage risks and compliance while ensuring financial prudence and stability," the release said. With Fincle Treasury, Chola now has end-to-end coverage for operations across the entire treasury lifecycle, managing various liabilities and investment portfolios. This includes a diverse range of borrowing and funding sources. The non-banking financial company has also streamlined its fund transfer process, allowing faster and more efficient management of loans, market borrowings, securitisation, and interest and tax adjustments.

Will push for comprehensive trade partnership with India

New Zealand PM ahead of visit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of his trip to India, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon has said that he will push for a comprehensive economic partnership with New Delhi and will explore ways to strengthen bilateral security ties. Luxon is visiting India from March 16 to 20 in what will be his first trip to the country as the prime minister.

He will be accompanied by one of the largest delegations a New Zealand prime minister has ever travelled with. The delegation will comprise ministers, senior business leaders, a community delegation of prominent Kiwi Indians and several parliamentarians. "We're going to do everything we can to push trade really, really hard," Luxon told New Zealand media on Sunday.

"What I'm looking for is just a much more comprehensive economic partnership and how we'd move that forward," he said, adding, "I am determined that we are going to change the trading relationships with India big time."

In New Delhi, Luxon will hold wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to explore areas of cooperation, deepen political and security ties and strengthen the economic relationship.



"India is an important power in the Indo-Pacific and I will discuss with Prime Minister Modi what more we can do together to maintain peace and prosperity in our region," the New Zealand PM said.

Luxon said travelling with a senior business delegation will help increase trade and business opportunities and promote New Zealand as an investment destination. "The large and growing Indian diaspora make significant contributions to New Zealand. I am pleased to be travelling with a first-of-its-kind community delegation, to highlight the importance of the people to people links we share, and to profile the best and brightest among Kiwi-Indians," he said.

Luxon will deliver the inaugural address at the Raisina

Dialogue in New Delhi on March 17.

"New Zealand's relationship with India is more important than ever at this time of geopolitical uncertainty. I am confident my visit will achieve a step change in our engagement, as we continue to strengthen our mutual security and prosperity," Luxon said.

The New Zealand PM said strengthening ties with India is a key priority for him. "Since coming into office, I have signalled that strengthening our relationship with India is a key priority for my government."

"We've already made incredible progress over the last year as we invest in building a broad-based, sustainable relationship with India, the world's fastest-growing major economy, and the place from which six per cent of

New Zealand's population claim their heritage," he said.

The New Zealand PM hoped his visit will further strengthen the close links between the two countries.

Luxon will also visit Mumbai from March 19 to 20 before returning to Wellington.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday said Prime Minister Modi will host a lunch in honour of the visiting dignitary. Luxon will also call on President Droupadi Murmu.

Luxon's visit underscores the longstanding and enduring ties between India and New Zealand, the MEA said. "It reaffirms the continued commitment of both countries to further strengthen the bilateral relationship across all sectors and deepen our close people-to-people ties," it said.



Govt to set up SPV for making aircraft in India, says Union Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is in the process of setting a special purpose vehicle for making regional transport aircraft, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammoohan Naidu said on Monday as he asserted that necessary policies are in place for India to manufacture planes and its components.

Replying to questions in the Rajya Sabha, the minister highlighted the steps taken by the government to promote aircraft component manufacturing and MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) activities, including having a uniform IGST rate.

India is one of the world's fastest growing civil aviation markets and domestic carriers have placed orders for more than 1,500 planes as they expand their fleets to meet rising air traffic demand.

"We have changed the thought process that we have when it comes to manufacturing of aircraft. We are saying that India is at the stage right now

where we can manufacture, we can design and we can maintain an aircraft," Naidu said.

Elaborating about the way forward, the minister said the government has adopted a holistic approach and is in the process of setting a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for manufacturing regional transport aircraft.

"We have a plan to create an SPV for five years, which is going to bring in all the necessary stakeholders... study the existing picture in the country and create a road map...," he said and added that the idea is to make the aircraft in five years.

As the government pushes ahead with the Make In India initiatives, the TDP leader also emphasised that states are the key players.

While stressing that skilling is also important, Naidu mentioned that there are 38 working FTOs (Flying Training Organisations) and the focus is to create an ecosystem for manufacturing aircraft components.

Assam presents Rs 2.63 lakh cr budget

Offers sops to youths, tea garden workers



PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam government on Monday presented a Rs 2.63 lakh crore budget for the 2025-26 fiscal, offering sops to jobless graduates and tea garden workers while suggesting to exempt professional tax on a section of the salaried class in the state where assembly polls are due next year.

With a deficit of Rs 620.27 crore, this is the last full Budget of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led second BJP government.

Finance Minister Ajanta Neog tabled a Rs 2.63 lakh crore Budget for the next financial year that proposed no new tax for the general public but gave additional relief to nearly 1.5 lakh salaried people.

Neog announced extending tax holiday for green tea leaves for two more years to alleviate the challenges faced by the industry, while offering a one-time cash benefit of Rs 5,000 to 6.8 lakh garden workers.

Assembly elections in Assam are likely to take place during March-April next year. Neog announced a flagship scheme 'Chief Minister's Jibon Prerana' to financially support the graduates for one year during their job search period.

"This initiative is not an unemployment allowance, but motivational support (Prerana) to help them prepare for competitive exams, interviews and entrepreneurial pursuits. I am

glad to announce Rs 2,500 per month to the graduates passing out in 2025 from government universities/colleges of Assam," she added.

Under the same scheme, the government seeks to provide a one-time Rs 25,000 grant to the research scholars of state and central government universities. This assistance will be Rs 50,000 for 'divyang' (people with disabilities) research scholars, Neog said. The government will launch the scheme in October 2025, around six months before the state goes to polls, and allocated Rs 25 crore for its implementation.

Emphasising that no additional tax is imposed on the public, Neog said the budget proposes exemption on professional tax for individuals earning up to Rs 15,000 per month.

"This will benefit more than 1.43 lakh taxpayers/families and boost their purchasing capacity," she said.

Neog also proposed to slash the electricity rate by Re 1 per unit for Jeevan Dhara and domestic consumers up to 120 units in a month, giving relief to 48 lakh consumers out of the total 68 lakh.

"We shall provide Rs 300 crore targeted subsidy this year. If the Assam Power Distribution Company Limited (APDCL) continues to show the positive trend of revenue, I shall consider further reduction in tariff," she added.

Budget: Aim is to create one crore 'Lakhpatti Didis', says CM Fadnavis

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday said his government will focus on the 'Lakhpatti Didi' scheme to ensure creation of one crore beneficiaries.

The scheme was launched by the Union government in 2023 and recognises women members of SHGs, who have an annual income of at least Rs 1 lakh from agriculture, animal husbandry, and small industries, as 'Lakhpatti Didis'. "The state government will focus on women empowerment through the Lakhpatti Didi scheme. We aim to create one crore women beneficiaries with annual income of Rs 1 lakh. This



will ensure financial independence for women and foster a circular economy. Over 23 lakh women have benefited so far, with plans to add another 24 lakh this year," he said.

The target is to have one crore women beneficiaries earning Rs 8,000- Rs10,000 monthly, creating a robust network of self-reliance, the CM added.

Incidentally, on Saturday,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi took part in the 'Lakhpatti Didi Sammelan' in Navsari in Gujarat where he spoke on the success of the scheme and exuded confidence that the target of five crore beneficiaries nationwide would be achieved in the time to come.

Speaking to reporters after the state budget was presented in the assembly, the CM also underscored the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in agriculture.

"AI can revolutionize farming, from soil testing to flowering stages. It can reduce costs and improve productivity. We have introduced schemes to facilitate this transformation," Fadnavis said.

Sitharaman presents Manipur budget envisaging Rs 35,104 cr expenditure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday tabled in the Lok Sabha the Manipur budget for 2025-26, envisaging an expenditure of Rs 35,103.90 crore, up from Rs 32,656.81 crore in the current financial year.

Manipur is currently under the President's Rule. The total receipts have been pegged at Rs 35,368.19 crore, up from Rs 32,471.90 crore in 2024-25.

According to documents, the capital outlay has been increased by 19 per cent to Rs 7,773 crore over the current financial year ending March 2025.

Manipur's budget provides for over Rs 2,000 crore under

Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) and Rs 9,520 crore for social sector outlay.

For relief and rehabilitation for internally displaced persons, Rs 15 crore has been provided for temporary shelter to them; Rs 35 crore towards housing for displaced people, Rs 100 crore for relief operation, and Rs 7 crore for compensation.

A budgetary allocation of Rs 2,866 crore for 2025-26 has been made towards incentives for police personnel posted in sensitive areas.

Sitharaman tabled the supplementary demands for grants in respect of Manipur for the year 2024-25.

Prices of veg, non-veg thali decline 5 pc in Feb: Crisil

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The cost of vegetarian and non-vegetarian thali declined by 5 per cent on-month in February due to lower vegetable and broiler prices, an arm of domestic rating agency Crisil said on Monday.

Onion, potato and tomato prices were down 7 per cent, 17 per cent and 25 per cent on-month, respectively, amid fresh arrivals, said Crisil Market Intelligence and Analysis in its monthly 'Roti Rice Rate' report.

Also, broiler prices declined by an estimated 5 per cent on-month because of lower demand amid bird flu scare in Southern India, it said.

"For the vegetarian thali, the decline was driven by lower vegetable prices, particularly of onions, tomatoes and potatoes, while for a non-vegetarian thali, the cost eased with a decrease in broiler prices," said Pushan Sharma, Director- Research, Crisil Intelligence.



On an annual basis, the cost of a home-cooked vegetarian thali declined 1 per cent in February, while that of a non-vegetarian thali grew by about 6 per cent, the report said.

The on-year decline in the cost of a vegetarian thali was because of a fall in prices of tomato and liquid petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders, the report said.

Tomato price declined 28 per cent on-year to Rs 23/kg in the month, from Rs 32/kg a year ago, owing to a 20 per cent increase in arrivals on-year.

The increase in the cost of a nonvegetarian thali was driven by an estimated 15 per cent on-year rise in the price of broiler.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is poised to become a global AI talent hub, but a looming skill gap threatens to hinder its progress, with a new study by Bain & Company revealing that the country's AI sector could face a shortfall of over a million skilled professionals by 2027.

The report highlighted the urgent need for India to reskill and upskill its workforce to meet the growing demand for AI expertise.

"India has a unique opportunity to position itself as a global AI talent hub. However, by

Massive AI talent gap looms in India Report predicts shortfall of over a million workers

2027, the job openings in AI are expected to be 1.5-2x of the talent availability. The challenge - and opportunity -- lies in reskilling and upskilling a significant portion of the existing talent base on emerging technology tools and skillsets," said Saikat Banerjee, Partner and leader in Bain & Company's AI, Insights, and Solutions practice in India.



India's AI sector could surpass 2.3 million job openings by 2027 while the AI talent pool is expected to grow to around 1.2

million, presenting an opportunity to reskill more than 1 million workers, according to the report.

Since 2019, AI-related job postings have exploded, increasing by 21 per cent annually, while compensation for these roles has risen by 11 per cent each year.

Despite this surge in demand and attractive salaries, the sup-

ply of qualified AI professionals has not kept pace, creating a widening talent gap that risks slowing down AI adoption across industries.

Globally, executives surveyed cited a lack of in-house AI expertise as a major obstacle to implementing generative AI technologies. This shortage is projected to persist through at least 2027, with varying degrees

of impact across global markets.

Addressing the AI talent shortage requires a multi-pronged approach -- companies must move beyond traditional hiring practices and prioritise continuous upskilling initiatives to cultivate internal talent.

"The AI talent shortage is a significant challenge, but not insurmountable. Addressing it requires a fundamental shift in how businesses attract, develop, and retain AI talent. Companies need to move beyond traditional hiring approaches, prioritise continuous upskilling, and foster an innovation-driven ecosystem," Banerjee said.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
**IRRIGATION & CAD DEPARTMENT**  
**E-PROCUREMENT SHORT TENDER NOTICE**  
Tender Notice & Date: 15/03/2025 (1st Call) Dt. 10.03.2025  
Name of the Work: I&CADD - Minor Irrigation - Warangal District - Excavation and loading of silt in Bhadrakali Tank for Block No 4 & 5, Estimated Cost Value: Rs. 610.95 Lakhs.  
Tender Documents Available: From 11.03.2025 at 11.00 AM onwards. For more details and for downloading: <https://tender.telangana.gov.in> tender documents please visit.  
Office Email ID: [soic.wg@gmail.com](mailto:soic.wg@gmail.com), Contact No(s): 9490669434 (SEC, I.C, WGL), 9701578925 (AE/IC, WGL).  
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, I&CADD, Irrigation Circle, K.C.Colony, Warangal.

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Office Email ID: [soic.wg@gmail.com](mailto:soic.wg@gmail.com), Contact No(s): 9490669434 (SEC, I.C, WGL), 9701578925 (AE/IC, WGL).  
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, I&CADD, Irrigation Circle, K.C.Colony, Warangal.



## 'What works on stage isn't the same as what works on screen'

FATIMA HASAN  
hasanfatimafax@gmail.com

**M**any dream of becoming journalists, but only a few possess the traits required for the profession. This is what banker-turned-actor Danish Husain,

as he goes by his screen name, reflected upon in his latest series *Crime Beat*.

In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Husain traces his journey in *Crime Beat* and shares what drew him to the project. "When the director told me about the story and the novel that inspired the series—*The Price You Pay*—it immediately caught my attention," he says. Husain was particularly drawn to the depiction of journalism in the series, especially the role of the editor and the character of Abhishek Sinha. "I liked the way journalism was portrayed, the editor's role, and how Abhishek's character was written. That, along with my experience of interacting with journalist friends, played a big part in my decision to take up the role. I admire the professionalism the job demands—the objectivity and authenticity required. All of these factors made me want to do the series." Playing the chief editor of a newspaper was a challenging experience for Husain. "Maintaining objectivity while getting the news, understanding what the real news is and then presenting it properly—these are the key responsibilities of an editor. I think that's a huge task."

He adds, "The script also delves into how an editor decides which stories make it to the front page and how to differentiate those stories from how other newspapers treat them. It's not just about professionalism—it's also about the emotional side of the job, which I had to bring into my performance."

To prepare for the role, he relied on the expertise of Jairaj Singh, a seasoned journalist who served as a consultant on the series. "Jairaj's guidance was invaluable. His observations were extremely relevant and helped me shape my character. He helped me understand how an editor operates—how they carry themselves, the fast-paced nature of their work, and the perspective they bring to news." Interestingly, he did not model his performance on any specific real-life journalist or detective. Instead, he focused entirely on the inputs from Jairaj, the director, and conversations with other actors. "I did not base my performance on any real-life journalist. I simply worked with the insights and feedback I

received," he emphasises.

One of the most compelling aspects of *Crime Beat* is how it navigates the fine line between entertainment and responsible journalism. When asked about this balance, he responds with a thought-provoking counter-question: "Who decides how much is entertainment and how much is responsibility? What one person sees as responsible storytelling might seem irresponsible to another, and vice versa."

He acknowledges that making a series for a platform involves a significant entertainment component. "At the same time, you want the series to be credible. It shouldn't be so implausible or outlandish that it loses touch with reality, especially when it's set in a very real socio-political landscape," he explains. Quoting a dialogue from the series—"As it becomes more and more corrupt and democratic, the world that you are living in becomes harder and harder"—Husain raises critical questions: "Can we really do meaningful crime journalism today? What happens when journalists expose big corruption and scams? What happens to whistleblowers?"

He points out that crime journalists are increasingly at risk. "When they bring major scams to light, they become targets. Many have even lost their lives for it," he notes. "Journalists are constantly threatened. So, in such an atmosphere, how can crime journalism continue to evolve?" Having worked in theater and film for over two decades, he has gained a deep understanding of how different mediums shape storytelling. "What works on stage isn't the same as what works on screen, and that's different from how a story is told in a book. Each medium has its own limitations and advantages. Understanding how to adapt a story to the medium is crucial."

He elaborates, "If I have a story, I need to know how to make it compelling for the screen. If it's for the stage, I need to understand how it can be adapted theatrically. The medium dictates how the story is told." As for his future projects, Husain remains tight-lipped but assures fans that exciting work is on the horizon. "There are a handful of series I'm currently working on, including a Netflix series. Some of my projects are in the production stage, waiting to be released by the producers," he concludes.

**In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Danish Husain delves into his role as a chief editor in *Crime Beat* and the broader themes of journalism, integrity and truth-seeking. He also discusses how his performance was shaped by real newsroom dynamics**



## NEUROSCIENCE IN EARLY EDUCATION

In recent years, our understanding of how young brains develop has been significantly enhanced by advances in neuroscience. This knowledge offers powerful insights into early education, allowing us to design interventions that can positively shape cognitive development during the most formative years of a child's life. Early childhood represents a critical window of opportunity and we must leverage neuroscience to optimise learning experiences that foster intellectual, social and emotional growth.

Neuroscientific research has demonstrated that the first five years of a child's life are crucial for brain development. During this period, the brain is highly malleable, forming over a million new neural connections every second. This rapid growth lays the foundation for cognitive functions, emotional regulation and even personality traits that will continue to evolve. However, the quality of experiences during this phase plays an essential role in either reinforcing or hindering this development.

What we now understand is that targeted educational interventions can significantly influence this process. High-quality early education environments, rich in cognitive stimuli, can help children reach their full potential by enhancing neural pathways associated with problem-solving, language acquisition and executive function skills.

**Implementing neuroscience-informed interventions in early education is not about making learning more complicated; rather, it's about being intentional with the kinds of stimuli and experiences we provide to young learners. Here are some key areas where neuroscience has provided valuable insights:**

### Language acquisition and bilingualism:

Neuroscience shows that early exposure to multiple languages can enhance brain plasticity and improve cognitive flexibility. Bilingual children often exhibit stronger skills in attention and problem-solving. Incorporating multiple languages in early education fosters not only language skills but also critical cognitive functions.

**Executive function development:** Executive functions like working memory, flexible thinking and self-control are foundational skills that are nurtured during early childhood. Neuroscience suggests that playful, structured activities that challenge children to think critically and plan can improve executive functions. These are skills that predict future academic success.

**Social-emotional learning (SEL):** Neuroscientific evidence strongly supports the importance of

emotional regulation in learning. Emotions are deeply intertwined with cognitive processes. Therefore, early education that incorporates SEL—teaching children to manage their emotions, empathise with others, and build healthy relationships—can lead to stronger academic outcomes and improved well-being throughout life.

### Motor skill development and cognitive growth:

Physical movement has a direct impact on cognitive development. Neuroscientists have found that motor skills and cognitive development are closely linked. Activities that promote coordination, balance and fine motor skills can enhance neural networks responsible for spatial awareness and mathematical reasoning. Movement-based learning can be especially beneficial in early education settings.

Resilience, the ability to bounce back from stress and adversity, is a quality that can be nurtured from early childhood.

Neuroscience has shown that children who develop resilience have stronger neural connections in areas of the brain associated with emotional regulation. Early interventions that focus on building resilience—through supportive relationships, exposure to manageable challenges, and teaching coping mechanisms—can shape more adaptive and stress-resistant individuals.

As educators, it's important to understand that the goal is not to shield children from all difficulties but to equip them with the emotional tools they need to navigate challenges. This nurturing approach aligns with the brain's natural developmental trajectory and helps children build the neural architecture for handling adversity.

Educators are key to translating neuroscience into practice. Understanding how the brain works can inform teaching methods, curriculum design and classroom interactions. Teachers who are trained in brain-based strategies can create learning environments that are stimulating and supportive, promoting both intellectual and emotional development.

By fostering curiosity, encouraging problem-solving, and creating a positive emotional climate, educators can facilitate the kind of deep, sustained learning that neuroscience shows is possible during these critical early years. The impact of these efforts is profound, shaping not only a child's academic trajectory but also their lifelong capacity for learning, creativity and resilience.

(The author, Manish Rastogi, is the CEO of Zee Learn Ltd.)



## New era in healthcare, inspired by Ratan Tata

PNS/HYDERABAD

From seeing a family's heart-breaking struggle to pay for life-saving medications to creating a pharmaceutical empire that is revolutionising the industry, Arjun Deshpande's journey is one of ingenuity, passion and purpose. Come along as we explore the history of Generic Aadhaar!

**Q You started working to address a basic problem in India's pharmaceutical industry when you were just sixteen years old. What was the most difficult thing you had to do as a teenager?**

Disrupting the conventional pharmaceutical distribution system, which relied heavily on middlemen, was the most difficult task. When I was sixteen, I noticed a serious problem with India's pharmaceutical sector: the exorbitant cost of medications because of several intermediaries. Knowing that this needed to change, I went to 200–300 pharmacies in an attempt to persuade them to use my direct-to-consumer business strategy. Most were doubtful at first. However, I was not taken seriously. "How can a 16-year-old change an industry that has worked this way for decades?" they found it incomprehensible that a teenager would question a long-standing system. I struggled for two to three months before I was able to persuade one pharmacy. As a result of that success, more retailers began to support the idea over time. Breaking the retailers' deeply rooted attitude was the most difficult task. However, perseverance, conviction and a distinct vision transformed suspicion into trust. And that "yes" was only the first step.

**Q Have you encountered opposition from bigger pharmaceutical firms? If yes, how have you handled it?**

Indeed, large corporations that rely on aggressive marketing, medi-

cal referrals and branding have historically controlled the pharmaceutical sector. Established businesses resisted when I proposed the Generic Aadhaar business model, which cuts out middlemen to lower the cost of medications. I addressed this, though, by emphasising openness, quality control and public knowledge. My strategy was to inform patients and customers about the effectiveness and affordability of generic medications. It increased public trust and expanded access to affordable healthcare.

**Q Have you had to put forth more effort to build credibility, or has your young allowed you to disrupt the industry?**

In a field as well-established as pharmaceuticals, being young presented both opportunities and difficulties. On the one hand, it gave me the freedom to think creatively and unconventionally without being constrained by social standards. However, at first, credibility was a barrier since many people doubted that someone so young could have

a significant influence. I created an ecosystem with it that allows consumers to obtain the same premium medications at reasonable costs from the same producers who supply global corporations. By cutting out needless intermediaries and lowering exorbitant prices, I guarantee that important medications will always be accessible to the average person.

**Q Do you view yourself as spearheading a new social entrepreneurship movement in light of India's employment crisis?**

By producing micro-entrepreneurs, the concept not only lowers the cost of medications but also gives people more control. One of the most rewarding parts of my journey has been this! Allowing people to operate their own pharmacy with no financial outlay has significantly improved their lives, especially in light of India's employment issues. I'm most surprised by the initiative's overwhelming impact, which includes witnessing entire towns gain access to inexpensive

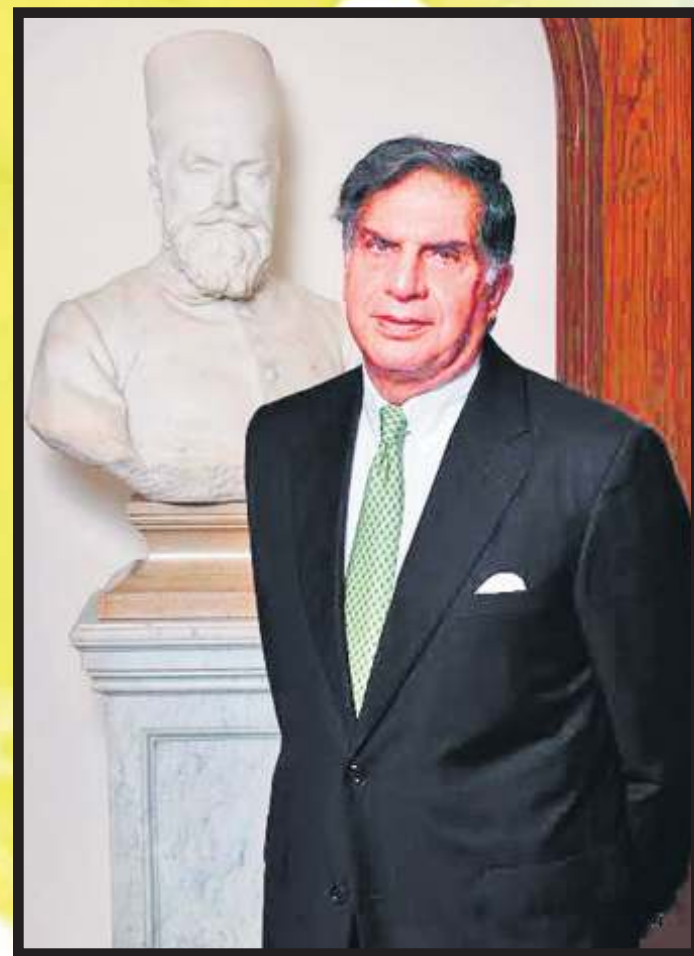
healthcare, young entrepreneurs become financially independent and families improve their standard of living. This strengthens my conviction that companies can contribute to society while still being sustainable.

**Q What measures have you done to guarantee that people trust your medications?**

Despite scientific proof that generic medications are just as effective as branded ones, many continue to be skeptical because of ignorance and false beliefs about their quality. I have addressed these issues in a number of ways. Through awareness efforts, I also concentrate on educating consumers, pointing them that generic medications are far less expensive than branded ones while still containing the same active components.

**Q Have you discussed healthcare changes with legislators?**

Affordable healthcare is a crucial topic that is frequently debated in policy circles, but when efforts are put into practice, genuine change occurs. Businesses like Generic Aadhaar, in my opinion, have the power to bring about systemic change in areas where governments struggle to implement policies. Our goal is in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji's ambition to make medications accessible and inexpensive for all citizens, including those living in remote areas. Recognising the need for creative solutions that close the gap between affordable and high-quality healthcare, government agencies have taken the initiative to promote this cause. Droupadi Murmu madam, the President of India, commended Generic Aadhaar for its substantial role in ensuring that life-saving medications are accessible to the general public at notably reduced costs. She recognised our efforts to provide millions of families with access to necessary medications without sacrificing quality and to lessen the financial burden of



my mission also gave me confidence. He has always dreamed of a healthcare system in which the exorbitant cost of necessary medications does not prevent anyone from accessing them. Under his direction, I am using Generic Aadhaar to make this goal a reality and provide everyone with access to reasonably priced healthcare. I'm determined to uphold his legacy of moral business practices and social impact as I develop further, making sure that high-quality healthcare reaches the people who need it most.

**Q You saw an old man who was having trouble paying for cancer treatment, so you began Generic Aadhaar. Do you ever think back on that moment now that you have thousands of consumers?**

That was a pivotal event in my life. I came to the realisation that affordability should not be a privilege but rather a right after witnessing someone who was having difficulty paying for life-saving medications. Since then, my goals have expanded to include changing healthcare accessible more broadly as well as creating a profitable company. I feel even more obligated to advance now that it is growing quickly and enabling micro-entrepreneurs. I now see this as a movement to transform healthcare in India and abroad, not just a company.

**Q Do you anticipate growing internationally as you scale further, especially in nations like the U.S. where the cost of medications is similarly high?**

Indeed, growing internationally is undoubtedly a goal of ours. The high cost of medications is a problem in many nations, including the US, and my strategy of lowering the cost of high-quality generic medications can have a big worldwide impact. We are now working to fortify our position in India, but I envision it helping to lower the cost of medications globally in the future.



# what's brewing?



● Mishika, Priety upadhyay and Ankit

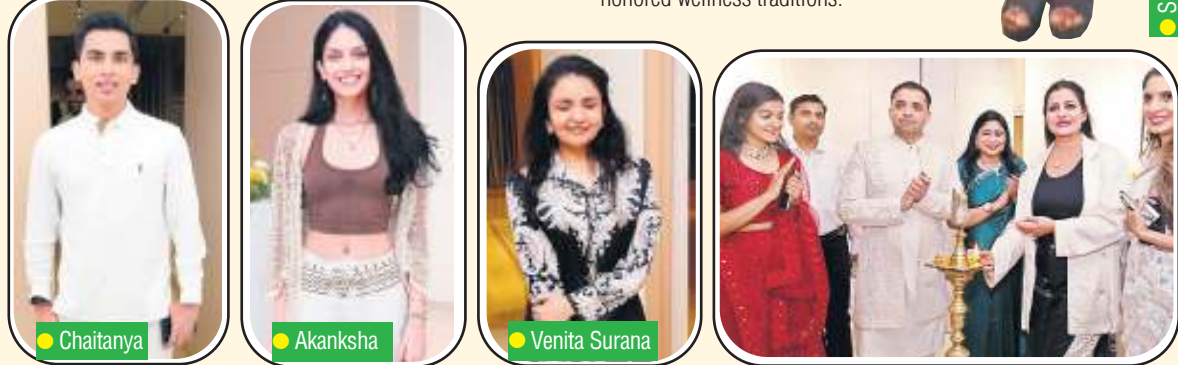
● Priya

● Sakshi

● Anjana

● Sudha Reddy

Hyderabad witnessed the launch of Ankitam, an exclusive wellness centre founded by internationally acclaimed wellness expert Grandmaster Ankit. Located in Jubilee Hills, Ankitam aims to redefine health and well-being by integrating advanced scientific methodologies with time-honored wellness traditions.



● Chaitanya

● Akanksha

● Venita Surana



Hyderabad City Police and HCSC celebrated with a 5K and 2K run, bringing the community together for a day of fitness and fun. During the event, NCD Chairman V. Srinivasa Rao and Director Yeshwanth were honored with a memento by Minister Seethakka and Commissioner C.V. Anand in recognition of their continuous support.



Wonderchef, the premium kitchen appliance brand co-founded by Chef Sanjeev Kapoor and Ravi Saxena, has announced plans to double the number of its exclusive stores by next year, with a particular focus on expanding in southern India. This strategic focus was highlighted during a successful meet and greet event held at its Hyderabad Exclusive Brand Outlet (EBO).



Conceiva Fertility has announced a state-of-the-art fertility hospital dedicated to providing advanced, ethical, and compassionate reproductive care. Conceiva Fertility follows a patient-first approach, ensuring the highest standards of care and the best possible success rates.



The Global Education Fair 2025, organised by premier abroad education consultant Global Tree, showcased an impressive array of international educational opportunities, enabling attendees to connect, learn, and thrive as they pursue their aspirations for overseas studies. Held at Hyatt Place, Hyderabad, this one-day event was attended by the esteemed Gareth Wynn Owen, British Deputy High Commissioner.



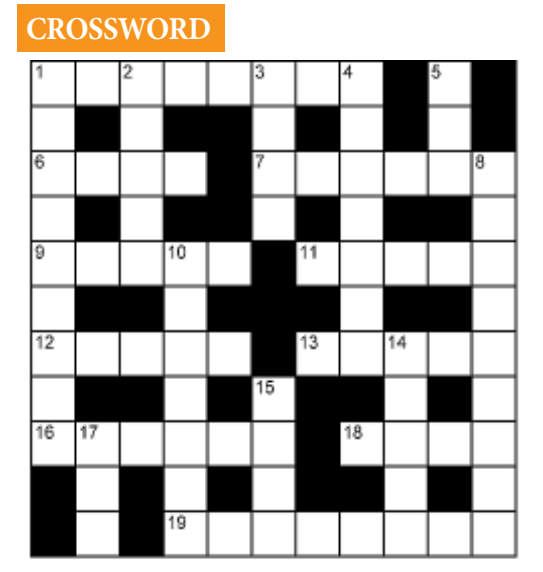
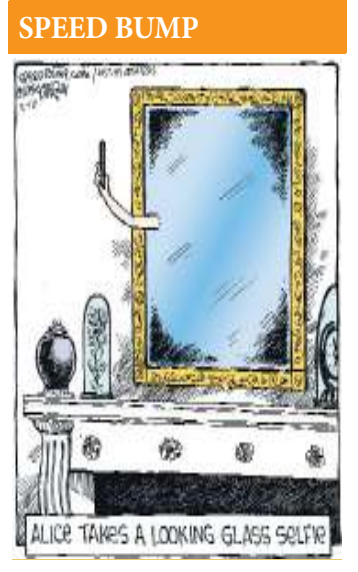
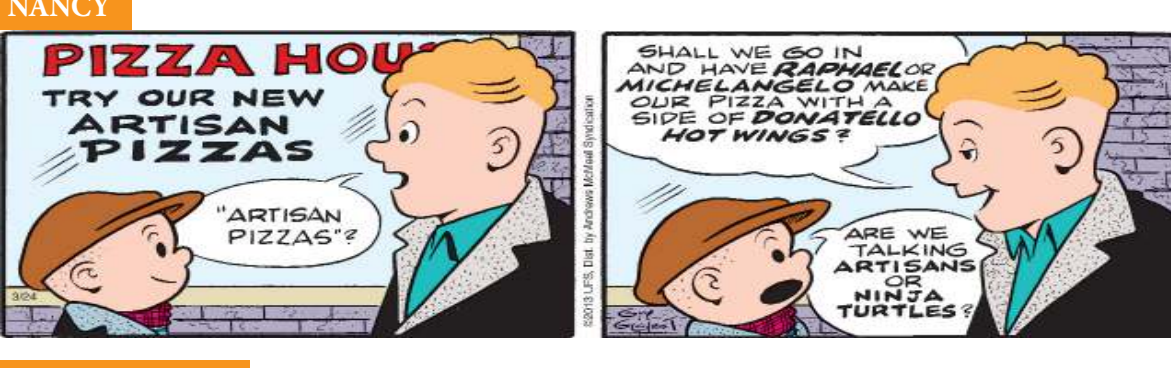
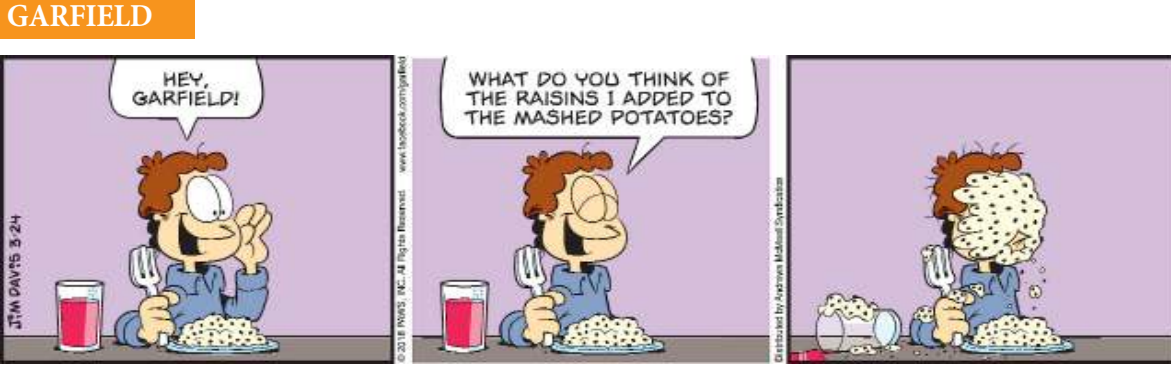
Raunaq Yar Khan, the 9th Nizam of The Asaf Jahi Dynasty, attended a significant Women's Day celebration hosted by the Sahaaya Foundation at Taj Deccan Hotel in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad. The event marked the presence of notable dignitaries, including popular film artists Poonam Kaur, Suman, and Shyamala, wife of esteemed actor Krishnam Raju. Other distinguished attendees included Vundavalli Sridevi, Chairperson of the AP SC Corporation, as well as government representatives from the Backward Classes Department, and the former lady principal of Osmania Medical College.



Harley's India hosted a special and unique program, Harley's Retro Royale, at their Harley's Fine Baking, located at TSPA Appa Junction. The Retro Royale stood out from the usual celebrations by embracing a fun-filled retro theme, where ladies showcased the charm of the past by dressing up in retro-style outfits. The event invited women to Sing, Play, and Slay with a variety of activities that brought the golden era back to life.

PARTY  
Photos by- SV Chary

## FUN



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

### ACROSS

- Expecting a baby
- Scraps of material
- Weigh yourself with these
- Frequently
- A row of metal rings fastened together
- Jumble together (3,2)
- Sneak
- Baby's toy
- A stinging insect
- A newspaper employee

### DOWN

- Actor or singer
- An octagon's number of sides
- As well
- Instructor
- Use your eyes
- Rub wood smooth with this
- 10 An imaginary line around the middle of the Earth
- 14 Precise
- 15 Jump
- 17 A chopping tool

SOLUTION

A	H	P	R	I
W	O	L	S	O
O	P	E	R	A
N	O	J	H	C
D	I	S	O	B
E	T	T	N	I
R	O	A	S	T
F	O	I	E	A
U	N	I	V	E
L	O	D	T	E

## Sankalp Reddy of *Ghazi* fame joins hands with Gopichand for a period drama



Director Sankalp Reddy, known for his National Award-winning film *Ghazi* (2017), is set to begin shooting his new film with Gopichand. The film was officially launched on Monday with a puja ceremony, and production will commence soon.

Like his previous films, Sankalp is crafting this project as a period drama. He made a mark with *Ghazi*, a war film set in the sea, followed by *Antariksham* (2018), a space-based drama, and *IB71*, a Hindi spy thriller based on the 1971 Indian Airlines hijacking. His projects are known for their distinct and unconventional narratives.

This untitled film, produced by Chittoori Srinivas, aims to bring to life a forgotten chapter of Indian history. Set in the 7th century, the film explores an untold historical event with rich cultural depth and period-accurate details.

Gopichand will be seen in a never-before-seen role, showcasing his versatility as an actor. Sankalp, known for his technical brilliance, is assembling a skilled team to ensure high-quality visuals and production value.

"The shoot will start in Hyderabad, followed by a schedule in Kashmir," Sankalp Reddy confirmed. The female lead is yet to be finalised, with casting expected to take place in May.



## VISHNU MANCHU'S KANNAPPA GENERATES POSITIVE BUZZ AHEAD OF RELEASE

Vishnu Manchu's highly anticipated film *Kannappa* is gaining positive response from various quarters. The actor plays the titular role, while Preeti Mukundhan stars as his love interest.

As part of the film's promotional strategy, the makers release new content every Monday. This week, they unveiled a romantic song, featuring Vishnu and Preeti, choreographed by Prabhu Deva.

According to sources, the makers recently held a private screening for industry insiders, who gave rave reviews.

"The last half-hour of the film is a visual spectacle and will leave audiences spellbound," a source revealed.

Directed by Mukesh Kumar

Singh, the film was primarily shot in New Zealand, with key sequences involving Prabhas and other actors filmed in India.

The film boasts an ensemble cast, including Prabhas, Mohanlal, and Akshay Kumar. Akshay plays Lord Shiva, while Prabhas appears as Rudra. Vishnu has previously stated that Prabhas did the film without charging any fee, as a gesture of friendship.

Scheduled for release on April 25, *Kannappa* will hit screens in multiple languages, including Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam.

Vishnu has already kick-started nationwide promotions, expressing confidence that the film will live up to expectations.



## Actress Abhinaya gets engaged to her longtime beau

Popular Telugu and Tamil actress Abhinaya has announced her engagement to her longtime boyfriend. She took to Instagram on Sunday, sharing a picture of their intertwined hands with the caption: "Ring the bells, count the blessings – forever starts today!" She did not reveal her fiancé's name or photo. Rumours previously linked Abhinaya to actor Vishal, but she consistently denied them. Despite being hearing and speech impaired, she has delivered outstanding performances in films like *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu*, *Dhruva* and *Raju Gari Gadhi 2*. In interviews, Abhinaya had mentioned that she was in a long-term relationship with her childhood friend. Now, with this official announcement, all speculation has been put to rest.

## Jailer 2 shooting officially on floors

Following a few underwhelming releases, Superstar Rajinikanth made a roaring comeback with *Jailer* (2023). The film turned out to be a massive success, grossing over Rs 600 crore at the box office.

Now, reports suggest that the much-awaited sequel, *Jailer 2*, has officially begun production, with shooting starting on Monday. Director Nelson Dillipkumar is returning to helm the project, while Sun Pictures is backing the film. Anirudh Ravichander is once again composing the music.

Several actors from the original film are expected to reprise their roles. Jackie Shroff, Shivarajkumar and Mohanlal had cameo appearances in *Jailer*, but according to sources, Shivarajkumar and Mohanlal will have extended screen space in *Jailer 2*. There is also buzz that Nandamuri Balakrishna might play a cameo in the sequel, although there is no official confirmation yet. "The makers approached Balakrishna for a role in *Jailer 2*, but he has not given a final decision yet," a source revealed. The film is expected to hit theaters in 2026.



## Rajamouli's team furious over leaked footage from Mahesh Babu's film

the filmmakers frustrated.

Since the film's launch, Rajamouli has ensured tight security at the shooting locations, preventing unauthorized access. Even cast and crew members have been required to sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), barring them from revealing any details. Despite these precautions, information has still found its way into the public domain.

While the production team remains tight-lipped, reports suggest that Priyanka Chopra plays a key role alongside Mahesh Babu and Malayalam star Prithviraj Sukumaran is also part of the cast. According

to a source, Tamil superstar Chiyaan Vikram is also rumored to have an important role in the film.

The leak has infuriated Rajamouli, who has demanded answers from his team regarding how the video was recorded and released. In response, the crew has now intensified security protocols, reportedly banning mobile phones on set to prevent further leaks. The team is currently working to remove the leaked footage from all online platforms. Meanwhile, Rajamouli remains determined to maintain secrecy around the project, ensuring no further disruptions in the film's production.



## POOJA HEGDE STUNS RETRO TEAM WITH HER TAMIL DUBBING SKILLS

Actress Pooja Hegde is set to surprise audiences with a new milestone in her career—dubbing in her own voice for her character in director Karthik Subbaraj's highly anticipated action film, *Retro*. Starring Suriya in the lead role, the film has already created a buzz among fans, and this latest update has only added to the excitement. The film, produced by Stone Bench Films in collaboration with Suriya's 2D Entertainment, has been building anticipation through a series of comic strips featuring behind-the-scenes moments. On Monday, the production house released its fifth comic strip titled "EPI005: Vaazhga Tamizh! Challenge Accepted! Pooja Hegde Dubs for Herself" on its X (formerly Twitter) timeline, revealing the actress's dedication to perfecting her Tamil dialogue delivery. The journey of casting Pooja Hegde for *Retro* was not a straightforward one.

According to the production house, several names were considered for the female lead, but it was Pooja who ultimately stood out.

"When director Karthik Subbaraj was searching for a heroine, multiple names were suggested. But when Pandiyya saw Pooja Hegde, he immediately confirmed, 'This is the girl we've been looking for!' The only concern was whether she could deliver dialogues fluently in Tamil. But Pooja, known for taking on challenges since childhood, confidently assured the team that she

would overcome this hurdle as well," the production team revealed.

Once finalised for the role, Pooja underwent intense Tamil language training to perfect her dialogue delivery. Her dedication was evident, as she managed to flawlessly deliver even lengthy monologues, impressing the entire team.

While Pooja Hegde has been part of several South Indian films,

*Retro* marks a significant first in her career—dubbing in her own voice for a regional film.

"After an impressive look test, she

began her daily Tamil training and surprised everyone by delivering even lengthy monologue sequences flawlessly. There were plenty of fun moments on set, with the team challenging her with tougher Tamil words," the production house shared. This announcement has thrilled her fans, who are eager to witness her authentic and natural performance on the big screen. Apart from Suriya and Pooja Hegde, *Retro* boasts a powerful ensemble cast, including Malayalam actors Joju George and Jayaram, as well as Tamil actor Karunakaran. The film promises a thrilling cinematic experience, packed with high-octane action sequences choreographed by stunt master Kecha Khamphakdee. With Karthik Subbaraj's signature storytelling, powerful performances, and stunning visuals, *Retro* is shaping up to be a must-watch action spectacle. The film is set for a grand theatrical release on May 1, 2025.



