



# sunday pioneer

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**'Vocal for local' campaign bearing fruit: Modi**

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**Rao Ramesh—the MASTER of versatility**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

**The BJP will win in South India too in the next elections. There is no need for the BJP to use delimitation to stay in power. First of all, the government has to conduct a census and then the delimitation process will be done. Prime Minister Modi or Union Home Minister Amit Shah did not say that LS seats will decrease in South India if delimitation is done**

— G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Coal

P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**Inter exams off to a peaceful start**

The first-year Intermediate examinations commenced smoothly in the NTR district on Saturday. Of the total 40,695 registered candidates, 39,737 appeared for the Telugu, Sanskrit, Hindi, and Urdu exams across 103 centres, while 958 students remained absent. With four flying squads and several sitting squads deployed, no instances of malpractice were reported. However, students faced difficulties in reaching examination centres at Nidamanuru, Gudavalli, and other outskirts of...

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**Lokesh prays at Mantralayam**

Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh visited the Sri Raghavendra Swamy temple in Mantralayam, Kurnool district, and participated in the Sri Raghavendra Swamy Guruvai Bhavotsav celebrations. He took part in the 40th Paduka Patabhishekam under the guidance of seer Subudendra Teerthulu. Speaking at the event, Lokesh reaffirmed the government's commitment to preventing migration from Rayalaseema. He said the coalition government was working tirelessly to ensure people lived happily and did not have to...

—PAGE: 4

**'Stalin spreading imaginary fears'**

Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai on Saturday said his party would not take part in the March 5 all-party meeting on the delimitation exercise and blamed Chief Minister M K Stalin for attempting to spread 'imaginary fears' over the matter. Writing to Stalin, Annamalai said his party firmly believed that he has misconstrued the delimitation exercise and has convened the all party meeting to 'spread your imaginary fears and deliberately lie about it,' even before any official statement was made. Pointing to Union Home...

—PAGE: 5

**Viksit Bharat 2047 a realisable ambition**

The 16th Finance Commission Chairman Arvind Panagariya on Saturday said India's aim to become a developed nation by 2047 is a 'realisable ambition' for which the country's per-capita income needs to grow at 7.3 per cent in dollar terms to USD 14,000 over the next 24 years. India's per-capita income, in 2023-24 dollar terms, is about USD 2,570, which is very low compared to countries like South Korea, Taiwan, United States, and other European nations. Speaking at the 49th Civil Accounts Day, Panagariya said with the existing technology, coupled with reasonable capital accumulation and skill acquisition, India has 'enormous room' for 'catching up' with the per-capita income of developed nations and meet World Bank's...

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## 12.92% growth rate in AP: CM

### SAYS NDA GOVT TAKING SYSTEMATIC STEPS FOR THE STATE'S DEVELOPMENT

PNS ■ GD NELLORE

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reiterated his commitment to the welfare of the underprivileged, stating that the government is prioritising both welfare and development in the State Budget. He participated in the NTR Bharosa Social Security Pension Distribution Programme at GD Nellore in Chittoor district on Saturday and personally handed over pensions to beneficiaries, including Vasu, a toddy-tapper from BC Colony, and Vasanthamma from SC Colony. Naidu said the state government is spending Rs 33,000 crore on pensions that benefit 64 lakh pensioners. He remarked that during the past five years, people had suffered, but after the NDA came to power, there was renewed hope. He accused the previous government of pushing Andhra Pradesh into a debt burden of Rs 10 lakh crore and asserted that his administration is taking systematic steps towards overall development.

He announced that the pension amount has been increased from Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 as promised. Additionally, dialysis patients receive Rs 10,000 per month, while bedridden individuals get Rs 15,000. "Pensions are being disbursed on the first of every month, just like government employees

- Naidu says 33,000 cr spent on pensions for 64 lakh beneficiaries
- Pensions disbursed on the first of every month like government salaries
- Poor families to receive medical aid up to Rs 25 lakh
- Rs 6.50 lakh crore investments secured in nine months, creating five lakh jobs
- Rs 24,000 crore debts from the previous government cleared
- DSC recruitment will fill vacant teacher posts by June
- Talliki Vandanam to provide Rs 15,000 per child from May
- Annadata Sukhibhava to grant Rs 20,000 annually to farmers
- Fishermen will also receive Rs 20,000 in financial assistance.
- 20,000 km of roads repaired in nine months
- Development of Amaravati is progressing

receive their salaries," he said.

Highlighting recent achievements, Naidu stated that in just nine months, the State has secured Rs 6.50 lakh crore in investments, expected to generate over five lakh jobs.

He also revealed that Rs 24,000 crore of debts raised by the previous government had been cleared and that the State had achieved a record growth rate of 12.92 per cent in the same period.

Continued on Page 2



**'Meeting party cadre gives me strength'**

PNS ■ GD NELLORE

Chief Minister and TDP national president Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday expressed his happiness at meeting party workers, stating that they are like his family.

"I feel truly energised when I meet the cadre. Over the past eight months, I have been occupied with administrative work, which kept me from interacting with party activists. Now, meeting them again fills me with joy," Naidu said at a meeting with party leaders and activists in GD Nellore, Chittoor district.

Continued on Page 2



## Lokesh moots model schools in all segments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a step towards educational reform, Minister for Education, IT, and Electronics Nara Lokesh has outlined plans to establish a model school in each Assembly constituency across Andhra Pradesh. As part of the broader Andhra Pradesh Model of Education, this initiative aims to incorporate best practices from national and international institutions.

At a review meeting, Lokesh discussed the implementation of the Learning Excellence in Andhra Pradesh (LEAP) programme with officials from the School Education, Intermediate Education, and Higher Education departments. Emphasising a collaborative approach, he announced a workshop scheduled for March 3 at Undavalli, where Assembly members will deliberate on alternative educational arrangements and

Government Order 117. Higher education also remains a focal point in Lokesh's agenda. He revealed plans for a meeting, led by the Governor, with university vice-chancellors to explore reforms and strategies for improving Andhra Pradesh's rankings in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). To ensure financial accessibility, he directed officials to formulate guidelines for implementing postgraduate fee reimbursement, a promise made during the Yuvagalam Padayatra. To strengthen student monitoring, Lokesh suggested linking academic progress from kindergarten to postgraduate levels through the Aadhaar ID system. He also stressed the urgency of expediting the establishment of a world-class Sports University and an AI University in Amaravati to enhance academic and professional opportunities.

Continued on Page 2

## Posani complains of stomach pain, shifted to RIMS-Kadapa



PNS ■ KADAPA

YSRCP leader and film actor Posani Krishna Murali, who is in judicial remand at Rajampet sub-jail, complained of stomach pain on Saturday. He was initially taken to the Government Hospital in Rajampet, and later shifted to RIMS Hospital in Kadapa on doctors' advice.

Doctors at RIMS conducted medical tests, including ECG and blood examinations, and found no health issues. Koduru Rural CI Venkateswarulu stated that Posani had pretended to have chest pain, but doctors confirmed he was in good health.

"Posani Krishna Murali enacted a drama, claiming stomach pain. The doctors confirmed he has no health problems and is healthy. He is being sent back to Rajampet sub-jail," CI Venkateswarulu said.

It may be recalled that Posani was remanded for 14 days for allegedly making provocative comments and using abusive language against TDP and JSP leaders.

**Min Nimmala slams Jagan for opening incomplete Veligonda: P2**



## Swift justice: HM Anitha warns criminals sternly

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

The days of criminals escaping justice for years are coming to an end in Andhra Pradesh. Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha has sent out a strong message—crimes will not go unpunished, and offenders will face the consequences within 100 days. The government's goal is clear: to create a law-abiding society where swift justice serves as a deterrent to wrongdoers.

Addressing the passing out parade of 395 newly trained Sub-Inspectors at the PTCC parade ground in Anantapur, the Home Minister emphasised the significance of collaboration between the police and the public in ensuring

law and order. Citing a recent POCSO Act case in Vizianagaram where the accused was convicted within 100 days, she underscored the government's commitment to delivering timely justice.

The induction of 97 women among the newly recruited officers marks a significant step in strengthening the police force. Minister Anitha lauded the perseverance of these officers, highlighting their dedication despite the rigorous selection process. She also stressed the role of youth in crime prevention, acknowledging their technological proficiency as a vital tool in tackling modern-day criminal activities.

Continued on Page 2

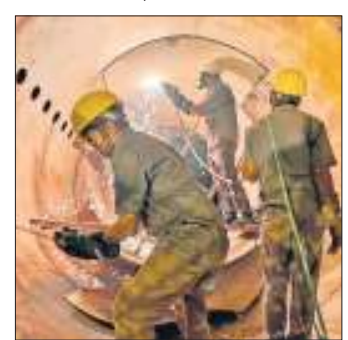
## 4 trapped men located, survival chance put at 1%

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rescue operations at the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel continued on Saturday with the authorities deploying cutting-edge technology and expert teams to locate and rescue the eight workers trapped in the tunnel since February 22.

The project, originally designed to supply irrigation and drinking water to the fluoride-affected areas of erstwhile Nalgonda, is now witnessing a rescue mission involving state and Central agencies.

Addressing the media at the JP Camp Office, Minister Jupally said that Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR) helped to locate four of the missing workers, and excavation is in progress. "Rescue efforts are expected to conclude by Sunday



evening. Initial signs indicate traces of the remaining four workers near the tunnel boring machine," he revealed. The Minister put the chances of their survival at 'one per cent' and hoped that they would be extricated by Sunday evening. Asked about the condition of the

four whose whereabouts were found, he recalled that he had said on the first day itself that the chances of survival of the trapped persons were remote. The state government, in coordination with the Centre, has mobilised 18 organisations, 54 officials and over 700 personnel to carry out the complex rescue operation.

Advanced technology, including Aqua-Eye, Proboscop and GPR has been deployed to detect anomalies in the tunnel and trace the missing workers. Rescue operations are being carried out round-the-clock in three shifts. The authorities have intensified steps to remove the debris with teams from the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), SCLL Rescue, NDRF, SDRF, GIS and the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI) playing key roles.

## CM greets Muslims

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The holy month of Ramzan commenced following the sighting of the crescent moon across various parts of the country, including Andhra Pradesh. The moon sighting committee, along with Islamic clerics from Darul Uloom Raza-e-Mustafa and Darul Qaza Imdarat-e-Shariah, confirmed the sighting on Saturday evening, marking the beginning of fasting.

Muslims began the sacred month with special 'Namaz-e-Taraweeh' prayers at mosques on Saturday night.

Continued on Page 2

## Declare Tirumala a 'no-fly zone': TTD chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman BR Naidu has urged the Union government to declare the airspace over the sacred Tirumala temple a 'no-fly zone' to uphold its sanctity and security.

In a letter to Union Minister of Civil Aviation Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, he stressed the

need to prevent aircraft and helicopters from flying over the revered shrine of Lord Venkateswara.

Naidu pointed out that low-flying aircraft disrupt the spiritual ambience of the temple, violating the 'Agama Sastras'—the traditional scriptures governing temple rituals. He added that such flights not only compromise the temple's sanctity but also pose security concerns and hurt the sentiments of millions of devotees.

## AP's tourism push: Aiming to woo global investors

### MINISTER KANDULA DURGESH TO ATTEND ITB BERLIN 2025 ON MARCH 5 & 6

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As Andhra Pradesh sets its sights on becoming a premier global tourism destination, the State government is actively working to attract international investors and promote its diverse offerings. Taking a significant step towards this goal, Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh is set to attend ITB Berlin 2025, one of the world's largest tourism trade fairs, scheduled from March 4 to 6 in Germany.

At the Berlin Expo Centre, Durgesh, accompanied by AP Tourism Development Corporation MD Amrapali Kata, will present the state's unique tourism potential to investors. With a focus on adventure, culture, luxury, medicine, health, MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions), and

technology-driven tourism, Andhra Pradesh is positioning itself as a multifaceted destination.

**Revamping tourism policies**  
Highlighting the state's commitment to the tourism sector, Durgesh has announced several key initiatives, including a revamped Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model and a new tourism policy (2024-29). These measures aim to attract foreign direct investment and create employment opportunities while ensuring sustainable tourism practices.

To further boost investor confidence, the government plans to host tourism investor summits in Hyderabad, Chennai, and Bengaluru, showcasing the lucrative opportunities Andhra Pradesh has to offer.

**Showcasing AP's unique offerings**  
At ITB Berlin, the minister will



engage with over 30 potential investors and participate in media interactions to highlight Andhra Pradesh's tourism landscape. The government's focus on enhancing beaches, securing Blue Flag certifications for Kakinada, Suryalanka,

Mypadu, and Machilipatnam, and expanding air connectivity is expected to be a key discussion point.

**Strengthening tourism infrastructure**  
Recognising the need for world-class infrastructure, the state government has undertaken significant initiatives. Leading hospitality groups such as Oberoi, Mayfair, and Taj have already expressed interest in investing in Andhra Pradesh's tourism sector. Additionally, the government is working to upgrade Haritha Resorts to premium facilities and aims to establish 50,000 tourist accommodations over the next five years, with an immediate goal of constructing 5,000 rooms by year-end.

The ambitious tourism expansion also includes a decision on the utilisation of the controversial Rushikonda Palace, with the government ensuring that it serves public

interest.

**Central support and future prospects**  
Durgesh acknowledged the Union Government's support in Andhra Pradesh's tourism initiatives. Union Minister for Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat has recognised the state's efforts, and additional central assistance is expected after April for major projects, similar to Akhanda Godavari and Gandikota. Thanking Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan for their support, Durgesh emphasised that Andhra Pradesh is committed to promoting its tourism sector on international platforms. As the state embarks on this journey, its efforts at ITB Berlin 2025 will play a crucial role in transforming Andhra Pradesh into a globally recognised tourism hub.

**OBTUSE ANGLE**



# Foreigners Unimpressed with Amaravati and fourth city

Foreign delegates keeping an eye on developments in Telugu states aren't exactly thrilled about Andhra Pradesh's Amaravati or Telangana's much-hyped fourth city or Future City. The sentiment isn't negative, but it's far from positive either. The hesitation? A simple lack of trust in whether anything concrete will actually happen. A top Consulate official didn't mince words - "these have largely been on paper." And that pretty much sums up the scepticism surrounding these grand urban dreams. The message is clear: if both governments don't get serious about building infrastructure in the next couple of years, these projects will become nothing more than a closed chapter in history. Hope can only go so far; eventually, the world needs to see bulldozers, cranes, and actual development - not just PowerPoint presentations and fancy proposals.

## KCR listens, but his social media army prefers to attack

In a recent BRS meeting, KCR made it clear - he is open to feedback and willing to make course corrections. He even held a lengthy session to hear out grievances, signalling that he understood the need for introspection. But while the boss seems to have gotten the message, his social media warriors clearly haven't. The announcement of an airport for Warangal had BRS supporters celebrating, but the mood soured quickly. Excitement turned into frustration as many started questioning why BRS hadn't delivered for Warangal when it had the chance. The organic social media warriors - the ones who had stood by BRS without expecting anything - began asking the tough questions. That was enough for them to be attacked by the usual suspects. Things got so messy that even MLC contested candidate A Rakesh Reddy had to delete his celebratory tweet, where he was conveniently poking at past governments for Warangal's neglect. Perhaps he realized that finger-pointing doesn't work when your own party is in power. Sensing the heat, he later posted a video trying to explain. Maybe it's time the social media loudmouths took a lesson from KCR himself - attacking critics won't fix what went wrong. Listening might.

## JSP cadre uneasy as Pawan Kalyan pitches 15-Yr alliance

Pawan Kalyan's recent remarks about the TDP-JSP-BJP alliance lasting for the next 15 years have ruffled feathers within his own party. While he heaped praises on Chandrababu Naidu and emphasized coalition unity in the assembly, his declaration that the NDA alliance would rule uninterrupted for over a decade has left many Jana Sena Party

(JSP) supporters uneasy. The discomfort isn't just about words—it's about what they imply. His earlier statement, expressing a desire for Naidu to continue as CM for another ten years, had already set off murmurs. But now, with his unwavering commitment to the alliance, JSP members are starting to wonder—what exactly is their role in this grand plan? "Are we just here to ensure Naidu remains CM?" is the question many JSP supporters are now asking. The growing fear is that their party, instead of emerging as a strong force, may end up playing second fiddle to TDP indefinitely. As Pawan Kalyan's stance becomes clearer, so do the concerns about JSP's future.

## Meenakshi's simplicity clashes with Cong leaders' showmanship

Meenakshi Natarajan, the newly appointed AICC in charge for Telangana, wasted no time in making her style of functioning clear - she stands for simplicity, not spectacle. Right from the start, she informed TPCC chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud that there should be no grand welcome on her arrival. No fan-

## 'Jai Jagat' or 'Jai Jagan'? slogan turns into BRS trolling fodder

Communication experts often talk about 'noise' - anything that disrupts the transmission of a message. Sometimes, that noise is literal; other times, it's political. On February 28, when newly appointed AICC in-charge for Telangana, Meenakshi Natarajan, arrived in Hyderabad, a classic case of 'noise' turned into a full-blown trolling session. The chaos began when TRICOR chairman Bellaiah Naik Tejavath wrapped up his speech with the Congress slogan 'Jai Jagat'. But BRS social media warriors insisted he had said 'Jai Jagan', leading to a storm of posts mocking Congress, suggesting its own leaders had forgotten CM A Revanth Reddy's name. Congress beat reporters rushed to Gandhi Bhavan's CPRO room to get Bellaiah Naik's reaction. His response? A mix of amusement and frustration. "I am happy that BRS is making the 'Jai Jagat' slogan famous," he remarked, attempting to brush off the distortion. As the trolling escalated, Bellaiah Naik was forced to issue a clarification, explaining that 'Jai Jagat' is an old Congress slogan - a Sanskrit phrase meaning

"Victory to the World," and Congress has a long history with impactful slogans—from 'Bharat Chhodo' against the British to 'Bharat Jodo' in

Udaipur. But, as Naik himself pointed out, "Sometimes people hear 'Rama' as a curse word." Moral of the story? Politicians need to be careful with their words—but perhaps even more careful with their listeners.

## Kavitha stays on the ground, no gimmicks needed

While most BRS leaders are still figuring out their next moves, Kavitha is already on the ground. Over the last fortnight, she was on the go, moving from Nagarkurnool to Siddipet, Sircilla to Mahabubabad, and Nalgonda, meeting karyakartas and supporters, with or without media attention. This isn't just about optics. She visited a party worker who was beaten up, helped set up a Xerox shop for a follower, and even checked in on a Jagruthi leader nursing a fractured bone. Temples, Weddings, local meetings, small gatherings - she's showing up where it matters. "We will fight it out in public," she said after coming out of jail, and she's proving it with action. While others wait for the tide to turn, Kavitha is making sure she's seen, heard, and remembered. Reporters shared that she is making time to talk after press meetings with district reporters and also giving her own number to be in touch on peoples issues. This is so unlike leaders - about whose teams, the less said, the better.

(Naveena Ghantate, Dr Venkateshwarlu Kolishetty, C Pradeep Kumar)

# Min Nimmala slams Jagan for opening incomplete Veligonda

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu criticised former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for inaugurating the incomplete Veligonda project, stating that the public would not forgive him for the move. He pointed out that even YSRCP leaders had admitted that the project was unfinished and questioned whether Jagan felt any shame in inaugurating it in such a state.

He demanded that Jagan apologise to the people of Prakasam district for misleading them.

Ramanaidu accused YSRCP leaders of continuing to spread falsehoods even after losing power, stating that they were competing with each other to mislead the public.

He questioned Jagan's claims about dedicating the project to the nation and dismissed the argument that



Ramanaidu accused YSRCP leaders of continuing to spread falsehoods even after losing power, stating that they were competing with each other to mislead the public. He questioned Jagan's claims about dedicating the project to the nation and dismissed the argument that merely initiating the project was equivalent to completing it.

merely initiating the project was equivalent to completing it. He also criticised YSRCP leaders for questioning budget allocations despite their own past failures. Refuting allegations that the TDP government had failed to provide water, he called the accusations made by YSRCP-backed media baseless. The minister asserted that

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was giving special attention to the Veligonda project. He assured that the government would complete all pending works, including the head regulator, second tunnel lining, removal of 1.2 lakh cubic metres of soil from the tunnel, feeder canal wall construction, and extraction of the stuck tunnel-boring

machine. He further stated that the government would provide compensation to displaced families and construct rehabilitation colonies to facilitate water transfer to the Nallamala Reservoir. He set a target to fill the reservoir with Krishna waters by July 2026, ensuring benefits for farmers in the region.

# REPORTERS' DIARY

fare, no hungama. After reaching Hyderabad, she reinforced her stance, making it clear that flattery and theatrics wouldn't work on her. "No leader should try to get in my eyes," she remarked bluntly, instructing that no one should come to receive her at the railway station, no one should carry her bags, and if she needed help, she would ask for it herself. She even set the tone for accessibility, stating that party workers could call her directly if they had any problems, and if she missed a call, she would get back to them later. Despite her no-nonsense approach, some Congress leaders couldn't resist indulging in their usual pageantry. Hyderabad Central DCC president Dr. C Rohin Reddy, Kukatpally constituency in-charge Bandi Ramesh, and a few others went ahead and installed massive flexes and cutouts welcoming her directly defying TPCC chief's instructions. Rohin Reddy even placed them in his Amberpet constituency and at key locations leading to Gandhi Bhavan, making it clear that old habits die hard. One Congress leader quipped that their actions made psychologist Susan Jeffers' famous words - "Feel the fear and do it anyway". Another, however, dismissed the notion of fear, saying they simply did what they wanted, enjoying the "freedom" Congress allows. Clearly, while Meenakshi Natarajan is here to enforce discipline, Congress leaders aren't ready to part with their love for grand gestures just yet.

constituencies. He also stressed the need for close coordination with Jana Sena and BJP leaders. Issuing a stern warning to MPs and MLAs, Naidu said that disciplinary action would be taken if they failed to fulfil their responsibilities. "I have had a 45-year-long association with all of you, and this bond should remain strong. In the last elections, I sidelined even my close associates when necessary. I may share a meal or tea with anyone, but I will never compromise on the party's interests," he asserted.

At the Chekkapalli Road area of Vemulawada town in Rajanna Sircilla district, a body of a married woman was found in a well. The police, with the assistance of the Fire Service personnel, retrieved the body of the woman, identified as M Pallavi, a resident of Achannapalli village. Pallavi had been married to Shivudu, a resident of Vemulawada town, about three years ago. Relatives of Pallavi alleged that she was frequently subjected to harassment and torture by Shivudu and his family members. They also claimed that Pallavi had previously attempted suicide, and the police have registered a case and are investigating further.

# 'Meeting party cadre gives...

Continued from Page 1

He assured the cadre that, despite his busy schedule, he considers it his responsibility to meet them wherever he goes. "If the TDP loses an election, it is not because of any failure in governance but because the cadre is dissatisfied," he remarked.

Warning party workers against favouring YSRCP leaders or activists, Naidu said, "Extending any kind of support to them is like falling prey to a snake." He credited the TDP cadre's dedication for the party's success in GD Nellore

after 30 years and promised to make it a stronghold. Taking a veiled dig at the YSRCP, Naidu questioned, "Where are those who once said, 'Why not 175 and why not Kuppam?' What happened to them?" During the meeting, Naidu read out the names of booth-level leaders and activists who worked hard for the party's victory. An open discussion was also held on the functioning of various leaders and cadre. He directed MPs and MLAs to address the concerns of party workers and actively engage with the public in their

constituencies. He also stressed the need for close coordination with Jana Sena and BJP leaders. Issuing a stern warning to MPs and MLAs, Naidu said that disciplinary action would be taken if they failed to fulfil their responsibilities. "I have had a 45-year-long association with all of you, and this bond should remain strong. In the last elections, I sidelined even my close associates when necessary. I may share a meal or tea with anyone, but I will never compromise on the party's interests," he asserted.

# Woman's body found in well

PNS ■ VEMULAWADA

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The police, with the assistance of the Fire Service personnel, retrieved the body of the woman, identified as M Pallavi, a resident of Achannapalli village. Pallavi had been married to Shivudu, a resident of Vemulawada town, about three years ago. Relatives of Pallavi alleged that she was frequently subjected to harassment and torture by Shivudu and his family members. They also claimed that Pallavi had previously attempted suicide, and the police have registered a case and are investigating further.

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Continued from Page 1

To tighten the grip on habitual offenders, she announced strict measures, including the immediate opening of rowdy sheets upon case registration. The government is also deploying one lakh CCTV cameras across the state to bolster surveillance and crime prevention.

A major crackdown on organised crime is already underway. In just nine months,

# Ex-DGP Maria Kumar honoured with prestigious De Nobili Award

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Philosophical commentator and Director General of Police (DGP) of Madhya Pradesh State, B Maria Kumar was honoured with the prestigious *De Nobili Award* at the International Hindi Seminar held at the historic 173-year-old St. Joseph's College in Bengaluru on Saturday.

The two-day event, dedicated to celebrating the Hindi language, was organised as part of the 'Vikasit Bharat' mission. The seminar brought together renowned Hindi scholars and luminaries from across national and international circles, including Dutch human rights activist Dr Neena Sharma and Prof. Sanjay L. Madar, the Kerala head of the Hindi Prachar Sabha.

Dr Antony Oliver, the organiser of the seminar, highlighted that the primary goal of this international conference was to underscore the significance of Hindi in advancing the spirit of Vikasit Bharat. He pointed out that Hindi, as the third most spoken language in the world after English and Mandarin, plays a crucial role in fostering cultural and national unity.

In his acceptance speech, B. Maria Kumar emphasised the transformative power of language. He noted that the knowledge of multiple languages enhances cognitive abilities, which in turn enriches human capital and drives national development.



A recipient of the National Rajbhasha Gaurav Award in 2022, Kumar also expressed his admiration for the enthusiastic participation of students from various colleges, who attended the event in large numbers, showcasing their passion for Hindi. The seminar not only celebrated the richness of Hindi but also served as a platform for fostering dialogue and collaboration among various language enthusiasts, furthering the vision of a developed and culturally vibrant India.

# CM greets...

Continued from Page 1

Religious leaders stated that after 'Namaz-e-Isha', the last prayer of the day, 'Namaz-e-Taraweeh' was offered, with 'Huffaz' reciting the Holy Quran.

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu extended his heartfelt wishes to the Muslim community, acknowledging Ramzan as a period of strict fasting and deep spiritual reflection. He urged believers to embrace the values of devotion and discipline. Minister of Education and IT Nara Lokesh also conveyed his greetings, highlighting the significance of fasting, charity, and prayers during the holy month.

Muslim Joint Action Committee president Md Kaleem described Ramzan as a time for spiritual renewal, community togetherness, and selflessness. He noted that fasting began with the pre-dawn meal, 'Sehri', with the faithful abstaining from food and drink from dawn to dusk.

Plans are in place to establish dedicated cyber stations in every district to counter the growing menace.

The event, attended by Anantapur Urban MLA Daggupati Venkateswara Prasad, former minister Palle Raghunatha Reddy, Rapthadu MLA Paritala Sunitha, and other dignitaries, sent a resounding message: law and order will not be compromised.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Mar 02 12:09 AM to Mar 02 09:02 PM

Chaturthi: Mar 02 09:02 PM to Mar 03 06:02 PM

**Nakshatram:**

Uttara Bhadrpadra: Mar 01 11:22 AM to Mar 02 08:59 AM

Revati: Mar 02 08:59 AM to Mar 03 06:39 AM

**Rahukalam:** 4:51 PM to 6:19 PM

**Yamagandam:** 12:28 PM to 1:56 PM

**Varjyam:** 07:49 PM to 09:15 PM

**Gulika:** 3:23 PM to 4:51 PM

**Amritakalam:** 04:29 AM to 05:55 AM

**Abhijit Muhurtham:** 12:04 PM to 12:51 PM

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 35°

Humidity: 70%

Sunrise: 6:25 AM

Sunset: 6:15 PM

Updated: March 1, 2025 5:00 PM

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# Inter exams begin on a peaceful note in NTR dist

39,737 first-year students appear for language exams amid traffic congestion

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The first-year Intermediate examinations commenced smoothly in the NTR district on Saturday. Of the total 40,695 registered candidates, 39,737 appeared for the Telugu, Sanskrit, Hindi, and Urdu exams across 103 centres, while 958 students remained absent. With four flying squads and several sitting squads deployed, no instances of malpractice were reported.

However, students faced difficulties in reaching examination centres at Nidamanuru, Gudavalli, and other outskirts of Vijayawada due to heavy traffic congestion on National Highway 16. The transportation of question papers from police stations to exam centres was also delayed, causing exams to begin 15 minutes late. An official from the Intermediate Board attributed the delay to vehicles carrying question papers getting stuck in traffic.

Traffic congestion from Ramavarappadu to Gudavalli, where several corporate colleges are located, further compounded the issue. With buses, cars, and two-wheelers parked



Hall tickets being verified at an Intermediate exam centre in Vijayawada on Saturday. Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar

along the highway, many students arrived late. Although the National Bypass from China Avutapalli to Gollapudi was available as an alternative route, the police failed to regulate traffic effectively.

Meanwhile, NTR district collector Dr G Lakshminsha conducted a surprise inspection at the SRR & CVR Government College examination centre in Machavaram, Vijayawada. He

reviewed the arrangements to ensure a conducive environment for students, instructing officials to provide sufficient drinking water, ORS packets, and emergency medicines. Dr Lakshminsha also assessed security measures, including CCTV surveillance at exam centres. He stressed the need for thorough checks of invigilators, including the Chief Superintendent, before they

enter the exam halls. Additionally, he directed that examination rooms be well-ventilated and well-lit.

Further, he instructed officials from the departments of Intermediate Education, School Education, Revenue, Police, Public Transport, Medical and Health, Electricity, and Postal services to coordinate efforts for the smooth conduct of the examinations.

## State budget lacks clarity on CPS: YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP Employees & Pensioners Wing State president N Chandrasekhar Reddy criticised the state budget for neglecting employees and pensioners, calling it deeply disappointing.

Speaking to the media, he condemned the government for failing to allocate funds for Rs 30,000 crore in pending dues, including gratuity, medical reimbursements, and DA arrears. He accused the government of attempting to evade these payments. He also criticised the lack of clarity on scrapping the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS) and the delay in implementing Pay Revision Commission (PRC) recommendations and interim relief, despite being in power for nine months.

He pointed out that the government had assured timely salary payments on the 1st of every month but fulfilled this promise only once in nine months. He also accused the administration of deceiving contract and outsourcing employees by failing to ensure job security or regularisation.

Volunteers, who were given pre-election assurances, were allegedly abandoned as well.

## TDP MLC Anuradha slams YSRCP for misleading public

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP MLC and Chief Whip Panchumarthi Anuradha criticised the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) for allegedly misleading the public with false figures instead of appreciating a budget aimed at reviving the state's economy.

Addressing a press conference at the TDP headquarters in Mangalagiri, Anuradha accused former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of pushing the state into financial ruin. "Jagan has destroyed every system, instilled fear among people, and turned Andhra Pradesh into a hub for sand, land, liquor, and ration mafias. Despite the public limiting the YSRCP to just 11 seats, he shows no remorse," she alleged.

She warned YSRCP leaders against spreading misinformation about the budget, stating that they must face the consequences if they continue to mislead the people. Asserting that the TDP is committed to public welfare, she said the party would not allow YSRCP's falsehoods to go unchallenged.



Anuradha warned YSRCP leaders against spreading misinformation about the budget, stating that they must face the consequences if they continue to mislead the people. Asserting that the TDP is committed to public welfare, she said the party would not allow YSRCP's falsehoods to go unchallenged.

Dismissing YSRCP's claims that the government had reduced welfare spending, she pointed out that Rs 9,407 crore was allocated for the Taliki Vandanam scheme, contrasting with what she termed as YSRCP's unfulfilled promises.

She also criticised the previous government's handling of the Amma Vodi scheme, claiming that while YSRCP had promised Rs 15,000 per child, it only provided Rs 13,000 to one child per household. She alleged that such discrepancies

in welfare schemes had disappointed the public and exposed YSRCP's failures.

Highlighting employment generation under Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, Anuradha stated that over 20 lakh IT jobs were created in Hyderabad due to his efforts. She also stressed that Amaravati's development as the state capital does not require government funds, as it can be sustained through revenue from excess agricultural land.

## Collector unveils ambitious development plans for Seethampeta region

Focus on local industries, tourism, and infrastructure growth

PNS ■ PARVATIPURAM

District Collector A. Shyam Prasad has unveiled comprehensive development plans for the Seethampeta region, focusing on boosting local industries, enhancing tourism, and improving village infrastructure. This announcement comes after a thorough district tour, where the Collector assessed ongoing projects and explored potential growth opportunities alongside Seethampeta ITDA Project Officer C. Yashwanth Kumar Reddy.

During the tour, Collector Shyam Prasad visited various sites, including the cashew and agarbatti (incense stick) processing units managed by the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVK). He emphasised the importance of attractive packaging and high-quality standards to maximize profits, stating that "leveraging the local market is crucial for the economic empowerment of the community."

The Collector also inspected the government-run silk industry, stressing the need for producing grade-one silk to compete effectively.



Collector Prasad observing the production of silk processing in VDKV.

Additionally, he toured the Jagathipalli resort, highlighting Seethampeta's scenic beauty and its potential to become a leading tourist destination. "Seethampeta boasts natural wonders that can attract a significant influx of tourists," he stated, promising to enhance the region's parks, waterfalls, and viewpoints.

As part of the village development initiative, a site inspection was conducted in Panukupet. The Collector also visited the agarbatti industry unit in Bhamini, gathering insights and

discussing potential improvements with local producers.

"Our goal is to ensure holistic development of Seethampeta," said Collector Shyam Prasad. "By focusing on local industries, tourism, and village infrastructure, we can create sustainable growth and improve the quality of life for the residents." The Collector's visit demonstrated a unified commitment to the region's development, with officials from various departments accompanying him throughout the tour.

## 'NTR Bharosa' pensions disbursed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The disbursement of NTR Bharosa Social Security Pensions was successfully completed in the NTR District on Saturday. Under the supervision of District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha, a total of Rs 98.20 crore was distributed to 2,29,913 beneficiaries. Dr Lakshminsha personally inspected the door-to-door pension distribution in Madhuranagar, Budameru Madhyakatta, and other areas.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Lakshminsha emphasised that the district administration effectively supervised the distribution process, adhering to state government guidelines. The disbursement began at 7



AM and was successfully completed on the same day. He credited the seamless execution to the coordination among all officials.

He further assured that no beneficiary faced any difficulties in receiving their pension. In case any beneficiary mis-

es the disbursement, arrangements have been made to ensure they receive their pension by 3rd March.

DRDA Project Director K Srinivasa Rao and other officials accompanied Dr Lakshminsha during the inspections.

## NASSCOM career fair at GITAM on March 5, 6

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The NASSCOM Prime Career Fair, scheduled for March 5-6 at GITAM University, will offer over 10,000 job opportunities for students and young professionals. Graduates from diverse fields, including technology, arts, science, ITI, polytechnics, and diploma courses from the 2024 and 2025 batches, are eligible to participate.

Top companies such as Wipro, TCS, Tech Mahindra, Genpact, Concentrix, and Axis Bank will be recruiting at the fair. Organisers have urged early registration, as participation will be on a 'first come, first serve' basis. The fair provides a platform for candidates to interact with industry leaders and explore career prospects.

Visakhapatnam MP Sribharat



encouraged job seekers to seize this opportunity, highlighting the city's growing reputation as an education and industry hub. He emphasised the significance of skill development and adaptability in today's job market.

Interested candidates must register by March 3 on the official website. The event will commence at 8 AM daily, offering job seekers a chance to connect with top employers and secure promising career opportunities.

## YSRCP slams TDP for 'false propaganda' on State debt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP has criticised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for allegedly spreading misinformation about Andhra Pradesh's debt, accusing the TDP government of suppressing facts to mislead the public.

Former Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath responded to Naidu's remarks made during his visit to Gangadhara Nellore in Chittoor district, where he blamed the previous YSRCP government for the state's financial situation. Rajendranath countered the claims, stating that if the Chief Minister truly wished to inform the public, he should publish the state's debt details in Volume 6 (Budget in Brief), as per established practice.

He dismissed the TDP's assertion that Andhra Pradesh's debt had reached Rs. 14 lakh crore during the YSRCP's tenure as "an outright falsehood." Referring to the TDP-led coalition's first budget presented in November 2024, he pointed out that official figures recorded the state's debt at Rs. 6.46 lakh crore, of which Rs. 3.10 lakh crore was inherited when the YSRCP assumed power in 2019. The debt accrued under the YSRCP was far lower than the exaggerated figures cited by Naidu, he asserted.

Rajendranath further noted that during Naidu's previous



He criticised the TDP government for omitting debt details from Volume 6 (Budget in Brief) in this year's budget, alleging a deliberate attempt to conceal facts and sustain false propaganda against the YSRCP. He expressed confidence that the truth would eventually emerge through the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report.

tenure (2014-2019), the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of debt was 19.54%, whereas under the YSRCP (2019-2024), it was lower at 15.61%. He also highlighted that despite the financial strain caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, debt growth remained controlled under the YSRCP government.

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## Rare cancer treated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Doctors at the American Oncology Institute (AOI) in Mangalagiri, Vijayawada, have successfully treated a patient with Lynch syndrome who developed three different types of cancer over the years.

Lynch syndrome is a genetic condition that increases the risk of certain cancers, including those of the colon, uterus, ovaries, and stomach.

## 'VG Technotsav 2025' concludes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The two-day national-level technical and cultural fest, 'VG Technotsav 2025', organised by the Vikas Group of Institutions in Nunna, Vijayawada Rural Mandal, NTR district, concluded on a grand note on Saturday. The event saw the participation of 623 Engineering and Polytechnic students from 27 colleges across Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Over 200 teams competed in various technical events, while 60 teams took part in cultural competitions, displaying their talent and creativity. The fest also featured group discussions, technical presentations, and sports events aimed at enhancing students' analytical and critical thinking skills.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, D.B. Rammohan, for-



mer principal of Vikas Group of Institutions and chief guest, highlighted the importance of such events in sharpening students' technical and analytical abilities. He urged students to utilise these platforms to prepare for campus placements and job interviews.

The programme was coor-

Secretary, Naredla Satyanarayana Reddy, stressed the role of tech fests in developing problem-solving skills, while College Principal, Dr P.S. Srinivasa, encouraged students to actively participate in similar events for better exposure.

The programme was coor-

minated by Dr Narendra Reddy along with co-conveners Dr Kishore Reddy, T. Kishore Reddy, R. Hari Babu, G. Yamini Satish, and N. Gopalakrishna. The fest concluded with a prize distribution ceremony, where winners were felicitated by esteemed guests.

## Five-member child trafficking gang busted; 3 kids rescued

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR district police arrested a five-member gang involved in infant trafficking in the Prakashnagar area under Nunna Rural Police Station limits on Saturday. Three children were rescued during the operation, and Rs. 4 lakh, allegedly obtained from the sale of a child, was seized from the accused.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Bhagalam Sarojini, alias Balagam Sarojini, of Sitara Centre; Shaik Fareena and Shaik Sydabi of Ajith Singh Nagar; and Kovvarapu Karuna Sri and Pedala Sirisha of Prakash Nagar.

According to NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu, the operation was carried out by the Task Force under the leadership of Additional Deputy



Commissioner of Police (ADCP) A Srinivasa Rao, with assistance from Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) K Lathakumari, North Zone ACP Sravanthi Rai, and officers from the Task Force and

Nunna Police Station. ADCP Srinivasa Rao revealed that Sarojini, a resident of Sitara Centre, Vijayawada, was initially introduced to illegal activities after being approached by a woman

named Vijayalakshmi near a hospital. Vijayalakshmi suggested that she could earn money by donating eggs to infertile women. After successfully receiving payment for her egg donation, Sarojini

began encouraging others to participate in similar activities, collecting commissions for her involvement.

Later, a woman from Hyderabad reportedly introduced Sarojini to child trafficking, suggesting that she could earn more by selling infants to childless couples. Sarojini then established links with Preeti Kiran from Delhi and Anil from Ahmedabad, who supplied infants for illegal sale in Vijayawada. She allegedly procured children for Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2 lakh and sold them for Rs. 4 lakh to Rs. 5 lakh.

Further investigations revealed that the trafficked children were brought to Vijayawada and kept under the care of Karuna Sri and Pedala Sirisha. Sarojini coordinated their sale with the help of Shaik Fareena and Shaik Sydabi, targeting childless couples seeking medical treatment

and those unwilling to adopt legally.

Police stated that Sarojini had a prior criminal record and was arrested earlier in Mumbai for similar offences, serving a prison sentence before being released in August last year. Despite her imprisonment, she continued her illegal activities, allegedly trafficking seven children in the past six months. She reportedly sold girls for Rs. 2 lakh to Rs. 3 lakh and boys for Rs. 4 lakh to Rs. 5 lakh, successfully selling four infants in Eluru and Guntur.

She was finally apprehended while attempting to sell three more children. A case has been registered under Cr.No 78/2025 U/s 143 BNS, 81, and 87 of the Juvenile Justice Act.

Police Commissioner Rajasekhara Babu commended the officers for cracking the case and ensuring the safety of the rescued children.

# Tackle drinking water crisis amid heatwave concerns: DC

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector P. Prasanthi has directed officials to take immediate measures to tackle the drinking water crisis, as heatwave conditions are expected in the district within the next 10 to 15 days.

During a video conference with divisional, mandal, and village-level officials on Saturday, the Collector reviewed the steps being taken to mitigate water scarcity in affected areas. She instructed officials to repair 180 hand-bore pumps across the district to improve water availability.

Emphasising the importance of sanitation and safe drinking water, she urged officials to ensure proper sanitation management and uninterrupted supply of clean drinking water to prevent waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and other infections.



tions. Joint Collector S. Chinna Ramudu, Municipal Commissioner Ketan Garg, RDOs, and other officials participated in the meeting.

Earlier, Collector Prasanthi distributed social security pensions at Burugupudi village in Korukonda mandal, personally handing over pensions to some

beneficiaries at their homes. She stated that the district has 2,35,344 pensioners, for whom Rs 102.04 crore was disbursed on Saturday.

# Minister assures potable water supply to villagers

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy has assured that drinking water will be provided to Garlapet village in Marrupudi mandal, reaffirming the Government's commitment to welfare schemes and development despite financial constraints.

The Minister inaugurated the newly constructed CC road at Garlapet village on Saturday. Addressing the gathering, he said that the villagers had sought cement roads during the 'Palle Panduga' programme, and the request was approved. The road has now been completed and dedicated to the people. Additionally, the village's demand for electricity supply to the colony has been met.

The Minister acknowledged



the villagers' request for drinking water and assured that steps would be taken to resolve the water crisis permanently within three years. He also promised the construction of a community hall soon.

He further assured that house-sites and houses would be allocated to eligible beneficiaries.

A Gokulam shed would be set up for cattle rearers in the village. From the next academic year, BPT rice will be supplied to welfare hostels to

ensure students receive quality rice. He also promised an electric auto-rickshaw for students' transportation.

Directing DRDA officials to ensure all women are enrolled in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), the Minister urged them to promote solar energy usage among villagers. He also assured that the PB Veligonda project would be completed within two years to provide water from the project.

"The Government is committed to fulfilling people's aspirations, and the recently introduced State Budget reflects this commitment," he stated. ZP CEO Chiranjeevi, Social Welfare Officer Lakshmi Naik, SC Corporation ED Ajun Naik, and other officials were present.

# Officials directed to remove hyacinth from canals

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has instructed irrigation officials to take immediate steps to remove hyacinth creepers from irrigation canals and blacklist contractors who fail to complete assigned works.

Accompanied by revenue and irrigation officials, the Collector inspected irrigation canals at Satyanarayanapuram in Eluru rural mandal, Singavaram in Denduluru mandal, and Gundugolanu in Bhimadolu mandal on Saturday.

She directed officials to clear hyacinth creepers and desilt canals to ensure smooth water flow. Warning of strict action against negligence, she stated that if complaints of drinking water scarcity arise, officials concerned will be held accountable.

The Collector emphasised that hyacinth and weeds



obstructing water flow must be removed promptly, and irrigation officials should monitor the completion of works within the stipulated time. She cautioned that if contractors or officials show negligence, contractors will be blacklisted, and officials will face action.

Officials were also instructed to prevent irrigation water misuse, ensure adequate drinking water supply in villages, and maintain irrigation water

flow to agricultural lands in suburban areas. She ordered the immediate completion of the tender process for sanctioned irrigation works to facilitate timely execution.

Irrigation SE P Nagarajna Rao, RDO Achyut Ambarish, Municipal Commissioner Bhanu Pratap, and Water Bodies Association Chairman V Ramachandra Prasad were among those who accompanied the Collector.



# 3,860 litres of liquor destroyed using JCB

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

The police destroyed a large quantity of Non-Duty Paid Liquor (NDPL), Duty Paid Liquor (DPL), and illicit liquor in Mummidiwaram on Saturday. Circle Inspector (CI) Mohan Kumar said the police had seized 3,860 litres of NDPL and DPL while they were being transported illegally.

Additionally, 775 litres of illicit liquor were seized in 322 cases.

Thousands of liquor bottles and seized illicit liquor were dumped on the road and crushed using a JCB in the presence of police and excise officials. The CI said the liquor had been confiscated over the past three years in Mummidiwaram, Katrenikona, and I. Polavaram areas.

# State budget lacks substance: Ex-MP Margani

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Former YSRCP MP Margani Bharat has criticised the State budget, alleging that it focuses more on rhetoric than substance and fails to meet key welfare commitments.

Bharat pointed out that under the 'Annadata Sukhibhava' scheme, farmers were promised Rs 20,000 each, requiring Rs 11,000 crore for 50 lakh farmers, but the government has not clarified the allocation details. He also highlighted a Rs 2,600 crore shortfall in the 'Talliki Vandanam' scheme, meant to support 87 lakh students.

Raising concerns over unmet promises, he questioned the absence of unemployment allowances for 20 lakh jobless youth and funds for the Aabadidda Nidhi scheme, which was intended to benefit 1.2 crore women. He also criticised the lack of Rs



10,000 honorariums for 2.5 lakh volunteers and pensions for BCs above 50 years.

Accusing the government of financial mismanagement, Bharat noted that while the budget stands at Rs 3,24,000 crore, the state's revenue is only Rs 2,17,000 crore, implying an additional Rs 1 lakh crore in loans to mislead the public. He also cast doubts over the Rs 40,000 crore capital expenditure, questioning its adequacy for development and welfare.

On investments, he challenged the government's Davos

claims, citing Maharashtra's 61 MoUs and Telangana's 20 MoUs, which secured Rs 1,61,000 crore, while Andhra Pradesh's investment inflows remain unclear.

Regarding infrastructure projects, Bharat accused MP D. Purandeswari of taking undue credit for flyover projects like Diwan Cheruvu, which he claimed to have proposed earlier. He urged her to focus on mega projects such as a Godavari rail-cum-road bridge and criticised the repackaging of railway projects launched by PM Modi.

Bharat further cited his efforts in securing Rs 100 crore for ESI Hospital upgrades and Rs 88 crore for the NRCB project, demanding their completion.

He also pressed for funds for the approved Rajamahendravaram Outer Ring Road from Diwan Cheruvu to Pottilanka.

# Collector inspects ballot boxes strong room

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi here on Saturday inspected the ballot boxes in the strong room on the premises of Sir CR Reddy Engineering College.

The MLC election for the graduates' constituency was held on February 27 and the ballot boxes were preserved in the strong room located on the CR Reddy College campus. The counting of votes will be held on March 3.

The Collector signed on the register inspected the strong room and reviewed the security arrangements. She examined the CCTVs and other arrangements for counting of votes.

# Araku Coffee earns organic certification

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra Pradesh's Girijan Cooperative Corporation Ltd (GCC) has achieved a significant milestone with its organic certification for Araku coffee, enabling it to enter several European markets and secure a major domestic buyer in Tata Consumer Products, who will handle the marketing and sale of the coffee.

GCC Vice Chairman and Managing Director, Kalpana Kumari, said the response to this initiative has been overwhelmingly positive. Building on this success, the corporation plans to extend its organic certification efforts to include pepper, in partnership with Tata Consumer Products.

"With an organic certification in place, GCC has started marketing organic coffee separately. The response has been encouraging, with orders already received from Tata Group domestically and buy-

ers from Germany and Italy internationally," Kumari said.

GCC and Tata Consumer Products have inked an agreement to market and sell certified Araku Coffee, an organic product grown by tribals in the Paderu Agency area.

"We have an agreement with Tata, they will be purchasing certified organic coffee. It is organic but the first time we have got certified organic coffee from the Araku area," Kumari said.

She noted that Araku coffee has always been an organic product, the certification it has achieved marks a major milestone in its journey.

In a major step towards sustainable agriculture, GCC has successfully launched a pilot project for organic certification of coffee in the Paderu Agency area.

Launched in 2019, this initiative has brought 2,600 tribal farmers across 2,275 hectares in Chintapalli and GK Veedhi

mandals under organic cultivation, the official said.

According to the GCC managing director, organic certification is a rigorous process, which requires three years to complete, demanding strict adherence to organic farming practices.

To ensure compliance, an Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) approved certification body has been conducting periodic inspections and audits of farmers' records, said Kumari.

Recognizing the efforts of these farmers, the GCC has announced a premium procurement price for organic coffee this year.

Arabica Parchment is being procured at Rs 450 per kg, compared to Rs 400 for the regular variety while Arabica Cherry fetched Rs 330 per kg, up from Rs 250 for the regular variety.

# Lokesh prays at Mantralayam temple

The HRD & IT Minister vows to prevent migrations from Rayalaseema

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh visited the Sri Raghavendra Swamy temple in Mantralayam, Kurnool district, and participated in the Sri Raghavendra Swamy Guruvai Bhavotsava celebrations. He took part in the 404th Paduka Patabhishekam under the guidance of seer



Subudendra Teerthulu. Speaking at the event,

Lokesh reaffirmed the government's commitment to pre-

venting migration from Rayalaseema. He said the coalition government was working tirelessly to ensure people lived happily and did not have to migrate. He also prayed for good rainfall and prosperity for the region.

The seer honoured Lokesh with a shawl and a memento. The minister later participated in the Rathotsava, performed special prayers, and received theertha prasadam. He also inaugurated a newly constructed shopping complex on the temple premises.

# Ensure 100 days of work under NREGA, WG Collector tells officials

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadalawada Nagarani has directed officials to ensure that workers receive 100 days of employment under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

On Saturday, the Collector personally inspected the summer storage tank dredging work undertaken by NREGA workers in Nawabupalem village of Tadepalligudem mandal. During her visit, she interacted with the workers, inquiring about their work availability, the number of days they had been employed, and whether their wages were being credited to their bank accounts. She also spoke to elderly workers, who informed her that they had not received their social security pensions as they were engaged in work.



The Collector immediately instructed the Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) to disburse their pension amounts on the spot.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Nagarani said she visited Nawabupalem to assess the functioning of 'Shramshakti Sangams'. She stated that around 10,000 people in the district have been provided employment under NREGA, and efforts are being made to identify and generate

more job opportunities. She further noted that 253 workers had been engaged in desilting the Nawabupalem summer storage tank for the past 17 days under the scheme. She directed officials to work towards ensuring 100 days of employment for all eligible workers.

DWMA Project Director K. Ch. Appa Rao and RDO Kateeb Kousar Bhano accompanied the Collector during the visit.

# Minister highlights pension disbursement

PNS ■ BANAGANAPALLE

Minister BC Janardhan Reddy announced that the government has successfully disbursed 99% of pensions on the first day of each month over the past nine months. He made this statement at the NTR Bharosa pension distribution event in Nandivargam village, Banaganapalle mandal, Nandyal district, on Saturday.

The Minister highlighted that nearly Rs 5.35 crore was distributed in Banaganapalle mandal alone, underscoring the government's commitment to welfare. He stated that under the coalition government, significant infrastructure projects, including CC roads and drainage systems, are being implemented, creating a festive atmosphere in villages. Crediting Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for steering the state back on track with central government support, Reddy criticised the previous administration for neglecting the village panchayati raj system over the past five years.

# AU's new V-C assures corruption-free era

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Professor G P Rajasekhara officially assumed the role of Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University on Saturday, immediately signalling a commitment to ethical governance with a public vigilance pledge. In a move aimed at eradicating corruption and ensuring transparency, Prof. Rajasekhara's first act set the tone for his tenure.

Addressing the university faculty, Prof. Rajasekhara outlined his vision for elevating Andhra University to a leading educational institution. He emphasised the institution's existing strengths, asserting its superiority over many central universities, and stressed the importance of unity in achieving further progress.

"Education is paramount, not administrative positions," he declared, acknowledging the challenges ahead and the need for strategic reforms. He called for a renewed focus on core subjects while adapting to technological advancements, proposing a future-focused curriculum that equips students with essential skills. His plans include securing increased resources and funding through collaborations with central and international educational institutions.

# No need for delimitation to stay in power: Kishan

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

The BJP will win in South India too in the next elections, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said. There is no need for the BJP to use delimitation to remain in power, he added.

He made it clear that South Indian states would not suffer injustice due to delimitation. The BJP or Prime Minister Modi or Union Home Minister Amit Shah have not said that LS seats will decrease in South India if delimitation is done, Kishan added.

"Why is the CM speaking like that as the delimitation process has not started. First of all, the government has to conduct a census and only then delimitation will be done," he said.

He also made it clear that the BJP will certainly abolish the four per cent reservations for Muslims in Andhra Pradesh if it comes to power on its own. Addressing the media at the State BJP office on Saturday, Kishan said, "The Chief Minister is speaking as he liked. The internal squabbles of the Congress have been making the

# 'Will scrap 4% Muslim quota in AP'



Telangana BJP president G Kishan Reddy addressing the media at State BJP office on Saturday

CM restless. I am condemning the CM's false statements. I am threatening anyone in politics. However, the CM is stooping low and hurling false allegations against me," he said. He said that he has never blocked any development project in Telangana. Revealing the letters addressed by him to Union Ministers and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Kishan said that the Centre will not give huge funds to any state. It is also not possible to give sanctions within three months.

He said that the RRR is a Central project and that he wrote letters to the CM for acquiring land. The TG Government allotted a mere Rs

100 crore revolving fund for RRR, he added.

He said that KCR had sent the Metro Second Phase proposal. However, Revanth sent letters to the Centre asking it to stop and told them that they would make changes.

Kishan said the Centre will not delay in any way Hyderabad Metro Phase-2.

I give priority to politics with moral values. It would be wrong to imagine things like blocking projects. I have been working based on principles since childhood. The Centre would adhere to the promises made to the people and implement them," Kishan said.

ACROSS THE STATES



**Bangla woman sent to jail for illegal stay**

A court in Maharashtra's Thane district has convicted a 36-year-old Bangladeshi woman for illegally staying in India and sentenced her to imprisonment for 14 months and 28 days. In the order of February 27, a copy of which was made available on Saturday, Additional Sessions Judge Vasudha L. Bhosale also directed that the woman, Taniya Yunus Shaikh, who has already spent the duration of the sentence in jail, be deported. During the trial, Additional Public Prosecutor R. P. Patil told the court that Shaikh was found to be living in Mira Road (East), on the outskirts of Mumbai, without a valid passport or visa. The court noted that the burden of proof, as per the Foreigners Act, lies upon the accused to establish their nationality. "The accused has no permanent or temporary address in India and failed to provide any valid proof of Indian nationality."

**'Vocal for local' campaign bearing fruit: Modi**

Says India now emerging as factory of world

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Saturday that his 'vocal for local' campaign is bearing fruit as Indian products are going global and making their presence felt across the world.

Speaking at the NXT conclave where the 'NewsX World' channel was launched, Modi also said that India was becoming the land of infinite innovations, finding affordable solutions and offering them to the world. "The world is keenly watching 21st-century India. People from around the globe want to visit and understand India," Modi said.

He said that the country was now emerging as a manufacturing hub and a "factory of the world".

"For decades, the world referred to India as their back office. Now, India is becoming the new factory of the world. We are no longer just a work-



force but instead becoming a world force," Modi said.

The prime minister said that India's rising defence products showcase the strength of its engineering and technology to the world.

"From electronics to the automobile sector, the world has witnessed India's scale and capability. India is not only providing products to the world but is also becoming a trusted and reliable partner in the global supply chain," Modi said.

The prime minister said India's leadership in various sectors was a result of years of hard work and systematic policy decisions.

"A few years ago, I presented the vision of 'Vocal for Local' and 'Local for Global' to the nation and today, we are seeing this vision turn into reality," he said. Modi said the country is manufacturing semiconductors and aircraft carriers and its superfoods like 'makhana' and millets, Ayush products and yoga are being

embraced across the world.

The prime minister said India should be presented to the world as it is, without any bias. "We do not need any make-up," he said, adding that real stories from the country should reach the world in its true form.

He said India was the land that gave the world the concept of zero and was now becoming the land of infinite innovations.

"India is not only innovating but also 'Indovating', meaning innovating the Indian way," Modi said. He added that India was creating solutions that were affordable, accessible, and adaptable, and offering them to the world without gatekeeping.

"When the world needed a secure and cost-effective digital payment system, India developed the UPI (Unified Payments Interface) system. Today, countries like France, UAE, and Singapore are integrating UPI into their financial ecosystems," he said.



**Aiming to bring normalcy in Manipur, asserts Amit Shah**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday directed security forces to ensure free movement of people on all routes in Manipur from March 8 and also called for strict action against those creating obstructions.

The direction was given here by Shah at a high-level meeting where the security situation of Manipur was discussed. The order bears significance as travel through the areas inhabited by Imphal valley-based Meiteis and neighbouring hills based Kukis was totally prohibited since ethnic violence broke out between the two communities in May 2023.

While Kukis travel mostly through Mizoram to go outside the state, the Meiteis don't go to the hills dominated by the Kukis.

This confidence building step came 10 days after Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla ordered those holding illegal and looted arms to surrender before the security posts.

Chairing the review meeting, Shah also said the Centre remains fully committed to restoring lasting peace in the state and is providing all necessary assistance in this regard.

The home minister directed that free movement of people should be ensured on all roads of Manipur from March 8, according to an official statement.



**Goa Carnival begins with float parade**

The popular Goa Carnival began here on Saturday in the presence of Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who said the four-day long event showcases the state's culture and helps to attract tourists. The Carnival began with the float parade along the banks of Mandovi river here in the presence of the CM, tourism minister Rohan Khaunte, Corporation of City of Panaji Mayor Rohit Monserratte and actor Varsha Usgaonkar. The parade was led by the float of 'King Momo'. Cleven Fernandes, who has been selected as King Momo by the tourism department this year, read out the decree of eat, drink and be merry. He also urged people to enjoy with responsibility. "Goa's culture is showcased through the Carnival's float parade. These festivals help in attracting tourists. The Goa government is working to boost tourism," Sawant said.

**'Stalin spreading 'imaginary fears' on delimitation'**

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai on Saturday said his party would not take part in the March 5 all-party meeting on the delimitation exercise and blamed Chief Minister M K Stalin for attempting to spread "imaginary fears" over the matter.

Writing to Stalin, Annamalai said his party firmly believed that he has misconstrued the delimitation exercise and has convened the all party meeting to "spread your imaginary fears and deliberately lie about it," even before any offi-



cial statement was made.

Pointing to Union Home Minister Amit Shah's statement that no state would be "undermined," and that the exercise shall be on a pro rata basis, the Tamil Nadu BJP chief told Stalin: "You must understand that the announcement for the delimitation exer-

cise will be made at an appropriate time by the delimitation commission and it is disheartening to notice that you have still not learnt lessons from the lies you spread when one nation one election was announced and later when those got debunked."

Annamalai said that the INDIA bloc's campaign line had been "Jitne Abadhi Utmi Haq," and (Rights proportional to the population) in 2023 and PM Narendra Modi had hit back saying it would hurt the southern states which effectively implemented population control measures.

**Shivakumar's visit to Sadhguru's event divides K'taka Congress**

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The controversy over Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's visit to Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev's Isha yoga centre in Tamil Nadu for Mahashivaratri celebrations has refused to die down with leaders in the state Congress unit sharply divided over the issue.

Cooperative Minister K N Rajanna questioned the justification behind Shivakumar sharing the stage with those who have been critical of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. "Sadhguru had himself said he does not know Rahul Gandhi. Isn't it? He

(Shivakumar) knows better than me what people speak about our leader Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha. Let him answer how justified it is to share stage with such people," Rajanna told media in Hassan.

However, former MP D K Suresh backed his brother, saying Shivakumar has always kept the party informed before attending any event.

"Whenever Shivakumar met Prime Minister Narendra Modi he informed the party high command. He had even informed the high command about attending Isha Foundation's Maha Shivaratri event," Suresh told reporters here.



**'Cinema may have role in violence in society'**

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Union Minister Suresh Gopi on Saturday conceded that cinema may have a role in the violence occurring in society, but it cannot be said that movies were the source of the same.

Gopi, the Union Minister of State for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Tourism, said that people watching a film should not merely see it, they need to understand it.

The minister, who is also an actor, said that he cannot say violence be not depicted in movies or it be reduced, but the people need to understand that what is being shown is "not for entertainment and they need to learn from it that such acts are not good".

"Don't just see the film, understand the film," he added. Gopi was responding to queries from reporters here on the role of cinema in the instances of violence in society. Earlier this week, senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala had said that Malayalam action movies like RDX and Marco are in a big way "encouraging people, especially youngsters, to become violent". Gopi also said that every child born into a family is an asset for the nation and everyone, including the political parties, government and the people, should work together to ensure they all have good physical and mental health and can realise their full potential.

"Each child is born into the family called nation. None of them should be lost," he said in an apparent reference to the death of a schoolboy due to injuries suffered in a clash between students near a private tuition centre in Kozhikode.



**Two Naxalites killed in Chhattisgarh encounter**

PNS ■ SUKMA

Two Naxalites, including a woman, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Saturday, a police official said.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said 67 hardcore Naxalites have been neutralised in the last 60 days in the state's Bastar range and called the achievement proof of the courage and commitment of the security personnel. The gunfight broke out around 9 am in the forest of Gundrajgudem village under the Kistaram police station area when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Naxalite operation, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavan said.

**'Question of reverting to ballot paper out of your scope'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The question of reverting to ballot papers does not fall under the ambit of the mandate of a joint committee of Parliament examining the two bills on simultaneous polls, the Union law ministry is learnt to have said.

Going back to the ballot paper system was a "suggestion" made by some of the members of the joint committee, and the law ministry was to respond to it in writing.

While the ministry's Legislative Department gave elaborate responses to a variety of questions posed to it by the committee, it did not give a direct reply on the suggestion on the ballot paper system.

The ministry is learnt to have said it was "out of scope" of the parliamentary panel to make a suggestion on the use of the ballot paper system, according to sources.

Whether to use Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) or ballot papers for casting votes is not the subject the panel is examining, they underlined.

**Law Ministry to Parl panel on ONOE**



The committee is mandated to examine the bills on simultaneous polls -- the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill -- and give its report on whether they are sound enough for the purpose or need changes, the sources said.

While the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill lays down a legal framework to

Parliament that it does not favour returning to the ballot paper system and the Supreme Court too has weighed in favour of using EVMs.

The top court recently rejected pleas for reviving paper ballots, holding that suspicions regarding tampering of voting machines were "unfounded".

The sources said that while the ministry answered some of the questions, some others were sent to the Election Commission for a calibrated response.

The ministry has also told the committee that holding simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies is not undemocratic and does not hurt the federal structure.

It is learnt to have asserted that elections were held simultaneously in the past before the cycle was broken due to various reasons, including the imposition of President's rule in some states.

Following the adoption of the Constitution, elections to the Lok Sabha and all state assemblies were conducted.

hold the Lok Sabha and assembly polls together, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill seeks to align the terms of legislative assemblies of Delhi, Puducherry and Jammu and Kashmir for the purpose of holding joint elections.

Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu and Kashmir are the three union territories with legislative assemblies.

The government has on multiple occasions told

**UTTARAKHAND AVALANCHE**

**Four die, search on for five labourers**

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Fifty workers have been pulled out of snow from the site of an avalanche-hit BRO camp in the Mana village in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district, but four of them died on Saturday as rescuers raced against time to save the remaining five.

The avalanche hit the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) camp between Mana and Badrinath between 5:30 am and 6 am on Friday, burying 55 workers inside eight containers and a shed, according to the



Army. Thirty-three of them were rescued by Friday night. Rain and snowfall hampered the rescue efforts on Friday and the operation was suspended as the night fell.

As the weather cleared up on Saturday morning, the Army and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel based in Mana resumed the rescue operation, District Disaster Management Officer N K Joshi said. Six helicopters, including three of the Indian Army Aviation, two of the IAF and one civil copter hired

by the Army, are engaged in the rescue operations, an Army spokesperson said.

"Fifty labourers have been rescued out of which, unfortunately, four injured have been confirmed as fatal casualties while the search for the remaining five is underway," the Army spokesperson said.

The injured were being prioritised for evacuation, he said.

Sources said that two of the rescued workers have been taken to AIIMS-Rishikesh for advanced treatment.

**No fuel for overage vehicles after March 31, says Delhi govt**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government announced on Saturday that from April 1, fuel pumps in the city will not provide petrol and diesel to vehicles older than 15 and 10 years, respectively.

Fuel pumps would be equipped with devices to identify overage vehicles and restrict fuel supply to them, Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said after a high-level meeting with officials to discuss anti-pollution measures.

The move aims to curb

vehicular emissions and combat air pollution in the city, which remains a persistent challenge for the residents.

Talking to reporters, the minister said the Delhi government would inform the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas about the decision and the ministry would, in turn, notify the fuel pump owners. The city has more than 425 petrol-diesel stations.

"We are setting up gadgets at our petrol pumps that will identify vehicles older than 15 years. They will not be provided fuel," Sirsa said.

A senior official of the Delhi government told PTI that diesel-run vehicles older than 10 years will also be denied fuel after March 31.

According to rough estimates, there are around 55 lakh overage vehicles, 66 per cent of which are two-wheelers and 54 per cent four-wheelers, the officer said.

The government also plans to phase out nearly 90 per cent of CNG-driven public transport buses in Delhi by December 2025, replacing them with electric buses to promote cleaner and more sustainable transport.



# Two Decades of Sizzling Success

Kylin reflects on a journey of gastronomic excellence and countless memories within its walls, writes ABHI SINGHAL

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

## DUMPLINGS

The Mixed Vegetable variety of Kylin's Signature Dumplings, dipped in Szechuan Chilli Oil, is just like an edible poem, a spicy ballet of flavours that lingers even after the final bite. Think of the delicate, silky wrappers that are individually expertly made to hold a variety of crisp, fresh veggies.

## FACT SHEET

**Outlets in Delhi/NCR:** Noida, Aerocity, Vasant Kunj  
**Cost for two:** 2500 + taxes (exclusive of drinks)  
**Operational time:** 12pm to 11:30 pm

Two decades. A score of years. However you phrase it, *Kylin* has marked a monumental milestone, an authentication to its reign as an Asian dining in India. From its humble beginnings as a single Delhi outlet, it's blossomed into a culinary empire, now boasting eight vibrant locations across six bustling cities. But beyond the numbers, beyond the expansion, lies a story woven with the threads of flavour, innovation, and cherished memories.

Stepping into a *Kylin* restaurant is an experience in itself. It's not just a meal, it's a journey. You're enveloped in an atmosphere that seamlessly blends the time-honoured traditions of Asian cuisine with a distinctly modern, sophisticated flair. Think sleek, contemporary design, inviting spaces, and a palpable buzz of excitement. Whether you're seeking a romantic dinner, a lively gathering with friends, or simply a moment of culinary indulgence, *Kylin* offers a sanctuary for every occasion.

And what a menu it is. From *Signature Bowls* from Thailand, Indonesia, Korea, and so much more, *Kylin* is a place of flavours,

meticulously crafted to tempt the palate. You can always go for the *Chilli Oil Dim Sums*, a fiery dance of textures and tastes, or the comforting warmth of a *Hot Stone Bowl*. Their *Veg Tempura Sushi*, a delicate balance of crispy and fresh and is an example to their commitment to innovation. This constant evolution, this refusal to rest on laurels, is what has kept *Kylin* at the forefront of the dining scene for two decades.

It's not just the food that shines. *Kylin* was the first Asian brand in India to truly embrace the art of the cocktail. Their bar, a vibrant hub of creativity, offers a curated menu of concoctions that perfectly complement the culinary offerings. Each sip is a masterpiece, designed to elevate your dining experience to new heights.

So, if you're a seasoned foodie or seeking a memorable meal, *Kylin* welcomes you. It's a place where there is both sweet and savoury are offered and where every visit is a celebration. Twenty years on, and *Kylin* continues to set the standard, proving that culinary excellence, like a fine wine that only improves with age. You can visit anytime, and experience the legacy for yourself.

## THE PERFECT ENDING

*Kylin's* desserts are a sweet symphony. There are *Fried Ice Cream Spring Rolls*,

## SPECIAL RECOMMENDATION

Directly from China's heart, *Kylin's Hot Stone Bowl* deserves your undivided attention. Choose your canvas: *silken tofu*, *tender chicken*, or *rich lamb*. Then, select your grain: *sticky rice*, *fun noodles*, or *healthy quinoa*. Finally, paint it with your preferred *sauce* - the sharp bite of black pepper, the aromatic punch of hot basil, or the fiery allure of chilli garlic. Each bowl is cooked with a medley of mushrooms, peppers, and water chestnuts. For *tofu lovers*, edamame adds a delightful twist.

# Spiced to Perfection



BY TEAM AGENDA

Aromatic, rich and bursting with flavour, *Hyderabadi Veg Biryani* is a classic dish that brings together fragrant basmati rice, perfectly spiced vegetables and delicate layers of saffron and herbs. This traditional recipe ensures each grain of rice is infused with the essence of whole spices and slow-cooked for the perfect dum biryani experience. Serve it with raita or mirchi ka salan for a truly authentic meal.

By Executive Chef Sanjay Kumar, The Tivoli Hotel, Chattarpur

- |             |   |                |  |
|-------------|---|----------------|--|
| <b>RICE</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 2 cups basmati rice (soaked)</li> <li>● 6 cups water, 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp lemon juice</li> <li>● 2 bay leaves, 3 green cardamoms, 4 cloves, 1-inch cinnamon stick, 1 star anise, 1 black cardamom</li> </ul> | <b>VEGGIES</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ½ cup each: carrots, beans, peas, potatoes, cauliflower</li> <li>● ½ cup paneer (optional)</li> </ul> |
|-------------|---|----------------|--|



## MASALA:

- 3 tbsp oil, 2 tsp ghee, 2 onions (sliced)
  - 2 tsp ginger-garlic paste, 2 green chillies (slit), 2 tomatoes (chopped)
  - ½ cup curd, ½ tsp turmeric, 1 tsp red chilli powder, 1 tsp coriander powder
  - 1 tsp biryani masala, ½ tsp garam masala, ½ cup mint and coriander leaves
  - ¼ tsp saffron in ¼ cup warm milk
- Layering:
- ½ cup fried onions, 2 tsp ghee, and saffron milk
  - ½ tsp rose water, ½ tsp kewra water

## METHOD

**Cook Rice:** Boil water with spices, salt, and lemon juice. Add rice, cook till 70% done, then drain.  
**Prepare Masala:** Sauté onions in oil and ghee. Set half aside. Add ginger-garlic paste, chillies, tomatoes, spices, curd, and vegetables. Cook until soft. Stir in mint and coriander.  
**Layer:** In a pan, layer rice, masala, fried onions, saffron milk, rose and kewra water, and ghee. Repeat.

## CHEF'S TIPS

- Maintain a rice-to-water ratio of 1:3 for perfect texture.
- Adding a few drops of ghee before serving enhances the aroma.
- Use a heavy-bottomed pan to prevent the biryani from burning at the base.
- For an extra smoky flavour, place a hot charcoal piece in a bowl, pour a

This *Hyderabadi Veg Biryani* is a royal treat that captures the essence of authentic Mughlai cuisine. Enjoy it as a centrepiece for festive occasions or a comforting week-



# Exquisite Culinary & Artistic Haven

Arts Room offers an unparalleled gastronomic experience with its elegant Parisian-inspired ambiance, writes GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Situated in Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, *Arts Room* by *Ambrosia Hospitality* is a distinguished new gem in the city's thriving culinary landscape. This global cuisine restaurant, envisioned by Navneet and Randeep Bajaj, is a seamless blend of culinary artistry, sophisticated ambiance, and immersive sensory experiences. *Arts Room* offers a dining experience that is nothing short of extraordinary.

Stepping into the *Arts Room* is akin to entering a Parisian courtyard infused with the charm of a classical French living room. The thoughtfully curated decor, adorned with Indian artwork from Pristine Contemporary, sets the stage for an atmosphere that is

both luxurious and inviting.

The menu at *Arts Room* is a testament to culinary excellence, celebrating global flavours with an emphasis on locally sourced, high-quality ingredients. Diners are treated to a diverse selection of dishes, each reflecting a perfect balance of tradition and innovation. Signature offerings such as the *Chicken Teeka Masala*, prepared with *Layla's roast chicken* and *velvety tomato cream sauce*, and the indulgent *Lobster and Caviar*, featuring *Andaman lobster* paired with *cognac* and *Osetra caviar*, exemplify the restaurant's commitment to reimagining global classics with a contemporary Indian twist. *The Crunchy Pork Belly* with *Shillong roast dip* and *Tajin seasoning*, and the refreshing *Yellowtail Ceviche* with coconut and guava accents, further showcase the chef's creative ingenuity.

*Arts Room* also caters to a variety of dietary preferences with a well-curated selection of vegan-friendly

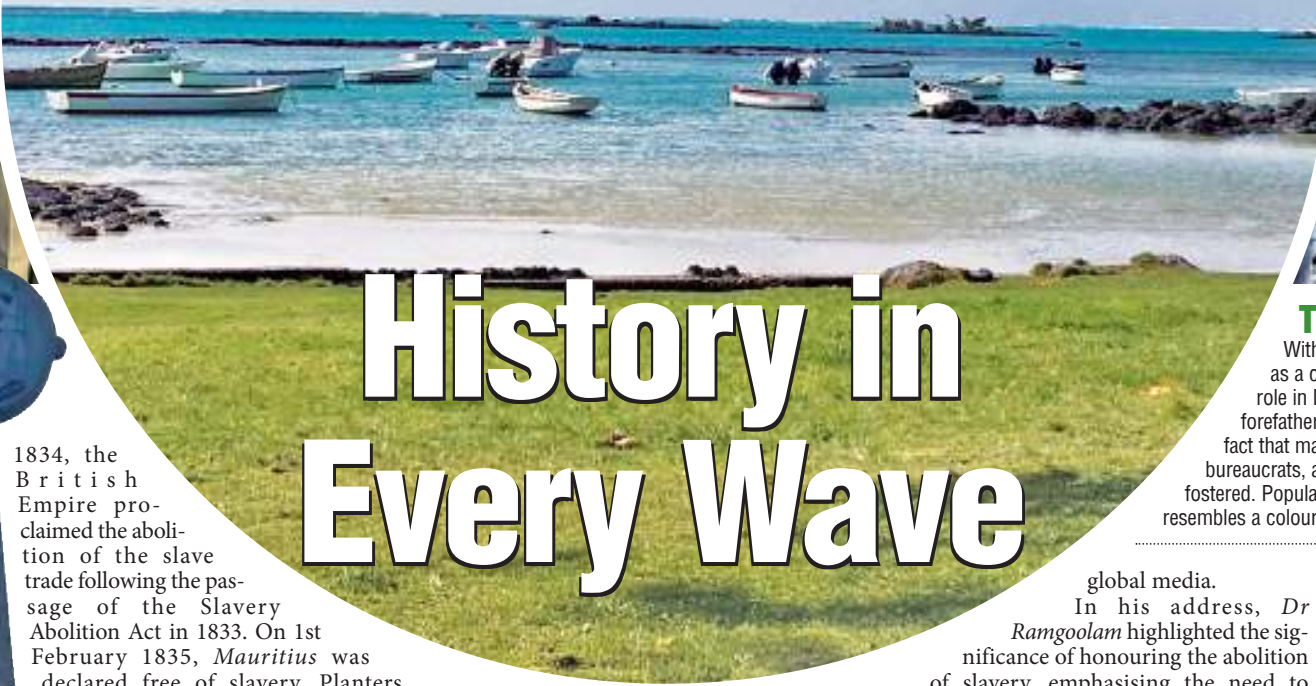
and gluten-free options. The breakfast menu adds another dimension to the dining experience, allowing guests to enjoy an elegant morning meal in a setting that is as serene as it is sophisticated.

Beyond its exceptional cuisine, *Arts Room's* cocktail program is a work of art in itself. Under the expert guidance of bar veteran *Kamal Kohli*, the beverage menu draws inspiration from iconic artists and their masterpieces. *The Two Fridas*, inspired by *Frida Kahlo's* celebrated painting, features hemp seed-infused tequila blended with watermelon and chili saccharum, delivering a drink as vibrant as its muse. *The Goan Rains*, a kokum-based tequila concoction, pays homage to *F.N. Souza's* depiction of monsoon-soaked Goa, while *the La Guernica*, a whisky-based cocktail with dark chocolate and Mexican chili, honors *Picasso's* legendary anti-





Despite its beauty, Mauritius honours its painful history of slavery annually on Abolition Day



# History in Every Wave

As I dived into an ambitious itinerary on my fourth visit to Mauritius, checking into the breathtaking island's luxury hotels, savouring world-class gastronomy, and admiring its storied landscapes, beaches, lagoons and reefs, I also had a rare chance this time to reflect on the country's early beginnings, marked by suffering and social upheaval.

In fact, it is impossible to understand Mauritian history, dominated by the Arabs, Dutch, English and French, without delving into its past of slavery. Located on the east coast of Africa, 702 miles east of Madagascar, the island traces its provenance to its discovery by Arabs and Malays in 1507. The Portuguese arrived in 1510, bestowing upon it the moniker 'Cirné'. By 1598, the Dutch wrested control of the island, renaming it 'Maurice' after their head of state, the Prince of Orange and Count of Nassau.

Mauritius' magnetic draw among rapacious foreign invaders was hardly surprising, given its plentiful natural resources and breathtaking beauty. No wonder Mark Twain famously said that Mauritius was "created first and then Heaven copied after it!" However, slave trading marked its ugly presence on the island in the 1640s when the Dutch ushered in the first lot of slaves.

Between the 16th and 19th centuries, some 27 million Africans were forced onto ships and transported across the Atlantic to work on lush Mauritian sugarcane fields. By the 17th century, the country was teeming with slaves from Madagascar, Africa, India and Java, who worked in Dickensian conditions, abused and exploited.

However, after centuries of slavery and international resistance, in

1834, the British Empire proclaimed the abolition of the slave trade following the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. On 1st February 1835, Mauritius was declared free of slavery. Planters were compensated with two million pounds for their slave loss, and eventually, Mauritius gained independence in 1968.

To commemorate the abolition of slavery, celebrated as 'Abolition Day', the island nation organises a series of activities each year. This year, which marked the 190th anniversary of the practice, was

both a poignant and joyous occasion, as dignitaries acknowledged the island's fraught past and the sacrifices made by its people.

At the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Le Morne Brabant, a towering mountain serving as a powerful symbol of the struggle against slavery and the enduring impact of this dark period on the island's societies, I watched a moving wreath-laying ceremony conducted by Mauritian Prime Minister Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam, attended by international delegates, celebrities and

global media.

In his address, Dr Ramgoolam highlighted the significance of honouring the abolition of slavery, emphasising the need to remember history, promote social justice and strengthen national unity. "This commemoration is not just about remembering our history; it is a call to action to ensure that the values of freedom, dignity, solidarity and justice continue to guide our nation," he said. The island's legacy of slavery and its lasting impact, he added, remained one of the most painful chapters of history.

At Aapravasi Ghat, another UNESCO Heritage Site and an immigration depot in Port Louis, where thousands of Indian slaves landed in the nineteenth century, another poignant celebration took place. A symbol of Indo-Mauritian ties, the depot includes a rice store, a military hospital complex, a civil hospital and a museum. It also records Mahatma Gandhi's work on the abolition of slavery and his visit to Mauritius in 1901 on his way back to India from South Africa.

The ceremony at Aapravasi Ghat was marked by the presence of international dignitaries, top ministers, renowned human rights advocates, activists and international media. This offered me a deep dive into Mauritius' fraught past and what shapes it today.

Next, I attended a thought-provoking conference, Routes of Enslaved Peoples: Resistance, Liberty and Heritage Project, which acknowledged the com-

## THE HEARTFELT HONOUR

With several misty eyes among the assembled guests, the event also served as a catharsis for the descendants of slaves, whose ancestors played a pivotal role in Mauritius' nation-building. As I mingled with them, listening to their forefathers' tales of remarkable fortitude, I could not help but be moved by the fact that many of them today occupy positions of power as ministers and top bureaucrats, a development only an inclusive nation like Mauritius could have fostered. Populated by Indians, Creoles, Africans and Dutch, the country today resembles a colourful mosaic of nationalities, forming a progressive nation.



memoration of 190 years of slavery in Mauritius. Premised on the theme Resistance, Liberty, Heritage in the Western Indian Ocean, it was held at the University of Mauritius in Réduit, the island's first university. International delegates and authors listened in rapt attention to Mauritian President Dharambeer Gohul, who shared that the occasion "marks a pivotal moment in our ongoing journey to understand, reconcile and learn from shared histories of slavery and its enduring legacy".

At the Pamplemousses Slave Heritage Trail, another heritage site, descendants of indentured slaves gathered to pay tribute to their ancestors. Stephan Karghoo, Director at the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture in Mauritius, noted that Abolition Day celebrates the nation's ancestors in the most meaningful way.

— By Neeta Lal

# Couple Getaways for Adrenaline Junkies



For couples who want more than just a quiet dinner or a lazy beach day, adventure can be the perfect way to bond. Facing challenges together, feeling the thrill, and creating unforgettable memories make for a different kind of romance. Whether it's diving into the ocean, climbing mountains, or flying through the sky, adventure travel brings couples closer in the most exciting ways.

### Ride the Rapids Together

White-water rafting is a great way to test teamwork and have fun. Couples can brave the thrilling rapids of the Zambezi River in Africa or enjoy the stunning scenery of Costa Rica's Pacuare River. In India, Rishikesh offers an exciting rafting experience on the Ganges, where couples can paddle through the waves and admire the surrounding mountains.

### Dive into a New World

Scuba diving is a magical experience for couples who love the ocean. The Great Barrier Reef in Australia, Thailand's Similan Islands, and Mexico's cenotes offer incredible underwater adventures. In India, the Andaman Islands provide crystal-clear waters and colourful marine life, perfect for a diving trip together.

### TAKE A ROMANTIC ROAD TRIP

A road trip lets couples explore new places at their own pace. Iceland's Ring Road, New Zealand's South Island and the American Southwest have stunning scenic routes. In India, a road trip through Ladakh's mountains and high-altitude passes is a thrilling and romantic journey.

— By Jatinder Paul Singh, Co-founder and CEO, Viacation

### Fly High with Paragliding

Few experiences match the thrill of paragliding over breathtaking landscapes. Couples can fly over the Swiss Alps, the beaches of Oludeniz in Turkey, or the hills of Nepal. In India, Bir Billing in Himachal Pradesh is a world-famous spot for paragliding, where couples can glide through the air and take in stunning views.

### Hike to Breathtaking Views

Hiking is a wonderful way for couples to bond while enjoying nature. Famous trails like the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, Mount Kilimanjaro, and Patagonia's Torres del Paine offer unforgettable experiences. In India, the Valley of Flowers trek in Uttarakhand is a beautiful and romantic hike filled with colourful blooms and fresh mountain air.



# Dawn in the Mountains

In the sacred hours of a Mussoorie morning, tears of joy kissed my cheeks as consciousness gently returned after eight hours of profound sleep. The embrace of the "Queen of Hills" welcomed me back, not just to physical awareness, but to a deeper awakening that only these majestic mountains could inspire. Two thousand meters closer to heaven, I felt the weight of mundane existence lifting from my shoulders.

My training hostel window framed a masterpiece that no artist could replicate. The ethereal blue light, nature's most delicate performer, danced across the vast canvas of sky. Each molecule of pristine mountain air seemed to carry fragments of ancient wisdom, painting the firmament in hues that deepened at the zenith and softened towards the horizon, like emotions that grow more profound as they reach the heart.

The sun, that eternal poet, orchestrated a magnificent performance through centuries-old branches. Delicate shadows strolled across my bedspread, each movement telling stories of time immemorial. My typically bustling mind discovered a stillness that mirrored the crystal-clear mountain air. Thoughts, usually racing like mountain streams, settled into a peaceful pool of clarity. Stepping out into the embrace of the morning, each

breath became a prayer of gratitude. The mountain path unfurled before me like a ribbon of possibilities, winding three kilometers through veils of mountain mist.

In this morning theatre, a moment of divine Connection unfolded as several cows blessed me with their presence. Their eyes held the wisdom of ages, reflecting a gentleness that spoke of unconditional giving. When my empty pockets whispered regret, modern technology offered salvation through a simple QR code. Time surrendered its linear march in these precious moments of connection, allowing eternity to peek through the veil of ordinary existence.

The morning's gifts continued to unfold as two langurs graced the scene, their regal presence demanding to be captured through my phone's lens. As I shared offerings with them, more emerged from the misty shadows like spirits of the forest.

This morning in Mussoorie was more than a series of moments; it was a reunion with a forgotten part of myself. In the embrace of the Himalayas, where heaven touches earth, I rediscovered the profound Truth that We are Connected - humans, animals, mountains, and sky - in an eternal dance of being.

— By Dr Tanu Jain



### Go on a Wild Safari

Seeing wild animals in their natural habitat is an exciting and romantic experience. Couples can go on safari in Tanzania's Serengeti or camp under the stars in Botswana. In India, Ranthambore National Park is great for spotting tigers, while Jim Corbett National Park offers wildlife experiences.

### Experience the Magic of Snow

Snowmobiling in Lapland, dog sledding in Alaska, or watching the Northern Lights in Finland are great options. In India, Gulmarg in Jammu & Kashmir offers skiing and snowboarding.



IN BRIEF



**NLC India secures wind power project from SJVN**

State-owned NLC India Ltd (NLCIL) on Saturday said it has bagged a contract from SJVN Ltd to develop and operate a 200 MW wind power project. The project was secured through an e-reverse auction at a tariff of Rs 3.74 per kWh. "The project is set to generate 526 MU of clean green power each year offsetting an equivalent amount of greenhouse gas emissions," a company statement said. The company has a target to achieve 10 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030. "Winning this 200 MW wind project further strengthens our commitment to sustainable and clean energy solutions... Our investments in renewable energy will play a crucial role in strengthening India's green economy and meeting global climate commitments," Prasanna Kumar Motupalli, Chairman & Managing Director, NLC India Ltd said.



**NTPC Group achieves fastest 400 BU power generation**

State-run power giant NTPC on Saturday said the group has achieved its fastest-ever generation of 400 Billion Units (BU) on March 1, 2025, in the FY24-25. This milestone was achieved in just 335 days, 12 days earlier as compared to the last financial year, a company statement said. In FY23-24, the company had crossed 400 BU generation on 13th March 2024. NTPC Ltd, India's largest integrated power utility, contributes one-fourth of the country's power requirements. It has an installed capacity of over 77 GW, with an additional capacity of 29.5 GW under construction, including 9.6 GW of renewable energy capacity. The company is committed to achieving 60 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2032. Along with power generation, NTPC has ventured into various new business areas, including e-mobility, battery storage, pumped hydro storage, waste-to-energy, nuclear power, and green hydrogen solutions.



**98.18 pc of Rs 2000 notes returned, says RBI**

The Reserve Bank on Saturday said 98.18 per cent of the Rs 2000 banknotes have been returned to the banking system, and only Rs 6,471 crore worth such notes are still with the public. On May 19, 2023, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced the withdrawal of Rs 2000 denomination banknotes from circulation. The total value of Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation, which was Rs 3.56 lakh crore at the close of business on May 19, 2023, declined to Rs 6,471 crore at the close of business on February 28, 2025, RBI said. "Thus, 98.18 per cent of the Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation as on May 19, 2023, has since been returned," it said in a statement. The facility for deposit and/or exchange of the Rs 2000 banknotes was available at all bank branches till October 7, 2023. However, this facility is still available at the 19 issue offices of the Reserve Bank.

**India, EU discuss efforts to accelerate FTA talks**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With India and the EU setting the year-end deadline to conclude a free trade agreement, teams from both sides held discussions on Saturday to accelerate efforts towards a balanced and mutually beneficial pact.

The meeting was held between Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and EU Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic in Mumbai along with officials from both sides.

"Our discussions focused on accelerating efforts towards a balanced and mutually beneficial free trade agreement. Looking forward to deepening economic ties and fostering a prosperous India-EU partnership," Goyal said in a post on X.

On February 28, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen agreed to seal a much-awaited free trade deal by this year amid rising concerns over US President Donald Trump's policy on tariffs.

The two sides are scheduled to hold the tenth round of negotiations for the FTA from March 10-14 in Brussels.

Further strengthening of economic ties between the two is crucial in light of the threat from



US President Donald Trump to impose higher tariffs. In the current uncertain global economic situation, India is the fastest-growing major economy. It is projected to grow at 6.4 per cent in 2024-25.

In June 2022, India and the 27-nation EU bloc resumed the negotiations after a gap of over eight years. It stalled in 2013 due to differences over the level of opening up of the markets.

Besides demanding significant duty cuts in automobiles, the EU wants tax reduction in wines, spirits and a strong intellectual property regime.

Indian goods' exports to the EU, such as ready-made garments, pharmaceuticals, steel, petroleum products, and electrical machinery, will become more competitive if the pact is concluded successfully.

India is also seeking data security status for the IT sector. The lack of this status has prevented the flow of sensitive information to India, a big deal for its IT industry.

India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU was USD 137.41 billion in 2023-24 (exports USD 75.92 billion, imports USD 61.48 billion), making it the largest

trading partner of India for goods. The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, while the EU's exports to India make up 9 per cent of its total exports.

In addition, the bilateral trade in services, in 2023, between India and the EU was estimated at USD 51.45 billion.

The agreement is aimed at further boosting bilateral trade and investments between the two. The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs).



**India to remain fastest growing major economy: IMF**

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Multilateral financing agency International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that India will retain its position as the fastest-growing major economy by clocking a GDP growth of 6.5 per cent in 2025-26, on the back of robust private investment and macroeconomic stability.

India's strong economic performance, the IMF said, provides an opportunity for the country to advance critical and challenging structural reforms to realise the ambition of becoming an advanced economy by 2047. "Real GDP is expected to grow at 6.5 per cent in 2024-25 and 2025-26, supported by robust growth in private consumption on the back of sustained macroeconomic and financial stability. According to the second

advance estimate released by the Indian government, the country's economy is expected to clock a growth rate of 6.5 per cent during 2024-25. "Headline inflation is expected to converge to target as food price shocks wane," the IMF said after Article IV consultations with India.

The IMF statement also underlined the need for deeper implementation of structural reforms to boost private investment and employment, and push growth.

"...comprehensive structural reforms are crucial to create high-quality jobs, invigorate investment, and unleash higher potential growth. Efforts should focus on implementing labour market reforms, strengthening human capital, and supporting greater participation of women in the labour force," it added.

**Make Govt's annual accounts more user-friendly**

**FM Sitharaman urges civil accounts officers**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday asked civil accounts services officials to work towards making the government's annual accounts more approachable and user-friendly.

Addressing the 49th Civil Accounts Day event here, Sitharaman lauded the Indian Civil Accounts Service (ICAS) officers, led by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) for the "silent technological revolution" in which states are finding a lot more ease of operation and ease of getting their government business done by adopting the public financial



management system (PFMS). "I would also like you to examine, in consultation with the CAG, whether it would be possible to make the annual accounts more approachable and user-friendly and allow cit-

izens to analyse easily and generate customisable and simpler reports," Sitharaman said.

She said that since a lot of digital integration has already taken place with the states, more research can be carried out based on the data set available with the CGA. "If you're able to make the report a lot more user-friendly, that itself can generate a lot of interest in the work that you do," the Minister said.

Sitharaman also asked both the Expenditure Department and the CGA to ensure that the SNA Sparsh is smoothly rolled out for all schemes in the upcoming financial year.

**GST collections rise 9 pc to Rs 1.84 lakh crore**

**Indicate economic revival, say experts**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gross GST collections rose by 9.1 per cent to about Rs 1.84 lakh crore in February, boosted by domestic consumption and indicating potential economic revival.

As per the official data released on Saturday, on a gross basis, mop up from Central GST stood at Rs 35,204 crore, State GST at Rs 43,704 crore, Integrated GST at Rs 90,870 crore and compensation cess of Rs 13,868 crore.

GST revenues from domestic transactions jumped 10.2 per cent to Rs 1.42 lakh crore while that from imports grew 5.4 per cent to Rs 41,702 crore during February.



Total refunds issued during February were Rs 20,889 crore, a 17.3 per cent increase over the year-ago period. Net GST collections during February 2025 grew 8.1 per cent to about Rs 1.63 lakh crore. Gross and net GST revenues in February 2024 were Rs 1.68 lakh crore and Rs 1.50 lakh crore, respectively.

The gross GST collections in February 2025, at Rs 1.84 lakh

crore are, however, lower than Rs 1.96 lakh crore collected in January 2025.

EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said the robust GST collection figures indicate that the Indian economy is withstanding global economic challenges.

"The consistent rise in domestic GST revenue compared to import-related collections points to the effective implementation of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat policies.

"Furthermore, the government's increased disbursement of domestic and export refunds, including those related to inverted duty structures, demonstrates its commitment to easing working capital pressures on businesses," Agarwal said.

**Google building digital agri stack for India: official**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Global tech giant Google is building a digital agri-stack using satellite imagery and has started with a base layer that will help identify farm boundaries, a senior official said on Saturday.

Data and analysis of this base layer of the stack can be used in a slew of applications like bettering the subsidy payments, farm insurance or farm loans, Manish Gupta, a senior director at Google DeepMind said.

"...we have built the first such model that using satellite imagery analysis can now start to identify field boundaries based on usage pattern start to identify what crops are being



grown and so on," Gupta said, speaking at the Mumbai Tech Week here.

The model has taken inspiration from UIDAI's Aadhar, ascribing a unique ID to each farm and is intended to act as a base layer of the "digital agri

stack", he said. Gupta said it is upon the startups and other agri-tech players to build solutions which will provide loan crop insurance and also subsidies using the data churned out by the platform.

**Honda Cars India sales drop 21 pc**



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Cars India Ltd (HCIL) on Saturday reported a 21 per cent decline in total sales at 10,323 units in February as compared to 13,078 units in the same month last year.

Domestic sales at 5,616 units and exports were at 4,707 units in the month of February 2025, HCIL said in a statement.

The company had registered 7,142 units in domestic sales and exported 5,936 units in February 2024, it added.

"The market conditions have been challenging for the auto industry where we saw reduced momentum in car registrations and difficulties in creating fresh demand during Feb as compared to last year," HCIL Vice President, Marketing & Sales Kunal Behl said.

The company's recent launches of all-new Amaze and special editions of Elevate Black and City Apex with good response from market have helped it to create new excitement in products and sustain sales in this tough period, he added.



**Pandey promises focus on transparency, teamwork**

**Takes charge as Sebi chief**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Seasoned bureaucrat Tuhin Kant Pandey assumed charge as Sebi Chairman on Saturday, promising focus on transparency and teamwork. Pandey, formerly the Finance Secretary, termed Sebi as a "robust market institution" which has been built over the years by successive leaders.

Declining to outline his exact agenda or style of working, the successor to Madhabi Puri Buch, said he will not comment on anyone.

Buch, who had faced a slew of allegations of impropriety during the final few months of her term, was not present when Pandey arrived at the Sebi headquarters in the Bandra Kurla Complex business district. She is reportedly unwell and down with a COVID infection.

"Sebi is a very robust market institution, it has been built over the years with successive leaders and will continue," the 59-year-old Pandey told reporters. The new chairman outlined his objectives, calling out the four Ts-- trust, transparency, teamwork, and technology-- as his key focus areas.

"I think these four elements make us (Sebi) distinctive, and we have created one, and we will continue to create one of the best market institutions in the world," he added.

He said Sebi is a great institution and the team led by him will continue to work towards its growth. It can be noted that in the last few months, there has been some unprecedented activity at Sebi, where a large section of its employees protested against the management.

Dressed in dark blue blazer and a striped shirt, Pandey arrived at the Sebi headquarters in the Bandra Kurla Complex business district on Saturday afternoon.

All the four whole time members of regulator -- Ashwani Bhatia, Amarjeet Singh, Ananth Narayan and Kamlesh Varshney -- welcomed Pandey at the Sebi headquarters. The Odisha cadre Indian Administrative Service official's term is for a period of three years.

**Viksit Bharat '2047 a realisable ambition: Panagariya**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**Stresses per capita income needs to grow at 7.3%**

The 16th Finance Commission Chairman Arvind Panagariya on Saturday said India's aim to become a developed nation by 2047 is a "realisable ambition" for which the country's per-capita income needs to grow at 7.3 per cent in dollar terms to USD 14,000 over the next 24 years.

India's per-capita income, in 2023-24 dollar terms, is about USD 2,570, which is very low compared to countries like South Korea, Taiwan, United States, and other European nations.

He further said that as per the estimates by the United Nations, population in India would grow 0.6 per cent by 2050. This would mean that to achieve that 7.3 per cent growth in per capita income, India's GDP will have to grow at 7.9 per cent during the next 24 years.

"Our growth rate (in real dollar terms) for the last 21 years was at 7.8 per cent... To get from 7.8 per cent (GDP growth) to 7.9 per cent is entirely feasible. Our prospect of Viksit Bharat is a realisable ambition," Panagariya said.



He further said that India needs to carry out necessary reforms, which will facilitate the emergence of the labour-

**"Today, our per capita income in dollars is about USD 2,500. To get to USD 14,000 in 24 years or by 2047-48, what growth rate do I need for per capita income?... my per capita income from 2023-24 onward has to grow annually at 7.3 per cent," Panagariya said**

intensive industry on a larger scale so as to create good jobs for the masses.

"If you see, there are good jobs certainly for the very highly skilled. We have the pharmaceutical industry, machinery industry. These are all, you know, for engineers for talented engineers, etc. You got the jobs. But when it comes to the masses, I think, you know, there is a jobs issue," Panagariya noted.

To a question on whether time is ripe for India to move towards capital account convertibility, Panagariya said India has been managing exchange rate and that has served the country well. "I am more conservative on this. I would rather go slow on that one... So I will still wait for quite a while, actually, for our per capita income to rise to at least 8,000-10,000 US dollars," he said.



# Combining tradition, nutrition & fun

Holi, the festival of colours, is a time of joy, laughter and indulgence. It's that time of the year when we forget our diets, dive into plates of gujiyas, and sip on thandai without a second thought. But what if we told you that you can enjoy the festive flavours of Holi without compromising your health? Yes, you read that right! This year, let's give a healthy twist to traditional Holi foods, making them not just delicious but also nourishing. And while we're at it, let's reveal some fascinating facts about Holi delicacies that you probably didn't know!



undeniably tasty, they're often deep-fried and high in sodium. This year, try making baked versions of these snacks at home. Use whole wheat flour, add a mix of seeds like flax and sesame for crunch, and season them with herbs like rosemary or thyme for a unique flavour.

Another great option is roasted chana or spiced chickpeas. They're high in protein, low in calories, and perfect for munching on while playing with colors. You can also make a colorful trail mix with dried fruits, nuts, and a sprinkle of chaat masala for that festive touch.

### THE POWER OF NATURAL COLOURS

While this blog is about food, we can't ignore the role of colors in Holi. Did you know that the colors used during Holi were originally made from natural ingredients like turmeric, beetroot, and flowers? These not only added vibrancy to the festival but also had skincare benefits.

This Holi, why not extend the concept of "healthy" to the colours you use? Opt for organic, herbal colours that are safe for your skin and the environment. And while you're at it, pair them with a plate of healthy snacks for a truly wholesome celebration.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

Holi is a time to celebrate, connect, and indulge. But that doesn't mean you have to abandon your health goals. With a few simple swaps and creative tweaks, you can enjoy all your favorite festive foods without the guilt. Plus, knowing the fascinating history and benefits of these dishes adds an extra layer of appreciation for the festival.

So, this Holi, let's paint the town red (and green, and yellow) with vibrant colours and nourishing foods. After all, a healthy celebration is a happy celebration!

*(The author, Dr Ridhima Khamsera, is a clinical dietician.)*

### THE SECRET HISTORY OF GUJIYA

Let's start with the star of Holi—gujiya. This crescent-shaped sweet is a staple in every household during the festival. But did you know that gujiya has its roots in the royal kitchens of medieval India? It was originally created as a luxurious dessert for kings and queens, filled with dry fruits, khoya and aromatic spices. Over time, it became a festive favourite for everyone.

While the traditional gujiya is undeniably delicious, it's also loaded with sugar and ghee. This year, let's give it a healthy makeover. Swap refined flour with whole wheat or almond flour, and replace sugar with

jaggery or dates. For the filling, use roasted nuts, seeds, and a hint of cardamom for that authentic flavor. You can even bake them instead of deep-frying to cut down on excess oil. Trust us, your taste buds won't miss a thing!

### THANDAI: MORE THAN JUST A FESTIVE DRINK

Thandai is synonymous with Holi, and for good reason. This cooling drink, made with milk, nuts and spices, is the perfect antidote to the playful chaos of the festival. But here's something you might not know: thandai was originally concocted as an Ayurvedic tonic to beat the heat and boost energy during summers.

The blend of almonds, fennel, rose petals, and saffron is not just delicious but also packed with nutrients.

To make your thandai even healthier, use plant-based milk like almond or oat milk instead of regular dairy. You can also skip the sugar and sweeten it naturally with honey or stevia. Add a pinch of black pepper or ginger for an extra kick of flavour and digestion-boosting properties. Serve it chilled, and you've got yourself a drink that's both refreshing and guilt-free.

### THE MAGIC OF PURAN POLI

Puran poli, a sweet flatbread stuffed with lentil and jaggery filling, is a Holi favorite in many Indian households.

But did you know that this dish has a cultural significance beyond its taste? In Maharashtra, it's often prepared during festivals as a symbol of prosperity and abundance.

To give this traditional dish a healthy twist, use whole wheat or multigrain flour for the dough. For the filling, replace jaggery with mashed bananas or date paste for natural sweetness. You can also add a dash of cinnamon or nutmeg to enhance the flavor without adding extra calories. Cook it on a non-stick pan with minimal ghee, and you've got a lighter version of this festive treat.

### BHANG: THE ANCIENT ELIXIR

No Holi celebration is complete

without a mention of bhang, a traditional drink made from cannabis leaves. While it's known for its intoxicating effects, bhang has a rich history in Ayurveda as a medicinal herb. It was used to treat ailments like anxiety, pain, and even digestive issues. If you're planning to include bhang in your festivities, moderation is key. Pair it with healthy snacks like roasted makhana or baked namak pare to balance out the experience. And remember, always consume it responsibly!

### HEALTHY SNACKS FOR HOLI

Holi is also about munching on savory snacks like papdi, mathri, and namak pare. While these are

### WHAT'S NEW

#### INDULGEO ESSENTIALS - ROSE GOLD OIL

Enhance your skincare routine with the luxurious Rose Gold Oil by Indulgeo Essentials. This indulgent facial oil is infused with 24K gold flakes and a blend of premium essential oils to hydrate, prep, and illuminate your skin for a radiant, glowing finish.

Price: Rs 2,700

#### AQUALOGICA REFRESH+ ON THE GO - SET OF 3 PERFUME BODY MISTS

The Aqualogica Refresh+ On The Go set features three delightful perfume body mists - Sun-Kissed Vanilla, Dewy Floral Kiss, and Sweet Summer Kiss. From the warm sweetness of vanilla and caramel to a refreshing floral bouquet and a playful strawberry-musk blend, this set is perfect for those who love to switch up their scent. Infused with Hyaluronic Acid & Zemea, these mists not only smell divine but also keep the skin hydrated and fresh.



## SUN-KISSED, NOT SUN-DAMAGED!

Summer brings longer days, warmer temperatures and plenty of sunshine, but it also demands extra care for your skin. The combination of heat, humidity and increased sun exposure can lead to dehydration, sunburn, and premature aging if not properly managed. Staying hydrated, cleansing regularly to remove sweat and excess oil, and incorporating soothing ingredients like aloe vera and vitamin C can help maintain a healthy glow. Whether you're battling sun damage or just trying to keep your skin fresh, adjusting your skincare to the season's needs is key to looking and feeling your best all summer long.

#### SKINDELI - A YOUTH SCULPTOR THAT BUDDY WHO MAKES YOU FEEL YOUNGER

Get ready for skin that feels as tight as those hugs from your best friends. A Youth Sculptor is an anti-ageing face serum that works to help improve cell turnover & communication, boost collagen & elastin production and target premature ageing whilst combatting damage due to internal & external stressors. Powered by Copper Peptides and Brahmi a.k.a. Gotu kola, A Youth Sculptor serum helps achieve visibly sculpted, tighter and toned skin.

Price: Rs 798



#### KUMKUMADI OIL SERUM

Kumkumadi Oil by A' Dash Of Me is an elixir crafted from saffron and 20+ rare Ayurvedic herbs. This miracle oil is enriched with pure goat milk and red sandalwood and works like magic overnight to reveal your skin's natural radiance. Experience the transformative power of this ancient natural formula as it gently fades pigmentation, softens fine lines, and infuses your skin with deep nourishment.

Rs 1,299.00



#### SKINVEST - FACE HUG BARRIER REPAIR MOISTURIZER

Pamper your skin with the ultimate care and hydration with Face Hug from Skininvest. This luxurious Barrier Repair Moisturizer is infused with 70% Rice Water, known for its soothing and restorative properties. Designed to deeply nourish and strengthen your skin's barrier, this moisturizer provides long-lasting hydration while addressing dryness, irritation, and sensitivity.

Price: Rs 1,400



### HOROSCOPE



#### ARIES

An exciting encounter awaits. Stay persistent but manage expectations. Use your strengths wisely, handle stress effectively and communicate clearly-success will follow.



#### TAURUS

New connections will intrigue you. Stay patient through career delays and trust your instincts. Avoid impulsive choices and channel energy into meaningful pursuits.



#### GEMINI

Your appreciation for beauty leads to opportunities. Stay resilient despite obstacles, focus on goals, and trust colleagues. A positive outlook ensures success.



#### CANCER

Be kind to yourself and others. Resolve misunderstandings, balance principles, and embrace support. Stay loyal and focused-your efforts will pay off.



#### LEO

Someone special will open your heart. Stay composed amid family pressures. Offer support, focus on meaningful work, and success will follow.



#### VIRGO

Your guidance benefits loved ones. Balance personal growth with duties. Stay calm, avoid emotional outbursts, and manage stress while focusing on projects.



#### LIBRA

Resilience helps you overcome setbacks. Strengthen relationships and address doubts with your spouse. Obstacles may slow progress, but positivity keeps you on track.



#### SCORPIO

Financial pressures arise, but staying calm helps. Friends will support your success. Embrace new ideas, stay determined, and enjoy a rewarding trip.



#### SAGITTARIUS

A stimulating connection awaits-express your feelings before it's too late. Stay confident despite setbacks, focus on the future, and good health will follow.



#### CAPRICORN

Attraction and harmony define your week. Strengthen relationships, care for your health, and communicate openly. Students should prioritise studies.



#### AQUARIUS

You'll feel drawn to someone-persist despite initial setbacks. Address emotional concerns, communicate with your spouse, and don't let work disrupt plans. Recognition is near.



#### PISCES

Unexpected attractions could change your life. Seek beauty and harmony but avoid excess. Prioritise quality time with loved ones to strengthen relationships.

# the pioneer agenda

"Life is too short to drive boring cars"  
—ELVIS PRESLEY



**THE CLASSIFICATION OF OLD CARS**

Contrary to popular perception not all cars are vintage cars. Old cars are classified into different categories based on the era of their manufacture, reflecting historical and technological advancements in automobile design. Here's a rundown of the key classifications:

**VETERAN CARS (PRE-1905)**

- Also known as the Brass Era or Pioneer Era cars.
  - Characterized by hand-built craftsmanship, steam, electric, and early gasoline engines.
  - Example: 1886 Benz Patent-Motorwagen, the first car by Karl Benz.
- EDWARDIAN CARS (1905-1918)**
- Named after King Edward VII's reign in Britain.
  - Marked by improvements in internal combustion engines, the introduction of the steering wheel (replacing tillers), and mass production.
  - Example: Ford Model T (1908), which revolutionized the automobile industry with assembly line production.

**VINTAGE CARS (1919-1930)**

- Cars produced between World War I and the Great Depression.
- More advanced engineering, stronger steel chassis, and luxurious coachbuilding.
- Example: Rolls-Royce Phantom I (1925), Bugatti Type 35.

**PRE-WAR CARS (1931-1945)**

- Includes both Depression-Era Cars and World War II Vehicles.
- Innovations like independent suspension, hydraulic brakes, and streamlined designs.
- Example: Cadillac V16, Mercedes-Benz 540K, Volkswagen Beetle (designed in the late 1930s).

**POST-WAR CLASSIC CARS (1946-1959)**

- The post-WWII era saw major automotive growth with more stylish designs, tailfins, and the introduction of muscle cars.
  - Examples: Chevrolet Bel Air, Jaguar XK120, Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing.
- Classic Cars (1960-1979)**
- Covers muscle cars, early supercars, and the transition to modern engineering.
  - Examples: Ford Mustang (1964), Porsche 911 (1964), Lamborghini Miura (1966).

**MODERN CLASSICS OR YOUNGTIMERS (1980-1999)**

- These are not officially vintage yet but are recognized as emerging classics.
- Includes early supercars, high-performance sedans, and experimental designs.
- Examples: Ferrari F40 (1987), McLaren F1 (1992), BMW E30 M3.

Each of these categories reflects the evolving design, engineering, and cultural significance of automobiles throughout history.

**VINTAGE CARS: THE ROYAL TOUCH**

The erstwhile Maharajas of India had a deep fascination with luxury cars, particularly Rolls-Royce, which symbolised their opulence, status and power. During the early 20th century, Indian royalty became one of the biggest patrons of Rolls-Royce, commissioning custom-built models adorned with gold, ivory and exquisite embellishments. It is estimated that more than half of the Rolls-Royce cars produced in the world during that era were made for Indian Maharajas. These cars were not just transport; they showcased wealth, used in ceremonies, hunting, and even garbage collection.

**THE TIMELESS CHARM OF**

# Vintage Cars

The passion for vintage cars in India is no longer limited to a select few; it has evolved into a nationwide obsession, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**, captured by **PANKAJ KUMAR**



**THE 21 GUN SALUTE: CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE**

To honour vintage cars, numerous rallies are organised across the country throughout the year, with some gaining increasing popularity. One such event is the 21 Gun Salute. The heart of New Delhi witnessed an

extraordinary spectacle as the 11th edition of the 21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance. A breathtaking parade of over 125 rare vintage cars and 50 vintage motorcycles, capturing the essence of India's rich motoring history.

The event featured an impressive lineup of iconic vehicles, including the 1939 Delahaye, the 1903 De Dion Bouton—one of the oldest cars in the concours—the 1917 Ford Model T Roadster and the regal 1935 Cadillac Fleetwood. The three day event concluded at the Leela Ambience, Gurugram. The coveted Best of Show award was claimed by the majestic 1922 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost of Mayurbhanj princely state, owned by Dhanraj Gidvani since 1992. Gidvani remarked, "All the cars in this event are special and priceless." The 1935 Buick 90L (ex-Ayodhya), owned by Diljit Titus, secured first prize in the Post-War American Coupe category.



**A GROWING INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY**

This event is a tribute to India's motoring legacy. Besides the sentimental value, vintage cars have also emerged as lucrative investments. As the demand for well-maintained classics rises, so does their market value. Collectors are willing to pay a premium for rare models, and auctions have seen skyrocketing prices for pristine examples. Owning a vintage car is now seen not only as a passion project but also as a valuable asset that appreciates over time.

**Challenges and Triumphs of Restoration**

Unlike modern vehicles with readily available spare parts, vintage cars often require extensive research and sourcing of original components. In India, restorers and mechanics specialising in vintage cars have become increasingly sought after. Cities like Chennai and Pune have seen the rise of skilled craftsmen who can meticulously rebuild engines, repair bodywork and replicate period-correct interiors. Interestingly enough the earlier cars were made of wood and a metal sheet was plastered over it to give a metallic look. Besides their spoke wheels and their carriage style gave them a majestic look. Many of these cars are painstakingly restored and are at display in Heritage Transport Museum in Delhi NCR. "Restoring old cars is like preserving a piece of history. It's a meticulous process to bring them back to their original glory," says Tarun Thakral, whose passion brought the Heritage Transport Museum to life. Despite the challenges, the joy of seeing a beautifully restored classic on the road is unparalleled.

**Preserving Automotive Heritage**

With the growing interest in vintage cars, there is also a renewed focus on preserving India's automotive heritage. Museums and private collectors are working to document and showcase the evolution of automobiles in India. Efforts are being made to protect historically significant vehicles from being scrapped or lost to time.

Vintage car clubs, restoration garages and automobile historians are ensuring that the legacy of these "old ladies" continues to thrive. Their dedication highlights that these cars are symbols of history, art and engineering excellence.

Tarun Thakral, Founder and Managing Trustee of the Heritage Transport Museum.



**FROM THRONES TO TRIALS**

Post-independence in 1947, the princely states were integrated into the Republic of India, and the economic realities shifted drastically. The newly independent nation imposed high taxes on princely wealth and the Privy Purse-financial allowances given to the former royals-was abolished in 1971 by the Indian government. Stripped of their vast fortunes, many Maharajas had no choice but to sell off their prized possessions, including their magnificent Rolls-Royce collections, to collectors and museums worldwide. Today, these cars remain a testament to a bygone era of regal extravagance.



# 'Every project motivates me to push the boundaries of what's possible'

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In the ever-evolving world of interior design, few names command as much recognition as Susanne Khan. With an eye for detail and an instinct for innovation, she has redefined the way spaces are envisioned and experienced. Since founding The Charcoal Project in 2011, her journey has been one of continuous exploration—blending timeless elegance with cutting-edge technology to create interiors that are both striking and deeply functional. Now, with the unveiling of her latest flagship store in Hyderabad's Jubilee Hills, she embarks on a new chapter, bringing her signature aesthetic to a city known for its rich heritage and modern aspirations.

More than just a design destination, this six-floor space redefines interiors by seamlessly integrating advanced home automation, intelligent lighting and high-end aesthetics. With a focus on "quiet luxury" and a deep appreciation for personal storytelling through design, Susanne aims to offer Hyderabad a new era of immersive, functional, and bespoke interiors.

With the launch of the flagship store in the vibrant and historic city of Hyderabad, *The Pioneer* had an opportunity to delve into her journey, her design philosophy and what this new chapter in her creative evolution means. The Charcoal Project's new home in Hyderabad's iconic Jubilee Hills isn't just a store; it's a carefully crafted space designed to push the boundaries of interior design. The decision to choose Hyderabad for this flagship location stems from a confluence of factors. "Hyderabad is a revelation—it's a city that is both progressive and dynamic. While I hadn't spent much time here before, my visit was eye-opening. The warmth of the people, the authenticity and their appreciation for refined living made it the perfect location to bring our vision to life."

With a remarkable portfolio spanning advanced home automation systems, premium kitchen brands like Häcker and Easy Kitchen and top-of-the-line audio-visual merchandise, Susanne and her partners—Karan Bajaj, Nafees Ahmed and Rishabh Jain—are introducing a new era of immersive spaces. "The Charcoal Project Hyderabad is not just about interior products," Khan explains. "It's about innovation. It's about advanced automation systems, intelligent lighting and state-of-the-art audio-visual solutions. These elements seamlessly fuse with furniture and living spaces, creating an experience that is both functional and aesthetically exceptional."

Over the years, her creative journey has evolved, constantly embracing new trends while retaining a commitment to timeless design. "My personal style is incredibly versatile," she reflects. "I believe that one should not adhere to a singular style throughout life. It's about constant evolution, adapting and growing



depending on the client and the context." This mindset was influenced by her time studying design at Brooks College in Palm Springs, where she learned the importance of continuous growth and the exploration of new materials and forms. Every year, she revisits the latest design trends, drawing inspiration from her travels and experiences, keeping her work fresh and attuned to the pulse of the design community.

The design philosophy at The Charcoal Project is best understood through Susanne's signature style—what she refers to as "quiet luxe." This concept blends industrial masculinity with a feminine, edgy sensibility, creating a balance that allows the space to feel both bold and understated. "I have two distinct sides to my personality," she explains. "One is bold, edgy, and industrial. While I may appear feminine, my true aesthetic leans toward designs that are structured, functional, and often more masculine in nature." At the same time, she embraces a deep appreciation for luxury that isn't ostentatious but speaks softly.

When asked to define "quiet luxury," Susanne elaborates: "It's about creating spaces that focus on the

senses. It's not just what you see but how a space makes you feel. It's about the scent, the texture, the tactile experience. Luxury isn't always about opulence. Sometimes, it's about the contrast—glossy, exuberant elements paired with matte, understated details. That's when the magic happens."

The new Hyderabad store is set to showcase this philosophy, spanning six floors filled with an eclectic mix of collections from both renowned local and global designers. Susanne's approach to curating such a diverse range was guided by a singular vision: to offer something for everyone. "We want to welcome anyone who wants to add a little 'Charcoal' quotient to their space," she says. "Our mission has always been to refresh and excite. With this new store, we present a range of possibilities, ensuring there's something here for every taste."

One of the standout features of this new space is the dedicated floor for Gauri Khan Designs, a

collaboration that reflects Susanne's longstanding friendship and mutual respect with Gauri Khan. "Gauri is an incredibly dear friend," Susanne shares. "I've always admired her unique sensibility and distinctive style. We complement each other beautifully, and having her as part of the Hyderabad store brings a new layer of diversity to the customer experience."

The presence of Gauri Khan Designs at The Charcoal Project, with its distinct flair, adds a refreshing dimension to the space, creating an atmosphere that balances Susanne's design sensibilities with Gauri's individualistic style. When it comes to curating spaces—whether residential, commercial, or luxury—Susanne's approach has always been client-centric. "The space belongs to the client, and their happiness is my top priority," she explains. "My role is to elevate their ideas, ensuring

that their vision is realized while also adding my own expertise and creativity. It's about striking the right balance between personal vision and professional insight." While creating these unique spaces is rewarding, it's also challenging. Susanne prefers to view these challenges as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles. "Every project motivates me to push the boundaries of what's possible. I've learned that when you reach a point where you're comfortable, it's time to shake things up and explore new possibilities," she says. These experiences have significantly expanded her understanding of design, helping her refine her skills and sharpen her approach.

As a woman leading a brand in a traditionally male-dominated industry, Susanne has some empowering advice for aspiring female designers: "Trust your instincts, embrace your individuality, and challenge the status quo. Design is about storytelling, and your unique perspective is your strength. Innovation comes from fearlessly reimagining materials, forms, and functions. Surround yourself with inspiring people, keep learning, and never let the industry define you—redefine it with your vision."

Looking ahead, Susanne's ultimate vision is one that redefines the landscape of interior design in India. "I want to create soulful, functional spaces where innovation, craftsmanship, and technology merge seamlessly," she shares. "I see The Charcoal Project as more than just a destination; it's a movement. A movement that challenges conventions and inspires people to embrace bold, personal interiors. Through collaborations with artisans and designers, I want to help shape a future where every space tells a unique story of individuality and quiet luxury."

As Susanne continues to push the boundaries of design, The Charcoal Project in Hyderabad represents not just the next chapter of her brand, but a fresh wave in the evolution of interior design in India—one that blends innovation, art, and functionality to create spaces that are truly unique.

**Gauri is an incredibly dear friend. I've always admired her unique sensibility and distinctive style. We complement each other beautifully, and having her as part of the Hyderabad store brings a new layer of diversity to the customer experience**

**Susanne Khan, the visionary behind The Charcoal Project, brings her signature blend of innovation, craftsmanship and understated luxury to Hyderabad with the launch of her flagship store in Jubilee Hills. *The Pioneer* caught up with Susanne over an exclusive chat as she discusses her journey, Hyderabad being the latest chapter and more**

**Hyderabad is a revelation—it's a city that is both progressive and dynamic. While I hadn't spent much time here before, my visit was eye-opening. The warmth of the people, the authenticity, and their appreciation for refined living made it the perfect location to bring our vision to life.**

## TRENDING

### PERSON

### NILAM SHINDE

Neelam Shinde, a resident of Maharashtra, has been in a coma following a reported accident in California on February 14. Her family had been urgently seeking a visa to be by her side during this critical time. After their appeal, they have now been granted the necessary permission to travel.



### WOMAN MAULED BY SIX STRAY DOGS

### VIDEO



A disturbing CCTV video from a basement parking area in Greater Noida West has gone viral, showing a woman being attacked by six stray dogs. The alarming footage has sparked widespread outrage on social media, with many users calling for stricter measures to address the growing stray dog population and ensure public safety.

### MOVIE

### MAHASANGHAM

Acclaimed filmmaker Bharat Bala is set to bring an evocative new cinematic experience to the big screen with *Mahasangam*, an intense exploration of family, legacy and music, all unfolding within the mystical and chaotic grandeur of the Mahakumbh.



### SONG

### BAITHI HO KYUN GUMSUM



On the first death anniversary of legendary ghazal maestro Pankaj Udhas, his final posthumous track, *Baithi Ho Kyun Gumsum*, has been released by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series. The soulful melody serves as a poignant tribute to the late singer, ensuring that his legacy continues to resonate with fans worldwide.

### 15,000 WORKERS CLEAN MAHA KUMBH

### PICTURE



During the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj, over 15,000 sanitation workers participated in a large-scale cleanliness drive across four designated zones. The synchronised effort, conducted on Monday, aimed to set a Guinness World Record for maintaining cleanliness at the grand religious gathering.

# GREEN BOOM: GOVERNMENT PUSH AND MARKET DEMAND PROPEL GREEN BUILDINGS

The adoption of green-certified buildings in India is accelerating, driven by regulatory incentives, policy mandates and increasing consumer awareness. According to the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC), India is the third-largest market for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified buildings, with more than 8.5 million square feet of green-certified space.

Industry experts expect this growth will continue, citing government regulations, climate action commitments and the financial benefits of sustainable construction as key drivers. The shift is supported by both public sector policies and private sector investments, as developers align their projects with India's sustainability goals for the years ahead.

## Government push for sustainable construction

The government has launched several initiatives to promote eco-friendly real estate development, including the Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC), which sets minimum energy efficiency standards for new buildings. Municipalities in cities like Pune, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Mumbai offer property tax rebates of up to 10% for projects that meet sustainability benchmarks.

These measures are in line with India's goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has emphasised the importance of integrating energy-efficient construction practices into urban planning, especially in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, where informed customers are increasingly demanding sustainable solutions.

## Financial and economic benefits drive market adoption

Data from real estate industry bodies suggest that while green-certified buildings require an initial investment which is 3-5% higher than conventional structures, long-term cost savings on electricity, water and maintenance outweigh the upfront costs and eventually help in mapping a more robust green and sustainable ecosystem.

Industry estimates indicate that energy-efficient homes can reduce electricity consumption by 30-50% through features like advanced insulation, smart lighting systems and solar power integration. Water conservation technolo-

gies, including rainwater harvesting and high-efficiency plumbing fixtures, can lower water usage by up to 40%. Analysts tracking real estate investment trends report that homebuyers and institutional investors are increasingly considering sustainability as a key determinant of property value.

## Rising demand for green homes in Indian cities

Consumer demand for green housing has risen sharply, particularly in metros and Tier-1 cities, where energy costs and water shortages are driving homebuyers to seek resource-

efficient properties. According to a recent survey conducted by a real estate research firm, over 60% of prospective homebuyers in urban areas expressed a preference for properties with green certifications. They cite lower utility costs, enhanced indoor air quality and long-term financial benefits as the primary motivators.

From a latest trend, the developers are increasingly incorporating sustainability elements into new projects as demand for eco-conscious housing continues to grow in prime cities like Gurgaon, Delhi, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Some of the recent survey findings also suggest that green-certified properties command a resale premium in the market, with energy-effi-

cient homes attracting more buyers due to their lower long-term costs.

## Health benefits and improved quality of living

Beyond financial savings, green buildings significantly contribute to public health by improving indoor air quality and reducing pollutants. Certified projects prioritise low-VOC (volatile organic compound) materials, enhanced ventilation systems and natural lighting, all of which help minimise exposure to allergens and airborne toxins. With air pollution being a major concern in India's urban areas, green buildings are designed to tackle this issue by incorporating advanced filtration systems and energy-efficient designs, offering occupants a healthier and more comfortable indoor environment.

## Types of green certifications in India

India has developed several esteemed green building certification systems to promote sustainability in the real estate sector. Among the most prominent are LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), IGBC (Indian Green Building Council) and GRIHA (Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment).

LEED, established by the U.S. Green Building Council, evaluates buildings based on key sustainability metrics such as energy efficiency, water conservation, and carbon footprint reduction. IGBC, managed by the Confederation of Indian Industry, offers a rating system that is specifically designed to address India's unique climate and environmental challenges. GRIHA, endorsed by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, assesses buildings on parameters such as sustainable site planning, resource-efficient mate-

rials, and waste management strategies.

Each certification system categorises buildings into various levels—Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum—depending on their performance in meeting environmental and sustainability standards. These certifications not only support eco-friendly practices but also play a crucial role in driving the growth of green buildings across India.

## Few challenges in large-scale adoption

Despite growing awareness, several challenges hinder the widespread adoption of green-certified buildings in India. High upfront costs for energy-efficient materials and advanced construction techniques remain a key barrier for developers. Additionally, limited awareness among homebuyers and developers about the financial and environmental benefits of green projects further slows progress. A shortage of skilled labor in green construction also hampers the supply chain.

Government incentives and educational initiatives could help overcome these obstacles, supporting the transition to sustainable building practices. With growing government support and a focus on energy efficiency, green-certified buildings are gaining traction, especially in cities prioritising sustainability. Although challenges like higher initial costs remain, the demand for certified properties continues to rise. As urbanisation increases, green construction will be crucial to India's long-term infrastructure development, benefiting both the real estate sector and housing finance companies.

(The author, Madhvi Gupta, is the Head - Marketing and Communications, at IIFL Home Finance.)



# RAO RAMESH—THE MASTER OF VERSATILITY

## QUIET SCHOLAR

I was born in Srikakulam and brought up in Chennai, where I started my schooling from the first standard. During my school years, I was a bright student, consistently securing the 5th or 6th rank in my class. I have always been a calm person, and my focus was on my studies. There were no mischievous incidents during my school days, as I never paid attention to such distractions. From my childhood until now, I have always remained honest, sincere, and focused on my work. I studied at Velankanni School and later at Ramakrishna School, where I built the foundation of my education and values.



**R**ao Ramesh is a celebrated actor in Telugu cinema, known for his ability to bring depth and authenticity to every role. Son of legendary actor Rao Gopal Rao, his career spans over two decades, with standout performances in *Gamyam*, *Magadheera*, *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu*, *Duvvada Jagannadham*, *Katamarayudu*, *Kotha Bangaru Lokam*, *Khaleja* and *A.. Aa...* His impeccable voice modulation, natural dialogue delivery and ability to seamlessly switch between roles—be it a villain, comic character, or father—set him apart. Following the legacy of icons like SV Ranga Rao, Kaikala Satyanarayana and many more, Rao Ramesh has become a defining character actor of his generation. In an industry where non-Telugu actors are often cast, he proves that true impact comes from understanding the language and culture. Writers frequently craft roles specifically for him, a testament to his profound influence and unique presence in Telugu cinema. He takes *The Pioneer's* Suresh Kavirayani through his early days, the legacy of his father and more



## LEGACY OF INTEGRITY & DISCIPLINE

You all know my father, Rao Gopal Rao, a great actor who made his own unique mark in Telugu cinema. He passed away in 1994. My mother, Kamala Kumari, was a Harikatha exponent before she got married. My father hailed from the Rajas dynasty, and my parents had a love marriage—my father was captivated by my mother's Harikatha performances. On my mother's side, the family has a rich legacy of Carnatic musicians. She passed away in 2018. My father always told us to never lie. He was a great admirer of socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia, and he despised dishonesty. He made it a point to instill in us the importance of truthfulness, and would get extremely angry if anyone lied. This value of honesty has been deeply ingrained in me and it's why I always strive to work honestly, sincerely and remain focused on my work. Another crucial lesson I learned from him was the importance of discipline. My father had a deep love for the Telugu language and was an avid reader of Telugu literature. We had an extensive library filled with Telugu literary works, and I, too, grew up reading and learning the language. From him, I learned how to read, write, and speak Telugu properly, which remains an important part of my identity.

## FATHER'S DEMISE; END OF AN ERA

My father passed away in 1994, which was a huge shock for us. He was a great actor, having worked in nearly 280 films, and had made his mark with his exceptional dialogue delivery and acting performance. We were at a loss about what to do, whom to approach, and how to lead the family forward. While we may not have had many interactions with him, we always knew he deeply loved us. My brother was supposed to leave for the USA, but due to our father's sudden demise, he decided not to go.

## FRIENDSHIP THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

When I was in school, my best friends were Balaji, Babu, and Murali. Nearly 40 years later, we continue to be great friends, staying in touch every alternate day. Despite living in different cities, our bond remains as strong as ever, as we make it a point to meet whenever possible. What keeps our friendship intact is our mutual understanding—money is never a topic of conversation. We made a pact not to borrow from each other, which has helped us maintain our friendship over the years. We talk about various things, have fun, and cherish our time together, but money is something we never discuss.



## REBUILDING LIFE POST FATHER'S DEATH

After my father's passing, life felt empty, and I found myself in a state of confusion. I had applied for a course in live action and animation at The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in California. I was accepted into the program for Hollywood photography, but I chose not to go. Suddenly, life seemed void, and I distanced myself from photography. I spent my time aimlessly, hanging out with friends and wandering around the streets of Chennai. I didn't know what direction to take after my father's death, and for two years, I remained idle.

## THE SPARK OF PHOTOGRAPHY PASSION

After my tenth grade, I developed a strong interest in photography, possibly due to my friend Balaji. He needed a cameraman, and it was through him that I became deeply attracted to photography. I decided to pursue this passion, even though it led me to discontinue my B.Com degree midway. I found myself constantly thinking about lighting and experimenting with various photography techniques. My parents encouraged me to complete my degree, but I couldn't focus on anything other than photography. I carried a camera with me everywhere and immersed myself in the world of photography.

## FACING CAMERA FIRST TIME

Ghantasala Ratna Kumar, along with Nimbus Company, started a serial and offered me a role. Though I'm not sure of the exact year, it was around 1999. I began acting in that serial, but it was discontinued midway, so it never came to fruition. Once again, I found myself without work, but I decided to try my luck in films. I came to Hyderabad and met Paruchuri Gopalakrishna, who offered me a small role in *Seema Simham* in 2002, where I played Simran's brother. However, after that, I realised that I wasn't getting much work in films, so I decided to shift back to Chennai.



## SENIOR ACTOR NAGESH'S WISE WORDS

At that time senior actor Nagesh came to my house. "The history of Rao Gopal Rao ends today and the phone in your house rings from tomorrow onwards, I will change my name. You have to learn practicality from now on, and you concentrate on your study and work," said Nagesh to my brother Kranthi. Actually, it was a great saying from him. My mother took over the responsibility of the house.

## LEARNING THROUGH PRACTICE AND EXPERIMENTATION

I worked as a camera assistant for director KS Prakash's film and also assisted in K. Raghavendra Rao's films, such as *Janaki Ramudu* and *Akhari Poratam*. My goal was to learn about photography, not to earn money as an assistant cameraman. Some people looked at me strangely because I was the son of the legendary Rao Gopal Rao, wondering why I needed to work as a cameraman. Even director YVS Chowdhary asked me, "Why do you want to work like this, Ramesh?" But my thoughts were different—I wanted to expand my knowledge and learn new things in photography. During my time in college, I spent countless hours at the British Library, reading books on photography. I took photographs in nature and also conducted many experiments to refine my skills.



## MOTHER'S INFLUENCE LED TO A NEW CHAPTER

Eventually, my mother encouraged me to get married, although I had hoped to first settle down in my career. However, she insisted, and on February 21, 1996, I got married to Gayatri. Together, we have two children—a son and a daughter.



## MOTHER'S WISDOM: GUIDING ME TOWARD ACTING

After my marriage, I wanted to do something, but I didn't know how to approach it. My comfort zone was my friends, so I spent time with them. I aspired to become a director and even wrote a couple of stories. However, my mother persuaded me to act in films instead of directing. She said, "You want to direct, but who will give you a chance? What do you think, being a director is easy? It's like a tunnel, and you don't know what's on the other side. Directors learn many things from life, and that's how they write stories. Direction is not just about photography, lenses, and films; direction is life. You don't know anything about life yet, so first, learn about life. Focus on acting because it's in your blood and DNA. You have talent in you, but it hasn't come out yet, so start acting. Only then will you understand life."

## THE ADVERTISING AGENCY I NEVER STARTED

I learned a lot about photography by always carrying my camera and walking around on the roads or in different places. I was particularly interested in advertising photography, so I went to Bengaluru to pursue it. My younger brother was studying there and I shared a room with one of his friends while attending classes. I also worked as a photography assistant at an ad agency and did industrial photography for several major industries. Although I had aspirations of starting my own advertising agency, it never materialised. While working at the ad agency and in the film industry, I was offered money for my work, but I never accepted it. My focus was not on the commercial side of things, and I always declined the payment, explaining that I wanted to learn as a student. I watched movies primarily to study photography, observing how color patterns, lighting and other elements were used. I was a great admirer of cinematographer Ashok Mehta and his films like *Utsav*, *Trikaal* and *Mandi*. I also admired Radhu Karmakar, who worked on many films for Raj Kumar, as well as Marcus Bartley and Ravikanth Nagayach. My life has been smooth, as I continue with my photography, enjoy watching movies and cherish my friendships.



## BREAKTHROUGH ROLE IN GAMYAM, NO LOOKING BACK LATER

I received many offers for serials, but my ultimate wish was to act in films. I got an offer from Chandrasekhar Yeleti's film *Okkadunnadu*, in which I appeared in just one scene. I was tense because my dates clashed with both my serial commitments and the film shoot. At that time, Chandrasekhar Yeleti told me, "Ramesh garu, don't get tense, the industry will adjust your dates in the future," and this was 18 years ago. Unfortunately, I didn't get any other film offers, so I returned to serials and acted in a serial called *Sireesha* for ETV. Later, Bibo Srinivas, a friend of mine and one of the producers of *Gamyam*, recommended director Krish my name and offered me a role in his film. I played a Naxalite in the film, and that became the turning point of my career. After the film was released, I received immense appreciation for my role, and I never looked back. February 29, 2008, is a memorable day for me. I watched the film at the RTC Cross Roads theatre and felt immense happiness about the positive response. Since the release of *Gamyam*, my career has never been the same.

## REFUSING THE TAMIL REMAKE LED TO BIGGER HITS

The same *Kalavari Kodalu* was planned for a Tamil remake to air on Sun TV. Balaji Telefilms offered me double the remuneration and wanted me to play the same role in Tamil. However, I refused to take up the offer. Omkar was angry with me for not accepting, but I remained firm in my decision. I declined because I wanted to explore something new, not repeat the same role. Money was never my priority; the quality of work was always more important. I didn't want to stay stuck in the same serial, shooting at the same location, with the same people. I wanted to challenge myself by working with different production houses and in new environments. This led to my role in the serial *Jayam* on ETV, where I played Singapore Bangaru Babu, and it became a big hit. I also worked in two Tamil serials, where I delivered live-synced dialogues in Tamil. Initially, I struggled a bit, but eventually, I got the hang of it and delivered dialogues that were appreciated.

## STORY OF MY ROLE IN KALAVARI KODALU

Writer and actor Omkar had great admiration for my father. He had seen me act in my first serial and offered me a role in *Pavitra Bandham*. One day, I received a call from Balaji Telefilms, asking me to come to their office. Since my car was in for servicing, I rushed to their office in an auto. After the meeting, they asked about my salary, but I wasn't sure what to ask for. They set it at Rs 1,500. At the time, I didn't want money to become a barrier, as I was eager to work. I feared I might lose the opportunity, so I immediately accepted the amount. That's how I started my life again with another serial. My first paycheck was Rs 15,000 for 10 days of work, which I offered at the Tirupati temple. My next project was *Kalavari Kodalu*, where I played the character of Hari. Omkar wrote some great punch dialogues for me, and my character became an instant hit.