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Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN



EX-SEBI CHIEF, 5 OTHERS



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

FILMMAKERS



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

Vontimitta fete from Apr 6 to 15

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Executive Officer J Syamala Rao inspected the preparations for the annual Brahmotsavam at Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple in Vontimitta, Kadapa district, scheduled from April 6 to 15, alongside the state festival of Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam. accompanied by Kadapa District Collector Dr Cherukuri Sridhar, SP EG Ashok Kumar, TTD JEO Veerabrahmam, and other officials, the EO reviewed the temple premises, Kalyana Vedika, and surrounding areas on Saturday

Bodies of 3 more workers recovered

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

Goyal's US visit for trade talks today

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

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Praggnanandhaa scores second win

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

Rammohan: Naidu asked me to develop TG on par with AP

PNS HYDERABAD

Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu stated that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had advised him to ensure the development of Telangana on par with Andhra Pradesh.

Speaking at press conference along with another Union Minister G Kishan Reddy here on Sunday, Rammmohan Niadu said, "Chandrababu told me that as a Union Minister, I must work for the people of both Telugu states. Develop Telangana as you develop Andhra Pradesh. The NDA Government is committed to Telangana's progress, utilising every available opportunity for its development."

He highlighted that while the Centre is focusing on aviation and aerospace manufacturing in Hyderabad, similar opportunities would be explored for Andhra Pradesh. He emphasised that AP has vast potential for aviation infrastructure growth, given its strategic location and expanding industrial

On Telangana's aviation projects, he mentioned that the Centre is awaiting land acquisition for the Mamnoor Airport, which it aims to complete within two-and-a-half years, instead of the usual 36 months.

Criticising the previous BRS administration, Rammohan Naidu remarked



Union Minister G Kishan Reddy addressing the media on Sunday along with Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu and BJP MLA P Rakesh Reddy

AP focusing on expanding its aviation sector and attracting aerospace investments.

that Telangana, which had a surplus

budget before bifurcation, was now

debt-ridden due to misgovernance. He

- The Union Minister says that the NDA govt is dedicated to TG's development.
- Centre plans to set up aviation and aerospace manufacturing units in Hvderabad.
- Centre aims to complete Mamnoor Airport in 2.5 years, pending land acquisition.

Rammohan Naidu blames the BRS for turning Telangana from a surplus-budget state into a debtridden one.

> Centre is ready to expedite Warangal Airport if the Telangana government provides land.

ues to focus on expanding its aviation sector, with efforts to strengthen regional connectivity and attract investments in aerospace manufacturing.



India beat NZ by 44 runs Shreyas 79, Varun's spin help in victory

PNS DUBAI

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

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

Chasing 250 was not a tall order for New Zealand's capable batting unit but they struggled against India's spin quartet led by Chakravarthy (5/42) to be all out for 205 in 45.3 overs. Kane Williamson's gritty 81 went in vain.

India will face Australia, who finished second in Group B, in the first

semifinal here on Tuesday while the Kiwis play South Africa in the other semifinal in Lahore on Wednesday. As they have been doing through-

out this tournament, the Indian spinners placed efficiency ahead of wizardry, and bowled in a manner suited to the conditions. Ravindra Jadeja found massive

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

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

YSRCP struggles amid legal bombardment by TDP govt

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The political landscape in Andhra Pradesh has turned volatile as the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government ramps up its legal offensive against the opposition VSR Congress Party (VSR revival of old cases and a fresh wave of arrests targeting YSRCP leaders have sparked concerns over the fairness of these actions while also exposing internal discord within the party's legal apparatus.

YŚRCP chief and former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has condemned the slew of cases against his party members and directed the legal team to provide

"There is a perception that top leaders benefit from elite legal services, while others are left to fend for themselves." said a YSRCP insider.

faction is brewing within the party, with several leaders questioning the legal wing's ability to secure favourable verdicts. Critics argue that YSRCP's defence strategy has been inconsistent, raising doubts about its preparedness to counter the ruling party's legal tactics. The struggle to secure bail has

become a key concern.

to expedite the completion of Warangal

Airport if the state ensured land acqui-

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh contin-

CM committed to uplift of women: Savitha

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Marking International Women's Day, the NDA government in Andhra Pradesh has announced a new initiative to empower women by providing training in tailoring and distributing free sewing machines. The scheme aims to enhance the economic prospects of women

AP govt suspends IPS officer for 'unauthorised' foreign visits

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government officer P V Sunil Kumar for allegedly making repeated foreign visits without prior permission during the previous YSRCP regime.

In a government order, Chief Secretary K Vijayanand stated that Kumar, a DGP-rank officer awaiting posting, had deviated from the travel plan approved by the government during those overseas trips.

Now, therefore, in the exercise of the powers conferred under Rule 3 (1) of the All India Service (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969, the Government of Andhra Pradesh hereby places P V Sunil Kumar, IPS, under suspension with immediate effect," said the Chief Secretary in the order.

According to the top bureaucrat, Kumar repeatedly demonstrated willful disregard for established practices.

His actions exhibit gross negli-gence, indiscipline, and grave misconduct by undertaking foreign travel without obtaining the requisite permission, he said, adding that disciplinary proceedings were being contemplated for such repeated acts of "grave miscon-

Georgia, the UAE, Sweden, the

BLOW TO AP'S TOURISM IMAGE

Rushikonda Beach loses Blue Flag certification



destinations involved in these alleged unauthorised visits between 2019 and 2024, the Chief Secretary He further said although Kumar

was granted permission to visit Georgia from March 1 to 4, 2024, he allegedly deviated from the approved plan and visited the UAE within those four days without per-

The State was ruled by the erstwhile YSRCP government, led by Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, between 2019 and 2024.

Bihar IPS man summoned in RRR 'torture' case

USA, and the UK were among the

Similarly, Vijayanand pointed out that Kumar visited the USA between February 1 and 28, 2023, departing from Hyderabad without obtaining prior government approval, among other such unauthorised trips.

VIJAYAWADA: The Prakasam district police have issued a notice to Bihar-cadre IPS officer Sunil Naik, directing him to appear for questioning in connection with the alleged custodial torture of former MP and current AP Deputy Speaker Raghurama Krishna Raju The notice, sent via fax and WhatsApp, was issued by Prakasam SP Damodar, the investigating officer in the case. At the time of the incident, Naik was serving as the DIG of the Crime Investigation Department (CID) in Andhra Pradesh, having been deputed by the previous YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government. However, following the TDP-led alliance's victory in the recent elections, he returned to Bihar, where he is currently posted as the IG of Fire Services and Home Guards Investigators have established that Naik was present during Raiu's arrest in Hyderabad and his subsequent transfer to the CID regional office in Guntur. Based on available evidence and recorded statements, the police have decided to question him regarding his role in the case.

3 women siblings, infant killed as car collides with auto

In a gory road accident, three women siblings and a three-monthold infant were killed, while three others sustained injuries when a car collided with the auto-rickshaw they were travelling in at Kammuru village in Kuderu mandal on Sunday.

According to the police, one of the deceased, Saraswati (32), had given birth to a baby girl, Vidyasri, three months ago. She was travelling with her daughter and her two elder sisters, Leelavathi (42) and Yegeswari (40), to her mother-in-



law's house in Rayampalli, Uravakonda mandal, from her parents' home when the mishap occurred. All four, including the infant, died on the spot.

The car, which was heading to Anantapur from Uravakonda, collided with the auto-rickshaw while attempting to overtake an RTC bus. The auto-rickshaw driver and two students were critically injured and were admitted to the Government General Hospital (GGH).

Heart-wrenching scenes unfolded at GGH as grieving family members struggled to come to terms with the loss of three sisters and an infant. The tragedy has cast a pall of gloom over three families.

The Kuderu police have registered a case, removed the wrecked vehicles, and cleared the traffic.

UK, France, Ukraine agree to work on ceasefire plan

PNS LONDON

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

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

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

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



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

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



eco-label, awarded by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), was revoked due to maintenance lapses and environmental degradation. This setback not only strips Andhra Pradesh of its sole Blue Flag beach but also raises

concerns over the State's ability to

uphold global sustainability stan-

The Blue Flag certification, granted in 2020, placed Rushikonda Beach on the world city's image as a responsible coastal destination. However,

rating conditions, including waste accumulation, malfunctioning security systems, stray dog infestations, and poor upkeep of amenities, led FEE to reassess and ultimately revoke the status.

the executive capital of Andhra Pradesh, such a development is more than just a lost title—it's a dent in its reputation. "Losing the Blue Flag status reflects poorly on the state's ability to manage its

natural assets. It signals a failure to meet international standards and impacts tourism potential," says Dr. Anjali Sharma, an environmental scientist specialising in coastal management.

A warning for other tourist

The loss of this certification underscores broader concerns regarding Andhra Pradesh's commitment to environmental and tourism infrastructure. Industry experts fear it may deter environmentally conscious tourists and investors, potentially affecting other beaches and heritage sites across the state.

Local residents and business owners are already feeling the

Continued on Page 2

Once a beacon of environmental excellence, now a cautionary tale tourism map, attracting eco-conscious travellers and boosting the – Rushikonda Beach in Visakhapatnam has lost its prestigious Blue Flag certification, casting a shadow over Andhra Pradesh's tourism and environmental stewardship. The internationally recognised

Experts urge authorities to

implement stricter maintenance measures, improve waste management, and ensure regulatory compliance. With proactive governance and sustained conservation efforts, Andhra Pradesh can reclaim its place on the global tourism map

Monday Mirchi

POSTS—A NEW POWER SHIFT?

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

HARISH RAO'S SLBC BLOCK— INTELLIGENCE MISFIRE

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

WEEKEND GETAWAYS—SPS MISSING FROM DISTRICT HQS

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

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

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

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

ARVIND KUMAR'S LOOPLINE POSTING TURNS INTO A FRONTLINE MISSION

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

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

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

India beat...

Continued from Page 1

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

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

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

But Axar deceived an on-charge Williamson with a slightly fuller and slanted delivery, and Rahul just had to remove the bails from the stumps.

The dismissal effectively sealed the match in favour of India.

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

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

TUDAT					
ALMANAC					
Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha				
Tithi:					
Chaturthi:	Mar 02 09:02 PM				
	to Mar 03 06:02 PM				
Panchami:	Mar 03 06:02 PM				
	to Mar 04 03:16 PM				
Nakshatram:					
Revati:	Mar 02 08:59 AM				
A a booring is	to Mar 03 06:39 AM				
Ashwini:	Mar 03 06:39 AM to Mar 04 04:29 AM				
Rahukalam:	8:04 AM to 9:32 AM				
Yamagandam:	11:00 AM to 12:28 PM				
Varjyam:	01:20 PM to 02:49 PM				
Gulika:	1:56 PM to 3:23 PM				
Amritakalam:	09:56 PM to 11:23 PM				
Abhijit Muhurtham:	12:04 PM to 12:51 PM				
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER					
Forecast: Mostl	y Cloudy				
Temp : 36 [∞]					
Humidity: 68%	2000				
Sunrise: 6:24 AM	A TOTAL TOTAL				
Sunset: 6:15 PM					
Undated: Marc	h 2 2025 5:00 DM				
Updated: March 2, 2025 5:00 PM					

YSRCP MLA charges CM Naidu with bias

PNS VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) MLA Tatiparthi Chandrasekhar has launched a scathing attack on Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, accusing him of lacking vision and making divisive statements

Condemning Naidu's vengeful, Chandrasekhar alleged that the Chief Minister's rhetoric was aimed at favouring those who financially backed the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). He linked Naidu's statements to those of TDP leader Atchennaidu, who reportedly urged him to prioritise

party donors. The MLA also criticised the Home Minister for stating that YSRCP leaders would not be able to step onto the streets if the government willed it. He accused both the Chief Minister and the Home Minister of arrogance and vendetta politics.

Questioning Naidu's leadership, Chandrasekhar alleged that funds were being diverted to Minister Nara Lokesh's constituency to consolidate power, while YSRCP leaders were being targeted with false cases. He contrasted this with former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's governance, claim-



ing it was free from caste or religious bias, unlike the curther accused the government of harassing the Reddy community and Dalit officials, demanding an apology from Naidu and intervention from the Governor and the

The MLA also criticised the government's inaction on the Veligonda project, accusing Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu of failing to allocate funds for rehabilitation and resettlement while making empty promises. Announcing plans for a 'padayatra' to highlight the project's neglect, he urged Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan to visit Yerragondapalem and clarify what his department has done for the region.

Highlighting the struggles West Prakasam. Chandrasekhar said residents were struggling for basic water supply and accused the government of showing indifference and hostility towards the region

Rushikonda Beach loses....

Continued from Page 1

"Tourists associate the Blue Flag with cleanliness and safety. This revocation sends the wrong message and could lead to a decline in visitors," laments a resort owner near Rushikonda Beach. Restoring lost glory

The path to regaining Blue Flag status is arduous but necessary. Experts urge authorities to implement stricter maintenance measures, improve waste management, and ensure regulatory compliance. With proactive governance and sustained conservation efforts, Andhra Pradesh can reclaim its place on the global tourism map. However, this episode serves as a stark reminder that recognition is not just about obtaining a title—it's about sustaining it.For Visakhapatnam, a city aiming to position itself as a premier tourism and administrative hub, regaining Blue Flag status is not just an environmental necessity but a reputational imperative.

Pithapuram festival from March 10

PNS TIRUPATI

Brahmotsavam in Sri Padmavati Sametha Sri Venkateswara temple at Pithapuram in Kakinada will be observed from March 10-14 in a grand

manner by TTD.

Dhwajarohanam will be on March 10 between 10.10 am and 10.30 am while on the same day, Kalyanotsavam will be

observed at 6pm. On March 11, Garuda Seva will be observed from 6pm onwards. On March 11, 12 and

Snapana Tirumanjanam will be performed in the morning while Unjal seva on March 12 and 13 between

6pm and 7pm. On March Chakrasnanam and Dhwajavarohanam will be performed. On March 15, Pushpa Yagam will be observed at 5.30pm.

NAREDCO welcomes key urban and revenue reforms

The National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) Andhra Pradesh has lauded the state government's recent urban development and revenue reforms, calling them a significant step towards improving ease of doing business and enhancing transparency in regulatory processes. These changes are expected to benefit the real estate and infrastructure sectors by simplifying approvals and reducing procedural bottlenecks.

Speaking at a press briefing on Sunday, NAREDCO AP State president Gadde Chakradhar welcomed the reduction of the minimum road width requirement from 40 feet to 30 feet, stating that it would help regulate unauthorised layouts and improve urban planning. He also noted that the approval of Podium Parking would ease the financial burden on developers who previously faced high costs for



cellar parking.

State Executive Vice President Kiran urged further policy adjustments to support developers, advocating for the removal of floor height restrictions for non-high-rise buildings to optimise space utilisation. He also called for setback relaxations for smaller plots adjacent to major roads, arguing that existing regulations were leading to unnecessary land loss for developers. Kiran further welcomed the proposed instalment-based payment system for development fees, which he said would ease financial constraints and facil-

itate project execution. State Secretary General Seetaramaiah stressed the importance of seamless interdepartmental coordination to expedite approvals. He pointed out that the government was working on a single-window system integrating various departments, including MAUD, Fire, Revenue, and

Podium Parking would ease the financial burden on developers who previously faced high costs for cellar parking. Airports, to streamline governance. He also praised the modernisation of fire safety

policies, which will align reg-

ulations with global standards. State Treasurer Ramesh Babu highlighted the financial relief provided by these reforms, particularly the instalment payment facility. He also noted that basement construction would now be permitted on plots of 500 square metres or more, leading to better land

28.62L families in AP issued permanent caste certificates

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In a significant development, the coalition government has fulfilled another election promise by issuing permanent caste certificates to 28.62 lakh families, Revenue Minister Anagani Sathya Prasad said. He stated that the initiative was carried out by the revenue department, which has been actively involved in the distribution process.

The Minister explained that revenue officials reviewed data of over 34.37 lakh families and conducted field inspections to ensure accuracy. Village Revenue Officers (VROs) were deployed to deliver the permanent caste certificates directly to households.

"The caste certificates are essential for school and college admissions, job reservations, and availing government welfare



schemes. This initiative eliminates the need for families to visit MRO offices for these crucial documents," Sathya Prasad said. He further noted that nearly 5

lakh families could not receive their caste certificates due to various reasons. Those who believe they are eligible can apply through their respective village or ward secretariats or at Andhra Pradesh Seva Kendras. Upon application, revenue officials will conduct field assessments and issue the caste certificates on the spot, ensuring a hassle-free process, he added.

Education with skills need of the hour: Samagra Siksha PD while Agriculture, Food

PNS VIJAYAWADA

State Project Director of Samagra Shiksha, B Srinivasa Rao, has stressed the importance of integrating vocational skills with academics to equip students for the future. Addressing vocational trainers at a five-day training programme at Maris Stella College, Vijayawada, on Sunday, he underscored the need to identify students' interests and nurture their skills accordingly.

He stated that Samagra Shiksha is offering vocational education in 10 trades for students from Class 9 to Class 12, helping reduce dropout rates. 'No student should be left behind due to a lack of academic interest. Some may excel



in sports, while others may prefer science. We have to provide them with the right training to develop their skills,"

Srinivasa Rao noted that vocational education is being introduced at the primary level in several foreign countries. As part of the first phase, training in the IT trade is being conducted at Maris Stella College,

Processing, Healthcare, Home Appliances, and garment-making training sessions are being held at St Joseph's College, Guntur.

He emphasised the need for students to develop scientific thinking, critical reasoning, and self-reliance in their careers. The first phase of training will conclude on March 4, followed by the second phase from March 7, covering trades such as Beauty & Wellness, Banking, Financial Services & Insurance (BFSI), Retail, Automotive, and Electronics & Hardware. Around 2,000 trainers are currently undergoing training across these trades, he

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

PNS HYDERABAD

should declare 'war' if he can on Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu over the Krishna water issue and protect Telangana's interests.

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

party's guarantees and his Krishna water for 60 years,"

promise that he would implement them in 100 days.

The BRS's Siddipet MLA, T.
Harish Rao, said that Chief
Minister Revanth Reddy

"But the CM is talking about big things like Musi cleansing.
The CM has not done anything for Palamuru except repeatedly calling himself a child of Palamuru and reciting dry sentiments. The children of Palamuru are workers who toil hard, but Revanth talks more and works less," Harish said.

He said Revanth and the Congress have no moral right to talk about projects or pro-

"Whose fault is it that Telangana, which has 68 per He said that Revanth is cent of the Krishna catchment unable to speak about his area, has been going without



Harish asked.

"Aren't the crooks who turned Palamuru district which has gold-bearing black soil into a distress migration district your Congress Chief Ministers,"

he asked. "The Congress creat- ened even after 15 months. It to droughts. Chandrababu while the Telangana Movement was

going on, now wants to talk

about Krishna districts without

offending CBN," he pointed "If you are honest, hold an inquiry into the SLBC tunnel accident by a sitting judge. Find out who the culprits are. Stop spreading lies and crazy sentiments. If you are lazy, things will not work, but if you work hard, things will work. It is unfortunate for Telangana

that you have not been enlight-

ed a terrible situation for 60 is not because you do not years by subjecting Telangana know the facts, but because you are trying to mislead people. Why are you hiding that the BRS admin spent Rs 3,900 crore from 2014 to 2023 to dig 11.48 km of the SLBC tunnel? Was the work on the 11.48 km of tunnel done without spending money? Not a single Rupee was spent on the Dindi Project during your tenure. That is the truth. The work on projects did not stop during KCR's tenure. That is why Revanth did not say anything then. The people clearly understood that KCR means green crops and Revanth means lies," Harish said.

CM committed to uplift ...

Continued from Page 1

State BC Welfare Minister S Savitha said that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is committed to women's empowerment and is encouraging them to take up small businesses such as retail shops, tailoring, and the production of incense sticks, palm oil, and traditional handicrafts, including Kondapalli toys and Mangalagiri sarees.

As part of the initiative, training in tailoring will be provided to 1,02,832 women on March 8, along with the distribution of sewing machines. Minister Savitha urged women to seize this opportunity to become financially independent and contribute to the state's economic growth.

She highlighted that the government is fulfilling its election promises, citing the provision of three free LPG cylinders annually to women. The decision to offer tailoring training and free sewing machines has

been widely appreciated, as it acknowledges the vital role of women in society.

Recalling the contributions of former Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao, she noted that he had ensured equal property rights for women and their participation in governance. Following his legacy, CM Naidu has granted house titles in women's names and facilitated construction projects under their ownership. The government has also reserved 33.33% of educational and employment opportunities for women.

The scheme will benefit women from BC, EWS, and Kapu communities across all 175 Assembly constituencies, with Rs 255 crore allocated for its implementation. The BC Welfare Corporation will select 46,044 beneficiaries, while 45,772 will be from the EWS category and 11,016 from the Kapu community. The selection process is in its final stages, the minister

Guv prorogues TG Assembly & Council

PNS HYDERABAD

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

It may be recalled that the government continued the special session without proroguing the Assembly which started in December and passed a motion paying tributes to former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

The government also

issued statements on SC categorisation and caste census. However, on Sunday a decision was taken proroguing both the Houses. The Governor has to address both the Houses during the budget session and

and Council. The government may approve the BC Reservation bill in the budget session.

the government may issue a

notification to the Assembly

YSRCP struggles...

Continued from Page 1

While prominent leaders like Nandigam Suresh, Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy, and Jogi Ramesh have managed to obtain bail, sources indicate that these legal victories were largely due to personal efforts rather than a coordinated party-driven strategy. This has fuelled frustration over what some perceive as a lack of cohesive legal planning within the YSRČP.

The party's legal wing is also grappling with internal friction. General secretary Ponnavolu Sudhakar Reddy, a former Additional Advocate General, and legal cell president Manohar Reddy are facing scrutiny for the party's legal setbacks. While top YSRCP leaders reportedly engage senior Supreme Court advocates such as S. Niranjan Reddy, grassroots activists and mid-level leaders remain dependent on the party's internal legal team, which has struggled to deliver results. This has led to allegations of an unequal legal support system, with top leaders receiv-

ing preferential treatment. A recent case highlighting these concerns was the arrest of former Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi, accused of kidnapping and attacking a TDP office. Despite representation from Ponnavolu Sudhakar Reddy, he was denied bail, raising further doubts about the party's legal preparedness. Similarly, actor Posani Krishna Murali's continued detention for alleged inflammatory remarks against Jana Sena leader Pawan Kalyan has intensified dis-

content within YSRCP ranks. "There is a perception that top leaders benefit from elite legal services, while others are left to fend for themselves," said a YSRCP insider. Constitutional law expert Raghunandan Rao echoed these concerns, stating, "YSRCP must establish a cohesive legal strategy. A fragmented approach will not withstand the government's aggressive legal crackdown."

With legal pressure mounting and internal dissatisfaction growing, the YSRCP faces urgent calls for a strategic

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NTR police rescue fourth baby from child trafficking gang

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Officials from the NTR Commissionerate have successfully rescued another baby from an infant trafficking gang, bringing the total number of infants rescued to four. The latest rescue took place in Rajamahendravaram on Sunday, following information provided by the arrested gang

The police handed over the



Child Welfare Departmentrun childcare shelter in Vijayawada, ensuring proper care and protection. On Saturday, the Nunna Rural Police Station House Officer (SHO) Krishna Mohan had transferred three babies rescued earlier from the trafficking network to the same department.

The operation was carried out under the directions of led trafficking gang, leading to

Babu and the supervision of Commissioner's Task Force Additional Commissioner of Police (DCP) Srinivasa Rao. The rescue team included Taskforce ACP K Latha Kumari, North Zone ACP Sravanthi Rai, and Inspectors from the Task Force and the Nunna Rural Police. The police successfully busted the five-member women-Police a series of rescues.

Plea to disburse overdue salaries

cerns related to the university. In a subsequent press release, Joshi noted that 10 years had

passed since the implementation of the State Bifurcation Act, which has affected the procedures of Dr BR Ambedkar University in the State. As a result, he pointed out that approximately 30,000 students have been unable to gain admission to the Dr BR Ambedkar Open University. Joshi brought this matter to the attention of Prof Bala Krishna Reddy and

He reported that Prof Bala Krishna Reddy responded positively and assured him that all issues would be addressed through discussions with the authorities from both States. Joshi expressed satisfaction with

problems. In addition, they are lanning to conduct Cycle

CPM State secretary V Srinivasa Rao addressing a press conference about the State budget in Vijayawada on Sunday

CPM's Praja Chaitanya

Yatralu from March 8-17

March aims to address challenges faced by the people

He urged the State government to implement the free bus travel scheme, one of the six key assurances made by the NDA. Furthermore, he called for the government to provide financial assistance of Rs.1,500 to unemployed youth and women by Ugadi. To support this cause, the party plans to organise various programmes. Rao stated that the people are eagerly awaiting resolutions to their issues from the new government, as well as subsi-dies outlined in the recently presented budget, but they have been disappointed thus

The Left leader accused the State government of cutting allocations for the Super Six schemes and claimed that the government is trying to reduce the number of beneficiaries under the P4 programme, labelling it as deceitful. He criticised Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for failing to address the issue of Special Category Status for the State during his visits to New Delhi. pointed out that Chandrababu had previously stated that investors would flock to the State if this status

was granted. Srinivasa Rao noted that there are Rs.20,000 crore in dues owed by the Central govbursed. He questioned the allocation of Rs.309 crore for the Veligonda project, raising concerns about delays in its completion despite a two-year deadline. He highlighted that although the Centre promised Rs.12,000 crore for the Polavaram project, only Rs. 6,000 crore was allocated in the State budget, leaving many

feeling cheated.
Additionally, he criticised the government for lacking support for women, noting that there was no mention of the free bus travel scheme and that funding for the promised Rs.1,500 per month has not been allocated. He remarked that the burden of high elec-tricity costs is being placed on citizens. Moreover, he pointed out that unnecessary meters were installed to benefit Adani, allowing the company to collect enormous profits, and urged the public to oppose this situation.

Srinivasa Rao expressed frustration over the State government's failure to cancel the SECI agreement, particularly since even a smaller country like Sri Lanka had the courage to do so with Adani. He also voiced anger about the exorbitant electricity costs imposed on the State, criticising Chandrababu, who had previously promised to release a White Paper before assuming power, but has since neglected

Villagers demand urgent Forest Dept clearances for roads Road project aims to link five villages within NR Puram panchayat

to BRAOU Study Centre staff sion, Joshi raised several con-

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Chairman of the Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE), Prof V Bala Krishna Reddy, has committed to ensur-ing the swift disbursement of overdue salaries to the staff at the Dr BR Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) Study Centre in Andhra Pradesh. He also expressed his intention to engage with higher authorities from both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana regarding universityrelated issues, as stipulated in the State Bifurcation Act.

On Sunday in Hyderabad, Dr Velaga Joshi, the Officer on Special Duty (OSD) for Dr BR Ambedkar Open University in Andhra Pradesh, met with Prof Bala Krishna Reddy to formally present a request concerning hese issues. During their discussought a timely resolution.

Spiritual wisdom illuminates seekers Three-day spiritual discourse titled 'Secret of Sadhana' commences

PNS VIJAYAWADA

CPM State secretary V

Srinivasa Rao has announced

that the party will conduct

'Praja Cĥaitanya Yatralu'

(People's Awareness Marches)

across the State from March 8-

17 to address the challenges

currently faced by the people.

As the programme will be launched on International

Women's Day, he emphasised

that the Yatra aims to spotlight

During a press conference held at Balotsav Bhavan in

Vijayawada on Sunday,

Srinivasa Rao, accompanied by

party State secretariat mem-

bers Y Venkateswara Rao, Ch Babu Rao, and Ch Prabhakar Reddy, outlined the party's

plans. He stated that from March 22 to 28, they will

organise protests and hunger

strikes at government offices to

demand resolutions for the

issues identified during the

Yatralu. If no solutions are

reached by that date, they

intend to initiate further

Srinivasa Rao also indicated

that following discussions held

during the two-day CPM State

committee meetings, the party

has developed a future action

plan that includes the organi-

sation of the Praja Chaitanya

Yatralu. He noted that party

leadership at both State and

district levels will be touring the State to study the people's

protests in April and May.

women's issues.

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

July were also stalled due to the same clearance delays. K. Govinda Rao, CPM district Like the daily sunrise that dispels executive member, has warned that if the Visakhapatnam darkness, knowledge and devotion light the way for spiritual Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) does not act immediateseekers, declared Swami ly, tribal communities will Paripoornananda during the strengthen their protests. Plans opening of a three-day spiritual are in place for a demonstradiscourse titled 'Secret of tion featuring traditional dol-Sadhana'. The event, which comlies (makeshift stretchers) at menced on Sunday, aims to unravel the profound wisdom the Forester's office, with a larger protest at the District embedded in ancient scriptures Collector's office threatened if and showcase its relevance in contemporary life.



Emphasising the timeless teachings of Bhagavad Gita, Swami Paripoornananda under-

scored that each reading of the application of eternal wisdom. sacred text brings fresh insights, guiding spiritual aspirants toward divine connection and self-awareness. He delved into the central philosophies of Sri Krishna, the divine teacher of the Gita, Adi Shankara, the proponent of Advaita Vedanta, and Ramana Maharshi, the revered sage of selfinquiry. The discourse encouraged attendees to integrate these spiritual principles into their daily lives, offering solutions to modern challenges through the

The event commenced with a traditional lamp-lighting ceremony. Several distinguished personalities graced the occasion, including Mantena Satyanarayana Raju, Chairman of the Visakhapatnam Music and Dance Academy, Dr. GRK Prasad, Secretary of Kala Bharathi, and Dr. Chitti Pantulu. As a mark of reverence, Swami Paripoornananda was honoured with a ceremonial garland, and all attendees were offered Prasadam

The president and the secretary of Kala Bharathi expressed their joy at the enthusiastic participation, highlighting the audience's deep engagement and the role of such spiritual discourses in fostering inner awakening. With two more days of enlightening discussions ahead, the event promises to be a transformative journey, guiding seekers toward enlightenment and self-realization through the practice of

Visakhapatnam to launch plug-and-play co-working spaces for startups

simple request for a road is

Driven by frustration, the

residents have threatened a

major protest at the upcoming

ZP governing body meeting in

Paderu if the permissions are

not granted. Somula Appalaju (Ward Member, Rompalli pan-

Simhachalam, Buruga Veeraiah, and numerous other villagers, took part in the

The issue extends beyond Chinna Konela, with multiple

Konaparthi

being unjustly denied.

chayat),

demonstration.

necessary clearances from the

lighted the dire need for the

road. Eswar Rao, a resident of

Chinna Konela, died while

working in Guntur district. His

family was forced to carry his

body for eight kilometres through treacherous terrain

after an ambulance could only reach Vanija village in Vizianagaram district. While

District Collector Alluri

Seetharama Raju authorised

reports of this incident, the

stalled Forest Department per-

missions persist as a major

Independence, we thought we

finally had hope," a villager

said. "But without the Forest

clearances, we remain cut off.

Pregnant women endure per-

ilous journeys to reach hospi-

tals, and we struggle to access

basic necessities like weekly

markets." The villagers argue

that while large-scale projects

years of

roadblock

cial approval, construction is at receive swift approvals, their

'After 78

A recent tragic event high-

Forest Department.

State-backed initiative aims to alleviate financial burdens and foster IT growth

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

PNS PADERU

Villagers from the isolated

hamlets of Buruga and Chinna

Konela, nestled within the

Anantagiri mandal of the ASR

district's Rompalle panchayat,

have made a desperate appeal to the District Collector,

demanding swift approval of Forest Department permis-sions to build a crucial road. The proposed route, connect-

ing Onija to Chinna Konela, is

seen as a lifeline for these long-

a demonstration along the

rugged, unpaved path, symbol-

ically carrying Bauhinia leaves

on their heads and joining

hands in a plea for basic infra-structure. They emphasised their decades-long struggle

for connectivity, a struggle

that continues to hinder their

daily lives. The road project,

funded with Rs 3 crore under

the Employment Guarantee

Scheme, aims to link five vil-

lages within NR Puram pan-

chayat. Despite receiving offi-

neglected communities.

Visakhapatnam's local government is pushing forward with plans to establish ready-to-use co-working offices for small and medium-sized IT businesses. This move aims to relieve the financial burden of setting up independent offices and stimulate the city's rapidly expanding technology sector. The initiative, driven by the State government, comes after discussions between IT Minister Nara Lokesh and various IT consulting firms. These companies have pledged to manage and equip the spaces, providing essential infrastructure on a rental basis.

The district administration is actively searching for suitable private buildings, targeting a total area of 250,000 to 300,000 square feet. Officials have already examined roughly 10 potential sites, including locations in Botsa Square, VIP Road, Old Jail Road, MVP Colony, and Seethammadhara. The anticipated rental costs, estimated between Rs 50 and Rs 60 per square foot, are expect-



ed to be particularly appealing to smaller IT companies. Reports on the inspected buildings have been handed over to the government, and IT consulting firms are currently evaluating the properties, with agreements with building owners

spected to be finalised soon. The co-working model will serve businesses needing as little as 2,000 square feet of space. Consulting firms will provide furnished offices, power, and air conditioning, allowing companies to concentrate on their core activities. Many of these firms operate with teams of 10 to 20 employees and require basic amenities such as desks and shared meeting rooms. A single building could potentially accommodate 10 to 20 such

companies, fostering a collaborative business environment. "This plan is designed to

mirror the success of co-working spaces in major IT centres like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Noida," stated an industry insider familiar with the project. "It will offer a vital starting point for startups and

administration is actively searching for suitable private buildings, targeting a total area of 250,000 to 300,000 square feet. Officials have already examined roughly 10 potential sites, including locations in Botsa Square, VIP Road, Old Jail Road, MVP Colony, and Seethammadhara

small IT businesses, promoting innovation and growth in isakhapatnam."

The government's goal is to attract more IT companies to the city by providing affordable and well-equipped workspaces, thereby creating jobs and strengthening the local economy. This initiative is viewed as a crucial part of the State's wider strategy to establish Visakhapatnam as a leading IT

Vizag Police reintroduce Visitor Monitoring System

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to tackle escalating crime rates, the city police have reintroduced a digital platform for monitoring visitor activity in hotels and lodges. Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi announced the reactivation of the Visitor Monitoring System (VMS), a strategy initially launched during the tenure of former Commissioner CH Srikanth, as a critical component of their wider crime prevention

The system is designed to closely examine the details of approximately 50,000 individuals who stay in the city's more than 1,000 lodging establishments daily, ranging from high-end hotels to budget accommodations. This initiative aims to establish a strong digital surveillance network to bolster public safety. "Our priority is the safe-ty and security of our commu-nity," the Commissioner emphasised. "This system will deliver essential data to help us identi-fy and apprehend offenders

before they can commit crimes."
The VMS utilises a specialised mobile application with secure logins for hotel manageSystem examines details of people who stay in the city's lodging establishments daily



ment, enabling the real-time registration of guest information, including arrival and departure times. This information is then accessible to the police, facilitating the rapid identification of known criminals or potential suspects. While hotels have traditionally kept guest logs, the VMS seeks to modernise this process, providing a centralised database for police

However, the system fell into disuse under previous administrations, largely due to oversight and inconsistent enforcement. Commissioner Bagchi is now leading the effort to revitalise it, assigning the Crime Branch

the responsibility of ensuring consistent data uploads. "The system demonstrated significant effectiveness when it was originally put into operation," an anonymous police source revealed. "Its abandonment was a lost opportunity. We believe its reintroduction will greatly improve our ability to monitor and control criminal activity."

Hotel operators are directed to maintain accurate records and cooperate with police inspections, with penalties for noncompliance.

The initiative has triggered privacy concerns among some residents. "While I recognise the need for security measures, I am concerned about how this data will be handled," expressed Sneha Reddy, a local student. Police officials have reassured the public that the system will be used responsibly and in line with data protection laws. "We are aware of the privacy concerns and want to assure the public that rigorous protocols are in place to protect data," a senior police official stated.





Civet strays to residential colony, captured

PNS ■ GUNTUR

One of the endangered species 'civet' was found in a residential colony in Tadepalli on Sunday

Forest officials said that the civet strayed into the residential colony located on Mugguroad in Tadepalli. The civet entered into the house of Gottuula Lazar. YSRCP SC Cell former president Mudigonda Prakash informed the forest officials about the civet straying into the residential colony.

The forest officials rushed there, caught the civet, and shifted it to the veterinary hospital to provide the required medical treatment. The forest officials said that the civet would be released into the forest. The civet is facing extinction and is one of the endangered species.

Govt committed to welfare of hostel students: Minister

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy has urged students to draw inspiration from Dr B.R. Ambedkar and strive for academic excellence. Addressing a virtual meeting with Intermediate and Class 10 students from social welfare hostels on Sunday, he emphasised the government's commitment to their welfare and education.

The Minister announced that Rs 150 crore had been sanctioned for repairing social welfare hostels across the state and enhancing facilities. He also revealed plans for constructing new hostels, including a girls' hostel at Santapet for Rs 6.50 crore, a boys' hostel is constructed by the same and the s tel in Santhanuthalapadu for Rs 2 crore, and girls' hostels in Chimakurthy and Ongole at Rs 2 crore each. Temporary arrangements were being made at Parivartan Bhavan in Sakkubayamma College to accommodate students until the new buildings were com-

Prakasam district has been allocated Rs 13 crore for hos-



tel repairs, he said, adding that Dr B.R. Ambedkar's statues would be installed in all social welfare hostels. He highlighted the government's focus on providing quality education, nutritious meals, and essential amenities such as RO water plants, blankets, and towels. The Minister reaffirmed Chief Minister N. Chandrababu

Naidu's vision of ensuring social welfare hostel students receive education on par with corporate institutions. He assured that all-in-one guides had been provided for Class 10 students, and tutors were appointed wherever necessary. Stressing that the govern-

ment acts as a guardian for hostel students, he instructed

officials and wardens to closemonitor students and help them achieve top grades. Social Welfare Officer N. Lakshma Laik stated that 7,274 students were staying in 61 pre-matric and 20 postmatric hostels in the Prakasam district, including 911 Class 10 students and 916 Intermediate students.

GRADUATE MLC POLL

All set for counting of votes today



PNS FI URU

All arrangements have been made for the counting of votes for the MLC graduates' constituency elections, scheduled to begin on Monday, District Collector K. Vetri Selvi said on

The counting will take place on the CR Reddy Engineering College campus. The Collector, accompanied by Joint Collector P. Dhatri Reddy, inspected the counting centre and reviewed the arrangements with officials.

Speaking on the occasion, she stated that all officials and

staff involved in the counting process had undergone extensive training to ensure accuracy. The first phase of training was held at the Collectorate, while a second round of practical training was conducted at the counting hall.

The Collector confirmed that the counting would commence at 8 a.m. on Monday. A total of 2,18,902 votes were cast in the election, and the counting process is expected to take 2-3 days. To facilitate smooth operations, 700 staff members have been deployed in three shifts.

She informed that 28 tables

have been set up for the counting, which will be conducted in 17 rounds under tight security. Duty passes have been issued to the counting staff, and agents have been provided with ID cards. No one will be allowed inside the counting centre without proper authorization, and mobile phones are strictly prohibited.

The Collector also instructed APEPDCL SE Salman Raju to ensure an uninterrupted power supply during the counting. Additional SP N. Suryachandra Rao, DRO V. Visweswara Rao, and other officials were present.

Heavy rush of devotees at Durga Temple

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam, located atop Indrakeeladri, witnessed a heavy rush of devotees on Sunday. In response, temple authorities made special arrangements to ensure a

smooth darshan experience, ple management arranged including providing drinking water in queue lines and organising crowd management measures. Many devotees performed special pujas to goddess Durga, with a significant number participating in the Arjitha Seva. The tem-

separate queue lines to regulate the large crowd.

Additionally, temple authorities distributed Anna Prasadam and Laddu Prasadam to devotees as part of the temple's ongoing ser-

SP inaugurates newly built Podili Cl's office

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Superintendent of Police (SP) AR Damodar inaugurated the newly constructed Podili Circle Inspector's office on Sunday.

The old office, originally built in 1940 during the British era, had become dilapidated. The new building, equipped with modern facilities, was formally inaugurated by the SP. He inspected the premises, reviewing the new furniture, computers, waiting hall, and reception centre.

Speaking on the occasion, the SP stated that the office has been designed to create a better working environment for staff and improve service delivery to the public. He urged police personnel to make the best use of the upgraded facil-



ities, adopt modern crime control methods, and provide effi-

He emphasised the importance of courteous interac-

tions with victims and professionalism in maintaining law and order. Highlighting the

police department's efforts in crime prevention and public safety, he called for greater public cooperation to make the region crime-free.
Later, the SP hoisted the

national flag at the Circle

Former Circle Inspector Raghavendra, current CI Venkateswara Rao, and several staff members, including Head Constables Ameer and Srinivasulu, Constable Nayak, Home Guards Khalil and Shanu, and Women Police Nagalakshmi, were felicitated with certificates of appreciation for their role in expediting the office's renovation.

Additional SP (Admin) K. Nageswara Rao, AR Additional SP Ashok Babu, DSPs, and other officials were present at

100 probationary SIs join duty in Eluru Range

Eluru Range Inspector General (IG) GVG Ashok Kumar on Sunday handed over appointment letters to 100 probationary Sub-Inspectors (SIs) who have completed their training at the Anantapur Police Training College.

Congratulating the newly inducted officers, the IG urged them to serve with discipline, honesty, transparency, and accountability. He advised them to perform their duties fearlessly and impartially, ensuring justice for victims and strict action against offend-

He emphasised that their commitment to duty would enhance the reputation of the police force and improve public service delivery. Among the 100 probationary SIs, 68 are male, and 32 are female officers.



CM's remarks violate Constitution: Shailajanath

PNS ANANTAPUR

Former minister Shailajanath has strongly criticised Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, alleging that his recent remarks violate the Constitution of India. He asserted that the Chief Minister's statements contradict the oath taken during his swearing-in and accused him of lowering the dignity of the office.

Shailajanath questioned the justification behind denying welfare and development benefits to workers of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). He emphasised that the legacy of inclusive welfare, irrespective of caste, religion,



or political affiliation, was established by former chief minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy and continued by YS Jagan Mohan

He urged Naidu to draw lessons from Jagan Mohan

ers to perform their duties with integrity and impartiality. He also criticised the Chief Minister and his cabinet for allegedly acting out of personal animosity.

The former minister accused leaders of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) coalition of making derogatory remarks against Jagan Mohan Reddy and his family on social media. Despite these alleged offences, he claimed that the police had not taken any action. Questioning the neutrality of law enforcement, he asked, "Is the law a mere relative of the TDP coali-Reddy's governance, stating that



Car fatally knocks down morning walker

PNS TIRUPATI

A morning walker was killed and another critically injured when a car knocked them down at Chennuru village in Guduru rural mandal on Sunday.

Police said that the deceased Alluru Murali (57) and C Ramana Reddy were walking on the road. A speeding car

knocked them down, killing

Murali instantaneously. Ramana Reddy was critically injured and was admitted to the GGH in Gudur and later he was shifted to the Apollo Hospital in Nellore where his condition is said to be very critical. The police registered a case and shifted the body of Murali to the GGH for

MP to promote women, youth in self-employment

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Under the directives of MP Kesineni Sivanath, the National Institute of Rural Development Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) has been actively working towards comprehensive rural development.

As part of this initiative, Panchayat Champions who have undergone training at NIRDPR launched development programmes in Pedda Thanda village on Sunday.

A meeting was held with DWCRA women and local villagers to discuss various aspects of self-employment

and rural development.

NTR district NIRDPR Programme Coordinator Songa Sanjay Varma and A Konduru mandal party president Gaddi Krishna Reddy stressed MP Kesineni Sivanath's vision of trans forming 295 villages within his parliamentary con-stituency through holistic development.

They highlighted the importance of self-employment and explained how cottage industries can be established and marketed effectively.

Panchayat Champions were tasked with supporting villagers in these endeav-

TTD EO reviews steps for 'Vontimitta Brahmotsavam'



PNS KADAPA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Executive Officer J Syamala Rao inspected the preparations for the annual Brahmotsavam at Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple in Vontimitta, Kadapa district, scheduled from April 6 to 15, alongside the state festival of Sri

Sita Rama Kalyanam. Accompanied by Kadapa District Collector Dr Cherukuri Sridhar, SP EG Ashok Kumar, TTD JEO Veerabrahmam, and other officials, the EO reviewed the temple premises, Kalyana Vedika, and surrounding areas on Saturday evening. He later conducted a review meeting to assess the progress of arrange-

Syamala Rao instructed officials to complete all development works at the temple by the end of March and ensure the Kalyana Vedika is well-prepared. He emphasised close

coordination between TTD and district authorities for smooth conduct of the event and assured that he would review progress every 15 days. He directed officials to wide-

ly publicise the event in Kadapa and Annamaiah districts through the 'Prachara Ratham'. Engineering and other departments were asked to follow the checklist for Brahmotsavam preparations and make adequate arrangements for devotees, particularly for the celestial Kalyanam on April 11.

With over one lakh devotees expected to attend, he stressed the need for efficient crowd management, traffic regulation, and timely distribution of 'Annaprasadam', drinking water, and buttermilk, considering the summer heat. District and TTD officials were instructed to conduct regular department-wise reviews to

Former Union Energy Secretary slams budget for ignoring Uttarandhra

Calls for urgent government action in irrigation and development projects in North Srikakulam

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Former Union Energy Secretary EAS Sharma has voiced strong disapproval of the recently unveiled Andhra Pradesh budget for the 2025-26 fiscal year, citing its failure to address the critical developmental needs of the Uttarandhra region, particularly in Ichchapuram, Srikakulam dis-

In a letter addressed to Chief

Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday, Sharma voiced "deep disappointment," citing the budget's failure to address crucial developmental needs. He reminded the Chief Minister of the State's obligations under Section 46 of the 2014 agreement, which mandates special financial assistance for Uttarandhra's progress.

Sharma reiterated concerns from a previous letter, emphasising the urgent need for the Veredu" project, sanctioned by the Vamsadhara Tribunal, to support economically disadvantaged areas. He blamed the State vernment's "lack of diligence" for delays in Supreme Court proceedings, hindering project res-

olution. He argued that timely intervention with the Odisha Chief Minister could have facilitated a bilateral agreement, preventing the loss of 23.6 TMC of vital drinking water for northern Srikakulam mandals. This water, he asserted, would have significantly boosted agricultural outHe further highlighted the six-year delay of the Vamsadhara and Bahuda river linkage project, which would have secured irrigation for vast farmland. Sharma lamented the unfulfilled hopes of the region's residents following the formation of the new coalition government.

Addressing acute irrigation

challenges in North Srikakulam's underdeveloped mandals, Sharma pointed to the mismanagement of 6,589 minor irrigation projects and 1,800 tanks, some neglected for over five years. This neglect has deprived 260,000 acres of agricultural land of essential irrigation water. Sharma criticised the budget

for failing to prioritise these projects, causing distress among residents of Ichchapuram and other marginalised areas. He urged the State government to allocate immediate funding for vital irrigation infrastructure in northern Srikakulam, ensuring sustainable growth and pros-





ACROSS THE STATES



Trishul Yatra underway in UP to reach Lucknow today

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



Two Indians, one Nepali held for trafficking drugs

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



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

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

Bodies of 3 more missing workers recovered from avalanche site

PNS DEHRADUN (UTTARAKHAND)

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

UKD-AVALANCHE-SURVIVORS

Came to senses BRO worker Jagbir Singh came to his

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

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



PM Modi offers prayers at Somnath temple

PNS GIR SOMNATH

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

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

district during the day.

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

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

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

efforts, added the release.

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

PNS KARNATAKA

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

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

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



ing" formula. I have not put any condition on any one and there is no need to put any condition. I'm a Karyakarta, I work according to what the party tells me. Putting conditions or black-

mailing is not in my blood. I'm

a loyal Congress worker," Shivakumar said, in response

he had apparently put some conditions on party leaders. Speaking to reporters here, he said, "If anyone, let them be from any party, questions my dedication to the Congress party and the Gandhi family,

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

ambition to become the CM.

to a question on speculation about his visit to Delhi and that

Illegal structures built by drug smugglers demolished

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

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

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

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

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



Omar Abdullah chairs meeting of alliance partners

PNS JAMMU

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

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

'Regional commander'

PNS CHATRA (JHARKHAND)

outfit arrested

of Maoist

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

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

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

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

Private lunar lander Blue Ghost aces moon touchdown

Oppn to boycott of tea party on assembly session

PNS MUMBAI

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

Opposition parties in

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



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

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

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

ing bloc. Speaking to reporters

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

Activists of rival Shiv Sena

Build hospitals along expressways: UP CM to officials

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

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

The chief minister issued the



directions during a meeting of the State Road Safety Council that was attended by ministers, senior bureaucrats, divisional commissioners, district magistrates, police commissioners, and superintendents of police.

According to an official statement, Adityanath said in 2024, Uttar Pradesh recorded 46,052 road accidents, leading to 34,600 injuries and over 24,000 deaths.

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

factions face off in Thane

PNS ■ THANE

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

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

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

ing to a heated exchange of

Gangster held, weapons seized: Punjab Police

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

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

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



miles (360,000 kilometers) founded a decade ago — the "You all stuck the landfirst private outfit to put a ing. We're on the moon," Firefly's Will Coogan, chief spacecraft on the moon without crashing or falling over. engineer for the lander, report-Even countries have faltered, ed. An upright and stable landwith only five claiming success:

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

Blue Ghost — named after a rare US species of fireflies had its size and shape going for it. The squat four-legged lander stands 6-foot-6 (2 metres) tall and 11 feet (3.5 metres) wide, providing extra stability,

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

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

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

PNS CHANDIGARH

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

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

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

Besides, 45 grams of heroin was also recovered from his



possession, he said.

the state.

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

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

He said the accused was to

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

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

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

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

A clash of diplomacy and dignity

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

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



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

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



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

A new era for rural revival and inclusive growth

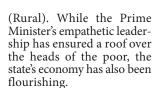


With a sharp focus on strengthening infrastructure and boosting holistic rural development, the UP budget underscores a visionary and inclusive agenda

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Minister of UP; views are personal)

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



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

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

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

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

To date, this device has been successfully used in 48 cases to repair blockages in brain arteries, preserving brain function throughout.

Dr Bedi refined his surgical skills in advanced cardiovascular techniques at Escorts Hospital in Sydney, where he managed cases using wholebody cooling (hypothermia) to preserve organ function. At the conference, the technique received an enthusiastic response from 1,700 national and international expert

Dr Rajneesh Malhotra, innovation. Dr Bedi's com-Cardiac Director at Max Hospitals, expressed particular enthusiasm, suggesting that the technique be applied to more clinical cases to further safeguard patients' brain function. He noted that innovations like this empower Heart Institute and St Vincent Indian surgeons to tackle

cases that might otherwise

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

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

> (The author is a columnist; views are personal)

FINDING FUNDS FOR FREEBIES

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

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

Vinod Johri | Delhi

SEBI GETS NEW CHAIRMAN Madam— Tuhin Kanta Pandey, the former Finance and Revenue Secretary, was

appointed as the new chairman of the SEBI. The new appointment is crucial as the for-

Decriminalise Indian politics

t is with reference to the editorial "Lawbreakers as Lawmakers." It is time to eradicate the influence of criminality in Indian politics. The rising number of elected representatives with criminal backgrounds in Parliament and State Assemblies is a matter of deep concern to all law-abiding and right-minded citizens. The increasing trend is dangerous and has steadily been eating into the vitals of democratic polity along with the growing corruption of a humongous

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

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

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

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

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

P Victor Śelvaraj | Tirunelveli

US-UKRAINE TALKS FAIL

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

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

Gopalaswamy J | Chennai

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FIRST COLUMN

DEALING WITH EXAM ANXIETY

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



SAKSHI SETHI

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

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



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

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

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Is Forest Rights Act driving deforestation?



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

DEVASTATED, DEGRADED AND THERE ARE FORESTS IN MEDHA LEKHA GRAM SABHA WHERE ALL BAMBOO

CLUMPS WERE CLEARED IN ONE STROKE IN 2012

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are patches of bamboo forests in Medha Lekha Gram Sabha where all bamboo clumps were cleared in one stroke in 20 Forest officers were physically prevented from entering the area. Bamboo has not responded well to the clear feeling. The fresh regeneration is bushy and does not yield any usable bamboo culm. It yielded certain culms every four years when it was managed by the Forest Department.

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

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

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

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

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

ensure balanced growth. A New Era: The Phygital Approach



SAMEER MATHUR

Phygital combines the tangible benefits of traditional systems with the efficiency of digital technology, creating a hybrid framework that enhances accessibility, empowers local businesses, and fosters inclusive growth. In rural regions, where infrastructural deficits and resource limitations persist, phygital strategies are not about replacing established methods but rather integrating them with modern digital solutions. This approach is proving transformative across key sectors such as banking, commerce, agriculture, healthcare, and public services.

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

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

nience with physical touch-

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

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



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

Reinvigorating Rural Commerce

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MONEY MATTERS



Purabi Dairy inks pact with NDDB, to double output

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



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

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



infrastructure and for general corporate purposes.

Wave Group, Agristo to invest Rs 750 cr in UP

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

Court orders FIR against ex-Sebi chief, 5 others

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

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

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

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



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

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

status report (of the case) within 30 days. The Sebi said it "would be

initiating appropriate legal steps to challenge this order and remains committed to ensuring due regulatory com-

pliance in all matters".

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

> believe in hard work. Indians must work hard, whether it's 80

hours or 90 hours a week. If

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

'We have made it fashion-



Money 08

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

debate on working

hours, India's G20

Sherpa said Japan,

South Korea and

China have achieved

through a strong work ethic and suggested

economic success

that India must

cultivate a similar

mindset to build a

world-class economy

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

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

economy.
"I strongly

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During the recent visit of Prime

India and the US announced their commitment to more than double the two-way commerce to USD 500 billion by 2030 and negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral

Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025. Last month, the minister stated that India and the US are committed to increasing bilateral trade to USD 500 billion and negotiating a "strong" trade agreement Donald Trump has announced plans to impose higher tariffs against India. Tariffs are import duties imposed and collected by the government and paid by

the companies to bring foreign goods into the country. Earlier, Goyal said the two countries can

offer concessions and duty reductions as their economies complement each other. Normally in a free trade agreement, two

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

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

PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

that the second SFIO Report fully admissible and can be



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

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

Deloitte Haskins and Sells

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

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

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

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

passed last week.

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

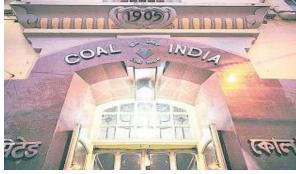
PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

This also helps to reduce the financial burden for NPS



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

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

During the ongoing financial year, CIL supplied about output.

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

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

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

PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



Framework to tap fisheries in A&N, Lakshadweep

PNS NEW DELHI

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

Ministry said on Sunday. The discussions focused on the need to train local communities and enhance infrastructure, an official state-

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

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

'Yawning wealth gap widening inequalities in China'

PNS BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

sumption essential to halt the economic slowdown grew by just 3.5 per cent last year, a rate that was slower than the 5 per cent rise in GDP, suggesting that the income and wealth gaps were holding back spendng.

The growing inequality was

As a result, the overall con-

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

what's brewing?

Tiger Shroff unleashes a fiercer Ronnie in Baaghi 4 poster



n the occasion of Tiger Shroff's 35th birthday, the makers of Baaghi 4 treated fans to a gripping new poster, offering a glimpse of the actor in a more intense and ruthless avatar. The latest look at the film was unveiled by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment (NGE), heightening the excitement around the fourth installment of the blockbuster action franchise.

The poster, shared on social media, features Tiger's character, Ronnie, bloodied and battle-worn, staring fiercely into the camera with a cigarette in his mouth. The bold tagline on the poster reads, "This time he is not the same," hinting at a major shift in his character's journey.

Sharing the poster on his Instagram, Tiger reflected on how the *Baaghi* franchise has shaped his career, calling it the foundation of

his action-hero image. He wrote, The franchise that gave me an identity and allowed me to express my eagerness to prove myself as an action hero... is now the franchise that is changing my identity. He's definitely not the same this time, but I hope you guys accept him the way you did 8 years ago."

The electrifying transformation has already caught the attention of industry peers. Arjun Kapoor commented, "Aatank" with a fire emoji, while Mouni Roy called it "Bestttt" with heart emojis. Director-choreographer Remo D'Souza also hyped up the poster with multiple fire emoiis.

Bringing his expertise in highoctane action, acclaimed Kannada filmmaker A. Harsha helms *Baaghi* 4. Known for delivering mass entertainers like *Bhajarangi* (2013) and Vajrakaya (2015), Harsha's signature style promises to take the franchise to new heights.

Produced by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, Baaghi 4 also stars Bollywood veteran Sanjay Dutt in a pivotal role. The action thriller is set to hit cinemas on September 5, 2025.

With Tiger's evolved persona, intense action, and a fresh directorial vision, Baaghi 4 is shaping up to be one of the most awaited action spectacles of the year. Fans can expect a darker, grittier and more brutal Ronnie than ever before.

Typecast again? Bobby Deol opens up about getting only villainous roles



Bobby Deol is riding high on the success of Ek Badnaam Aashram Season 3 Part 2, but along with the praise, he finds himself at an interesting crossroads in his career. The actor, once known for his romantic and action-hero roles, has successfully reinvented himself with powerful negative characters. However, he now admits that this transformation has led to a new

challenge—typecasting.
In a latest interview, Deol credited filmmaker Prakash Jha for changing the course of his career by casting him as the controversial godman Baba Nirala in Aashram. "At that stage in my career, few believed in my ability to play a dark, intense character except for Prakash Jha. He saw something in me that others didn't and that changed everything," he shared.

Bobby Deol has taken the

industry by storm with his menacing on-screen personas. From playing the sinister Baba Nirala in Aashram to the ruthless antagonist in Animal, he has proved his versatility time and again. His performances in Race 3, Love Hostel and the upcoming *Kanguva* further solidify his place as a formidable villain.

The actor admits that playing these roles is both thrilling and demanding. "There's a unique challenge in playing a negative character. You have to make the audience love to hate vou and that's not easy," he explained.

While Deol appreciates the recognition his performances have garnered, he also acknowledges the downside. "I've started getting only villainous roles now. don't mind playing negative characters, but I also want to explore other shades. It's not about being the lead hero-it's about variety."

Despite his concerns about typecasting, Deol continues to challenge himself. He shared that his current projects push him bevond his comfort zone, requiring significant effort to bring

depth to his performances.

With Ek Badnaam Aashram Season 3 Part 2 now streaming on Amazon MX Player, Bobby Deol's evolution as an actor remains a fascinating journey. Whether he continues to embrace the dark side or ventures into new territory, one thing is certain—he has firmly re-established himself as a force to be reckoned with in Bollywood.









Lookbook

Renowned actors, celebrated designers and influential personalities gathered to support **Sussanne Khan's vision** with The Charcoal Project, making it a glamorous evening filled with style and elegance. The store is its second retail gallery in Hyderabad, following in the footsteps of their success in Mumbai. This also marks an exciting collaboration, renowned Interior **Designer Gauri Khan** joins forces with Sussanne Khan with a dedicated floor showcasing products from her eponymous label Gauri





made him regret producing *Dangerous* cinger Mika Singh has made a shocking writer, with Bhushan Patel helming the kissing scenes. Suddenly, she was Mika Singh's candid remarks have stirred project. throwing tantrums, saying she won't Things changed when Bipasha expressed do this or she won't do that," he said.

Mika Singh says Bipasha Basu's tantrums

revelation about his unpleasant Dexperience working with actor Bipasha Basu on the 2020 crime thriller *Dangerous*. In a latest interview, Mika claimed that Bipasha's attitude on set was problematic and even suggested that her current lack of work is a consequence of her behaviour.

Mika, who turned producer with Dangerous, initially intended to create a low-budget film primarily as a platform to showcase his music. However, things took an unexpected turn when Bipasha joined the project.

Reflecting on his experience. Mika shared that Dangerous was originally planned as a Rs 4 crore film. "I liked Karan a lot and wanted to produce a low-budget filmaround Rs 4 crore," he said. At the time, he couldn't afford filmmaker Vikram Bhatt as a director, so he brought him on board as a who had to feature in

interest in being part of the film. "I was considering another actress, but she wanted to be a part of it," Mika revealed. However, her involvement led to a significant budget spike. "The shoot was set in London, and the budget increased from Rs 4 crore to Rs 14 crore... And the drama created by Bipasha ensured that I would always regret getting into production," he added. According to Mika. Bipasha's onset behaviour made the production process difficult. "It was a team she was comfortable with and they were playing a couple,

The problems didn't end there. Mika also claimed that the dubbing process for the film was constantly delayed. "Someone always had a sore throat. If it was Bipasha who was sick at one time, it was Karan at another,"

curiosity about Bipasha Basu's side of the story. The actor, who has been away from films in recent years, has not yet responded to the allegations. Meanwhile, Dangerous, which was released on MX Player in 2020, received mixed reviews and failed to make a lasting impact Whether Bipasha will address Mika's claims remains to be seen, but his comments have certainly

reianited discussions about choices and past collaborations.

REALITY CHECK

You look tired!

Mind you, you look

tired all the time.

ARCHIE









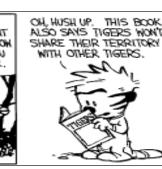
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ACROSS

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- 7 A tangle in your hair 8 Get
- 10 Sets fire to
- 13 Courage
- 16 Disappear

 Counterfeit 2 As much as is needed

5 Draw with this

4 Rip

- 17 Thought
- 18 Lines 19 A bird that is raced

for sport DOWN



6 Watch

15 Sunrise

9 Female tiger

11 Tremble with cold 12. A bed for a baby

14 Cold winter flakes

GINGER MEGGS







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> Monday March 3, 2025

"Crime beat wasn't just another projectwas great content I couldn't let go of'

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

TEJAL SINHA tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

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

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

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

to let go of."

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

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

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

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

The show also explores the moral dilemmas journalists face—

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

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

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

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

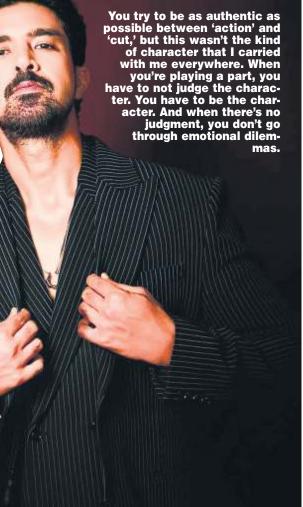
tionally draining. "It is called acting for a reason. You try to be as authentic as possible between 'action' and 'cut,' but this wasn't the kind of character that I carried with me everywhere." He adds that detachment is key: "When you're playing a part, you have to not judge the character. You have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

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

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

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

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



REVOLUTIONISING PARENTHOOD

The next frontier in IVF technology



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

Artificial intelligence (AI) in IVF

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

Non-invasive embryo assess-

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

Advances in cryopreservation

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

Stem cell and regenerative medicine

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

Gene editing and CRISPR tech-

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

Artificial wombs and uterine transplants

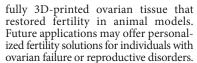
Artificial womb research aims to develop bioengineered environments for embryo growth outside the body. Though experimental, this technology could benefit individuals with uterine disorders or high-risk pregnancies. Uterine transplants have already enabled previously infertile women to carry pregnancies,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

Microfluidics and lab-on-a-chip

technologies Microfluidic technology, or "lab-on-a-chip," enhances sperm sorting, embryo culture and gamete handling. These miniaturised systems isolate healthy sperm with high motility and DNA integrity, improving fertilisation outcomes. Microfluidic embryo culture systems provide stable environments, increasing implantation success rates. 3D bioprinting in reproductive

medicine 3D bioprinting is being explored for creating artifi-

cial ovaries. endometrial tissue and reproductive structures. Scientists have success-



Personalised medicine and hor-

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

Telemedicine and remote IVF monitoring

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

Ethical and societal considera-

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

Steering India's defense manufacturing sector

PNS|HYDERABAD

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

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

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

Understanding risk, regulation and longterm sustainability has been a prerequisite for every industry I have entered, including land banking, lottery and now defense manufacture. Adaptability has served as my compass: as sectors change, so too must business owners. This flexibility will help defense manufacturers navigate intricate rules, promote innovation and stay in line with national security interests while upholding a sound business plan.

How do you strike a compromise between the need for technological advancement and the limitations imposed by laws and defense procurement

Defense innovation cannot function independently of policy frameworks; it must be strategic. At VTDS, we'll make investments in R&D that support India's procurement and defense regulations, guaranteeing adherence while advancing technology. Our strategy will entail tight coordination with defense installations, policymakers and research and development organisations to close the gap between state-of-the-art developments and practical regulatory requirements.

How do you want to establish India as a major participant in international ammunition supply chains?

Any defense force's foundation is its ammunition, which guarantees operational preparedness. The impact of ammunition manufacture is more immediate and scalable than that of high-tech weapons, which require extensive R&D cycles. India has the potential to develop into a major global center for the production of ammunition, which would increase strategic exports and lessen reliance on imports. By guaranteeing precision manufacturing, upholding international standards and encouraging future international cooperation, I hope to establish India as a reliable supplier.

Prior to his successful transition to land banking, your father, Karan Luthra, was referred to as the "Lottery King of India." What particular insights did you get from observing him handle company changes?

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

may change, the fundamentals of business—risk assessment, strategic foresight and adaptability—remain constant. Second, the secret to success is seeing opportunities where others see obstacles. His ability to move across industries with ease served as inspiration for my own strategy, which saw defense not just as a sector but also as a chance to make a significant contribution to national security while creating a long-lasting business.

What do you think are the main obstacles that Indian businesses still have to overcome in this industry?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vidarbha wins third Ranji Trophy title

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

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

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

Hazare Trophy. It is for the third time that Vidarbha have won the Ranji Trophy title, having done so earlier with their two consecutive wins in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons.

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

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

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



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

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

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

Overall, Vidarbha won nine of the 10

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Praggnanandhaa scores second victory in Prague Masters

PTI ■ PRAGUE

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

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

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

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

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

from what looked like a shaky French defense with black.

in the middlegame. Praggnanandhaa went for the

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

An exchange spree led to a very slight advantage for

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

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

with white. In the challengers' section, Divya Deshmukh played out a draw with Ma Qun of China and took her tally to

Keymer was caught off guard

on time and wasted

1.5 points from four games. This section is

Lydia Ko wins Singapore LPGA

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Lydia Ko finally conquered the LPGA's HSBC Women's World Championship, clinching her first title at her 11th attempt with a dominant four-stroke win over Ayaka Furue and Jeeno Thitikul in Sunday's final round. The 2024 Olympic gold

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

on Nos. 7 and 8, seizing control of the leaderboard from then Despite dropping two bogeys after the turn, the world No. 3 closed with a solid 69, sealing a 13-under-par 275 total at Sentosa Golf Club.

"I dreamt last night that I won but then I woke up, and I was

West Indies legend Sir Vivian Richards on

Sunday said Virat Kohli's

fighting spirit, energy, and

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

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

of Kohli's indomitable spirit

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

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

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

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

magnificent form, so, that is

true testament to the

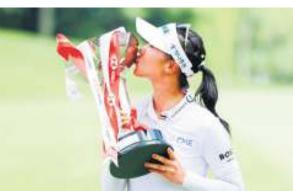
character that we are speaking

about," said Richards, a

governing council member for the International Master

League, during a virtual

PTI MUMBAI



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

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

interaction. "This is why I put him in the category of being great and legendary... Not all the time that you get players

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

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

Richards said if he was still

playing, he would love to have

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

game all the time. There's a

passion for that. There's not a

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

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

Kohli reminds me of myself

Asked about batters he

admires, the former West Indies captain said Kohli

"A lot of batsmen... Before you

reminds him of himself.

Kohli's energy on the field.

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

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

Kos previous best finish here was a lone second place in 2015.



Tendulkar, who has retired,"

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

had people like Sachin "I appreciate seeing guys who,



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Real Betis defeats Real Madrid 2-1 in Spanish league

PTI BARCELONA

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

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

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

down in the area. Madrid's loss left it level on points with Barcelona, which hosts Real Sociedad on Sunday. Atletico Madrid moved two points clear of them both at the top of the table after substitute having helped it win five midfielder was the most Julián Álvarez scored to secure Champions League titles before decisive player on the field at

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

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

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

Champions League round-of-16 game against Atletico. Isco torments old team Isco left Madrid three years ago,

he lost his starting job and then struggled to get off the bench. But Madrid might wish it had him back after the 32-year-old

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

coach, said. "They played better in the first 15 minutes and deserved their goal, but from there on it was our match."

Madrid was without Jude Bellingham, who was serving the second of a two-game suspension for cursing at a referee. Dani Ceballos was out with a leg injury, and Federico Valverde was recovering from an unspecified knock. Sixthplaced Betis likewise had including midfielders William Carvahlo and Marc Roca. Atletico takes advantage

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

all competitions since joining

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

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

Lukebakio rescues point for Sevilla Dodi Lukebakio continued to provide a bright spot in Sevilla's otherwise drab season by

scoring his 11th league goal in the 81st minute to secure a 1-1 several players on the injury list, draw with Rayo Vallecano.



'Cinema should inspire, not disgust':

Former vice president urges filmmakers

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

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

Comparing past and present films, Naidu noted that smuggling and criminal activities have been glorified in recent years. "I agree that cinema is a business, but at the same time, it

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



rather than physical intimacy.

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

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

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



Bhagyashri Borse in talks to star opposite



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

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

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

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

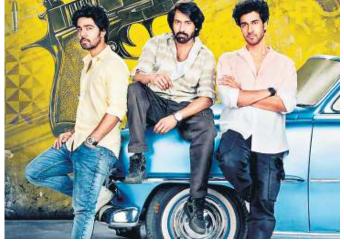
Despite a strong supporting cast, including Rao Ramesh and the return of Anshu Sagar (Manmadhudu fame), the film had several shortcomings. The poorly received songs and last-minute

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

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



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



MAD Square & Robinhood set for March 28 clash?

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

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

⊣he 2023 film *MAD*, made on release date with Nithiin's Robinhood. However, the producer clarified that there is no competition between the two films. "Since March 29 falls on Amavasya, our distributors felt it was best to advance the release, and we were happy to oblige. There was never any intention to cause a last-minute rescheduling. We wholeheartedly wish that March 28 will be a memorable day for Telugu cinema, with both *Robinhood* and *MAD Square* lighting up the big screens," the producer stated on social media. MAD Square is produced by Harika Suryadevara and Sai Soujanya, with Kalyan Shankar directing. The film stars Narne Nithiin, Sangeeth Shoban and Ram Nithin in lead roles, while Reba John features in a special song.

dhe much-awaited teaser of ence. Vishnu Manchu leads as Kannappa is finally out, offering Thinnadu, a fearless warrior who a visual spectacle packed with action, devotion, and high-stakes embarks on a journey of ultimate devotion to Lord Shiva. The teaser also gives a glimpse of Kajal Aggarwal and Preity Mukhundhan, drama. The teaser features an ensemble of big stars, including Prabhas, Akshay Kumar and Mohanlal, alongadding more star power to the film. side Vishnu Manchu and Mohan Babu. Shot extensively in the lush forests of New Zealand, *Kannappa* offers breathtaking visuals, blending Akshay Kumar takes on the divine role of Lord Shiva, while Prabhas appears as Rudra, promising an intense and visually stunning experimythology with cutting-edge action sequences and emotional storytelling.

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





After Pushpa 2, Allu Arjun prioritises Atlee over Trivikram?

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

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

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

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