


# the pioneer

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**J&K resolution on special status not rejected:**  
**CM Abdullah**



**CRAFTING SONIC WORLDS ACROSS GENRES**  
**GV PRAKASH**



**Kingston will transport audiences into a magical world, says**  
**GV PRAKASH**

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer

**"Bhatti Vikramarka, Uttam Kumar Reddy and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy eyed the CM seat and these ministers are not allowing the CM to work. Uttam is putting checks on CM Revanth Reddy everywhere. Uttam informing everything to Delhi high command. Uttam is the reason for the appointment of Meenakshi Natarajan as AICC incharge of Telangana. I know very well about Uttam and about his master plans. Earlier, CM only used to pay tax to Delhi; however, now four are paying tax to Delhi"**

**- Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, BJLP leader**

**DON'T MISS...**  
**Miraculous escape for 40 bus passengers**

Forty passengers narrowly avoided serious injury on Monday when their private bus collided with an electric pole on the ghat road leading to the Annaram hill shrine. The passengers, part of a marriage party, were returning to Rajahmundry after visiting the Satyanarayana Swamy temple atop Annaram hill. While descending the ghat, the bus driver reportedly lost control as a surge, causing the vehicle to veer off the road and strike an electric pole. The impact brought the bus to a halt, leaving...

**India, Belgium for defence ties**

India and Belgium on Monday discussed the possibility of bilateral maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and looked at ways to enhance defence industrial ties. Ways to bolster India-Belgium defence engagement figured prominently at a meeting between Belgium's Princess Astrid and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The two sides also agreed to explore the setting up of an institutionalised defence cooperation mechanism between the two nations. Belgian Defence Minister...

**'Sufficient wheat stock to meet PDS'**

Union Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra on Monday said the government has sufficient wheat stock to meet the requirement of welfare schemes and for market interventions to keep prices under check. He said the Centre has offloaded 30 lakh tonnes of wheat to flour millers and processors this fiscal year under the open market sale scheme (OMSS) and stressed that benefits should be passed on to consumers. In a written message read at a conference organised by Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India...

**New Zealand to face SA in semifinal**

Senior batter Tom Latham said New Zealand will take confidence from their recent win over South Africa in the tri-series when they face the same opponents in the semifinal of the Champions Trophy (CT) in Lahore on Wednesday. New Zealand lost to India by 44 runs in their final Group A match here on Sunday but Latham said it would have no bearing on the semifinal. Recently, New Zealand successfully chased 305 against South Africa in Lahore and then went on to win the tri-series, beating Pakistan...

**Naidu calls for 100% digital literacy in State**

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Monday directed officials to strive towards achieving total digital literacy in Andhra Pradesh, ensuring that every citizen becomes digitally literate. Reviewing public perception and the Real-Time Governance Society (RTGS) at the State Secretariat, Naidu emphasised the need to promote WhatsApp governance, which enables citizens to access government services without visiting offices. He noted that people were yet to fully adapt to this system and instructed officials to take steps to encourage its widespread use.

He urged District Collectors to create awareness in their respective districts through village and ward secretariats. He stressed that WhatsApp governance allows not only access to public services but also facilitates lodging complaints and appeals. A new feature will soon be introduced to enable illiterate citizens to register grievances through voice messages, he added.

**Govt eases building permit norms**



Minister P Narayana has announced a major reform in the State's building permit process. Under the new system, buildings up to 18 metres in height or five storeys can obtain construction permits through self-certification, eliminating the need for approval from town planning officials. However, property owners must submit the required documents in the presence of registered local town planners, engineers, or architects to complete the self-certification process. The minister noted that while the government had issued a GO last month introducing this system, technical issues caused delays in its implementation. He said the new approach aims to streamline the approval process and ensure faster issuance of building permits. The necessary software for self-certification-based approvals is now available on the APDPMS portal. The minister further stated that the system will benefit approved layouts, village layouts, circulation plans, and the reconstruction of buildings constructed before 1985.

Officials briefed Naidu that public satisfaction with the quality of food at Anna Canteens stands at 94 per cent. He directed them to address any concerns raised by citizens to maintain high standards. Ministers P. Narayana, K. Atchen Naidu, Vangalapati Anitha, and Kondapalli Srinivas, along with Chief Secretary Vijayanand and other senior officials, attended the meeting.

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Monday virtually inaugurated Hero Future Energies' (HFE) Green Hydrogen plant at Rockman Industries in Tirupati, marking a significant step towards Andhra Pradesh's clean energy ambitions. Congratulating Hero Future Energies and Rockman Industries on the initiative, the Chief Minister said that Andhra Pradesh, with its strong industrial base and progressive energy policies, is poised to lead India's green hydrogen revolution. "This project aligns with our vision of leveraging abundant renewable resources and growing industrial demand to build a sustainable energy future," he said.

Naidu reiterated the State's commitment to the Swarnandhra Vision 2047, which aims to establish Andhra Pradesh as a global hub for renewable energy and green hydrogen production. He stressed that the government is determined to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and support India's Net-Zero by 2070 goal, contributing to energy security while cutting crude oil imports.

**'AP will be green hydrogen hub'**

**CM NAIDU VOWS TO REDUCED DEPENDENCE ON FOSSIL FUELS**

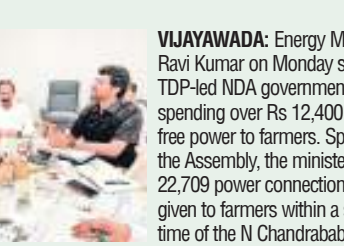
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- Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu virtually inaugurates Hero Future Energies' Green Hydrogen plant at Rockman Industries in Tirupati.
- The project aligns with the Swarnandhra Vision 2047 for renewable energy development.
- The government is committed to reducing fossil fuel dependence and supporting India's Net-Zero 2070 goal.
- Andhra Pradesh's Integrated Clean Energy Policy focuses on large-scale renewable energy capacity and attracting significant investments.
- The Tirupati plant blends green hydrogen with PNG/LPG for industrial use, reducing carbon emissions.
- Hero Future Energies considers the project a key step in industrial decarbonisation.
- Rockman Industries reaffirms commitment to sustainable manufacturing.

**Free power to farm sector costs Rs 12,400 cr: Gottipati**



led government coming to power. "In total, 69,975 connections were sanctioned. On each power connection, the coalition government is spending Rs 2.6 lakh," Kumar told the House, adding that the erstwhile YSRCP government had 'destroyed' the power sector in the state.

**Notification for Mega DSC soon: Lokesh**



Lokesh announced the launch of the "Drugs: No Bro" campaign to educate students on the harmful effects of substance abuse. He also revealed plans to establish Eagle Clubs in schools, which will be activated after the Class 10 and Intermediate examinations to spread awareness. Regarding school infrastructure, Lokesh said Rs 3,000 crore would be required for constructing compound walls in government schools. The project will be implemented in phases using employment guarantee scheme funds and the 'Mana Badi Mana Bhavishyathu' initiative. He emphasised the government's commitment to improving school facilities, stating that schools rated one or two stars in a recent Mega Parent-Teacher Meeting would be upgraded with leak-proof buildings, benches, toilets, and drinking water.

**PRTU's Gade wins North AP Teachers' MLC poll**

**TDP candidates Alapati, Perabattula leading in Graduate constituencies**

In a setback to the coalition government, PRTU candidate Gade Srinivasulu Naidu emerged victorious in the Visakhapatnam-Vizianagaram-Srikakulam Teachers' constituency elections. Meanwhile, TDP candidate Alapati Rajendra Prasad is leading in the Guntur-Krishna Graduates' constituency, while TDP's Perabattula Rajasekhar is ahead in the West Godavari-East Godavari Graduates' constituency. Gade Srinivasulu Naidu secured 12,035 votes, defeating his nearest rival Raguvarma, who was backed by the TDP and Jana Sena. After nine rounds of counting, Naidu won



with the support of second-preference votes. A total of 19,813 votes were polled in the election. In the Guntur-Krishna Graduates' constituency, TDP's Alapati Rajendra Prasad led with 30,065 votes after the third round, while PDF candidate KS Lakshman Rao trailed by 7,403 votes. Counting is still in progress. In the West Godavari-East Godavari Graduates' constituency, TDP candidate Perabattula Rajasekhar was leading with over 18,000 votes against his closest rival, PDF candidate Didla Raghavulu, after the first round of counting. Meanwhile, the TDP extended its congratulations to Gade Srinivasulu Naidu on his victory in the North Andhra Teachers' MLC elections. TDP state president Palla Srinivas stated that the ruling coalition remains committed to addressing teachers' concerns and ensuring their voices are heard.

**Polls for 5 AP MLC seats set for March 20**

The Election Commission on Monday announced the biennial elections for five members of Andhra Pradesh's Legislative Council (MLCs), who will be elected by MLAs. The polling is scheduled for March 20. Four members of the state's Legislative Council are set to retire on March 29, while one seat has been vacant since March 15, 2024.

**Govt keen to stamp down ganja cultivation: Anitha**

Home Minister V. Anitha informed the State Assembly on Monday that the Andhra Pradesh government has taken significant steps to curb ganja cultivation and drug trafficking. Addressing questions during the Question Hour, she stated that a special initiative, 'Eagle', has been launched to combat the menace, with a dedicated budget allocation. The initiative is led by Minister for Education, Electronics, RTGS,



**White-collar job market sees 4% growth in Feb: Report**

The Indian white-collar job market maintained its growth momentum in February this year, recording a 4 per cent year-on-year increase, mainly led by recruitments in the Artificial Intelligence (AI-ML) and hospitality sectors, a report said on Monday. The job market has begun the new year on a positive note, reporting positive growth in both January and February. "Moreover, considering that February last year saw an 8 per cent de-growth, it looks even more promising this year around. While AI/ML hiring continues its buoyant trend, it is also encouraging to see sectors like Hospitality driving growth," Naukri Chief Business Officer Pawan Goyal said, quoting the Naukri JobSpeak Index report.

**Linemen backbone of power sector: Chief Secy**

The Andhra Pradesh government will observe Linemen Diwas on March 4 to recognise and honour the tireless efforts of linemen, who serve as the backbone of the power sector. Chief Secretary K Vijayanand emphasised the crucial role of linemen in ensuring uninterrupted power supply to households, agriculture, industries, and communities. Addressing AP Power Utilities ahead of Linemen Diwas, Vijayanand urged all power utilities to mark the occasion significantly. "Linemen are the unsung heroes of our power sector, working in challenging conditions to keep the electricity network running smoothly. Their dedication, commitment, and bravery deserve our highest recognition and appreciation," he said. He noted that Linemen Diwas, an



Vijayanand noted that Linemen Diwas, an initiative of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) under the Ministry of Power, will be observed nationwide on March 4 to honour the frontline workers of the Indian power sector. State and private transmission and distribution companies nationwide will participate in the celebrations.

initiative of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) under the Ministry of Power, will be observed nationwide on March 4 to honour the frontline workers of the Indian power sector. State and private transmission and distribution companies nationwide will participate in the celebrations. Vijayanand stressed the importance of safety practices in the power sector. "Ensuring the safety and well-being of our linemen is paramount. On this occasion, we call

for greater awareness and implementation of stringent safety protocols to prevent workplace accidents and safeguard these dedicated professionals." Recalling the dedication of linemen, he cited instances of their bravery, such as those in Sunnampadu and Devarapalli villages of Visakhapatnam district, where linemen worked on electric wires to restore power during heavy rains in July 2024. He also highlighted their crucial role in restoring power during the September 2024 floods in NTR, Krishna, Guntur, CRDA, and Ongole circles, as well as during cyclones Hudhud and Titli. "Despite severe weather conditions and immense risks, their unwavering dedication ensured the restoration of electricity in affected areas. Their selfless service exemplifies true heroism, and they deserve our deepest gratitude," Vijayanand said. He urged everyone to observe Linemen Diwas, pay tribute to these frontline workers, and pledge support for their safety, dignity, and well-being.



# Rayanapadu Rly Station being modernised with Rs12 crore

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rayanapadu Railway Station, near Vijayawada, is undergoing modernisation at a cost of Rs 12.13 crore under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS). It is among 53 railway stations in Andhra Pradesh under the South Central Railway (SCR) being redeveloped.

Rayanapadu, an 'NSG-5 category junction station, has three platforms and serves as a crucial stop for 20 trains. Located 9 km from Vijayawada Junction, it is strategically positioned on the Grand Trunk Route connecting Chennai, Balharshah, Nagpur, and New Delhi—one of the busiest railway corridors in the South Coast region. Known as the Vijayawada Bypass Station, it handles trains from Nagpur and Secunderabad (via Warangal)



to Visakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, and Kolkata without them entering Vijayawada Junction.

A railway release on Monday stated that Indian Railways is undertaking large-scale station upgrades to provide world-class passenger amenities.

Under ABSS, SCR is redeveloping 53 stations across Andhra Pradesh at a total cost of Rs 2,611 crore, aiming to transform them into regional growth centres.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for these station redevelopment

projects in August 2023 and February 2024. Additionally, major upgrades are underway at Tirupati and Nellore railway stations, while Tiruchanur Railway Station is being developed as a crossing station to ease the growing pilgrim traffic.

# AP ST Commission urges Forest Dept to expedite road clearances in tribal hamlets

## THE PIONEER IMPACT

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh State Commission for Scheduled Tribes is pressing the Forest Department to swiftly authorize road construction in the isolated hilltop villages of Buriga, China Konela, and other hamlets within the Anantagiri region of the Alluri Sitharama Raju (ASR) district.

Commission Chairman D.V.G. Sankar Rao is advocating for the utilization of Section 3(2) of the Recognition of Forest Rights Act-2006 to expedite the necessary

approvals. Following a report in The Pioneer, titled "Villagers demand urgent forest dept clearances for roads," published on Monday, the Commission has formally communicated with the Principal Chief Commissioner of Forests, located in Mangalagiri, and the ASR District Collector. The Commission's letter emphasizes that despite the state government's allocation of funds for these road projects, the Forest Department has yet to issue the required clearances.

The absence of adequate roads is causing significant hardship for the tribal residents, who are com-



Chairman D.V.G. Sankar Rao pushes for faster approvals under Forest Rights Act to ease hardships in ASR district

the critical nature of the situation, the Commission is demanding that forest officials accelerate the approval process. Additionally, they are recommending that forest clearances be granted for road development in all tribal areas where such permissions are essential, underscoring the vital role these roads play in enhancing the well-being of the tribal population.

The Commission's directive underscores the pressing necessity for infrastructure advancement in tribal territories, aiming to provide improved access and enhance the quality of life for those living in remote communities.



# Concerted efforts needed for child marriage-free society: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha has inaugurated a Candlelight Rally organised by the District Women's Development and Child Welfare Department to combat child marriage. The event took place at the Working Women's Hostel and Children's Home near the Civil Courts in Vijayawada on Monday. This rally was part of the celebrations for International Women's Day, during which the Women's Development and Child Welfare Department launched several special programmes in the city. Additionally, a signature campaign against child marriage was initiated.

In his address at the rally, Collector Dr Lakshminsha emphasised the need for a collaborative effort to eliminate child marriage. He stated that it is essential to raise awareness among the public about the detrimental effects of child marriages. He labelled child marriage as a social evil that not only obstructs the education, health, and development of girls, but also robs them of a promising future. He urged everyone in society to actively oppose child marriage.

Dr Lakshminsha called for a coordinated effort among officials from various departments, including Women's Development, Education, Health, and Police, to strictly enforce laws aimed at preventing child marriages and to support government programmes and policies. He stressed the importance of prioritising girls' education and working together towards empowerment across all sectors, including the economy.

# Botsa slams coalition for evading Oppn's questions

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council, Botsa Satyanarayana, has criticised the ruling coalition for failing to respond to the Opposition's questions and instead resorting to political counterattacks.

Addressing the media, Botsa accused the ruling parties of defaming the opposition whenever they raised public concerns, calling it an unacceptable tactic. He pointed out the government's contradictory stance — while asserting that the existing Secretariat and Assembly buildings are not temporary, they are simultaneously inviting tenders for new constructions. He described this as a clear example of duplicity and lack of credibility.

Botsa condemned Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's remarks on welfare schemes, terming them deplorable and unprecedented in independent India's history. He challenged the ruling party and the Chief Minister's Office to clarify their stance if they believed their statements were misrepresented, questioning why they hesitated to do so. He also noted that no Chief Minister had ever spoken in such a manner, arguing that welfare beneficiaries exist across all parties and should not be linked to political affiliations.

He alleged that the live broadcast of Council proceedings was halted under the pretext of technical issues when these matters were raised. On allegations of corrup-



tion in the Rushikonda constructions, Botsa dismissed them as baseless. He questioned how the government could clear bills at Rs 10,500 per square foot for temporary buildings if irregularities had occurred. He demanded an inquiry and strict action if any

wrongdoing was proven, criticising the government's evasive responses.

Accusing the ruling party of misusing the House for political gain and attempting to suppress the opposition, Botsa reaffirmed the Opposition's commitment to holding the

government accountable.

Recalling past governance, he said that during the previous TDP regime, a Rs 1.19 lakh crore plan was announced for Amaravati's development. However, under the YSRCP government, only Rs 6,000 crore was spent — Rs 2,000 crore from bonds, Rs 2,000 crore from the state budget, and Rs 2,000 crore as pending dues. He argued that constructing a capital with such ambitious estimates would take another five to six years, a financial burden the state could not afford at the time. He criticised the construction of temporary buildings at Rs 10,500 per square foot seven years ago as reckless, accusing the government of using defamatory tactics to silence opposition when unable to provide answers.



# MP discusses concerns of Vwada Auto Nagar industrialists

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) held a meeting with Auto Nagar industrialists on Monday to address their concerns, including the cancellation of Government Orders (GOs) No. 5 and 6, open land tax, and setback tax. During the meeting at his office, MP Kesineni contacted AP Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) Chairman Mantena Ramarao to facilitate further discussions with the industrialists. The representatives raised concerns over the impact of GO No. 5 and 6 and sought the MP's intervention for their revocation. They also urged a reduction in the steep

tax rates — 200% on open land and 150% on setbacks. APIIC Chairman Mantena Ramarao responded positively to their grievances.

Prominent industry representatives, including APMSSME Industries Association Honorary President Boyan Venkata Rao, President Donepudi Durgaprasad, General Secretary M. Ramachandra Rao, JRD Tata Industries Estate Society Chairman Vinod Babu, and Vijayawada Industrial Estate Manufacturing Association Secretary T. Nageswara Rao, participated in the meeting. Other attendees included G. Sambasiva Rao, P. Sriramaprasad, P. Ramesh Babu, and Amarnath.

# Revanth seeks fair share of Krishna waters to TG

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy urged Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil to allocate a fair share of Krishna waters to Telangana.

During a meeting in Delhi, Revanth pointed out that while 70% of the Krishna River basin lies in Telangana, the state gets only 34% of the water, while Andhra Pradesh, which has only 30% of the basin, gets 66%. He emphasised the need for justice in water allocation and pointed out that the existing formula is unfair. He also requested that the NDSA report on the Medigadda Barrage should be given to the state soon.

The Chief Minister demanded that the Centre should determine Telangana's net water share in the Godavari River before deciding on Andhra Pradesh's irrigation projects.

He accused the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) of bias, stating that Andhra Pradesh has been illegally drawing more water than allocated to it. This year too, Andhra Pradesh has taken more than its share, causing losses to Telangana,



the CM said.

We need strict monitoring to prevent violations, he asserted. He urged the Centre to install telemetry systems at all major Krishna River irrigation projects and offered Telangana's willingness to bear the cost if necessary.

Revanth also raised concerns about the delay in approving Telangana irrigation projects. He pointed out that despite submitting the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme in 2022, the Centre has been stalling approvals while clearing the Upper Bhadra project in Karnataka, which is still under judicial

review. Similarly, the Sitarama and Sammakka Sagar projects have not been granted permission. He requested the Central Water Commission (CWC) and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to speed up approvals for these projects.

Highlighting violations by Andhra Pradesh, the Chief Minister told Patil that AP had unilaterally designed the Godavari-Bankacharla Project without approval from the CWC, Godavari River Management Board (GRMB), or the KRMB.

He demanded that Telangana's share in the Godavari's net water flow

should be determined and approvals for Telangana's projects be granted without delay. He reminded the Centre that Telangana has already suffered due to Krishna delta ayacut adjustments and would not accept more injustice in the name of ayacut stabilisation.

Revanth stressed that Andhra Pradesh's Godavari-Bankacharla Project was never discussed in the Apex Council, where both state Chief Ministers are members. "We will not compromise on Telangana's water rights," he said.

He said the Union Minister said that the DPR of the Godavari Bankacharla Project was not submitted to them.

He urged the Centre to provide financial assistance under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) and PMRP-2024 for key projects, including the Palamuru-Rangareddy, Sitarama Lift Irrigation Scheme, Modi Kunta Vagu, Chanaka-Korata Barrage Distribution System and the Chinna Kaleshwaram (Mukteshwara) Lift Irrigation Project.

# Govt keen...

Continued from Page 1

Anitha criticised the previous government, alleging that ganja cultivation and trafficking had proliferated under its tenure. She revealed that a senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer has been appointed to head the 'Eagle' initiative, and 26 narcotic cells—one in each district—have been set up to tackle the issue effectively.

Highlighting the progress made, she said, "We have reduced the area under cannabis cultivation from 11,000 acres to just 100 acres. We have identified 20 hotspots across 375 villages in seven mandals and have taken steps to eliminate cultivation in these areas. Families previously dependent on ganja farming have been counselled and encouraged to switch to alternative crops, with 359 families successfully making the transition."

# Polls for 5 AP...

Continued from Page 1

"The Governor of the state of Andhra Pradesh is, hereby, pleased to call upon the Members of the Legislative Assembly of the state, to elect five members of the Legislative Council," said Chief Electoral Officer Vivek Yadav in the notification.

MLCs D Rama Rao, P Ashok Babu, B Tirumala Naidu and Y Ramakrishnu are set to retire on March 29 while MLC J Krishna Murthy's seat has been vacant since March 15, 2024.

# PRTU's...

Continued from Page 1

YSRCP leader Botsa Satyanarayana, however, termed the loss in the North Andhra Teachers' MLC elections as a setback for the TDP-Jana Sena coalition.

# Notification for...

Continued from Page 1

Criticising the previous government, Lokesh said 117 government orders (GOs) had negatively impacted education for underprivileged children, leading to a decline of 12 lakh students in government schools. He added that discussions were underway with public representatives and teacher organisations to explore alternatives to these GOs. The minister assured that pending works under the Nadu-Nedu programme were being reviewed for completion. He also pointed out that 80 schools in the Rampachodavaram constituency required infrastructural support, and the government was planning a special scheme to address their needs. Lokesh further announced plans to install CCTV cameras and lighting in schools within the next three months, urging members to support efforts to enhance facilities and improve star ratings under the Learning Excellence in Andhra Pradesh (LEAP) programme.

# Free power to farm...

Continued from Page 1

He said that nine hours of free power will be supplied for farmers soon under the PM-KUSUM scheme as per the directions of the CM, and added that 4.5 lakh power connections are required for farming in the southern state.

Kadapa MLA R. Madhavi appealed to Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha to address the indiscriminate sales of painkillers. Meanwhile, the home minister informed the House that illegal marijuana cultivation was reduced to 100 acres from 11,000 acres as part of the state government's efforts to crackdown on it completely. She noted that families used to growing marijuana are being counselled to take up other crops, among other initiatives. Later, Deputy Speaker K Raghurama Krishna Raju adjourned the House to Tuesday, following speeches praising the Rs 3.22 lakh crore budget for fiscal 2025-26.

**Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar**  
CORRIDGEM

Reference No. CM/CC/2024/07 dated: 03/02/2025  
Tender notice for Development of Project for Sports Complex and Commercial Shops under ECG at JV Centre N10 in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation on Build Operate and Transfer (BOT) Basis. Situated at Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Tender EE 2025, AMCA, 145331-1. Dated: 03/02/2025. Published in daily news paper and also on www.municipalcorp.org. As per the above reference. Schedule of bid opening process of last date of submission 28/02/2025 is changed and extended to 10/03/2025 upto 10:00 hrs. In case of any change in the schedule of opening of Technical Bid, and for further details will be published on www.municipalcorp.org portal. Rest of the conditions remains unchanged.

Municipal Corporation, CSMC

**TODAY ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Panchami: Mar 03 06:02 PM to Mar 04 03:16 AM  
Shashthi: Mar 04 03:16 PM to Mar 05 12:51 PM

Nakshatram: Bharani: Mar 04 04:29 AM to Mar 05 02:37 AM  
Krithika: Mar 05 02:37 AM to Mar 06 01:08 AM

Rahukalam: 3:23 PM to 4:51 PM

Yamagandam: 9:31 AM to 10:59 AM

Varjyam: 01:53 PM to 03:23 PM

Gulika: 12:27 PM to 1:55 PM

Amritakalam: 10:12 PM to 11:40 PM

Ahijit Muhurtham: 12:04 PM to 12:51 PM

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 37°C

Humidity: 65%

Sunrise: 6:23 AM

Sunset: 6:15 PM

Updated: March 4, 2025 5:00 PM

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# AP govt plans to host National Games in 2029

IGMC Stadium in Vijayawada being considered as the main venue

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government, led by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, is planning to host the National Games in 2029 to enhance sports infrastructure in the region. The government is considering primary venues in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Acharya Nagarjuna University in the Guntur district for the event. If the National Games are awarded to the State, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) is expected to allocate approximately Rs.200 crore for the development of sports facilities. Recently, PT Usha, the president of the IOA and a member of the Rajya Sabha, met with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to discuss this initiative. During the meeting, the CM expressed his willingness to host the National Games in 2029.

Since the State bifurcation, there has been a significant lack of sports infrastructure and proper grounds, causing various sports bodies to face difficulties in conducting tournaments. Hosting the National Games would help develop sports fac-



ilities in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, and Guntur.

The State government is considering the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada as the main venue for the National Games. Other potential venues in Vijayawada include the Dandamudi Rajagopala Rao Municipal Corporation Indoor Stadium, the Chennupati Ramakotaiah Municipal Corporation Indoor Stadium,

and the Makinani Basavapunniah Municipal Corporation Stadium.

Additionally, events may be held at the Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) Stadium and the Swarna Bharathi Stadium in Visakhapatnam, as well as at the Acharya Nagarjuna University grounds in Guntur. Also, there are some proposals to conduct the National Games in Kakinada and Tirupati. Previously, during the TDP

regime from 2014 to 2019, the State government planned to conduct the National Games. The Andhra Pradesh Olympic Association (APOA) filed a bid in 2016 with financial support from the State government; however, due to various reasons, no Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was executed between the APOA and the IOA, leading to the cancellation of the bid. According to regulations, it is the State Olympic Association's responsibility to file a bid for the National Games.

There has historically been a strained relationship between the Andhra Pradesh Olympic Association and the State government, as observed during the recent National Games held in Uttarakhand. The State government did not conduct meetings with the APOA concerning financial assistance, coaching camps, or the allocation of officials. Due to inadequate coaching and a poor relationship between the APOA and the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP), the State's contingent performed below expectations in national competitions.

# Tribal women fight for clean water

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

Women from the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) residing in Pedagaruvu village, part of Arla panchayat in Rolugunta mandal, have raised serious concerns over the persistent drinking water crisis in their hamlet. Home to just 13 families and 60 residents, Pedagaruvu faces significant challenges in accessing clean water, compelling villagers to undertake exhausting daily treks down a steep hill to source water for their basic needs.

One major obstacle in securing a sustainable water supply is the village's exclusion from official revenue records, which disqualifies it from government-funded water schemes. Despite countless appeals to local authorities, the community continues to wrestle with inadequate access to safe drinking water, contributing to increasing hardships.

In a determined effort to address the problem, villagers attempted to take matters into their own hands in 2019 by engaging in Shramdaan (voluntary labour). They dug 40 vertical wells over three months, garnering notable media attention. Previously, when Pedagaruvu fell under the Sarabhavaram gram panchayat, a well was fitted with an electric motor using funds

Village is excluded from revenue records, which disqualifies it from government-funded water schemes



from the 15th Finance Commission. However, corroded iron pipes eventually contaminated the water, making it unfit for consumption. Residents have lodged numerous complaints with government officials, but no significant remedial action has been taken. As a result, they remain reliant on natural water sources, navigating treacherous terrain that poses risks to their health and well-being. Frustrated by ongoing neglect, the women have urged

the district administration to implement immediate solutions.

They plan to stage a protest at the Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) office, armed with empty vessels, as a powerful symbol of their plight and demands if no action is undertaken by International Women's Day.

Despite government claims of substantial investments in projects aimed at improving water supply under initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Janjati

Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) and the Jal Jeevan Mission, the reality on the ground remains distressing for the tribal women of Pedagaruvu.

CPM district executive member K. Govinda Rao and mandal secretary Chiranjeevi have warned of escalating protests if urgent responses are not forthcoming, calling for immediate attention to establish a reliable drinking water system and alleviate their long-standing hardships.

# 'Godavari Pushkaralu' from July 23 to Aug 3, 2027

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Godavari Pushkaralu will be held from July 23 to August 3, 2027. Minister Nimmala stated in the Assembly that the tradition of considering water sacred is deeply rooted in Indian culture, and scriptures proclaim that taking a holy dip in rivers during Pushkaralu is highly auspicious.

During the Question Hour on Monday, MLAs Adireddy Vasu (Rajahmundry Urban), Muppidi Venkateswararao (Kovvuru), Vegulla Jogeshwararao (Mandapeta), and Boliseti Srinivas (Tadipatri) raised queries and made suggestions regarding



the upcoming Pushkaralu. Responding to them, Minister Nimmala said that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu aims to organise the event on par with the Maha Kumbh Mela and has directed

officials to formulate a well-coordinated plan.

The Minister highlighted that participating in the 12-day Pushkaralu is believed to bestow the merit of bathing in 12 rivers over 12 years. The

Godavari is revered as the 'Southern Ganga' due to its spiritual significance.

A preparatory meeting for the event was recently held in Rajahmundry as per the Chief Minister's directions. He has prior experience in organising the Pushkaralu in 2003 and 2015, and lessons from the recent Maha Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj will serve as a reference for planning.

In the 2015 Pushkaralu, 307 projects were executed for Rs 117 crore, with 145 ghats developed over a 3,625-metre stretch and 98 ghats over 2,452 metres in West Godavari district. The irrigation department is responsible for constructing and main-

taining the ghats and managing water flow, while the Panchayat Raj department oversees overall event management.

Various departments, including Home, Endowments, Municipal Administration, Roads and Buildings, Fisheries, Civil Supplies, and Tourism, will also be involved. The Chief Minister has directed all departments to conduct regular coordination meetings to ensure the smooth execution of the event.

Minister Nimmala assured that he would convey the members' suggestions to the concerned ministers and officials for the successful conduct of the Pushkaralu.

# Canadian diplomat meets AP Chambers office-bearers

Improving bilateral trade relations between Canada and Andhra Pradesh discussed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ryan A Ward, Minister (Commercial Affairs) of the High Commission of Canada in New Delhi, along with Vikram Jain, Trade Commissioner of Canada in Hyderabad, called on the office-bearers of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation (AP Chambers) president Potluri Bhaskara Rao and general secretary B Raja Sekhar here on Monday.

They discussed improving bilateral trade relations between Canada and Andhra Pradesh. Ryan Ward spoke about the opportunities that companies from Andhra



Pradesh have in Canada and the possible business partnerships between Canadian companies and businesses from the State.

Speaking at the occasion, Potluri Bhaskara Rao said, "India and Canada share a robust and growing trade relationship, with Andhra Pradesh emerging as a key player in various sectors such as agriculture, food processing, pharmaceuticals and IT services. The State has been exporting high-quality seafood, spices, textiles and pharmaceuticals to Canada. With its strategic coastal location and well-developed port infrastructure, Andhra Pradesh serves as an important hub for trade and commerce between the two nations, which is poised to grow further."

# YSRCP slams govt for denying MSP to chilli farmers

Alleges conspiracy to benefit middlemen

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MLC Lella Appi Reddy has accused the State government of failing to deliver the promised Rs 11,781 minimum support price (MSP) for chilli farmers. He questioned if even a single unit of chilli was procured at this rate, highlighting the drastic fall in prices from Rs 27,000 per quintal last year to below Rs 10,000 now, pushing farmers into distress sales amid unpaid debts.

Reddy criticised the State government for not releasing funds and delaying action, alleging a conspiracy to benefit middlemen by seeking trader details two months after sales began.

He questioned whose interests the coalition government serves, contrasting the previous YSRCP regime's Rs 3,000 crore Price Stabilisation Fund

with the current Rs 300 crore allocation, a 10th of the earlier amount, calling it a shameful neglect of farmers. YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's visit to the Guntur chilli yard has prompted the government's limited response, which included review meetings and a letter to the Centre, but no concrete relief, he said and slammed the government for politicising farmers' issues despite a Legislative Council motion, urging it to prioritise their welfare.

Reddy emphasised Guntur's significance, with its Rs 10,000 crore annual chilli trade and 150 cold storage units holding 1.3 crore bags, making the government's apathy deplorable.

He accused Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu of indifference, warning that such neglect threatens farmers' livelihoods and the State's agricultural legacy.



# NTR police rescue another baby in Palakollu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR District Police Commissionerate's Law & Order team, along with the Commissioner's Task Force, is actively continuing their rescue operations for infants who have gone missing or been sold across the State. The total number of rescued infants has now reached five.

On Monday, authorities rescued the fifth baby, who had

been sold in Palakollu, located in the West Godavari district.

Following the rescue, the police handed the baby over to the Women and Child Welfare Department.

Under the supervision of Police Commissioner's Task Force Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) K Latha Kumari, Task Force and Women Police Station officials and staff went to Palakollu and

rescued the fourth fifth baby, based on the information from the five-member gang.

Later, the police handed over the rescued baby to a Women and Child Welfare Department-run childcare shelter in Vijayawada, ensuring proper care and protection. NTR Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu appreciated the efforts of the team in carrying out the infant rescue operation.

# Seats allocated for MLAs in AP Assembly

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Speaker Raghurama Krishna Rao has confirmed the allocation of seats to MLAs in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly. On Monday, the Andhra Pradesh Assembly officially allocated seats to its members. Deputy Speaker Raghurama Krishna Rao made the announcement regarding the seat distribution.

The front row of the treasury bench has been designated for the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, and other ministers. Following this, seats have been assigned to the Chief Whip and Whips of the government.

The allocation of seats has been conducted based on seniority

# Mental strength of students stressed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Students of this generation are losing mental strength to accept failure, making it essential to instil resilience in them, said Samagra Shiksha State Project Director B Srinivasa Rao. To address this issue, the Andhra Pradesh government has appointed career and mental health counsellors in government schools, a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, he added. The State Project Director urged Indlas Clinic and local medical professionals to assist in training the counsellors.

He was the chief guest at the 10th anniversary celebrations of Indlas Child Guidance Clinic (ICGC) held at IMA Community Hall, Vijayawada.

Speaking on the occasion, Srinivasa Rao highlighted the services provided by the Andhra Pradesh government



under Samagra Shiksha through Bhavita Centres for children with special needs (CwSN). He stated that children with disabilities often display exceptional talents compared to regular students and the government is offering

special training to nurture their abilities. Around 4,400 students with disabilities have been provided tabs for digital education, he added.

Dr Vishal, Director of Indlas Child Guidance Clinic, briefed that the clinic offers psychiatric

evaluation, physiotherapy counselling, speech therapy, home-based management training and behaviour therapy for children with special needs. He mentioned that ICGC was the first hospital in Vijayawada exclusively for children with disabilities, also providing services in Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, and Mumbai branches.

Founder of Indlas Hospitals, Dr Indira Ramasubba Reddy, commended the Andhra Pradesh government's historic decision to appoint 255 counsellors in government schools. He praised the leadership of B Srinivasa Rao, in implementing this project, which plays a pivotal role in promoting students' mental health. IMA president Dr B Hanumayya, secretary Dr V Suresh Kumar, Dr Manjiri Deshpande and others participated in the event and unveiled the ICGC poster.

# Lazeez-e-Ghost food festival launched

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

For food lovers in Vijayawada and across the State, a variety of delicious recipes are being offered by the most popular Barbeque Nation that announced the launch of the Lazeez-e-Gosht food festival, running from March 3 to April 6, exclusively at its outlets in Andhra Pradesh.

This festival offers a delectable mutton menu, featuring dishes such as Mutton Marag Soup, Keema Kaleji, Galouti Kebab, and Mutton Raan for starters. Main course options include Hyderabad Mutton Haleem, Nihari Gosht, and Shahi Mutton Korma, along with a special Zafrani Mutton Dum Biryani. Guests can also indulge in desserts like Fruit Custard and Sheer Khurma, complemented by specially curated kulfis.

Mansoor Memon, CDO of Barbeque Nation Hospitality Ltd., stated that the festival aims to provide guests with a unique dining experience while showcasing the brand's commitment to innovation.



# APMARKFED, NCEL join hands to boost agri exports from AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr Manazir Jeelani Samoon, Managing Director representing the Andhra Pradesh State Co-operative Marketing Federation Ltd. (APMARKFED), Vijayawada, and Unupom Kausik, Managing Director representing National Co-operative Exports Limited (NCEL), New Delhi, have signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote the export of agricultural commodities from Andhra Pradesh.

The MoU was signed at AP Secretariat, Amaravati, in the presence of Budithi Rajsekhar, Ex-Officio Special Chief

Secretary (Agriculture, Co-operation, Marketing, Animal Husbandry & Fisheries) and Karrothu Bangaraju, Chairman, APMARKFED, Vijayawada. Under this partnership, APMARKFED will act as the nodal agency to coordinate the export of farm produce from cooperative societies and farmers in Andhra Pradesh.

NCEL, a national-level export agency, will facilitate procurement, processing, and international marketing of key agri-products. This initiative will help enhance farmers' income, create global market opportunities, and strengthen agricultural exports from the State.

# VMC provides services with MEPMA, Home Triangle

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC), in collaboration with the Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA) and Home Triangle, is offering a variety of community services, including plumbing, electrical work, and household repairs. These services are accessible through the Home Triangle App, which helps skilled individuals earn a substantial income.

Recently, MEPMA Director N Tej Bharath visited the electrician training centre in Governorpet,

Vijayawada. He mentioned that the State government is onboarding service providers before the training is completed. Currently, MEPMA has identified 824 service providers and plans to soon offer these services to the public in order to provide trainers with a good income.

Additionally, he stated that not only will training be provided, but the trainers will also receive National Skill Development Certificates. All trainers are registered on the Home Triangle App as well. VMC Urban Community Project Officer P Venkata Ramana and

others were present during the visit.

VMC Chief convenes teleconference with HODs  
Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra held a teleconference with all Heads of Departments (HODs) on Monday. He emphasised the importance of ensuring that citizens do not face difficulties. He instructed all officials to coordinate closely with the Sanitation, Planning, and Amenity Secretaries in this effort.





## MSME outreach prog held in V'wada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Bank of India's Regional Office in Vijayawada organised an MSME outreach programme at the Regional Head Office in One Town, Vijayawada, on Monday. The event aimed at engaging with existing and prospective Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) customers and was attended by around 150 MSME founders, along with several bank officials.

Deputy Zonal Head M.S.

Rama Rao outlined the objectives of the outreach camp, while the Chief General Manager and Central Officer from Mumbai, Biju Vasudevam, delivered the keynote address. He highlighted the efficiency of MSMEs and their crucial role in driving the Indian economy. Union Bank of India's Regional Head Muvvala Sridhar, Deputy Regional Head Beta, and several branch managers and officials were also present at the event.

## 5 workers hurt in blast at transport company

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Five workers were injured in an explosion while unloading goods from a transport vehicle at a company here on Monday.

DSP Devraj M Patil told the media that the incident occurred at the office of Balaji Export Company on Varpu Road. A worker unloaded a gunny bag from the truck and dropped it on the floor, triggering a massive explosion. The impact left five labourers injured, three of them grievously. Following the blast, panic-stricken workers fled the premises. The injured were rushed to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for treatment.

Preliminary investigation revealed that the gunny bag contained an explosive substance. Police have collected remnants from the site and sent them for forensic examination.

According to transport company sources, the parcel was booked in Hyderabad, but the company accepted it without verifying its contents. The police have registered a case against the transport company for transporting explosive materials.

It is suspected that the bag contained chemicals used in firecracker manufacturing. The police are examining CCTV footage and have reportedly detained the consignee for questioning.



## Change of AICC incharge means change of CM only: Alleti Maheshwar Reddy

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

Bharatiya Janata Legislative Party leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy commented that the change of AICC incharge means change of Chief Minister only. The Congress high command has handed over the mission of change of Chief Minister of Telangana to newly appointed AICC incharge of Telangana Congress Affairs Meenakshi Natarajan.

Maheshwar Reddy said, "Meenakshi Natarajan is preparing ground to change the CM of Telangana. Change of CM is certain in the month of December. CM Revanth Reddy stated in the Wanaparthy public meeting that he will be CM for 10

years if women's blessings are on him. However, Revanth Reddy needs the blessings of a woman who came from Delhi instead of Telangana women if he wants to continue as the CM."

In a chat with the scribes on Monday, Maheshwar Reddy alleged that CM Revanth Reddy and his Ministry has completely lost its way. The Ministers' behavior is as if they are on the shores of the Yamuna. Discussion is going on in the Congress party on U-Tax and B-Tax. Maheshwar Reddy wondered at the behavior of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who scolded Prime Minister Narendra Modi all these days, and is praising PM Modi now.

Maheshwar Reddy said that no minister is caring for the CM. Revanth Reddy

himself stated that some are eyeing on his CM seat and that means—it is clear that Rahul Gandhi hinted Revanth Reddy, he said. Maheshwar Reddy said, "Bhatti Vikramarka, Uttam Kumar Reddy and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy eyed the CM seat and these ministers are not allowing CM to work. Uttam Kumar Reddy is putting checks to CM Revanth Reddy everywhere. Uttam is informing everything to Delhi high command. Uttam is the reason for the appointment of Meenakshi Natarajan as AICC incharge of Telangana. I know very well about Uttam and about his master plans. Earlier, CM only used to pay tax to Delhi; however, now four are paying tax to Delhi."

Maheshwar Reddy alleged that

Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy is collecting highest tax in the state. Srinivas Reddy has been saying 50-50 whatever land issue has been taken to him. The Congress MLAs were only talking about Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy's activities. Jacharla MLA Anirudh Reddy changed his target from CM Revanth Reddy to Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, he said. Maheshwar Reddy questioned the CM to tell why he is not probing the allegations made in Mahabubnagar. He also questioned why Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, who used to be seen with CM Revanth Reddy, is not seen with the CM these days. There is no coordination between the Congress leaders, Ministers because of misbelief among them.

## Mango farmers in north Andhra expect bumper harvest

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Mango farmers in North Andhra Pradesh are anticipating a significantly better harvest this year compared to the previous two seasons, which were hampered by unfavourable weather conditions. Vizianagaram district, with its 30,000 hectares dedicated to mango cultivation, plays a crucial role in the state's overall mango production. Andhra Pradesh cultivates mangoes across 3.5 lakh hectares, typically yielding 45-50 lakh tonnes annually.

This year's projected yield is estimated at 10 tonnes per hectare, representing approximately 60% of a good season's output. This marks a substantial improvement over 2023, which saw a 50% yield, and the particularly poor 2024 season,

which only achieved a 20% yield.

"While unusual rains in December impacted flowering, the overall outlook for the mango crop is positive," stated Jamadagni, Additional Director of Horticulture, on Monday. He highlighted several government initiatives aimed at bolstering mango production, including a subsidised fruit cover scheme. Under this programme, farmers receive paper covers, costing Rs 2 each (with the government subsidising Rs 1), to protect young mangoes, reducing the need for pesticides.

"We are also providing training to farmers on integrated pest management techniques to further enhance yields," Jamadagni added. He also announced a buyer-seller meet in Vizianagaram in early March to connect farmers with potential



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buyers and improve market access. L. Demudu, a mango farmer and trader from Alamanda, Vizianagaram, who

owns a 30-acre orchard and leases an additional 500 acres, confirmed the abundant flowering observed this season. However, he noted that fog-related diseases have necessitated increased pesticide use. Farmers typically invest around Rs 20,000 per acre in inputs like irrigation, pesticides, pruning, and Cultar, a flowering-inducing plant hormone.

The region cultivates several popular mango varieties, including Banganapalli (Benishan), China Rasalu, Pedda Rasalu, Totapuri, Neelam, and Suvarnarekha. Banganapalli and Suvarnarekha are particularly prized for their export potential. With the promising yield projections and ongoing government support, mango farmers in North Andhra are optimistic about a successful and profitable season.

## DEEPAM - 2 SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION REVIEWED

# Ensure prompt delivery of gas cylinders: EG Collector

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector P Prasanthi has directed gas agencies not to charge additional amounts while delivering cylinders under the Deepam scheme.

The Collector held a meeting with representatives of gas agencies on Monday to review the implementation of the free gas cylinder distribution under Deepam 2.

She emphasised that gas cylinders must be delivered to beneficiaries within 48 hours of booking. Dealers should also ensure that the subsidy amount is credited to consumers' bank accounts within 48 hours of delivery. Strict monitoring should be in place to prevent delivery personnel from demanding extra charges. She urged dealers to counsel delivery staff to adhere to billing regulations. The Collector instructed



gas agencies to issue proper receipts upon delivery. She noted that 408 beneficiaries in the district have yet to receive their Deepam 2 subsidy and directed officials to ensure its prompt disbursement. East Godavari district has 43 gas agencies, including 28 HPCC, 12 IOPC, and 3 BPCC agencies. District

Supply Officer M. Naganjaneyulu and gas agency representatives attended the meeting.

Earlier, Chief Secretary K. S. Jawahar Reddy held a video conference with Collector Prasanthi and other officials to review various welfare schemes, paddy procurement, sand supply, and the func-

tioning of Anna Canteens.

The Collector stated that 2,378 people shared feedback on pension distribution, with 90% expressing satisfaction. Of the 17,886 people who provided feedback on Anna Canteens, 2,378 were contacted, and 80% were satisfied.

She further reported that 79% of 2,053 respondents were satisfied with the management, timeliness, and quality of food at Anna Canteens, while 60-68% expressed satisfaction with fertiliser supply.

Additionally, 84% of respondents were satisfied with VRO field visits, land title passbook distribution, municipal services, and medical services.

Out of 111 people, 104 expressed satisfaction with sand transportation. Feedback is also being collected on pothole-free roads and RTC services, she added.



## Miraculous escape for 40 bus passengers

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Forty passengers narrowly avoided serious injury on Monday when their private bus collided with an electric pole on the ghat road leading to the Annavaram hill shrine.

The passengers, part of a marriage party, were returning to Rajahmundry after visiting the Satyanarayana Swamy temple atop Annavaram hill. While descending the ghat, the bus driver reportedly lost control at a curve, causing the vehicle to veer off the road and strike an electric pole.

The impact brought the bus to a halt, leaving it precariously positioned on the edge of the ghat. Passengers reported that had the bus travelled just a few more meters, it would have plunged into the gorge below.

The bus driver claimed a sudden brake failure caused the loss of control. He stated

**The passengers, part of a marriage party, were returning to Rajahmundry after visiting the Satyanarayana Swamy temple atop Annavaram hill. While descending the ghat, the bus driver reportedly lost control at a curve, causing the vehicle to veer off the road and strike an electric pole.**

he attempted to slow the bus by hitting a road divider but ultimately collided with the pole.

Despite the severity of the incident, all 40 passengers escaped without injuries, according to police.

## Govt to grant house-site pattas to the poor: Minister Anagani

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad has announced that the government will grant house pattas to eligible poor beneficiaries under the housing scheme. He emphasised that every poor individual should have access to food, clothing, and shelter, which aligns with the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) policies. As part of this initiative, the coalition government plans to allocate three cents of land in rural areas and two cents in urban areas for housing.

The minister said that a Government Order (GO) was issued last month regarding the initiative, and so far, 70,238 applications have been received. He stated that after assessing the number of applicants, land allocations would be made on government land, and if government land is unavailable, private land will be acquired for distribution.

Satya Prasad made these remarks while responding to queries raised by YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) members Rajasekhar and



Hanumanth Rao in the State Legislative Council. He refuted claims that the previous YSRCP government had granted over 30 lakh house pattas, stating that only 22 lakh pattas were issued, and nearly seven lakh beneficiaries failed to register them. He questioned why these individuals, if truly eligible, did not come forward for registration.

The minister pointed out that while the previous government provided just one cent of land, the current government is offering two to three cents. He added that financial assistance of Rs 4 lakh is being given for house construction, compared to the previous government's Rs 2.5 lakh, which

was sourced from central government funds.

Satya Prasad criticised the Jagananna housing scheme, alleging large-scale corruption in the selection of beneficiaries. He claimed that affluent individuals, government employees, party workers, and followers were given house pattas disproportionately. He further alleged that major irregularities took place in land acquisitions, with unsuitable lands being procured at inflated prices.

The minister accused YSRCP leaders and workers of siphoning off large sums of money, stating that Rs 10,500 crore was spent on acquiring 26,000 acres of private land. He asserted that all corruption allegations related to the Jagananna housing scheme would be thoroughly investigated.

He reiterated that the coalition government, under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, is committed to ensuring that every eligible poor individual receives a house patta and has access to proper housing.

## Expedite MSME, P-4 surveys, officials told

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector A Thameem Ansariya has directed municipal commissioners and MPDOs to expedite the MSME and P-4 surveys and ensure their completion within the prescribed timeline.

The Collector, accompanied by district officials from the concerned departments, conducted a review meeting via video conference with municipal commissioners, MPDOs, and APOs. The meeting focused on the progress of housing construction, the MSME and P-4 surveys, mapping of missing citizens, biometric attendance of secretariat employees, sanitation in gram panchayats, implementation of the NREGA scheme, and inspection of school toilets.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Thameem Ansariya emphasised that special attention should be given to the MSME and P-4 surveys, which must be completed within the stipulated time. She instructed that the MSME survey be completed by March 15 and the P-4 survey by March 4, warning that action would be taken against officials failing to meet the deadlines.

The Collector also directed officials to ensure that beneficiaries of the housing construction scheme complete their houses at the earliest, with necessary position certificates issued without delay.



## Palnadu police take Posani on PT warrant

PNS ■ KADAPA

YSRCP leader and film actor Posani Krishna Murali, who was in judicial remand at Rajampet sub-jail, was taken into custody by Palnadu police on a PT warrant on Monday. He was produced before the Narasaraopet court, which sent him to 10-day judicial remand.

A total of 17 cases have been registered against Posani across various police stations in the State. On Monday, police teams from Guntur, Narasaraopet, Anantapur, and Alluri Sitarama Raju districts arrived at Rajampet sub-jail with PT warrants to take him into custody for cases registered in their respective jurisdictions.

The Narasaraopet police presented the PT warrant to sub-jail authorities and secured permission to take Posani to Narasaraopet. After a medical examination at the Government General Hospital (GGH), the Palnadu

police transported him to Narasaraopet, where he faces criminal charges under Sections 153, 504, and 67 of the Bharat Nyaya Samhita. Though Posani had earlier complained of chest pain, doctors confirmed he had no heart-related ailments.

Police said TDP leader Kotta Kiran had lodged a complaint with Narasaraopet Two Town police against Posani for allegedly making abusive comments against JSP chief K. Pawan Kalyan. If the court grants police custody, the Narasaraopet police will question him regarding the cases.

It may be recalled that a court in Annamaya district had earlier sent Posani to 14-day judicial remand, following which he was lodged in Rajampet sub-jail. Additionally, another case has been registered against him at Puttur police station in Tirupati district for allegedly making derogatory remarks against TTD Board Chairman B.R. Naidu.

## Massive rally to mark Intl Women's Day in Bhimavaram: WG Collector

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

A massive rally will be held in the town on March 8 to mark International Women's Day.

District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani said that, as per government directions, International Women's Day celebrations will be organised across the district.

The Collector reviewed the arrangements for the rally during a meeting with officials from various departments and representatives of voluntary organisations at the Collector's Camp Office.

She stated that extensive preparations are underway for the rally, which is a key event for women. Cultural performances

and special programmes will be organised by a thousand women and students from diverse backgrounds. The rally will proceed from Prakasam Chowk to the Alluri Seetharama Raju statue, in collaboration with government departments and NGOs.

Women staff from ICDS, DRDA, MEPMA, agriculture, medical, and health departments, along with students, will participate in large numbers under the aegis of various NGOs. ICDS PD B. Sujata Rani, DRDA PD M.S.S. Venugopal, DMHO B. Bhanu Naik, municipal commissioner K. Ramachandra Reddy, and representatives of several voluntary organisations attended the meeting.



## 2 electric scooters donated to TTD

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Two local entrepreneurs donated two electric scooters to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams on Monday. Maruti Naidu and Devendra Naidu donated the scooters worth Rs 2.28 lakh, said a press release.

Following the donation, rituals were performed to the scooters in front of Lord Venkateswara temple.

Later, the keys of the two-wheelers were handed over to deputy executive officer Lokanatham, the press release added.





ACROSS THE STATES

# J&K resolution on special status not rejected: CM Abdullah

PNS ■ JAMMU

The resolution on special status passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in its first sitting last year has not been rejected by the Central government which is a big thing, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Monday and asserted that there was no need to bring any other resolution on Article 370, which was abrogated in August 2019.

The chief minister said all legislators need to work together to help the government to fulfill its priorities for public welfare.

"What we have to do was done in the first (assembly) session (in November, 2024). The resolution is still holding after passed by the House. The PDP and others helped us in passing the resolution and it is still holding is a big thing," Abdullah told reporters outside the assembly here while responding to a question that some members are planning to



bring a fresh resolution to condemn abrogation of Article 370.

The 40-day Budget Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, having a total of 22 sittings, began on Monday with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's address.

The chief minister said some people were thinking that any resolution on special status

will get outrightly rejected by the Central government.

"The resolution was not rejected and the fact of the matter is that it is still holding so there is no need to talk further on this," he said. The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed a resolution on November 6, asking the Centre to work out a constitutional mechanism for restoring special status of the erstwhile state.

Abdullah said the National Conference will not repeat what it had already done. "It is not like that we will repeat this thing. What we have to do was done in the first session. If we had not brought that resolution, then there was a possibility of holding discussions on it. We bought a resolution and the House passed it with majority so what is there to talk further on it," he said. The chief minister said the House will meet on Tuesday to discuss the lieutenant governor's address and the members are free to raise their issues in the House.



## Only economic failure, inflation made in bulk under Modi govt: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday took a dig at the Centre over its handling of the economy, saying only "economic failure, unemployment, inflation and lies" were "manufactured" in bulk under the Narendra Modi government. The former Congress president called for the removal of "unjust" taxes, eliminating monopoly, opening the doors of banks and giving rights to the talented.

"If anything has been 'manufactured' in bulk under the

Modi government, it is economic failure, unemployment, inflation and lies!" Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on Facebook. "Remove unjust taxes, eliminate monopoly, open the doors of banks, give rights to talent ... Only then will the building of the economy, employment and a strong India begin!" he said.

The Congress has been attacking the government over its handling of the economy, claiming the issues of rising prices, decreasing private investment, and stagnating wages were hitting the common people hard.



## One injured in firing at Pak - Afghan border

An exchange of firing between Pakistani and Afghan security forces at the Torkham border overnight left one civilian from Pakistan injured after the two sides failed to reach an agreement on reopening the crossing, which has been closed for more than a week. According to security sources, the exchange of firing left a civilian injured on the Pakistani side of the border. The security situation caused panic amongst people who have been waiting for the reopening of the border, which remained closed for the 11th day on Monday. The truckers association also asked all vehicle owners to vacate the border after heavy artillery firing from both sides. Witnesses said a driver also suffered a cardiac arrest amidst the mayhem and died on the spot. They said several ambulances were rushed after a fire engulfed a checkpoint on the Afghan side of the border. There was no immediate confirmation of the casualties due to the fire. Pakistan and Afghan security forces on Sunday failed to reach an agreement on reopening the Torkham border even as both sides showed optimism about resolving the issue this week.



## Indian woman on death row in Abu Dhabi executed

An Indian woman on death row in Abu Dhabi for the alleged murder of a four-month-old child has already been executed on February 15, the Delhi High Court hearing her father's plea about her well-being was informed on Monday. On being informed about the development, Justice Sachin Datta termed it "very unfortunate". "It is over. She was executed on February 10, 2023 and she was sentenced to death on July 31, 2023. She was lodged in the Al Wathba jail. Shabbir Khan, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Banda, said there was "profound uncertainty" regarding his daughter Shahzadi's situation and his repeated applications to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) for clarification were fruitless.



## Motorcyclist charred to death after crashing into trailer

A 30-year-old man was charred to death after his motorcycle rammed into a trailer parked on the road and caught fire in Maharashtra's Thane district, police said on Monday. The accident occurred on the Khoni-Usatne road in Ambenath in the wee hours of Sunday, an official said. The victim, Rajesh Dinesh Ram, was riding with his friend when he crashed into a trailer parked on the roadside without any indicators, the official from Hill Line police station said. He said the two-wheeler caught fire in the impact, charring the victim to death and injuring his friend, who is undergoing treatment at a hospital. The official said a case was registered under sections 106 (causing death by negligence), 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others), 281 (rash driving or riding on a public way) and other relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita and Motor Vehicles (MV) Act against the trailer driver.

## 38 injured as ST bus overturns

PNS ■ LATUR

At least 38 people were injured when a state transport bus overturned while trying to avoid a motorcycle on a highway in Maharashtra's Latur district on Monday, police said. The accident occurred on the Nagpur-Ratnagiri Highway near Nandgaon Pati in Chakur tehsil around 2 pm.

Divisional traffic officer Sandip Padwal said that at least 38 passengers on the bus sustained injuries, and six of them are in critical condition.

An official said the bus was heading to Latur from Ahmedpur when it swerved to avoid hitting a motorcycle. The bus driver lost control of the wheel, causing the vehicle to overturn. According to eyewitnesses, the bus was being driven at a high speed, and it skidded some distance before coming to a halt.

Several passengers sustained critical injuries to their limbs and were rushed to hospitals in ambulances and private vehicles, Padwal said.

## ED identifies assets worth thousand of crores

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate Monday said it has identified assets worth thousands of crores of rupees following searches in Delhi-NCR against realty firm WTC Group and Bhutani Group.

The raids were conducted on February 27 at a dozen locations in Delhi, Noida (Uttar Pradesh) and Faridabad and Gurugram (both in Haryana) against WTC Group and its promoter Ashish Bhalla, and Bhutani Group and its promoter Ashish Bhutani under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the federal agency said in a statement.

The ED said the case stems from dozens of FIRs filed by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police and the Faridabad Police against WTC Group and its promoters Ashish Bhalla, Suparna Bhalla, Abhijeet Bhalla, and Bhutani Infra and others for alleged cheating, criminal breach of trust and committing fraud on hundreds of homebuyers.

These police cases were registered on the basis of com-



plaints from "hundreds" of homebuyers and investors.

The Bhutani Infra said in a statement last week that it severed all ties with the WTC Group recently and "is now fully cooperating with the ED in its investigation." No comment was immediately available from the WTC Group.

The ED said the police FIRs allege that WTC Faridabad Infrastructure Private Limited and its promoters "lured" the general public to invest in their project at Sector 111-114 of the city for residential plots.

The promoters/directors hatched a "criminal conspiracy" and "siphoned off" the plot buyers' hardearned money by not completing the project within the stipulated time and "non-delivery" of the plots for more than 10 years, it said.

## India, Belgium exploring defence ties in Indo-Pacific

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Belgium on Monday discussed the possibility of bilateral maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and looked at ways to enhance defence industrial ties.

Ways to bolster India-Belgium defence engagement figured prominently at a meeting between Belgium's Princess Astrid and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The two sides also agreed to explore the setting up of an institutionalised defence cooperation mechanism between the two nations.

Belgian Defence Minister Theo Francken was also part of the Belgian delegation.

Princess Astrid is leading an Economic Mission to India that comprises top ministers and business leaders.

"Both sides discussed the possibility of defence engagements in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in maritime domain," the defence ministry said.

It said there were discussions on ways and means to enhance bilateral defence industrial cooperation and that Singh welcomed Belgian investments in the defence sector.



**"Both sides discussed the possibility of defence engagements in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in maritime domain," the defence ministry said.**

"He suggested that the Belgian companies could play an important role by expanding their footprint in India and integrating the Indian vendors in their supply chains," the ministry said in a statement.

Further, both countries agreed to explore an institutionalised defence cooperation mechanism," it said.

The overall trajectory of India-Belgium ties has wit-

nessed steady expansion in the last few years. The focus of the relations has traditionally been on trade and investment.

India is Belgium's 14th largest export destination and the 16th largest importer to Belgium.

India is Belgium's seventh largest export destination outside the EU and the sixth largest trade partner outside the EU.

## Jaishankar to visit UK, Ireland on six day tour

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will embark on a six-day visit to the UK and Ireland beginning Tuesday to explore ways to further boost bilateral cooperation.

Jaishankar will first travel to London to hold talks with his British counterpart David Lammy on a range of bilateral, regional and global issues.

It will be interesting to see whether Jaishankar and Lammy discuss the Ukraine conflict as their meeting comes against the backdrop of the heated exchanges between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that drew global attention.



Two days after the rare clash between Trump and Zelenskyy, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hosted a summit with European leaders in London and vowed to work towards a peace deal to end the war in Ukraine.

Jaishankar and Lammy are also expected to touch upon the ambitious India-UK free trade deal, people familiar with the matter said.

## UP CM rejects pollution claims at Sangam during Maha Kumbh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday dismissed reports of pollution at the Sangam during the Maha Kumbh, asserting that extensive water quality monitoring showed the river remained clean throughout the event.

Speaking at a gathering of Indian Institute of Management officials and Indian Postal Service officers in Lucknow, Adityanath said, "Despite baseless claims, our state pollution control board and independent labs consistently found water quality at the Sangam to be within safe limits."

He pointed out that con-

### Fake reporting



cerns about the environmental impact of the Maha Kumbh had been raised, including by UNESCO, given the massive scale of the event.

"In 2013, when the Prime Minister of Mauritius visited, he refrained from taking a dip after seeing pollution in the

Ganga. We ensured that such an incident did not happen this time," Adityanath said.

The chief minister claimed his government took preventive measures from day one to ensure no sewage or industrial waste entered the Ganga or Yamuna.



## Mayawati expels nephew from party

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after removing her nephew Akash Anand from all key posts, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Monday said she has expelled him from the party "in the interest and movement" of the party. Mayawati said that Akash's response to her action against him on Sunday was "selfish and arrogant". In a BSP meeting on Sunday, Akash was relieved from all responsibilities as he was under the continuous influence of his father-in-law Ashok Siddharth, more than the interest of the party, for which he should "repent and show his maturity", she said.

"But on the contrary, the lengthy response given by Shri Akash is not a sign of his remorse and political maturity, but is mostly selfish, arrogant and non-missionary under the influence of his father-in-law," Mayawati said in a post on X in Hindi. "Therefore, in the interest of the self-respect and self-esteem of the movement of the most revered Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and following the tradition of discipline of Manaywar Shri Kanshiram ji, Shri Akash Anand, like his father-in-law, is expelled from the party in the interest of the party and the movement," Mayawati said.

# Women borrowers grow 22% since 2019

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Women borrowers in India have grown at a compounded growth rate of 22 per cent over the last 5 years with majority of them from semi-urban and rural areas, who are also actively monitoring their credit scores, a report said on Monday.

The report titled 'From Borrowers to Builders: Women's Role in India's Financial Growth Story', released by NITI Aayog CEO B V R Subrahmanyam also showed bulk of their loan was for meeting consumption demand and comparatively less for businesses.

## Non-metro regions lead in credit monitoring



The report has been published by TransUnion CIBIL, Women Entrepreneurship

Platform (WEP) of NITI Aayog and MicroSave Consulting (MSC).

"The number of women availing credit in India has increased at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22 per cent between CY 2019 and 2024. While consumption loans continue to be the preferred products held by women borrowers, the report's insights show that more women are also availing business loans," a statement said. As per the report, credit avialment for financing businesses constituted only 3 per cent of the overall borrowings by women in 2024, as against 42 per cent for personal finance products like person-

al loans, consumer durable loans, home ownership and 38 per cent against gold.

The report said the number of accounts opened for business purpose has grown 4.6 times since 2019, but these loans constitute only 3 per cent of overall loans availed by women in 2024.

Government think tank NITI Aayog in a statement said that more women in India are seeking credit and actively monitoring their credit scores.

As of December 2024, 27 million women were monitoring their credit, marking a 42 per cent increase from the previous year, signalling growing financial awareness.

## 4 Bangladeshis held in Tripura for 'illegally' entering India

PNS ■ AGARTALA

Four Bangladesh nationals have been arrested by the BSF in Tripura for allegedly entering India illegally, officials said on Monday.

Five Indians who reportedly facilitated their infiltration have also been apprehended in two separate incidents in the northeastern state, they said.

Acting on a tip-off, a patrolling party raided Dhaniabari, a remote tribal hamlet near the Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) at Nutanbazar area of Gomati district on Sunday evening, and detected four persons trying to cross

the international border.

When they crossed the border, BSF personnel managed to apprehend the four.

Two of them are residents of Nutan Bazar in Gomati district, while the other two are from Khagracheri district in Bangladesh, a BSF official said.

In another operation in Dyke VIII area in Nutanbazar, BSF personnel observed unusual movement of five persons and apprehended them while crossing the international border.

Later, two of them were identified as Bangladesh nationals.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A fresh start or fleeting relief?

With N Biren Singh's exit and AT's surrender of arms, Manipur shows signs of normalcy—but is the peace lasting?

The conflict in Manipur, marked by ethnic tensions between the Meitei and Kuki-Zomi communities has shown some positive development in the recent weeks. The surrender of arms by Arambai Tenggol (AT), Home Minister Amit Shah's firm stance on opening all roads and the resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh have created new possibilities for peace in the violence-stricken state. However, the underlying tensions and the continued presence of weapons in the region mean that true reconciliation remains a complex challenge. One of the most notable recent events was the voluntary surrender of 246 weapons by the AT group on February 27, following the appeal made by Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla. This move is being seen as a crucial step towards de-escalation, as it marks the largest voluntary surrender of arms in the state since the ethnic conflict began in May 2023. However, security officials and observers caution that the surrender may not indicate a complete loss of AT's firepower.



Reports suggest that only a fraction of the looted sophisticated weapons has been returned, with country-made firearms making up a large portion of surrendered arms. Furthermore, AT's insistence on conditions such as full security guarantees and amnesty for its members indicates that the group still holds significant leverage.

The Union Home Minister's directive to ensure free movement on Manipur's highways from March 8 represents a decisive move to restore normalcy. Road blockades have been a persistent problem in the state, significantly affecting trade, movement of essential goods and the overall economic stability of the region.

The government's resolve to dismantle illegal bunkers and target drug trafficking further aligns with the broader goal of restoring law and order. However, concerns remain over the implementation of these directives. Ensuring that all roads remain open requires a sustained security presence, as groups with vested interests may attempt to impose fresh blockades. Additionally, the crackdown on drugs—while crucial—must be executed without further alienating communities that already feel marginalised. The resignation of Chief Minister N Biren Singh and the imposition of President's Rule in Manipur have led to a shifting power dynamic. Singh was widely seen as a key backer of AT and other Meitei groups, which played a role in the ethnic conflict. The major issue has been the divide between the Meitei and Kuki-Zomi communities, which remains unaddressed. Both sides continue to view each other with suspicion, and without a long-term reconciliation plan, tensions may resurface. Despite the surrender of arms, thousands of sophisticated weapons remain unaccounted for, posing a major security risk. The demand for a separate administration by the Kuki-Zomi groups remains a contentious issue. Without addressing the political aspirations of all communities, peace efforts may prove temporary.

# Mahakumbh 2025: Vikas bhi, virasat bhi

From the large-scale eco-friendly practices to the timeless wisdom of Bharatiya traditions, Mahakumbh offered a new model for development in harmony with nature



ANURAG SAXENA

The Valeriperis Circle is a fascinating concept. Imagine a circle on the world map. The circle is centered around the Beibu Gulf, off the east coast of Vietnam, has a radius of 4,000 kilometers, and includes Southern China, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. Now this is where it gets stupefying. This circle covers just about 9 per cent of the world's land-mass, but over 50 per cent of the world's population. This simple reality, clubbed with colonial impoverishment, explains why many people in this circle lived in filth and squalor. Most "progressive" thoughts therefore, be it sustainability, development, environment, innovation, or education, came from the "developed west". We, the unwashed and the uncouth plebs, lapped these ideas up. These imported ideas however, played out terribly. Not just for people, but for the planet. So much so, that escaping this planet seems to be the primary focus of the biggest billionaires from the west. Talk about a fence eating its own crop!

Kumbh on the other hand is a metaphor for the alternate model. A moksha, if you will, from the destruction-premised development models from the west. Prayagraj, a city with a population of 1.4 million saw over 50 million visiting it over a month. To put that in context, imagine a flat typical urban flat that houses a family of four, suddenly visited by 1,400 people. This is indeed Valeriperis Circle on steroids, and any other city would have crumbled a 1,400x overload. Not just did the city manage, but actually offered solutions for how humanity could manage an explosion of demand quite sustainably.

Those of us that experienced the Kumbh personally will tell you the level of cleanliness that has been maintained. We have noticed the extensive use of bamboo instead of plastic, of jute rugs instead of astroturf, of manual boats instead of diesel motors, of e-rickshaws instead of fossil-fuel vehicles, of free refillable RO purified water instead of disposable mineral water bottles. Half a bil-



lion people used donas (cups made of dried leaves) in contrast to small birthday parties in "developed" countries serving single-use plastic.

What you didn't see perhaps was India's largest plastic buy-back program aimed at recycling, or leftover prasad being shared with animals as fodder, or compactor trucks working round the clock, or solar-powered sewage treatment plants.

The invisible sustainability efforts of the Kumbh were perhaps the silent hero that emerged naturally from a culture that values interdependence with nature at its core. The recently concluded Kumbh Global Summit on Sustainability explained the phenomenon and drew lessons from our rich history and culture. Ministers from a dozen Girmitya nations shared their learnings around sustainability, most of it rooted in ancient Bharatiya wisdom.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat brought in simple, rooted wisdom from something as intrinsic as sustainability inbuilt into language itself. The word "dohan" (to milk a cow) comes from



THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT BROUGHT IN SIMPLE, ROOTED WISDOM FROM SOMETHING AS INTRINSIC AS SUSTAINABILITY INBUILT INTO LANGUAGE ITSELF

"do+han" the norm to milk just two teats of a cow, leaving the rest for the calf. Contrast that to industrial-grade milk production from hormone-ridden cows that has been normalised in the "developed" west. Ram Madhav proposed a sangam (confluence) of ancient Indic wisdom with modern practices, without which the world's sustainability crisis can never be avoided.

He highlighted that environment and sustainability are challenges that cannot be solved at COP summits along, but actually need a convergence of the richest ideas globally. The urgency of the summit was encapsulated most eloquently by Suresh Prabhu who framed an enquiry - with thousands of years of history and knowledge across the world, can we even be sure that we will last another hundred years?

Gas-guzzling economies of the West will continue to posture around sustainability as a virtue-signaling badge. They will postulate, make loud visible pledges, and fly into sustainability summits on their private jets. The minerals-filching economies east of us will ignore calls to action and

give you the silent treatment. They will continue to live the delusion that they are communist nations, while going out their way to display toxic capitalism, much to the peril of their people and our earth.

As Bharat, we have to accept a simple reality - What broke it, can't fix it. Period! Bharat has the unique civilisational advantage of leveraging our ancient wisdom to actually demonstrate that you can actually develop infrastructure at scale (like at the Kumbh) without bludgeoning mother nature with a hammer. As we attain maturity on the world stage, we neither need to twirl our moustache, nor cover up our acne. We would rather focus on the purity of our soul as the thought model we export. We would rather focus on our civilisational value of attaining balance.

As PM Narendra Modi's statement for the summit said, the only way to achieve global sustainability is to follow a simple, yet powerful principle, "Vikas bhi, Virasat bhi".

(The writer is a nominated Member of the National Tourism Advisory Council and the co-founder of India Pride Project; views are personal)

### PICTALK



Painted storks at Keoladeo National Park, in Bharatpur

PTI

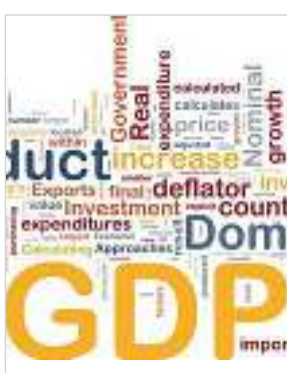
## MIGA: Can India overcome economic challenges

Despite its economic size, India's developing status reveals challenges like inequality, youth unemployment and a vast informal sector

Prime Minister Modi recently visited the US to strengthen bilateral ties and committed to Making India Great Again (MIGA), in consonance with Donald Trump's dream of making America greater again (MAGA).

Although India is the world's fifth-largest economy with a GDP of approximately US\$ 4.27 trillion, it is still classified as a developing nation. A developing country is technically a country where the Gross National Income per capita is \$1,905 or less, with India's per capita being nearly half of it at \$6,951. We rank 134 out of 193 countries in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI), below our neighbouring countries China at 75, Sri Lanka at 78, and even Bhutan and Bangladesh at 125 and 128 respectively (UN Development Report 2022-23).

With an HDI score of 0.644, India is categorised as 'medium human development'. However, there has been improvement across all HDI indicators—life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income (GNI) per



capita from last year. Nevertheless, we cannot conceit the improvement in the HDI alone, as Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2024, places India at the top of the 5 countries with the most people in poverty with 234 million people in the bracket. In sharp contrast to this, it ranks 3rd in the number of billionaires (Forbes, 2023), indicating glaring disparities in income inequalities. Another morbid aspect is high youth unemployment which accounts for almost 83 per cent of the total unemployment in India. Even worrisome is the share of youngsters with secondary or higher education

in the total unemployed, which has almost doubled from 35.2 per cent in 2000 to 65.7 per cent in 2022 (Indian Employment Report, 2024). The unemployment problem is further aggravated as about 90 per cent of the labour force works in the unorganised sector grappling with the issues of irregular work, income, social security benefits and working conditions. The policymakers are profoundly designing policies to boost the economy. Recently the monetary policy was eased, the repo rate dropped to push investment, and the government announced tax concessions to encourage consumption, both expected to accelerate output and income with a multiplier effect. This will probably counter the Blume Venture report, that nearly 100 crore Indians, 90 per cent of the country's population, lack discretionary spending power to purchase goods or services. With a desired GDP growth rate of at least 7 per cent, these measures will likely create a transitional optimistic mood for the econo-

my, but cannot sustain growth forever. The World Development Report, 2024, found the developing economies in the "middle-income trap", and emphasised the 3 I's, Investment, Infusion (of global technologies) and Innovation as three drivers of economic growth and expanding the production frontier. The government thereby needs to adopt a multifaceted approach to overcome challenges in covering potential gaps in production. It needs to work pragmatically towards education reforms, higher investment for skill development, human capital and creating regular employment opportunities. Moreover, efforts to promote medium and small enterprises, labour-intensive industries, start-ups, Make in India mission, need to be further strengthened to ensure an easy path to Make India Better (MIB) before MIGA.

(The writer is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi University. Views are personal)

### UKRAINE-US TENSIONS ESCALATE

Madam — The clash of diplomacy and dignity (March 3) in the case of Ukraine-US is taking an ugly turn. Trump is not losing any opportunity to project himself as the ultimate global authority. Ukraine had political issues with Russia, which gained serious turns after the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by Russia. This incident had instilled a sense of apprehension and made Ukraine seek membership in NATO. As Russia was against Ukraine joining NATO due to various crucial concerns, it had to act tough with Ukraine, leading to war. As everyone knows, Ukraine cannot even think of war against Russia but for the lavish help it could receive from the US and European nations in terms of funds, weapons, political and moral support. The change of guard in the US with Trump as its head took the entire issue in a different direction. The mediator Trump dictates and decides the course without offering even scope for the aggrieved Ukraine to spell out its terms. Instead of mediation, Trump is giving dictation to Ukraine. The President of Ukraine feels let down by the US. His open shouting at the US president makes it easy for everyone to understand the seriousness of the situation. In the melee, Russia is allowed to retain the territories it captured, and the US gets a favourable agreement to exploit the precious natural mineral resources of Ukraine. But Ukraine stands repenting for having ventured a big war against a big giant for nothing but a huge loss of men, material, peace and dignity. Who should be blamed?

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

### TAMIL NADU OPPOSES NEP

Madam — I refer to your editorial on "Simmering linguistic tension" (February 28). The Centre insists on implementing the NEP, whereas the state objects to it, fearing the imposition of the Hindi language leading to the destruction of Tamil. The state is committed to a two-language formula, says the incumbent state government. There is a total misconception in this regard. According to the new NEP, the first

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## India beats New Zealand



The match against New Zealand is yet another thrilling game by the men in blue, Team India. The back to back success for Team India has made our team stand stronger in the ICC Champions Trophy. Despite New Zealand winning the toss and deciding to bowl first, India successfully managed to give a 250-run target to the opposing team. Although the short innings by Virat Kohli jerked everyone, our bowling order

managed it well. At 45.3, India made New Zealand all out, clinching victory by 44 runs. Varun Chakravarty stole all attention as he took five crucial wickets for India, presenting spectacular bowling prowess, before he was crowned as the Player of the Match.

Our player deserves heartiest congratulations for their exuberant efforts, showcased in the match against New Zealand. Now that India moves ahead to the next round, where it will strike a semifinals clash against Australia in the ICC Champions Trophy, we hope that the enthusiasm of our players for knocking all opponents dead will continue ahead with full positivity. And India will surely bring the ICC Champions Trophy home this season.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

language will be a local language, the second one English, and a third one any language of the student's choice. It is not prescribed that the third language must be Hindi. It is also not compulsory to learn Hindi nor the language forced down the throats of non-Hindi-speaking people. It is left to the discretion of the wards. NEP is aimed at improving knowledge, skill and language learning. There is nothing wrong in learning an additional language. It is an advantage for the students to seek better prospects. Playing politics for votes sake is highly reprehensible. Politicians should not play with the future of the students. In the name of imposition of Hindi, students are denied quality education. The establishment of Navodaya schools has not been permitted in the state for decades. This is highly a retrograde step. Tamil Nadu should adopt the new NEP in the welfare of the students, for the quality of education has come down heavily. All other states in India had adopted the NEP. The status of their mother language has not declined but rather improved. Also, the schools run by these politicians follow the CBSE syl-

labus. Their wards study Hindi. As such, victimising the poor government school students is unfair and unjust.

Sravana Ramchandran | Chennai

### AVALANCHE WARNING IGNORED

Madam — It is a matter of crying shame that in spite of snowfall and avalanche alerts since February 24, labourers working on a stretch of the road to Badrinath Dham had not been evacuated in time. Four days went by, but no action was taken to bring those labourers to a safer place. They were kept in the danger zone till avalanches hit the area on February 28. As a result, some labourers were killed, and some went missing. This indicates a total apathy towards the safety of labourers. Now, who will be accountable for playing with the lives of so many labourers? India needs stringent labour laws and their strict implementation. Otherwise, such a tragedy will become a routine affair.

Sujit De | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

## DREAM BIG AND STAY HUMBLE

Success isn't a mere stroke of luck—it's the result of daring to dream, backed by discipline and humility



RAVI VALLURI

Success is the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. What is the secret of the success of achievers? Dream the impossible, be extremely disciplined, remain dedicated and determined, take appropriate decisions all the time, even in adverse situations, and finally maintain humility while toasting success. To be successful, a human being necessarily dreams of the impossible. Dreams should be audacious. One has to think big and be bold in the actions taken. Ratan Tata emphasised leading from the front and not being a mere follower. Be a leader and not a follower. A quintessential leader takes up responsibility. The 'mind' of the leader needs to be confronted and challenged. The human mind loves challenges. Faced with challenging situations, it delivers the impossible. Mind is not motivated by rote, but is inspired to script something unusual. Maintaining mental and physical discipline are essential ingredients of successful leaders.

Physical fitness increases both our physical and mental stamina. Exercise releases endorphins in the human body which trigger positive thoughts. It helps immensely in smart decision-making. Along with exercise, an individual is also required to maintain a healthy and balanced diet which staves off disease and enhances alacrity and sharpness. Achievers may be from any field — sports, politics, administration or entrepreneurs. However, the cardinal principle is to maintain physical fitness, and punctuality and avoid procrastination by maintaining timely schedules. If a leader is lethargic, the organisation becomes flabby, sluggish and phlegmatic.

The mantra for attaining success is to be extremely disciplined. Such a trait inspires employees to increase their productivity levels too. In the spiritual path, a seeker needs to maintain a spirited tenacity and pursue his Sadhana relentlessly. Regular Sadhana inspires the mind to expand



its vistas and thereby attempt to embrace the ultimate reality. This, in the final analysis, is the underlying objective and the seeker unflinchingly needs to relentlessly practice the tenets laid down by the Guru. Smart, quick and efficient decision-making assists people in achieving success. This provides a person with the cushion and a cutting edge over others. There is no substitute for hard work. Working hard produces quick and efficient results. This is followed by the quality of determination. A Sadhak, a sportsperson, or an entrepreneur has necessarily to be determined. Determined minds are strong and developed minds. These are innovative minds and conjure a variety of ideas and positive thoughts. To achieve excellence in any field, such minds and individuals are determined at all points in time. The minds of such individuals are highly fertile and produce magic with regularity. An unbearable situation gets converted into an unbelievable one. This is their inherent strength.

They do not live in the past or future, they live in the Present Moment to confront all challenges. However, the ultimate hallmark of all successful individuals, teams, companies or organisations is HUMILITY. There is no or very little trace of arrogance. They are insulated by the feeling of doer ship and become hubristic. In a competitive and cutthroat environment, a huge helping of humility is essential for staying ahead of the game. Humility enhances curiosity and thus accelerates learning. Without humility, you can never be a good listener and understand the voices around you — of customers, colleagues and stakeholders. "Humility is the true key to success. Successful people lose their way at times. Humility halts their arrogance and self-indulging trap. Humble people share the credit and wealth, remaining focused and hungry to continue the journey of success," writes Rick Pitino.

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

## Tripura innovates cityscapes for sustainability and tourism



V K BAHUGUNA

Tripura's innovative projects are revitalising city life by enhancing public spaces, managing waste and tackling challenges like air pollution



About 35 per cent of India's population lives in urban areas and is still growing rapidly. As the population of cities is ever increasing with a lot of garbage and waste found all around in most cities, the sustainable management of urban area landscapes is very crucial for better civic amenities, ambience and dealing with adapting to environmental issues like air pollution, heat waves and flooding, while also improving quality of life through green spaces, better public areas for entertainment and relaxation and promoting physical activity and mental wellbeing among residents; all while managing waste disposal and addressing the challenges of a densely populated urban environment; the situation is exacerbated during extreme temperatures in summer. Tourist attractions are essential elements of progress these days and the aesthetics of the urban environment plays a key role in attracting tourists on the one hand and improving the economic activities of the people.

During 2023-24 more than 5,45,000 tourists including 75,000 from abroad visited Tripura compared to around 3 lakh tourists in the year 2015. Agartala is the only modern yet densely populated city in Tripura and is full of tourist attractions in and around its 50 to 60-kilometre radius. The flow of tourists has been steadily increasing in the state as the infrastructure of hotels, roads and transport has been picking up very fast thanks to the proactive initiation taken by the government during the last few years. I have recently visited Tripura in the second week of February 2025 to study a few innovative steps taken by the Tripura administration. A three-dimensional approach has been adopted in beautifying the urban architecture of Agartala and other cities.



THE FOREST DEPARTMENT ALONG WITH OTHER STATE DEPARTMENTS HAS CREATED PYRAMIDS OF FLOWERS, CROTONS AND INDIGENOUS TREE SPECIES ALONG WITH FOUNTAINS AND RASHI AND NAKSHATRA FORESTS

Tripura forest department has a rich tradition of embellishment of Tripura's natural beauty through a series of parks, gardens and beautification of pavements in different parts of the state. The state government had created an agency for this purpose to further beautify the state's already beautiful landscape to attract tourists as well as create employment opportunities for the people.

For this purpose, the state government had created an entity in the forest department "Tripura Park and Garden Society". In this direction the government of India's 'Nagarvan- city forests' scheme is giving a big impetus to this project not only in Tripura but also in other parts of the country. However, the innovative ways the city's Capital Complex, state secretariat and airport roads have been aesthetically laid out is a rare example of urban landscape management.

Most of the pavements covered by cement and bricks during summer months create heat waves in most of the cities. The forest department along with other state departments has created pyramids of flowers, crotons and indigenous tree species along with fountains and Rashi and Nakshatra forests. Most of the empty side lands along buildings and pavements were cleared of debris and planted in a pyramid shape hierarchy giving the most beautiful look in between fountain gardens were created along with plantations of medicinal plants for ex-situ conservation of these valuable plants. The top level was occupied by the tree species and special tree

grooves were also created for public awareness. For the benefit of people biodiversity and butterfly parks were created on Airport Road giving the inciting look to the tourists visiting the state. Such projects if undertaken in all cities in the country will be an excellent attempt to combat climate change, especially the heat waves engulfing most of the urban cities and landscape in recent years.

Such a project of beautification cannot be completed by a single department therefore, in this scheme public work and urban development departments also fully participated. Such innovation needs the full support of senior government functionaries. The proposal of young officers of the forest department was fully supported by the state Chief Secretary and other senior officers. The scheme is implemented through the Nagarvan scheme outside Tripura and shows cases of the unique vegetation and other cultural trends of the state. The rich floral and other biodiversity of the state is one of the reasons for success as well as the favourable agro-climatic conditions. Similar attempts need to be made in other states of the country and focus should be on local species and with conservation value of other endangered plants. The Rashi and Nakshatra Van were created by planting species like Chandan, Neem, Akanda, Peepal, Haritiki, Ashwagandha, Khair, Palash and Orange for Nakshatra Van. For Rashi van Jackfruit, Peepal, Ber, Bel, Jamun, Amla, Nageswar, Arjun,

Mahogany, Mango, Bakul and Guava are all very useful Trees. For the long-term sustainability of landscape beautification, the constant supervision, maintenance and involvement of people is a must. These types of innovations though started in administration all over the country need to be nurtured beyond the shadow of officers involved in it once they are not in the saddle. For this, standard operating procedures must be developed along with creating a scope for public-private partnerships like in Zoos in many other states where the people adopt certain animals and fund their food and other needs so that such activities can become financially viable in the long term and also involve the public in their management.

The entry fee should be such that these endeavours become sustainable and people are willing to pay if quality service is offered as such things cannot be relied only on government funding. All such creations must be linked to environmental management for climate change as well as it is becoming a critical factor in large landscape management in the country. The need of the hour is the holistic and integrated management of urban areas of the country.

(The author is former director general, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, and former Principal Secretary, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Resources and Forest Department, Government of Tripura; views are personal)

## Beyond social media regulation: The call for a national moral code

Amid debates over social media regulation sparked by Ranveer Allahbadia's remarks, a deeper question arises: should society adopt a clearly defined moral code?

While the nation discusses the desirability of regulating content on social media given the controversy that erupted from the statement made by YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia, there is a larger issue of defining morality and enacting moral patterns of conduct for people that requires prior consideration.

While it remains open whether Allahbadia's statement violated any provision of law, however, it is obvious that his statement hurt the moral sentiments of a majority of the population. Notwithstanding, the undesirability of his statement, how advisable it is to expect people to behave in a way that is morally acceptable to society when no particular pattern of ethically correct



SIDDHARTHA MISHRA

behaviour is prescribed for them by the state. It implies that society expects or presumes everyone to know morally accurate conduct in all situations.

As morality is an abstract concept that varies from place to place and from person to person, it is necessary that, like law, morality is clearly defined as well. Usually, an act or statement acquires a righteous or

erroneous character on the personal sense of judgement of individuals, thus, people must know clearly what is permissible moral and what is proscribed immoral.

In such a situation, it requires consideration whether society needs a code that prescribes a pattern of morally upright conduct for its people. Ideally, each society must aim to be free from immoral conduct or behaviour and, for this, the state should establish a pattern or standard of behaviour that is expected of all the citizens and is followed by all alike whether individuals or organisations.

Ironically, in India, the state has made little attempt to establish such a society where people follow a certain advised pattern of behaviour that is

acceptable to all.

The impression that laws would serve this purpose is completely contrary to the practical realities. Laws as they exist in this country are mostly proscriptive which means they largely prohibit particular or specific behaviour(s) rather than laying down in detail the desirable pattern(s) of conduct.

In India, laws are hardly prescriptive and they do not necessarily prescribe a particular pattern of behaviour for people. Generally, laws do not provide in brief or detail what manner, pattern of conduct or behaviour should people observe or practice.

They mainly proscribe or prohibit particular conduct(s) and make doing such conduct culpable or punishable and the



doer of it liable for certain consequences. Given such a situation, does it not sound farcical to expect all the people, all over, to know, in every situation, in minute details, what is legally and morally permissible conduct and behaviour? The lack of efforts on the part of the society or the state to

formulate a code of morally desirable conduct in India may be ascribed to the thought that this work be better left to the educational, religious or cultural institutions.

But if so, have such institutions fulfilled their responsibility in this regard? India, being a

multi-religious and multi-cultural country, a variety of factors seem to hamper this purpose. Diversity of faiths and religions results in a lack of a common behavioural pattern as well as a lack of a mechanism to ensure that the moral instructions being imparted are being uniformly learnt and practised.

Even the educational institutions seem to flounder here, as not all educational institutions seem to insist on teaching moral or ethical values uniformly at all levels. They lay immense emphasis on scientific and technical education but not in the same way on imparting moral education, which is more or equally necessary. Most of the problems in society are caused by a lack of strong values, morals and

integrity of character in people, hence, a civilised state must work sincerely on developing a strong value system in its population. Though the Indian constitution prescribes fundamental duties for citizens that are non-enforceable, they remain, merely, empty slogans. Given the massive onslaught of undesirable content on social media and its penetration among, and influence on, vulnerable youth, it is highly incumbent on the state, simultaneously, to regulate social media as well as draft a moral/ethical code of conduct for building a nation of people with strong morals and character.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Faculty of Law University of Delhi; views are personal)



IN BRIEF



**Bisleri 'Bottles for Change' partners with tiger reserve**

In a significant step towards sustainable conservation, Bisleri, under its CSR initiative Bottles for Change, has partnered with Panna Tiger Reserve, Department of Forest, Madhya Pradesh, marking a milestone in responsible plastic waste management within ecologically sensitive areas. A Letter of Association was formally exchanged, reinforcing a shared commitment to environmental sustainability and wildlife conservation. Panna Tiger Reserve, spanning 542.67 km<sup>2</sup> across the Panna and Chhatarpur districts, is a renowned sanctuary recognized with the Award of Excellence in 2007 as India's best-maintained national park by the Ministry of Tourism. Now home to over 100 tigers, the reserve stands as a testament to India's dedicated conservation efforts. As part of the collaboration, the Bottles for Change project has been introduced in the reserve, incorporating multiple plastic waste management initiatives. Six display boards have been installed along forest roads to educate visitors on responsible plastic disposal. Additionally, ten used plastic collection banks have been provided to encourage tourists and locals to segregate plastic waste for proper recycling.



**Upgraded to be Global: New era of e-Business comes**

The 5th China Cross-Border E-commerce Trade Fair, acclaimed as the No. 1 cross-border e-commerce exhibition in China, will take place from March 18th to 20th in Fuzhou, a southeastern coastal city in China. Overseas guests of online sellers, service providers, associations, influencers and content creators are all welcome to visit for e-business exploration. As a national-level professional exhibition, the 5th China Cross-Border E-commerce Trade Fair is characterized by its high-level organization, large-scale size, various range of exhibitors, extensive buyer invitations, and complete industrial elements. It is widely recognized as the "Canton Fair" of the cross-border e-commerce sector. The size of the fair has expanded by 20% compared to the previous session, with an area reaching 60,000 square meters. It gathers lots of popular global e-commerce platforms, including Amazon, Walmart, eBay, Alibaba, SHEIN, TikTok Shop, TEMU, Rednote, 1688, Shopee, Lazada, and Mercado Libre etc., 80% of Participants are Suppliers



**Gold prices rise by Rs 200 to Rs 87,900 per 10 g**

Gold prices rose by Rs 200 to Rs 87,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid fresh buying by jewellers and retailers and a weak rupee, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 87,700 per 10 grams on Friday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity advanced by Rs 200 to Rs 87,500 per 10 grams. It had settled at Rs 87,300 per 10 grams in the previous market close. Additionally, silver prices also went up by Rs 100 to Rs 96,500 per kg. In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for April delivery jumped Rs 698 to Rs 84,917 per 10 grams. "Gold remained positive after last week's 1.60 per cent profit booking. The fresh upside comes as global uncertainty persists, with tensions between US and Ukraine leaders over deal negotiations," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities.

**Samira Khan Mahi joins Babu88Sports as brand ambassador**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Babu88Sports, leading online sports news platform in South Asia is pleased to announce its partnership with acclaimed Bangladeshi actress and model, Samira Khan Mahi, as its new brand ambassador. This collaboration aims to merge the thrill of online gaming with the dynamic appeal of the entertainment industry, offering users a unique and engaging experience.

works include Mayabi (2017), Shokal Bikal Ratri (2021), Girl's Squad (2021), Biye Korte Giye (2022), Hangor (2022), Marriage Breaker (2023), and Overtrump (2023). With a strong social media presence, particularly on TikTok, where she boasts over 2 million followers, Samira continues to captivate audiences both on and off-screen.



About Samira Khan Mahi  
Born on February 7, 1997, in Lakshimpur, Sylhet, Bangladesh, Samira Khan Mahi, whose real name is Farjana Yesmin Koly, has established herself as a prominent figure in the Bangladeshi entertainment industry. She first gained recognition in 2014 as the first runner-up in the Rang RTV 2020 Colours Model Search. Her success in modeling led to collaborations with renowned brands such as Ecstasy, O2, Sailor, Pride Girls, Banglalink, and Textmart.

Transitioning into acting, Samira has demonstrated her versatility through compelling performances in numerous Bengali television dramas, series, telefilms, and digital content. Some of her notable

A Strategic Collaboration  
The partnership between Babu88Sports and Samira Khan Mahi represents a strategic alignment of entertainment and sports. As the official Brand Ambassador, Samira will leverage her star power, digital influence, and vibrant personality to enhance Babu88Sports's brand visibility and connect with sports enthusiasts. This collaboration will also introduce innovative opportunities for fans to engage with Samira through exclusive promotions, interactive content, and special events on the platform.

**'Sufficient wheat stock to meet PDS requirement'**

PNS ■ PANAJI (GOA)

Union Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra on Monday said the government has sufficient wheat stock to meet the requirement of welfare schemes and for market interventions to keep prices under check.

He said the Centre has offloaded 30 lakh tonnes of wheat to flour millers and processors this fiscal year under the open market sale scheme (OMSS) and stressed that benefits should be passed on to consumers.

In a written message read at a conference organised by Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India (RFMI), Chopra said the Centre is committed to ensuring food security for every citizen of India through initiatives such as efficient procurement of foodgrains, safe storage, and timely distribution under the Targeted Public Distribution Scheme (TPDS)/Other Welfare Schemes (OWS).

"Government has sufficient stocks of wheat to meet own requirements and also for necessary market interventions. This year government has offloaded 30 lakh tonnes of wheat to processors/millers through OMSS(D)," he said.

India produced a record 1,132 lakh tonnes of wheat in 2023-24 crop year (July-June).



The government expects a bumper crop in 2024-25 as well on the back of higher acreage.

Chopra said the Centre is also implementing an ambitious silo construction programme to ensure bulk storage and movement of wheat. "This will assist in dispersed storage and efficiency in logistics, he added.

"Ensuring food security and self-reliance in wheat production is a key government priority, and the milling industry plays a vital role in this effort," he said, and added that the Federation's market insights has helped in framing policies and strategic plan-

ning. The Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India has been a valued partner in addressing industry challenges and working closely with the Government to ensure smooth supply chains, the secretary said.

"The Federation must maintain oversight over its members to ensure that the benefits of OMSS conducted by FCI reach the consumer and inflationary tendencies are curbed," he said.

More than 600 delegates are participating in a global conference organised by the federation, which has 1800 direct and indirect members.

**IEX reports 9 pc rise in trade volumes to 9,622 million units**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) has registered a 9 per cent year-on-year rise in trade volumes to 9,622 million units in February compared to the year-ago period, a company statement said on Monday.

A total of 16.37 lakh renewable energy certificates were traded during the month, marking a 167 per cent year on year (y-o-y) increase, it said. The next REC trading sessions at the Exchange are scheduled for March 12th and 26th.

In the electricity market, the day-ahead market (DAM) achieved 5,369 MU volume in February as compared to 4,722 MU volume in the same month last year, an increase of 14 per cent YoY.

The real-time electricity Market (RTM) volume increased by 23 per cent to 2,887 MU in February from 2,340 MU in February 2024. Day Ahead Contingency and Term-Ahead Market (TAM), comprising of contingency, daily & weekly and monthly contracts up to 3 months, traded 814 MU during February 2025, lower by 45 per cent on YoY basis.

**ED issues Rs 611-cr notice to Paytm for flouted RBI guidelines**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday said it has issued a notice to Paytm's parent company, its MD and linked entities for "contravention" of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) involving Rs 611 crore.

According to Paytm's annual report for the financial year 2024, the fintech major's founder, Vijay Shekhar Sharma, is its chairman, managing director (MD) and chief executive officer.

The notice has been issued by a special director of the federal agency after the completion of an investigation and before the initiation of adjudication proceedings under the said law.

A Paytm spokesperson said the company was working to resolve the matter in accordance with applicable laws and regulatory processes.

The show cause notice has been issued to Paytm's flagship company One 97 Communication limited (OCL), its managing director and other Paytm subsidiaries such as Little Internet Pvt Ltd



and Nearbuy India Pvt Ltd for "contraventions" of the provisions of the FEMA to the tune of around Rs 611 crore, the ED said in a statement.

Investigations found that OCL made foreign investments in Singapore and "did not" file necessary reporting to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the creation of an overseas step-down subsidiary, it said.

The company had "also received foreign direct investment (FDI) from overseas investors without following proper pricing guidelines stipulated by the RBI", it alleged.

The ED said OCL's subsidiary company in India -- Little Internet Pvt Ltd -- received FDI from overseas investors "without following" the pricing

guidelines stipulated by the RBI. The other subsidiary -- Nearbuy India Pvt Ltd -- "did not" report the FDI received by the company within the time frame prescribed by the RBI, it said.

In a regulatory filing made on Saturday (March 1), Paytm said it received a notice from the ED for alleged violation of certain FEMA rules by the company and its two subsidiaries -- Little Internet and Nearbuy -- with respect to certain investment transactions.

Later, Paytm clarified that the alleged breach pertains to the period when the two companies were not its subsidiaries. It acquired the two companies in 2017.

**Coal India sets 788 MT production, 765 MT offtake for FY'25**

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Coal India Limited (CIL) is expecting production of 788 million tonnes (MT) and an offtake of 765 MT for the current fiscal year ending March 2025, its chairman P M Prasad said on Monday, while ruling out any price rationalisation despite a decline in international coal prices.

The initial production target was 838 MT, which was revised to 806-810 MT in January.

In FY'24, the company achieved production of 773.65 MT, reflecting a 10 per cent year-on-year growth.

Speaking at the Indian Coal Market Conference organised by mjunction, a joint venture between Tata Steel Ltd and SAIL, Prasad attributed the slowdown in offtake to a rake shortage in large mines.

At the same time, he remained optimistic about growth in the coming months.

Both production and offtake are expected to grow by 1.5 per cent this year, based on current estimates, against 10 per cent and 8.5 per cent growth, respectively, last year.

Prasad also mentioned that

the availability of rakes had been a concern due to the Kumbh Mela, but after discussions with the Railways, the situation has improved in the last few days.

He also mentioned that currently there is no shortage of coal and stock at power plants is 51 million tonnes.

According to the latest estimates, pithead coal stock is also



over 80 million tonnes. Despite softening international coal prices in the recent months, Prasad ruled out any price cuts by CIL, stating that the company aims to complement, not compete with, commercial mines.

He urged private commercial block owners to seek support from Coal India's CMPDI, as the company is committed to complementing the government's target of reducing coal imports.

**Nissan Motor India total sales up 44.76 pc at 8,567 units**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nissan Motor India on Monday reported a 44.76 per cent on-year rise in total sales at 8,567 units in February 2025, riding on exports.

The company, which sold 5,918 units in February 2024, said all the powertrain options of its compact SUV Magnite are now E20-compatible with the Magnite BR10 naturally aspirated engine also becoming fully-compliant recently after the more powerful 1-litre HR10 turbocharged petrol engine, which became E20-compatible in August 2024.

In February 2025, domestic sales accounted for 2,328 units, down from 2,755 units in the same month last year.

Exports last month totalled 6,239 units, up 97 per cent year-on-year, compared to 3,163 export units in February 2024. Nissan Motor India said in a statement.

**Naveen Jindal to acquire Bhadreshwar Vidyut**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jindal Power Limited is set to acquire Bhadreshwar Vidyut for nearly Rs 500 crore as the lenders of the Gujarat-based thermal power producer have approved its bid.

The Committee of Creditors (CoC) of Bhadreshwar Vidyut, which is currently going through an insolvency resolution process, has voted in favour of the resolution plan by Jindal Power Limited (JPL), a Naveen Jindal Group company, according to industry sources.

As per the provisions of the

Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC), the resolution professional of the debt-ridden thermal power producer will send the plan to the National Company Law Tribunal for final approval.

A source close to the deal said, "Jindal Power was the highest bidder in the second challenge process. The company will now work towards completing the acquisition within the next six months".

In a rigorous multi-round bidding, each participants were given a chance to improve their offers. Eventually, Jindal Power

emerged as the highest and sole bidder in the final round, he added.

JPL plans to fund its around Rs 500 crore bid entirely through internal accruals, and committed Rs 25-50 crore additionally for capital expenditure to ensure operational efficiency post-acquisition, he noted.

After completion, the acquisition will be crucial for a strategic expansion of the Jindal Group, reinforcing its presence in Gujarat and significantly bolstering its power generation portfolio.

The move aligns with the

company's long-term growth strategy of expanding its energy footprint across India while ensuring financial sustainability, the source said.

As Jindal Power moves swiftly to integrate Bhadreshwar Vidyut into its portfolio, industry experts anticipate that this acquisition will breathe new life into Gujarat's power sector, ensuring energy reliability and economic growth.

Bhadreshwar Vidyut, formerly known as OPGS Power Gujarat, operates two 150 MW coal-based power plants in Kutch.

**VW to drive in Golf GTI, Tiguan R-line in India**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

German carmaker Volkswagen will be driving in its two globally acclaimed performance models Golf GTI and Tiguan R-line in India as part of its steps to enhance brand positioning in the country, a senior company official said on Monday.

Volkswagen India will be launching the two models latest by the second quarter of 2025 by importing as fully built units under the 'GSR 870 rule' as a result of which volumes will be limited, Volkswagen India Brand Director Ashish Gupta told PTI.

"We are calling 2025 the year of 'Progressive Performance' for us... we want to make sure that we continue to grow in the Indian market. We want to make sure that we take the brand even higher up in terms of customer accessibility in terms of awareness and also in terms of brand image," he said. While the company has been able to establish the VW brand on the credentials of German engineering, fun to drive safety and build quality, he said, "We now want to take it up a notch higher with the introduction of our global iconic products, which signify performance".



On the all-new Tiguan R Line, he said, "It is not the normal Tiguan. We are bringing the top spec R-Line into India, a totally new third generation Tiguan, which is Volkswagen's one of the best sellers after the Golf worldwide."

When asked about sales expectations from the upcoming two models, he said as these will be imported as fully-built units 'GSR 870 rule', he said volumes will be limited.

**House of Surya unveils 'Adira': A timeless tribute**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a world where fashion trends ebb and flow, House of Surya presents Adira, a collection that transcends time, celebrating the essence of strength, heritage, and grace. This latest launch redefines contemporary luxury by blending exquisite craftsmanship with the deep-rooted traditions of handwoven artistry. More than a mere collection, Adira is a narrative—an homage to the resilience of generations, the quiet power of femininity, and the enduring beauty of heritage.

A Legacy Woven in Every Thread  
At the heart of Adira lies an unwavering commitment to preserving tradition while embracing modernity.

Every drape tells a story—of artisans who have honed their craft for centuries, of mothers passing down heirlooms to daughters, and of the modern woman who honours her roots while carving her own path. Each saree in this collection is not just an ensemble but a living testament to legacy and resilience. The collection's hallmark is its intricate handwoven textiles, crafted using time-honoured techniques that elevate every piece to an heirloom. The artistry of skilled weavers breathes life into each design, ensuring that no two pieces are exactly alike. From the softest silks to the most intricate Zari work, Adira represents the pinnacle of craftsmanship—where every motif carries the whispers of the past and the



strength of the present. The Magnolia Motif: A Symbol of Strength and Grace

Central to the collection is the Magnolia motif, an emblem of timeless resilience and beauty. Chosen for its significance, the Magnolia flower symbolizes strength wrapped in grace—an apt reflection of the modern woman. Whether delicately embroidered onto flowing silk or woven into the very fabric of the saree, the Magnolia motif serves as a poetic reminder that elegance is not just in appearance but in the quiet fortitude that defines true femininity. In Adira, the motif seamlessly intertwines with age-old weaving techniques, presenting a collection that is both rooted in

tradition and refreshingly contemporary. The Magnolia's presence across the collection celebrates the woman who walks with the wisdom of the past yet strides forward with unyielding confidence.

A Tribute to the Modern Woman  
The name Adira, meaning bold yet graceful, is a tribute to the essence of modern femininity—fearless, resilient, and effortlessly elegant.

The collection honours women who carry their heritage with pride while embracing their own unique journey. Each saree is designed to empower, serving as a reminder that strength and beauty are not opposing forces but rather harmonious elements that define today's woman.



# what's brewing?



## Abhishek Bachchan, Nora bring a heartfelt 'celebration of dreams & resilience' in *Be Happy*

*Be Happy* is more than just a movie; it's a powerful testament to resilience—reminding us that the bravest thing we can do is keep moving forward, even when life's toughest moments try to hold us back, much like in dance.

For Nora Fatehi, *Be Happy* is a special project that allowed her to combine her two greatest passions—acting and dancing. Portraying a dancer in the film, she found the role deeply personal and rewarding.

"Working on *Be Happy* has been an incredibly fulfilling experience. I've always enjoyed working with children, and it was wonderful to see Inayat bring such authenticity to her character. Sharing the screen with Abhishek Bachchan was fantastic—his dedication and focus elevated every scene," she said.

She also expressed her excitement about collaborating with Remo D'Souza once again, describing him as a "visionary director" whose expertise in dance storytelling helped her push her limits as an actor. "This film is a celebration of dreams and the resilience of the human spirit and I believe it will resonate with audiences worldwide," she added.

Produced by Lizelle Remo D'Souza under Remo Dsouza Entertainment Pvt Ltd, *Be Happy* boasts a strong supporting cast, including Nassar, Inayat Verma, Johnny Lever and Harleen Sethi. With Remo D'Souza's signature storytelling and dynamic dance sequences, the film promises to be an inspiring tale of hope and determination.

## Zindagi Ko Yas Bol reunites the iconic ZNBD trio

After weeks of speculation surrounding the viral video featuring Bollywood's beloved *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* trio—Hrithik Roshan, Farhan Akhtar, and Abhay Deol—the mystery has finally been revealed. The new campaign for Yas Island, *Zindagi Ko Yas Bol*, brings together the original cast for a much-anticipated reunion, celebrating the spirit of adventure and friendship that made the film so beloved.

Fourteen years after the iconic film, fans are getting the closest thing to a sequel, with the trio embarking on a brand-new adventure packed with challenges, thrills and unforgettable moments on Yas Island. The campaign kicks off with an exciting trailer, marking the beginning of a five-episode series that takes Hrithik, Farhan and Abhay across Yas Island's most iconic experiences. Reigniting the film's core theme, each character challenges the others, embracing the spirit of *Zindagi Ko Yas Bol* by saying 'Yas' to every adventure.

From high-speed thrills to breathtaking experiences, the series promises to deliver nostalgia, laughter, and the essence of living life to the fullest. And what's an epic adventure without an equally epic soundtrack? A brand-new jingle, created just for this campaign, captures the excitement and energy of Yas Island, making sure the spirit of fun stays with you long after the journey ends.

Filmmakers Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti, who co-wrote the script for the series, added: "We are excited about this collaboration with Yas Island, and it's amazing to see how the film still connects with people so many years later. At its heart, the film has always been about stepping out of your comfort zone and living life to the fullest and we are grateful for all the love it receives."

Fans can follow the trio's adventure in the upcoming episodes by staying tuned to Yas Island's official social media channels. With each episode unlocking new challenges and breathtaking experiences, *Zindagi Ko Yas Bol* is set to be an unforgettable journey that celebrates the spirit of friendship, adventure, and saying 'Yas' to life!

## 'Dabba Cartel' allowed me to merge my love for storytelling with a genre that needed more representation'

Shibani Akhtar, the writer of *Dabba Cartel*, has reflected on her journey in creating the gripping crime drama, calling it a transformative learning experience. Starring veteran actress Shabana Azmi, the show has received widespread acclaim from both fans and critics.

In a latest interview, Akhtar candidly spoke about the challenges she faced while bringing *Dabba Cartel* to life. She admitted that while she had prepared extensively, the actual production process was vastly different from what she had anticipated.

"It was a huge learning experience and there was so much that I was initially unaware of," she shared. She credited the show's director and producers for guiding her through the various stages of production, helping her gain a deeper understanding of the intricacies involved in filmmaking.

Akhtar also addressed the growing discussion around female-led narratives, expressing her hope that in the future, stories would simply be recognised for their merit rather than being categorised based on gender.

"What truly matters is the contribution of writers, creators and directors, regardless of gender."

Understanding the story and its characters is more important than focusing solely on gender representation," she emphasised.

Revealing what drew her to create a crime drama rooted in India and centered around women, Akhtar explained that she had long wanted to explore such narratives.

"I've always been passionate about telling women's stories and I felt there was a gap when it came to female-driven crime dramas in India. *Dabba Cartel* allowed me to merge my love for storytelling with a genre that needed more representation from a female perspective," she said.

As *Dabba Cartel* continues to receive praise, Akhtar's insights highlight the evolving landscape of storytelling in India—one where gender is secondary to strong narratives, compelling characters and impactful storytelling.



## STANDALONE

In a spectacular celebration of love and unity, Konark Gowariker, son of renowned filmmaker Ashutosh Gowariker and producer Sunita Gowariker, married Niyati Kanakia, daughter of Rasesh Babubhai Kanakia of Kanakia Builders. The wedding was a star-studded affair that brought together luminaries from both the film and business communities.



## Priyanka Chopra's short film *Anuja* misses out on Oscar win to Dutch sci-fi drama

The Indian short film *Anuja*, which was in contention for the Best Live Action Short award at the 97th Academy Awards, lost out to the Dutch-language film *I'm Not a Robot*. Directed by Victoria Warmerdam, *I'm Not a Robot* is a thought-provoking science fiction drama that follows Max, a man who spirals into an existential crisis after failing an online CAPTCHA test, making him question whether he is, in fact, a robot.

*Anuja*, helmed by Adam J Graves and Suchitra Mattai, tells the poignant story of a gifted nine-year-old girl who faces a life-altering decision—whether to pursue education or join her sister in factory work. The heart-wrenching narrative explores themes of poverty, opportunity and resilience. The film stars Sajda Pathan and Ananya Shanbhag in pivotal roles. Despite missing out on the

Oscar, *Anuja* boasts an impressive lineup of executive producers, including two-time Academy Award-winning producer Guneet Monga and global icon Priyanka Chopra Jonas, with Hollywood actor-writer Mindy Kaling also attached as a producer. The short film is currently streaming on Netflix.

The project was created in collaboration with the Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT), a nonprofit organization founded by filmmaker Mira Nair's family to support street and working children. It was also backed by Shine Global and Krushan Naik Films. Other nominees in the Best Live Action Short category included *A*

*Lien*, *The Last Ranger* and *The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent*. The 97th Academy Awards, hosted by comedian Conan O'Brien, aired live in India on JioHotstar and Star Plus, broadcasting from the iconic Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles.



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



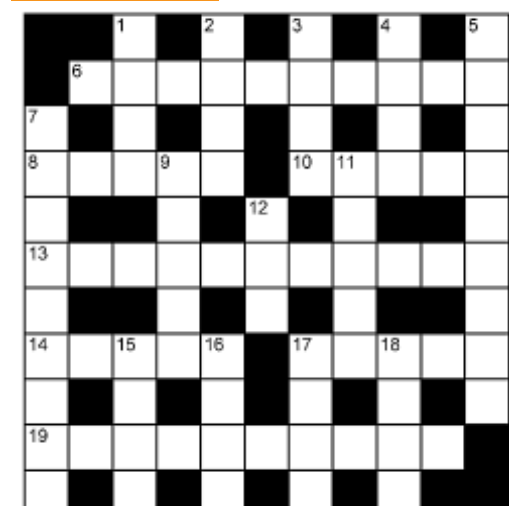
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

### ACROSS

- A thing with wheels that is fun to ride on
- Don't go
- A large bird of prey
- See-through
- Time of darkness
- Sickness with a high temperature
- On a trip
- Stubborn
- Follows eighth
- Think the same way as someone else
- A large hairy animal
- An animal with horns
- Large plant
- Use this in a camera
- Grape plant

### DOWN

- The body's covering
- A woodwind instrument
- The sound of an explosion
- An unusual or exciting experience

SOLUTION

F	L	E	E	C	E	S	T	O	P
A	N	O	E	E					
K	N	O	T	O	B	T	A	I	N
I	G	N	I	T	I	S			
S	M	C	A	R	C	L			
H	B	R	A	V	E	R			
I	S	E	E	A	D				
V	A	N	I	S	H	I	D	E	A
E	O	S							
R	O	S							



## CRAFTING SONIC WORLDS ACROSS GENRES



In conversation with *The Pioneer*, three-time Indian Recording Academy Award (IRAA) winner **Ninad Lad** delved into his journey from an award-winning guitarist to one of India's most sought-after sound engineers. He further shared insights on balancing commercial precision with artistic expression, the impact of digital platforms on sound engineering and how AI and immersive audio are reshaping the future of the industry

TEJAL SINHA  
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Three-time Indian Recording Academy Award (IRAA) winner Ninad Lad has shaped the soundscapes of some of the biggest films, TV shows and commercials in India. With over a decade of experience and a portfolio spanning 5,000+ TV commercials and numerous high-profile projects, Ninad has mastered the art of sound engineering. His latest works include mixing the background score for *Citadel: Honey Bunny*, *Dunki*, *Guns & Gulaabs*, *Lust Stories*, *Fukrey 3*, *Chup* and *Mismatched Season 2*. Before becoming one of the most sought-after sound engineers in the industry, Ninad was an award-winning guitarist, securing the IIT Mood Indigo title in 2007. His passion for music still runs deep, as he continues to collaborate on jazz and indie projects with artists like Rhythm Shaw, Gino Banks and Mohini Dey.

In this candid conversation, Ninad shares insights into his creative process, the transition from guitarist to sound engineer and how he balances commercial expectations with artistic freedom. With a filmography that spans action thrillers to comedies, Ninad has honed the ability to adjust his sound approach based on genre. He emphasises that each project demands a unique sonic treatment. "With action thrillers like *Citadel: Honey Bunny*, the sound needs to feel larger than life. Punchy percussion, deep bass and immersive spatial effects help build tension and excitement. On the other hand, for a comedy like *Fukrey 3*, the focus is on making the sound lively, playful and crisp, ensuring that dialogues and comedic timing shine through without unnecessary distractions. It's all about understanding the mood of the film and letting the sound enhance that experience organically." Ninad's transition from being a guitarist to a sound engineer has profoundly influenced his work. His background in music allows him to approach sound design with a deep understanding of tones, textures and

emotions. "Being a guitarist taught me to listen deeply to tones, textures, and emotions within music. This instinct carries over into sound design, where even the smallest sonic detail can shape a scene's impact. When collaborating with filmmakers, I translate their vision into sound, much like I would interpret a song's mood through my instrument. My musical background also helps me communicate better with composers and artists, ensuring the sound not only fits technically but also feels right emotionally." Having worked on over 5,000 TV commercials, Ninad knows the challenges of capturing a listener's attention in just a few seconds. He believes that experimentation is key to making sound stand out in advertising. "Advertising is all about impact—you have just a few seconds to grab attention. The key is to experiment with textures, rhythms and unique sound elements that instantly stand out. Sometimes, it's about stripping things down to their essence; other times, layering unexpected sounds can create something fresh. Each brand has a distinct identity, so I always tailor the sound to reflect that while ensuring it feels modern and engaging." While precision is crucial in sound engineering, Ninad also takes creative risks to push the boundaries of conventional sound mixing. Films like *Dunki* and *Guns & Gulaabs* provided opportunities to explore new sonic landscapes. "Absolutely! *Dunki* had moments where we played with subtle distortions and unconventional reverbs to heighten the emotional weight of a scene. For *Guns & Gulaabs*, the retro crime setting allowed me to experiment with vintage-style processing, giving the soundtrack an era-specific grit while maintaining modern clarity. Taking creative risks is crucial—some of the best mixes come from stepping outside the traditional playbook." Working on both mainstream hits and indie projects, Ninad has mastered the balance between maintaining authenticity and appealing to global audiences. "The core of any project is storytelling, and authenticity comes from staying true to that. For mainstream projects, the sound needs to be polished yet distinct, blending global production standards with cultural nuances. In

indie projects, there's more room to explore raw, unconventional sounds. Whether working on a commercial hit or an independent film, my focus is always on enhancing the emotional connection through sound while keeping the sonic identity unique." From the youthful vibrance of *Mismatched* to the dark psychological depth of *Chup*, Ninad carefully curates the sonic identity of every project. "Every project starts with understanding the world it creates. *Mismatched* had a youthful, modern energy, so the sound was crisp, clean and vibrant to match that vibe. *Chup*, on the other hand, was intense and psychological, requiring a darker, more atmospheric approach. The goal is to complement the story without overpowering it and using sound as a subconscious tool that heightens emotions and immerses the audience in that world." While commercial projects demand precision and polish, indie projects allow for more artistic freedom. Ninad enjoys the challenge of both. "It's about finding the right space within each project. Commercial work has specific expectations—there's a need for precision and polish. Indie projects allow for more creative freedom and experimentation. I enjoy both because they challenge different aspects of my craft. Even within structured commercial projects, there's always a way to infuse a personal touch, whether through a unique sonic texture or an unexpected mix choice." Deciding which sounds, beats, or instruments best evoke emotion is an instinctive process for Ninad. He believes sound should elevate a scene without distracting from the storytelling. "It all starts with feeling. If a scene needs tension, I look at ways to build anticipation through bass swells, subtle echoes, or rhythmic patterns. For emotional moments, warm textures and soft reverbs can create an intimate connection. Sound should never distract—it should elevate the scene without the audience necessarily noticing why they feel a certain way. A good mix is one that disappears into the storytelling." With digital platforms democratising music production, sound engineers have a greater impact on audience experiences than ever before. "It's an exciting time. Independent artists now have access to high-quality production tools without needing massive studio budgets, which allows for more experimentation and unique sounds. Sound engineers play a crucial role in shaping these sonic experiences, helping independent music stand shoulder to shoulder with mainstream releases. The direct-to-audience model also means more creative control, and that's a big win for both artists and engineers." Looking ahead, Ninad is excited about the next wave of innovation in sound design. "AI-driven tools are becoming increasingly sophisticated, helping streamline workflows and opening up new creative possibilities. Spatial audio and immersive sound experiences, especially with VR and AR content, are also pushing boundaries in storytelling. The way audiences consume sound is evolving and I'm excited about how technology will continue to redefine what's possible in sound design."



## Driving social impact through education

Education leaders can catalyse social change by igniting minds, empowering teams and striking collaborations across stakeholders in the education ecosystem.

With education emerging as an important tool for social change, the need for a new kind of education leadership couldn't be overemphasised. The next-gen leaders heading educational institutions need to imbibe special social skills that will help them create a culture of partnership, collaboration and inclusivity in educational practices. Here are key lessons that leaders in the educational domain can implement to make campuses a catalyst for community empowerment and social justice:

**Recognise needs:** With the world today distressed by societal issues, some challenges are unique to specific regions, people, cultures, and nations. Education leaders must recognise this urgency and select issues that need immediate redressal for the larger benefit of society. Be it the problem of unsustainable consumption or income inequality, leaders in the education domain should prioritise solving the pressing issues in their neighbourhoods. Further, university head needs to align their focus areas with societal issues so that impactful results can be obtained to reform the lives of communities.

**Adopt EID:** Equity, Inclusion and Diversity (EID) are fundamental for bringing social change and by adopting the approach as an operating philosophy, leaders can help societies on fundamental parameters of progress. Conducting training programs on equality, gender sensitisation, and human rights can be a good starting point for inculcating EID. Education leaders can also opt to establish Equity Departments (ED) on their campuses to develop, analyse, and implement policies through the lens of EID.

**Listen to empower:** While active listening has always been a fundamental aspect of great leaders, creating social impacts mandates

leaders in the education domain to empower their teams. Providing departmental heads with space, freedom and decision-making autonomy is also crucial for creating a wider impact on society. Leaders should encourage their team heads to conduct impact assessments on social issues, community problems and sustainability challenges. This attitude, in turn, will have a rub-off impact, prompting departmental heads to empower student communities to bring change to society.

**Be approachable:** Although rated underdog, approachable education leaders can induce social change by enhancing coordination and collaboration among partners. Both direct and virtual interactions are important, and by exchanging views with departmental heads, faculties, students and community representatives, valuable insights can be gained into what needs to be done for the larger welfare of society. The benefit of being open also helps uncover many dragging factors that would have never come to light otherwise.

**Redesign pedagogy:** To create caring communities, leaders must focus on developing responsive pedagogy that is strongly based on the socially relevant curriculum. There is a need to include diverse perspectives, and by integrating culturally responsive courses into the curricula, university leadership can contribute to uprooting social ills. Education leaders should ensure that department heads adopt a comprehensive approach to develop academic structure and focus on sensitizing students on issues like poverty, inequality, healthcare, child labour, etc. Student leadership forums can also be formed, and making community service a part of the internship programs can also help in addressing community issues in the long term. Generating social awareness among students is critical for achieving social justice and can help universities catalyse change in the way societies exist around the world.

(The author, Kalpesh Banker, is a managing partner at EduShine Search Partners.)

PNS/HYDERABAD

People are yearning for a simpler lifestyle and a closer relationship with nature as the world grows more urbanised. A new trend in tourism has emerged as a result of this desire: farm stays! Imagine spending your days surrounded by verdant fields and amiable farm animals, waking up to the lovely sounds of birdsong and inhaling the aroma of blossoming flowers. Sangam Farms provide a special chance to get your hands dirty, experience rural living and re-establish a connection with nature. Every moment is an opportunity to learn, develop and relax—from picking fresh food to feeding cute farm animals. You'll find yourself letting go of the worries of city life and embracing a more laid-back, genuine way of being as you become accustomed to the tranquil rhythms of farm life. It gives an opportunity to disconnect, rejuvenate and rediscover the splendour of the great outdoors, whether you're a foodie hoping to enjoy the freshest, locally produced delicacies, an adventurer keen to try your hand at farming, or just someone searching for a peaceful getaway from the bustle. This novel weave is being developed in the center of Bhilwara, the textile town in Rajasthan. Such a silent revolution is occurring amid the busy looms! The land is being tended by the same hands that once created elaborate designs on textiles.



## RISE OF FARM STAYS!

Bhilwara is leading the way as it develops into a center for farm stays, providing tourism that is guided by the community. But what really stands out is how the lush fields give way to a savannah-like setting as nightfall descends at the farms, bringing to mind the majesty of Africa's Masai Mara! The opulent tents take you right into the middle of nature. The noises of nocturnal animals and the rustle of foliage combine to produce a symphony that is both distinctively Indian and definitely African as you fall asleep beneath the starry sky.

### Moo-ving experiences

A dairy farm tour is the newest trend here, where guests of all ages may enjoy the creamy treats of farm-fresh milk, cheese and butter. Enjoy the tastiest delights, like freshly churned butter and the newest ice cream which comes next, while watching the gentle giants from Netherlands get milked. You'll find that the true magic occurs not just in the milking parlour but also in the relationships that are formed between people, animals and the land itself as you inhale the delightful aroma of fresh hay. You will feel thankful and maybe even a little "moo-ved" after this really amazing tour.

### Explore world of hydroponics

Greetings from the futuristic world of hydroponics, where nature and innovation collide in a way that is really revolutionary. Over here, hydroponics tours are the newest buzz. Observe the captivating interplay between nutrient-rich mist and well designed systems as vegetables grow in poly-houses with never-before-seen speed and vigour. Your exploration of the climate-controlled greenhouses will open up a world of limitless possibilities. You'll doubt everything you believed you knew about growing your own food after this mind-blowing experience and you'll be itching to embrace the hydroponic revolution!

### Ultimate strawberry experience

Then, savour the sweet life, where you can pick the juiciest strawberries! With the aroma of juicy strawberries filling the air, picture yourself walking through fields. You will experience the delight of selecting your own treasures and the gratification of biting into a fruit that is still warm from the sun as you stroll through the strawberry patches. With the extra benefit of bringing your freshly picked strawberries home to enjoy with loved ones, it's

a sensory experience that's equal parts thrilling and soothing. Your taste buds (and your Instagram feed) will thank you!

### Khad Paneer and magic of Mewar

A royal adventure awaits beneath the starry sky that illuminates the undulating farm fields with a beautiful orange hue. Enter the magnificent realm of Rajputana, where Mewar's imperial tradition coexists with the rustic beauty of rural India. As the aroma of spices fills the air, assemble around the roaring fire. Savour the mouth-watering flavours of traditional Mewar food, which is skillfully prepared by the chef who works his magic with each delicate herb and spice. The eerie sounds of folk music fill the night air as the stars start to shine above. The splendour of rural Rajasthan comes to life in the middle of farmland on this evening of regal proportions. The magnificent preparation of "Khad Paneer," a centuries-old dish that was handed down through the royal kitchens of Mewar, was what really ignited the Rajputana experience. Located in a pit buried in the ground, this personalized dish, appropriate for kings, was slow-cooked to perfection in a clay pot. The pit was shut while the succulent paneer cooked in a flavourful broth that was

infused with aromatic spices, allowing the flavours to develop like a great wine. With the paneer so supple and the flavours so deep that they lingered on the mouth like a comforting whisper, the end product was a culinary masterpiece. It was an absolutely royal dining experience in the middle of "khet"!

### Dam-side delights

The atmosphere changed to a calm symphony of golden hues as the last rays of the day danced across the rippling waters of Guwardi dam. Enjoying a traditional Indian meal of crispy, golden pakodas and steaming glasses of chai was the ideal backdrop. Good tea, crunchy snacks and the beauty of nature came together in a moment of perfect ecstasy as the sun sank below the horizon, painting the sky in pink and orange strokes.

### Meet farm's colourful residents

Each animal that lives on the farm is a thread in the complex web of farm life and together they form a colourful tapestry of species that go about their daily lives. Eager for the daily feeding frenzy, fish congregate at the water's edge and swim languidly in the lotus ponds, their scales gleaming in the sunlight. A bright kingfisher bird dazzles with its burst of colour, while two inquisitive young turtles by the name of Seth Ji & Tortuga peek out nearby.

### Your own Geet-moment awaits

The farm becomes a mystical movie theatre beneath the stars beneath the heavenly canvas. The aroma of freshly made cocktails fills the air while the soft glow of artificial lanterns creates the perfect atmosphere for an enchanted midnight. The expert mixologist creates signature drinks that go well with the film's theme and give the viewing experience a whimsical touch. It was an evening of old-school glitz! You can't help but experience déjà vu as well. You feel as though you had wandered into a scene from *Jab We Met*, when the fanciful romance between Aditya and Geet took place beneath the "Machan". The scenery was bathed in a golden glow from the sun! As one gives in to the peace of the moment and feels the worries of daily life dissolve, time seems to stop. When the freedom of the broad fields and the beauty of nature combine to provide an unrestrained sensation of joy and liberty, it can be your own Geet moment.

### Tactile tour

A tactile tour that tells a rich story of touch and tradition is another option. The

rustic charm of rural India meets the world of high fashion in this one-of-a-kind tour, where craftsmen provide gorgeous fabrics to well-known brands like HRX, Jockey, Zivame, Zudio and more. Every stitch, weave and thread narrates a tale of luxury lingerie and sportswear. The lines between art, fashion and culture become less distinct as you handle, feel and investigate the complex patterns and textures, giving you a greater respect for the unsung heroes of Bhilwara's textile heritage. Another passion project of the farm's owner is C9, an internal brand that captures the spirit of his textile appeal. It's an act of love!

A vision to cultivate a haven where peace and freshness flourished emerged in the middle of nature. It is the realisation of this goal, where the power of locally cultivated love is demonstrated by the journey from seed to plate. They deliver wholesome treats directly from their dairy farms and hydroponic gardens, celebrating the essence of farm-fresh goodness by adopting sustainable procedures and lowering their carbon footprint. The story doesn't stop there, though. The founders' dedication resulted in the establishment of a calm sanctuary where visitors find peace amid verdant surroundings and locals find comfort. Everyone is invited to enjoy the beauty of nature, which has been lovingly and carefully tended, in this picturesque haven.





# Four spinners a tempting combination after Varun's effort: Rohit

PTI ■ DUBAI

India captain Rohit Sharma did not commit to following the four-spinner template in the Champions Trophy (CT) semifinal against Australia, but said Varun Chakravarthy's splendid effort against New Zealand has made that option very tempting.

India played with Chakravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel and the quartet wrecked the Kiwis, sharing nine wickets among them in their team's 44-run win here on Sunday. "We really need to think, even if we want to play four spinners, how we can squeeze four spinners. The reason I say it is because we are very much aware of the conditions here and we know exactly what works and what doesn't work," Rohit said in his pre-match press conference.

"So, we will think about it, what is the right combination to go with, but it is tempting," he added. Chakravarthy, who came in as a replacement for rested pacer Harshit Rana, was excellent while returning with the figures of 5/42, and Rohit said the spinner is certainly in the team management's thoughts. "He just showed what he is

capable of. Now, it is up to us to think and see how we can get that combination right. He got a game, and he did everything that was asked for.

"He has got something different about him and when he gets it right, he knocks people over and he takes 5-5. So, it is very tempting to think about what to do, which is a good headache to have. We will also assess the Australian batting lineup to see what kind of bowling options will work against them," he detailed.

**Rohit lauds Chakravarthy**  
During the course of his match-winning effort against the Kiwis, the Tamil Nadu spinner had also rinsed away the memories of his modest outing against Pakistan in the 2021 T20 WC at this stadium. Rohit explained the improvements Chakravarthy has made in the interim.

"He has become more accurate now from the last time he played for India in 2021. There was a little bit of inexperience in him as well because he hadn't played a lot of cricket.

"But right now in the last two or three years he has played a lot of cricket whether it's domestic cricket, IPL and now for India in T20s and now the ODIs as well. So, he understands his bowling



really well," he said.

The Mumbai man said Chakravarthy has put in a lot of hard yards into his craft of late, which is now reflecting in his wicket column.

"You know, some of our batters also could not figure that (variations) out, which is always

nice. His pace variation now is superb. When you have a little bit of mystery, you do not want to be a one-dimensional bowler and bowl with the same speed.

"You need something different, the pace variation and the accuracy as well. So, he has worked on both and now you see

that he is getting a lot of wickets which is a good sign for us as a team," he added.

Drafting Chakravarthy into India's CT squad ahead of players like Yashasvi Jaiswal and Mohammed Siraj had raised some questions. Rohit explained the rationale. "It is just the talent. If there is

something really special about that particular player, you want to fast track him. Certain formats require a certain skill set and whenever we look at these kinds of players, if the talent is there, then you don't want to shy away from blooding them."

Rohit did not read too much into the criticism of stacking the side with spinners.

"There will be questions asked, there will be few eyebrows raised but as a team you want to do certain things which can help you win games. So, it's important to understand that talent and I have been here long enough to understand what kind of players are talented.

"With Varun especially, we had to sacrifice a batsman which we thought it's only five games in this tournament and it's very unlikely that batter is going to play at any stage unless there is an injury."

**'Middle-order did well'**  
India's top three — Rohit, Virat Kohli and Shubman Gill — had an off-game against New Zealand, leaving the side reeling at 30 for three. But Shreyas Iyer, Axar Patel and Hardik Pandya batted well to take India to a defendable total. Rohit said middle-order batters getting runs was important for the team during the business end of

the tournament. "The middle-order is very experienced but to just get some batting time in the middle and to get those runs and get that fighting total was very important from our standpoint. "Shreyas, KL, Hardik and Axar, they batted brilliantly which is a good sign for us going into the semis because we wanted to have these kind of situations where we are slightly under pressure and then the middle-order takes us through to that target which they did," he said.

**'Axar's improvement is superb'**  
Rohit also praised Axar for repaying the think tank's faith in him while promoting to No. 5 ahead of KL Rahul.

"The clear message was given to him when we started the ODI series against England. That no matter what, you will bat at No. 5. The kind of improvement he has shown with the bat over the last year or so is superb and that is where we felt that we can utilise him in the middle.

"He likes to take the game on, likes to play his shots. And sometimes when you are in trouble, you want to always take that positive route. He showed it in the T20 World Cup final (2024) which was a very, very crucial knock," he added.



## Champions Trophy: New Zealand to face South Africa in semifinal

PTI ■ DUBAI

Senior batter Tom Latham said New Zealand will take confidence from their recent win over South Africa in the tri-series when they face the same opponents in the semifinal of the Champions Trophy (CT) in Lahore on Wednesday. New Zealand lost to India by 44 runs in their final Group A match here on Sunday but Latham said it would have no bearing on the semifinal.

Recently, New Zealand successfully chased 305 against South Africa in Lahore and then went on to win the tri-series, beating Pakistan in the final, and Latham feels those experiences will hold them in good stead on Wednesday.

"Yeah, the (South Africa) team that we played potentially will be slightly different, they had a lot of guys that weren't in that side. They were still playing in their SAT20 back in South Africa so will be slightly different.

"But I guess from our point of view, we'll lean back on those experiences of Lahore in playing against South Africa," Latham said after the loss to India.

"So yeah, we'll look to prep as best we can. We'll do everything that we do leading up to a game. It's obviously going to be a

reasonably quick turnaround, but it is what it is. And, we'll be looking forward to the challenge of a semifinal."

Latham said what matters for the Kiwis is their attitude towards the game and preparation.

"As we go into every game, we prepare as best we can. Individuals have slightly different preparation. And, yeah, we obviously fielded fantastically well today (Sunday), which was fantastic. And I think that's something we like to do.

"Especially from a fielding point of view is to I guess have a presence in the field and keep taking every I guess attacking option that we can and I think we've seen throughout the tournament some of the catches that the guys have been taking. For us we believe that I guess from a fielding point of view, it's an attitude thing," he said.

"Our attitude is always the same. We turn up trying to play our brand of cricket as best we can. And if we stick to that, then hopefully that will give us a good chance at the back end of the game."

Latham added that they are in no mood to take the Proteas lightly.

New Zealand had sealed their semifinal spot ahead of Sunday's loss to India in Dubai. The Kiwis also had prior knowledge that they

would have to return to Pakistan for their last four game.

"That's something that's out of our control. We don't decide the schedule, for us it is about turning up at each game regardless of where it is and trying to play our best brand of cricket as best we can," Latham said.

"So, whether it be here, whether it be in Pakistan, our focus will obviously be on South Africa. We're fortunate enough we had a tri-series in Pakistan and against South Africa.

"So, we've got a chance to look back on those experiences and give it our best in a semifinal, which is pretty cool."

Latham said though the surfaces in Pakistan were on the slower side, they have not spun as much as the pitches in Dubai.

"I think if you look at the surfaces that we've played in Pakistan, they've obviously been on the slower side, potentially haven't spun as much as we've seen here in Dubai, but things or conditions can change a little bit from the daytime to the nighttime," he said.

"We've seen throughout the games in Pakistan that towards the back end of the game - a little bit of juice settles in and sometimes can be a little bit easier. A little bit nicer to bat on potentially"

## Connolly replaces injured Short in Australian squad

PTI ■ DUBAI

Young spin-bowling all-rounder Cooper Connolly on Monday replaced injured Matthew Short in the Australian squad for the knock-out stage of the ongoing Champions Trophy (CT).

Top order batter Short was ruled out of the ICC event, being held in Pakistan and Dubai, due to a calf injury sustained during the match against Afghanistan on Friday. The 21-year-old Connolly, who made his ODI debut in England last year, was initially named as a travelling reserve for the tournament.

The ICC's Event Technical Committee has approved his inclusion in the Australian squad early on Monday. Connolly has thus far featured in six internationals for Australia, of which three have been ODIs. He's a left-handed



batter, who bowls left-arm spin as well.

Short injured his calf on Friday while fielding and appeared hindered when making a quickfire 20 at the top of the order before the match was abandoned due to rain in Lahore.

"I think he'll be struggling," Australia captain Steve Smith had said of Short's injury status.

"I think we saw tonight he wasn't moving very well and I think it's probably going to be

too quick between games for him to recover."

Australia will face India in the first semifinal of the Champions Trophy here on Tuesday.

**Australia squad:** Steve Smith (c), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Cooper Connolly, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Adam Zampa.



## Praggnanandhaa draws with Aravindh in Prague Masters

PTI ■ PRAGUE

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa played a draw with fellow Indian Aravindh Chithambaram as the two stayed a full point ahead of nearest challengers after the fifth round of Prague Masters chess tournament here.

With 3.5 points in their kitty, Aravindh and Praggnanandhaa are now followed by top seed Wei Yi of China, Anish Giri of Holland, Quang Leim Le of Vietnam and Vincent Keymer of Germany, who all have 2.5 points apiece.

Sharing the sixth spot are the remaining four contestants, Czech duo of David Navara and Nguyen Thai Dai Van, Sam Shankland of United States and Gurel Ediz of Turkey.

There are four more rounds remaining in the 10-players round-robin tournament.

The day provided just one decisive game with Wei Yi cashing in on his new-found form to beat Shankland. Anish played out a draw with Dai Van, David Navara came back from a much worse position to hold Keymer, while Le signed the peace with Gurel Ediz.

This was the third Classical game between Praggnanandhaa and Aravindh but the result did not change. Aravindh, playing black, decided not to push Prag in to complexities and his Berlin defense was simply an easy guess to get a level position right through.

The opening that was popularised by Russian

Vladimir Kramnik quarter of a century ago in his match against compatriot Garry Kasparov, held Aravindh in good stead right through the course of the game as Praggnanandhaa exchanged pieces at regular intervals.

The players soon reached a rook and pawns endgame where Aravindh was a pawn less but had enough counterplay. The position petered out to be a theoretically drawn when Aravindh gave up a second pawn leaving no shelter for the white king to hide behind.

Wei Yi capitalized on a tactical oversight by Shankland who played white. After a rather shaky start that cost him two losses out of first three games, the Chinese came back roaring with his second victory in a row after beating Navara in the previous round.

Shankland allowed a dangerous passed pawn on the queen side and it was all over in a mere 27 moves as black crashed through in the base rank with his heavy pieces.

In the challengers section, Divya Deshmukh succumbed to her third loss in the event at the hands of MarcAndria Maurizzi of France and remained on 1.5 points. After attaining a nearly balanced position, Divya was outplayed by the French grandmaster in the ensuing endgame.

Nnodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan emerged as the sole leader here taking down Jachym Nemeš of Czech Republic. The Uzbek has four points from his five games.

## KKR appoints Rahane as captain

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India batter Ajinkya Rahane was on Monday Assigned captaincy of defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) after a remarkable run in the domestic T20 competition.

The 36-year-old Rahane, who has played majority of his international cricket in whites, has reinvented himself in the shortest format which was evident in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy wherein he emerged as the leading run getter with 469 runs at a strike rate of 164.56. In the IPL, the right-handed batter had also given a good account of his transformation while playing for Chennai Super Kings.

Rahane replaces Shreyas Iyer as KKR skipper, with the latter set to lead Punjab Kings this season. Iyer and KKR had surprisingly parted ways after a triumphant campaign in the last edition. Venkatesh Iyer, who was also in the reckoning to lead KKR, has been made Rahane's deputy.

Rahane has played for KKR in the past and the franchise bought him for his base price of Rs 1.5 crore at the mega auction.

"It's an honour to be asked to lead KKR, which has been one of the most successful franchises in the IPL. I think we have an excellent and balanced squad. I look forward to working



with everyone and taking up the challenge of defending our title," said Rahane in a statement.

Rahane, who captained India to a historic Test series in Australia in 2020-21, led Mumbai to the semifinals in the recently-concluded Ranji Trophy. In IPL, he has previously captained Rajasthan Royals where he was replaced by Steve Smith in the middle of the 2019 season.

KKR did not have too many captaincy options in the squad. Among the Indian players, they had to choose between Rahane, Venkatesh and Rinku Singh.

KKR will face Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL season-opener at the Eden Gardens on March 22.

# India will rely on spin battery to break knockout jinx against Australia

PTI ■ DUBAI

History weighs heavily against them but India would rely on a potent spin battery and familiarity with the conditions to break the knockout jinx against an undermanned Australia when the two formidable cricket forces clash in the Champions Trophy (CT) semifinal here on Tuesday.

It will not be a straightforward task, though, as the Aussies are a resilient beast in global tournaments even without their lead cast of Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc.

Their stunning chase of 352 against England at Lahore a few days back validates the thought. The last time India triumphed against Australia in the knockout stage of an ICC event was way back in 2011 World Cup quarterfinal.

India lost to Australia in the semifinals of the 2015 ODI World Cup and in the title clash of the

2023 ODI World Cup before succumbing to them in the World Test Championship final in 2023. This Indian side will realistically hope to rewrite that largely melancholic script over the last 14 years and the primary reason for that optimism is the presence of some top of the line spinners in their ranks.

Their pre-tournament decision to fill the squad with five spinners drew a lot of flak from all corners, but it is now proving to be a masterstroke on the slow pitches in Dubai.

The easiest explanation of their dominance is the knowledge of the conditions having had the luxury of playing all their matches in Dubai. But that is only partially true. They have made an effort to tweak their craft as per the needs of the surfaces here.

Since there was no fast or spitting turn on offer here like in a dustbowl, the Indian spinners were made to play the waiting



game.

Patience rather than magic is the key in bowling on these decks, as revealed by Varun Chakravarthy. "The pitch here is not a rank turner as such, which people were projecting it to be, But definitely it

was holding on a bit, and it was deviating a little bit to create the doubt. So basically, you had to play around it," said Chakravarthy.

The Indian spin quartet of Chakravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel

walked away with nine New Zealand wickets, but they applied the pressure consistently to earn their rewards.

They delivered 128 dot balls in the 39 overs bowled between them as the Kiwis struggled to break free, a sequence eventuating in a flurry of wickets.

Even the dismissal of an otherwise stoic Kane Williamson had a touch of desperation as his shimmy against Axar ended in a stumping by KL Rahul.

On the other hand, Australia have only one genuine spinner in Adam Zampa, while hoping for part-timers Glenn Maxwell and Travis Head to deliver the goods.

Matthew Short has been ruled out of the tournament with a calf injury and it has also robbed the already creaking Australian bowling unit of a handy spin option.

The absence of premier names was felt in the previous matches as the Aussie bowlers conceded 352 and

273 against England and Afghanistan respectively, albeit in better batting conditions.

Hence, the likes of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Shreyas Iyer and Shubman Gill will be eager to go full throttle at them here. They have found the perfect rhythm of batting on these sluggish tracks here.

Skipper Rohit hoped as much. "It is going to be a good game. Australia has a rich history of playing well in ICC tournaments. Now, it's about us to do things right. We have to be focussed on what we need to do on that day. Looking forward to that, hopefully we can stitch one towards us," he said after the match against New Zealand.

But he will not be unaware of the batting might the Aussies possess as the latter hunted down a 350-plus target without any meaningful contribution from Head and captain Steve Smith. India will certainly want to evict

them at the earliest, particularly Head as he has been the team's nemesis in recent years.

It is also a chance for Rohit and his company to mitigate the still lingering pain of losing to Australia in the 2023 World Cup final in Ahmedabad.

This match could be slow-burner but brace for a cracker nonetheless.

**Teams (from):**  
**India:** Rohit Sharma (c), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakravarthy.  
**Australia:** Steve Smith (c), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Spencer Johnson, Marnus Labuschagne, Glenn Maxwell, Tanveer Sangha, Adam Zampa, Cooper Connolly.



# Kingston will transport audiences into a magical world, says GV Prakash



SURESH KAVIRAYANI

**G**V Prakash Kumar is set to take audiences on an adventurous journey with his upcoming film *Kingston*, a sea-based fantasy horror thriller. Marking his 25th film as an actor and his debut as a producer, the multi-talented composer-turned-actor promises a unique cinematic experience.

GV Prakash Kumar, who plays the lead in *Kingston*, shares, "This project is also special as it marks his debut as a producer. "For the first time, we are bringing a sea adventure horror film. It's a magical fantasy world, and we plan to develop it into a franchise with sequels."

Discussing how he manages his multiple roles, he said, "I schedule my work meticulously and always prioritise timing. When I commit to delivering music on time, I make sure I do it. I remain calm, composed and focused primarily on my work."

"For me, I always strive to offer something new, regardless of a film's success. Every project, whether as an actor or a music composer, is a learning experience," he added. GV Prakash has completed 100 films as a music director and 25 as an actor.

Speaking about *Kingston*, he shared that several scenes were shot underwater. "I underwent underwater training for a few days before filming. We ensured we had a proper trainer to guide us during the shoot," he explained.

The music director believes that whenever he ventures into something for the first time, it brings him success. "I composed my first music for *Veyil*, which was a hit. Then, my first Telugu film, *Ullasanga Utsahanga*, was also a success. In Hindi, I composed for *Gangs of Wasseypur*, which became a huge hit. Now, as a producer for the first time, I feel lucky again and believe *Kingston* will be a success," he expressed with confidence.

GV Prakash's acting journey began unexpectedly. "I became an actor by accident when AR Murugadoss asked me to act in a film. Later, Geetha Arts and Gnanavel Raja roped me in for *Darling*, a remake of the Telugu hit *Premakatha Chitram*. It turned out to be a big hit, followed by *Trisha Illana Nayanthara*, which was another



blockbuster. I never planned on becoming an actor, but the offers kept coming," he recalled.

When asked if juggling multiple roles was challenging, he admitted, "Nothing is easy in this world. Every profession has immense competition, and there's no safe zone. Cinema is my passion, and I want to push myself. I need to keep the audience engaged—that's why I decided to make *Kingston*."

GV Prakash describes *Kingston* as a blend of horror, adventure, fantasy, and treasure hunting. "This is the first time an Indian film of this kind is being made," he stated.

The film also posed physical challenges. "Shooting on boats in the sea was extremely difficult. It's physically exhausting, and the environment is slippery, making it a tough experience," he shared.

Interestingly, GV Prakash admitted that he doesn't pay special attention to music when he acts in a film. "People often say I create better music for films in which I don't act. But I always compose based on the story's requirements. For *Kingston*, however, I tried to create something different, and I hope audiences like it," he said.

He also emphasised originality in his work. "I don't believe in copying. Our film is rooted in a sea-based community. The story revolves around a cursed sea village where fishermen are unable to enter the waters. When a boy dares to venture into the sea, his fate unfolds in an intriguing way. To find out what happens, you have to watch the film," he teased.

GV Prakash also spoke about his distinct musical style. "I don't believe in loud music—I believe in style. Whether it's *Lucky Bhaskar* or *Amaran*, I have my own approach. When it comes to *Good Bad Ugly*, which features Ajith sir, it's a mass entertainer, so the music is completely different," he explained.

Having composed music for several Telugu films, has he received acting offers in Tollywood? "Yes, I was actually supposed to do *Dasara* with Nani. But they wanted to start shooting in just two weeks, and I couldn't adjust my dates. If I get an offer, I'm ready to act in a Telugu film," he said.

He also revealed that he is producing another film with director Selva Raghavan. Addressing his separation from his wife, GV Prakash said, "We are friends and have mutually decided to part ways. Mental health is very important, and having personal space is essential. I spend a lot of time with my daughter," he shared.

When asked about the role of AI in music, he stated, "We can use AI as an advantage, but we cannot rely on it entirely. AI can assist in various aspects, but creativity is something that remains human-driven."

GV Prakash is confident that *Kingston* will provide audiences with a fresh cinematic experience. "When *Baahubali* was released, it transported audiences into a new world. The same happened with *Kantara*. Now, I am confident that *Kingston* will take everyone into a unique fantasy world," he concluded.

GV Prakash Kumar, who is going to make his debut as a producer in the upcoming film *Kingston*, interacts with the media here, sharing insights about the film, his approach to music and acting, the challenges of shooting at sea



## Sonakshi Sinha's South cinema debut with *Jatadhara*

**B**ollywood actress Sonakshi Sinha, renowned for her versatile roles in Hindi films, is all set to make her much-anticipated debut in Telugu cinema. The actress, known for hits like *Dabangg* and *Raees*, is reportedly joining the cast of the thriller *Jatadhara*, which also stars Sudheer Babu in the lead role. While an official announcement is awaited, industry sources suggest that Sonakshi has been finalised for a powerful and unique character that will showcase her talent in a new light.

The upcoming film *Jatadhara*, presented by Zee Studios and produced by Prerna Arora, has already piqued the interest of audiences after its grand muhurat ceremony in Hyderabad. Sonakshi's inclusion in the project marks a significant milestone in her career as she ventures into South Indian cinema, where the actress will be playing a role never seen before on screen. Filming for the movie is set to commence on March 8, 2025, with the excitement around her entry into the film only growing.

Interestingly, Sonakshi Sinha's very first film offer came from the Tamil film industry. She was initially considered to star opposite the legendary Kamal Haasan in the 2000 film *Hey Ram*. However, she did not pursue that opportunity, and the actress later went on to achieve massive success in Bollywood. Her long-awaited South debut is now generating significant buzz, with fans eager to see how she fares in a completely different cinematic landscape.

While her South debut has made waves, Sonakshi Sinha continues to make headlines in Hindi cinema as well. The actress was recently seen in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*, a Netflix series that explored the lives of tawaifs in Lahore's Heera Mandi during the Indian independence movement. Sonakshi played dual roles in the show—Rehana Jahan and Fareedan Jahan—which showcased her acting range in a complex period drama. The series, which also stars Manisha Koirala, Aditi Rao Hydari and Richa Chadha, has been one of the most anticipated Netflix projects.

In addition to *Jatadhara*, Sonakshi is gearing up for the release of *Tu Hai Meri Kiran*, where she will share the screen with actor Zaheer Iqbal. Directed by Karan Rawal and Sanjana Malhotra, this film marks their second collaboration following *Double XXL*. However, *Tu Hai Meri Kiran* has been facing legal issues, as reports suggest that Adlabs has raised concerns over potential copyright infringement regarding the film's song, *Tu Hai Meri Kiran*. The film's release is currently under a cloud of legal uncertainty.

Sonakshi Sinha's career continues to evolve with a series of intriguing projects on the horizon. One of her upcoming films, *Nikita Roy and the Book of Darkness*, promises to add another feather to her cap. As she continues to diversify her roles, Sonakshi is cementing her place as one of Bollywood's most dynamic actresses, with a mix of thrilling and emotionally complex roles across genres.

## Pawan Kalyan's *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* release postponed

**P**awan Kalyan, who recently became the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, was eagerly awaited to make his big-screen return with *Hari Hara Veera Mallu*. The film was initially slated for release on March 28. However, the makers have now confirmed that the release will not happen on this date.

Sources reveal that the delay is due to the incomplete shooting schedule, as the team is awaiting Pawan Kalyan's availability for a few more days of shooting. Although the promotional content, including songs, is being released to maintain buzz, the film will not hit theaters on March 28, as two other films — Nithiin's *Robinhood* and *Mad Square* — are scheduled to release on that date.

The filmmakers are now targeting a summer release, with June or July being the potential windows. The final release date will depend on Pawan Kalyan's schedule. The film, directed by Jyothi Krishna and Krish, features Nidhi Agerwal as the female lead and is produced by AM Ratnam. *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* is a high-budget project that has created considerable excitement among fans.



## Nani's bold new avatar in *The Paradise*

**N**ani, known for his versatile acting in films, is ready to take on a more daring role in his next project, *The Paradise*. The actor, who is currently shooting for *Hit 3*, is teaming up once again with director Srikanth Odela for this bold and intense film. The filmmakers recently released a teaser titled 'Raw Statement', which set the tone for the gritty, unfiltered narrative that will define the film.

The teaser presents a raw atmosphere, an unapologetic language, and a story that aims to break new ground in cinema. Nani, who has

already shown his range with the 2023 hit *Dasara*, will continue to push his boundaries with *The Paradise*. His character is described as one of the most intense and raw roles he has played so far. Produced by Sudhakar Cherukuri under SLV Cinemas, *The Paradise* promises a larger-than-life experience for audiences. The film will be released in multiple languages, including Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, English and Spanish, with versions in Kannada, Malayalam, and Bengali set to be released soon. The film is slated to hit theaters on March 26, 2026.



## Pradeep Rangarajan's *Dragon* becomes a massive hit



**P**radeep Rangarajan, who became an overnight sensation with the success of *Love Today* in 2022, has scored another hit with *Return of the Dragon*. The film, directed by Ashwath Marimuthu, released in both Tamil and Telugu on February 21 and has already crossed the Rs 100 crore mark, becoming one of the highest-grossing films of the year.

Pradeep, who also played the lead role in the film, travelled to Hyderabad to thank the Telugu audience for their support. He expressed his gratitude, saying, "The Telugu audience has treated me like one of their own and I'm very thankful for that. They even started memes calling me their 'adopted son.'"

Director Ashwath Marimuthu attributed the success of the film to its emotional depth. "If the emotion connects with the audience, it will succeed in any language," said Ashwath. He also mentioned that Superstar Mahesh Babu had tweeted about his previous film *Oh My Kadavule*, which contributed to its success, and now he hopes Mahesh Babu will watch *Return of the Dragon* and share his thoughts on it.

## STANDALONE



The makers of the upcoming Salman Khan and Rashmika Mandanna-starrer *Sikandar*, dropped the teaser of the song *Zohra Jabeen* on Monday. The teaser promises a vibrant, foot-tapping dance number and features Salman and Rashmika Mandanna, and their palpable chemistry. From dazzling costumes to smooth, lively choreography, the teaser is packed with everything needed to make this track a worldwide sensation.