



The Pioneer

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Maha Kumbh strengthened India's spirit of unity: PM



LOOKING FORWARD TO INK FTA WITH INDIA IN 60 DAYS



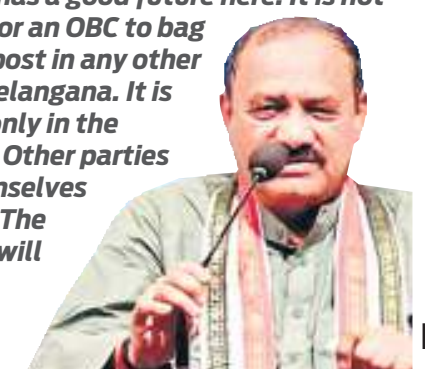
I believe in spontaneous acting, rather prepare for it: Aadi SAIKUMAR



QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

An OBC from the Congress will become the Chief Minister of Telangana in future. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is providing good governance in Telangana and the Congress has a good future here. It is not possible for an OBC to bag the CM's post in any other party in Telangana. It is possible only in the Congress. Other parties limit themselves to words. The Congress will show it through action



- Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC Chief

DON'T MISS...

Russian delegates keen to invest in TG

Minister for IT and Industries D Sridhar Babu thanked Russian government representatives for their interest in investing in the State. He assured them of full government support for their initiatives. On Tuesday, Russian delegates paid a courtesy visit to him on the Assembly premises. During the meeting, Sridhar Babu shared the State government's efforts to promote industrial growth and the incentives offered to entrepreneurs. He highlighted Telangana's goal of becoming the Global Capital of AI, mentioning the creation of a 200-acre ...

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'Committed to bring normalcy in Manipur'

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the central government is committed to bringing normalcy to Manipur and assured all support for the economic growth of the state. Replying to a discussion on the passage of the Manipur Budget for the current fiscal and vote of account for the six months of 2025-26 in the Rajya Sabha, the minister also sought the support of the Opposition parties for peace in Manipur instead of engaging in the blame game. The senior minister also hit back...

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Sensex jumps over 1,100 points

The BSE benchmark index Sensex jumped 1,131 points to revisit the 75,000 level on Tuesday, and the NSE Nifty surged 1.45 per cent, tracking a bullish trend in global equities and intense buying in market majors ICICI Bank, L&T and M&M counters. Besides, lower crude oil prices in the international markets and a weak dollar against major currencies overseas also bolstered sentiment, traders said. Rising for the second day on the trot, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,131.31 points or 1.53 per cent to...

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I always knew my strengths, abilities

He fought perceptions about a so-called technical shortcoming, was "typecast", and had his contract torn up within months of being a World Cup hero but Shreyas Iyer was indefatigable through it all, trusting his sincerity and uncomplicated mind to steer him through. The result of the perseverance has been pleasing, to put it mildly. The 30-year-old has built himself into one of India's most consistent number four batters in recent times and was declared a "silent hero" by his captain Rohit Sharma ...

-SPORTS

Astronauts Sunita, Wilmore on way back to Earth

PNS ■ CAPE CANAVERAL

NASA's two stuck astronauts headed back to Earth with SpaceX on Tuesday to close out a dramatic marathon mission that began with a bungled Boeing test flight more than nine months ago.

Butch Wilmore and Indian-origin Sunita Williams bid farewell to the International Space Station — their home since last spring — departing aboard a SpaceX capsule alongside two other astronauts.



The capsule undocked shortly after 1 am Eastern and aimed for a splashdown off the Florida coast

five hours later, weather permitting. The two expected to be gone just a week or so after launching on Boeing's new Starliner crew capsule on June 5. So many problems cropped up on the way to the space station that NASA eventually sent Starliner back empty and transferred the test pilots to SpaceX, pushing their homecoming into February. Then SpaceX capsule issues added another month's delay. Sunday's arrival of their relief crew meant Wilmore and Williams could

finally leave. NASA cut them loose a little early, given the iffy weather forecast later this week. They checked out with NASA's Nick Hague and Russia's Alexander Gorbunov, who arrived in their own SpaceX capsule last fall with two empty seats reserved for the Starliner duo. "We'll miss you, but have a great journey home," NASA's Anne McClain called out from the space station as the capsule pulled away 260 miles (418 kilometres) above the Pacific.

Continued on Page 2

Assembly passes SC Categorisation Bill

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Assembly on Tuesday unanimously passed the Telangana Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Bill, 2025, to implement the categorisation of SCs.

Presenting the Bill, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said his government had constituted a cabinet sub-committee after the Supreme Court ruled in favour of SC categorization last year.

The government had also appointed a one-man judicial commission to make recommendations for the implementation of SC categorisation and later accepted its report. The commission divided 59 SC castes in the state into three groups to ensure equitable distribution of the 15 per cent reservation available for SCs.

The CM said that Group 1 comprising 15 socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged SC communities, have been given one per cent reservation.

Group 2, including 18 moderately benefited SC communities, have been given a nine per cent quota. Group 3 comprising 26 significantly benefited SC communities have been given five per cent reservation.

Referring to the demand for increasing the reservation of SCs to

- Group 1 – 15 most backward SC sub-castes with 1% reservation
- Group 2 – 18 moderately benefited SC sub-castes with 9% reservation
- Group 3 – The remaining sub-castes who have significantly benefited with 5% reservation

18 per cent from 15 per cent, he said his government would enhance the quota on population basis after the 2026 census.

Noting that the struggle for SC

categorization in the state was 30 years old, the CM said a resolution was passed in the United Andhra Pradesh Assembly supporting it in 2004.

Continued on Page 2

Fulfilled decades-long demand: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy termed the passage of the SC (Rationalisation of Reservations) Bill 2025 in the Telangana Assembly on Tuesday as a landmark decision.

Uttam, who chaired the Cabinet Sub-Committee on implementing

the Supreme Court's verdict on SC categorisation, credited the Congress Government headed by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for fulfilling a demand that had remained unaddressed in both United Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for decades.

"This is a historic day. For years,

Govt dodging questions, running away from opposition: Harish



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao lashed out at the Congress Government accusing it of deliberately cancelling the Question Hour in the Assembly to avoid answering difficult questions.

Speaking to reporters in the Assembly lobby, he said the government was running away from accountability and silencing the

opposition's voice.

Harish criticised the government for mortgaging Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) lands to raise loans amounting to Rs 20,000 crore.

He said that the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIC) was taking loans of Rs 10,000 crore, the HMWS was securing Rs 10,000 crore and the GHMC's assets were being pledged for another Rs 10,000 crore. In total, he said the Congress Government is borrowing Rs 50,000 crore, but it is unwilling to respond to the opposition's queries on these dealings, he said.

He pointed out that the government had failed to make crucial Government Orders (GOs) available on the website. Expressing concern over

Continued on Page 2

Govt to present budget in Assembly today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress Government of Telangana is all set to present the budget for fiscal 2025-26 in the Legislative Assembly. Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka will table the budget at 11:14 am on Wednesday and read it out in the House.

Ahead of the budget presentation, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will chair a Cabinet meeting at 9:30 am to formally approve the proposals. After the approval, Bhatti will proceed to the Assembly with the budget documents.

This marks the second budget of the Congress government in Telangana. The budget is expected to outline the state's priorities and allocations for key sectors, shaping the government's economic roadmap for the year ahead.

BJP MLAs stage dharna protesting Maheshwar's arrest

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP MLAs staged a dharna on Assembly premises protesting against the police arresting BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy on Tuesday. The BJP MLAs said the government is trying to prevent Maheshwar from attending Assembly sessions.

BJP MLAs Payal Shankar, Palvai Harish Babu, Dhanpal Suryanarayana Gupta, Ramarao Patel and Maheshwar Reddy took part in the dharna. The BJP MLAs staged the dharna opposite the MLAs entrance to the Assembly.

Earlier, the police detained Maheshwar when he tried to extend support to the BJYM activists' Chalo Assembly programme. The police took him to the Bowenpally police



BJP MLAs stage a dharna on the Assembly premises on Tuesday protesting the arrest of BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy

station and brought him to the Assembly after two hours. However, Maheshwar staged a protest and refused to come out of the police vehicle. He asked the police to reveal why they had kept him for two hours. "How can the police arrest me

when I am going to attend the Assembly? The police should release BJYM activists," he said. The BJYM activists tried to lay siege to the Assembly protesting the auction held to sell 400 acres of land belonging to the University of Hyderabad.

TG second after AP in MLAs facing criminal cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) said that its analysis of the affidavits of 4,092 of 4,123 MLAs indicated that Andhra Pradesh has the highest percentage of sitting MLAs facing criminal cases at 79% (138 of 174), followed by Kerala and Telangana with 69% each, Bihar with 66%, Maharashtra with 65% and Tamil Nadu with 59%.

Interestingly, Andhra Pradesh also leads the list of MLAs facing serious criminal cases at 56% (98), followed by Telangana (50%) and Bihar (49%).

An analysis of 4,092 MLAs from 28 state and UT Assemblies revealed that nearly 45% (1,861 MLAs) have criminal cases registered against

them. Of them, 1,205 or 29% face serious criminal charges like murder, attempt to murder, kidnapping, and crimes against women.

In fact, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's TDP has the highest proportion of MLAs facing criminal cases at 86% (115 of 134 legislators). Moreover, 61% or 82 MLAs are facing serious charges.

Around 39% (638 out of 1,653) of BJP MLAs have declared criminal cases with 436 or 26% facing serious charges. The analysis shows that 339 out of 646 Congress MLAs (52%) also have criminal cases against them, with 194 facing serious charges. Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK has 74 per cent (98 out of 132) MLAs facing criminal cases,

Continued on Page 2

Israel strikes Gaza, kills 404 Palestinians

Shatter ceasefire with Hamas

PNS ■ DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP)

Israel launched airstrikes across the Gaza Strip early Tuesday, killing at least 404 Palestinians, including women and children, according to hospital officials.

The surprise bombardment shattered a ceasefire in place since January and threatened to fully reignite the 17-month-old war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strikes after Hamas refused Israeli demands to change the ceasefire agreement. Officials said the operation was open-ended and was expected to expand. The White House said it had been consulted and voiced support for Israel's actions.

The Israeli military ordered people to evacuate eastern Gaza, including much of the northern town of Beit Hanoun and other communi-



ties further south, and head toward the centre of the territory, indicating that Israel could soon launch renewed ground operations.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the strikes after Hamas refused Israeli demands to change the ceasefire agreement. Officials said the operation was open-ended and was expected to expand. The White House said it had been consulted and voiced support for Israel's actions

military strength," Netanyahu's office said.

The attack during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan could resume a war that has already killed tens of thousands of Palestinians and caused widespread destruction across Gaza. It also raised questions about the fate of the roughly two dozen Israeli hostages held by Hamas who are believed to still be alive.

A senior Hamas official said Netanyahu's decision to return to war amounts to a "death sentence" for the remaining hostages. Izzat al-Risheq accused Netanyahu of launching the strikes to try and save his far-right governing coalition and called on mediators to "reveal facts" on who broke the truce. Hamas said at least four senior officials were killed in Tuesday's strikes.

BRS must reinvent itself to regain its lost glory

The aggressiveness shown by ruling parties in taking on their principal rival indicates what kind of scenario is likely to unfold. This is a very big question that can decide the future of the BRS which played the key role in creating Telangana state. The BRS played the main role in spearheading the movement for achieving statehood for Telangana which was carved out of United Andhra Pradesh as per the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.



By the end of its first term, the BRS had lost credibility as far as developing the new state was concerned. But the move of the TDP to align with Congress came as a boon for the BRS. It may be mentioned here that the Telangana Movement was based on the aversion of Telanganites towards Andhraites and the role played by Andhra leaders in the administrative affairs of United Andhra Pradesh.

The BRS could exploit the sentiment favouring the creation of a separate state in the minds of the four crore people of Telangana which had seen only meagre development. It just crossed the majority mark in the 119-member TG Assembly by bagging 60-plus seats. Eventually, the BRS opened its gates to the legislators of the Congress and the TDP and its tally touched 80.

Although the BRS put forward the slogan of water, funds and employment (Neellu, Nidhulu & Niyamakalu), it was originally based on the anti-Andhra sentiment in the minds of Telanganites. This aversion of Telanganites towards Andhraites had faded by the time of the 2018 Assembly elections. BRS supremo K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) turned public attention

Although the BRS put forward the slogan of water, funds and employment (Neellu, Nidhulu & Niyamakalu), it was originally based on the anti-Andhra sentiment in the minds of Telanganites. This aversion of Telanganites towards Andhraites had faded by the time of the 2018 Assembly elections. BRS supremo K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) turned public attention towards the seat sharing agreement between the Congress and the TDP. KCR started drilling into the minds of Telanganites that Andhra rule may return to Telangana if the Congress-TDP combine won elections. He also said that Andhra rule may return due to the influence of Chandrababu Naidu as his party would be in the ruling alliance in case the two party combine came to power in Telangana. This pierced the



M D RATNA KUMAR
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hearts of Telanganites and made them vote for the BRS. Aligning with the TDP proved disastrous for the Congress. During the 2023 Assembly elections, the Congress kept the TDP away. The TDP did not contest to avoid splitting anti-BRS votes and to defeat the BRS. This yielded results and the TDP could attain its objective of defeating the BRS by not contesting and ensuring the defeat of the BRS. The Congress patronised

Revanth Reddy who was an outsider. Noticing his oratory skills against KCR, Sonia Gandhi made him the TPCC President signalling to Congress cadres indirectly that he would be made the Chief Minister if the party wins. Senior TPCC leaders did not like Revanth but agreed to work under him at the behest of the high command. Revanth succeeded in marginalising the BRS by encouraging desertions by its legislators. The BRS went into decline and it could not even get representation in the Lok Sabha in the 2024 LS elections.

Now the BJP seems to have become the second biggest party in Telangana. The Congress and the BJP won eight LS seats each and the remaining one went to the AIMIM. The BJP is now confident of becoming the ruling party in TG in the next Assembly elections in 2028. By bagging eight LS seats for the first time in its 45-year-old history in United Andhra Pradesh, the BJP converted its 'enhanced strength' spread over 56 Assembly seats. With eight seats in the current TG Assembly, the BJP is moving aggressively. The BJP leadership has picked Bandi Sanjay Kumar and G. Kishan Reddy to strengthen the party organisationally and to ensure

the party's presence in all Assembly seats. The BJP is now searching for a new leader to lead its TG unit in the 2028 Assembly polls.

The BRS scored a big zero in the LS elections as it preferred to defeat the Congress instead of winning. The BRS's hidden support came in handy for the BJP to equalise its LS score in TG with the Congress. As Telangana is a key state for the Congress, the BRS thought that it can give a deadly blow to the Congress by reducing its LS tally in the state.

The BJP may become stronger in 2028 due to the possible presence of the TDP and the Jana Sena Party (JSP). Both the TDP and the JSP having considerable vote banks in Telangana which would be helpful for the BJP.

With its lethargic attitude due to its humiliating defeat in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BRS is unable to become active. The BRS need to rejuvenate itself if it wants to

regain its lost glory. The tussle between the BRS and the Congress might become useful for the BJP. This means that the BRS may not be the principal contender in the next Telangana elections. If the BRS decides to scuttle the chances of the Congress instead of winning, then it could end up with empty hands.

The 2028 elections would be crucial for the BRS in view of its continuous struggle for existence as the Congress is aggressively moving forward. Chief minister Revanth Reddy exposed KCR for not attending Assembly sessions and drawing salary and other allowances amounting to Rs 56 lakh in the last 10 months embarrassing the BRS a lot.

The BRS may not be comfortable taking on both the BJP and the Congress. The impression of family rule that the BRS left in the minds of Telanganites is another minus point that it cannot erase.

Yadagirigutta Temple Bill introduced in Assembly

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Minister for Endowments, Konda Surekha, announced that the Congress Government is committed to improving facilities in temples all over Telangana, with special focus on Yadagirigutta.

Presenting the Yadagirigutta Temple Development (YTD) Bill in the Assembly, she said the need for better amenities as temple footfall has significantly increased after the introduction of free TGSRCT bus services. Yadagiri generates an income of Rs 200 crore per year, she said.

She said the Congress Government has already spent crores on improving Yadagirigutta's infrastructure and has decided to set up a dedicated temple board to streamline management.

"A well-structured governing body will ensure systematic development, like the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD)

model," she said.

She explained that the YTD Board would also be empowered to establish educational institutions. The Board will consist of 18 members with a two-year tenure. The chairman and members will serve without salaries receiving only travel and daily allowances.

Participating in the discussion, BRS MLA Vemula Prashanth Reddy said that he is happy to have been part of the reconstruction of the Yadagirigutta Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple under KCR's leadership. He recalled KCR's personal involvement in the project, stating that the former chief minister had ensured that all renovations adhered to Agama Shastra guidelines.

Prashanth revealed that during his tenure as R&B Minister, he personally monitored the construction, by even staying overnight at the site to supervise work.

Don't get trapped by those who want to use caste to gain political ground: CM

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

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy asked organisations of BCs not to fall into the trap of those who want to gain ground politically by playing the caste card.

"Don't fall into the trap of those who want to grow politically using caste. You will be the one who will lose if you find the caste survey wrong. If you block it at the beginning stage, you will be the one who will do injustice to yourself. Take the lead yourself to gain your rights. I will stand by you," the CM said.

The CM said that he faced many risks while conducting the survey. "I had to convince many people regarding this. I explained that there would be unrest if I didn't conduct a caste survey. You stay ahead. I will be with you till the end. Hold a congratulatory meeting for Rahul Gandhi. The other parties would be afraid. Rahul would also get strength if he organises a meeting here. He will get the support to fight in other states. On March



25, Rahul will attend the BC meeting in New Delhi. If necessary, our PCC will book a train. Those who benefited should be with me. If you like it, congratulate me... otherwise, leave it. But you should not insult other castes. Don't offend other castes. If you insult them, they will come and tell me. Some leaders are meeting those who did not participate in the survey. Don't trust the butchers. You people must remember even if we grant a small favour," he said.

Addressing the meeting held at the Assembly Community Hall on Tuesday, in which BC organisations thanked the CM

for passing the 42 per cent BC reservation Bill in the Assembly, the CM said the Congress would always stand by BCs.

"Most people who have served as TPCC presidents are BCs. The caste census is like the Bhagavad Gita, The Bible and the Quran for everyone. The caste census is the foundation. First, we have to implement it and then make necessary amendments," he said. The CM said that BC organisations have to extend congratulations not to him but to Rahul Gandhi as he made it clear during his Bharat Jodo Yatra that the Congress will conduct a caste census wherever it comes to power. "We conducted a caste survey as per the word given by Rahul Gandhi," the CM said.

The CM said that to increase reservations beyond 50 per cent, the population census should be conducted first. Those calculations should be legalised. Only then can reservations be increased. That is why we conducted the BC caste survey in the state. February 4, 2025, has a special place in the Assembly. That is why we declared February 4 as Social Justice Day, he added.

An OBC from Congress will become CM in future: Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President B. Mahesh Kumar Goud reiterated that an OBC will become the Chief Minister of Telangana from the Congress in future.

Speaking in the Legislative Council on Tuesday, Mahesh said that OBCs are in high numbers in Bihar and that OBCs have successively bagged the post of Chief Minister in Bihar.

He said that OBCs have also become CMs in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. "Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is providing good gov-

ernance in Telangana. The Congress has a good future in Telangana. In future, an OBC from the Congress will become the CM in Telangana. No other party can give the CM's post to an OBC in Telangana. It is possible only because of the Congress. Other parties are limited to words. Congress will show it by doing it in practice," he said. Mahesh said the opposition is spreading lies about Musi beautification. The government should move forward as per the people's aspirations without backing down on the Musi cleansing project, he added.

Rahul, Priyanka...

Continued from page 1

hike on caste census data. "The state has accepted the real numbers revealed through a scientific caste survey and ensured fair participation in education, employment and politics," he said.

"I have been saying that only an X-Ray - that is, a caste census - can ensure justice for the backward communities. Telangana has shown the way, and this is what the country needs," Rahul asserted.

Priyanka echoed similar sentiments, congratulating the people of Telangana for witnessing yet another Congress poll promise being fulfilled. "Our Backward Class brothers and sisters will now receive 42% reservation. We made this promise during the Assembly elections, and today, we have delivered," she wrote, calling it an essential step towards social and economic empowerment.

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy responded to the Congress leadership, expressing happiness at Telangana leading the charge on social justice.

The CM said, "Thanks Rahul bhैया and Priyanka didi" as they congratulated the TG admin on the BC Reservation Bill.

Work on RRR back on track, says Venkat Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy assured the Council that the long-delayed Regional Ring Road (RRR) project has been revived by the Congress Government.

Responding to questions by MLCs Jeevan Reddy, Mahesh Kumar Goud, and Balmuri Venkat, he said that the north part of the RRR was approved by the Centre in 2016, followed by a gazette notification in 2017. However, he accused the BRS government of negligence, which result-

ed in the project stagnating.

Venkat said that after Congress came to power, the project was put back on track, and tenders worth Rs 7,100 crore have been invited for the northern section. He added that discussions have been held with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari regarding the southern section, and approval for the Detailed Project Report (DPR) has been sought. He said that an agency has been selected to prepare the DPR, which will be submitted to the Centre within three months.

Highlighting the traffic congestion on Outer Ring Road (ORR), Venkat

said that over one lakh car units currently use the ORR, and in future, traffic on National Highways could spill into the city. He emphasized that constructing the RRR is the only long-term solution to the growing traffic burden.

Venkat revealed that he met Gadkari seven times regarding the RRR and that the Union Minister had assured him that Cabinet approval for the northern section would be granted within two months. Once approval is secured, the tenders will be opened, and construction firms will be selected.

He asserted that the ORR, which was built with a long-term vision, has transformed Hyderabad into a global city, facilitating the growth of infrastructure projects like the Financial District, Kokapet, the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport and the PVNR Expressway.

He took a swipe at the BRS government, accusing them of selling a revenue-generating asset like the ORR, which was earning Rs 300 to Rs 400 crore annually for a 30-year lease. He said that instead of selling roads, the Congress Government is focused on building them.

Fulfilled decades ...

Continued from page 1

SC categorisation had the support of all sections, but no structured solution was ever achieved. Under the Congress government, we have fulfilled this long-pending demand with sincerity," he said addressing the Assembly.

Govt dodging...

Continued from page 1

the drying up of crops in Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda due to water diversion to Andhra Pradesh, he slammed the government for failing to answer his question on whether Rythu Bharosa was provided to farmers during Kharif.

He also accused the government of delaying the establishment of procurement centres, which forced farmers to sell their crops at lower prices and incur losses. Harish contrasted the current administration's procurement figures with those of the BRS government, claiming that they had purchased 70 lakh tonnes of paddy, whereas the Congress government had managed only 52 lakh tonnes.

He said that while the government had promised to buy 54 lakh tonnes of fine rice, it had procured only 24 lakh tonnes. He called the government's handling of paddy procurement a complete failure and criticised it for not releasing Rythu Bharosa funds for the Rabi season.

BRS backs SC Categorisation Bill, demands implementation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS leaders, including Zaheerabad MLA Manik Rao and former minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy, strongly endorsed the

Categorisation Bill in the Assembly, asserting that the long-pending demand is finally being fulfilled.

They reiterated that THE BRS has always stood by the cause and that their party

founder KCR had consistently advocated categorisation both in and out of power.

Manik expressed his happiness over the Bill's passage and extended gratitude to the government and the sub-com-

mittee chairman. He reminded that the BRS government had passed a resolution in the Telangana Assembly and submitted it to the Centre, even presenting it to the Prime Minister.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	Panchami: Mar 18 10:09 PM to Mar 20 12:37 AM
	Shashthi: Mar 20 12:37 AM to Mar 21 02:45 AM
Nakshatram:	Vishaka: Mar 18 05:51 PM to Mar 19 08:50 PM
	Anuradha: Mar 19 08:50 PM to Mar 20 11:31 PM
Rahukalam:	12:24 PM to 1:53 PM
Vamgandam:	7:54 AM to 9:24 AM
Varjyam:	01:17 AM to 03:03 AM
Gulika:	10:54 AM to 12:24 PM
Ahnikalam:	10:56 AM to 12:44 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	Nil

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 36°
Humidity: 53%
Sunrise: 6:21 AM
Sunset: 6:27 PM
Updated: March 18, 2025 5:00 PM

Astronauts Sunita...

Continued from page 1

Their plight captured the world's attention, giving new meaning to the phrase "stuck at work." While other astronauts had logged longer spaceflights over the decades, none had to deal with so much uncertainty or see the length of their mission expand by so much. NASA's Anne McClain called out from the space station as the capsule pulled away 260 miles (418 kilometres) above the Pacific.

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Wilmore and Williams quickly transitioned from guests to full-fledged station crew members, conducting experiments, fixing equipment and even spacewalking together. With 62 hours over nine spacewalks, Williams set a record: the most time spent spacewalking over a career among female astronauts. Both had lived on the orbiting lab before and knew the ropes, and brushed up on their station training before rocketing away. Williams became the station's commander three months into their stay and held the post until earlier this month.

Their mission took an unexpected twist in late January when President Donald Trump asked SpaceX founder Elon Musk to accelerate the astronauts' return and blamed the delay on the Biden administration.

Assembly passes ...

Continued from page 1

Observing that the Congress has always been committed to the empowerment of Dalits, he said that Damodaram Sanjivayya was made the AICC president and the Chief Minister of United AP in 1960.

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha said that categorisation was not a new demand but had existed from 1965 when the Lokur Committee first studied it. Over the years, Punjab implemented it, and the movement intensified in Telangana in the 1990s, leading to the 1996 Justice Ramachandra Raju Commission's recommendations. The Congress government of that time implemented categorisation in 2000, but legal hurdles stalled it.

Referring to the Supreme Court's 2023 ruling permitting states to implement categorisation, Raja Narasimha said the Congress Government acted within six months to pass the Bill, making Telangana the first state to do so.

He assured that categorisation was not against any community but a step towards social justice.

BCs should take...

Continued from page 1

"We didn't stop at mere documentation. We passed two Bills in the Assembly, one for political reservations and another for education and employment quotas," he said, adding that this survey will serve as a foundation for future policies.

The Chief Minister pointed out that February 4, 2025, holds historical significance, which is why the government has declared it as Social Justice Day. He said that a ministerial sub-committee and a dedicated commission were established to ensure a structured approach to the caste survey, completing the process within a set timeframe. For those who missed participating in the first phase, a second phase was conducted, ensuring transparency and accuracy.

Revanth stressed that Telangana's caste survey should be a model for the entire country, setting an example for other states. He recalled that the Mandal Commission had estimated the BC population at 52%, but Telangana's caste survey revealed that BCs constitute 56.36% of the population.

TG second after ...

Continued from page 1

including 42 facing serious allegations. Around 41% (95 out of 230) of Trinamool Congress MLAs are facing criminal cases. Among them, 78 or 34% are facing serious charges. The AAP, which was recently ousted from power in Delhi, has 69 of its 123 MLAs (56%) facing criminal charges. These include 35 (28 per cent) with serious charges.

The report also flagged that 54 MLAs are facing murder charges, while 226 have attempt to murder cases against them. 127 MLAs are facing cases of crimes against women, including 13 MLAs accused of rape.

The report also sheds light on the financial background of MLAs, with 119 MLAs (3%) being billionaires. On an average, MLAs across all state Assemblies have assets worth Rs 17.92 crore. However, the average assets of MLAs facing criminal charges are higher at Rs 20.97 crore.

City Pioneer

The Pioneer

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | MARCH 19, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Cultural Programmes

By Yuvakalavahini

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
March 19, (6 pm)

Yojimo

Japanese Movie with English subtitles

Venue

Lamakaan
March 19, (7 pm)

Live Performance

By Dhunn (Band)

Venue

Stone Waters - Kitchen & Lounge
March 19, (8 pm)

Wednesday Night

With DJ Scintillate

Venue

Amnesia - Lounge Bar
March 19, (8 pm)

Live Performance

By Arun Gattu (Band)

Venue

Tabula Rasa Alfresco Bar
March 19, (8 pm)

Wednesday Night

With DJ Piyush Bajaj

Venue

Insomnia
March 19, (8 pm)

97.10% Inter second year students attend exam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Board of Intermediate Education (TGBIE) conducted the Intermediate Public Examination (IPE) for second-year students in Physics-II and Economics-II on Tuesday. The exams witnessed a high attendance rate of 97.10 per cent, with 4,49,742 students appearing out of 4,63,145 registered candidates.

Despite the smooth conduct of exams, 15 malpractice cases were reported from Peddapalli (1), Karimnagar (4), Jangaon (5) and Siddipet (5). The board classified the exam under SET C for security purposes.

Observers were deployed across Khammam, Wana parthy, Siddipet, Nagar kurnool and Hyderabad districts to monitor the examination process.

FGG's poser to CM on promoting officials facing cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Forum for Good Governance (FGG) has submitted a representation to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy regarding the promotion of officials facing serious ACB cases.

FGG president M Padmanabha Reddy stated that corruption is widespread in Telangana's administration. Citizens are forced to pay bribes even for services they are entitled to. Departments like Revenue, Municipality, Police, Commercial Tax, and Excise are among the worst affected.

He noted that government employees do not fear punishment for wrongdoing. Despite serious pending cases, officials continue to receive key postings and promotions. This sends a wrong message that promotions are guaranteed even if an ACB case is pending.



395 applications received at Prajavani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 395 grievance applications were received during the Prajavani programme at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan on Tuesday. People with various issues submitted petitions to the officials.

According to the officials, 145 applications related to the Indiramma Housing Scheme were received, 56 concerning revenue issues, 76 were for the Panchayati Raj Rural Development department and 30 were related to the Energy department. Another 88 applications were submitted for various other departments.

Prajavani Special Officer D Divya and other officials received the applications and enquired about the grievances.

TG OFFERS COLAB IN IT, INNOVATION AND EMERGING TECH

Russian delegates keen on investing in TG: Sridhar Babu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for IT and Industries D Sridhar Babu thanked Russian government representatives for their interest in investing in the State. He assured them of full government support for their initiatives. On Tuesday, Russian delegates paid a courtesy visit to him on the Assembly premises.

During the meeting, Sridhar Babu shared the State government's efforts to promote industrial growth and the incentives offered to entrepreneurs. He highlighted Telangana's goal of becoming the Global Capital of AI, mentioning the creation of a 200-acre AI City. He invited Russian companies to explore investment opportunities in this project.

He also spoke about the Young India Skills University, estab-



IT Minister D Sridhar Babu, along with Russian government representatives at the Assembly on Tuesday

lished to train global experts in AI and emerging technologies. He noted that many top global com-

panies have a strong presence in Telangana. Hyderabad has become a major hub for Global

Capability Centres (GCCs) and is recognised as the Vaccine Capital. He expressed pride in Amgen establishing its second-largest GCC in Hyderabad, after its US headquarters. He noted that institutions like T-Hub and T-Works are playing a key role in driving innovation.

Sridhar Babu stated that Telangana is eager to collaborate with Russia in IT, innovation and emerging technologies. He added that the State would study Russia's best practices in public service delivery to improve governance efficiency.

The meeting was attended by Russian government representatives Lidmila Ogorodova, Dmitry Starostin, Ramil Khismatullin and Vera Princhina, along with TGIIC MD Vishnuvardhan Reddy and TGIIC CEO Madhusudan.

TG govt working on a policy for gig workers: Special CS Sanjay Kumar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government is working on a policy for gig workers and will soon introduce an Act, said Sanjay Kumar, Special Chief Secretary of the LET&F Department, at the Retail Sector Roundtable Conference on Tuesday. The event was organised by the Department of Employment & Training under the SANKALP Scheme.

Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay said the retail sector is one of the largest job providers globally. He noted that it does not require highly specialised skills, basic training and experience are enough. According to a NITI Aayog report, about 3% of India's workforce is in retail, which may rise to 5% by 2030. He emphasised that retail will soon be the third-largest sector and highlighted the government's focus on gig workers. Sanjay announced that Telangana is developing a policy with the Centre for Good Governance and plans to provide the social security benefits scheme, making it the second State to introduce such a scheme.

Sanjay also spoke about modernising Industrial



Special Chief Secretary Sanjay Kumar addressing the Retail Sector Roundtable Conference in Hyderabad on Tuesday

Training Institutes (ITIs) like the Young India Skill University was announced last year offering short-term courses. He stressed the need for new courses, especially in construction and retail, and highlighted the importance of soft skills training in the retail sector.

Sanjay mentioned that Telangana's recent modernisation drive included a partnership with Tata Technologies to set up Advanced Technology Centres in rural ITIs, spending Rs 42 crore each. He concluded by inviting proposals for new skill courses in different sectors.

Meanwhile, President and HR Group Head of Jasper Industries, Dr Ravi Dasari said

that converting extremists and helping them return to normal life is a positive effort. He said, "We are living in exciting times with new developments emerging rapidly. Innovation is essential, and speed has become the new currency of life." He emphasised that digital literacy is crucial and should be included in the curriculum for all courses.

Dr Ravi urged the employment department to help the younger generation develop behavioral skills to enhance workplace productivity. He also pointed out a severe shortage of sales professionals. With 20 - 30% of sales happening digitally, e-commerce professionals must be prepared to adapt, he added.

Bill Gates meets Drone didis trained by Hyd's Marut Drones

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bill Gates, Chairman of the Gates Foundation and former Microsoft CEO, visited the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) Pusa campus, New Delhi, where he met three Drone didis trained under the Namu Drone Didi Scheme by Hyderabad-based Marut Drones.

During the demonstration, rural women operated Marut AG365 drones, showcasing how technology is transforming rural livelihoods and boosting family incomes.

Prem Kumar Vislawath, CEO and Co-Founder of



Marut Drones, expressed pride in seeing women trained by the company interact with Bill Gates. He said their confidence in operating drones highlights how technology empowers

women economically and breaks barriers in a male-dominated field. He also said that Bill Gates' visit validates India's growing drone ecosystem and its role in challenging gender norms in rural areas.

The company has provided extensive training to the three Drone Didis from Bihar, along with refresher sessions for smooth demonstrations. Marut Drones is India's first company to receive dual DGCA approval for drone manufacturing and remote pilot training. It continues to support government initiatives like the Namu Drone Didi Programme.

VIRAL VIDEOS OF MANCHU LAKSHMI PROMOTING BETTING APP

Police verify social media accounts of booked influencers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an update on the betting app case involving eleven social media influencers, the police stated that the social media accounts of those named in the FIR are under verification.

"We are examining the social media accounts of the eleven individuals. Action will be taken according to the law once we gather sufficient evidence," said DCP West Zone SM Vijay Kumar.

He further added that authorities are identifying other influencers promoting betting apps and will educate

them about its illegality. "Many youths in Telangana are losing money due to these betting apps and suicides have been reported," he said.

Additionally, the police noted that an influencer named Imran, associated with the social media account Pareshan Boys, has been posting videos irresponsibly. Authorities have taken notice and appropriate action will be taken.

The Social Media is also buzzing with viral videos of Manchu Lakshmi, daughter of Tollywood Actor Mohan Babu, promoting one of the betting apps. The Police had not responded to it yet.

Burglar held for entering MP Aruna's house

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Jubilee Hills police have arrested a burglar who unlawfully entered the residence of MP DK Aruna. The accused, identified as Mohammed Akram (48), was apprehended near his residence in Aman Nagar-B, Hyderabad Tuesday. He belongs to Uttarakhnad and there are 17 cases booked against him in Delhi.

According to the police, the incident occurred on the night of March 15. The MP's driver, who was sleeping in a room on the first floor, heard noises around 3:50 am but found no one upon checking. However, on reviewing the CCTV footage at 6:00 am, it was discovered that an unknown per-

son, wearing a mask, had scaled the compound wall, entered the first-floor kitchen by breaking a window and tampered with the CCTV wires before fleeing, said SM Vijay Kumar, DCP West Zone.

Following a complaint from the driver, the police registered a case and formed eight special teams to track down the suspect.

The police apprehended Mohammed Akram near his residence on Tuesday. Several tools and items used in the crime were seized, including: a hammer, two screwdrivers, a cutter, four locks with keys, a mobile phone, a backpack, clothes and shoes worn during the crime and a purse containing an Aadhaar card.

'1,719 artists receiving pension in TG'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government is dedicated to the welfare of artists, poets and literary figures, Tourism and Culture Minister Jupally Krishna Rao assured the Legislative Council on Tuesday. Responding to a question raised by MLC Yegge Mallesham regarding Oggu artists, the Minister emphasised that the State government holds art and artists in high regard.

Jupally clarified that there is no proposal to form a separate federation for Oggu artists, as Telangana is home to various art forms and creating individual federations for each is not feasible. However, he reaffirmed the government's commitment to the welfare of Oggu artists. He stated that currently, 1,719 artists receive a monthly pension of Rs 3,016, including 47 Oggu artists.



TG TO HOST MISS WORLD PAGEANT FROM MAY 7 TO 31

Miss World Krystyna visits Yadagirigutta

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Reigning Miss World Krystyna Pyszkova visited Yadagirigutta temple in Telangana on Tuesday, describing the experience as spiritually uplifting and deeply enriching. Sharing her impressions on social media, she expressed joy at discovering the temple's divine beauty and praised its serene surroundings and architectural grandeur.

"Visiting the Yadagirigutta temple brought me joy and peace of spirit. I feel blessed and happy knowing that in a few weeks, 120 Miss World participants will experience something unique when they come here. And this is just the beginning! I can't wait to see more of Telangana and its hidden gems," she stated.

Krystyna described it as a must-visit site for its stunning architecture and spiritual significance. "My first impression of Telangana could not be any better," she said, expressing excitement for her upcoming explorations.

The 72nd Miss World Festival is scheduled to take place in Telangana from May 7 to 31, making it the first time the global pageant will be hosted in the State.



Telangana SC/ST Commission Chairman Bakki Venkataiah, JNTUH Vice-Chancellor Prof T Kishen Kumar Reddy at a review meeting on Tuesday

Stress on training SC/ST students in employability skills

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 85 to 90 per cent of SC/ST students receive government scholarships. They should be trained for employability, said SC/ST Commission Chairman Bakki Venkataiah, in a review meeting conducted at Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad (JNTUH). The meeting highlights were service-related matters and reservation rules (RoR).

Speaking on the occasion, Venkataiah said, "An increase in SC/ST student admissions was observed compared to previous years, with many securing seats in the open category. PhD entrance exams across 14 universities in Telangana were conducted following reservation guidelines and 85 to 90 per cent of SC/ST students are receiving government scholarships. Train them for employability." Plans are in place to develop Jagtial and Manthani colleges into model institutions, he added.

Vice-Chancellor Prof T Kishen Kumar Reddy spoke about skill enhancement, language proficiency and industry opportunities. English proficiency is essential for online education and global job opportunities. The government needs to take necessary steps to address permanent faculty shortages.

Students from Mechanical, Electrical and Civil Engineering should be trained to secure jobs in industries like NTPC, he added.

MLA Sudheer Reddy booked under SC/ST Act for remarks

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

LB Nagar Police booked BRS MLA Devireddy Sudheer Reddy under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act for comments on a woman corporator.

The Sections invoked are 3(2)(va), 3(1)(r)(w)(ii) of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, along with Section 79 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

A complaint has been lodged with the LB Nagar Police and Women's Commission regarding inappropriate comments made by Sudheer Reddy about ST woman corporator Banoth Sujata Nayak.

Under the leadership of GHMC Floor Leader Darapalli Rajasekhara Reddy, Congress corporators met with the Chairperson of the Women's Commission, Nerella Sharada, and filed a complaint against Sudheer Reddy.

The Women's Commission has taken the comments of MLA Sudheer Reddy very seriously, where

he said that corporator Sujata Nayak went on a honeymoon with Madhu Yashki. The Commission has summoned Sudheer Reddy to appear before it.

The Women's Commission expressed anger, stating that making such remarks about a woman corporator in a constitutional position is an insult to women.

Corporator Sujata Nayak, who was upset by the comments, met with the Chairperson of the Women's Commission, Nerella Sharada, along with other female corporators in her support.

Speaking to the media, MLA Sudheer Reddy said, "The SC/ST Atrocities Act case filed against me is purely driven by political malice."

"I will fight this case in the court of law. I believe that justice will prevail in court. Congress and BJP have conspired to falsely implicate me in this illegal case. I will continue to expose the unlawful alliance between the Congress and the BJP."

YOUNG ADULTS IN HYD AT HIGH RISK

Surge in stroke cases sparks call for early rehab

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stroke cases are rising among young adults in Hyderabad, with one in seven patients aged between 25 and 45. Experts stressed that early rehabilitation is crucial for better recovery and long-term health.

To address this growing concern, HCAH, Hyderabad's first and only provider with a dedicated Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) team, hosted a roundtable discussion on the importance of early

stroke rehabilitation on Tuesday. HCAH has introduced a specialized PMR team to provide personalised, multi-disciplinary care using AI-driven equipment, robotics and advanced neuro-rehabilitation techniques.

Lifestyle factors like smoking, alcohol, stress, poor diet and lack of exercise are increasing stroke risks among young people. Despite medical advances, only 25% of India's population has access to stroke-ready hospitals, leaving many without



Doctors from HCAH

timely care. Neurosurgeons Dr Naveen Mehrotra and Dr Ananth Egoor emphasised that surviving a stroke is just the first step. Without structured neuro-

rehabilitation, patients risk permanent disability. Doctors stressed that Hyderabad must expand stroke rehabilitation services to help survivors regain independence.

AI and robotic-assisted therapy are transforming stroke recovery by improving precision, tracking progress and personalising treatment. Experts called for urgent action to prioritise early stroke rehabilitation and advanced medical interventions in Hyderabad.



Nalgonda Collector Ila Tripathi holding a review meeting in Nalgonda on Tuesday

Officials told to gear up for paddy procurement

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Collector Ila Tripathi has directed the officials of the Civil Supplies Department to gear up for paddy procurement. She has asked the officials to ensure smooth and flawless procurement of paddy.

She attended a one-day training session organised on Monday at Udayaditya Bhavan for in-charges of paddy procurement centres. The training focused on Yasangi paddy procurement and remunerative price for the produce.

The Collector announced that the Central and State governments fixed the support price for paddy at Rs 2,320 a quintal for grade A and Rs 2,300 a quintal for ordinary paddy. Additionally, a bonus of Rs 500 a quintal has been introduced to encourage the procurement of fine quality paddy.

It is estimated that 11,26,021 metric tons of paddy will arrive in the market and it includes 5,68,152 metric tonnes to be procured by millers and 5,57,869 metric tonnes by the Civil Supplies Corporation.

She directed the Agricultural and Related department staff to always be present at the procurement centres, maintain cleanliness, and ensure that farmers bring quality paddy to the centres.

Ensure uninterrupted coal supply to power plants: CMD to officials

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With electricity demand rising across Telangana and the country, Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) Chairman and Managing Director N Balam directed officials to ensure uninterrupted coal production and transportation to thermal power plants for the next three months. Conducting a review meeting via video conference with general managers from Singareni Bhavan in Hyderabad on Tuesday evening, he stressed the need for efficient coal supply to meet power generation demands.

Balam emphasised that all power plants with fuel agreements with Singareni must receive at least 50 rakes of coal per day. He urged officials to increase production while maintaining safety and quality standards.

With the summer heat intensifying, he instructed all mines to implement precautionary measures, including ensuring the availability of cool drinking water, buttermilk, and air coolers at rest shelters. Additionally, he called for an inspection of air conditioning systems in all machinery to ensure they are functioning optimally.



Singareni Collieries Company Limited Chairman and Managing Director N Balam holding a review meeting with officials via video conference in Hyderabad on Tuesday

Recognising the high electricity demand projected for the coming months, Balam reminded officials that all necessary contracts had already been approved to avoid any disruption in production and transportation. He also extended appreciation to the teams at Kistaram OC, PK OC-4, GDK-5 OC, RG OC-2, RK-6 Incline, RK Newtech, and SRP OC-2 mines for achieving their annual production targets ahead of schedule.

The CMD stressed the importance of asset protection, instructing the Estates and Security departments to work in coordination and take strict

legal action against encroachments. He further reiterated that every employee must contribute their full eight-hour shift, excluding lunch breaks, towards the company's growth and production goals.

Officers were instructed to ensure work discipline and strict action was ordered against employees found loitering during duty hours.

Balam firmly stated that negligence in duties would not be tolerated, emphasizing that a stronger work culture is essential for the company's sustainability over the next century.

Expressing satisfaction over

Balam firmly stated that negligence in duties would not be tolerated, emphasizing that a stronger work culture is essential for the company's sustainability over the next century

the successful trial run of methanol production from carbon dioxide at the STPP pilot project, he directed officials to make all necessary arrangements for full-scale methanol production in the coming days.

The meeting was attended by SCCL Directors D Satyanarayana Rao (E&M), LV Suryanarayana (Operations), K. Venkateswarlu (PA, P&P), Executive Director (Coal Movement) S.D.M. Subhani, GM (CPP) Manohar, GM (Marketing) N.V. Rajasekhar Rao, and general managers from all areas.



Warangal Police Commissioner and DCP Sheikh Saleema addressing a media conference in Warangal on Tuesday. The accused are standing behind with masks over their faces

Six-member gang arrested on charge of kidnapping, raping minor girl

Among the arrested, Musku Lata, the police said, is a brothel owner

PNS ■ WARANGAL

A six-member gang has been arrested for allegedly abducting and raping a minor girl in the city and then trying to push her into flesh trade. The Mills Colony police arrested a woman and four men, including a minor girl, on Tuesday. The police seized a kilogram of marijuana, a car, Rs 75,000 in cash, four mobile phones and a large number of condom packets from the house of the main accused.

The arrested are Musku Lata, a minor girl from Lyadella village under Damera Mandal in Warangal district, Abdul Afnan, Sheikh Sailani Baba, Mohammed Altaf, and Mirza Faiz Beg alias Wadood, all residents of Shambhunipet in Warangal.

Warangal Police Commissioner Sanpreet Singh disclosed that the entire episode came to light after a minor girl was abducted and raped by the gang. On receiving a complaint on March 11 that a minor girl went missing, three special teams were formed under the leadership of the supervision of Central Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Sheikh Saleema. The girl was traced to Mulugu crossroads and the police promptly rescued her.

Based on the description by the girl, the police arrested the suspects. Musku Lata, who was allegedly running a brothel at Lyadella village, gave shelter to a minor girl. The minor girl is also an accused in the case. The girl is an orphan. Lata, the police said, had instigated the minor girl to lure girls and thus earn large amounts of money. The minor girl acquainted herself with the minor girl (victim) through Instagram, and lured her to accompany her, the police said. On March 11, the girl was taken by the accused, along with Abdul Afnan, Shiek Sailani Baba and Mohammed Altaf, in a car and purchased marijuana from Mizza Faiz Beg. They forced her to consume marijuana and sexually assaulted her, the police said.

The accused threatened the victim girl that the video recorded on the mobile phone would be posted on social media.

Police Commissioner Sanpreet Singh commended the efforts of Central Zone DCP Sheikh Saleema, Warangal ACP Nandiram Nayak, Mills Colony inspector Venkata Ratnam, and SIs Srikanth and Suresh, along with other police personnel, for their swift action in bringing the accused to justice.



Khammam Police Commissioner Sunil Dutt

Three real estate brokers held for conning investors

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

The Central Crime Police have registered a case against three individuals who were cheating innocent people under the guise of real estate business and embezzling lakhs of rupees, according to Khammam Police Commissioner Sunil Dutt here on Tuesday.

It was found that the accused sold plots using fake documents in Survey Numbers 42/E and 42/EE located in the Agrahara area in Khammam urban mandal.

The three individuals involved in this fraud were identified as Manukonda Srinivas from Nayudupeta, Tallapalli Rajagiri from Khammam Town, and Siliveru Ravi from Srinivas Nagar, the Police Commissioner said. The fraudsters cheated an

individual of up to Rs 5 lakh, while they swindled Rs 25 lakhs from two others, the police said.

During this, the Police Commissioner advised that before purchasing land or plots, one should thoroughly verify the related documents and, if necessary, inspect the property directly on-site. He also mentioned that there has been an increase in cases where real estate dealers and landowners are taking money from financiers on the pretext of developing plots and registering them in their names. The same plots are being sold to others through GPA (General Power of Attorney) without proper registration, leading to fraudulent activities. The police are making efforts to identify and prevent such frauds.

Two lorries carrying PDS rice seized

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Police seized a large quantity of rice meant for public distribution system (PDS) at Masanpalli village under Kalher mandal on National Highway 161.

The police intercepted two lorries which had been allegedly illegally transporting the rice from Hyderabad to Maharashtra.

Acting on a tip-off, two trucks bearing Andhra Pradesh registration numbers

carrying around 50 tonnes of rice meant for PDS in 500 bags, were seized.

According to the Kalher police, the personnel conducting checks identified the trucks carrying rice worth Rs 15 lakh. The two trucks were

seized, and the two drivers were taken into custody. A case has been registered, and the police have stated that they will intensify their investigation to identify the groups behind the illegal transportation.

Sub-Registrar allegedly registers same land three times

PNS ■ MEDAK

An alleged case of fraudulent registrations of the same land three times at the Toopran Sub-Registrar office has come to light belatedly.

A 5-gunta land in Survey Number 97/ru in Toopran was illegally registered as 12 guntas using three fake documents in the Sub-Registrar office, it is alleged.

The affected farmer staged a protest. The farmer, Burgula Govardhan Reddy, filed a criminal case against the Sub-Registrar. This incident came light after a former Sub-Registrar was jailed for alleged illegal registrations. The Toopran Sub-Registrar office seems to have become a hub for fraud.

Five arrested on charge of poaching wild animals

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The Forest Range Officer Ravi Kiran on Monday revealed that five people were arrested for poaching wild animals at the Pakala Wildlife Sanctuary under Khanapur mandal in the district.

The incident came to light when the hunters, who had set a trap in the forest area near Chilukammanagar on Sunday, were transporting a wild boar carcass in an auto after slaughtering it.

A road accident occurred during this process, which led to the unearthing of wildlife hunting.

The Forest officials identified five individuals involved in the poaching and arrested five of them. They were sent to remand. The arrested



Warangal Forest Range Officer Ravi Kiran revealing the arrest of five persons on charge of poaching wild animals, at a media conference in Warangal on Tuesday

include Bangari Suman and Puresh, and Baburo alias Laxman from Payan Pavan Kumar, Asho, Mahabubabad district.

Extramarital affair leads to murder in Jilapur village

PNS ■ NARAYANPET

A woman died after being hit with a stone by another woman at Jilapur village under Narayanpet mandal in the district on Tuesday.

An alleged extramarital affair was said to have led to the murder, according to police. A man named Mogulappa (41) had an illicit affair with a woman for several years, it is alleged. On Tuesday around 8 am, Mogulappa's wife Lakshmi

went to the Jilapur village's Palle Prakruthi Vanam where Bujamma worked, and had an argument with her.

The two women entered into heated argument that led to a fight. The women hit each other with stones and Bujamma (35) died. Lakshmi suffered severe injuries and was rushed to Mahabubnagar government hospital. A case has been filed. Circle Inspector Shankar said that action would be taken.

'Hi-tech' thief from AP held in Sathupalli

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A 'high-tech' thief, who hid stolen property in crematoriums, was arrested by the Sathupalli Police in Khammam district on Tuesday. The accused had attacked a constable Naresh with a knife at the Sathupalli bus station on the March 10, the police said.

Khammam Police Commissioner Sunil Datt shared details of the incident with the media in Sathupalli.

Surendra (35), a thief from Chittapur village under Chatrai mandal in Andhra Pradesh is known for his technical skills. He commits thefts using offline Google map markings.

He first committed a property crime to buy a sari worth just Rs 300 for his mother. Surendra is the accused in a total of 90 cases. After being released on bail on November 25 last year, he committed 15 thefts in the limits of

Khammam Police Commissionerate.

Surendra, who is a convicted criminal in a case in the limits of Challapalli Police Station in Krishna district, is also involved in four cases in Kothagudem, three cases in Mahabubabad, and three cases in Warangal Police Commissionerate. Within a span of three months, he committed 7 thefts in Suryapet, 5 in Nalgonda, 5 in Eluru, and 1 in West Godavari, totaling 43 cases. After committing the thefts, he often sought shelter in crematoriums and hid the stolen goods there. On March 10 around 9 pm, Sathupalli Police Constable Naresh Kumar, while on patrol duty, stopped a suspicious person. The suspect attacked Naresh Kumar with a knife, stabbing him six times with the intention of killing him, and escaped. Despite the attack, the constable bravely fought back and identified the suspect as Surendra.

'Cong alone can ensure social justice'

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA and Chairman of State Government Corporations Veerlapalli Shankar on Tuesday emphasised that the Congress Party alone can ensure social justice for Backward Classes and marginalised communities. Speaking at a media conference held on Tuesday at his camp office in Shadnagar, he expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Minister Ponnab Prabhakar on behalf of the people in constituency for their efforts toward the upliftment of Backward Classes.

During the press meet, MLA Shankar highlighted the initiatives taken by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for the development of Backward Communities. He noted that the Telangana Assembly's approval of the BC Reservation Bill aimed to increase reservations for Backward Classes from 29% to 42%. Fulfilling a promise made during his padyatra, the Congress government



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar addressing a media conference at Shadnagar on Tuesday

is committed to conducting a caste census and implementing reservations accordingly, he explained. The BC caste census bill, he added, will benefit the political, educational, and employment sectors and described it as a historic move.

Shankar expressed joy over the bill's passage and extended thanks on behalf of the Congress party to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Minister Ponnab Prabhakar, and all-party leaders who sup-

ported the initiative. He urged for swift action to secure legal backing for BC reservations, even if it required a constitutional amendment, by taking the matter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi. Responding to the Chief Minister's call, he stressed the need for unity beyond party lines and announced plans to visit Delhi with leaders from BRS, BJP, MIM, CPI, and other political parties to push for BC reservation rights.

Addressing local concerns, Veerlapalli Shankar announced that 18 new buses have been sanctioned for the Shadnagar RTC depot to alleviate commuter difficulties. He recalled that 18 buses were previously allocated to the same depot, and now an additional 18 have been approved.

The press conference was attended by Market Committee Vice Chairman Babar Khan, Mandal Party President Krishna Reddy, Srikant Reddy, Janga Narasimha Yadav, Chalivendram Palli Raju, Harinath Reddy, Town President K. Chennayya, Municipal Chairman Sudarshan Goud, Single Window Chairman Damodar Reddy, OBC Chairman Chandrasekhar, and senior party leaders including Gandrati Balaraju Goud, Raghunayak, Aganooru Baswam, Anasuya, Nushrat Begum, Syed Khadeer, Mubarak, Jangari Ravi, Nalamoni Sridhar, Karrolla Surender, Srihari Goud, Lingareddygudem Ashok, and Seetharam.

Man detained for 'stealing' gold from in-law's house

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

A bizarre case of man allegedly burgling the house of his in-law's house came to light belatedly.

The man was caught for stealing valuables from his in-law's house, according to police.

Santosh, a resident of Nizamabad city committed theft in his in-law's house. Whether it was due to urgent financial need, addiction, mounting debts, or some other reason, Santosh decided to steal. He noticed that his mother-in-law had left the house and locked the door. He chose the right time to act. Since it was his mother-in-law's house, no one would suspect him if he broke the lock. Moreover, since he knew the house well, he directly

went to the cupboard and took 8 tolas of gold jewelry. Santosh, feeling elated by finding the gold, did not even care about the broken lock and quickly fled the scene.

When his mother-in-law, who had just returned from the village, noticed that the lock had been broken and immediately thought that thieves had entered the house. Upon entering, she saw that her 8 tolas of gold were missing. She got anxious and immediately informed the police. The police rushed to the scene and collected details. A case was registered, and an investigation was launched. During the inquiry, it was discovered that her son-in-law, Santoshi, had committed the theft. With technical evidence, the accused was arrested.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT: SIR RONALD ROSS INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES
 Rr.No.G1/RRIT&CD, Hyderabad/2324-25/ Dated: -03-2025.
TENDER NOTIFICATION
 Sealed tenders are invited from the reputed agencies for collection, transportation, treatment and safe disposal of Bio Medical waste at SRIT&CD, Govt. Fever Hospital, Hyderabad for the F.Y. 2025-26 & 2026-27 for (02) yrs. For any details Contact Administrative Office, SRIT&CD, Hyderabad. Sale of tender forms 19-03-2025 to 03-04-2025 10:30 AM to 04:30 PM. Last date of submission 04-04-2025 upto 12:30 PM & opening of sealed tender on the same day at Superintendent chambers at 3:00 PM.
 Sr- SUPERINTENDENT SRIT&CD, HYDERABAD

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF T.G. LIMITED
 6-1-50, Corporate Office, Mint Compound, Hyderabad - 500 063
SHORT TENDER NOTICE
 Tender Notice No. 18/2024-25 of SE/Civil/Corporate Office/Mint Compound, G.O. dt. 18.03.2025
 Tenders are invited by the tender signee for the following works: 1. Tender Specification No. 48/2024-25 - Providing of Greaseless oil with 4 No. counters in Ground floor of B-Block, Corporate Office, Mint Compound, Hyderabad. (Reserved for SC Category) (Cell-3). 2. Tender Specification No. 49/2024-25 - Annual Maintenance for CCTV System at Corporate Office and CPTI for the period from April 2025 to March 2026. 3. Tender Specification No. 51/2024-25 - Clearing of Open Area and Maintenance of lawns of Director Quarters Block No.2 at Emerald, Hyderabad for the period from 01.04.2025 to 31.03.2026. For the detailed specifications, eligibility criteria and other terms and conditions etc. may be downloaded from the website www.spsdco.com for further details. Please contact: SE/Civil/Corporate Office/TGSDPCL/Hyderabad. Last date for sale of tender is 26.03.2025 and tender opening date on 27.03.2025. Phone No. 8448813854, Fax No. 23431006.
 SPP R.O. No. 1846-PP/CL/NOTV/132024/05, Dt. 18-03-2025. Sr- Superintending Engineer, Civil / TGSDPCL

ACROSS THE STATES



Akhilesh slams BJP over religious rows

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav has accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of endangering religious sites and fostering communal tensions. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an Uttar Pradesh assembly session on Monday night, he alleged that the BJP was creating conflicts around all religious places to divert attention from "real issues" such as law and order, unemployment, and economic distress. "Slowly, not just mosques but all religious sites will be under threat due to the BJP's conduct. Even our Kedareshwar Temple (in Etawah) has become a problem for them," Yadav claimed. The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister asserted that the BJP had objections to temple construction by others. "If we build a temple with support from our people, even that troubles the BJP." On the controversy in Maharashtra over Mughal ruler Aurangzeb's grave, Yadav urged the BJP to focus on historical figures who promoted harmony rather than fostering divisions.



Delhi's power demand likely to peak at 9,000 MW

Higher requirement during the upcoming summer months is likely to push Delhi's peak power demand to 9,000 MW, discom officials said on Tuesday. The city recorded an all-time high peak power demand of 8,656 MW in 2024, they said. "The peak load of the national capital is projected to reach 9,000 MW in late June or early July," Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited said in a statement. A BSES official said several initiatives, including network strengthening and thermo-scanning to identify potential hotspots, advanced load-forecasting techniques using artificial intelligence and machine learning, were being taken to meet the rise in demand. "More than 2,100 MW of green power will play an important role in ensuring adequate supply during the summer months," he added. Last year, Delhi's peak power demand crossed 8,000 MW for the first time, the discom officials said.



4-month-old baby girl found dead in well in Kerala

A 12-year-old girl was arrested on Tuesday for killing her four-month-old cousin sister, who was found dead in a well near their residence at Pappinisseri in Kannur city, after she confessed to committing the crime, police said. The baby, who was sleeping with her parents and two cousin sisters in the central hall of their residence, was found to be missing around 11.30 pm on Monday. Subsequently, a search of the nearby areas resulted in the infant being found drowned in the well, police said. A senior police officer said that since the door of the room was latched from inside, police suspected that someone in the family was involved. "On being questioned, the girl confessed to the crime. She claims to have killed the baby as she was concerned she would not get the same love and attention as she was getting earlier," the officer said. The 12-year-old girl was the daughter of the baby's father's elder brother who had died sometime back. Her mother had left her and therefore, her paternal uncle had taken her with him, police said. Besides her, the baby's father was also looking after the daughter of his younger brother.



Committed to bring normalcy in Manipur, says FM Sitharaman

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the central government is committed to bringing normalcy to Manipur and assured all support for the economic growth of the state. Replying to a discussion on the passage of the Manipur Budget for the current fiscal and vote of account for the six months of 2025-26 in the Rajya Sabha, the minister also sought the support of the Opposition parties for peace in Manipur instead of engaging in the blame game.

The senior minister also hit back at the Opposition for its criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi not visiting the violence-affected state, saying none of the prime ministers in the past visited Manipur when the violence took place there. She cited the names of former prime ministers PV Narasimha Rao and IK Gujral.

Sitharaman stated that in 1993 when Manipur was under Congress rule and Rajkumar Dorendra Singh was the chief minister, a major flare-up between Nagas and Kukis led to the death of 750 people and the burning

down of 350 villages. However, neither the then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao nor Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan visited the state.

Responding to the Opposition criticism of not paying the required focus to Manipur, she said the Union Home Minister and Minister of State for Home visited the state as part of the Centre's efforts to bring normalcy.

She added that violence in Manipur has adversely impacted economic activities in the state but expressed confidence that it will recover swiftly.

"We extend the fullest support to the state...so that the recovery of Manipur will be sooner than later...We are, all of us here, committed to getting that state back to some normalcy and we want that state to grow and prosper as much as any other state," Sitharaman asserted.

Observing that the unrest in Manipur led to a reduction in economic activities, she said, "With improvement in law and order and consequent improvement in economic activity, I expect GSDP to show some recovery this year onwards".

Maha Kumbh strengthened India's spirit of unity: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the Mahakumbh strengthened the spirit of unity in the country and gave a befitting response to those who questioned India's capability to organise such a large congregation.

Making a statement in the Lok Sabha, Modi said the success of the Mahakumbh was a result of the contributions of countless people from the government and society.

"We witnessed the enthusiasm and excitement of the Mahakumbh in India for about one and a half months. The way millions of devotees came together with devotion, rising above the concerns of convenience and inconvenience, is our greatest strength," Modi said.

"The nectar of unity is the most sacred offering of the Mahakumbh," he said.

"The Mahakumbh was such an event in which people from every region and every corner of the country came together.



People put aside their egos and gathered in Prayagraj with the feeling of 'we' and not 'I,' he added.

Modi said the huge display of unity at the Mahakumbh was India's strength, particularly at a time when the world was in disarray.

"The spirit of unity is so strong that it shatters any attempts to break it," he said.

"We have always said that unity in diversity is the speciality of India and we have experienced its grand form in

Prayagraj Mahakumbh. It is our responsibility to continue enriching this feature of unity in diversity," the prime minister said.

He said people speaking different languages and dialects chanting 'Har Har Gange' on the banks of the Sangam gave a glimpse of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', which increased the feeling of unity.

The prime minister likened the Mahakumbh to important milestones in the struggle for independence when the self-

Modi said the huge display of unity at the Mahakumbh was India's strength, particularly at a time when the world was in disarray

esteem of the country was awakened.

"Be it the war of independence in 1857, the time of Bhagat Singh's martyrdom, the call of Chalo Delhi given by Netaji Subhas babu or the Dandi March of Mahatma Gandhi, India achieved independence by seeking inspiration from such milestones in time," Modi said.

"Prayagraj Mahakumbh is a similar significant milestone that reflects the spirit of an awakened nation," he said.

Nagpur violence premeditated: Fadnavis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 50 persons have been taken into custody and curfew imposed in parts of Nagpur, a day after protests against Aurangzeb's tomb triggered violence in the city, which Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis claimed was premeditated.

Speaking in the legislative assembly on Tuesday, Fadnavis said the Vicky Kaushal-starrer film "Chhaava", based on the life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, reignited people's emotions against the Mughal emperor and brought before them the true history of the Maratha king. The Vishwa

Hindu Parishad (VHP) it won't tolerate any attempts to glorify Aurangzeb and claimed the Nagpur violence was planned. Five FIRs have been registered in connection with the violence, Nagpur police commissioner Ravinder Kumar Singh said on Tuesday. Violence erupted in central Nagpur's Chitnis

Park in Mahal area on Monday around 7.30 pm, with stones hurled at police amid rumours that the holy book of a community was burnt during an agitation by a right-wing body for the removal of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district, officials said.

Railway fares in India far less than neighbouring countries: Vaishnav

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Tuesday said the railway fares in India have remained constant since 2020 and are far less than the neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

He also asserted that railway accidents have come down by 90 per cent from the time when RJD supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav was at the ministry's helm.

Vaishnav made the remarks in the Lok Sabha while replying to a debate on the Demands for Grants under the control of the Ministry of Railways for 2025-26. The Lok Sabha later passed the Demands for Grants.

In his reply, Vaishnav said the national transporter has emerged from difficulties of the Covid pandemic to meet its own expenses.

Amid noisy protests by the opposition over not being allowed to speak on Prime



Minister Narendra Modi's statement on the Maha Kumbh, the minister said the railways has taken numerous steps for crowd control at stations and is running several special trains during festival seasons.

He asserted that with Prime Minister Modi's focus on safety, accidents have come down by 90 per cent from the time when Lalu Prasad was at the ministry's helm.

"During Lalu Prasad's time, in a year about 234 accidents and 464 derailments took place, about 700 in a year.

During Mamata Banerjee's period, 165 accidents and 230 derailments took the accident tally to 395 in a year and during Mallikarjun Kharge's time, 118 accidents and 263 derailments happened, taking the total number of accidents to 381," he said. Prime Minister Modi focused on safety and investment, and now it has come down to 30 accidents and 43 derailments, which is 90 per cent less from the earlier period and 80 per cent less than what it was in 2014-15, Vaishnav said.

PM Modi meets Ilaiyaraaja, hails him as 'trailblazer in every sense'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday met renowned composer Ilaiyaraaja, who is also a Rajya Sabha MP, and said he made history by presenting his first-ever Western classical symphony, Valiant, in London a few days ago.

Modi said in a post on X, "Delighted to meet Rajya Sabha MP Thiru Ilaiyaraaja ji,



a musical titan whose genius has a monumental impact on our music and culture. He is a trailblazer in every sense and he made history yet again

by presenting his first-ever Western classical symphony, Valiant, in London a few days ago."

Modi noted that his performance was accompanied by the world-renowned Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

This momentous feat marks yet another chapter in his unparalleled musical journey -- one that continues to redefine excellence on a global scale, he added.

Forty years on, 3 gets death for killing 24 Dalits in UP

PNS ■ MANIPURI

A special court in UP's Mainpuri district on Tuesday sentenced three persons to death in the 1981 Dehuli massacre which saw 24 Dalits, including women and two children, being killed.

On March 12, special judge Indra Singh convicted the trio, namely, Kaptan Singh (60), Rampal (60) and Ram Sevak (70).

Aside from the capital punishment, the court imposed a Rs 50,000 fine on the convicts, government counsel Rohit Shukla told PTI.

A gang of 17 dacoits dressed in khakis stormed Dehuli at around 4.30 pm on November 18, 1981. They targeted a Dalit family, gunning down 24 people, including the toddlers aged six months and two years, respectively.

The original FIR named 17 accused under Sections 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), and 396 (dacoity with murder), among others offences of the IPC.



Of the total accused, 14 persons died during the pendency of trial whereas one was declared an absconder.

The FIR was filed by Laik Singh, a local resident, on November 19, 1981, and following a detailed investigation, the dacoits, including gang leaders Santosh and Radhey, were chargesheeted.

In response to the tragedy, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi met the affected families whereas Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the leader in the opposition, undertook a pad yatra from Dilli to Sadupur in Firozabad, offering solidarity with the grieving families.

Does Lokpal have jurisdiction to hear cases against HC judges? SC to examine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday said it would examine the issue over the jurisdiction of anti-corruption ombudsman Lokpal in entertaining complaints against sitting high court judges.

A three-judge special bench comprising Justices B R Gavai, Surya Kant and Abhay S Oka was dealing with a suo motu proceeding initiated over the Lokpal's January 27 order on the issue. While posting the hearing on April 15, the bench asked senior advocate Ranjit Kumar to assist it as an amicus curiae in the matter.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the limited point was whether the Lokpal had jurisdiction. "We will only consider the issue with regard to jurisdiction under the Lokpal Act," Justice Gavai said. The top court on February 20 stayed the Lokpal's order, saying it was "something very, very disturbing" and concerned the independence of the judiciary.

It then issued notices and sought responses from the Centre, the Lokpal registrar and the complainant. Mehta previously said that a high court judge would never



fall within the ambit of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.

The Lokpal had passed the order on two complaints filed against a sitting additional judge of a high court.

On Tuesday, the complainant appeared before the apex court and said he had filed an affidavit in support of his submissions.

"I want the honour of the Lokpal and also the judiciary to be uplifted," he said.

The bench asked the complainant whether he would engage a legal aid lawyer.

The complainant refused any legal assistance and said his submissions were already mentioned in the affidavit. Pointing out a substantial question of law in the matter,

Mehta said, "In my view, only one section of the Lokpal Act is to be examined."

When the bench said a counter affidavit was filed by the registrar of Lokpal, Mehta said it was almost a "reiteration of the order".

There was already a mechanism in place to deal with complaints against judges, the bench observed. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who is also assisting the court, said, "The fundamental issue will be, can a complaint be ever filed outside the remit of the constitutional authority."

Kumar, the bench said, would go through the complainant's submissions and other materials to have a holistic view of the matter before it decided the issue.

'Develop Delhi Vidhan Sabha as 'model' assembly'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Tuesday gave a call to develop the Delhi Vidhan Sabha as a "model" Assembly and urged the newly elected MLAs to upskill themselves with modern technology such as Artificial Intelligence.

Inaugurating a two-day orientation programme for Delhi MLAs at the assembly, he said people have high expectations from the legislators and the new government.

"Delhi as the national capital is like a 'Mini India', representing the diversity among



people from different states living here... It is a big responsibility to meet their expectations and solve their problems by ensuring infrastructure development and social well-

fare," Birla said. The orientation programme will be helpful in learning ways to fulfil the high expectations of people from their MLAs and the new government, he said.

The inaugural session of the event was also attended by Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, Leader of Opposition in Assembly Atishi, Deputy Speaker Mohan Singh Bisht, Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh and the MPs from Delhi.

Stating that a good orator is also the best listener, Birla urged the MLAs to spend time participating in the legislative business of the assembly.

"Artificial Intelligence should be used for capacity building and efficiency. One can ensure better dialogue and communi-

cation with more use of technology," he said.

The Delhi Assembly should be developed as a "model" with respect to maximum use of technology and skills of its members, Birla said.

The Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies is conducting the orientation programme, offering insights into parliamentary rules and legislative practices. Birla also said the new members should learn legislative drafting, employ the available legislative sources, and become aware of the rules and regulations to be able to work for the people.

Editor's TAKE

New vistas with New Zealand

The visit of the New Zealand Prime Minister reinforces the ties between the two nations

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon is on an official visit to India from March 16 to 20, 2025, marking his first trip to the country as Prime Minister. He is accompanied by a high-level delegation, including ministers, senior officials, business leaders, media personnel, and members of the Indian diaspora community. New Zealand happens to be one of the most friendly nations India has in the southern hemisphere. The two countries share warm and friendly relations, rooted in historical ties as former British colonies and members of the Commonwealth. The Indian diaspora in New Zealand, which numbers around 2,40,000 also plays a crucial role in strengthening bilateral ties.

This visit of New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon marks a significant step in the deepening of bilateral relations between the two nations. With discussions ranging from defence and security to counterterrorism measures, the visit underscores a growing alignment in worldviews between India and New Zealand.

One of the most noteworthy outcomes of the meeting between Prime Minister Luxon and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the signing of a comprehensive pact aimed at strengthening defence and security cooperation. This agreement reflects a shared commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, where both nations recognise the importance of collaboration in countering security threats. New Zealand supports a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific but is not part of security arrangements like the Quad.

During the bilateral discussions in New Delhi, Prime Minister Modi conveyed concerns over the activities of separatist groups that misuse democratic freedoms to promote terrorism and threaten Indian interests. In response, the New Zealand government reaffirmed its commitment to addressing such concerns and acknowledged India's perspective on these security threats. Indeed, a significant highlight of the discussions was the shared stance against terrorism. Prime Minister Modi and Prime Minister Luxon emphasised that terrorism in any form is unacceptable, recalling tragic incidents such as the Christchurch attack in 2019 and the Mumbai 26/11 attacks.

Beyond security and counterterrorism, the visit also provided an opportunity to explore avenues for enhancing economic collaboration. Both leaders reiterated the need for stronger trade and investment ties, with a focus on sectors like technology, agriculture, and renewable energy. The two nations recognise the importance of fostering innovation and economic growth, paving the way for deeper economic integration. New Zealand is keen on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India, but progress has been slow.

India and New Zealand have been increasingly converging on global issues, including climate change, sustainable development, and maritime security. As responsible stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific, both countries aim to uphold international norms and work towards a stable and prosperous region. Their commitment to multilateralism and global governance is reflected in their ongoing cooperation with international organizations. From defence and security to economic collaboration and counterterrorism, India and New Zealand are steadily aligning their interests and working towards a shared vision for global peace and stability. Luxon's visit reflects a concerted effort to strengthen the multifaceted relationship between New Zealand and India, encompassing trade, security, education, tourism, sports, and cultural exchanges.

Nepal's monarchy debate reignites

Former King Gyanendra Shah, backed by the royalist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), has launched a bold campaign to reclaim relevance. His recent high-profile return to Kathmandu has ignited political tensions

Returning to Pokhara, Nepal, during the current weather-fickle Holi season what struck me was the re-ignition of the debate on the revival of monarchy in a carefully orchestrated campaign driven by the royalist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), other royalists and former King Gyanendra Shah. Not since the republic replaced monarchy in May 2008, has the debate and movement been so intense. The Republicans have hit back in Parliament and outside it. For the royalists, RPP parliamentary party leader Rajendra Lingden, vice president RPP Rabindra Misra and sister party stalwart, Kamal Thapa along with dissident CPN UML leader Durga Parsain, joined by members of civil society are backing Gyanendra. A battle royal is brewing between the two sides.

Gyanendra returned to Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport in a helicopter from Pokhara on March 9 greeted by tumultuous crowds, according to one estimate of around 100,000 supporters. The Royal convoy took nearly three hours to reach Gyanendra's Nirmal Niwas. Earlier on Democracy Day (February 19) he broke his silence through a video message on the restoration of the monarchy. Speaking directly to his countrymen in the third person 'we', he urged for their support for the progress and prosperity of the country.

"Now we are ready to sacrifice anything for the country. We have decided to solve the national problem". Gyanendra has taken the horse by the bit.

Royalists say the monarchy was removed by 'foreigners' and that the 2015 constitution was backed by 'foreigners'. One implied foreigner is India. Banners showing UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were prominently displayed on March 9. The House of Shahs, the royal dynasty began nearly 400 years ago and has an abiding connection with Gorakhnath Peeth whose founder Guru Gorakhnath blessed Prithvi Narayan Shah, founder of modern Nepal. Yogi Adityanath, is still its presiding priest and had in 2015 in Kathmandu publicly advocated the return of Nepal as a Hindu Rashtra. I am frequently asked here if India supports the revival of the Hindu state and monarchy in Nepal. I have said that India does not officially support either institution for Nepal. RPP has 14 seats in Parliament and secured 60,000 votes (out of 14 Million electorates) in the 2023 elections. Even in the local elections, their performance was below par. I met some well-wishers from Nepal at the Holi get-together in my village Anpu. Former Havaladar Durga Bahadur Gurung told me that during the monarchy, 'all the money' went to the



King's coffers; there were no 'vikas'. Now there is round development but 'money goes to several ministers'. But "vikas is essential and necessary". After the monarchy ended Nepal became secular, democratic and a republic enjoying the freedom of speech and people free to indulge in legitimate pursuits of happiness.

What Royalists forget is that monarchy was dismantled following a people's revolution (Jan Andolan) of 2006 — which was the culmination of the civil war, the 10-year-long Maoists insurrection that cost 17,000 lives and several thousand were victimised through disappearances and displacement. Further, Gyanendra had led a coup in 2005 dismissing Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. He deleted democracy aspiring to return to absolute monarchy. It is therefore naive to think of turning the clock back.

The debate in and outside Parliament is continuing. Former Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai who has started a new party Nepal Samajbadi Party, had said after Gyanendra's Democracy Day speech, that he should be arrested. Prime Minister KP Oli has asked Gyanendra to start a political party and fight an election. The discussion in the

lower House has been civilised. Outside it, former prime minister and leader of the opposition, Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda the pathfinder of the republic, has said that the former King has found voice at this time due to the mis-governance of the ruling CPN UML and Nepali Congress alliance government.

He has also accused Gyanendra of murdering his brother Birendra and a statue smuggler. NC General Secretary Gagan Thapa has asked the government to withdraw Gyanendra's privileges. Gyanendra's alleged role in the 2001 Palace massacre has resurfaced. There are calls for a fresh enquiry into the royal tragedy; the initial enquiry was done hastily. Conspicuously Gyanendra and his notorious son Paras were among the few survivors of the tragedy.

On March 16, a royalist rally on the Durbar Marg between the main gate of the

palace and the statue of King Mahendra (Gyanendra's father) carrying a banner demanding the return of King Gyanendra for the third time to his throne. On March 28, republicans led by smaller Left parties will stage a counter-rally. And this duel will continue until governance and delivery improve which won't be any time soon.

How will the former King's clarion call resonate in India, and how will it resurface the political fortunes of the royalists? Only elections and time will tell. The King will be pleased with his direct call, to the Nepali Janta to help him reclaim his throne. History will record February 19 and March 9, 2025, as dates of Gyanendra's riposte to return to Narayanhiti Durbar. Mr Shah will keep himself relevant to the discourse on monarchy at a time when many challenges confront Nepal not the least corruption which is at the heart of people's grievances. Unfortunately, the eight-month rule of the so-called stable alliance of two major parties has little to show to cheer Durga Bahadur.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views expressed are personal)



ASHOK K MEHTA

Gathered by love, glued by familial bonds

SECOND Opinion



ASHA IYER KUMAR

I had been a footloose solo traveller until health issues bogged me down and kept me cloistered in my home for nearly two years. In that period, I had nearly lost the innate verve to step out and see the world without being accompanied by the spouse. There was a certain blitheness to the spirit that came when I travelled alone and it was all taken away when an ailment robbed me of the confidence to wing out on my own.

Having come out of the phase for the most part, I had an opportunity to travel to India to attend a nephew's wedding earlier this month. However, I was caught between the nervousness of having to set out alone or giving the occasion a pass. The former meant steeling up to face whatever my mind and body would do to me during the time of travel. The former meant giving up a glorious opportunity to meet a horde of extended family members.

My dad came from a family of 13 siblings, most of whom have now moved on, leaving behind a sprawling clan of cousins who, over time, have built families of their own. Now with time, this family tree has grown phenomenally, with my cousins adding sons and daughters in-laws too. The invitation to the wedding meant having an enviable chance to meet many of them, and the list of people who had confirmed their attendance made me slaver. It was something I could not gloss over.

Good health or not, this was an occasion I did not want to miss because in a world that is getting polarised faster than a sneeze, one thing we need to preserve is the ties that transcend differences — the bonds of family that remind us, no matter how far we have drifted, there are roots that still hold us together.

The wedding promised to be more than just a celebration, it was a rare convergence of faces and stories I had not seen in years. A chance to relive old memories, forge new connections, and feel the warmth of belonging once again.

In the days leading up to my journey, I found myself replaying fragments of childhood spent with these cousins — the carefree gatherings on family occasions, the teasing banter that stitched us together, and the quiet comfort of knowing we belonged to the same expansive family tree. Life had since scattered us across continents, and while social media kept us loosely tethered, it was not the same as being in each other's presence — seeing familiar eyes light up, hearing voices unchanged by time, and embracing those whose touch still carried the warmth of home.

I knew this gathering would be more than just a reunion, it would be a gentle reminder that no matter how far we wander, we remain connected by unseen threads woven from shared memories, loud laughter, and the silent understanding that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. And so, with a heart both anxious and eager, I packed my bags, not just for a wedding, but for a journey back to the roots that

still held me fast. And boy, was I overwhelmed! From the first hug I received from my paternal aunt when I walked into her room through the number of embraces I got from dozens of people I was meeting after a long time, it was two days of nonstop reminders about how deeply intertwined our lives were, despite the years and distances that had come between us. Each embrace seemed to unlock a memory. Conversations flowed like an unbroken river, as if it had never stopped, carrying with them the warmth of familiarity and the quiet reassurance that some connections never truly fade.

In those two days, I found myself moving through a reel of faces and voices, yet each encounter felt personal and profound as if no time had lapsed at all. It was not just a family gathering, it was a homecoming for the heart, a reminder that love, in its purest form, doesn't need constant tending to thrive. It waits patiently, ready to embrace us the moment we return.

All we need to nurture is a willingness to cruise into embraces and a bonding that are not encumbered by status, health conditions, time lapse, achievements or other highs and lows of a world that has no time to stand and share.

For this reason alone, I have resolved to attend any major celebration in the family if conditions are conducive, not just to enhance my experience of life, but also to let the bonds that time threatens to fray find their strength again, because some ties deserve to be nurtured, not merely remembered.

(The author is a Dubai-based columnist and children's writing coach. She has published six books. Views expressed are personal)

Leaderspeak

I really appreciate that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not bring up New Zealand's Champions Trophy loss to India, and I did not mention our Test victories in India. Let's keep it that way and avoid a diplomatic incident. During PM Modi's tenure, the men in blue have been the most dominant side in cricket, most recently winning the Champions Trophy in Dubai against my men in black. They broke many, many New Zealanders' hearts in the process, including mine.

CHRISTOPHER LUXON, PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

Letters to the Editor

INDIA TAKES CENTER STAGE

Madam—The on air podcast episode of American podcaster and Youtuber Lex Fridman in which he had interviewed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gone viral sensation on all the major internet platforms. Mr Fridman, who is known for interviewing the renowned personalities of the world, have so far achieved more than 1.5 Million views on his official YouTube channel for Modi's episode.

The exuberant interview of three long hours, make thought provoking discussion on so many critical issues including relationship with China, betrayal of Pakistan, his handling attempts of Godhara Riots, glimpses of his personal life, fasting, Donald Trump and his nostalgia stance of Howdy Modi to express the generous humility of Trump, Russia-Ukraine, war, peace, AI, education and so on.

He presented his bold words fearlessly on many of the controversial issues of his tenure as the Indian Prime Minister for three times. It seems like, not him alone voicing out locally about India, instead 1.46 Billion people's are being centre-staged for the Lex Podcast for the world to listen the roars of India and the Indians.

The whole interview is jam-packed about the life realities of PM Modi, stories of India and Indian legacy. He mesmerised the interview with his personal touch, depicting his entire age crisp snapshot in those three hours.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

TRUMP AND PUTIN EYE 30-DAY CEASEFIRE

Madam—It is with reference to the news article "Putin Trump to hold talks about Ukraine war today" (March 18). US President Donald Trump is going to speak with Russian President Putin about 30 days ceasefire in Russia-Ukraine war field. White House officials are curiously optimistic about a proposal that would stop the fighting between Russia and Ukraine for 30 days. It is really a welcome move.

Recently Ukraine's government agreed to the US proposal of 30 days ceasefire in talks in Saudi Arabia. Putin has praised Trump's efforts to end the war in Ukraine and has agreed in principle with the US ceasefire proposal. At the same time Putin has raised so many questions that may require further discussion before the agreement could be reached. His main demand is no NATO membership be given to Ukraine and international sanctions against Russia should be ended. Also Putin wants guarantees that Ukraine would not use the pause in fighting to resupply its forces or squirrel out Ukrainian fighters to avoid capture by Russians. Putin also questioned who would monitor the deal across the front-line as well as what penalties would be for violating its terms. Ukraine has already agreed a 30 days ceasefire if Russia signs on too so that a longer peace deal can be discussed. Ukraine demands an exchange of prisoners and a return of thousands of children who had illegally been taken to Russia.

P VICTOR SELVARAJ | TAMIL NADU

SOUTH INDIA'S TRIPLE WHAMMY

Madam —In a surprising coincidence, three major issues have simultaneously bounced to centre stage causing anxiety in the southern states. These issues are the linguistic burden placed upon them by the National Education Policy 2020, the upcoming report of the 16th Finance Commission and the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies in 2026. The explicit and implicit support for Hindi, along with its aggressive promotion, is perceived as a calibrated effort to impose the language on the non-Hindi-speaking states. The subtle manoeuvres in the Hindi heartland to replace English with Hindi, labelling the former as a colonial legacy and imbuing the exercise with nationalist sentiment, reinforce the suspicion. Ironically, India is the second-largest English-speaking nation in the world and some estimates suggest it may soon become the top nation. The percentage of people who can speak at least some English is higher in the South, where more people are now inclined to acquire proficiency. Revenue allocations from the central divisible pool to southern states have been scaled down. Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent assurance to the southern states that "not even one seat is reduced pro-rata" could be considered a mollifying statement, at best. India's unity lies in addressing all regional linguistic aspirations, celebrating diverse cultures and sharing resources fairly.

HARIDASAN RAJAN | KOZHIKODE

HIMACHAL PRADESH APPLE GROWERS FEAR US TARIFF THREAT

The adverse impact of trade war will be visible in Himachal Pradesh if the apple of the United States (US) is allowed to enter in India. Here it is worth mentioning that a few years back there was proposal of entry of dairy products from Scandinavian countries and strong protest was lodged by the Punjab and Gujarat because the livelihood of many is dependent on these dairy products and ultimately deal was cancelled.

Now, the apples of US will pose a serious threat to the Indian growers if the deal is matured. With import duties already slashed from 70 per cent to 50 per cent in 2023, orchardists fear another cut would flood the market with cheap, high-quality American apples, devastating domestic growers. The numbers tell a sobering story. When tariffs were hiked in 2018, US apple imports plummeted from 1.28 lakh metric tonnes to just 4,486 metric tonnes by 2022-23. But after the duty was reduced, imports surged nearly 20 times.

How the import duty can adversely impact the economy of the country it can be seen in the impact on Canada where there is total fear psychosis what will happen in the near future and as per media reports many are thinking to return to own country and there is total uncertainty among the Indians settled in Canada.

All are aware that apple growers are already facing stiff competition from cheap Iranian imports and struggle with high production costs due to the rugged Himalayan terrain which makes mechanisation which ultimately adversely impact the sale in the competitive market, because the mechanisation become impossible. Whereas, the American apples benefit from highly mechanised farming and large-scale subsidies. Due to this high imbalance the India's apple industry extremely vulnerable to unregulated imports. And if the tariff is further cut without protective measures it would cripple an industry already on the edge.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

Please send your letter to the letterstopioneer@gmail.com in not more than 400 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Transforming education in a globalised era

True progress lies in integrating cognitive discourse, ethical values and innovative methodologies to bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and contemporary demands. By fostering inclusivity and transparency, we can cultivate responsible, knowledgeable and globally competitive individuals

FIRST
Column

The increasing liberalisation and globalisation have fostered the concept of a global village, deeply interwoven with society, markets, freedom, choice, empowerment, peace, opportunities, and political linkages. However, its far-reaching impact has also created a somewhat confusing situation. Over the years, there has been considerable debate on reforms in education. It is crucial to identify new ways to assess candidates' qualitative competence by emphasising the improvement of their analytical and observational skills. This can be achieved through cognitive discourse, exploring multiple perspectives, and formulating integrated texts and questionnaires.

Students' lives are undergoing a significant transformation, largely due to rapidly changing value systems across the globe. However, this transformation, driven primarily by acquisition rather than genuine learning, risks turning education—a highly pious institution—into a business venture, where success is measured by material possessions alone. Our traditional knowledge system has long been known for embracing values and approaches that have nurtured students' creativity for centuries. Yet, we must acknowledge the challenges posed by the increasing complexities of this transitional phase.

Despite the historical challenges posed by imperialism and colonialism, our education system has grown richer in content and more diverse in ideas. Continuous efforts have been made to expose students to the nuances of socio-economic, political, and international issues. Kudos to the Ministry of Education for consistently updating curricula, placing a strong emphasis on enhancing students' comprehension skills, and fostering their all-round personality development. The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) has provided a robust framework to upgrade, innovate, and evolve new educational methods. This ensures that our education system remains on par with the best in the world.

The inquisitiveness of the new generation is evident in their ideas and remarkable achievements globally. However, the demands of changing times and the rise of social media, coupled with its negative influences, have made students increasingly vulnerable to shortcuts, criminal activities, and anti-social elements. This has compelled policymakers to revisit the glory of our traditional education system, which is rooted in immense knowledge and wisdom. The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) is a commendable initiative in this direction. Its mission aims to create a confluence between our rich traditional values and modern educational advancements. This can help cultivate a culture of liberal literature and



SUDHIR HINDWAN

nurture a spirit of selfless service and brotherhood.

Recent transformations in India's higher education system deserve applause. Efforts have been made to ensure equitable access and partnerships among institutions, demonstrating a strong commitment to empowering students and faculty members. Additionally, the NEP's emphasis on school, adult, and higher education, as well as the promotion of Indian languages and online learning, signifies a tremendous effort to enhance the overall educational landscape.

The essence of these reforms is to ensure clean governance and accountability in education while maintaining synergy among various stakeholders, particularly the youth. Establishing clear norms for structuring new educational frameworks ensures affordability and promotes social justice. Many positive changes have been implemented through fresh perspectives.

Another welcome regulation is the introduction



STUDENTS' LIVES ARE UNDERGOING A SIGNIFICANT TRANSFORMATION, LARGELY DUE TO RAPIDLY CHANGING VALUE SYSTEMS ACROSS THE GLOBE. HOWEVER, THIS TRANSFORMATION, DRIVEN PRIMARILY BY ACQUISITION RATHER THAN GENUINE LEARNING, RISKS TURNING EDUCATION INTO A BUSINESS VENTURE

of monitoring mechanisms that assess institutions based on research output, academic excellence, industry linkages, and employability. The clear framework for decision-making regarding the establishment and closure of institutions ensures transparency.

There has been considerable debate among academicians regarding selection processes in higher education.

One of the major challenges is adapting selection criteria to the contemporary context of increasing global interdependence. Recent developments have laid the foundation for a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of politics and society.

However, modifying the examination system is crucial, without it, reforms may remain theoretical rather than practical. The strength of the higher education system lies in fostering internal dynamism and ensuring inclusive growth. Even the best systems are shaped by the people who drive change.

Tremendous efforts have been made to create a robust higher education apparatus, yet there is always room for improvement to make the sys-

tem more cost-effective and people-centric. Academicians play a vital role in this fast-changing world, which faces increasing challenges from cyber fraud, the misuse of artificial intelligence, and the influence of social media. The blurred distinction between virtual (reel) and real life is a growing concern. As beacons of wisdom and sacrifice, academicians must relentlessly pursue knowledge, contribute to society, and help students navigate the paradoxes of the transitional phase.

Students should be encouraged to engage in practical learning experiences that bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world applications.

A constant focus on conceptualising knowledge can help students carve out a niche for themselves. Since the ultimate goal of life remains happiness and contentment, we must delve deep into the vast ocean of knowledge and retrieve the pearls of forgotten wisdom.

Conclusion

The transformation of India's education system, driven by globalisation and policy reforms, reflects a broader shift toward a more inclusive, innovative, and skill-oriented framework. While challenges persist, including the commercialisation of education, social media's negative influence, and the evolving global landscape, the efforts to modernise learning while preserving traditional wisdom are commendable.

The National Education Policy (NEP) has laid a strong foundation for enhancing analytical skills, fostering research excellence, and improving employability. A well-balanced approach—integrating cognitive discourse, ethical values, and advanced methodologies—can bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and contemporary demands.

The role of academicians remains crucial in guiding students to think critically and engage meaningfully with society. With a focus on inclusivity, transparency, and lifelong learning, India's education system is poised to create a generation of responsible, knowledgeable, and globally competitive individuals. Ultimately, education should not merely be a tool for financial success but a means to cultivate intellectual curiosity, selfless service, and a deep appreciation for knowledge.

As we continue to refine our educational policies, the goal should be to nurture individuals who contribute positively to society while upholding the rich legacy of Indian wisdom.

A holistic, student-centric approach will ensure long-term success and sustainable progress.

(The writer, a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav Award, is a professor. Views expressed are personal)

Global AI framework: Learning from nuclear arms race and climate change

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is fast becoming the defining technology of our era, shaping everything from retail and finance to warfare and surveillance. Unlike run-of-the-mill general-purpose technologies, AI is truly path-breaking: it holds the power to transform the foundational structures of society, from how we work and learn to how we govern and secure ourselves. Much like nuclear technology and climate change, AI transcends national borders and individual interests. While celebrating technology's limitless potential, we must heed Geoffrey Hinton, dubbed the "Godfather of Deep Learning" and a 2024 Nobel laureate, who warns of the existential risks of rapidly advancing AI.

A few technocrats and major corporations now steer AI's development, potentially reshaping economies and societies. To ensure AI benefits humanity rather than endangering it, we must adopt a global governance framework akin to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) or the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The peril of few holding the future

Economists Daron Acemoglu and Jhonson warn that a small elite controlling technological development can lock society into pathways that primarily benefit the privileged. This echoes historical moments when narrow interests drove massive decisions: for example, Ferdinand de Lesseps undertook the Panama Canal project after his success in Suez, only to misjudge engineering challenges and trigger disastrous outcomes. By analogy, big-tech leaders might have grand AI visions but overlook ethical hazards, job displacement, or societal well-being. When vision and capital become so concentrated, even a minor misstep at the top can ripple across the globe.

Moreover, this dynamic reflects what Cornell economist and India's former chief economic advisor Kaushik Basu calls the "Samaritan's Curse." Well-intentioned or philanthropic AI solutions-like free educational software from tech giants-could still undermine local autonomy and accountability.

In this scenario, communities become dependent on external providers who extract data and set the terms for entire regions. Over time, local institutions weaken, and the global majority is left beholden to decisions made just in the tech hubs. Likewise, an overreliance on purely "rational" frameworks-common in game theory-can exacerbate these inequalities. If tech elites optimize only for short-term interests or market dominance, they risk creating suboptimal outcomes that harm societal well-being-much like a Prisoner's Dilemma, in which self-interested actions lead everyone astray.

Lessons from nuclear non-proliferation

The parallels to the nuclear age are not accidental. In the early Cold War, world leaders recognised that nuclear weapons posed an existential threat, motivating treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Although imperfect, the NPT regime has provided an institutional channel for monitoring, compliance, and the promotion of peaceful nuclear uses.

AI, too, carries existential dimensions-whether from fully autonomous weapons, large-scale manipulation through algorithmic propaganda, or poorly controlled superintelligence. If major actors pursue an "arms race" mentality, each will race to deploy ever more powerful AI systems without adequate safety checks. In this Hawk-versus-Dove dynamic, those who prefer cautious regulation (the Doves) risk being overtaken by more aggressive competitors (the Hawks).

History shows that unrestrained competition with no global oversight can lead to destabilising deployments, leaving the rest of humanity at risk.



ISHOO RATNA SRIVASTAV

A climate governance

Meanwhile, the IPCC provides another model. By assembling scientific findings from around the world and presenting them in plain language, the IPCC has anchored climate negotiations for decades.

Although climate action remains insufficient overall, the IPCC demonstrates the value of an inclusive, science-driven body that informs international treaties and inspires national policy.

AI would benefit from a similar body-an "IPCC for AI." Such an institution could pool data, consolidate research, and highlight both the benefits and dangers of emerging AI applications. It would not, by itself, end competition or guarantee ethically deployed AI. However, it could foster a shared understanding of risks, develop transparent benchmarks for testing AI systems, and guide negotiations on international standards.

The need for equitable participation

If we want to avoid replicating the inequities of past global governance efforts, we must ensure that developing nations and historically marginalised communities have a real seat at the table. In nuclear and climate frameworks, wealthier nations often dominate the agenda, while poorer nations struggle to make their voices heard. When it comes to AI, the stakes are just as high-

if not higher-because the technology permeates jobs, education, healthcare, and human rights.

Without equitable participation, we risk a scenario in which AI is developed primarily by and for affluent societies, leaving much of the world behind. Local languages, cultural contexts, and social needs might remain unaddressed. Worse, data could be harvested from vulnerable communities without meaningful consent, reinforcing a cycle of dependency and exploitation. Moreover, if large companies or governments leverage AI to automate industries, job losses may disproportionately impact regions lacking the resources to adapt or retrain.

Towards a global architecture

A robust AI governance framework would combine elements of the NPT (agreements limiting destructive uses and encouraging responsible technology sharing) with the IPCC's approach (transparent, collaborative scientific assessment). Governments, industry, civil society, and academia should unite in a formal institution that:

1. Sets global standards for data governance, algorithmic transparency, and ethical AI usage.
2. Establishes monitoring and verification protocols to identify dangerous or manipulative AI deployments.
3. Facilitates capacity-building so that lower-income countries can develop or adapt AI ethically, rather than become passive recipients of technology shaped elsewhere.
4. Promotes open research on AI safety, interpretability, and fairness, ensuring that breakthroughs are not locked behind corporate or governmental secrecy.

Conclusion

AI's immense promise should not blind us to its potential perils as AI has already transformed the planet's strategic and economic landscape. To avoid a future shaped solely by a powerful few, we must proactively craft a global governance system.

Such an institution can harness the best of AI innovation while safeguarding against misuse, exploitation, job losses, and catastrophic misjudgments.

The lesson from nuclear arms and climate policy is clear: when technology poses risks on a planetary scale, neither laissez-faire market forces nor unilateral national approaches will suffice. Instead, a cooperative international framework, informed by science and rooted in fairness, is our best hope.

(The writer is an officer of the Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers and is presently pursuing MPA at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. Views expressed are personal)

Purity and well-being: The true foundations of health

Health is Wealth is an old maxim that's relevant even today in this modern age. It's a fact that health is very essential to happy and natural living. And without good health, one does not have a feeling of stamina, suppleness and well-being. Today, nobody wants to be sick and physically distressed to spend their hard-earned money on doctors and medicines and that is why people all over the world have become more health conscious than they were a few years back.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease. Since there is an intimate connection and interaction between mind and body, most of the time a physical disease causes some symptoms of ailment in the mind and vice versa. And to treat it, there are many systems or parties as we call them. Usually, the doctors give medicine so that the symptoms of the disease disappear or, at most, the disease in its present form disappears. However, there are only very few systems that feel concerned with the eradication of the causes of the disease and with the restoration of health.

Various systems define 'disease' and its causes differently and their philosophy of health and disease is very different from that of the other systems. For example, the allopathic system of medicine is based on the philosophy that it is the virus that causes a disease and hence allopaths consider viruses as living microorganisms.

They also think that many diseases are caused by bacteria if not by viruses. So, their system attempts to kill these viruses or bacteria to help the body recover from their attack. But the hygienist school of thought or the nature curists say that viruses are not living entities and they consider viruses as the proteinaceous debris of spent cells that create a condition of intoxication, called toxemia or toxicosis. They say that which is called 'virus' is always dead, it never shows any signs of life, such as metabolism or control mechanisms.

As to the bacteria, they say that bacteria have always been with us because they are our symbiotic partners. So, according to nature curists, the real culprit is the accumulated toxic matter and hence they consider a disease not as a result of attack by viruses or bacteria but the result of the toxic matter, generated within or taken from outside, and also the result of the body attempting to throw this toxic material out of it.

So, according to them, all diseases are toxemia in origin and most diseases are a remedial effort or a struggle by the body to purify or repair itself. Now, if we consider 'disease' as the manifestation of a signal concerning the accumulated debris,

waste or toxic matter, then we will have to say that purification of the body is the mother of health. In this purification, 'purity of mind' plays a very great role because purification of the body requires fasting or less eating, avoiding toxic food, and having control over sensual pleasures that lead to waste of body-vitality.

It also means control over our behaviour and emotions, for these also lead to debility, innervation and unhealthy functioning of our nervous or glandular system. Even if we believe in the existence of viruses, bacteria or microorganisms as the causes of our disease, it would be hard to deny the fact that the main culprit is the accumulated toxic matter in our body because that provides a suitable breeding ground for the virus or the bacteria. In sum, it would be correct to say that spiritual and physical purity is the factor that promotes natural health.

Hence, without positive emotions of love, enthusiasm etc, one cannot have the vitality to maintain normal functions of all body parts because the negative emotions cause a great drain on one's vitality and debilitate the whole organism. It would therefore be proper to emphasise that purity is the main ingredient to achieve good health.

So, while doctors talk of holistic health, hypertension, psychosomatic diseases, and drug addiction, we wish that due attention is also paid to the turmoil caused by one's negative thoughts which is making the atmosphere of society polluted and unhealthy.

In conclusion, maintaining good health requires a holistic approach that encompasses physical, mental, and emotional well-being. While medical systems like allopathy focus on eliminating viruses and bacteria, natural hygiene emphasises detoxification and purification as the key to health. The debate over the causes of disease highlights the importance of keeping the body free from toxic accumulation. Furthermore, emotional health plays a crucial role in overall well-being, as negative thoughts and stress can weaken the body's vitality. True health is not just the absence of disease but a balance of mind, body, and spirit. Cultivating purity-both physically and mentally-through proper nutrition, controlled emotions, and positive thoughts is essential to achieving lasting wellness.

As society becomes more health-conscious, a shift toward preventive care and natural healing methods can help reduce dependency on medications and promote a healthier way of life. Ultimately, health is indeed wealth, and nurturing it should be a priority for all.

(The writer is spiritual teacher and a popular columnist. Views expressed are personal)



IN BRIEF



Barclays Bank invests Rs 2,300 cr in India ops

British lender Barclays on Tuesday announced a Rs 2,300-crore capital infusion into India operations. The infusion by the head office into Barclays Bank PLC India must be seen as a reaffirmation of its long-term commitment to one of the world's fastest-growing economies, as per a statement. The infusion will strengthen the bank's balance sheet and help grow its businesses across the investment and private banks, it said. It will enable the bank to expand its reach to a wider client base across corporate and financial sponsor clients and ultra-high-net-worth individuals in India, the statement added. The bank last injected Rs 3,000 crore in 2021, and the latest investment takes the bank's total invested capital to over Rs 12,400 crore. "India's economic potential continues to present attractive opportunities for Barclays to grow its business," its interim head of markets for Asia Pacific and country chief executive for India Jaideep Khanna said.



Rupee settles 26 paise higher at 86.55 against US dollar

The rupee appreciated for the third consecutive session and registered gains of 26 paise to close at 86.55 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, amid positive domestic equity markets and a weak American currency. Forex traders said the US dollar declined on disappointing economic data from the US. Moreover, the strength of the Asian currencies also supported the rupee. However, a surge in crude oil prices capped the gains. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee witnessed high volatility. It opened at 86.71 then touched the intraday high of 86.54 and the low of 86.78 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 86.55 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 26 paise from its previous closing level. On Monday, the rupee had appreciated 24 paise to close at 86.81 against the US dollar. On Thursday, the rupee surged 17 paise to settle at 87.05 against the US dollar. Forex market was closed on Friday on the occasion of Holi festival.



Kia India to hike vehicle prices up to 3 pc

Kia India on Tuesday said it will hike vehicle prices up to 3 per cent from April in order to offset the impact of rising input costs. The price hike, effective from April 1, 2025, is primarily due to rising commodity prices and escalating supply chain-related costs, the automaker said in a statement. "As a brand committed to providing exceptional value and quality to our customers, we have always strived to offer the best vehicles at competitive prices," Kia India Senior Vice President (Sales and Marketing) Hardeep Singh Brar said. However, due to the rising costs of commodities and input materials, the automaker will be increasing up to 3 per cent price across all models, effective from April 1, he added. "While we understand that price adjustments can be challenging, this decision has been made to ensure we can continue delivering the high-quality, technologically advanced vehicles that our customers expect from Kia," Brar said.

RBI and Bank of Mauritius sign pact on use of local currencies

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank and the Bank of Mauritius (BOM) have signed a pact for establishing a framework to promote the use of the Indian Rupee and the Mauritian Rupee (MUR) for cross-border transactions. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra and BOM Governor Rama Krishna Sithanen G C S K, the central bank said in a statement on Tuesday.

The MoU documents were exchanged in Port Louis, Mauritius in the presence of the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Mauritius Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, it said.

The RBI said the MoU aims to promote the use of INR and MUR in bilateral trade. The MoU covers all current account transactions and permissible capital account transactions as agreed upon by both the countries.

The framework would

enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn, would enable the development of a market in the INR-MUR pair.

Use of local currencies would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions.



"This collaboration marks a key milestone in strengthening bilateral cooperation between RBI and BOM," RBI said.

Use of local currencies in bilateral transactions will eventually contribute to promoting trade between India and Mauritius as well as deepening financial integration and strengthen the historical, cultural, and economic relations between India and Mauritius.

Look forward to ink FTA with India in 60 days

Says New Zealand Prime Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon on Tuesday said he looks forward to signing a free trade agreement with India in 60 days, a move which is expected to increase bilateral trade by 10 times over ten years.

After a gap of about ten years, India and New Zealand on Sunday announced resumption of negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement to boost economic ties.

The New Zealand Prime Minister is here on a four-day visit from March 16.

"Let's drive this relationship forward, and I look forward to Prime Minister Modi signing that agreement in 60 days time," Luxon said while addressing the India-New Zealand Economic Summit organised by industry body FICCI.

According to trade experts, the tricky point in the talks would be duty concessions on agri products like apple, kiwi, dairy, and wine.

"I can tell you that together, there's every possibility of achieving that 10x growth in the next 10 years," Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said.



"...if we work in the spirit of complimentary economies ... there is hardly anything on which we compete with each other, and those few areas of sensitivity we can very easily navigate or respect each other given the different levels of development and different levels of prosperity that each country has today," Goyal said.

On dairy being a sticking point between the two nations, New Zealand Trade Minister Todd McClay said, "I think there are many opportunities between us to grow trade. One of the most important things we're going to do is respect our negotiators."

When asked about the ongoing trade talks with vari-

ous countries including the US, Goyal said, "Every engagement stands on its own legs, and every engagement will come up with good results in the interests of India, in the interest of the people and businesses of India, and likewise, our partner."

Responding to the New Zealand prime minister's 60-day FTA timeline comment, Goyal remarked, "We are very aspirational. I don't think any of you imagine that we could do the UAE agreement in 90 days. So we are an aspirational two friends working together in a spirit of cooperation, respecting each other's sensitivities, and we will be aspiring to do this equally fast."

Sensex jumps over 1,100 points

Reclaims 75k-mark on firm global markets

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The BSE benchmark index Sensex jumped 1,131 points to revisit the 75,000 level on Tuesday, and the NSE Nifty surged 1.45 per cent, tracking a bullish trend in global equities and intense buying in market majors ICICI Bank, L&T and M&M counters.

Besides, lower crude oil prices in the international markets and a weak dollar against major currencies overseas also bolstered sentiment, traders said.

Rising for the second day on the trot, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,131.31 points or 1.53 per cent to settle at 75,301.26. During the day, it soared 1,215.81 points or 1.63 per cent to 75,385.76.

As many as 2,815 stocks advanced while 1,221 declined and 123 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The NSE Nifty surged 325.55 points or 1.45 per cent to 22,834.30.

Buoyancy across global equities boosted the confidence of local investors, which translated into value buying across the sectors. As markets were in a bearish mode over the past few weeks and valuations had become a bit attractive, investors seized opportu-



nity in the beaten-down sectors.

In the Sensex pack, Zomato emerged as the biggest gainer with over 7 per cent jump, followed by ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Asian Paints, Titan, Kotak Mahindra Bank and State Bank of India were among the gainers.

In contrast, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel, Tech Mahindra and Reliance Industries were the laggards.

The BSE small-cap gauge soared 2.73 per cent, and the midcap index jumped 2.10 per cent.

All BSE sectoral indices ended higher, where realty surged 2.95 per cent, industrials (2.79 per cent), consumer

discretionary (2.76 per cent), capital goods (2.44 per cent), auto (2.42 per cent), power (2.27 per cent), financial services (2.09 per cent) and bankex (1.98 per cent).

Among Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory.

European equity markets were trading with gains. US markets ended higher on Monday.

"The benchmarks witnessed a strong recovery, driven by favourable global trends and domestic tailwinds. Improved retail sales data from the US and China boosted investor confidence, while mid and small-cap stocks outperformed, with all major sectors registering gains."

Alphabet to buy cybersecurity startup Wiz for USD 32 billion

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Google owner Alphabet will buy cybersecurity startup Wiz for USD 32 billion.

The all-cash deal is set to boost Alphabet's profile in the cloud computing market, a space currently led by Amazon and Microsoft. Once the transaction is closed, the company says Wiz will join Google Cloud.

"Today, businesses and governments that run in the cloud are looking for even stronger security solutions, and greater choice in cloud computing providers," Google CEO Sundar Pichai said in a statement Tuesday — adding that Google Cloud and Wiz will "turbocharge improved cloud security and the ability to use multiple clouds" together.

Wiz, a four-year-old startup headquartered in New York, makes security tools designed to shield the information stored in remote data centres from intruders.



Gold continues record run, breaches Rs 91k level

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed by Rs 500 to hit another record high of Rs 91,250 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday driven by sustained buying by stockists and retailers amid a strong trend overseas, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

On Monday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity rallied by Rs 1,300 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 90,750 per 10 grams.

The yellow metal of 99.5 per cent purity advanced by Rs 450 to hit a lifetime high of Rs 90,800 per 10 grams against the previous close of

Rs 90,350 per 10 grams. "Gold extended gains on Tuesday and touched a fresh record high in the international market as well as the domestic market."

However, silver prices traded flat at Rs 1,02,500 per kg, also a historic high.

Meanwhile, gold futures jumped by Rs 649 or 0.73 per cent to establish a fresh peak of Rs 88,672 in the afternoon trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange.

On the global front, spot gold increased to hit a fresh high of USD 3,028.49 per ounce. Similarly, Comex gold futures quoted higher to hit a record peak of USD 3,037.26 per ounce.

LIC to buy stake in a health insurer before March 31: CEO

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Life insurance behemoth LIC is confident of buying a stake in a health insurer in the next two weeks, its chief executive Siddhartha Mohanty said on Tuesday. Without identifying the company it will be buying a stake in, Mohanty said the state-owned company is in final stage of talks and hoped that a deal gets announced before March 31.

"It is a natural choice for LIC to be in health insurance, dis-

ussion is going on at final stage," he told reporters on the sidelines of the GCA25 event here. Mohanty said LIC will not buy a controlling stake of 51 per cent or more in the target company and the exact quantum of the stake buy depends on factors like the decision of LIC board and valuations.

At present, life insurance companies are not allowed to offer health covers which include covering up hospitalization and other expenses for



the insured. There was a suggestion for a composite licence for insurers, but no announcement was made in this regard in the Union Budget.

As per some media reports, LIC is said to be eyeing a stake

in ManipalCigna in a deal pegged at Rs 4,000 crore.

In a regulatory filing issued later, the Corporation said it is in advanced talks to pick up a substantial stake in a "stand-alone" health insurer and no binding agreements have been signed so far. "The execution and ultimate consummation of the deal is subject to various factors, including approval of the Board, regulatory approvals and other approvals, if any, before executing any binding agreements."

Singapore, India exploring pact on green digital shipping corridor

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore and India are exploring signing of a Letter of Intent (LoI) for a green digital shipping corridor (GDSC), which is expected to link the Indian marine sector to the global network.

The letter of intent is expected to be signed during shipping minister Sarbananda Sonowal's visit to Singapore next week.

Sonowal, Minister of Port, Shipping and Waterways, along with a delegation, is expected to attend the Singapore Maritime Week

(SMW), which is being held here from March 24 to 28.

"We are thinking of establishing a letter of intent with India as a start. It is something we are still working towards," said Teo Eng Dih, chief executive of Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), which is hosting the week-long maritime event.

The LoI is expected to be signed during SMW itself, but details are yet to be confirmed, MPA added.

Teo noted India is keen to export green fuel including biofuels to the region as well



The GDSC will link the Indian maritime sector to the global network through the Singapore maritime ecosystem, which has been rated as one of the largest shipping and marine trade hubs in the world, according to industry observers. The SMW will also host maritime ministers from

as sharing digital expertise. The GDSC will link the Indian maritime sector to the global network through

the Singapore maritime ecosystem, which has been rated as one of the largest shipping and marine trade

hubs in the world, according to industry observers. The SMW will also host maritime ministers from

Estonia, France, Portugal, Norway and the Netherlands.

The Indian minister's visit will be supported by Indian ports, shipyards and companies setting up an 'India Pavilion' at the exhibition.

The pavilion participants are: Indian Ports Association, Cochin Shipyard, Indian Maritime University, Shipyards Association of India, Swan Defence and Heavy Industries, Chowgule Shipyard, Garden Reach Shipyards and Engineers, San Marine Shipyard, Synergy Ship Builders and L&T Shipyard, according to MPA.

Majority of Indians are long-term investors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Majority of Indians are long-term investors as only 2 per cent actively trade in derivatives out of the 110 million market participants, National Stock Exchange (NSE) MD and CEO Ashish Kumar Chauhan has said.

This suggests the growing culture of disciplined, sustainable investment in the country.

"Out of 110 million market participants, only 2 per cent actively trade in derivatives. The majority are committed to long-term investing," he stated.

At a recent panel discussion in Singapore, he dispelled the notion that India's stock market is driven primarily by speculative trading.

According to a statement issued by the exchange, Chauhan provided deep insights into the evolving financial landscape, the rise of technology-driven capitalism, and the increasing complexities of global markets.

He redefined conventional perspectives on financial stability, asserting that volatility is not a weakness but an inherent feature of economic progress.

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF T.G. LIMITED
E-Procurement/Open Tender Paper Notification
RRZ - 19/2024-25
Tenders are invited from eligible contractors for tender Specification No. 38B/2024-25 for Bifurcation of 11kV Golden tulip feeder in Cybercity Circle of CE/CP/RR Zone. For further details regarding detailed notification, specification and digital certificate please visit www.tender.telangana.gov.in.
Sd/- Chief Engineer, Operation, Rangas
Reddy Zone, KPHB Colony, Hyderabad.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
e-PROCUREMENT SHORT TENDER NOTICE
NIT No: 76/SE (KZ)/GHMCTA/2024 -2025, Date: 18/03/2025
No. of Works: Organizing of the GHMC Sports Meet for Print & Electronic Media & Employees/ Staff of GHMC and (150) GHMC Corporators Sports Meet, Bid Submission Start Date: 20/03/2025 @ 03.00 P.M., Bid Submission Closing Date: 24/03/2025 @ 03.00 P.M. Address: Officer Cell No.: SE (KZ), GHMC, Phone No. 8790522144. Further details can be seen at e-procurement@www.eprocurement.gov.in
Sd/- Superintending Engineer (KZ)
GHMC

Training in an 'Akhada' gave me a warrior physique, not just muscles

In a candid conversation with *The Pioneer*, Ankit Sharma opens up about his transformative journey portraying Santaji Gorpade in *Chhaava* and dives deep into the intense physical and mental preparation he underwent, opting for traditional Indian training methods over modern gyms to capture the essence of a warrior

TEJAL SINHA
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Ankit Sharma, known for his dedication and versatility, takes on the role of Santaji Gorpade in *Chhaava*, a film based on the life of the legendary warrior. In this exclusive interview, Ankit shares his journey into portraying one of history's greatest warriors, his preparation for the role and the challenges he faced while embodying Santaji Gorpade's strength and loyalty. Ankit recalls his initial reaction when he was approached for the role, revealing that he had always admired Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj since childhood. "I have admired Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj since childhood and he has always been my idol," he says. Initially, Ankit auditioned for the role of Dhanaji Maharaj, but fate led him to portray Santaji Gorpade. "It was an incredible feeling, a moment of pure joy," he recalls. This unexpected turn of events allowed him to step into the shoes of a warrior whose loyalty and bravery were unparalleled in Indian history. To better understand his character, Ankit turned to Shivaji Sawant's novel *Chhaava*, the inspiration behind the film. He explains how this book played a crucial role in shaping his understanding of Santaji Gorpade. "Through this journey, I got to learn a lot about my character, the Ghorpade family lineage, and the life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj. It was a deeply enriching experience," he reflects. Taking on the role of such a legendary figure required extensive mental and physical preparation. Rather than focusing on modern gym training, Ankit chose to immerse himself in traditional Indian workout

techniques to prepare for the role. He trained in an akhada, a traditional Indian gym where warriors would train using exercises that date back centuries. "Instead of going to the gym, the choice was made to train in an akhada, following traditional Indian exercises. This helped in understanding how people trained in earlier times before modern gyms existed," Ankit shares. The focus of this training was on building a broader physique through exercises like repetitive movements and training with natural elements such as mud, unlike the muscle definition-focused approach of modern gyms. Ankit's commitment to physical transformation was no easy feat. "Indian-style training builds a broader physique. It involves exercises like sitting, standing, and repetitive movements, shaping the body using the earth itself—training with mud," he explains. This shift in his workout routine posed certain challenges, but Ankit embraced it wholeheartedly, recognising that it was essential to embody the warrior spirit of Santaji Gorpade.

In addition to physical preparation, Ankit had to master the skills of sword fighting and horse riding to authentically portray his character. The challenges were compounded by the monsoon season, which added an element of fear and danger to the intense training sessions. "The shoot happened during monsoon and it lasted for three months. We followed the traditional Maharashtrian style of sword fighting and horse riding continues even now with practice in different techniques such as riding fast, riding slow, wielding a sword in one hand, and holding a shield in the other," he says. One particular memory stands out for him: "During the rainy season, we used to go horse riding, but I always felt scared. The area was full of snakes, which made me even more nervous. Our training teacher would often mention that a snake had appeared the previous day, which only added to my fear. Even while riding the horse, I couldn't shake off the feeling of unease. Despite the fear, it was still a fun experience." Sword fighting was another skill that pushed Ankit to his limits. He recalls a particularly terrifying incident: "Once during training, a talwar almost hit my eye. In that moment, my whole life flashed before me. It was a terrifying experience that made me realise the importance of

staying fully conscious and aware, especially while shooting or performing any scene." While physical training was intense, the emotional bond formed with his fellow cast members was just as significant. Ankit had the opportunity to

collaborate with Vicky Kaushal, and he speaks highly of the experience. "It was a very good experience. He was extremely cooperative and supportive. There was a lot of fun on set, but everyone was serious when needed. When he arrived in costume and makeup, people started calling him 'Raazi' and the name stuck," Ankit recalls with a smile. He mentions Vicky's discipline as well, stating, "He would hit the gym at 4 or 5 AM, working out in his vanity. Others would just be waking up and stepping out of their vans, while music blasting from his vanity signaled that he was already there." Throughout the shoot, he was fortunate enough to work with seasoned actors like Ashutosh Rana and Vineet Kumar, who offered valuable lessons. "I spoke to Ashutosh sir the most. We used to sit together for hours, and I call him Guruji. Many people do, but for me, it holds a special meaning," Ankit shares. Their conversations, which covered topics from acting to spirituality and politics, helped Ankit deepen his understanding of his craft. He also sought advice from Vineet Kumar, a doctor, who offered guidance on various matters. "Vineet Bhai is a doctor, so I often sought his advice on various matters. He gave me a lot of useful suggestions, which I truly appreciated." Despite the long shooting period, his passion for the project never wavered. "The set used to be incredibly beautiful. On days when there was no shoot, I would wonder why there was a break and wish we were filming instead," he admits. His love for the set and the environment, along with the camaraderie of his fellow actors and crew members, kept him motivated.

Playing a historical figure like Santaji Gorpade left a lasting impact on Ankit, especially in terms of understanding loyalty. "The one thing that touched me was the loyalty of Santaji Gorpade. He dedicated his entire life to Shivaji and Sambhaji. Playing this character made me realize how important loyalty is," he reflects. Looking ahead, Ankit shares his enthusiasm for playing more historical roles and real-life figures. "I enjoy playing historical characters. They feel comfortable to me, and I find them fascinating. But beyond historical roles, I would also love to portray real people in biographical films—understanding someone's life and preparing accordingly for the character excites me," he says. Ankit is also excited about his upcoming projects, including Kannada film titled *Toxic* with Yash Raj. "The shooting for *Toxic* is happening simultaneously, and there is another project that is almost finalized, but I can't reveal details about it just yet," he teases.



Effortless waves and slays for every occasion

Gen Z has redefined beauty standards with a bold, authentic approach that celebrates individuality. When it comes to hair, it's all about effortless styles that speak volumes without trying too hard. Effortless waves and versatile looks are at the forefront, offering a chic, low-maintenance vibe that can slay any occasion.

THE MAGIC OF EFFORTLESS WAVES

Effortless waves are the crown jewel of Gen Z hairstyles. They exude a carefree, beachy vibe while maintaining a polished edge. The key is to strike a balance between natural texture and subtle definition. You don't need to spend hours with a curling iron—loose braids left overnight, a quick twist-and-flat-iron technique, or even scrunching damp hair with a lightweight mousse can achieve that perfect wave.

SLAY FOR EVERY OCCASION

Casual days: Go for tousled waves with a middle part for an easy, laid-back look. Add a few hair clips or a colorful scrunchie for a playful touch.

Work or school: Sleek, soft waves paired with a half-up bun create a balanced, sophisticated style. It keeps hair off your face while showcasing volume and texture.

Night out: Amp up the drama with defined waves and a side part. Add some shine serum for a glossy finish and you're ready to turn heads.

Special occasions: Elegant, brushed-out waves with subtle accessories like pearl pins or delicate headbands offer a timeless, graceful look.

PRO TIPS FOR MAINTAINING THE LOOK

1. Hydration is key: Healthy hair holds styles better. Use moisturising masks regularly.

2. Less is more: Avoid over-styling. Embrace your natural texture.

3. Protect your hair: Heat protectant sprays are non-negotiable when using hot tools.

4. Gen Z's hair mantra is clear: Effortless, authentic and always ready to slay. Whether you're chilling at home, acing a presentation, or hitting the town, these styles ensure your hair game stays strong.

(The author, Azeem Qamar, is a Hair Expert at Brazil Protein.)

Why streetwear is thriving in Hyderabad!



PNS/HYDERABAD

Culture Pay allows customers to build collections through affordable EMIs, such as Yeezys at Rs 699 monthly or Jordans at Rs 499, without compromising authenticity. Our physical stores, including Hyderabad, create immersive experiences where customers interact with products that were previously only available online. We're not making luxury less exclusive—we're removing artificial barriers.

Although Hyderabad has a long history of fine craftsmanship, it hasn't historically been thought of as a center for streetwear. Why did you decide to expand to Hyderabad?

Despite not having a physical location, Hyderabad had one of the highest per-order values on the platform, indicating a sophisticated but underserved market. Hyderabadis understand quality and invest in it and witnessing young professionals fusing global streetwear trends with traditional aesthetic sensibilities to create something distinctively Hyderabad. The auction results confirmed this: expensive items found eager buyers, demonstrating that Hyderabad isn't just ready for luxury streetwear—it's hungry for it!

How does it balance the seemingly opposing consumer mindsets of luxury fashion, which is frequently about classic investment pieces and streetwear?

Because we believe that these attitudes are complementary rather than antagonistic, we have designed it to support them. The platform provides classic luxury investments as well as limited-drop hype releases. The data reveals Gen Z customers genuinely blend both approaches—they'll invest in a vintage Rolex while seeking the latest Travis Scott collaboration. The SourceX technology offers historical pricing information, authenticity verification and potential appreciation forecasts to assist customers in making well-informed decisions. This gives consumers the ability to carefully approach every purchase, whether it be as a long-term investment or a cultural moment.

Counterfeiting is a common problem in the resale and streetwear market. How does an AI-powered verification system operate?

The in-house AI verification system compares more than 200 data points on each product, such as material textures and stitch patterns, to our database of verified products using computer vision. Every seller is subjected to stringent KYC verification and we keep an extensive database of known distributors of counterfeit goods. With the five-step verification badge system, which is visible to all users, we have established transparency beyond technology and we guarantee the authenticity of every pur-

chase with a money-back guarantee. Building trust requires more than simply verification; it also requires continuously providing genuine goods.

The auction during the Hyderabad launch saw frenzied bidding for sneakers, watches and collectibles. Do you see this format as a sustainable and increasing aspect of luxury retail in India?

The core elements of luxury culture—exclusivity, camaraderie and shared passion—are tapped into via auctions. The enthusiasm during the Hyderabad auction proved that this format is quite popular in India! For rare items, we incorporated time-limited in-app auctions, setting up appointment-based bidding in our physical stores and designing "Dutch auction" forms in which prices decrease until an item is claimed. While guaranteeing fair market value, these arrangements generate excitement. In the end, auctions turn transactions into unforgettable experiences, which is precisely what emerging luxury buyers look for in brands.

Previously unimaginable for India's sneaker and streetwear industry, the event featured an auction of a Rs 1.2 crore Patek Philippe and a Rs 22 lakh Rolex Hulk. What can we infer from these figures on the changing attitudes of Indian luxury buyers?

These numbers show that Indians' perceptions of luxury purchases have fundamentally changed from ostentatious consumption to thoughtful collecting. Luxury buyers today conduct in-depth research, comprehend the values of the global market and view purchases as both an investment and a passion. Authenticity is more important to them than just brand names and quality is more important than quantity. Additionally, the high bidding shows that domestic luxury platforms are becoming more and more trusted. Because Indian customers trust authentication procedures and value the community experience we offer around these pur-

chases, they no longer feel pressured to purchase expensive goods overseas.

High-profile guests at the event included Rana Daggubati, Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala. How important is celebrity affiliation?

Paid endorsements are not as important to us as real ties. At our debut, the celebrities were real fans and clients who value what we're creating! Indian celebrities are increasingly influencing the fashion of high-end streetwear and local film industries are creating their own unique aesthetics. We're witnessing the emergence of fascinating partnerships between foreign businesses and Indian celebrities, producing goods that appeal to consumers locally while remaining globally competitive. In order to create an ecosystem where Indian superstars may create global trends rather than merely follow them, the website gives these influencers a safe place to interact with fans and possibly start their own collections.

Where does Culture Circle proceed from here?

We're deliberately expanding to four additional stores across important Indian metros within 12 months while simultaneously building our overseas presence, starting with our UAE beta that will soon go public. The future isn't online vs offline—it's seamless integration between digital and physical. Through augmented reality, we are creating technology that enables customers to virtually try on rare items before scheduling in-store fittings. Through community features, collectors will be able to interact with other enthusiasts who share their interests and virtually display their collections. With a revenue run rate of Rs 120 crore by FY25, we hope to make it India's first genuinely international luxury marketplace.

With Culture Circle leading the way and providing exclusive access to high-end labels like Dior, Fendi, Prada, Gucci and Jacquemus, as well as brands like Nike, Yeezy, Jordans and Dunk Low, the event cemented Hyderabad's status as a hub for luxury fashion and hype sneakers! Stay tuned.



How do you strike a balance between your platform's promised accessibility and the exclusivity of high-end fashion?

We've redefined luxury accessibility by connecting buyers with verified global sellers through our tech-driven supply chain, which eliminates unnecessary markups while maintaining product rarity.

what's brewing?

Zouk x Rhea Kapoor

What happens when the effortless style of Rhea Kapoor meets the proudly Indian craftsmanship of Zouk? A bag collection that redefines modern elegance, celebrating women who embrace tradition and modernity with equal ease. It has joined forces with renowned stylist, filmmaker and producer Rhea Kapoor to launch a stunning collection of bags designed for the modern Indian woman. This exclusive collaboration blends Rhea Kapoor's signature style with Zouk's mastery of design and craftsmanship, resulting in a collection that is versatile, stylish and dynamic—just like the women it's designed for.

everything in between. **BOMBAY: HEARTBEAT OF THIS COLLECTION**
The prints and patterns in this collection draw inspiration from Bombay—the city that shaped Rhea Kapoor. From its rich cultural tapes-

try to its timeless elegance, every design reflects the energy, diversity and spirit of the city. Whether it's the effortless charm of the city skylines or the endless expanse of the Arabian Sea, these bags tell a story—of a city that never sleeps and a woman who never stops.

Speaking about the collection, Rhea Kapoor said: "For me, fashion is about effortless confidence. Bombay has shaped my style—it's bold, timeless, and always evolving. With Zouk, I wanted to create something inspired by it, while still preserving quintessential Zouk DNA for its customers."

Disha Singh, Founder of Zouk, added: "We design for the modern Indian woman—bold, versatile and unstoppable. Collaborating with Rhea Kapoor was a natural fit, as she embodies these very qualities. This collection is more than just fashion; it's a statement of empowerment, style and individuality."

Discover the Zouk x Rhea Kapoor Collection—now available online at zouk.co.in, at Zouk's offline stores and across its key retail partners.



The beta release of "HOIST" was successfully launched by MMediaWorks and Arte Almanac at Jubilee Hills. This new spot is quickly becoming the go-to destination for pocket-friendly pricing, making it the perfect place for a fun and affordable kitty party in the heart of the city.

PARTY

TRIBUTE TO WOMEN OF TODAY
Every woman plays multiple roles—she is bold, ambitious, independent and deeply connected to her roots. The collection embodies this very essence, offering functional yet fashion-forward bags that transition effortlessly from day to night, work to play and



Socialite Ananya A Simlai formally inaugurated the 10-day Handloom India Expo 2025 at Kalinga Cultural Hall, Road No. 12, Banjara Hills. The event, organised by Jagdishwar Hastkala, showcases a wide variety of handloom products and crafts. The expo will be open to visitors until 27th March 2025 from 9 am to 9 pm, offering a unique opportunity to explore and celebrate the rich heritage of Indian handlooms.

Photos by - SV Chary

PAWWA, a trailblazer in the food and beverage sector, has introduced a unique dining experience to Hyderabad with the launch of The Quarter Culture. This innovative concept allows diners to customize their meal portions, offering quarter, half and full sizes to cater to various appetites.



Celebrating the sacred month of Ramadan, Dr. Lion Kiron, CEO of Suchirindia, graciously hosted a splendid iftar gathering at Radisson Blu Hotel. This annual tradition brought together esteemed guests from various social and political circles including actor Syed Sohel, Mohd. Khaleequr Rahman, National Coordinator of AICC, and several prominent political figures.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



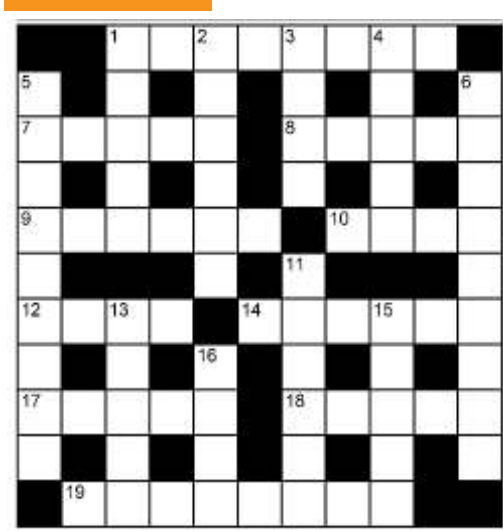
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



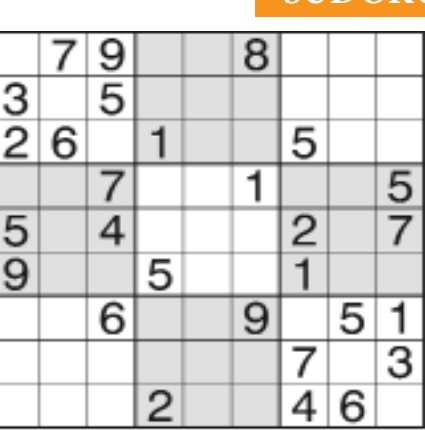
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution
3 7 2 6 9 8 1 4 5
1 9 4 5 2 3 7 6 8
5 6 8 1 7 4 2 3 9
7 4 6 8 3 1 5 9 2
8 5 1 2 4 9 3 7 6
9 2 3 7 6 5 8 1 4
4 8 5 9 1 7 6 2 3
2 1 9 3 5 6 4 8 7
6 3 7 4 8 2 9 5 1

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

ACROSS

- 1 Graveyard
- 7 In the lead
- 8 Shelf
- 9 Pay attention
- 10 Threesome
- 12 Yours and mine
- 14 An old fortified building
- 17 Racket
- 18 Mirror reflection
- 19 A jewellery item
- 5 A type of pen
- 6 Got well again
- 11 Liquid always in your mouth
- 13 Lift
- 15 To bother or annoy someone for fun
- 16 Feeble

DOWN

- 1 A game played on a squared board
- 2 Infuriate
- 3 Story
- 4 Jockey



GINGER MEGGS



I BELIEVE IN SPONTANEOUS ACTING, RATHER PREPARE FOR IT: AADI SAIKUMAR

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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Making his comeback after a two-year break, Aadi Saikumar will next be seen in the upcoming cop-film *Shanmukha*, which also stars Avika Gor. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, he gets candid and shares insights about the film, comparisons with his father's cop films and more

After a two-year hiatus, Aadi Saikumar is back with *Shanmukha*, a supernatural murder mystery where he plays a cop navigating a gripping investigation with a devotional twist. Set for release on March 21, the film marks his return to the big screen with a content-driven approach. In this exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Aadi opens up about his role, working alongside Avika Gor, comparisons with his father Saikumar's legendary cop portrayals, and his commitment to choosing strong scripts.

He also discusses his fitness routine, future projects, and why he believes in spontaneous acting over method preparation.

"I am playing a cop in this one," Aadi begins, adding that his previous cop role in *CSI Sanatan* didn't perform well at the box office. However, *Shanmukha* brings a fresh twist by incorporating

supernatural and devotional elements.

Aadi revealed that he took his time to select the right script. "I believe in strong content. That's the key to a film's success. With *Shanmukha*, we have focused entirely on the story," he said. Unlike traditional commercial films, this one has only one song. "We didn't want to force songs into the narrative," he explained.

Describing the film, he said, "It's a serious murder mystery that I investigate. Blending supernatural elements with a social drama isn't easy, but those who've watched it say they liked the combination. It's a risky film, but I'm confident it will mark my comeback."

Despite mixed theatrical success, Aadi's films have performed well digitally. "Some of my films may not have done well in theaters, but they've found a strong audience on OTT platforms," he noted.

Aadi's father, Saikumar, is renowned for his powerful dialogues in police-centric films, particularly his iconic role as Agni in *Police Story*. Naturally, the question arises—does *Shanmukha* have any impactful dialogues?

"There are a couple of strong dialogues, but they aren't as intense as my father's," Aadi admitted.

When it comes to choosing scripts, Aadi makes independent decisions but values his father's input. "My dad is busy with several films and is considered a lucky charm for many filmmakers. I personally decide on my scripts, but I do listen to his suggestions,"



he said. Aadi has no plans for another hiatus. "I'm currently working on three to four films. *Shambhala* is one of them, a content-driven film. Then there's *Sub Inspector Yugandhar*, another cop-based story. After this, I want to take a break from cop roles," he shared. He added, "I've done quite a few cop films, so I want to explore different genres. I've signed a romantic comedy with director Sattibabu, which will be full of entertainment. This year, I plan to release at least two to three films."

Discussing the evolving audience preferences, Aadi emphasised the importance of strong content. "Look at *Court*, which became a massive hit recently. If it had been released two or three years ago, it might not have had the same impact. Timing is crucial," he explained. He also stressed the need for aggressive promotion. "Marketing a film before its release is essential. You have to take the film to the audience and create buzz," he said.

When asked about his acting approach, Aadi said he prefers spontaneity over excessive preparation. "I ask the director for my character's backstory, but I believe in spontaneous acting rather than over-preparing. If I prepare too much, it becomes method acting. I enjoy living in the moment," he explained.

For his cop role in *Shanmukha*, he took inspiration from Suriya's performances. "I played a commando in *Operation Goldfish* and watched some of Suriya's films to understand his approach. I also took tips from my father, who is known for his cop roles," he added.

Aadi expressed his admiration for his co-star Avika Gor. "She is very talented. We were supposed to work together earlier, but it didn't happen. Now, with *Shanmukha*, we finally got the chance. Her role is very interesting and she performed exceptionally well," he said.

Aadi and his father previously worked together in *Chuttalabbayi*, which performed well. He hinted at another collaboration. "Dad is busy with multiple projects, but we are planning to work together on a fantasy film soon. We'll announce the details shortly," he revealed. With his family's strong connections to Kannada cinema, Aadi was asked about his Kannada debut. "Right now, I'm tied up with multiple Telugu projects, but I will definitely make my Kannada debut soon. My cousin, Ravi Shankar's son, is making his debut there and Ravi Basrur is composing music for it. He's also working on *Shanmukha* and his background score will be one of the film's highlights," Aadi said. Although Aadi has previously worked in web series, he isn't keen on them at the moment. "I'm currently focused on films. If a big platform like Amazon or Netflix approaches me, I'll consider it. But I don't want to do web series for smaller platforms," he clarified.

On maintaining fitness, Aadi shared that he works out for at least an hour daily. "I'm continuously working, I do an hour in the morning. Otherwise, I hit the gym in the evening too," he said. Given the amount of action he's doing in his films, fitness has become crucial. "My father always emphasises the importance of staying fit," he concluded.



Mohan Babu's grand b'day celebrations planned in Tirupati

Senior and versatile actor Manchu Mohan Babu is set to celebrate his 73rd birthday in a grand manner at his university today. On this special occasion, his son, Vishnu Manchu, has planned an extravagant event in Tirupati.

Mohan Babu, who is both acting in and producing the prestigious film *Kannappa*, scheduled to release on April 25, will have a special promotional video dedicated to his role as Mahadeva Shastri, which will be unveiled on his birthday. The veteran actor began his cinematic journey in 1975, but it was during the late 1970s through the early 1990s that he redefined the portrayal of villains in Indian cinema. Known for his versatility and commanding screen presence, he revolutionised the antagonist's role, making him one of the most sought-after villains of that era. While his debut as a lead actor was in *Swargam Narakam* (1978), it was his impactful negative roles that solidified his status as one of the industry's most formidable actors.

After excelling in negative roles, Mohan Babu transitioned into lead roles with blockbuster films like *Assembly Rowdy*, *Alludu Garu*, *Allari Mogudu* and several others. His 1995 hit *Peddarayudu* became a massive success, cementing his status as a superstar. In this film, he played a dual role, while his close friend Rajinikanth made a special appearance.

Mohan Babu also established himself as a

producer, debuting with *Prathigna* in 1981. Over the years, he has backed several acclaimed films, with *Kannappa* being his latest and most ambitious project.

Beyond films, Mohan Babu has made significant contributions to education. In 1992, he founded the Sri Vidyanikethan Educational Trust to provide quality education to students, irrespective of their socio-economic background. Furthering his commitment to education, he inaugurated Mohan Babu University in 2022, marking another milestone in his legacy.

In recognition of his contributions to the arts, he was honored with the Padma Shri in 2007, one of India's highest civilian awards. With 75 films under his belt as a producer, Mohan Babu holds the distinction of being one of the few actor-turned-producers in Indian cinema to achieve such a remarkable feat. His impact as an actor, producer and philanthropist continues to shape the industry.



THAMAN REVAMPS THE RAJA SAAB MUSIC, DISCARDS INITIAL TRACKS

In a surprising move, music director S. Thaman has scrapped all the songs he initially composed for *The Raja Saab*, the highly anticipated Prabhas-starrer directed by Maruthi.

Speaking in a latest interview, Thaman revealed that although he had composed the songs when the film started, he later decided to revamp the entire soundtrack. He is now working on fresh compositions that align better with the film's evolving narrative and energy. Providing an update, Thaman stated that *The Raja Saab* is almost complete, except for the songs. He also revealed that the movie will feature a grand introduction song for Prabhas, along with several other tracks. Thaman is determined to deliver a chartbuster album, aiming to replicate the musical success of Prabhas's hit film *Mirchi*. Interestingly, *The Raja Saab* has been in production for a long time, and despite nearing completion, the makers have yet to announce a release date. Now, with Thaman completely reworking the soundtrack, the film's release could be further delayed.



Aditya 369 to re-release on Apr 11

Re-releasing classic films has become a significant trend in Tollywood, starting with Mahesh Babu's *Pokiri* in 2022. Since then, several iconic films have returned to the big screen, and now, one of Indian cinema's finest sci-fi classics, *Aditya 369*, starring Nandamuri Balakrishna, is set for a grand re-release on April 11. The film's success is credited to the visionary direction of Singeetam Srinivasa Rao and the production efforts of Sivalenka Krishna Prasad. Legendary singer SP Balasubrahmanyam served as the film's presenter.

Widely recognized for its groundbreaking storytelling and technical brilliance, *Aditya 369* received both critical acclaim and audience appreciation worldwide upon its original release. Taking audiences back to the nostalgic era of 90s classics, this sci-fi gem is now digitally remastered in 4K resolution with upgraded 5.1 surround sound for an enhanced cinematic experience.

"Even after 34 years, the film continues to enjoy immense popularity. At the time of its release, *Aditya 369* was considered a futuristic and visionary project and even today, it resonates with audiences," said producer Krishna Prasad. He praised Balakrishna for his dual roles as Sri Krishnadevaraya and Krishna Kumar, commending his majestic screen presence and royal demeanor. "This film stands as a testament to the brilliance of Singeetam Srinivasa Rao as both a storyteller and a director," the producer added.

Adding to its excellence, *Aditya 369* features music composed by Ilaiyaraaja, dialogues penned by Jandhyala, and the remarkable work of three legendary cinematographers—PC Sreeram, VSR Swamy and Kabir Lal.

ALLARI NARESH VENTURES INTO A MURDER MYSTERY



Allari Naresh is in dire need of a box-office hit, as his recent films have failed to make an impact. His previous film, *Bachchala Malli*, which he had high hopes for, turned out to be a massive disappointment. Despite his dedicated efforts, the film's weak storytelling and narration failed to engage the audience.

His last major success was *Nandhi*, a gripping legal drama released in 2021. Since then, Naresh has worked on four films, but none managed to strike a chord with viewers. His most recent project, *Naa Saami Ranga*, in which he shared screen space with Nagarjuna and Raj Tarun, saw moderate success, largely due to its Sankranthi release advantage. After experimenting with various genres, Naresh is now stepping into the murder mystery genre. According to sources, his upcoming film is titled *12A Railway Colony* and is directed by Dr. Anil Viswanath of Polimera fame. The film's teaser has already been released, creating intrigue among audiences. While it gives off horror-thriller vibes, sources confirm that the plot revolves around a gripping murder mystery, with Naresh playing a character who races against time to solve the case before the police do. The film's shoot is progressing at a brisk pace and the makers are planning a summer release. Naresh is hopeful that *12A Railway Colony* will finally give him the much-needed breakthrough he has been striving for.

Vaccharroy from Mad Square creates a buzz among fans

Following the buzz surrounding its recently released trailer, *Mad Square* is quickly becoming one of the most talked-about films in Tollywood. Directed by Kalyan Shankar, this sequel to the hit film *MAD* is generating immense anticipation. Adding to the excitement, the third song from the film, *Vaccharroy*, has been released and is already climbing the charts. The song, composed and sung by Bheems Ceciroleo, is gaining immense popularity. Its lyrics have been penned by the talented KV Anudeep. *Vaccharroy* is a testament to Bheems Ceciroleo's signature style, known for delivering chartbusters that resonate with the masses. The track's

energetic composition makes it an instant earworm, bound to dominate playlists and dance floors alike. Bheems has already struck gold with earlier singles from the film, such as *Laddu Gaani Pelli* and *Swathi Reddy*. *Mad Square* brings back the hilarious trio of Narne Nithin, Sangeeth Shobhan and Ram Nithin as they navigate life with their signature chaos and comedy. The ensemble cast also includes Priyanka Jawalkar and Muralidhar Goud, with special appearances by KV Anudeep and a sizzling dance number featuring Reba Monica John. Produced by Haarika Suryadevara and Sai Soujanya, *Mad Square* is set for a theatrical release on March 28.



I always knew my strengths, abilities: Shreyas Iyer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

He fought perceptions about a so-called technical shortcoming, was "typecast", and had his contract torn up within months of being a World Cup hero but Shreyas Iyer was indefatigable through it all, trusting his sincerity and uncomplicated mind to steer him through.

The result of the perseverance has been pleasing, to put it mildly. The 30-year-old has built himself into one of India's most consistent number four batters in recent times and was declared a "silent hero" by his captain Rohit Sharma after the team's Champions Trophy triumph a few days ago. "Maybe, the perception was created or maybe I was typecast. But I always knew my strengths, my abilities and (there was also) the belief (that) I had in myself," Iyer said in an interview when asked about his perceived lack of ability to play the short ball that became a talking point in the last couple of years.

The numbers back him. In the last eight ODIs, including the home games against England and the subsequent Champions Trophy, Iyer has averaged 53 batting at number four and had only one low-scoring outing in eight knocks.

"An athlete needs to constantly evolve as the sport keeps changing its dynamics. I am glad I kept a positive frame of mind, and trusted my process," he said.

Last year, he sustained a back injury during the home Tests against England and



then lost his central contract after showing up for his then IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders' training instead of Ranji Trophy duties after his recovery.

He was stripped of his central contract as BCCI set out to assert the importance

of domestic cricket by seemingly punishing him. Iyer kept his head down and led Kolkata Knight Riders to the IPL trophy weeks later before forcing his way back into India's 50-over set-up.

His was a classic case of performance

doing all the talking for him.

"I kept my process simple. Tried not to over-think the situation and to continue doing my work honestly. I always had the belief that my performance and my sincerity will bring back the opportunity," said

the prolific batter, who will be captaining Punjab Kings this IPL season.

The difficult time also made him a better learner. "It allowed me to learn a lot, reassess the situation and prepare a routine to add additional skills in my armoury."

"Looking back, I am happy with the outcome, the way I managed the situation and importantly, belief in my abilities. Lots and lots of hard work went behind it.

"From my coach Pravin Amre sir to my trainer Sagar, everyone worked around my needs. The two of them really helped me create power and the force which you see in my batting now," he recalled.

Number 4 is where I belong

The right-hander, who averages close to 50 (48.22) after 70 ODIs, said ever since his impressive run in the 2023 World Cup, in which he scored 530 runs, he has felt comfortable batting at number four.

He was also India's top-scorer in the Champions Trophy, finishing with 243 runs in five games.

"I feel I belong to the No.4 position. Whether it was in the 2023 World Cup or now in the Champions Trophy, I enjoyed the most coming as Number 4. It gives me a sense of belonging and that's where I am able to flourish."

Iyer had one of the most tricky jobs during the Champions Trophy and that was to manoeuvre the strike against spinners in the middle overs. And he did it quite well, proving himself to be as good a play-

er of spin as his stroke-making skipper on the slightly slow surfaces of Dubai.

"Well, basically the foundation needs to be stronger and thankfully in my case, having played in Mumbai where wickets are grassless, it helps. Besides, I think early in the career, I learned that the footwork has to be strong to play on such tracks," he explained.

Iyer said he was quite pleased with how he executed his plans during the marquee event and "provided a sense of consistency in the middle order throughout the campaign." "I will tirelessly repeat it to provide that balance in the middle order, whenever I represent India," he promised.

And to ensure that his obsessive desire to perform does not become an all-consuming routine, Iyer likes to tune out every once in a while. "...I feel it's needed, to not over-think and burn yourself out. There is life beyond cricket with family and friends, hobbies and magic tricks, and I enjoy these breaks in between," he revealed.

A limited-overs giant in the making he might be but Iyer has a decent Test record too. In 14 Tests that he has played, Iyer averages around 37 which includes a hundred and five half-centuries.

Does he think that he has a chance of making it to the squad that will tour England in June-July for a five-Test series?

"I prefer not to over-think and complicate my current process. For now, I am living in the moment to fulfil my roles and responsibilities with Punjab Kings," he concluded.

India face Maldives in Asian Cup qualifier

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Shillong

The returning Sunil Chhetri will be the cynosure of all eyes as India face Maldives in an international friendly here on Wednesday, the match serving as a dress rehearsal for the all-important AFC Asian Cup qualifier against Bangladesh at the same venue in less than a week's time.

The 40-year-old Chhetri came out of his international retirement earlier this month to help the team successfully navigate the qualifiers for the continent's top football tournament, starting with the March 25 clash.

The preparatory match for Manolo Marquez's side marks a historic moment as the Blue Tigers will play in the football-crazy hill town for the first time.

It will also be India's all-time top scorer Chhetri's first match since announcing his return to international football.

The main team needs to win games. And if we need to win games, we need to call players who are in better shape

— MANOLO MARQUEZ, HEAD COACH

In the pre-match press conference on Tuesday, Marquez said, "It is the first time we are playing here, but I have worked with a lot of coaches and players from here. I knew it's a very nice place. "I remember when I watched the Durand Cup in Shillong last year, I said, 'Wow, the ground, crowd, atmosphere, everything is nice.' I'm not joking, I said it'd be great if one day, the national team could play here."

Defender Mehtab Singh concurred with the Spaniard. Mehtab said, "We feel great to be in Shillong. It's the first time our national team will be playing here. The north-east is known for its football fan following. Football is the biggest sport here. Taking football to diverse regions is a great thing for

Indian football."

For Marquez, his first competitive match since becoming India's head coach in July 2024 is a week away, and the friendly presents a great opportunity to fine-tune his team before the crucial fixture. The Indian team, though, remains winless under Marquez with the side ending the year with a 1-1 stalemate against Malaysia in November in Hyderabad. "It's a friendly game to prepare for the Asian Cup qualifier. Obviously, we want to win. We knew that the target during the previous FIFA windows was to arrive in the best possible condition for the first competitive match against Bangladesh next Tuesday. "I don't think we will play with the same team against Bangladesh that will play tomorrow. Obviously, you can't change all 11. Some will repeat on Tuesday. I'm confident in all my players. It has to be a good game and a good preparation for Bangladesh."

Marquez also confirmed Chhetri's involvement in the friendly match that will mark his 152nd cap for India. "For sure, Sunil will play some minutes. I don't know whether as a starter or from the bench. We can use six substitutions, so 17 players can play, and I think Sunil will be one of them.

"He is the Indian player with the most goals this season. It doesn't matter if a player is 20, 40, or my grandfather at 87. If they are in better shape, they will be here. The national team is not about developing players. "Developed players have to arrive here. The main team needs to win games. And if we need to win games, we need to call players who are in better shape," said Marquez.

Chhetri had earlier hung his boots in June 2024 after a glorious international career after making his India debut in 2005. But he showed he remains a force to reckon with, in the 2024-25 ISL which has turned out to be Chhetri's most prolific season.

He has scored 12 goals from 24 match-

Runner Archana Jadhav gets four-year ban

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's long-distance runner Archana Jadhav was on Tuesday banned for four years owing to a failed dope test in January, the findings of which she did not contest despite repeated reminders, prompting World Athletics to deem her actions as acceptance of guilt.

According to World Athletics' Athletes Integrity Unit (AIU), Jadhav's sample, which was collected at the Pune Half-Marathon in December last year, contained prohibited substance Oxandrolone. "This synthetic anabolic steroid promotes protein production and muscle building in the body.

The ban came into effect from January 7. Jadhav has been under provisional suspension for the duration. On February 25, she had replied to the violation charge in an e-mail to the AIU stating "I am extremely sorry sir...I welcome your decision." The AIU said its understanding of this communication was that Jadhav did not require a hearing and was "content" to get a decision from the body.

The AIU said Jadhav was nonetheless informed that she had time till March 3 to admit that she had committed the Anti-Doping Rule Violations, and was reminded of the same by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) on February 28. The AIU, however, did not get any response from Jadhav.

Jadhav's sample, which was collected at the Pune Half-Marathon in December last year, contained prohibited substance Oxandrolone

— WORLD ATHLETICS' ATHLETES INTEGRITY UNIT

The AIU said Jadhav has also not demonstrated that the Anti-Doping Rule Violations were "not intentional".

"...The Athlete is deemed to have committed the Anti-Doping Rule Violations..." the AIU stated.

As a result, "a period of ineligibility of four years" commences on January 7.

In addition, her results on and since December 15, 2024 stand disqualified. She will have to forfeit all awards,

medals, points, prizes and appearance money for the period.

The AIU said Jadhav did not exercise her right to a 'B' sample test despite expressing a desire to do so in early communication.

She responded well past the stipulated date of January 17 to state that she was hospitalised owing to illness.

This was after she was told about the procedure and the cost involved in getting a test. The AIU said it had provided an extended deadline to the athlete.

"...On 22 January 2025, the AIU wrote to the Athlete and provided her with an extended deadline by which to make the full payment of the costs of the B Sample analysis to World Athletics..."

Jadhav was required to confirm her availability by no later than January 24.

The AIU said Jadhav once again failed to respond or make the full payment.

She had last competed in the Delhi half marathon in October 2024 in the elite Indian women's race, finishing fourth with a time of 1:20.21 behind winner Lili Das, Kavita Yadav and Priti Lamba.

Pakistan origin cricketer dies after collapsing on field

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Adelaide

Junail Zafar Khan, a club-level Pakistan-origin cricketer, has died after collapsing on the ground during a local match played in extreme heat at the Concordia College here.

In his 40s, Khan was representing Old Concordians Cricket Club in a match against Prince Alfred Old Collegians last Saturday, news.Com.Au reported.

After fielding for 40 overs and batting for seven, Khan collapsed around 4pm Australian Central Daylight Time (ACDT). South Australia has been in the grip of extreme heat over and according to data from the Bureau of Meteorology, temperatures here were still above 40 degrees Celsius at the time.

Adelaide Turf Cricket Association rules state that games are cancelled if the temperature climbs above 42 degrees Celsius.

Samson joins team practice session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jaipur

Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson has joined his IPL team after completing his recovery from a finger surgery he underwent last month.

The 30-year-old cricketer, who finished his rehabilitation at the Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, attended the Royals' first practice session on Monday ahead of the upcoming season.

Samson had suffered the injury after being struck by a bouncer from Jofra Archer during India's five-match T20I series against England. Following the injury, he underwent surgery to treat the damaged finger. "Straight from the airport to our first practice match to making everyone smile like he does!," RR said

in a post on 'X'. The RR skipper was seen interacting with his teammates, including India batter Yashasvi Jaiswal, and head coach Rahul Dravid, among others.

Rajasthan Royals, the inaugural champions, will kick off their campaign against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Hyderabad on March 23. Although Samson has regained full fitness, it remains uncertain whether he will take the wicketkeeping gloves straight away. If he isn't deemed fit, Dhruv Jurel is likely to step in behind the stumps. In another boost for RR, all-rounder Rryan Parag has fully recovered from a shoulder injury that had kept him out of the T20Is against South Africa and England. Parag made his comeback in the second phase of the Ranji Trophy, scoring a half-century and bowling 26 overs against Saurashtra.



New Zealand beat Pakistan by five wicket in T20 match

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dunedin

Tim Seifert blasted 45 from 22 balls and Finn Allen hit 38 from 16 as New Zealand cruised to a five-wicket win over Pakistan on Tuesday in a rain-shortened second Twenty20 (T20) cricket international.

Captain Salman Ali Agha made 46 as Pakistan reached 135-9 in a match reduced to 15 overs per innings after a delay for wet outfield. Shaheen Shah Afridi then bowled a maiden to start New Zealand's innings. But Seifert and Allen hit seven of the next 12 balls for sixes as New Zealand launched an assault which helped them clinch the match and a 2-0 series lead with 11 balls remaining.

Seifert and Allen hit five sixes apiece as New Zealand sped towards its target. After the scoreless opening over Allen cleared the boundary on the first, third and sixth balls of the second over, then Seifert struck sixes from the first two and the last two deliveries of the next over as New Zealand raced to 44-0.

New Zealand began its innings needing 136 runs from 90 balls. By the end of the five-over power play that target had been reduced to 70 runs from 60 balls. New Zealand was 87-2 when Allen followed Seifert to the pavilion in the seventh over.

"There's not too much conversation out there to be fair," Seifert said.

"It's just about backing our skills and putting pressure on the bowlers when we can." Mitchell Hay made an unbeaten 21 to steer New Zealand home and Bracewell hit a four off Jahandad Khan for the winning runs. New Zealand won the toss and was eager to bowl first on a pitch at the University Oval which had been covered and looked fresh with patches of grass.

Jacob Duffy, who took 4-14 in the series-opener which New Zealand won by nine wickets on Sunday, removed Hasan Nawaz with the fourth ball of the match.

The New Zealand bowlers were too full at first and Pakistan reached 19-1 before Ben Sears came on in the fourth over and dismissed Mohammad Haris with his first delivery. Sears, who missed the Champions Trophy with injury, used bounce effectively and Haris sliced his first delivery to Duffy at third man.

Pakistan was 36-2 after the five-over power play. Salman took 12 runs including a 75-meter (yard) six from the sixth over bowled by Jimmy Neesham, lifting Pakistan to 48-2. But spinner Ish Sodhi dismissed Irfan Khan (11) and Khushdil Shar (2) with the fourth and sixth balls of the seventh over as Pakistan slipped to 52-4.

Kohli to focus on playing smart cricket: AB De Villiers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

South African batting great AB de Villiers believes Virat Kohli should focus on playing smart cricket and continue controlling the game this season as RCB possess immense firepower with Phil Salt expected to ease the pressure on the Indian superstar.

Despite being one of RCB's most consistent performers, Kohli's strike rate was a topic of discussion past two seasons.

However, with the Bengaluru franchise acquiring the English duo of Salt and Liam Livingstone, along with Australian Tim David and West Indian Romario Shepherd all fearless strikers of the ball de Villiers feels Kohli can play with more freedom.

"Virat seems to be enjoying his cricket. I don't think he's going to have to up his strike rate batting with Phil Salt," de Villiers said on JioStar Press Room on Tuesday. "Salt is one of the most attacking players we've ever seen. I think he's going to take a lot of pressure off Virat. Virat needs to continue what he's been doing for so many years...Control the game, play smart cricket. He's got the best instinct of any player out there. He knows when to up the ante a bit and when to lower it."

The South African, who played for RCB for 11 seasons, said Kohli needs to ensure there are no batting collapses.

"Virat needs to be the captain of the batting department in this tournament and really just keep things together, play smart cricket to make sure they don't find



those collapses in the batting order?"

The former Proteas skipper feels that Kohli has been subjected to "unnecessary criticism over the last few seasons."

"There's no doubt some of the outside noise has maybe influenced him a bit. He's

only human, he's definitely got those doubts in his head.

"But the one thing about Virat is that he's always had the ability to, when it matters most, when he crosses that line for his team, block everything out and it's busi-

ness time." With Faf du Plessis' departure, RCB enters the season with a new captain in Rajat Patidar.

De Villiers opined that Patidar's biggest challenge would be dealing with self-doubt while stepping into the shoes of past captains like du Plessis and Kohli.

"His biggest challenge will be insecurity, stepping into the big boots of the past captains like Faf and Virat... Having Virat around and constantly almost doubting yourself.

"He needs to stay true to who he is and not try to captain like Virat or like Faf. And use the experience of Virat, use the experience of Andy Flower and some of the other players."

RCB will be on the road consistently throughout the season, frequently alternating between home and away fixtures.

"Their scheduling is going to be a big obstacle. The team is balanced and that bodes well for them, especially with their scheduling, where they hop around to different venues all the time, right throughout the tournament. They've got the trickiest schedule of them all."

Despite this challenge, de Villiers believes RCB has a strong and balanced squad.

"They're only lacking an X-factor spinner, right? Krunal Pandya is a wonderful spinner. We've seen him over the years perform very consistently and he can chip in with the bat as well. They have some other options as well.

"But I mean, look at that batting lineup. It is pure power. There's a mix between power and also control."