



The Pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

I never insulted former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and would never do so in future. I've immense respect for the Telangana movement & KCR's role.

Telangana came into existence because Sonia Gandhi gave it, even though it caused political damage to her party. He said, "We won't neglect I25Ft Ambedkar Statue and Martyrs Memorial, just because BRS built them"

- Jupally Krishna Rao, Tourism Minister

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DON'T MISS...

Joint efforts to tackle monsoon challenges

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) and Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) will focus on resolving monsoon-related challenges and taking preventive measures against fire accidents. GHMC Commissioner K Ilambarthi and HYDRA Commissioner AV Ranganath conducted a review meeting with officials at the GHMC office on Tuesday. Addressing the meeting, the officials said that to prevent fire accidents, a joint committee will be formed, including HYDRA, GHMC and the Fire ...

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B'desh: Awaiting India's response

Bangladesh on Tuesday said it was awaiting a response from India to its proposal for a meeting between Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok next week. "From our side, we are fully ready for the meeting. Now, we await a positive response from India," Foreign Secretary Md. Jashim Uddin said at a media briefing here, outlining the Chief Adviser's forthcoming visits to China and Thailand. Dhaka earlier sent a letter to India proposing...

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'India top milk producer in world'

India is the top producer of milk in the world and has set a target of producing 300 million metric tons (MMT) of milk in the next five years from the present 239 MMT, Union Minister of Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh said in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Singh also said that ever since the Modi government has launched the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) in 2014, the milk production in the country has increased by 63.5 per cent and the government is hopeful of further...

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Smriti, Deepti retain spots in ICC rankings

India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana and all-rounder Deepti Sharma held on to their third positions respectively in the latest ICC Women's T20I batter and bowlers' rankings issued here on Tuesday. Besides Mandhana, no other Indian is in the top-10 with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur placed 11th position, Jemimah Rodrigues ranked 15th and Shafali Verma a rung below. The batters' list is led by Australia's Beth Mooney, followed by teammate Tahlia McGrath. Mooney increased her lead at the top...

-SPORTS

CM to launch PDS fine rice scheme on Ugadi



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy will launch the government's scheme to distribute fine rice through the Public Distribution System (PDS) on Ugadi Day, that is, next Sunday. The

launch will be held in Huzurnagar town in Suryapet district at 6 pm during a public meeting.

The schedule released by Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy says the Chief Minister will take off from Begumpet Airport at 5 pm and land near the Ramaswamy Gutta in Huzurnagar at 5:45 pm. He will first visit the housing colony being built for weaker sections with 2,000 single-bedroom flats before heading to the meeting venue.

The launch of the fine rice distribution scheme will commence at 6:15 pm, followed by a public address. The Chief Minister is expected to return to Hyderabad by road and will reach the city by around 9:45 pm.

Officials of the Civil Supplies Department, Housing Corporation, SERP and the local administration have been directed to make arrangements for the CM's visit.



State sanctions Rs 156.56 crore for Gruha Jyothi scheme

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has sanctioned Rs 156.56 crore to DISCOMs for implementing the Gruha Jyothi scheme in March 2025. The funds will be used to supply free electricity up to 200 units per month to domestic households.

According to GO. Rt. No: 10 issued on March 24 by the Energy Department, the release is part of the broader budgetary allocation of Rs 1,612.12 crore made under the Gruha Jyothi scheme for the financial year 2024-25.

The administrative sanction enables Telangana State Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (TGSPDCL) and other DISCOMs to issue "zero bills" to eligible households, effective from March 1, 2024.



File photo

The sanction follows a request from TGSPDCL's Chairman and Managing Director Musharrarf Faruqi, IAS, seeking advance payment of Rs 156.56 crore to cover the cost for March. Of the sanctioned amount, Rs 118.99 crore will be debited under the general category head of account, Rs 23.48 crore under the BC sub-plan and Rs 14.09 crore under the ST sub-plan.

The Assistant Secretary of the Energy Department has been directed to draw and credit the amount to TGSPDCL's account through ECS.

The power utility has also been asked to submit a utilization certificate for the same. The move comes at a time when Telangana has already recorded an all-time high power demand of 17,162 MW in March due to increasing consumption in all sectors.

TG calls for early allocation of Krishna waters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Final arguments continued before the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) on Tuesday, with Telangana's senior counsel CS Vaidyanathan pressing for the equitable allocation of Krishna River waters to the state's in-basin projects.

The proceedings are being held in New Delhi before the Tribunal headed by Justice Brijesh Kumar, with Justices Ram Mohan Reddy and S. Talapatra as members. Arguments are set to resume on Wednesday, March 26.

Presenting Telangana's case, senior counsel Vaidyanathan cited the 2018 Cauvery judgement to stress the importance of irrigation intensity and equitable distribution based on national perspective and in-basin requirements. "Water sharing must ensure maximum benefits to farm



families while keeping in view both availability and regional needs," he argued, urging the Tribunal to prioritise Telangana's existing, ongoing and proposed in-basin irrigation projects.

When the Tribunal raised a query about the legality of taking up projects without Central Water Commission (CWC) approvals, the counsel clarified that most of the ongoing projects were launched by the erstwhile United Andhra Pradesh Government and that their Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) were submitted to KWDT-II as early as 2006. **Continued on Page 2**

Cabinet expansion likely on April 3

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The date has been decided for expanding the Telangana Cabinet after the AICC gave the green signal, it is learnt.

Sources said the Cabinet expansion will be carried out on April 3 most probably. However, neither the Telangana Congress unit nor the AICC are revealing the names of MLAs and MLCs who got a Cabinet berth.

However, there are speculations that the AICC gave the green signal for appointing four Ministers. No one has confirmed this. Another group of leaders have been saying that the AICC gave the green signal to appoint six ministers.

Meanwhile, the names of Chennai MLA Gaddam Vivek and Makkal MLAs V. Srihari have been finalised. No one is confirming the remaining names. However, the names of Rajagopal Reddy, Sudarshan Reddy and Adi Srinivas were doing the rounds for two

minister posts. It is not known whether the party will give the sixth minister post to STs or minorities or women.

One Congress leader on condition of anonymity, said the AICC is going

'Confident of Cabinet berth'

The Congress's Munugode MLA, Komatireddy Raj Gopal Reddy, who is in the race for a minister post, exuded confidence that he would get a minister post. Raj Gopal said that he hasn't got a phone call so far but likes the Home Ministry.

Addressing journalists on Tuesday at the Assembly Media Point, Raj Gopal said,



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to give a shock to speculators and is going to throw a surprise regarding names. However, TPCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud said after the meeting with the high command on Monday that all matters will be concluded soon.

"We have explained everything, including development and welfare issues, to the high command in detail. The high command will decide on all matters soon," he said without revealing details.

It may be recalled that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud, and AICC in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan met the high command and discussed the cabinet expansion on Monday.

Deputy CM reached Hyderabad early morning on Tuesday. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy and TPCC Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud reached Hyderabad only in the evening.

Speaker withdraws remarks after BRS MLA Sunitha objects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A brief, emotionally charged exchange took place in the Telangana Assembly on Tuesday as BRS MLA Sunitha Laxma Reddy objected to some remarks of Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar during her speech during the discussion on the budget the previous day.

Sunitha, taking the floor at the beginning of the session, recalled, "While I was speaking on Monday, as the Speaker, you made some comments. I was hurt by them. It was painful to hear you say that even I couldn't understand what was being said and that you could. I never deviated from the subject. Perhaps I didn't hear your words. I've never violated any parliamentary convention. Even when we were humiliated by

Continued on Page 2

Kancha Gachibowli land not forest, belongs to govt: Sridhar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Industries and IT Minister Sridhar Babu on Tuesday issued a detailed statement clarifying on the ownership and development plans regarding the 400-acre land located in Survey No: 25 of Kancha Gachibowli in Sherlingampally Mandal in Ranga Reddy district. The clarification comes amid what he described as "distorted reports" circulating in some quarters.

Tracing the land's history, Sridhar said the United Andhra Pradesh Government had allotted the land in 2003 to IMG Academies Bharat Pvt Ltd for developing sports infrastructure. However, the IMG never began work on the project. Subsequently, in 2006, the



Congress government cancelled the allotment after identifying violations of allotment terms.

IMG challenged the cancellation in the High Court, but on March 7, 2024, the court upheld the government's decision. **Continued on Page 2**

SC questions delay in disqualification pleas against TG MLAs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday raised concerns over the prolonged inaction of the Telangana Assembly Speaker in dealing with disqualification petitions against three MLAs who defected from BRS to the ruling Congress. The court cited precedents and questioned whether constitutional courts are powerless to enforce timelines on constitutional authorities.

A Bench of Justices BR Gavai and AG Masih noted that the Speaker had not even issued notices despite complaints being filed as early as March 2024. The court referenced the Subhash Desai and **Continued on Page 2**

Cricket betting racket busted; Two held with Rs 15.6 lakh in online IDs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major crackdown ahead of the IPL-2025 season, the Commissioner's Task Force, South Zone Team, in coordination with Abids Police, apprehended two individuals involved in an illegal online cricket betting racket. The arrested have been identified as Ramdev Ladha, a resident of Ashok Nagar, and Pavan Agarwal from Narayanaguda.

Officials seized Rs 1,36,620 in cash, two mobile phones, and traced online IDs associated with transactions amounting to Rs. 15,62,620. According to police, both individuals were operating as punter and bookie using the

web platform radheexch.xyz under the name Radhe Exchange, which is not authorized to conduct any betting activity.

Investigators revealed that the accused had obtained betting user IDs from a main bookie, identified as Shiraj Boob, also from Ashok Nagar. They were allegedly distributing login credentials to punters and collecting commissions for facilitating illegal betting on IPL matches.

The arrests were made during a raid at Bombay Bar following a tip-off. "Both accused were caught red-handed with betting proceeds and mobile devices used in the operation," said an official involved **Continued on Page 2**

SSC PAPER LEAK Nalgonda Police nab suspects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nalgonda Police have arrested individuals allegedly involved in malpractices during the SSC examinations in Nakrekal town. The arrests were made after an investigation into the leak of the Telugu question paper via WhatsApp on March 21.

The accused 1 to 5 and a child in conflict with the law (CCL) were arrested and remanded to judicial custody. Investigations are going on after **Continued on Page 2**

Two FIRs against KTR, Krishank & Dileep for post

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CEO meets political parties, discusses cleaning up of voters' lists

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Electoral Officer C. Sudharshan Reddy held a meeting with representatives of political parties to discuss the cleaning up of electoral rolls in Telangana before elections.

The meeting, held at the BRKR Bhavan on Tuesday, focused on measures to

improve the accuracy and integrity of the voter database. The CEO explained steps being taken to identify and eliminate discrepancies in the rolls and sought the cooperation of all parties to ensure the electoral system remains transparent and inclusive.

Among the key suggestions discussed were



the establishment of polling stations inside gated communities, linking Aadhaar with voter IDs and removing the names of dead voters. Sudharshan also emphasised the legal procedures governing the addition and deletion of names from the rolls and highlighted the need to enrol first-time voters aged between 17 and 18.

Representatives of the BJP, the Congress, the BRS, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM), the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the CPM took part in the discussion and offered feedback on strengthening the voter roll system.

The CEO requested political parties to support the initiative and help raise awareness among the public about the importance of voter registration and clean electoral rolls.

Centre releases NHM funds of Rs 1,072 cr to TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MP Anil Kumar Yadav raised a non-starred question in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday regarding the release of pending funds to Telangana under the National Health Mission (NHM).

Responding, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare confirmed that Telangana had received Rs 564.93 crore for the financial year 2023-24 and Rs 1,072.29 crore for the current financial year 2024-25 (as of March 5, 2025).

The Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Prataprao Jadhav, said the release of funds is based on proposals submitted by states as part of their Annual Programme Implementation Plan (PIP). Approvals are provided depending on resource availability and compliance with financial guidelines laid down by the Department of Expenditure of the Union Ministry of Finance.

While the response did not specifically address whether Telangana had made additional pending requests, it clarified that the released funds are provisional and updated as of early March.

KTR slams govt for hosting beauty pageants amid farmers' suicides

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) launched a scathing attack on the state government for prioritising beauty pageants over addressing the escalating crisis of suicides by farmers in Telangana.

Speaking in the Assembly, KTR criticised the government's decision to spend ₹55 crore on events like the Miss World while farmers are struggling without drinking or irrigation water.

"When the state is reeling under distress, with farmers taking their lives, the government is busy organizing beauty contests. These events have no relevance or necessity," KTR said, demanding that the government explain how such pageants generate jobs or revenue. He accused the administration of projecting them as grand international achievements despite their declining global significance.

KTR also slammed the government for locking up the towering statue of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, a national symbol of honour, and asked him why it has been excluded from the tourism circuit. "Why is Ambedkar being held captive behind locks? Will they open it at least on his birth anniversary when followers from across the country visit?" he asked.

Highlighting the government's contradictory stance, KTR pointed out that it scrapped the ₹46 crore Formula-E event —intended to attract electronics investments — after labelling it as wasteful. But another ₹55 crore was also spent on beauty pageants.

He alleged that the unilateral cancellation of the Formula-E car race without Cabinet approval cost the exchequer ₹46 crore, calling it a "foolish decision." KTR noted that Formula-E had spurred significant investments in the electronics sector in districts like Zahirabad, Rangareddy, Vikarabad and Mahbubnagar, drawing interest **Continued on Page 2**

Jagan needs to evolve a balancing act

The leadership decides one thing, but the reality is another thing. The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leadership seems to be in a hurry to regain its glory. Generally, a party which has the experience of functioning as a ruling party as well as in the opposition will be capable of dealing with reversals. Having ruled AP for five years, the YSRCP should have been able to manage things. But the party's condition is not conducive to this due to internal developments.



Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the JSP and the BJP, which bagged 164 out of 175 seats in the Assembly. The YSRCP could win only 11 seats and failed to get the principal opposition tag in the Assembly. The party's leadership is now trying to recover from defeat, and its cadres are looking to the leadership for guidance on how to move forward.

YSRCP president Jagan Mohan Reddy parted ways with his parent party, the Congress, to float a new party as the Congress leadership didn't accept his demand for chief ministership immediately after the death of his father Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy. He lost the 2014 election to the TDP by a minor margin, and that gave him confidence. As expected, the YSRCP stormed into power in the 2019 polls.

As Jagan was the supreme leader of his party, he often ignored others' suggestions. As a result he had to bear the brunt of his decisions, and his party activists had to defend their leader's lapses. For example, awarding contracts worth thousands of crores to a few selected companies drew flak. This proved embarrassing to YSRCP activists, and a gulf started developing between them and the leadership.

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Some leaders said that Jagan couldn't be reached easily and blamed the coterie around him for that. This opinion gained ground only after the party's Rajya Sabha Member V. Vijayasa Reddy said that the coterie around Jagan ruined the party.

lakh crore on welfare schemes could not make people support the YSRCP. This throws more light on the need to search for another way to reach people apart from implementing welfare schemes.

The fact that many YSRCP leaders are facing criminal cases is affecting the party's revival chances. The arrests of former YSRCP MLA, Pinnelli Ramakrishna Reddy, for breaking EVMs at the Palvai Gate polling station in Palnadu district, that of former YSRCP MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsimohan for allegedly kidnapping a staffer of the TDP office at Gannavaram, and that of FDC chairman and film actor Posani Krishna Murali for making derogatory remarks have stunned YSRCP cadres. Many cases have been filed against two former ministers and prominent figures of the party's women's wing, RK Roja and Vidudala Rajani. Others are now afraid that they may also be arrested.

Former Ministers Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao, Seediri Appala Raju and former MLA Simhadri Ramesh Babu have already spoken about this. Three former YSRCP ministers Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, Perni Venkatramaiah and Jogi Ramesh are also facing the same situation. Jogi Ramesh had drawn the accolades from Jagan Mohan Reddy on the floor of the Assembly for his heroic act of attacking the house of the LOP Chandrababu Naidu. This made him a minister later.

The YSRCP was slated to take the plunge, citing the alleged irregularities of the NDA administration. But that was not done. Jagan preferred to visit jailed colleagues to remove the fear in the minds of cadres. But such gestures do not always bring results. For example, YSR did the same when his colleague Gouri Venkata Reddy was arrested in

Kurnool district when he was in the opposition. That drew criticism, but YSR didn't mind that. He made Venkata Reddy's wife Charita an MLA in 2004. But the couple decided to back Chandrababu instead of Jagan.

It is surprising to see that Jagan is claiming that the YSRCP would emerge victorious in the 2029 elections. With desertions everywhere and attempts to topple the heads of local bodies in many districts, the YSRCP is now worried. Concrete steps are not being taken to tackle problems except in Kadapa.

The TDP thinks that it can weaken the morale of YSRCP cadres by making the Kadapa Mahanadu a grand success. The TDP's policy seems to be to use state power to weaken the YSRCP.

Jagan needs to evolve a balancing act to tackle these problems and live up to the hopes of his party workers.

Never insulted KCR, Ambedkar statue won't be neglected: Jupally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao on Tuesday said he had never insulted former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and would never do so in future. Participating in a debate in the Assembly, Jupally said he had immense respect for the Telangana movement and acknowledged KCR's leadership in spearheading it from the front. He stated that despite the sacrifices of 360 lives in 1969, Telangana was not granted a statehood during the BJP

regime, even though it created three other states. "Telangana came into existence because Sonia Gandhi gave it, even though it caused political damage to her party," he said.

He said, "We won't neglect 125ft Ambedkar Statue and Martyrs Memorial, just because BRS built. These will be used accordingly"

Jupally also targeted the BRS over its track record in liquor regulation, blaming the previous regime for increasing the number of belt shops in the state. He said liquor revenue

under BRS had risen from Rs 9,000 crore in 2014 to Rs 34,000 crore by 2023. He claimed this was due to the proliferation of illegal belt shops and poor oversight by the previous government.

His remarks triggered a strong rebuttal from BRS MLA Vemula Prashanth Reddy, who accused the Congress government of hypocrisy. Prashanth reminded the House that the Congress manifesto had promised to shut down belt shops, yet the new excise policy set a target of Rs 50,000 crore in liquor revenue this year.

Massive overhaul of women & child services underway: Seethakka

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Women and Child Welfare Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka launched a counter-attack against the BRS in the Assembly on Tuesday during the budget debate, defending her department's reforms and directly taking on opposition claims raised by BRS MLA Sunitha Laxma Reddy.

Responding to Sunitha's concerns about Anganwadi workers, Seethakka said, "It's commendable that Sunitha acknowledged their service. Anganwadi staffers are second only to parents in caring for children. They look after preg-

nant women, lactating mothers and preschoolers. That's why our government is strengthening the system with a clear plan." She asserted that salaries are being paid on time every month and that retirement benefits have also been extended. "We have already moved proposals to the Centre for gratuity, and orders will be issued soon. We upgraded mini Anganwadis to full centres and approved helper posts too," she said.

Seethakka announced that recruitment will be carried out transparently through district-level notifications under the supervision of collectors.

Komatireddy unveils Rs 5,903 cr outlay Pushes HAM Roads, Airstrips, Osmania tenders soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy presented the department's budget proposals in the Assembly with a sweeping announcement of Rs. 5,903.95 crore allocation for the financial year 2025-26. Laying out an ambitious roadmap to transform Telangana's infrastructure, he confirmed administrative sanction for projects worth Rs. 6,547.48 crore, covering 1,888 km of road improvements and construction of 52 bridges.

Currently, 89 works spanning 747.8 km are underway at a cost of Rs. 2,120.81 crore. Additionally, Rs. 850 crore worth works for 435.29 km roads were sanctioned under CRIF (Central Road Infrastructure Fund), of which 29 works for 394.29 km are in progress. He also acknowledged a Rs. 4,167.05 crore loan through the RDC mechanism.

Venkat Reddy emphasized hospital infrastructure as a priority, citing construction of LB Nagar TIMS, which was revised to 24 floors to comply with Supreme Court norms. Alwal TIMS will be launched in August 2025 and LB Nagar TIMS by December.

Sanathnagar TIMS is being expedited for completion by June 2. On Osmania Hospital, he confirmed that the bhoomi pooja was completed and tenders would be called shortly.

Highlighting a major achievement, he announced the breakthrough on the long-pending Mamnoon airport. After obtaining NOC from GMR, the government allocated Rs. 205 crore for land acquisition. Feasibility studies for Mamnoon, Adilabad, and Nizamabad yielded positive results, while reports for Bhadrachalam, Peddapalli, and Mahbubnagar were negative.

Naxalite with Rs 25 lakh bounty among 3 killed in Chhattisgarh

PNS ■ DANTEWADA (CHHATTISGARH)

A Naxalite carrying a reward of Rs 25 lakh on his head was among three ultras killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Tuesday, police said.

The killed Maoist, Ankanpalli Saraiah, (58), hailed from Taralapalli village in Madikonda mandal in Hanamkonda district. He had a bounty of Rs 25 lakh on his head.

Saraiah went underground 30 years ago and was a member of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee, the strongest formation of Maoists, the police said.

TUNNEL COLLAPSE

Another body extricated

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

Body of one of the seven persons who remained trapped inside the partially collapsed SLBC project tunnel here for over a month was found on Tuesday, officials said.

This takes the total number of bodies retrieved so far to two. Nagarkurnool dis-

trict Collector Badavath Santhosh told reporters that the body was found Tuesday morning.

He said "tentatively" the body has been identified to be that of Manoj Kumar, a project engineer from Uttar Pradesh. The body was shifted to a government hospital for post mortem and other procedures as per the norms. The Collector

said the family members of the deceased would be informed about the matter. The mortal remains would be sent to the native place of the deceased as per norms. As per the instructions of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, an ex-gratia of Rs 25 lakh would be handed over to the family members of the deceased, he said.

KTR slams ...

Continued from page 1
from companies like Tesla. He accused the government of double standards in its tourism policy, questioning why leasing the Outer Ring Road for 33 years was deemed wrong, while it now plans to lease public lands and assets for 99 years.

He criticised the Congress for its past opposition to the Outer Ring Road deal, alleging it now follows a hypocritical approach.

Refuting Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao's claim that little was achieved in tourism, KTR listed the BRS government's accomplishments, including securing UNESCO recognition for Ramappa Temple and developing attractions like Qutub Shahi Tombs and Mojamjahi Market in Hyderabad.

He also highlighted the completion of the

Buddhanam Project, initiated by former minister Jana Reddy, and tourism spots like Ranganayaka Sagar under the Kaleshwaram Project.

KTR emphasized that the BRS hosted global events like the World Economic Forum and Global Entrepreneur Summit, attended by figures like PM Narendra Modi and Ivanka Trump.

He added that tourism projects were advanced in Kollapur and the Kaloji Auditorium in Warangal was nearly completed under BRS rule, with the Congress government now claiming credit for the final touches.

In a nod to cultural preservation, KTR said the BRS provided jobs to 550 artists through the unique Cultural Sarathi initiative and revived Telangana's suppressed language and dialect.

"We breathed life into our identity, while this government locks up symbols of justice," he concluded.

SC questions...

Continued from page 1

Meghachandra rulings to argue that disqualification pleas must be decided within a reasonable period and cannot be indefinitely delayed.

Senior Advocate Aryama Sundaram, representing the petitioners, argued that the defected MLAs campaigned for Congress while still officially with BRS. He said one of the MLAs, even after losing a Lok Sabha election on a Congress ticket, continued as an MLA from the BRS quota.

The court was told that the Speaker gave three weeks to the MLAs to respond to the pleas, with Justice Gavai remarking, "At least here he was reasonable."

Sundaram raised critical constitutional questions - whether courts can compel Speakers to act within timelines and whether silence in rules allows Speakers unchecked delay. He argued that courts cannot be silent when constitutional authorities fail to act. Citing Meghachandra, he said, "Law cannot live in a vacuum." The case has been adjourned to April 2.

Cricket betting ...

Continued from page 1

In the probe. The seized material and the accused have been handed over to the Station House Officer, Abids PS, for further investigation. The operation was carried out by a team led by Inspector S Raghavendra and sub-inspectors G Anjaneyulu, K Narsimulu, M Mahesh, N Naveen, along with the Abids police team under the supervision of Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, Task Force, Ande Srinivasa Rao.

Two FIRs against KTR, Krishank & Dileep for post

PNS ■ NAKREKAL

Two separate FIRs have been filed at the Nakrekal police station against BRS working president K Rama Rao, social media convener Mannem Krishank, and former digital media director Konatham Dileep for allegedly spreading misinformation related to the SSC Telugu question paper leak. The complaints were lodged by two Congress-affiliated local leaders who accused the trio of defaming them on social media platforms by linking them falsely to the accused in the leak case.

In the first FIR (No. 85/2025), Chougoni Rajitha, municipal chairman of Nakrekal, said that she was wrongly portrayed as being associated with Chitla Akash, one of the accused in the case. She said false claims were circulated that Akash had

worked as her driver and that she had supported his actions. Rajitha alleged that these claims were amplified by KTR, Krishank and Dileep without any verification, tarnishing her image and causing significant personal and political damage. She belongs to the Goud community and said the attack was not only defamatory but also socially humiliating.

The second FIR (No. 86/2025) was registered following a complaint from Uggidi Srinivas, a follower of Nakrekal MLA Vemula Veeresham and a Congress activist from the Yadav community. He alleged that he was falsely linked to another accused, private school teacher Guduguntla Shankar. He said the false claims were amplified by the same BRS leaders, leading to distress and reputational harm.

CM's native Mahabubnagar leads surge in Yasangi power consumption

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's native erstwhile Mahabubnagar district has emerged as a frontrunner in power consumption during the ongoing Yasangi season, with a remarkable increase of up to 59.36 percent in certain circles, reflecting a sharp spike in agricultural, industrial, and residential power needs across the state. The power department in Telangana has not only met this surge with uninterrupted and quality supply but also achieved a substantial reduction in interruptions and breakdowns.

According to data provided by the Southern Discom, Mahabubnagar region-including Wanaparthy, Nagarkurnool, Narayanpet, and Mahabubnagar circles-has recorded growth between 12.25 percent and 59.36 percent when compared to 2023-24 consumption patterns. Vikarabad, which falls under the same jurisdiction, clocked an astounding 112.73 percent rise. CMD Musharraf Faruqi, has been personally monitoring field operations and touring several districts to ensure seamless electricity delivery. He credited the on-ground staff, stating that every employee worked tirelessly this Yasangi season to maintain consistent supply even amidst the record-breaking demand.

On March 20, 2025, the State witnessed its highest-ever peak power demand of 17,162 megawatts, surpassing last year's record of 15,623 megawatts.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Dvadashti: Mar 26 03:45 AM to Mar 27 01:43 AM

Trayodashi: Mar 27 01:43 AM to Mar 27 11:03 PM

Nakshatram: Dhanishta: Mar 26 03:49 AM to Mar 27 02:29 AM

Shatabhisha: Mar 27 02:29 AM to Mar 28 12:33 AM

Rahukalam: 12:21 PM to 1:52 PM

Yamaganadam: 7:49 AM to 9:20 AM

Variyam: 09:06 AM to 10:35 AM

Gulika: 10:51 AM to 12:21 PM

Amitakalam: 04:40 PM to 06:10 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 36°
Humidity: 47%
Sunrise: 6:15 AM
Sunset: 6:28 PM
Updated: March 25, 2025 5:00 PM

'Confident of ...

Continued from page 1

"The selection of candidates for minister posts should be held based on capability. I discharged my responsibility during the LS polls in Bhongir efficiently. I like the Home Ministry. However, I will do whatever the high command asks me to do. I will stand by the people. Discussions on Cabinet expansion might be going on seriously in New Delhi."

It may be recalled that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Malli Bhatti Vikramarka, Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, TPCC Chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud and the AICC in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan had talks with the high command on cabinet expansion on Monday. Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka came to Hyderabad. However, the CM, the TPCC Chief and the Irrigation Minister did not come till evening.

Meanwhile, Congress MLC T. Jeevan Reddy said that unhappiness is likely for anyone if they do not get a post. "At present, I am also unhappy."

TG calls for ...

Continued from page 1

He added that Telangana's Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme (PRLIS) report has been submitted to the CWC, but the Commission is unable to process approvals due to the tribunal proceedings.

Highlighting regional deprivation, Vaidyanathan elaborated on the historical denial of irrigation water to drought-prone erstwhile Mahbubnagar district.

He pointed out that despite the proposal for the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) project, which aims to draw 150 TMCs of water, the project has not materialised, although it was placed before KWDI-I decades ago.

He urged the Tribunal to speed up allocations so that Telangana can proceed with long-overdue irrigation works. "We are only asking for what is rightfully due. Our share of Krishna waters. The delay is denying justice to our farmers," he stated.

Speaker withdraws ...

Continued from page 1

the then Chief Minister in the past, we stood silently in protest without crossing the line. I was deeply hurt by your words. I leave it to your wisdom whether to take them back or not." It may be mentioned here that when Sunita wanted to speak about KCR's achievements, the mic was cut, and the opposition started requesting the mic. Then the Speaker said, "I don't feel like listening, wonder how these people are listening."

Responding with a calm and conciliatory tone, Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar clarified, "I have the utmost respect for women. I have eight sisters. My comments weren't directed at you. You were making a running commentary, and my intention was not to snub you. I hold Sunitha Laxma Reddy in high regard. If my words offended you, I withdraw them."

The exchange was brief, but it brought attention to the sensitivities around gender in the Assembly, drawing appreciation from several members for the dignified manner in which both the MLA and the Speaker addressed the issue.

Nalgonda Police ...

Continued from page 1

the suspects were arrested. The individuals arrested in connection with the case are Chitla Akash (21) Driver, Nakrekal, Chitla Shiva (19) DJ Operator, Nakrekal, Bandi Sirinu (23), a resident of Gorenkalapalli, Guduguntla Shankar (34) a private teacher, Nakrekal, Brahmadevara Ravishankar (55), a photostat shop owner of Nakrekal, Pogula Sriramulu, (45), a businessman of Nakrekal, Talari Akhil Kumar (19), a student from Nakrekal, Muthyala Vamsi (22), a student from Nakrekal, Palasa Anil Kumar (23), a businessman of Nakrekal, Palla Manohar Prasad (22), a daily wage labourer of Nakrekal. One Rahul, whose involvement was confirmed, is absconding.

Nalgonda DSP K. Shivaram Reddy said that on March 21, the Telugu examination was scheduled from 9:30 am to

12:30 pm.

At around 10 am, the paper got leaked on WhatsApp, sparking an alert from the Nalgonda District Education Officer (DEO). The Mandal Education Officer (MEO) of Nakrekal investigated the matter and found that an unknown person had captured a photo of a student's question paper through a school window at TGWSRS (Girls) School, Nakrekal.

Later, a formal complaint was registered at the Nakrekal Police Station under Sections 318 (2), 318 (3), 353 (2), and 223 of BNS, and Section 8 of the Telangana State Public Examinations (Prevention of Malpractices and Unfair Means) Act, 1997. The investigation revealed that a group of friends and relatives of SSC candidates had conspired to leak the paper and provide answers through illegal means.

The accused and the CCL went to TGWSRS Girls' School at 9:40 am but were unable to enter due to the police presence.

Kancha Gachibowli ...

Continued from page 1

The company then approached the Supreme Court through a Special Leave Petition, which was dismissed on May 3, 2024.

Sridhar emphasised that revenue authorities, including the Deputy Collector and Tahsildar of Sheringampally, have confirmed through official land records that the 400-acre parcel is government land and not forest land.

"There is no connection to the Forest Department. The land is recorded as state-owned," he said.

The government has allotted the land to the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIC) as per the new land allocation policy. Revenue Department orders were issued on June 26, 2024, and the land was formally handed over to TGIIC on July 1, 2024.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

City Pioneer

The Pioneer

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | MARCH 26, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Rasaranjani Natakotsavalu

Chairman Play By Kodali Gopalarao

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
March 26, (5:30 pm)

Madadayo

Japanese Movie With English Subtitles

Venue

Lamakaan
March 26, (7 pm)

Live Musical Orchestra

By Aakash Musicals

Venue

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
March 26, (4:30 pm)

Live Musical Orchestra

By Ghantasala Gana Nidhi

Venue

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
March 26, (5 pm)

Handloom India

Silk Lifestyle Exhibition

Venue

Kalinga Cultural Hall
March 18 to 27
(10 am)

Workshop

Basics of photography

Venue

Kalyan Cricket Academy,
Kukatpally
March 24 to 28, (4:30 pm)

Job Mela on March 28 to fill 100 pharmacist posts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A special Job Mela to recruit 100 pharmacist positions will be held on March 28 under the joint auspices of Osmania University's Employment Bureau and Apollo Pharmacy. The mela is scheduled to begin at 11 am at the Employment Bureau office, located opposite the Arts College on the university campus.

According to a press release issued by the University Employment Information and Guidance Bureau, the drive aims to fill both Pharmacist and Assistant Pharmacist posts in Apollo Pharmacy. The eligibility is restricted to candidates aged between 18 and 35 years who have completed D Pharmacy, B.Pharmacy, M Pharmacy, or a degree.

The salary for the selected candidates will range between Rs11,000 and Rs 25,000, the release stated. For further details, applicants have been advised to contact T Raghupathi from HR at 82476 56356.

Tribal Museum to showcase heritage

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Tribal Museum coming up in Bhadrachalam will serve as a window into the rich cultural legacy of tribal communities, said Revenue, Housing and Information & Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy.

Along with Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka, he released the brochure of the Bhadrachalam Tribal Museum on Tuesday at the Legislative Assembly.

Speaking on the occasion, Ponguleti said the museum will provide a platform to highlight the traditions, attire, lifestyles, handicrafts, folklore and rituals of tribal communities.

HYDRAA, GHMC, Traffic, Fire depts to tackle monsoon challenges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) and Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) will focus on resolving monsoon-related challenges and taking preventive measures against fire accidents.

GHMC Commissioner K Ilambarithi and HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath conducted a review meeting with officials at the GHMC office on Tuesday.

Addressing the meeting, the officials said that to prevent fire accidents, a joint committee will be formed, including HYDRA, GHMC and the Fire department.

Regional committees will be established consisting of Traffic, HYDRAA and GHMC officials to



HYDRAA and GHMC Commissioners addressing a monsoon session meeting

tackle the flood risks and traffic issues during the monsoon. These committees will hold regular meetings to ensure coordination and proactive problem-solving.

The officials emphasised the need to analyse high-risk areas for fire accidents and understand why they occur and raise awareness in those regions.

The plan is to start inspections in areas with frequent fire incidents and alert residents. Regular inspections will ensure residential and commercial properties comply with fire safety regulations, the commissioners said.

The authorities have already identified 141 flood-prone areas in the city.

The current situation and flood prevention measures were reviewed by the commissioners.

The use of advanced technology to clear debris in drains, culverts and catchment areas was discussed to facilitate smooth water flow.

The officials stressed the need to map catchment areas and ensure floodwater is directed to nearby lakes. Zonal committees will be responsible for providing localised solutions.

Hyd's Novotel shows 50% YoY growth in city's hospitality sector

First hotel in South India to receive Green Key certification

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Focusing on sustainability and ESG initiatives, Novotel Hyderabad Airport hotel has shown a significant 50% year-on-year growth in the city's hospitality sector.

When asked about the growth story, Novotel general manager Sukhbir Singh shared that Hyderabad's hospitality market is divided into three key ecosystems: Hi-Tech City, the Central Business District (CBD), and the Airport Ecosystem. Unlike Delhi and Mumbai, Hyderabad's hospitality hubs function independently with minimal overlap.

He noted that the airport ecosystem mainly depends on airport-related activities but has seen rapid growth in business and leisure travel, driving steady expansion. He announced that a 10-12% growth rate is expected this fiscal year, driven by aerospace, defence and corporate travel.

Sukhbir Singh said that the



Novotel Hyderabad Airport general manager Sukhbir Singh along with the staff

hotel has implemented various sustainability measures such as in-house organic farming through its Herb Garden, producing 9,000 kg of vegetables annually. Groundwater extraction has been eliminated through rainwater harvesting and a sewage treatment plant. Energy efficiency is enhanced with LED lighting, solar power and heat recovery systems, while waste reduction efforts include plastic elimination, linen life extension programmes and cigarette butt recycling.

He highlighted that these

initiatives earned the hotel a Green Key certification, making it the first hotel in South India to receive this recognition. An EV charging station has also been installed on the property.

Sukhbir Singh emphasised that while AI-driven automation is being explored, the focus remains on enhancing guest experiences rather than full automation. He concluded that Novotel Hyderabad Airport has achieved a 92.5% guest satisfaction score, prioritizing service quality over capacity expansion.

GHMC trains engineers in street-light maintenance app

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) is implementing a Street Light Maintenance Application to enhance the efficient management and upkeep of streetlights across the city, GHMC Commissioner K Ilambarithi announced.

On Tuesday, a training session was held at the GHMC headquarters where electrical engineers, division electricians and representatives from TG Online Agency provided a practical demonstration of the app's functionality covering topics of streetlight audits, data entry processes and repair and maintenance tracking.

During the session, Commissioner Ilambarithi explained that the Street Light Maintenance System App will be used to register and track streetlight assets, including: electric meters, centralised control and monitoring system panels, streetlights and poles.



Electrical engineers participating in a training session

The app will allow real-time monitoring, enabling authorities to immediately detect and resolve issues, ensuring prompt repair and improved services for city residents.

The engineers and electricians were instructed to fully familiarise themselves with the app and monitor streetlight conditions across the city.

SBI staff donates Rs 37 lakh to Armed Forces Flag Day Fund

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State Bank of India employees working under the Local Head Office (LHO) in Hyderabad contributed Rs 37,16,500 to the Telangana State Armed Forces Flag Day Fund. The cheque was formally handed over to Telangana Governor and Chairman of the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund Jishnu Dev Varma, at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday.

The cheque was presented by SBI General Manager Rajesh Kumar, as a token of the collective contribution made by employees of the bank.

Appreciating the gesture, the Governor lauded the dedication and commitment shown by the SBI staff. "Such generous support from SBI employees is commendable and serves as an inspiration for other institutions and citizens to come for-



ward and support our armed forces," he said. He also acknowledged the consistent efforts of the bank staff over the past 10 years in contributing to the fund and praised their sense of duty.

The event was attended by Colonel Ramesh Kumar, Director of Sainik Welfare, and SBI Deputy General Manager and Chief Development Officer Jitendra Kumar Sharma, among others.



Health Secretary Christina Z. Chongthu addressing a meeting on Tuesday

Exclusive testing labs to improve food safety

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Exclusive testing infrastructure will be set up in Hyderabad, Rangareddy and Medchal districts with new mini-labs, one per GHMC zone to strengthen food safety, said Christina Z Chongthu, Secretary to the Telangana Department of Health, Medical & Family Welfare.

In a meeting with food safety officials on Tuesday, Christina stated that over 60% of the state's food businesses operate in and around Hyderabad (GHMC, Rangareddy, and Medchal).

She directed that food safety standards be improved across food outlets, restaurants, street vendors, manufacturing units and dairy units. While past efforts by the Food Safety department have raised awareness, she emphasised

the need for stricter measures to further enhance standards.

She also announced that the government will ensure that all food businesses obtain FSSAI registration/licenses by cross-checking trade licence data and previous hawker survey records. To improve enforcement, the department will recruit additional staff, and senior officers in GHMC will oversee field officers for better monitoring and implementation of food safety standards along with support from GHMC will help identify locations for the new mini-labs.

Christina highlighted that as Hyderabad is famous for its culinary culture, these initiatives will strengthen its reputation by improving compliance, quality control, and public confidence in food safety and hygiene across the State.



Dr VK Saraswat, Member of Niti Aayog, launching the 'PurePower' energy storage segments along with Pure founder Dr Nishanth Dongari in Hyderabad on Tuesday

Energy storage segments launched offering a lifespan of 10+ years

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Electric Vehicles (EVs) and battery storage can eliminate over 200 million tonnes of CO₂, said Dr VK Saraswat, permanent member of Niti Aayog, at the launch of 'PurePower' energy storage segments at HICC Novotel on Tuesday.

Hyderabad-based PURE, a leader in electric mobility and clean energy innovation, launched 'PurePower' energy storage products to accelerate India's energy transition, with a lifespan of 10+ years.

Dr Saraswat appreciated founder Dr Nishanth Dongari and co-founder Rohit Vadera for their contribution to innovation. He highlighted Niti Aayog's initiatives, including driving innovation in schools and India's goal of 500 GW of green energy, 40% mobility electrification and one crore solar rooftops by 2030.

He mentioned that with growing AI and data demand, battery storage is crucial for managing transmission capacity during peak hours. India needs 236.22 GWh of energy storage by 2030 for grid balancing, load management and renewable energy integration.

Dr Saraswat highlighted that Lithium-Ion (Li-Ion) and Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) batteries are commonly used in EVs, while Lithium-Sulphur (Li-S) batteries are successfully piloted for drones and defence. Solid-state batteries offer better safety and energy density and he urged to invest in in-house manufacturing.

He also warned about cybersecurity risks for EV charging stations and emphasised that India's public charging network needs improvement.

Meanwhile, founder and MD of PURE, Dr Nishanth Dongari, emphasised the importance of energy storage in India's clean energy transition. He stated that by equipping homes, businesses and the grid with advanced battery technology and power electronics, Pure is helping reduce the country's carbon footprint.

SCR increases security, deploys more female RPF and GRP personnel

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) has increased security measures after the recent MMTS sexual assault incident to ensure safer travel, deploying more female RPF and GRP personnel on trains.

SCR General Manager Arun Kumar Jain held a review meeting with officials and instructed them to enhance passenger security without compromise. More female Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Government Railway Police (GRP) personnel will be deployed, especially in ladies' compartments and MMTS trains. He noted that regular patrolling by RPF and GRP will be conducted, particularly during late-night and early-morning hours.

Arun Kumar mentioned that emergency numbers will be displayed in all ladies' coaches and key locations. Awareness campaigns, including announcements, posters and digital updates, will educate passengers on safety measures and helpline numbers. He noted that coordination between RPF and GRP would be strengthened, with joint task forces ensuring quick responses to crimes against women.

Meri Saheli Teams will patrol MMTS trains and analyse security risks, focusing on high-risk routes. Station officers will conduct mandatory checks and escort vulnerable sections. Officers in plainclothes will monitor trains based on complaints and crime records. Frequent drives will remove intoxicated passengers and men travelling in female coaches.

SCR announced that future plans include installing CCTV cameras, panic buttons, display screens, mobile app integration, WhatsApp groups for women's safety and issuing breath analyzers to RPF personnel to detect intoxicated passengers.



South India's first robotic kidney transplant performed

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

Urologists at Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) have performed the institute's first-ever robotic (Da Vinci Xi) kidney transplant for a patient who had previously experienced transplant rejection.

The Da Vinci Xi system, typically used in corporate hospitals where procedures cost between Rs 18 to Rs 20 lakh, was procured by NIMS in August 2023. The transplant surgery was completed on Monday, and remarkably, the patient was able to walk within a day compared to the week-

long recovery time following his first transplant.

The recipient, a 33-year-old man from Nalgonda, had been battling end-stage renal disease for nearly a decade. After undergoing a live-related kidney transplant in 2017, he later suffered chronic rejection, necessitating a second transplant. This time, he received a cadaveric kidney, making the surgery particularly complex due to previous surgery, said Professor Dr Rahul Devraj, Lead Urologist who performed the surgery.

The procedure was performed free of cost under the Telangana Aarogyasri Health Scheme. Additionally, the



patient will benefit from free access to immunosuppressive drugs, essential for long-term graft survival, further easing the financial burden of post-transplant care.

Despite the challenges, the surgery was carried out for three hours. The newly transplanted kidney functioned immediately, producing good

urine output as soon as it was connected, signaling a successful graft and a smooth recovery. NIMS stands first in the government sector to perform a robotic transplant, he added.

The introduction of robotic technology is expected to further enhance surgical precision, reduce recovery time, and

improve patient outcomes, said Professor Dr Rahul Devraj, the institute's lead Urologist and transplant surgeon.

The pioneering procedure was led by Professor Dr Rahul Devraj, along with Senior Professor and HOD Dr Ram Reddy and Assistant Professor Dr Dheeraj SSS, who were instrumental in executing the complex surgery. They were supported by a highly skilled team of urologists, including Dr Vidyasagar, Dr Charan Kumar, Dr Ramachandriah, Dr Raghuvver, Dr Poovarasana, Dr Suraj Kumar, Dr Shahrugh, Dr Anant, Dr Abhishek, Dr Anupama.

Suspect in MMTS assault remanded; victim to undergo multiple surgeries

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A large-scale manhunt is underway for the suspect involved in the attempted sexual assault of a young woman on an MMTS train. The Secunderabad, Cyberabad, Special Operations Team (SOT), Central Crime Station (CCS) and Government Railway Police (GRP) have deployed 13 special teams to track him down.

While police have detained a known offender, the victim was unable to identify him,

making the investigation more challenging. Officials are reviewing over 200 CCTV cameras along the 28 km stretch from Secunderabad railway station to Gundlapochampally, covering 11 railway stations.

The victim, currently undergoing treatment, requires multiple plastic surgeries. "There could be three or four surgeries. All necessary blood tests have been completed and we will begin the procedures soon," said hospital sources. Railways SP Chandana

Deepti told The Pioneer, "We have remanded an individual, and our investigation is going on. Once we match the details, we will make an official announcement."

Preliminary findings suggest the suspect, a drug addict estranged from his family, boarded the women's coach at Alwal railway station, where two female passengers had just disembarked. Several suspects have been detained for questioning as the search operation continues across 14 railway stations.



A mini truck crammed with people



Wanaparthy Collector Adarsh Suabhi inspecting damage to crops due to unseasonal rains at Sankireddypally village in Wanaparthy district on Tuesday

Collector assures support to rain-hit farmers

PNS ■ WANAPARTHY

District Collector Adarsh Surabhi on Tuesday said that a report on crop damage would be submitted to the government to help the farmers who suffered crop losses due to the unseasonal rains and strong winds.

District Collector Adarsh Surabhi, along with Agricultural Officer Govindu Nayak, visited Sankireddypally village under the Kothakota mandal of Wanaparthy district and inspected the crops damaged by the unseasonal rains.

The officers visited the farm owned by Venkat Ramulu, whose paddy crop was

destroyed, and spoke to him to gather details.

When the District Agricultural Officer was asked how many acres of crops were affected in Sankireddypally, he mentioned that, according to the survey conducted by the agricultural department, crops were damaged in 170 acres.

The Collector assured the farmers that a report would be submitted to the government with full details on crop damage due to unseasonal rains.

The Collector also visited the Indiramma Housing Model House under construction on the Tahsildar's office premises at Kothakota.

Crash in chilli prices leaves farmers distraught

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

The price of Teja variety red chilli in Khammam has been falling consistently, dropping from Rs 19,000 a quintal at the start of the season to Rs 13,350 a quintal by Monday, a fall of Rs 2,500 per quintal in just a month. This sharp decline has left farmers frustrated, as the current price is deemed unprofitable.

On Monday, a total of 60,000 bags of red chillies were brought to the market. However, traders purchased over 55,000 bags at prices below Rs 12,000 a quintal. The majority of the bags were bought in the price range of Rs 6,000 to Rs 11,500 a quintal.

While traders point to a decrease in quality as the cause of the price drop, farmers argue that the fall is due to a lack of exports. In the past, red chillies were exported to countries like China, Thailand, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, where a quintal would fetch up to Rs 25,000. This lack of export demand has further contributed to the price slump. Many farmers are disheartened by the continuous price decline.



Those in immediate need of cash have sold their crop at a loss, while others have opted to store their chillies in cold storage, hoping for a future price increase. Khammam district is home to more than 48 cold storage facilities, which have played a key role in preserving the chillies.

Three years ago, red chillies in Khammam commanded a price of Rs 25,000 per quintal. However, prices have since dropped significantly. Last year, traders bought red chillis from farmers at Rs 16,000 to Rs 18,000 per quintal, storing them in cold storage with hopes that prices would rise. Initially, this season's prices were around Rs 19,000 per quintal but have since dropped,

causing losses for both farmers and traders. Traders who stored the chillies in cold storage have been taking loans against the commodity. Marketing officials have also been advising farmers not to sell their crops at a loss but to store them instead.

Lakawat Shukla, a farmer from Manapuram in Suryapet district, shared that he cultivated red chillies on two acres with an investment of Rs 1.80 lakh. However, the traders are offering just Rs 12,000 a quintal in the market. He harvested 19 bags of chillies and paid agricultural workers Rs 350 per day for harvesting. Shukla has called on the government to fix a fair price for red chillis, as farmers are struggling to recover their costs.

Another farmer, G. Shankar from Nalgonda district, cultivated red chillis on two acres, paying a lease of Rs 16,000 per acre. He harvested 13 quintals but was offered only Rs 8,000 per quintal at the market. Shankar spent Rs 7,000 on labour costs and expressed concern that even if traders offered Rs 20,000 per quintal, it would still not be enough to cover his expenses.

Fatal accidents involving goods vehicles surge

PNS ■ WARANGAL

In the undivided Warangal district, it is common practice for people to take goods vehicles on rent to travel together. People are travelling in these goods vehicles with overloaded goods, putting their lives at risk and causing accidents. Despite regulations prohibiting the transportation of people in goods vehicles, vehicle owners and drivers throw the rules to the wind.

As a result, lives are lost, and survivors live with permanent disabilities for the rest of their lives. Vehicle owners are facing legal consequences. Ultimately, both the passengers and vehicle owners are suffering as their lives are shattered in accidents.

Due to a shortage of labourers in villages for agricultural work, farmers are dependent on labourers from other areas. To transport large numbers of labourers, auto-rickshaw trolleys are deployed.

The owners of these trolleys are also overloading them with workers. In such cases, accidents happen due to the overloaded vehicles, resulting in deaths. People are also relying on auto-rickshaw trolleys and tractors for attending weddings and fairs, which increases the risk of accidents.

Although there used to be only one Road Transport Officer for the entire undivided Warangal district, road inspections by the Road Transport Authority are conspicuously absent. Even after the district was divided and more officers were appointed, inspections have become rare.

People expressed the opinion that there are no inspections like before. Now, authorities are allegedly focusing on registering one or two cases a day based on targets set by higher officials, limiting their work to only filing cases in the offices. There are also allegations that no awareness campaigns are being conducted for vehicle owners and the public to prevent accidents.

The regulation clearly states that people should not travel in goods vehicles, as they are designed for transporting goods, not passengers. Transporting passengers in goods vehicles is against the rules. On January 27, a total of 22 labourers from Municipality village in the Hasanparti mandal of Hanumakonda district were travelling in an auto-rickshaw trolley to Vangapalli in Kamalapur mandal for agricultural work. On their return in the evening, the trolley collided head-on with an RTC bus on the Guduru-Ambala road. This incident led to the death of several people.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA, REVENUE DEPARTMENT									
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR HYDERABAD DISTRICT									
FORM VII									
(See Sub-rule (1) of rule-25 and Section-19 (1) of the Act-30/2013)									
DECLARATION									
Gazette Hyd. - HAML No.57, No. C6/164/2024-LHS (276 to 287)		Dated: 24-03-2025 Dated: 21-03-2025							
Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana Collector, Hyderabad District that a total of 993.37 Sq. yds of land is required in Shan-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District namely affected under Metro Rail Phase-II, MGBS to Chandrasangutta in Kondur-VI, stretch from Dausah shifts.									
Therefore, Declaration is made that a piece of land measuring, more or less 993.37 Sq. Yards under acquisition for the above said project in the Shan-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District whose detailed description is as following:-									
Sl. No.	Serial No.	Plot No.	Type of Title	Name & Address of person interested	Area (sq. yds.)	Boundaries	Traces	Structure	Remarks
1	277	23-6-1015	Owner	Ramesh Babu	69.19	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-2
2	277	23-6-1015	Owner	Smt. B. Uma Rani W/o Late Sri Amarnath Beemam	80.40	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-3
3	277	23-6-1015	Owner	1. Md Farooq, 2. Md Bashir, 3. Niaz Ahmad, 4. Niaz Ahmad, 5. Mohammed Hussain SioShahbaz Ahmed, 6. Aziz Ahmad, 7. Md. Shabbir Ahmed, 8. Mohammed Abdul Romzeer/Sio Mohammed Abdul Nayeem, 9. Smt. Hoana Begum W/o Mohammed Abdul Nayeem, 10. Hebeeb Osman, 11. Smt. Aliya Nabeed W/o Late Md. Jawad Raja, 12. Yousof Ba Ramzan Sio, Late Abdul Khader Ba Ramzan, 13. Sri. Sajjad Pasha Sio/ Mr. Akram Pasha, 14. Owner Bin Mohd Wahlan Sio Mohd Wahlan	112.87	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		C-G-3
4	277	23-6-988	Owner	1. Alaghapura Police Out Post, 2. Sri Mohammed Abdul Nayeem Sio Late Mohammed Abdul Raheem	49.80	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-2
5	285	23-6-983 & 985	Owner	Mohammed Abdul Nayeem	9.60	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-4
6	285	23-6-983 & 985	Owner	Rakha Rani	14.28	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-2
7	285	23-6-983 & 985	Owner	Sri. J. Narsimhulu, Sio Late J. Jaggaiah	9.63	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-2
8	285	23-6-983 & 985	Owner	1. Sri. J. Narsimhulu, Sio Late J. Jaggaiah 2. Praveen Sio Late Narsing Rao	10.76 8.11 16.87	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-1
9	285	23-6-983 & 985	Owner	1. Rupaender Kumar Sharma Sio Late Chandra Kishore Sharma, 2. Puspender Kumar Sharma Sio Late Chandra Kishore Sharma, 3. Jahangir Khan, 4. Kamtha Gupta W/o Suresnder Kumar Gupta	1.78 9.88 11.66	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G
10	285	23-6-983 & 985	Owner	1. Sunil Kumar Srivastav	31.75	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-2
11	285	23-6-983 & 985	Owner	1. Ishaq Ahmed Quadri 2. Ali Ahmed Quadri 3. Sharif Kothari 4. Sri. Sundar Mehta Sio Late Sham Raj Mehta 5. Sri. Anil Jain Sio Ashok Kumar 6. Sandeep Gupta	15.96 4.73 20.71	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G
12	285	23-6-983 & 985	Owner	A/1) Y. Govind Raju 2) Y. Govardhan Raju, 3) Y. Nagaru Yastee, All Sons of late Y. Kamalamma W/o Late Y. Venkatesham, R/o 23-6-983/W2, Ram Bakshi Banda, Shaikbanda, Hyderabad. B/1) Sandeep Gupta Sio Om Prakash Gupta, 2) Smt Krishna Gupta W/o Sandeep Gupta	46.42 4.68 51.10	North: Neighbour Property South: Neighbour Property East: Neighbour Property West: Neighbour Property	Road		G-3

2 dead, 2 injured as car collides with tanker

PNS ■ SURYAPETA

Two persons were killed and two others were injured when a sport utility vehicle (SUV) collided with a water tank near Shantinagar-Bojjiguda Tanda village under Ananthagiri mandal in Suryapet district on Tuesday.



According to local reports, four individuals—Somu Krishna Reddy, Ammireddy Padma, Upender Reddy, and Brahma Reddy—from Vepasingerum village in Mellacheruvu mandal were returning to Kodad after attending the Ellamma festival in Khammam. The deceased were identified as Somu Krishna Reddy and Ammireddy Padma. Upender Reddy and Brahma Reddy suffered severe injuries. The deceased were shifted to Kodad Government Hospital.

Police officers told to earn people's trust through their work

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh has urged police officers to uphold integrity in their work to foster respect and dignity for the police force.

During his first visit to the Atmakur Police Station on Tuesday, the Police Commissioner inspected the station's surroundings. He then assessed the operation of the CCTV cameras in the control room and inspected various record rooms within the station.

After going through several records, he sought information from Inspector Santosh regarding the types of crimes in the area, the number of known offenders, daily accident statistics, and details about the police station's jurisdiction and personnel.

He highlighted the importance of honesty among police officers to build public trust, respond promptly to complaints, and take proactive steps to prevent road accidents on the main road of Warangal-Bhupalpattanam, which is under the station's jurisdiction.



Warangal Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh at Atmakur Police Station in Warangal district on Tuesday

He also underscored the necessity of being vigilant in crime prevention.

He was accompanied by East Zone DCP Ankit Kumar and ACP Satish Babu. To address illegal sand transportation, Police Commissioner Sunpreet Singh, along with Deputy Commissioner of Police Ankit Kumar, visited the police check-post in the Kanthathmakur area, which is

under the Atmakur Police Station's jurisdiction.

During this visit, the Police Commissioner inquired about the responsibilities of the staff at the check-post and the number of vehicles inspected throughout the day.

He also asked how the staff would verify permits of vehicles carrying sand, and the check-post personnel demonstrated their inspection procedures to him.

Blast at hotel sparks panic

PNS ■ NALGONDA

A powerful explosion at a restaurant in Nalgonda caused panic in the early hours of Tuesday. Authorities are still investigating the cause of the blast and have not yet determined whether it was due to a cylinder explosion or something else.

The incident happened at the Hot Bucket Biryani Centre. The impact of the blast sent furniture in the restaurant flying outside onto the road. Fortunately, as the explosion happened after the restaurant had closed, no injuries were reported.

A fire broke out following the explosion, but fire services personnel quickly arrived at the scene and managed to contain it. The blast occurred soon after the restaurant had closed for the day. Investigations are currently underway to determine the exact cause of the explosion.

Man attacked, wife sexually assaulted

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

In the early hours of Tuesday, a man was reportedly assaulted and his wife was sexually assaulted by unidentified individuals at the Mamidipally crossroad under Kandi mandal. The couple had got out of an auto-rickshaw on NH-65 at 4 am near Tilottam Gardens and were on their way to Mamidipally village when they were confronted by the

assailants. When the husband attempted to defend his wife, he was beaten, and she was subsequently attacked.

A few hours later, with the assistance of their relatives, the couple reported the incident to the Sangareddy rural police.

The police have since taken the victim to the government hospital in Sangareddy for medical examinations.

Investigation is currently underway.

MLC promises to support Madasi Madari Kuruvala

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

MLC Naveen Kumar Reddy has promised that he would raise the issue of Madasi Madari Kuruvala in the Legislative Council. On Tuesday, several leaders, led by Madasi Madari Kuruvala Taluka president Sindham Vithalaya, met MLC Naveen Kumar Reddy in Shadnagar to discuss their concerns and submitted a petition outlining their grievances.

During the meeting, Naveen Kumar Reddy highlighted that while Scheduled Castes certificates were issued to Madasi Madari Kuruvala in many parts of the erstwhile district, the same had not

been implemented in the Shadnagar constituency. Despite assurances from former MLA Anjaiah Yadav in the previous government and MLA Shankaraiah now, the issue remains unresolved.

After being briefed on the matter, the MLC assured the leaders that he would bring their concerns to the attention of the government in the Legislative Council and strive to ensure justice for the community.

Leaders Banda Venkatesh, district unit vice president Kore Raju, Taluka general secretary Banda Kumar, and media convener Mandal Balaraj participated in the programme.



MLC Naveen Kumar Reddy with the representatives of Madari Kuruvala Association in Shadnagar on Tuesday

Indian Bank

KHAMMAM BRANCH 2-2-32833, PSR ROAD GANDHI CHOWK, KHAMMAM TELANGANA-507003
Phone: 08742-228347

PUBLICATION DEMAND NOTICE

Notice under Sec. 13 (2) of The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002.

Sent on 15.03.2025 by Regd. Post

To: 1. Borrower: Mr. Mohammed Abdul Nisar Sio Mohammed Abdul Hameed, H.No.4-2-5911B/9/1, Puli Gopavindray Nagar, Mahabubabad, Mahabubabad Dist, Telangana-508101.
2. Co-Borrower: Mrs. Nazima Mikhat W/o Mohammed Abdul Nisar, H.No.4-2-5911B/9/1, Puli Gopavindray Nagar, Mahabubabad, Mahabubabad Dist, Telangana-508101.

Sir/Madam,
Sub: Your Loan No. 891298373 (B Home Loan) with Indian Bank, Mahabubabad Branch-Regd.

You committed default in repayment of loans to the tune of due as on date 14/03/2025 amounts to Rs.15,66,484/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Sixty Six Thousand Four Hundred and Eighty Four Only) and the said amount carries further interest at the agreed rate from 15/03/2025 till date of repayment. The Bank issued notice under the Act on 15/03/2025 calling upon you to repay the outstanding amount of due as on date 14/03/2025 amounts to Rs.15,66,484/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Sixty Six Thousand Four Hundred and Eighty Four Only) and the said amount carries further interest at the agreed rate from 15/03/2025 till date of repayment. The notice was sent to you by Regd. post. You are called upon to pay due as on date 14/03/2025 amounts to Rs.15,66,484/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakhs Sixty Six Thousand Four Hundred and Eighty Four Only) and the said amount carries further interest at the agreed rate from 15/03/2025 till date of repayment within 60 days from the date of this notice failing which Bank will be constrained to exercise its rights of enforcement of security interest as against the secured assets given in the schedule hereunder. This Notice is without prejudice to any other right reserved available to the Bank.

SCHEDULE: The specific details of the assets in which security interest is created are enumerated hereunder: **Mortgaged assets:** All that part and parcel of land and residential house (Ground Floor - 917.00 Sq Ft and First Floor - 1264.00 Sq Ft) in S/No.4762, 4771, 4772, 494/B, 496 and 497 in Plot No.71 bearing H.No.4-2-5911B/9/1 to an extent of 148.50 Sq.Yds of Mahabubabad Revenue, Mahabubabad Mandal within limits of Mahabubabad Municipal Corporation, Mahabubabad Dist, Telangana bounded by North: 40 feet Municipal Road, South: Place of Anantha Muthiah, East: House of Shaik Yusuf, West: House of Venkatesh Varunathaw.

Date: 25.03.2025
Place: Mahabubabad

Sd/- AUTHORISED OFFICER
Indian Bank

ACROSS THE STATES



Assam passes Bill to regulate coaching centres

The Assam assembly on Tuesday passed a bill to regulate private coaching centres, making it mandatory for registration of all such institutes and strict compliance with laid-down guidelines. During discussion on the proposed legislation, MLA Sherman Ali Ahmed was suspended from the House by Deputy Speaker Numol Momin for disrupting a minister's reply. Ahmed, who had been earlier suspended from the Congress, tried to intervene when Education Minister Ranaj Pegu was speaking, prompting the deputy speaker to suspend him for 10 minutes. Pegu, who had moved the proposed new law, said the objective behind it is to control commercialisation of coaching centres and ensure that guardians get justice. "The guardians and students had no one to approach if they are duped or misled by the coaching institutes. Hence, we have brought this bill," he said.



LS clears Bill to replace 100 years old Boiler Act

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed a bill to provide for the regulation of boilers, safety of life and property of persons from the danger of explosions of steam-boilers and uniformity in registration. The Boilers Bill, 2024, seeks to repeal the century-old Boilers Act, 1923. The bill was earlier passed by the Rajya Sabha in December last year. The bill, which aims to decriminalise seven offences and promote ease of doing business, was cleared in the Upper House by a voice vote. The bill also has provisions to ensure the safety of persons working inside a boiler. It also provides that repair of boilers should be undertaken by qualified and competent persons. Piloting the bill, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said several colonial-era redundant and obsolete provisions have been removed and the bill seeks to do away with the colonial mind-set. "We have made the bill simple and readable," he said.



CRPF chief honours woman SI for saving passenger's life

CRPF chief GP Singh on Tuesday commended a woman sub-inspector who recently saved the life of a Delhi Metro passenger by performing CPR on him in a moving train, officials said. Director General (DG) Singh met sub-inspector Anjali at the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) headquarters in Delhi and praised her for saving a precious life when she was returning from work. The incident took place on March 19 between the Kirti Nagar and the Moti Nagar stations on Delhi Metro's Blue Line. The 27-year-old sub-inspector saw a man in his 40s standing behind her falling unconscious on the floor of the coach. The man probably suffered a cardiac issue and fainted in the heavily-crowded train, CRPF officials had said. Losing no time, Anjali administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on the man and he soon came back to his senses.

Chaos in Tripura Assembly over minister's 'racist' remark

Privilege motion moved

PNS ■ AGARTALA

Chaos reigned supreme in the Tripura assembly on Tuesday as the CPI(M) MLA demonstrated seeking an apology from Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ratan Lal Nath for his alleged racist remarks against Leader of the Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury. Nath had made the comment on Monday when Chaudhury was addressing the House.

After the Question Hour concluded, CPI(M) MLA Shyamal Chakraborty sought an apology from the minister

for his remark.

As Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen continued with the proceedings, the CPI(M) MLAs rushed to the Well raising slogans, insisting that he has to apologise.

Nath intervened, claiming that he did not have any intentions to hurt the opposition leader's tribe.

With the speaker not paying heed to the opposition's demand, the CPI(M) MLAs walked out of the House.

Chaudhury, meanwhile, moved a privilege motion against the minister for his remark.

PM-CARE fund more transparent than UPA's PM relief fund: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the Congress party's management of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, alleging a lack of accountability and transparency during the previous UPA regime.

During his reply to the debate on the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill 2024, the minister said while the Prime Minister's Relief Fund was created during the UPA era, the PM-CARE Fund was established during the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government. "Under the Congress regime, only one family had control over the prime minister's relief fund. The Congress party president used to be the member of the prime minister relief fund. What reply you will give to the people of this country?" Shah said.



The Prime Minister's Relief Fund was created during the UPA era, the PM-CARE Fund was established during the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government

The minister alleged that under the UPA, the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation received funds from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Even Public sector undertakings (PSUs) were funding the foundation, he added.

"There was no transparency during their time. There was no committee to look into the

utilisation of funds," he said.

In contrast, the minister said the PM-CARE Fund's management includes the top five ministers, including the Finance and Defence Ministers as trustees.

A committee of five secretaries reviews and approves its expenditure. The funds of the PM-CARE were used for crit-

ical COVID-19 infrastructure like ventilators and vaccination.

No political party president is involved in the fund's management, he said.

"People will decide who has more accountability," the minister said, challenging the Congress party to explain its previous fund management practices.



B'desh: Awaiting India's response to Yunus-Modi meeting proposal

PNS ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh on Tuesday said it was awaiting a response from India to its proposal for a meeting between Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok next week.

"From our side, we are fully ready for the meeting. Now, we await a positive response from India," Foreign Secretary Md. Jashim Uddin said at a media briefing here, outlining the Chief Adviser's forthcoming visits to China and Thailand.

Dhaka earlier sent a letter to India proposing a meeting between Yunus and Modi amid a strained bilateral relation after the August 5, 2024 regime change in Bangladesh when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 16-year Awami League regime was toppled and she virtually fled to India.

Modi and Yunus are likely to visit Thailand to attend the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) summit.

Dhaka has proposed their meeting on the sidelines of the event. Jashim Uddin acknowledged the existing "strain" in bilateral relations but said this could be overcome if a bilateral meeting is held between the two leaders.

Last week in Delhi, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson

Randhir Jaiswal said he had no update on any planned meeting between the two leaders.

Yunus will be in Bangkok to attend the BIMSTEC summit from April 2-4.

Ahead of the Bangkok visit, Yunus will travel to China on a three-day visit starting Wednesday to attend the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) annual conference in Hainan Province, a business summit nearly identical to the World Economic Forum conference in Switzerland.

The foreign ministry said Yunus was expected to hold a bilateral meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit during which the trans-border Teesta River reservoir issue might be discussed.

India earlier expressed its reservations regarding Chinese involvement in the project during the Hasina regime.

"Teesta is not on the agenda of this visit. It is a matter of top leadership's will. However, water management is on the agenda, and there is a possibility that Teesta will come up during those discussions," the foreign secretary said.

China has previously conducted a survey to assess the scope of the proposed Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration project assumed to be at the invitation of the now-deposed Hasina regime. Later, Hasina said India could carry out the project since the river is shared by the two neighbours.

'INDISCIPLINE' IN HOUSE

Odisha Assembly suspends 12 Congress MLAs for 7 days

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy on Tuesday suspended 12 Congress MLAs for seven days over "indiscipline" in the House.

The action against the Congress legislators came after the House adopted a motion moved by government Chief Whip Saroj Pradhan.

The suspended MLAs include Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Rama Chandra Kadam, Sagar Charan Das, Mangu Khilla, Satyajeet Goswami, Ashok Kumar Das, Dasarathi Gamango and Sofia Firdous.

Two other Congress MLAs - Taraprasad Bahinipati and Ramesh Jena - were, however,

not suspended as they were not present in the House when the announcement was being made. Bahinipati was earlier suspended for seven working days on similar grounds on March 11.

As soon as Padhy announced the decision, Congress members created a ruckus in the assembly, playing gongs as a mark of protest.

The suspended MLAs also demonstrated in the Well of the House and recited hymns, even as Padhy urged them to vacate the assembly and stop the sit-in. Odisha's main opposition party, the BJD, condemned the Speaker's move, called it a "motivated" one to suppress the voice of opposition in the assembly.



"Congress MLAs have been suspended to scare us. We will not be afraid of the action. We will fight and not compromise in any way," Bahinipati said.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das also criticised the decision and

demanded immediate withdrawal of the suspension order.

"We had demanded formation of a House committee to inquire into crimes against women. And, they attempted to suppress the voice of the Congress. We will not tolerate this," Das asserted.

GOLD SMUGGLING CASE

Court reserves order on Ranya Rao's bail plea

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A special court here has reserved its order on the bail plea of Kannada actress Harshavardhini Ranya alias Ranya Rao in the gold smuggling case until March 27, following a detailed hearing of arguments from both the defence and the prosecution.

During the proceedings, Rao's counsel Kiran Jawali argued for her release, while the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence's (DRI) lawyer, Madhu Rao, presented evidence suggesting her direct role in the illicit transfer of funds.

According to the prosecution, the actress admitted to using hawala channels to facilitate gold purchases, a claim that strengthens the case against her.

As part of the legal process, officials have invoked Section



108 of the Customs Act, which mandates a judicial inquiry.

Authorities clarified that this is not a police interrogation but a judicial investigation to scrutinise financial irregularities and potential violations of law. The probe aims to uncover the depth of the illegal transactions and any further connections to the broader smuggling network.

Gold bars worth Rs 12.56 crore were seized from Ranya, the step-daughter of DGP-rank officer K Ramachandra Rao at Kempegowda International Airport on March 3 upon her arrival from Dubai.

Goa police force faces shortage of 1,000 personnel : CM

PNS ■ PANAJI

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant told the legislative assembly on Tuesday that the state police force was facing a shortage of nearly 1,000 personnel of different ranks.

Responding to a question tabled by BJP MLA Ulhas Naik Tuenkar, he said that as against the total sanctioned strength of 7,791, 910 posts are vacant as only 6,881 police personnel are currently working in the force. The shortage is seen across all the ranks in the police force. At the highest rank, the post of Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) is vacant. One post of Superintendent of Police is vacant while out of nine sanctioned vacancies for Deputy Commandant of India Reserve Battalion (IRB), all the posts are vacant, the data submitted in the House said.

'China has Deepseek, the US has ChatGPT - Where does India stand?'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Adami Party MP Raghav Chadha on Tuesday in Rajya Sabha questioned India's position in the world in AI, as China and US make big strides in the field.

Chadha said that America has developed indigenous models of artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Grok, while China has come up with Deepseek, a low cost AI model.

"Is India lagging in the field of AI? Will India not be able to have its own generative AI model?" Chadha wondered.

He said that between 2010 and 2022, of all AI patents registered in the world, 60 per cent were by America and 20 per cent by China.

On the other hand, India, which is the world's fifth-largest economy, has registered only half per cent of patents, Chadha said.

He added that both, the



USA and China, not only have a four-five years of head start, but they have also invested heavily in AI research and development.

According to him, 15 per cent of the total AI workforce are Indians, as about 4.5 lakh of them have been working in foreign countries as AI professionals.

Despite India being a digital economy with over 90 crore internet users, it has become a consumer of AI and not its

producer, he said.

The AAP leader, when asked about India's AI potential, said that OpenAI founder Sam Altman termed it "disappointing" and urged the government to deliver a response by becoming an AI producer.

To be on the frontline in the field, India needs to be producing indigenous AI chips, have a dedicated AI infrastructure fund, research grants, tax breaks as well as a check on talent migration, he said.

Avalanches recurring phenomenon in JK, Himachal, U'khand, Arunachal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Avalanches are a recurring natural phenomenon in high-altitude areas such as Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh and the government is aware of the significant risks they pose to human lives and property, Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday.

Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said automated weather stations and doppler radars have been installed in vulnerable regions to improve forecasting capabilities.

He said that the Defence Geoinformatics Research Establishment (DGRE) has installed 72 snow meteorological observatories and 45 automated weather stations (AWS) are operational, 100 (AWS) are under testing and 203 (AWS) are under installation.



The data is regularly received from snow observatories at 3 hour intervals and at 1 hour interval from AWS at DGRE. This output and the expert opinion is used to draw avalanche forecast for different areas at least 24 hour in advance, Rai said in a written reply to a question.

He said the government is aware of the hazard of avalanches in the Himalayan regions, which poses signifi-

cant risks to human lives and property.

"Avalanches are a recurring natural phenomenon/disaster in high-altitude areas such as Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Arunachal Pradesh," he said.

The minister said the government effectively deploys technologies for improved early warning and forecasting of avalanches in the hazardous

zones.

Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) is a national level agency for avalanche forecasting and is involved in the daily Operational Avalanche Forecasting for Defence users, he said.

Rai said the DGRE, Chandigarh under the DRDO is also the nodal agency for studying and developing avalanche mitigation technologies. The methodologies include aerial reconnaissance/ground surveys, which are further used as an input to prepare avalanche hazard maps.

Regular operational avalanche warning is issued by DGRE to the Army and civilian population in the snow bound regions of north-west Himalayas. Additionally, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) supplies six-hourly weather updates to enhance situational awareness, Rai said.

Delhi govt to relocate Tihar jail, allocates Rs 10 cr for survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday announced plans to relocate Tihar Jail to the city's outskirts while setting aside Rs 10 crore in the 2025-26 budget for survey and consultancy services related to the shifting of the jail.

Established in 1958, Tihar Jail is one of India's largest prison complexes comprising nine prisons spread over more than 400 acres - one prison in Rohini and six prisons in Mandoli.

"In order to decongest the existing Tihar Jail Complex for the welfare of prisoners, a new scheme for development of a new Jail Complex by shifting the existing Tihar Jail Complex to some other location has been formulated," the Delhi chief minister said while presenting the budget in the assembly.

Located in West Delhi, Tihar is close to Tilak Nagar and Hari Nagar areas of the city. Originally designed to house approximately 10,025



inmates, it currently accommodates over 19,000, leading to overcrowding and security challenges. The Delhi government has initiated the development of new prison complexes in Narela to alleviate congestion.

Meanwhile, a Tihar Jail source said, "We had also asked for space in Baprola, but due to encroachment, we couldn't get that. However, we have written to the Delhi government to provide 100 acres of land somewhere else."

The source said that Jail Numbers 1 to 9 are designed to house approximately 5,000 inmates, but these accommodate over 12,000 prisoners at present.

Editor's TAKE

Turkey in turmoil

Ekrem Imamoglu's arrest could pose a serious challenge for President Erdogan

Democracy is increasingly under attack across the world. Turkey is the latest case in point where the President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is out to weed out any opposition and would not mind even if it irks the people at large. Turkey is facing one of its most intense political crises in years following the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, a key opposition leader and major rival to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The arrest has sparked mass protests across the country, raising concerns about Turkey's democratic future and stability. Imamoglu was arrested on corruption-related charges, including running a criminal organisation, bribery, extortion, bid-rigging, and illegal data collection.

His supporters argue that the charges are politically motivated and are part of Erdogan's broader strategy to sideline a formidable contender for the 2028 presidential race. The Turkish government, however, denies any political interference, insisting that the judiciary remains independent. The timing is particularly significant, as it coincided with the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) holding a symbolic primary election to endorse him as their presidential candidate.

The arrest has triggered widespread protests across Turkey, particularly in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir. Riot police have responded with water cannons, tear gas, and plastic bullets, while demonstrators have fought back with stones. Despite the government's vow to crack down on what it calls "street terror," the protests continue to gain momentum. The opposition sees Imamoglu's detention as an attack on democracy.

In response to the government crackdown, the CHP has set up nationwide ballot boxes for non-members to cast 'solidarity votes' in support of the embattled mayor. The international community has reacted strongly to Imamoglu's arrest. The Council of Europe has condemned the move and called for his immediate release. Political analysts suggest Erdogan is attempting to eliminate his strongest opposition ahead of the next elections. Domestically, the case has rattled Turkey's financial markets. Investors are increasingly wary of the country's political instability, which could further impact Turkey's struggling economy. This is not Imamoglu's first legal battle. In 2022, he was convicted for allegedly insulting Turkey's Supreme Electoral Council. More recently, a university nullified his degree over alleged irregularities, effectively barring him from running for president.

His political ascent has been a major challenge for Erdogan. He secured a surprise victory in Istanbul's 2019 mayoral elections, defeating Erdogan's ruling AKP in a major blow. A rerun of the election only solidified his popularity, making him one of the strongest opposition figures in Turkish politics today.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has increasingly exhibited authoritarian tendencies, undermining Turkey's democratic institutions. Over the years, he has consolidated power by curbing judicial independence, restricting press freedom, and suppressing political opposition. His government has jailed journalists, academics, and activists critical of his rule, while elections have been marred by allegations of unfair practices, media censorship, and crackdowns on rival parties.

The transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system in 2018 granted Erdogan sweeping executive powers, weakening checks and balances. Furthermore, his handling of protests, such as the Gezi Park demonstrations and the post-2016 coup purges, has drawn widespread criticism for human rights violations. These actions have significantly eroded Turkey's democratic credentials, pushing the country toward an increasingly autocratic rule.

A historic return from space

Sunita Williams safe return has sparked pride across India and the world, with leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, celebrating her achievement

NASA astronaut Sunita Williams, of Indian descent, is in the news this week. Her team has returned safely to Earth after spending nine months in space. They initially planned to be in space for eight days, but technical problems extended their mission. The spacecraft returned without them in September. This week, they landed in a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule alongside Nick Hague and Alexander Gorbunov.

After landing near Tallahassee, they were taken on stretchers for health checks. Her return is a moment of immense pride for leaders in India and across the globe, marking a significant leap in space exploration. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote an emotional letter to the "illustrious daughter of India," inviting her to visit India after her return.

Notable figures who praised her include Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, among others. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed her joy: "Our daughter of India returns to us, and we are deeply, deeply happy and elated. We are profoundly happy for Butch Wilmore as well. Hail their courage, hail their return, hail human glory!" Mamata also called for a Bharat Ratna for Sunita in a post on X.

Sunita Williams, 59, is a former US Navy captain. She was born in Ohio to a Gujarati father, Deepak Pandya, from Jhulasan in Gujarat, and a Slovenian mother, Ursuline Bonnie Pandya. Sunita practices Hinduism and took a copy of the Bhagavad Gita and a Ganesh idol to space. She feels proud of her Indian heritage and said, "Everywhere I have lived, I have had Ganesh with me, so he had to come with me to space. The last time, I brought a small copy of the Upanishads."

The NASA astronauts will now undergo standard protocols to mitigate the physical challenges posed by prolonged weightlessness in space. They have been sent to the Johnson Space Center in Houston, where they will undergo recovery and return to normal life after some time.

According to Newsweek, Sunita has spent 322 days in space across several missions. She previously held the record for the most spacewalks by a female astronaut, with nine spacewalks, until Peggy Whitson broke the record in 2017. Sunita joined NASA in 1998 and has helped test new space technologies and conduct research on the International Space Station (ISS). She has been married to former police officer Michael J Williams for



over 20 years.

What began as an eight-day mission became a remarkable testament to the astronauts' resilience.

Their extended stay included over 4,500 orbits and a staggering journey of more than 121 Million statute miles.

Experts worry that spending a long time in microgravity can cause health problems for astronauts when they return to Earth's gravity. NASA maintains that transitioning from one gravity field to another is more challenging than it sounds.

"It affects spatial orientation, head-eye and hand-eye coordination, balance, and locomotion, with some crew members experiencing space motion sickness," the US agency stated.

The rehabilitation program includes daily two-hour sessions to help improve mobility, build muscle strength, and increase endurance. Life on the ISS follows a set routine, focusing on dealing with weightlessness, fluid shifts in the body, and the loss of bone density. Their extended stay has provided valuable scientific insights into space exploration. Their endurance in the face of balance issues, dizziness, and muscle weakness—common due to the legs and back not supporting body weight—is commendable.

Although both astronauts have completed their mission, adjusting to life on Earth

will take time.

Former US President Donald Trump has turned the issue of the stranded astronauts into a political matter. He blamed former President Joe Biden for not helping them.

The White House's official X account stated, "PROMISE MADE, PROMISE KEPT: President Trump promised to rescue the stranded astronauts while criticising Joe Biden."

Trump mentioned Sunita, referring to her as "the woman with wild hair" in his comments.

Trump explained why he has not yet invited the NASA astronauts to the White House. "They have to get better. You have no pull in your muscles and gravity when you are up there (in space). You can lift a thousand pounds like this," the former US President told Fox News.

Sunita and her crew's return is a key success in space exploration. This mission will provide valuable data for future space travel and help improve spacecraft technology. The mission was critical in understanding

the effects of prolonged space travel, aiding NASA and other space agencies in planning future missions, including sending humans to Mars.

Conclusion

Sunita Williams' safe return from her extended mission in space marks a significant milestone in human space exploration. Despite the unforeseen technical setbacks that prolonged their stay, the mission has contributed valuable scientific data that will aid future space endeavors, particularly in understanding the long-term effects of space travel on the human body. Leaders and citizens alike have celebrated her achievements, with calls for national recognition reinforcing her status as a symbol of perseverance and excellence. As Sunita and her fellow astronauts undergo rehabilitation, their experiences will continue to shape the future of space travel. With missions to Mars and beyond on the horizon, their insights into endurance, adaptation, and survival in microgravity will be invaluable. This mission underscores the evolving challenges and triumphs of human spaceflight, reminding us of the limitless possibilities that lie ahead in the quest for exploration beyond Earth.

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

Green infrastructure for sustainable cities

SECOND Opinion



HARI SOMALRAJU

According to UN reports, approximately 55 per cent of the global population lives in urban areas, but this percentage is expected to reach 68 per cent by 2050. Rapid urban growth surpasses effective urban and transport planning, resulting in worsening air and noise pollution, urban heat islands, and limited green spaces. These challenges contribute to significant health risks, including increased mortality rates for city dwellers.

However, with strategic urban planning and sustainable transport solutions, cities can mitigate these harmful effects and create healthier, more liveable environments.

One of the most effective ways to achieve this is through active transportation. Cities that invest in pedestrian-friendly pathways and bike lanes encourage physical activity while also minimising reliance on cars.

By ensuring safety and convenience, such infrastructure makes walking and cycling more appealing to residents, reducing vehicle congestion and emissions.

Public transport also plays a critical role in sustainable urban mobility. Expanding metro networks, bus services, and other mass transit options can significantly ease traffic congestion and lower pollution levels. For example, Paris is enhancing its transit system with new routes to offer viable

alternatives to car travel, encouraging a shift toward greener commuting habits.

Technology is another powerful tool for improving urban transport. Smart traffic systems that analyse real-time road conditions can optimise signal timings, reducing unnecessary idling and emissions. Adaptive traffic control strategies lead to smoother traffic flow, minimising pollution and enhancing efficiency.

The transition to electric vehicles (EVs) is a key component of sustainable transport. By investing in EV charging stations, cities make it easier for residents to adopt cleaner transportation options. Many municipalities are prioritising this shift to align with long-term sustainability goals. Green urban planning extends beyond transport infrastructure. Parks, green roofs, and urban forests help combat the heat island effect while providing essential recreational spaces. Brisbane, for instance, has been actively designing cooler, walkable urban spaces, setting a precedent for other cities worldwide. Sustainable road construction materials further contribute to environmental benefits. The use of recycled asphalt and permeable concrete minimises resource consumption and improves stormwater management, making roads more resilient while reducing their ecological impact.

The advantages of sustainable urban transport planning are far-reaching. Reduced vehicle usage leads to lower carbon emissions and improved air quality. Access to green spaces and active transport options fosters healthier

lifestyles, reducing the risk of lifestyle-related diseases. Efficient public transport and smart traffic systems ease congestion, enhancing the daily lives of commuters. Additionally, investments in sustainable infrastructure create job opportunities and attract responsible businesses, stimulating economic growth.

Despite these benefits, several challenges must be addressed. Implementing sustainable infrastructure requires significant initial investment, but the long-term savings in public health improvements, reduced environmental damage, and economic development make it a worthwhile endeavour. Strong policies and regulations are essential to drive these initiatives forward, ensuring that sustainable urban development remains a priority. Community engagement is also crucial—when residents are actively involved in planning, projects are more likely to meet local needs and gain public support. The journey toward sustainable cities is both necessary and achievable. By prioritising active transport, public transit enhancements, smart traffic solutions, and green infrastructure, urban areas can minimise their environmental footprint while improving the quality of life for their residents. While challenges exist, the long-term benefits of a low-carbon, people-centric urban environment far outweigh the obstacles, paving the way for a greener and healthier future.

(The writer is managing director of Systra Group India. Views expressed are personal)

Leaderspeak



Rishabh Pant is an intelligent cricketer, and he will have picked up valuable insights regarding his batting and captaincy. I believe we will see him improve his performance. Additionally, when a captain scores runs or takes wickets, it significantly boosts their confidence in making bowling changes and setting the field. Once he gets some runs under his belt, I expect his captaincy to become even more assured.

SUNIL GAVASKAR, INDIAN CRICKETER



Letters to the Editor

Trump's Greenland gambit

Madam—President Donald Trump's renewed interest in acquiring Greenland has intensified geopolitical discussions and raised concerns among Greenlandic and Danish officials. In December 2024, Trump described the acquisition of Greenland as "an absolute necessity" for US national security, building upon a similar proposal from his first term that Denmark had previously declined. The situation escalated with the planned visit of a US delegation to Greenland, including National Security Adviser Mike Waltz, Second Lady Usha Vance, and Energy Secretary Chris Wright. This visit, coinciding with local elections, was labeled "highly aggressive" by Greenland's Prime Minister Mute Egede, who viewed it as an unwelcome pressure amid Trump's controversial annexation plans.

Despite significant opposition from Greenlandic lawmakers and the Danish government, the Trump administration has continued its efforts. In January 2025, Trump's son, Donald Trump Junior, visited Greenland's capital, Nuuk, distributing "Make America Great Again" hats and engaging with locals, actions perceived by many as attempts to sway public opinion.

The US delegation's visit included cultural engagements such as attending the Avannaata Qimussersu dogsled race and touring historical sites.

ANUSHKA BOHRA | UJJAIN

Clamour for Justice Varma's impeachment

Madam—Apropos of the headlines 'Bar demands Justice Varma's Impeachment' (March 25), amid heightened reactions from the Bar Associations and the public ire, it is imperative that the case should be handed over to the Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) and it should be first ascertained whether the unaccounted cash of ₹500 crore notes were demonetised.

The investigation should be taken to a logical end as early as possible lest the agitation of Allahabad Bar Association takes an ugly turn. Even for impeachment, the investigation is mandatory.

The Union Government and media have been much disciplined in handling matter of the unusually stashed cash found at the Delhi High Court Judge. But the Collegium's approach manifests reluctance and delay. The public is not convinced by the action in the matter. It should also be borne in mind that just one High Court Judge implicated in alleged recovery of huge unaccounted cash at home does not put the entire judiciary under fire.

But for this, the Supreme Court should have taken prompt action as they do in similar cases. Many a time, the High Court and Supreme Court benches held midnight hearings in very urgent cases and took decisions even taking cognisance suo moto. This time, their inertia is not convincing.

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

MPs' get a salary hike of 24 per cent

Madam—Parliament is the cornerstone of democracy, where the nation's fate is decided. The representatives sitting there should be committed to public service, yet reality paints a different picture.

While farmers take their own lives under the weight of debt, laborers struggle for fair wages, and youth remain unemployed, MPs focus on increasing their own salaries and privileges. This stark contrast mocks the very spirit of democracy.

Recently, Indian MPs' salaries were increased by 24 per cent, raising their monthly pay to ₹1.24 Lakh. Along with numerous perks such as travel allowances, medical benefits, and housing facilities, their total monthly benefits exceed ₹3 Lakh. Meanwhile, an unskilled worker earns around ₹20,358 per month, a highly skilled worker only ₹26,910—nearly 10 times less than an MP. This vast disparity questions the fairness of our democratic system.

In neighbouring countries, MPs' salaries are significantly lower. In Pakistan, it is ₹1,59,246, in Bangladesh ₹40,000, in Nepal ₹43,000, and in Sri Lanka merely ₹15,000. Given India's economic challenges, should MPs receive such high salaries and benefits while millions struggle for basic survival? Supporters argue that higher salaries ensure honesty in politics, but corruption and nepotism continue to flourish.

SACHIN TRIPATHI | SATNA

RESERVATION HAS BECOME A SLOGAN FOR HARNESSING VOTES

It has become a routine process to raise the issue of reservations whenever an election is near as now Bihar elections will be held after six months and political parties know that the issue will be challenged in the court and will be rejected by the judiciary and till then keep this alive for vote bank. In the Parliament elections, Opposition parties were to flare up the issue of reservations and due to this reason BJP could not get the absolute majority in the Lok Sabha, and it is a great weapon in the hands of Opposition.

Now the Karnataka government has declared four per cent reservation for Muslims in allotment of contracts, and it is also true that the state has already provided similar reservation for SCs and STs and OBC contractors.

Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India mandate that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth but authorises governments to "make special provisions for the

advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes."

The Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which the state Assembly passed the other day reserving for Muslims four per cent of contracts in civil works valued up to ₹2 Crore, and goods or services procurement contracts up to ₹1 Crore, hence, hardly qualifies for constitutional protection. The government would argue that the measure is designed to address the acute unemployment among the communities.

But the fact remains that the Constitution has designed reservation as a policy to ensure that communities which have been kept off the mainstream get a chance to be part of it. Economic disadvantages are an issue that have to be addressed separately.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

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

The ailing discoms need structural changes

India's power distribution companies (discoms) remain trapped in a cycle of mounting losses. Can the government's latest 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBSD) aims to curb inefficiencies and improve their financial health

FIRST Column

The power distribution companies (discoms) stand at the core of the power supply and distribution network in the country. Mostly owned and controlled by State Governments, they buy electricity from the generating companies (gencos) and supply it to the consumers. Yet, invariably, the financial health of discoms has been a matter of serious concern.

According to a report by the Lok Sabha's Standing Committee, the accumulated losses of discoms increased from ₹545,000 Crores in financial year (FY) 2020-21 to ₹584,000 Crores in 2021-22, ₹647,000 Crores in 2022-23 to ₹692,000 Crores in 2023-24. The government has sought to address these losses under a 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBSD). The Scheme was unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech for FY 2021-22.

Involving an outlay of ₹300,000 Crore for five years (FY 2021-22 to FY 2025-26), the RLRBSD was aimed at trimming discus Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses to pan-India levels to 12-15 per cent and gradually narrow the ACS-ARR gap (ACS stands for an average cost of purchase, transmission and distribution of electricity whereas ARR stands for the average revenue realized from its sale) by March 2026.

It has two components: (i) providing financial support for compulsory prepaid and smart metering to be implemented across the power supply chain, including in about 220 Million households and up-gradation and strengthening of the distribution infrastructure (ii) training and capacity building.

As reported in the Standing Committee, the Ministry of Power (MoP) has sought an extension of the Scheme by two years through FY 2027-28 to complete the envisaged targets.

Can the scheme deliver?

Before answering this question, we need to analyze the fundamental causes behind discoms losses. AT and C losses are a sophisticated nomenclature for leakage from the system or power theft. During FY 2015-16, these were 20.7 per cent. When, out of say 100 units of electricity that leave the generating stations or power dispatch centre, 20.7 units are stolen and hence not paid for, this is bound to have a debilitating effect on the discus operations.

The discoms could charge more on the sale of the balance 79.3 units to compensate for the 'nil' revenue on the 20.7 stolen units. But this is theoretical. So, the discoms would end up making a loss to the extent of revenue lost on stolen units. There is another potent factor that exacerbates their losses.



UTTAM GUPTA

The Electricity Act (2003) and the Guidelines issued by the MoP require the discoms to fix the electricity tariff supplied to consumers in a manner such that the ARR from its sale is equal to the ACS.

Yet under diktat from the State Government, either they don't bill certain households (HHs) at all (on consumption up to 200 or 300 units a month in Delhi or Punjab) or give a flat subsidy of ₹800 on monthly consumption (between 201 and 400 units a month in Delhi), besides free supply to farmers as in Punjab.

The discoms seek to make up for the resulting under-recoveries by charging more from industries and businesses for which the tariff can go up

to a high of ₹16 per unit as in Delhi (there being no more than two-three discoms in any jurisdiction hence an oligopolistic situation, they have no option but to pay). Moreover, the States not fully compensating discoms for the under-recoveries, despite making loud promises, further adds to the discom losses.

The twin problems of AT and C losses and under-recoveries on sale to HHs or farmers have existed for close to a quarter century. Since the beginning of 2000, the Centre has come up with four financial restructuring packages (FRPs) to help discoms.

While, the first two (2002, 2012) merely sought to condone their losses, the third namely the Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) launched in November 2015 required discoms to set their house in order and achieve certain milestones in exchange for financial assistance.

Under UDAY, discoms' mammoth debt of about ₹400,000 Crore was condoned. Instead of this, they were required to reduce AT and C losses from 20.7 per cent during FY 2015-16 to 15 per cent by FY 2018-19. Further, they were to reduce the ACS-ARR gap from ₹0.59 per unit of electricity during FY 2015-16 to 'zero' by FY 2018-19. But, the discoms failed to deliver.

During FY 2019-20, AT&C losses were 18.9 per cent against the 15 per cent target for FY 2018-19. The ACS-ARR gap during FY 2019-20 stood at ₹0.42 per unit against a target of 'zero' for FY 2018-19. During FY 2020-21, AT and C losses zoomed to 22.3 per cent and the ACS-ARR gap scaled up to ₹0.69 paise per unit. In the following years, despite some improvement, the AT and C losses still stood at a high of 16.87 per cent during FY 2023-24. No wonder, discoms were grappling with cumulative loss of ₹692,000 Crore in



FY 2023-24.

The RLRBSD launched in FY 2021-22 talks of lowering AT&C losses to 12-15 per cent by the end of FY 2025-26, a level that should have been reached in FY 2018-19. As for the ACS-ARR gap, it merely talks of 'gradually narrowing' the gap forgetting the 'zero' target that UDAY sought to achieve by FY 2018-19. Now, the MoP has shifted the goalpost to the end of FY 2027-28.

The Scheme seeks to address discoms losses by up-grading the distribution infrastructure, pre-paid and smart metering, training and capacity building and so on. Out of ₹300,000 Crore outlay proposed for implementing it, the Centre was to provide gross budgetary support (GBS) of close to ₹100,000 Crore and funding by Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) under irrevocable State Government guarantee. The fund's release is subject to discoms meeting the pre-qualifying criteria and achieving the basic minimum benchmark in reforms.

As for the follow-up action, in reply to a question in Parliament given by then Power Minister RK Singh in December 2023: "Till today, detailed project reports (DPRs) having totaa l outlay of ₹120,000 Crore has been approved for loss reduction works and ₹130,000 Crore for smart metering works." Further, as of January 2024, the total loan disbursed by PFC-REC was ₹112,000 Crore for 16 States, against the sanctioned amount of ₹133,000 Crore.

As for the GBS, the release of funds by the Centre during FY 2023-24 was a mere ₹6,000 Crore against the budget allocation of ₹12,000 Crore.

During FY 2024-25, as of February 10, 2025, 96 per cent of the ₹12,665 Crore allocated for the scheme was utilised as per the revised estimates for 2024-25. So, the money spent (GBS plus loans from PFC-REC) has been less than half of the intended outlay. But, more worrisome is the outcome.

Till last year, 'against the sanctioned smart meters of around 220 Million, only about 0.8 Million had been installed'. During the current FY, till February 10, 2025, 20.8 million smart meters have been installed.

That takes the total to 21.6 million. This is less than 10 per cent of the target. The scheme merely addresses the 'technical' side of the problem. It barely touches the fringe. The real problem has to do with free or heavily subsidised power and theft assured or facilitated by the political brass just to win elections. For this, it rides piggyback on discoms. Till this is addressed, discoms will continue to remain under serious financial stress.

(The writer is a policy analyst. Views expressed are personal)

Importance of Himalayan glaciers and risks posed by climate change

Himalayan glaciers are not just frozen reservoirs of water; they are the lifeblood of South Asia. These colossal ice masses feed major river systems, including the Ganges, Indus, and Brahmaputra, directly impacting over a billion people. However, these glaciers are vanishing at an alarming rate, putting millions of lives, biodiversity, and entire ecosystems at grave risk.

Among them, the Gangotri Glacier stands out, supplying water to the sacred and economically crucial Ganges River. The glacier's retreat is not just an environmental concern but a looming humanitarian crisis, threatening water security, agriculture, energy production, and even cultural heritage.

The Gangotri Glacier is just one part of a larger crisis, other Himalayan Glacier including Yamunotri, Pindari, Milam and Sunder Dhunga Glaciers are also Shrinking impacting tributaries such as the Yamuna, Kali and Ramganga rivers. This accelerating glacier retreat is disputing the delicate balance of the Ganga River system.

The Himalayas are warming at nearly twice the global average, causing glaciers to melt at an accelerated pace. Several studies, including those conducted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), confirm that Himalayan glaciers have lost over 20 per cent of their ice mass in the last four decades.

The Gangotri Glacier, which feeds the Ganges, has retreated by approximately 1,500 meters since 1935, with an annual recession rate of 10-22 meters. Scientists warn that by 2050, many smaller glaciers feeding the Ganges may completely disappear, leading to severe water shortages across northern India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

The situation is dire for other glaciers as well for example Yamunotri Glacier (source of the Yamuna River) is shrinking, affecting water supply to Delhi and surrounding regions. Pindari, Milam, and Sunderdhunga river area depleting, impacting tributaries such as the Kali, Ramganga. Chorabari Glacier (Kedarnath region) is receding, increasing the risk of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs), similar to the catastrophic 2013 Kedarnath floods.

The retreat of Himalayan glaciers will severely impact freshwater availability. The Ganges, which supports more than 400 Million people, is at risk of reduced flow in the dry season. This would devastate agriculture in the Indo-Gangetic plains, one of the most fertile regions on Earth. Without adequate glacial meltwater, farmers will face severe droughts, reducing crop yields and leading to food shortages.

As glaciers melt, rivers swell, leading to devastating floods. Initially, increased meltwater boosts river flows, but as glaciers deplete, erratic water patterns emerge, alternating between excessive flooding and extreme drought.

There are over 2,500 glacial lakes in the Himalayas, with more than 200 classified as dangerous and among them 50 glacier lakes in the Himalayas as "very highly hazardous". These lakes, formed by melting glaciers, can burst due to landslides or earthquakes, triggering catastrophic floods downstream.

As a result of glacial melting and heavy rainfall, the flash floods killed over 6,000 people, in Kedarnath in 2013 washing away entire villages. A chunk of the Nanda Devi Glacier collapsed, leading to floods that killed over 200 people and destroyed two hydroelectric projects in Chamoli in the year 2021.

The melting of permafrost (frozen ground) destabilizes mountain slopes, triggering landslides and rockfalls. Roads, villages, and even major infrastructure projects like dams and tunnels are at constant risk.

Uttarakhand Tunnel under construction in the Himalayas collapsed, trapping dozens of workers due to unstable, melting permafrost and excessive rainfall.

Entire villages in Himachal Pradesh, Nepal, and Arunachal Pradesh are being abandoned as the land underneath them becomes unstable.

Glacial meltwater is the primary source of many South Asian rivers. If glaciers continue to retreat at the current rate the Ganga will dry up during summer months, leading to severe water shortages and the Indus and Brahmaputra Rivers will also suffer reduced flows, threatening millions in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh and Salinity levels in coastal Bangladesh will rise, destroying freshwater ecosystems.

Himalayan forests depend on glacial-fed rivers. As river flows decrease, many plant species will perish. Endangered species like the snow leopard, Himalayan brown bear, and black-necked crane are at risk as their habitats shrink.

Even the fisheries in the Ganges and Brahmaputra will collapse due to erratic water temperatures and reduced oxygen levels in the rivers.

As glaciers melt, ancient pathogens trapped in ice for thousands of years may resurface. Scientists warn that melting permafrost in the Arctic and Himalayas could release deadly viruses and bacteria.

Rising temperatures also increase the spread of waterborne diseases like cholera and dysentery due to contaminated water sources.

For millions, the Ganges is not just a river but a sacred entity. Hindu beliefs hold that the



HIMANSHU UPADHYAYA

Ganges descended from the heavens to cleanse humanity's sins.

The Gangotri Glacier, the river's source, is thus considered divine. The retreat of the Gangotri Glacier represents not just an environmental disaster but a spiritual crisis.

Many believe that a receding Ganges is a sign of moral and ecological imbalance. The river is celebrated in countless hymns, scriptures, and festivals, yet today, it is polluted, shrinking, and at risk of vanishing. Air pollution is accelerating glacial melting. Black carbon (soot) from vehicles, industries, and crop burning settles on ice, reducing its reflectivity. As a result, glaciers absorb more heat, melting 50 per cent faster than they would naturally.

A study by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) found that black carbon contributes to nearly 30 per cent of the total glacier melting in the Himalayas.

The burning of fossil fuels in India, Nepal, and China is significantly worsening the problem.

Regional and Global Consequences like Hydropower projects in Nepal, which rely on glacial meltwater, are at serious risk due to erratic water flow.

The cities like Kathmandu face severe drinking water shortages, impacting millions and in the Tibetan Plateau, known as the "Water Tower of Asia," is drying up, affecting the Mekong, Yangtze, and Yellow Rivers. China's water security is under threat, leading to geopolitical tensions.

The Ganga-Brahmaputra Delta is experiencing severe water shortages and rising sea levels. Salinity intrusion in coastal areas is making agricultural land unusable, displacing millions.

Glacial melt from the Himalayas contributes to rising sea levels, threatening coastal cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Dhaka, and Karachi. The global sea level is rising by 0.13 inches per year, with estimates suggesting a 10-32 inch rise by the end of the century, endangering low-lying islands and coastal megacities.

The melting of Himalayan glaciers is an existential crisis. This is not just about losing ice-it is about losing water security, agriculture, biodiversity, and entire cultures. The crisis threatens the livelihoods of millions, disrupts ancient river systems, and accelerates natural disasters.

If the current trends continue, South Asia faces an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. The melting glaciers of the Himalayas are a warning-one that the world cannot afford to ignore. Urgent global action is needed to mitigate climate change and protect the lifeline of over a billion people before it is too late.

(The writer is a lawyer at the Supreme Court of India. Views expressed are personal)

The art of stress-free management

Most of the people working in the corporate field would agree to the fact that in the fast-paced world of modern business, stress seems to be an unavoidable companion for every manager. This is mainly because the pressure to meet deadlines, satisfy stakeholders, and navigate through uncertain environments creates a constant state of tension.

And that is why the topic of "Management Without Stress" has become very popular and nowadays it is being discussed in all corporate seminars and plenaries that are held all over the globe. It's a known fact that the world over, corporations spend millions and, in some cases, even billions to find that magical technique of management without any kind of tension.

But still, no company has found that magical technique. Why? After a lot of mind churning and keeping a pragmatic approach, it can be said

that the art of tension-free management is mainly about using the 8 M's, 7 P's, 6 S's and lastly 5 T's in an organised way and useful, profitable and peaceful manner and to the maximum possible satisfaction of and justice to all concerned.

The 8 M's are: men, money, materials, machines, marketing, mutual connections, mutual relations and means. The seven P's. These are: productivity and performance, price and profitability, planning ahead of time, pecuniary discipline, publicity, public relations and politeness, punctuality and personal commitments. The six S's are: skills, standards, strategies and speed, salesmanship, systems and structures social good and finally the 5 T's are: time and time sense, technology or techniques, teamwork, treatment of each other, thanks giving habits.

Now, to be a good manager, one has to have a good judgement of men, materials, movements and moments and one has to have the abilities of innovation, intuition, entrepreneurship and enthusiastic efforts. One has also to have the qualities of farsightedness, global thinking, humility, integrity and lastly humour.

Since this is the era of increasing competition, rapid changes in technology and trends and doing things in ever new ways and at a great speed, one must have the abilities of resilience and feel relaxed in the face of all these and many more pressures, else one would lose one's health and happiness and temper and tranquillity.

If one plans, organises and manages the above factors properly and has the essential abilities and qualities, some of which have been mentioned above, one can sustain an atmosphere of growth and can achieve success for himself and all the members of the team, else one is bound to be a failure in life, business and industry or administration and organisational work.

Now, to attain success in achieving the goal of

one's life, we must add 2 M's, P's, S's and T's, to the above list viz: moral values, meditation, purity, peaceful personality, spiritual study, soul-consciousness, truthfulness and trusteeship.

"If we practice Meditation, there would be no mental tension" and that is why it is generally explained to managers and administrators that one must spend some time daily in meditation to do management without tension. But one thing that is being very much neglected today is that, in many places, there is tension without management.

Since there is neither any planning, nor any fixed priorities, neither fit personnel nor any fixed protocol, neither any sincerity nor any spirit of cordiality, neither any impartial judgement nor any mutual understanding, there is a great mental tension. Finally, leading by example is perhaps the most powerful way to promote stress-free management.

Managers who prioritise their well-being, practice effective stress management techniques, and cultivate a positive work culture set the tone for their team members to follow suit.

By modelling healthy behaviours and attitudes, managers can inspire their team members to prioritise self-care, communicate openly, and embrace flexibility, ultimately fostering a more resilient and productive work environment.

It should also be remembered that meditation and management have an intimate connection. One who can manage well can also meditate well and vice versa of it also is true.

So, while there is tension in many places because there is management without meditation, there is tension in many places because there is no proper management at all and, in the disturbed atmosphere, many find it difficult to meditate also. There is thus the need to follow good principles of management to be able to facilitate good and easy meditation at workplaces. This would automatically bring in a stress-free environment and stress-free life for everyone.

A stress-free work environment is crucial in today's corporate world, where managers face relentless pressures.

Adding moral values, meditation, and self-awareness further enhances efficiency. Ultimately, leading by example, fostering open communication, and prioritising well-being create a productive, stress-free atmosphere.

Integrating meditation with management ensures mental clarity and balance, proving that structured leadership and inner peace go hand in hand for lasting success.

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



IN BRIEF



Gold falls Rs 100 to Rs 90,450 per 10g

Gold prices dropped by Rs 100 to Rs 90,450 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday due to weak demand from jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 90,550 per 10 grams on Monday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity declined by Rs 100 to Rs 90,000 per 10 grams, marking the fourth straight day of fall. According to HDFC Securities' Senior Analyst of Commodities Saumil Gandhi, gold prices declined amid rising US dollar and treasury yields following indications that President Donald Trump's next round of tariffs may be less harsh than initially anticipated. Silver prices also depreciated by Rs 500 to Rs 1,00,000 per kg from Monday's closing level of Rs 1,00,500 per kg. Meanwhile, spot gold in the international markets increased by USD 12.56 or 0.42 per cent to USD 3,023.60 per ounce. "Gold is trading near USD 3,020 per ounce as traders got relief from signs the next wave of US tariffs is shaping up as more focused, easing fears of an all-out trade war," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP-Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, said.



Indira IVF Hospital scraps IPO plans; withdraws draft papers

Fertility clinic chain Indira IVF Hospital has withdrawn its draft IPO papers, which were filed through the confidential route, an update with markets regulator Sebi showed on Tuesday. The confidential pre-filing route allows the company to withhold public disclosure of details under the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). Further, pre-filing DRHP does not guarantee the company will go ahead with the initial public offering (IPO). The preliminary IPO papers were received by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) on February 13, however, 'draft offer document (was) withdrawn on March 19, 2025' by the company without disclosing any reasons. Last week, PhysicsWallah joined the league of a handful of companies that took confidential filing routes for its IPO. In 2024, food delivery giant Swiggy and supermarket major Vishal Mega Mart successfully floated their respective initial share sales after making confidential filings. Before this, online hotel aggregator OYO took the confidential filing route in 2023 but did not proceed with the initial share sale.



Rupee falls 13 paise to settle at 85.74 against US dollar

The rupee snapped its seven-session rally and settled with a loss of 13 paise at 85.74 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as increased demand for dollars from importers, coupled with the greenback's recovery against major currencies, weighed on the rupee. Forex traders said the Indian rupee halted its seven-day winning streak, reflecting a shift in market sentiment towards risk aversion. However, mixed-to-positive domestic markets and foreign fund inflows cushioned the downside. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.59 and touched the high of 85.58 against the greenback during the day. The unit later turned volatile and hit the day's low of 85.84 before ending the session at 85.74 (provisional) against the dollar, 13 paise lower from its previous closing level. On Monday, the rupee appreciated 37 paise to close at 85.61 against the US dollar, wiping off all its losses in 2025. The domestic unit had added 154 paise in the last seven trading sessions.

Govt blocks 7.81 lakh SIM cards, 3K Skype IDs

The law enforcement agencies have blocked over 7.81 lakh SIM cards linked to digital frauds till February 28 this year, Lok Sabha was informed on Tuesday. Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar, replying to a written query, said a total of 2,08,469 IMEIs reported by police authorities have been blocked by the Government of India. The International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) is a unique number assigned to every phone. In addition, the Indian

Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C), which functions under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has proactively identified and blocked more than 3,962 Skype IDs and 83,668 WhatsApp accounts used for digital arrest, the minister said. "The Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System, under the I4C, has been launched in 2021 for immediate reporting of financial frauds and stopping siphoning off funds by fraudsters. So far, around Rs 4,386 crore have been saved in more than 13.36 lakh complaints," Kumar said in the reply.



A total of 2,08,469 IMEIs reported by police authorities have been blocked by the Government of India. The International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI) is a unique number assigned to every phone

As part of the 14C, a national cybercrime reporting portal (<https://cybercrime.gov.in>) has been launched to enable public to report incidents pertaining to all types of digital crimes, with special focus on crimes against women and children, the minister said. He said the crimes reported on this portal, their conversion into FIRs and subsequent action are handled by law enforcement agencies in the states and Union Territories concerned. The minister said a toll-free helpline number -- 1930 -- has been operationalised to assist in lodging complaints.

Delhi govt rolls out welfare schemes for women

Focuses on financial aid and safety

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to empower women and enhance their safety, the Delhi government has announced a host of welfare schemes, including a monthly honorarium of Rs 2,500, installation of 50,000 CCTV cameras, introduction of Pink PCR (all-female police assistance) units and a financial aid of Rs 21,000 for expecting mothers. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said that the government would launch the Mahila Samridhi Yojana (MSY) with an allocation of Rs 5,100 crore.

The scheme aims to recognise and support women's unpaid domestic labour, enhance their financial independence, decision-making power, and self-esteem, she said.

However, Gupta did not specify a launch date for the MSY Scheme.

To support pregnant women and newborns, the Mukhyamantri Matru Vandana Yojana (MMVY) will be introduced alongside the central government's Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana.

Under this scheme, one lakh beneficiaries will receive financial assistance of up to Rs 21,000 along with six nutrition

kits. A budget of Rs 210 crore has been allocated for this initiative.

In an effort to strengthen women's safety, the government plans to install 50,000 new CCTV cameras in addition to the existing 2.8 lakh cameras across the city, Gupta said.

"We will take concrete steps to enhance women's safety and security by identifying 'dark spots' in Delhi...those areas that lack proper lighting, police

presence, and connectivity." She further added that such vulnerable zones will be systematically reduced.

The monthly financial assistance for 'women in distress' and those with disabilities will also be increased from Rs 2,500 to Rs 3,000. A total of Rs 3,227 crore has been set aside for these security and welfare measures, she said.

The CM said the one-stop centre scheme allows distressed women to address all their issues in one location and the government has allocated a total of Rs 11 crore for their operation.



Finance Bill 2025 offers unprecedented tax relief: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the Finance Bill 2025 provides unprecedented tax relief, and the 13.14 per cent projected growth in personal income tax collection is "realistic" and supported by solid data.

Replying to the discussions on Finance Bill 2025 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman also said the customs duty rationalisation announced in the Budget will support manufacturing units, domestic value addition, promote exports, facilitate trade and also provide relief to the common people.

In the 2025-26 Budget, the government has hiked income tax rebate to Rs 12 lakh per annum from Rs 7 lakh earlier. For the salaried class, this rebate will be Rs 12.75 lakh per year after taking into account the standard deduction. The hike in I-T rebate will lead to tax foregone to the tune of Rs 1 lakh crore in FY26.

Sitharaman said the Budget also provides "marginal relief" under the Income Tax law for those taxpayers whose income exceeds Rs 12 lakh per annum by a small margin.

"The Finance Bill provides unprecedented tax relief to honour taxpayer... We have recognised the contribution of the middle class," she said.



Collections in personal income tax have shown considerable buoyancy in the last few years and they have been increasing around 20 per cent year-on-year, the minister added.

"For the year 2025-26, the personal income tax collection is projected at Rs 13.6 lakh crore. The Revised Estimates for 2024-25 is Rs 12.2 lakh crore. So, Rs 12.2 lakh crore is going to be Rs 13.6 lakh crore and this is done with a certain realistic calculation," Sitharaman said.

The personal I-T revenue is projected to grow by 13.14 per cent in FY26, after taking into account a 7 per cent dip after factoring in the Rs 1 lakh crore revenue foregone.

"So, the projected collections for income tax for 2025-26 are

Replying to the discussions on Finance Bill 2025 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman also said the customs duty rationalisation announced in the Budget will support manufacturing units, domestic value addition, promote exports, facilitate trade and also provide relief to the common people

based on solid data," Sitharaman added.

With regard to an amendment regarding the abolition of the 6 per cent Equalisation Levy on online advertisements, Sitharaman said it was done to address "uncertainty in the international economic conditions".

Talking about Customs tariff rationalisation, she said the Budget 2025 aims to boost domestic production and enhance export competitiveness by reducing duties on raw materials and inputs, making domestic products more cost-effective.

Taking forward the comprehensive review of the Customs rate structure announced in the July 2024 Budget, the Union Budget 2025-26 proposes to

remove 7 customs tariff rates for industrial goods.

The two tranches of rationalisation of customs tariff carried out so far have reduced the number of tariff rates from 21 to 8, including 'zero' rated goods.

"Many Indian exports will become more competitive as the cost of imported inputs reduces," Sitharaman said.

The finance minister said the tax department carried out a 'nudge' campaign, asking taxpayers to voluntarily disclose their foreign income and assets. SMS and E-mails were sent to around 19,501 select taxpayers, asking them to review their Income Tax Returns filed for the AY 2024-25 based on information available on Income Tax of foreign deposits etc.

IndusInd Bank shares tank over 5 pc; market valuation down Rs 2,481 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of IndusInd Bank tanked over 5 per cent on Tuesday following reports that external auditor PwC is likely to submit its report to the bank's board on Friday regarding accounting discrepancies in its derivatives portfolio.

The stock dropped 4.76 per cent to settle at Rs 637.30 piece on the BSE. Intraday, it tumbled 5.32 per cent to Rs 633.55.

On the NSE, it declined 5.12 per cent to Rs 635.15 a share. The company's market valuation went lower by Rs 2,481.1 crore to Rs 49,649.14 crore.

PwC is likely to submit its report to IndusInd Bank's board on Friday regarding accounting discrepancies in its derivatives portfolio, sources said.

As per an estimate, Rs 2,100 crore discrepancy in accounting may impact 2.35 per cent of the bank's net worth.

'India top milk producer in the world'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is the top producer of milk in the world and has set a target of producing 300 million metric tons (MMT) of milk in the next five years from the present 239 MMT, Union Minister of Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh said in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

Singh also said that ever since the Modi government has launched the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) in 2014, the milk production in the country has increased by 63.5 per cent and the government is hopeful of further increasing it by 15 per cent in next three years.

"India is now the top milk producing country in the world. We have now set a target of producing 300 MMT of milk in next five years from the present 239 MMT," he said. The minister said about 10 crore people in the country are

engaged in milk production of which 75 per cent are women. He said the per person consumption of milk in India is 471 gram.

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying is implementing Rashtriya Gokul Mission. It aims objective is development and conservation of indigenous breeds, genetic upgradation of bovine population and enhancement of milk production and productivity of bovines thereby making milk production more remunerative to the farmers.

The scheme, launched in 2014, is continued under revised realigned schemes of the Department from 2021-2022 to 2025-2026. Its objectives are to enhance productivity of bovines and increasing milk production in a sustainable manner using advance technologies and to propagate use of high genetic merit bulls for breeding purposes.



India, US to focus on reducing duties, non-tariff barriers: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the US would focus on increasing market access, reducing import duty and non-tariff barriers, and enhancing supply chain integration in the proposed bilateral trade agreement, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada said that as on date, reciprocal tariffs have not been applied by the US on India.

He said that the government continues to engage with the US to achieve enhancement and broadening of bilateral trade ties in a mutually beneficial and fair manner.

"Both countries plan to negotiate a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement.

Both countries would focus on increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, enhancing supply chain integration and resolving bilateral trade issues," Prasada said.



minister said that as per WTO 2023, India's simple average tariff rate is 17 per cent, with simple average agricultural tariff (which includes textiles) being 39 per cent and for industrial goods 13.5 per cent for 2023.

Post Union Budget 2025-26, the simple average industrial tariff has reduced to 10.66 per cent.

Top 10 commodities of India's export to the US in 2023-24 are drug formulations, biologicals (USD 8.8 billion); pearl, precious, semi-precious stones (USD 6.57 billion); petroleum products (USD 5.83 billion); telecom instruments (USD 5.82 billion); gold and other precious metal jewellery (USD 3.3 billion); iron and steel products (USD 2.78 billion); ready-made garments of cotton including accessories (USD 2.74 billion); electronic components (USD 2.69 billion); cotton fabrics, made ups etc. (USD 2.61 billion); and marine products (USD 2.5 billion).

India losing 3 pc of GDP annually due to road accidents: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is losing 3 per cent of its GDP due to around 5 lakh road accidents annually in the country, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Tuesday.

The Minister for Road, Transport and Highways made the remarks while addressing AMCHAM's Technology Interventions For Road Safety: US-India Partnership in the national capital.

The most important problem for the country is road accidents, Gadkari said, noting that every year India sees 4,80,000 accidents, which lead to 1,88,000 deaths of



The most important problem for the country is road accidents, Gadkari said, noting that every year India sees 4,80,000 accidents, which lead to 1,88,000 deaths of people aged between 18 and 45 years

people aged between 18 and 45 years.

The minister raised concerns that 10,000 deaths are of children below 18 years.

Gadkari said, "It is one of the major public health issue and the most important thing is also, we are losing 3 per

cent of GDP because of road accidents."

The Union minister cited poor detailed project reports (DPRs) as one of the key reasons for accidents. "DPR consultants are the main culprits who are responsible for the road accidents. (They prepare DPRs) sometimes because of cost saving, other different reasons and non-serious approach...." he said.

Gadkari further said that to promote helping of accident victims, the government has decided to provide an award of Rs 25,000.

"We have taken the decision that any third person who is going to help to the victim of an accident, we will give him an award of Rs 25,000. Also, if any patient, by accident or after accident, is admitted to any hospital...we can give him Rs 1,50,000 maximum or 7 years expenditure for his treatment from the doctor," he said

S&P cuts India's FY26 GDP growth forecast to 6.5 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Tuesday cut India's GDP growth projections to 6.5 per cent for the next fiscal as it expects that economies in the APAC region will feel the strain of rising US tariffs and push-back on globalisation. In its Economic Outlook for Asia-Pacific (APAC), S&P said despite these

external strains, it expects domestic demand momentum to remain solid in most emerging-market economies. "India's GDP will grow 6.5 per cent in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, we expect. Our forecast is the same as the outcome for the previous fiscal year, but less than our earlier forecast of 6.7 per cent," S&P said.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
SRI NARAYANA DEPARTMENT
TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No: 07/AE/EE-1/MB/Tender/2024-25, Dt: 25.03.2025
Name of the work: Providing Drinking water facility to balance households of Rylyampeta R&R Center of Charur Mandal, Jagtarama Gachal District, Estimated Cost: Rs 87.00 Lakhs. Tender Documents are available in the e-procurement website: tenders.telangana.gov.in. From 02.04.2025 to 16.04.2025 upto 3.00 P.M. Officers concerned: Superintending Engineer, MB Circle, Wanaparthy. Contact No: 91901222248 / 9100121932. Further details can be obtained from e-procurement website. Further amendments, if any, will be notified on e-procurement platform only. DRR P.O. No: 12947/PP/CLAD/71/0204-25, Dt: 25-03-2025. Mission Bhagiratha, Mahabubnagar

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
IRRIGATION & CAD DEPARTMENT
TENDER NOTICE
No.36/2024-25 Dt: 19.03.2025
Name of Work: Permanent Restoration of Pedda Cheruvu M.I. Tank Breached Portions of the Bund Besuru(V), Thimmalayapalem(M), Khammam(Dist.). ECV: Rs. 18,758,096/-, Date and time for download of Tender Schedules Online: 26.03.2025, 3.00 P.M. Last date and time for submission 03-04-2025, 03.00 P.M., Note: For more information please visit <https://tender.telangana.gov.in> Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Irrigation Circle, Khammam. DRR P.O. No: 12947/PP/CLAD/71/0204-25, Dt: 25-03-2025

OFFICE OF THE MANIKONDA MUNICIPALITY
RANGA REDDY DISTRICT
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) Dt: 25.03.2025
No. 15/2025/MB/7/0204-25
The Commissioner, Manikonda Municipality invites an Expression of Interest for the following works:
1. Supply and fixing of Internal Partitions for office spaces in New Office Building of Manikonda Municipality.
2. Supply and fixing of Office Furniture for New Office Building in Manikonda Municipality.
3. Supply and fixing of Laminates, audio and electrical items for the council hall in New Office Building in Manikonda Municipality.
4. Supply and fixing of Lifts for New Office Building in Manikonda Municipality.
5. Supply and fixing of 15' x 30' mts height National flag and its maintenance in New Office Building in Manikonda Municipality.
6. Supply, fixing and maintenance of various architectural plants, vertical gardens and planter box / pots and other greenery and its related items for New Office Building in Manikonda Municipality.
7. Supply and fixing of various interior/architectural/conceptual designs / paintings / boards / wall papers / antique designs / sculptures / artworks / artistic works and etc. for New Office Building in Manikonda Municipality.
8. Repairs and regular maintenance of play and open gym equipments at various parks in Manikonda Municipality.
9. Supply and fixing of artistic/architectural poles and lights for New Office Building in Manikonda Municipality.
10. Supply and fixing of dust bins in various parks in Manikonda Municipality.
The interested organizations / Agencies / companies / firms are requested to send their expression of interest. Last Date submitting the EOI is 11.48 am @ Dt: 03.04.2025. For further details and detailed specifications contact Municipal Commissioner (9133473890) and Municipal Engineer (9008540891) during office hours. Sd/- Municipal Commissioner Manikonda Municipality. DRR P.O. No: 12947/PP/CLAD/71/0204-25, Dt: 25-03-2025

'Expect a 360-degree transformation in Jewel Thief – My character will shock you!'

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Nikita Dutta opens up about her transformative journey in the entertainment world, where she's quickly becoming one of the most exciting and fearless actresses. Known for her bold and unfiltered approach to acting, Nikita Dutta, opens up about her transformative journey in the entertainment world and insights into her powerful role as Poonam in *Waking of a Nation*. She also teases her upcoming project *Jewel Thief*

TEJAL SINHA
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Nikita Dutta is quickly becoming a force to be reckoned with in the entertainment world, delivering unforgettable performances that leave audiences captivated and craving more. With each role, she has proven that she's not afraid to take risks—whether it's stepping into the raw, gritty world of *Waking of a Nation* or gearing up for her upcoming high-stakes thriller *Jewel Thief: The Heist Begins*. Known for her bold choices and fearless approach to acting, she has not only earned rave reviews but has also captured hearts with her dedication to portraying characters who are unapologetically strong, complex and unapologetically real.

In this exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, she takes us behind the scenes of her transformative journey as Poonam in *The Waking of a Nation*, revealing the challenges, the freedom and the intense emotional moments that came with playing a character like no other. She also offers a sneak peek into her upcoming role in *Jewel Thief*, promising a completely new side of herself that will leave audiences in awe. Nikita Dutta is a



Usually, actors get touch-ups between takes, but with *The Waking of a Nation*, the sweat and dirt were left as they were. It gave me a sense of freedom—there was no vanity, no worrying about how I looked. I could just focus entirely on Poonam

required not just emotional depth but also a complete de-glamorisation. "I had zero makeup throughout the shoot—no foundation, no concealer, not even basic grooming like threading. Even my request for sunscreen was denied because the team wanted absolute authenticity," she recalls with a laugh. Shooting on live locations, where dust and sweat were a part of the environment, added to the realism. "Usually, actors get touch-ups between takes, but here, the sweat and dirt were left as they were. It gave me a sense of freedom—there was no vanity, no worrying about how I looked. I could just focus entirely on Poonam." Poonam navigates a world filled with chaos and personal tragedy, yet she remains steadfast.

"Credit goes to the writers for crafting a well-balanced character. She endures intense emotional trauma, yet she never loses her strength. Unlike many 'strong female characters' who express power by being loud, Poonam's strength lies in her thoughts, choices, and quiet determination," Nikita explains. She further admits that the role lingered with her long after the cameras stopped rolling. The courtroom scene in the fourth episode, where Poonam testifies about the massacre, was particularly intense. "The director didn't use 'action' or 'cut' to keep us immersed in the moment. After shooting that sequence, it took me a while to return to normalcy. The show's premise itself is emotionally heavy and that weight stays with you." Beyond the no-makeup look, the *Khakhee: The Bihar Chapter* fame also embraced a more relaxed approach to fitness for the role.

"Since Poonam gets pregnant midway through the show, I didn't have to follow a strict diet. But the biggest shift was accepting that I wouldn't be in my usual groomed, polished self—on set or in real life—until the shoot wrapped up." She describes the experience as liberating: "I was completely unfiltered, with no worries about hair, makeup, or even how I moved on camera. It gave me a new perspective on acting." After *The Waking of a Nation*, Nikita is set to appear in *Jewel Thief*, an action-packed thriller filled with deception and intrigue.

"It's a high-stakes world, full of twists and adrenaline. And of course, being a film by Ram Madhvani, you can expect the perfect mix of action, drama and entertainment," she teases. Without revealing too much, she promises a dramatic transformation. "My character in *Jewel Thief* is a complete 360-degree shift from Poonam. Audiences might not even recognize me!" As for her future projects, Dutta remains selective. "The first thing I consider is the character—does it excite me, challenge me, or offer something new? Then come other factors like the director, production team and genre. But my priority is always the role itself," she explains.

While she remains tight-lipped about her next projects, one thing is clear: Nikita Dutta is an actress to watch.

star who's just getting started—and trust us, you don't want to miss a moment of what's to come.

While Nikita's rise in the entertainment industry has been impressive, she insists that it was never a conscious strategy.

"I wouldn't say it's been a planned effort, but I have always prioritised doing work that I'm proud of, regardless of how it performs with the audience. I also try to improve with every project," she shares.

Her dedication to meaningful storytelling has paid off, with audiences and critics alike praising her for her nuanced performances.

The *Kabir Singh* star's latest project, *The Waking of a Nation*, is set in 1919 and revolves around a pivotal historical event. Her character, Poonam, is central to the story and her journey is one of resilience and strength.

"Poonam is bold and fierce, but not in a loud or over-the-top way. She has a quiet strength, a strong mind and an unshakable will. I don't think I've ever been this proud of a character I've played," she says. She points out that portrayals of women from that era often depict them as passive figures—either dancing or engaged in domestic tasks.

"Poonam breaks that stereotype. She is independent, outspoken and a rare representation of a powerful Punjabi woman of that time," she adds. Stepping into Poonam's shoes



Healthcare and sports with AI

PNS|HYDERABAD

Digital Darwin is transforming the sports and healthcare industries with its cutting-edge technologies, pushing the limits of human potential with sophisticated AI solutions. This business was founded on February 11, 2021, by visionary entrepreneur Rahul Bajaj, a Deep Tech specialist and former FMS and BITS Pilani student. Since then, it has grown to become a major force in the AI space! Renowned for his 'Transformation Supply Chain' methodology, he approaches problems with the accuracy of fixing a chain's weak points, guaranteeing a comprehensive transformation strategy. His creative ideas have not only sparked significant technological advancements but also the development of forward-thinking businesses that are constantly on the cutting edge. Offering a 360-degree perspective and integrating multiple athletic departments, Speed.AI is a comprehensive athlete management and performance solution. This tool is changing how pro teams, leagues, federations and national and state sports bodies oversee and improve athlete performance. Since its inception in January 2024, it has accounted for more than 10% of the Indian elite athlete market thanks to its integrated analytics and data integration. With over ten prominent clients, such as the Sports Authority of India in Bangalore, which is home to the Indian National Hockey Team and Karni Singh Shooting Range, which is home to Indian Olympian shooters, it is expanding at an astounding 22% each month. Additionally, it has been evaluated for NIC hosting, is PDP-compliant and is connected with the National Sports Science Database. Conversely, we also have Shitiz Ruhail, a seasoned leader with 15 years of expertise who serves as Digital Darwin's co-founder and chief growth officer. He has demonstrated exceptional proficiency in spearheading corporate transformation, strategic planning and mergers and acquisitions in a variety of industries, such as healthcare and finance. Let's go over an exclusive interview with Rahul and Shitiz, Darwin Digitech Pvt Ltd, the founder and CEO of Digital Darwin & co-founder and chief growth officer respectively.

(e.g., a post-surgery conversation or a cardiology follow-up). By taking a proactive stance, patients are more likely to schedule and receive the care they require, which increases the number of procedures, improves resource use and increases the number of OPD visits that turn into IPD admissions. It increases patient retention and encourages more patients to schedule procedures, which increases hospital revenue by guaranteeing timely engagement.

Which are the main sources of information that the AI Analyst Agent consults in order to offer insights?

Rahul Bajaj: To produce insights, Ana, uses a wide range of well screened data sources. She consults peer-reviewed medical literature, established clinical recommendations from top healthcare institutions and meticulously curated computerised health records. Ana also incorporates real-time updates from clinical trial repositories and regulatory agencies to make sure her analyses are up to date and supported by evidence. In addition to improving the precision and applicability of the insights offered, this multi-source strategy facilitates sound, well-informed decision-making in crucial healthcare environments.

In what ways does the OPD Booking Agent enhance conventional appointment scheduling techniques?

Shitiz Ruhail: By simplifying and automating the procedure to get rid of frequent inefficiencies, Sarthi, reinvents conventional appointment scheduling. In contrast to traditional approaches that frequently depend on manual scheduling, lengthy phone calls by hospital staff and possible misunderstandings, Sarthi uses cutting-edge AI to offer real-time availability, immediate booking confirmations and customised appointment recommendations based on patient preferences and history over a straightforward phone call or text message. Sarthi guarantees correct and current scheduling information by integrating with hospital systems and electronic health records in a smooth manner, thereby lowering administrative loads and decreasing errors. By making the booking process quicker and more dependable, this creative method not only increases patient convenience but also boosts overall operational effectiveness in healthcare facilities.

Why is "near-zero hallucination" important for healthcare applications?

Rahul Bajaj: HealthMates.AI's "near-zero hallucination" is the result of careful implementation and architectural design. Initially, it uses a multi-agent system, implying inherent cross-validation and redundancy. Second, the AI's knowledge base is customised to the healthcare industry by utilising optimised LLMs (Large Language Models). Importantly, the system uses RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation), which means that the AI retrieves data from reliable sources, such as the integrated HIMS/EMR system, rather than only producing responses from its learned model. The possibility of producing inaccurate or fake information is greatly decreased by this foundation on validated facts. "Near-zero hallucination" is crucial in the medical field since false information can have serious repercussions. If the AI gives inaccurate information, there could be a danger of misdiagnosis, improper treatment regimens and negative drug interactions. AI systems must be reliable and accurate in order to be employed properly in clinical settings, where patient safety is of utmost importance.

Give an example of how HealthMates.AI might assist a hospital in cutting expenses!

Rahul Bajaj: It improves revenue management and directly and visibly reduces man-hours by automating important administrative processes. For example, Sarthi, replaces multiple contact center agents by automating the appointment scheduling process—eliminating manual call handling and the back-and-forth inherent in traditional reservations. This speeds up patient care while significantly lowering staffing costs. At the same time, Medusa automates medical coding to revolutionise billing processes. This ensures that clinical facts are accurately captured and minimises errors that may result in revenue leakage or delayed reimbursements. When combined, these agents greatly improve operational efficiency and financial performance while freeing up vital staff time so that medical personnel can focus on patient care.

In what ways does it work with current EMR/HIMS systems?

Shitiz Ruhail: Through a strong interoperability architecture that makes use of secure API connections and industry-standard protocols like HL7 and FHIR, it interfaces with current HIMS/EMR systems with ease. Real-time synchronisation of clinical records, appointment scheduling and patient data is made possible by this integration, which guarantees that data moves between systems without interfering with current activities. The platform's adaptable design enables it to adhere strictly to data security and regulatory standards while accommodating the unique configurations and requirements of various healthcare organisations. Hospitals get improved operational effectiveness, precise data management and a single view of patient data across all systems as a result.

Describe how Follow-up Agent helps hospitals make more money!

Shitiz Ruhail: The issue of patients "slipping through the cracks" following initial consultations or procedures—a frequent source of wasted revenue and less-than-ideal results—is directly addressed by HealthMate, Meera. It uses the EHR to automatically identify patients who need follow-ups, such as specialty consultations, OPD reminders, or post-discharge check-ins. After receiving approval from the Human Manager, it begins individualised outreach to these patients, customising the message to meet their unique requirements

Addressing gender disparities in cardiac care in India

Indian women face disparities in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cardiovascular illnesses. Despite the fact that both genders have a significant health problem, women receive less intensive therapy and are more likely to be underdiagnosed. This imbalance leads to delayed diagnosis and insufficient treatment, both of which have a negative influence on patient health. As cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death among Indian women, surpassing breast and other cancers combined (Lancet, 2022). The incidence of coronary heart disease among Indian women ranges from 3% to 13%, increasing nearly 300% over the past two decades (Indian Heart Journal, 2020). From 1.1% in 2000 to 2.6% in 2015, the prevalence of heart failure in women has similarly increased dramatically (Global Burden of Disease Study, 2017).

Why does heart disease in women go undetected?

Many women are unaware of their heart disease risk, leading to late detection. Symptoms are often different from chest pain and may include fatigue, nausea, dizziness, or jaw pain. Nearly 45% of women aged 20 and older have cardiovascular disease, but many do not know (American Heart Association, 2024). Pregnancy-related conditions, like high blood pressure and diabetes, raise the risk but are rarely discussed. High blood pressure is especially dangerous, causing 51.9% of hypertension-related deaths in women (Go Red for Women, 2024).

Barriers to cardiac care

Gender disparity in cardiac care arises due to unawareness, late symptom recognition and biases within the healthcare system. Women often experience nonspecific symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, or jaw pain, leading to misdiagnosis or delayed treatment.

Biological and clinical differences: Women's heart disease symptoms are different from men's, which leads to underdiagnosis. Women may have jaw pain, nausea, exhaustion, or shortness of

breath following a heart attack, but men typically describe chest pain. These mild indicators sometimes lead to poorer outcomes and delayed diagnosis.

Limited access to healthcare: In India, 80% of cardiologists work in urban areas, creating barriers for rural populations. Women in villages frequently travel 50–100 km for check-ups, a costly and time-consuming journey. As a result, treatment is usually sought at later, more serious stages of the disease.

Socio-cultural barriers: Traditional norms in India contribute to delayed cardiac care for women. Prioritising family responsibilities over personal health, many women postpone seeking medical attention. Additionally, the cardiovascular risk in female patients is underestimated due to the false belief that heart disease mostly affects men.

Healthcare system biases: Gender disparities in treatment further exacerbate inequities. Studies indicate that women are less likely to receive evidence-based therapies such as lipid-lowering medications, aspirin, or beta-blockers. Data from the American College of Cardiology's PINNACLE India Quality Improvement Program (PIQIP) reveal that women receive suboptimal



cardiovascular care despite having similar clinical presentations.

Strategies to address disparities

Action is required from both women and the healthcare system to bridge this gap. The actions listed below can be beneficial:

- 1. Awareness raising** - Heart disease is often perceived as a male issue, but it affects women as well. Public health campaigns should educate both women and healthcare providers about female-specific symptoms.
- 2. Regular screenings** - Routine heart check-ups, particularly for women over 40, can aid in early detection. Serious consequences can be avoided by regular blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar monitoring.
- 3. Healthcare provider training** - Improved training is necessary for doctors and nurses to recognize heart disease symptoms in women and ensure equitable care.
- 4. Better access to care** - Women in rural areas often face challenges in reaching specialists. Accessibility can be improved with telemedicine, mobile clinics, and community programs.
- 5. Affordable treatment** - Government policies and insurance coverage should prioritise affordability, ensuring that low-income women have access to essential heart treatments.

Technology's role in minimising the gender gap in cardiac care: Telecardiology technology is improving heart care in rural areas. Heart scans in village clinics are made possible by portable ECG devices, with results promptly sent to urban cardiologists for diagnosis. AI-driven algorithms quickly analyse heart data, identifying potential risks. Diagnoses are delivered 90% faster than traditional methods, reducing the number of emergencies. By offering free and accessible screenings, technology helps ensure that women in remote areas receive essential heart care.

(The author, Arindam Sen, is a CEO & Director of HeartNet India.)



Ritu Shah



The Meraki Exhibition, an initiative curated by Poonam Daga to promote women entrepreneurs, was a resounding success. Held at Haveli Banquet Hall in Kokapet, the event was inaugurated by three distinguished women—Ritu Shah, past FICCI Chairperson; Dr. Roma Sinha, a pioneer in robotic surgery and Dr. Shikha Fogla, a glaucoma specialist—whose presence added immense significance to the occasion. The exhibition featured 29 stalls, each showcasing the remarkable creativity and talent of women entrepreneurs.



Poonam Daga



Vasuki and Harshita



Shikha and Rooma



Gayatri



Meenal



Ritu Agarwal



Archana



Abhilasha and Meenakshi



PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary



Hyderabad has warmly welcomed Ekadhi, celebrating the launch of its Punjagutta store, inaugurated by brand ambassador actress Nidhi Agerwal. The silver jewelry brand has received an overwhelming response, with customers flocking to explore its exquisite yet affordable collections. Ekadhi Directors Venu Rachakonda and Shiv Charan Vuppalachchi expressed their excitement, emphasizing the brand's commitment to offering high-quality jewelry that mirrors the elegance of gold without the hefty price tag.

Walgo Infra CMD No.1 Sridhar Rao celebrated his son Abisri's 7th birthday in grand style at their residence, Abisri 1, on Road No. 49, Jubilee Hills, by gifting him a Mini Cooper. The event began with a red carpet entrance and was attended by political leaders, bureaucrats, and celebrities, including Rajasekhar, Jeevitha, Catherine Tresa and Lahari Shari. The venue was transformed into a breathtaking spectacle, adorned with Dubai-inspired architecture, Milan-London-style lighting, and a stunning representation of Kakatiya heritage through the grand Warangal Gate entrance. The night was further elevated by electrifying performances from Anoop Sankar and top artists, creating an unforgettable celebration filled with joy, luxury, and camaraderie.



IREED & DCOIL officially launch MBA in real estate

The media launch of the MBA in Business Analytics & Marketing with a Specialization in Real Estate, a collaborative initiative by IREED Academy and DCOIL, was held on 20th March 2025 at DPG Degree College, DCOIL's Auditorium (2nd floor), Sector 34, Gurgaon. The event focused on addressing the growing skill gap in India's real estate sector by introducing an industry-integrated MBA program designed to prepare job-ready professionals for the evolving market.

Top industry leaders, including Rajendra Gahlot, Chairman, DPG Degree College; Ankush Kaul, President, Sales & Marketing, Central Park; Sudhir bhat, president of venture capitalist fund with global operations; Kunal Behrani, Chief Operating Officer, Unity Group; Rajat Jain, President, Sales, Marketing & CRM, Adani Realty; and Suneet Singh, Senior Vice President of Marketing, Whiteland Corporation attended the event and shared their insights on the future of real estate education and workforce transformation. IREED Academy, the Institute of Real



Estate Education & Entrepreneurship Development, reaffirmed its commitment to bridging the gap between academic learning and industry requirements.

As India's real estate market is projected to reach USD 1 trillion by 2030, contributing 13-15% of the country's GDP, the demand for professionally trained individuals is more critical

than ever. In collaboration with DCOIL, an institution known for its innovation-driven education model, and Maharshi Dayanand University (MDU), Rohtak, the MBA program integrates business analytics, marketing and real estate specialisation, ensuring a comprehensive learning experience that equips students with both theoretical knowledge and hands-on industry exposure.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



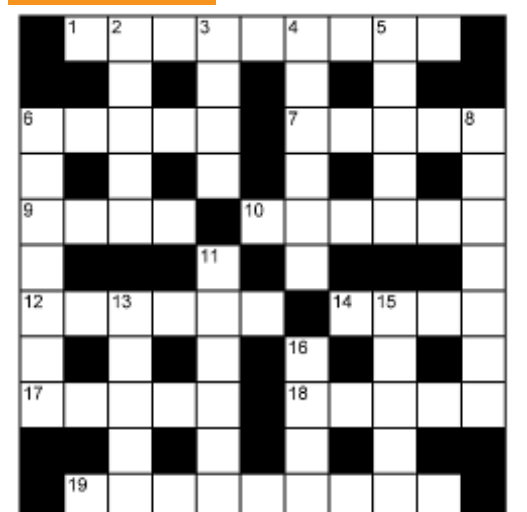
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

ACROSS

- A ship's right side
- Perspire
- Young person
- Take a break
- Very rarely
- A passenger needs this
- Sky colour
- Divide into two equal parts
- Acted dramas
- Lucky

DOWN

- Make longer by pulling
- Carpenters and engineers use these
- Say again
- A stringed musical instrument
- Fewest
- Twirl





Director Krishna Vamsi and Yandamuri Veerendranath pay homage to Alluri Sitarama Raju

Renowned director Krishna Vamsi visited Lakshimpuram village in Anakapalle district, Andhra Pradesh, accompanied by acclaimed novelist Yandamuri Veerendranath. Both paid homage at the tombs of legendary freedom fighters Alluri Sitarama Raju and Gantam Dora.

Reports suggest that Krishna Vamsi is keen on making a film with an Alluri Sitarama Raju backdrop, which prompted his visit. He also interacted with the family members of Gantam Dora to understand their history and legacy.

Yandamuri Veerendranath praised Krishna Vamsi's patriotism, citing his heartfelt gesture at Alluri's tomb. He also

recalled the director's patriotic film *Khadgam*, highlighting his commitment to portraying nationalism on screen.

Krishna Vamsi expressed his long-held desire to visit Alluri's historical sites, a dream that was finally fulfilled. He mentioned the book *Akupacha Suryodayam*, which deeply inspired him to explore Alluri's legacy further. The director also stated his intention to create a compelling film based on Alluri's history.

As part of the visit, the Nenu Saitham Charitable Trust distributed clothing to the family of Gantam Dora, who was one of Alluri's closest followers and now resides in Koyyuru Mandal. The trust's founder, Kusireddy Shiva, led the initiative.



RAJENDRA PRASAD ON DAVID WARNER CONTROVERSY

'It was not intentional'

Veteran actor Rajendra Prasad faced severe backlash for his inappropriate remarks about Australian cricketer David Warner at a pre-release event. Many social media users criticised his comments, resurfacing past videos of his controversial behavior. Amid mounting pressure, Rajendra Prasad issued an apology through a video on Tuesday.

As part of the promotional event for the film *Robinhood*, the team hosted a grand pre-release event in Hyderabad, where David Warner attended as a special guest. During the event, Rajendra Prasad, who

plays a role in the film, made controversial remarks about Warner, using inappropriate language. His comments quickly went viral, sparking criticism from netizens.

Responding to the backlash, Rajendra Prasad clarified that his comments were not intended to be offensive. "It was not intentional. Before the event, Nithiin, David Warner, and I had a lot of fun. I love Warner and I admire his cricket. If my words have hurt anyone's feelings, I sincerely apologise," he said in his video statement. He also assured that such incidents would not happen again.

Lyrics that set the screen on fire: Kasarla Shyam's musical mastery

Tollywood's most sought-after lyricist, Kasarla Shyam, opens up about his journey from folk street plays to blockbuster chartbusters. Best known for his Telangana-infused lyrics in hits like *Ramuloo Ramula*, *DJ Tillu* and *Balagam*, Shyam shares how his deep-rooted connection to folklore and passion for storytelling shaped his career

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Kasarla Shyam, the name behind some of Tollywood's biggest musical hits, has solidified his place as one of the industry's top five lyricists. Known for his mastery of Telangana folk dialect and deep-rooted storytelling, Shyam has become the go-to lyricist for filmmakers seeking authenticity in their songs. From *Ramuloo Ramula* (*Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*) to the unforgettable tracks in *Balagam*, *DJ Tillu* and *Tillu Square*, his journey is one of perseverance, passion and an unwavering dedication to the art of lyric writing.

While Kasarla Shyam had penned many songs before, it was *Ramuloo Ramula* from *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo* (2020) that catapulted him to stardom. The song, infused with Telangana slang and a vibrant folk rhythm, became the second-fastest song to top the charts and remained a fan favorite for months.

Shyam recalls how he got the opportunity to work on this iconic track. "I had written a song for Nithiin's film *Lie* and Trivikram Srinivas garu happened to be the chief guest at the event where it was released. He liked my work and later suggested to music director Thaman that I should write a song in Telangana slang for *Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*. That's how *Ramuloo Ramula* happened," he shares.

Born and raised in Hanamkonda, Warangal, Shyam pursued his post-graduation in Political Science and later completed an M.Phil. in Folk Arts in Hyderabad. His love for folk music was deeply influenced by legends like Warangal Shankar and Sarangapani, whom he considers his gurus.

His father, a stage artist and film actor, also played a crucial role in shaping his artistic inclination. "My school encouraged students to participate in cultural activities. Our correspondent, Upendra garu, was a writer himself, and he motivated us to write plays and poetry. I started writing poetry from my tenth grade," Shyam reminisces.

Shyam's journey into films wasn't an easy one. Though he initially wrote and performed folk songs, his first breakthrough in cinema came when a senior co-director, Srinivas, introduced him to filmmaker B. Jaya. This led to his first song in the 2003 film *Chantigadu*.

Between 2003 and 2009, he juggled his career as a casual commentator at All India Radio's Yuvavani program while occasionally writing songs for films. His major breakthrough came in 2009 with Krishna Vamsi's



Mahatma, thanks to actor Uttej, who introduced him to the director.

"During our discussions, Krishna Vamsi garu heard my folk song *Neelapuri Gajula O Neelaveni*—a song I had originally written for a street play. He liked it so much that he decided to include it in his film. That was the moment my name started getting recognized in the industry," Shyam shares.

One of the reasons filmmakers seek out Shyam is his expertise in Telangana folk dialect and cultural nuances. His songs in *Balagam*, which is deeply rooted in Telangana culture, were massive hits. Similarly, he contributed songs to *Dasara* and has a deep passion for incorporating age-old Telangana words into his lyrics.

"I have traveled across almost all villages in Telangana as part of my folklore research. I try to infuse those words and traditions into my songs whenever possible," he explains. Apart from writing lyrics, Shyam has also dabbled in music composition. He provided music for a few films made by his friends due to budget constraints, but he has since decided to focus solely on lyric writing.

His experimental approach to lyrics can be seen in songs like *Dabidi Dabidi* from *Daaku Maharaj*, where the lyrics cleverly integrate punch dialogues from Balakrishna's films. "If you listen closely, you'll notice how the lyrics reflect Balayya garu's iconic dialogues," he reveals.

Post-*Ala Vaikunthapurramuloo*, Kasarla Shyam's songs have continued to dominate the charts, with hits from *Mad* (*College Papa*), *DJ Tillu* (*Title Track*), *Tillu Square* (*Radhika Radhika*) and *Hanuman* (*Poolamma Pilla*). He is currently working on *Robinhood* and *Mad Square*, releasing this week, as well as upcoming projects like *Yellamma* (directed by Balagam fame Venu), Nani's *Paradise*, Ravi Teja's *Mass Jathara*, Sai Dharam Tej's *Sambarala Yetigattu* and Nithiin's *Thammudu*. Despite being one of the most sought-after lyricists, Shyam remains grounded. His biggest inspiration in the industry is Chandrabose, another renowned lyricist from Warangal. "When I was a student, Chandrabose garu was an icon for me. His work inspired me to pursue a career in lyric writing," he shares.

The camaraderie between lyricists in Tollywood is something he deeply values. "Whenever a song is released, we exchange congratulatory messages. Chandrabose garu has appreciated my work many times, which means a lot to me," he says.

Kasarla Shyam's journey has been deeply personal. His father, who once aspired to be an actor, had to return home after six unsuccessful years in Chennai. "I always wanted to enter the industry and succeed where my father couldn't. Today, I am among the top five lyric writers, and my father is proud of my achievements," he says with pride.

While his career continues to soar, Shyam remains connected to his roots, regularly visiting Hanamkonda to support folk artists and keep the culture alive.



28°C is a special film to me: Director Anil Viswanath

Director Dr. Anil Viswanath, known for *Polimera* and its sequel *Polimera 2*, is set to release his debut directorial film *28°C* on April 4. Starring Naveen Chandra and Shalini Vadnikatti, the film is a captivating love story with emotional and thrilling elements. Produced by Sai Abhishek, *28°C* holds a special place in the director's heart.

"This is my first film as a director, and I'm thrilled to talk about it. Every filmmaker dreams of a debut project like this, and I worked extremely hard to bring it to life," said Anil Viswanath. He expressed his deep emotional connection to the film, revealing that he plans to write a book about his experience making it.

Speaking about the story, the director said that an unexpected problem arises between the lead characters,

making their journey to overcome it truly gripping. "You won't see the last 20 minutes coming—it's something never before seen in cinema," he hinted.

Interestingly, *28°C* was completed in 2019 but faced release delays due to the pandemic. Lead actor Naveen Chandra shared, "It's a fresh love story about two doctors, packed with thrilling elements. The title *28°C* comes from a crucial plot point—if the female lead's body temperature isn't maintained at *28°C*, complications arise."

Additionally, Anil Viswanath teased his highly anticipated sequel *Polimera 3*, promising it will be "15 times bigger and better" than *Polimera 2*. "We are currently working on CGI and pre-production. Filming is set to begin around August or September," he revealed.



Vijay bids farewell to cinema with *Jana Nayagan* before full-time politics



Tamil superstar Thalapathy Vijay is gearing up for his last film before transitioning into full-time politics. With his political party already announced and multiple public meetings held, his political entry has become a major talking point. However, fans are equally eager for his final cinematic outing, *Jana Nayagan*. Produced by KVN Production and directed by H. Vinoth, the makers have officially announced that the film will release on January 9, 2026. Positioned just ahead of Makar Sankranti and Pongal (January 14, 2026), *Jana Nayagan* is set to dominate the box office during the festive season—an ideal time for blockbuster releases in both Tamil and Telugu cinema. Pongal has historically been a lucrative period for Tamil and Telugu films, and with a superstar like Vijay leading the charge, anticipation is at an all-time high. The film's first-look poster, which went viral, features Vijay taking a selfie with a massive, electrified crowd—symbolising his deep-rooted connection with his fans. The title *Jana Nayagan*, meaning "The People's Leader," aptly reflects both his on-screen charisma and his growing political influence.



Nithiin's *Robinhood* to face stiff competition at the Ugadi box office

Actor Nithiin is set to return to the big screen after nearly two years, hoping to bounce back after the box-office failure of his last film, *Extraordinary Man*. His upcoming film, *Robinhood*, directed by Venky Kudumula, marks their second collaboration after the successful *Bheeshma*. Starring Sreeleela as the female lead, the film is scheduled for release on March 27, just ahead of Ugadi (March 30), a major South Indian festival.

While Ugadi is an excellent time for film releases, *Robinhood* is set to face stiff competition. The small-budget film *Mad Square* is releasing on the same date, and its viral trailer has already captured youth interest. Trade analysts predict it could pose significant competition for Nithiin's film.

Additionally, Mohanlal's much-anticipated sequel *Empuraan* is also hitting the screens. The first installment, *Lucifer*, was a massive hit, even among Telugu audiences on OTT platforms. With Prithviraj Sukumaran directing and playing a key role, *Empuraan* has strong expectations, especially in its dubbed Telugu version.

Despite *Robinhood* featuring a cameo by Australian cricketer David Warner, trade experts believe it may not provide a significant boost to the film's performance. Moreover, the makers have announced that there will be no hike in ticket prices in both Telugu states, which could impact revenue. With these factors at play, *Robinhood* will have to fight hard for box-office success this Ugadi.

KKR, RR eye batting, bowling overhaul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Guwahati

Outmuscled in their previous matches, title-holders Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals will eye a quick course correction in every aspect when they face each other in an IPL match here on Wednesday.

The Knight Riders were beaten by seven wickets by Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the tournament-opener while the Royals were given a 44-run drubbing by Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The common theme in those defeats was how the seemingly powerful batting and bowling units of KKR and RR failed to fire.

While the Rajasthan outfit might offer the excuse of playing on a Hyderabad shirtfront for the malfunction of their bowling unit, the Kolkata side do not have any such cover.

Apart from Sunil Narine, none of the KKR bowlers were able to contain free-flowing RCB batters, and in that the demystification of mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy might just worry them a bit.

Even on an Eden Gardens pitch that had some grip, Chakravarthy was given a towell by Phil Salt and Virat Kohli.

The KKR camp now hopes that the spinner will find his stride on a Guwahati pitch that generally has some bite.

They will also keep an eye on the fitness of Anrich Nortje, who is recovering from



a back strain. If the South African gets a green signal from the physios, then he will walk in for Spencer Johnson.

Similarly, KKR's middle-order batting crumbled spectacularly after skipper Ajinkya Rahane and Narine gave them a blistering start, eventually settling for a sub-par score.

Their batting pivots such as Venkatesh Iyer and Andre Russell got out, playing pre-determined cross-batted shots, and KKR will hope that they will show more game awareness in Guwahati.

The Knight Riders will also hope that Rinku Singh regains his hitting prowess

down the order. It is crucial in converting a good total into something more intimidating in nature.

His recent T20 form is not that encouraging and in his last five international outings, Rinku has logged scores of 11, 9, 8, 30, 9 along with a 12 in the IPL opener.

Rinku and his top-order colleagues in KKR will hope that the Rajasthan bowlers would once again struggle to find their groove here.

The likes of Jofra Archer, who bowled the most expensive spell in the history of IPL against SRH, Fazalhaq Farooqi and Maheesh Theekshana were rudderless

against the onslaught of Travis Head and Ishan Kishan. Archer had leaked 76 runs from his overs at the Uppal.

But they have an opportunity in Guwahati to regain their form.

It will also be a blot on stand-in skipper Riyan Parag who, at times, looked perplexed on the field about the decisions to be made. The Rahul Dravid-coached side will eye sharper and more intuitive leadership from Parag against KKR.

Teams

Kolkata Knight Riders: Ajinkya Rahane (captain), Rinku Singh, Quinton de Kock, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Rovman Powell, Manish Pandey, Luvnity Sisodia, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Moonen Ali, Ramandeep Singh, Andre Russell, Anrich Nortje, Vaibhav Arora, Mayank Markande, Spencer Johnson, Harshit Rana, Sunil Narine, Varun Chakravarthy, Chetan Sakariya.

Rajasthan Royals: Riyan Parag (stand-in captain), Sanju Samson, Shubham Dube, Vaibhav Suryavanshi, Kunal Rathore, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Nitish Rana, Yuvraj Singh, Jofra Archer, Maheesh Theekshana, Wanindu Hasaranga, Akash Madhwal, Kumar Kartikeya Singh, Tushar Deshpande, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Kwena Maphaka, Ashok Sharma, Sandeep Sharma.

We are not too worried about first game loss: Coach Arun

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Guwahati

Defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders are not too worried about their opening match defeat in the Indian Premier League and are hoping to bounce back in their clash against Rajasthan Royals here on Wednesday, said bowling coach Bharat Arun.

The Knight Riders lost by seven wickets against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the tournament opener on March 22 while the Royals were given a 44-run drubbing by Sunrisers Hyderabad the following day.

"As a team, we are not too worried about it (first game). It's always good to win the first match, you gain the momentum. But there were a lot of positives from the first game, some lessons to be learnt from there," Arun said at the pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

"Just being game number one can happen, we could have capitalised, we could have got more runs had we not lost wickets towards the end of our batting. Whatever you do there is always an opportunity to bowl better. But this team is not too worried about it, we will learn from what happened in the last game and try to get better."

Arun is also not bothered about big

hitters Andre Russell and Rinku Singh not contributing much in KKR's total of 174 for 8, which RCB overhauled with 22 balls remaining.

"Sport is about failing. You fail more often, then you succeed. Of course, champions like Russell, I think it must be weighing in his mind that he failed last game and he is out to prove every single game. We are also hoping that he will really come good in tomorrow's game."

"Rinku has batted beautifully in the games leading up to the tournament. We are not too worried about his form."

He also felt that every team in the IPL is well-balanced and the ones which do better in crucial moments of the game will win.

"Every team is batting well, getting and chasing 250-plus scores. You can't say this team is better than the other team. Every team is evenly balanced, batting and bowling pretty well."

"Teams that snatches those crucial moments at any given point of time is going to win. How challenged you are to snatch those crucial moments of the game is important."

"All teams have some really fantastic batters. There is no point targeting one, we have to look at the whole team and devise a strategy accordingly. Our game plan is to win."

Whole year I focussed, visualised about finishing games, says Ashutosh Sharma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Visakhapatnam

Ashutosh Sharma says he spent the whole year visualising the finishing line after pulling off a miraculous heist for Delhi Capitals against Lucknow Supergiants in Visakhapatnam.

Ashutosh attracted attention with his exemplary finishing skills last season when he turned up for Punjab Kings. However, he did not leave the season a fully satisfied man as he did not meet his own expectations.

It is early days in IPL 2025 but the 26-year-old, who plays for Railways in domestic cricket, was pleased with his stellar 66 not out off 41 balls that brought Delhi Capitals back from the dead on Monday night.

Ashutosh was quick to highlight the role played by IPL debutant Vipraj Nigam as the duo changed the course of the game after Delhi Capitals found themselves

down and out at 113 for six chasing 210.

It was the contentious Impact Player rule that allowed Ashutosh to play the innings of his life.

Last year was really good but that's history for me. I have taken the positives from there and worked on myself, to improve whatever weaknesses I had

—ASHUTOSH SHARMA, DC PLAYER

He changed gears dramatically after collecting 20 runs off the first 20 balls he faced.

The last 11 balls he faced yielded 46 runs as he finished the game with a six over the bowler's head and the majority of his five sixes came down the ground.

"Missed out on finishing the game on a couple of occasions in the previous season. The whole year I focussed and visualised it. Had the belief that if I play till

the last over, anything can happen.

"Well played to Vipraj. I asked him to keep hitting. He was very calm under pressure. Want to dedicate this award to my mentor Shikhar (Dhawan) paaji," said Ashutosh.

Ashutosh and Shashank Singh made a name for themselves with their exploits for Punjab Kings before the franchise released the former ahead of the auction.

To become part of a serious discussion in the context of Indian cricket, Ashutosh knew he could not sit on past performances.

"Last year was really good but that's history for me. I have taken the positives from there and worked on myself, to improve whatever weaknesses I had. I'm applying what I did in domestic cricket."

With number 11 on strike in the 20th over and six runs needed for a famous win, it is natural to be nervous but Ashutosh remained confident.

Dhoni not convinced about Impact Player rule in T20

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former India captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni was not quite convinced about the need for the Impact Player rule (IPR) when it was first introduced in the IPL but now sees it as a part of T20 cricket's evolution.

The 43-year-old, who remains a talismanic figure for the Chennai Super Kings despite relinquishing captaincy last year, said he does not consider himself an Impact Player as he remains the first-choice wicketkeeper of his side.

"When this rule was implemented, I felt it wasn't really needed at that time. In a way, it helps me, but at the same time, it doesn't. I still do my wicket-keeping, so I am not an impact player," Dhoni told 'JioStar'.

"I have to be involved in the game. A lot of people say the rule has led to more

high-scoring games. I believe it's more due to the conditions and the comfort level of players," he added.

The rule has been criticised by the likes of India's Test and ODI skipper Rohit Sharma and star all-rounder Hardik Pandya, both of whom believe that it can affect the growth of all-rounders as teams tend to choose big-hitting batters for this role.

Dhoni said the rule does give teams the comfort of an extra batter for crunch situations.

"The number of runs being scored isn't just because of an extra batsman. It's about the mindset, teams now have the comfort of an extra batter, so they play more aggressively," he said.

"It's not that all four or five extra batters are being used, it's just the confidence of having them. This is how T20 cricket has evolved," he added.

We have to 'mix and match' until we get our players back: Lance Klusener

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Visakhapatnam

LSG assistant coach Lance Klusener says his injury-hit team has no option but to "mix and match" until it starts getting players back.

Injuries to as many as four fast bowlers — Avesh Khan, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan and Akash Deep — have dealt a big setback to LSG. They failed to defend 209 against Delhi Capitals on Monday night with dew also playing a part.

"At the moment, we don't have a lot of reserves with the ball, so we're going to have to just probably mix and match until we start getting players back," Klusener said at the post-match media interaction.

"But that's just the nature of it. We're going to have to stand up and stand tall with the bat in Hyderabad [venue of their next game] as we saw in the first game."

"We're looking forward to that, but as I said, it's an opportunity for some youngsters as well, getting their first opportunity. I was really happy for Sharul Thakur (injury replacement) - two wickets in the first over," he added.

Though skipper Rishabh Pant felt LSG had enough runs on the board, Klusener felt they were 20 to 30 runs short.

"If I have to put a finger on it, I would like to say we've probably left 20 or 30 runs with the bat out there. That was probably why we ended up being under pressure with the ball. I thought they [DC] finished well with the bat, but the reason why we're in that position is because we didn't score enough runs, which we should have."

"I thought when the bowlers got it right, there was a little bit of spin, so I thought there was a very good wicket. There was a little bit in there for everybody."

Ashutosh Sharma played a blinder for Delhi Capitals to pull off a famous one-wicket win.



If not cricketer, I would rather be a pilot, says Glenn Phillips

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

When he is done taking superhuman catches on a cricket field, Glenn Phillips, a man of multiple interests, would love to fly planes for a living. After all, flying has always been his passion and if he had all the money in the world, the New Zealand and Gujarat Titans all-rounder would rather be a pilot than a cricketer.

Speaking to PTI ahead of his maiden season with Gujarat Titans, Phillips also detailed how he uses his experience of playing a variety of sports in cricket, the hard work behind his gravity-defying catches, how playing in India has made him a better player of spin and why his fourth team in the IPL has already become his favourite one. But Phillips was most animated when asked about his love for flying, not very surprisingly either.

"Yeah, it's a huge passion of mine. If I wasn't playing cricket and I had all the money in the world growing up, I probably would have ended up being a pilot, to be fair. I love being in the air," said Phillips.

"I love all the procedures around being a pilot, the radio communications, but obviously the handling of the plane itself. And I don't really know why I love it so much, but I think anybody who's into aviation doesn't really know either."

"Obviously, the feeling of flying is something that humans have wanted all the time. So, I guess I'm no different from all those people." The 28-year-old South African-born player, who plays all three formats for New Zealand, still has a lot of cricket left in him and if he has not made enough money by his retirement, he would happily take up the pilot's job.

"I guess if it comes down to wanting to do something that I enjoy after cricket. Ideally, I'd like to be able to go into the mountains and have absolutely no need for work and do all my hobbies."

"But if push comes to shove, it means that I still need to work, piloting would be my first option on the list," said Phillips, who has flown the two-seater Cessna 152 aircraft. With cricket now taking most of his time, his flying time is limited to simulators. Blend of natural talent and hard work has made him the flier that I am.

Phillips' remarkable reach and agility on the field can be attributed to genes and his stint as a gymnast in his growing up days.

His jaw-dropping catches, most recently seen in the Champions Trophy, are also a result of his dedication to fielding aspect of his all-round game.

"I think there is definitely a huge piece of it that comes down to genetics from a speed and agility perspective. So, I guess you can say a little bit naturally gifted, but at the end of the day, talent and natural gifts can only get you so far."

"So, the other half of it is working my butt off to try and be able to cover all my bases, to go out in the middle and understand that I've done the work. So if I do drop catches, it's not because I haven't put the effort in," said the Blackcaps all-rounder. His left-handed grab to dismiss Mohammad Rizwan and his right-handed stunner to get rid of Shubman Gill in the Champions Trophy are fresh in the minds of cricket followers but they don't feature in Phillips' top-three catches.

"I would probably say Marcus Stoinis at the SCG in the T20 World Cup (2022). That one was pretty good, covered a lot of ground, full dive. And then I've taken a catch for Gloucester in the T20 Blast out at deep backward point."

"That was a full dive to my left after a full sprint. And that was pretty cool. And then I'm probably going to say Ollie Pope at Hagley Oval at Gully (during a Test), just because I literally couldn't get any further than that. That was the max limit I've been able to dive at," he recollected.

He never saw Jonty Rhodes go about his

Smriti, Deepti retain spots in ICC rankings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

India vice-captain Smriti Mandhana and all-rounder Deepti Sharma held on to their third positions respectively in the latest ICC Women's T20I batter and bowlers' rankings issued here on Tuesday. Besides Mandhana, no other Indian is in the top-10 with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur placed 11th position, Jemimah Rodrigues ranked 15th and Shafali Verma a rung below.

The batters' list is led by Australia's Beth Mooney, followed by teammate Tahlia McGrath.

Mooney increased her lead at the top following scores of 75 not and 70 against New Zealand. Phoebe Litchfield gained three places to move to 22nd overall following an innings of 32 in the second clash with the White Ferns.

Star all-rounder Melie Kerr gained two places on the list for T20I batters following her innings of 40 in the second match

Besides Mandhana, no other Indian is in the top-10 with skipper Harmanpreet Kaur placed 11th position, Jemimah Rodrigues ranked 15th and Shafali Verma a rung below

of the series against Australia, while fellow New Zealander Georgia Plimmer improved 20 spots to move to 50th on the back of some consistent innings at the top of the order over the last month.

Deepti continued to occupy her third spot among bowlers behind England's Sophie Ecclestone and Sadia Iqbal of Pakistan.

The plaudits continue to arrive for Annabel Sutherland as the Australian all-rounder reached a new career-high rating on the latest ICC Women's T20I bowling rankings.

Sutherland, who has featured in the

ICC Women's ODI Team of the Year in the last two years and won the ICC Women's Player of the Month award twice in 2024, reached a new personal best rating for T20I bowlers and leaped two places to the fourth spot after her four-wicket haul against New Zealand in Mount Maunganui.

The right-arm collected four wickets as Australia bowled the White Ferns out for just 122 in reply to their massive total of 204/3 and in the process opened up an unassailable 2-0 advantage in the three-game series.

Darcie Brown, meanwhile, moved 12 spots to reach 18th overall following figures of 2/23 against New Zealand in the second game of their series.

Kerr remains in second place behind West Indies' Hayley Matthews in the rankings for T20I all-rounders, with McGrath (up three rungs to 18th) and Sutherland (up one spot to 21st) among the biggest movers this week.

ICC retains Nitin Menon in Elite Panel of Umpires

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday included Allahudien Paleker of South Africa and England's Alex Wharf in the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires which features Nitin Menon as the only Indian, while Jayaraman Madangopal has been promoted to the Emerging Panel.

Michael Gough and Joel Wilson will make way for the two new entrants in Palekar and Wharf.

According to BCCI sources, the 50-year-old Madangopal has been promoted to the Emerging Panel which makes him eligible to officiate in overseas Tests and ODIs. Former Tamil Nadu player Madangopal has so far officiated in one Test, 22 ODIs and 42 T20Is.

Meanwhile, Menon is ranked second behind Richard Illingworth in the Elite Panel of Umpires.

Paleker, a former first-class cricketer from South Africa, has officiated on-field in four Tests, 23 ODIs and 67 T20Is in men's international cricket and a total of 17 women's international games — having also officiated at major ICC tournaments such as men's T20 World Cup 2024, and the Under-19 men's Cricket World Cup 2024.

Wharf brings a wealth of experience from his 16-year first-class career, having also featured in 13 ODIs for England.

Wharf has officiated on-field in seven Tests, 33 ODIs, and 45 T20Is in men's international cricket, and has stood at the recent ICC men's and women's World



Cups, the respective men's and women's T20 World Cups in 2024 and the men's Champions Trophy in 2025.

ICC chairman Jay Shah gave his warm wishes to the two new entrants, Paleker and Wharf, while also thanking the outgoing umpires, Gough and Wilson.

"By definition, being an elite official brings with it scrutiny and pressure, but we are confident that both Allahudien and Alex possess the temperament, experience and skill to deliver consistently at this very top level," Shah said in a statement. "On behalf of the ICC, I wish them all the best for the upcoming season as well as for the future. We would also like

to place on record our sincere thanks to both Joel and Michael for their services to the world game, over a number of years." Palekar expressed his gratitude for the promotion and acknowledged the support of his mentors, colleagues, and family. "This is a significant moment in my umpiring career. It's an honour to be named in the elite panel, and I look forward to reposing the faith shown in me. Being on this panel brings both pride and responsibility, but I am confident that my experience officiating across formats will stand me in good stead," he said.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family, friends, coaches, men-

tors, the ICC, and Cricket South Africa for backing me and all my colleagues who supported me over the years."

"To my father, Jamalodien, who was also an umpire. He is my inspiration and role model, his teachings have brought me to this stage. Lastly, to my wife Shakira, you have been through this incredible journey with me. I want to thank you for all the sacrifices, support, and patience you've shown; you have been my pillar of strength."

Wharf acknowledged the guidance and support he has received throughout his career.

"I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the ICC and ECB for the opportunities they've provided over the years. I am truly appreciative of their guidance and constant support," he noted.

"This milestone would not have been possible without the amazing colleagues who have shared their expertise with me and those who have supported me both on and off the field. I look forward to continuing to learn from and work alongside them as I embark on this exciting new chapter in my career."

Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Umpires (2025-26): Kumar Dharmasena (Sri Lanka), Christopher Gaffaney (New Zealand), Adrian Holdstock (South Africa), Richard Illingworth (England), Richard Kettleborough (England), Nitin Menon (India), Allahudien Paleker (South Africa), Ahsan Raza (Pakistan), Paul Reiffel (Australia), Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid (Bangladesh), Rodney Tucker (Australia), Alex Wharf (England).