



The Pioneer

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Ruckus over reservation for Muslims in Karnataka

'INDIA AIMS TO BECOME ALTERNATIVE TO GLOBAL SHIP-BUILDING INDUSTRY'

Suhas confident about O Bhama Ayyo Rama after SKEPTICISM

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Gajwel leaders complained that their MLA Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao was not present in the Assembly and as a result, public issues connected to the constituency were not discussed in the Assembly. I have a special affection for Gajwel as it reminded me of the 'Dalit-Tribal Dandora' that was held on the land of Gajwel. The people's government stands by the constituency in development matters

— Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister, Telangana P3

CM'S CALL TO OFFICIALS

Prevent summer water crisis

'WATER BELL' SYSTEM IN SCHOOLS TO CHECK STUDENT DEHYDRATION

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has instructed officials to implement proactive measures to prevent drinking water shortages and heatwave-related fatalities across the state during the summer months. During a review meeting at the Secretariat on Monday, he directed officials from Disaster Management, Panchayati Raj, and Municipal and Health Departments to ensure that no region faces water scarcity.

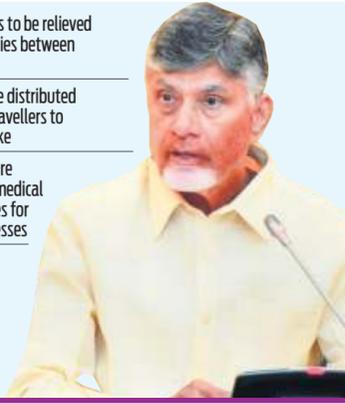
The Chief Minister emphasised the need for timely alerts on rising temperatures and directed Disaster Management officials to issue mobile alerts to inform and protect the public in heatwave-prone areas. By implementing preventive measures, the government aims to reduce heat-related deaths.

He also announced plans to establish hydration centres at bus stands, markets and labour hubs, offering free buttermilk to help citizens cope with extreme heat. Voluntary organisations willing to set up these centres will receive government support, reviving a similar initiative implemented between 2014 and 2019.

Special attention will be given to drought-prone regions such as Rayalaseema and Prakasam districts, where livestock face severe water shortages. The government will spend Rs 35 crore to construct 12,138 water ponds in villages to ensure adequate water availability for cattle.

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- Rs 2 crore allocated for 12,138 water ponds to aid livestock in drought-prone areas
- Disaster Management officials instructed to issue mobile alerts on rising temperatures
- Municipal workers to be relieved from outdoor duties between 12 PM and 4 PM
- ORS packets to be distributed to workers and travellers to prevent heatstroke
- Drones to monitor forest fires with strict action against negligence
- Hospitals to ensure adequate beds, medical staff, and supplies for heat-related illnesses
- Hydration centres to be set up at bus stands, markets, and labour hubs with free buttermilk
- NREGA labourers to get additional workdays with restricted working hours from 6 AM to 11 AM
- Mosquito control measures to be implemented in remote agency areas to prevent disease outbreaks



Govt to act as facilitator connecting donors with beneficiaries, says CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a bid to eradicate poverty by 2029, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has finalised the structure of the 'P4, A Platform for Helping Hands' initiative, aimed at bridging the gap between the affluent and the underprivileged. The programme will be officially launched on Ugadi in Amaravati.

At a high-level review meeting at the Secretariat on Monday, the Chief Minister emphasised that P4 is a voluntary platform enabling wealthy individuals, including Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), to assist disadvantaged

'P4' set for Ugadi launch



families. Inspired by the Janmabhoomi programme implemented during his previous tenure, the initiative is designed as a community-driven support system without direct financial involvement from the government.

Under the initiative, donors will be honoured with the title 'Margadarsi',

while beneficiaries will be recognised as 'Bangaru Kutumbam'. Beneficiaries will be selected through Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas to ensure transparency and fairness, preventing disputes and ensuring aid reaches the most deserving families.

Continued on Page 2

JUSTICE VARMA CASH DISCOVERY ROW

SC collegium recommends transfer to Allahabad HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/PRAVAGRAJ

After two meetings, the Supreme Court Collegium on Monday recommended the repatriation of Delhi High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma, who is facing a probe into the alleged discovery of huge stash of cash from his official residence in Delhi after a fire incident, to his parent Allahabad High Court.

Hours after the transfer recommendation to the Centre was made public in a resolution uploaded on the website of the top court, the president of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association (AHCBA) Anil Tiwari said the high court lawyers will go on an indefinite strike from Tuesday in protest against this move.

Justice Varma's proposed transfer could come into effect after the Centre accepts the recommendation, which came on a day when the Delhi High Court in a notice withdrew judicial work from Justice Varma "with immediate effect".

"The Supreme Court Collegium in its meetings held on March 20 and 24, 2025 has recommended the repatriation of Justice Yashwant Varma, Judge, High Court of Delhi, to the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad," said the resolution adopted by the top court.



"All the judgements delivered by Justice Yashwant Varma during his tenure at Allahabad High Court and Delhi High Court be reviewed in order to inspire confidence of people at large to regain public faith in the judicial system."

the lunch break. The association further demanded a review of judgements delivered by the judge.

"All the judgements delivered by Justice Yashwant Varma during his tenure of a judge at Allahabad High Court and Delhi High Court be reviewed in order to inspire confidence of people at large to regain public faith in the judicial system."

But some legal experts termed the demand as "preposterous", "premature" and "unjustified".

"So far as the review of all his (Justice Varma) judgements is concerned, it can only be sought by the parties concerned... this is not open for all," senior advocate Ajit Sinha said. "I don't agree. It's too premature for anything," said another senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan.

Speaking to mediapersons in Prayagraj, Tiwari referred to a number of resolutions adopted by the AHCBA.

DON'T MISS...

Jagan seeks crop loss compensation

Former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy criticised the coalition government for neglecting farmers and demanded immediate compensation for those who suffered heavy losses due to the recent heavy rains, which damaged horticultural crops in the region, pushing farmers into distress. He accused the coalition government of showing no concern for farmers who lost their standing crops due to gales and unseasonal rains on Saturday. Speaking to the media after assessing the extent of damage to banana crops...

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UCC will benefit Muslim women

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Monday said the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will give equal rights to every citizen of the state regardless of their religion or caste and end the oppression of Muslim women. Addressing the gathering at a function held at Gandhi Park here to felicitate him on the completion of three years of his second term as chief minister, Dhami said his government is living up to the expectations of the people of Devbhoomi, who have given their mandate to the...

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Investors' wealth swells by Rs 27,10L cr

Markets investors became richer by Rs 27.10 lakh crore as the BSE benchmark Sensex continued to rally for the sixth trading day, surging nearly 6 per cent during this period. On Monday, the 30-share BSE bellwether gauge jumped 1,078.87 points or 1.40 per cent to settle at an over six-week high of 77,984.38. During the day, the benchmark zoomed 1,201.72 points or 1.56 per cent to 78,107.23. The BSE benchmark gauge jumped 4,155.47 points or 5.62 per cent in six trading days. Tracking the optimism...

-PAGE: 8

I have to adapt and stay relevant: Dhoni

Rejecting speculation that he is the back-room decision-maker in Chennai Super Kings despite handing over captaincy to Rituraj Gaikwad, the talismanic Mahendra Singh Dhoni said he is instead focussed on reinventing himself and his strokes to "stay relevant" in the IPL. Speaking to 'JioStar' after CSK's four-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in their lung-opener on Sunday night here, Dhoni spoke about the team dynamics under Gaikwad, his own form and also the regional commentary being...

-SPORTS

24% salary raise for MPs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Monday notified a 24 per cent hike in the salaries of members of Parliament with effect from April 1, 2023, on the basis of the Cost Inflation Index, taking their monthly salaries to Rs 1.24 lakh besides certain allowances and perks.

A notification issued by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs also increased the daily allowances for sitting members and pension and additional pension for every year of service in excess of five years for former members.

The daily allowance too has been increased from Rs 2,000 to Rs 2,500, the notification said. MPs can draw daily allowances while attending Parliament sessions and meetings of parliamentary committees.

The pension for former members of Parliament has been increased from Rs 25,000 per month to Rs 31,000 per month. The additional pension for every year of service in excess of five years has been increased from Rs 2,000 per month to Rs 2,500 per month.

Continued on Page 2

TTD Board okays Rs 5,258.68 cr budget

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The TTD Board of Trustees has approved a budget of Rs 5,258.68 crore for the financial year 2025-26, announced TTD Chairman BR Naidu.

Speaking to the media at Annamaiah Bhavan on Monday evening, following the TTD Board meeting, he was accompanied by TTD Executive Officer J Syamala Rao, board members, and other officials. He stated that the board had taken several key decisions.

The board will explore the feasibility of increasing salaries and



enhancing medical care for Potu workers. It has approved financial assistance for the reconstruction of temples in Kodangal, Karimnagar,

Upamaka, Anakapalle, Kurnool, Dharmavaram, Talakona, and Tirupati (Gangamma temple).

Continued on Page 2

Collectors' meet from today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has released the schedule for the 3rd Collectors' Conference, set to take place on 25 and 26 March at the Conference Hall, 5th Block, AP Secretariat in Amaravati.

The conference will commence with a welcome address by the Chief Commissioner of Land Administration at 10:00 am on 25 March, followed by introductory remarks from key government offi-

cial, including the Chief Secretary and the Ministers for Revenue and Finance. The Chief Minister will deliver the keynote address from 10:20 am to 11:00 am.

The key agenda on March 25 will focus on Policy Insights & Governance: Presentations will include an overview of the state's vision and Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) by the Principal Finance Secretary, along with a session on WhatsApp Governance by the Secretary of IT.

Min hoists 'Blue Flag' at Rushikonda Beach

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

State Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh hoisted the Blue Flag at a grand function organised at Rushikonda Beach here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Durgesh highlighted that the reinstatement of the Blue Flag certification bolsters the beach's international appeal and emphasised the need for community participation in maintaining cleanliness.

Continued on Page 2

AP govt signs MoU for intl university

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Government of Andhra Pradesh on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Georgian National University SEU (GNU) to establish an International University in the state. The signing ceremony took place at the Chief Minister's residence in Undavalli.

Under the agreement, GNU will invest approximately Rs 1,300 crore to set up the International University, which is expected to create employment opportunities for 500 people and contribute to ecosystem development.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh will facilitate the establishment by providing necessary permissions, land acquisition, and infrastructure support, adhering to existing rules and regulations.

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister for Human Resource



Development, Nara Lokesh, reaffirmed the government's commitment to fostering world-class education and global engagement. He stated that the partnership with Georgian National University reflects the government's dedication to providing high-quality education and preparing students for the global job market.

He added that the International University would not only raise academic standards but also equip students with skills and knowledge aligned with international industry demands.

CS focuses on data lake, AI-driven governance

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand has instructed officials to expedite the data integration process at the Real-Time Governance Society (RTGS). During a review meeting on Monday, he assessed the progress of the data lake initiative, which is being developed through data integration.

Emphasising the need for swift completion, he urged officials to coordinate with department heads who have yet to submit their data, ensuring its timely inclusion to accelerate the data lake's implementation.

He stated that the data lake should be developed in line with Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's vision to enhance public services. He also reviewed the progress of WhatsApp Governance, expressing satisfaction with the expansion of

over 200 government services through the platform. He called for further efforts to make WhatsApp Governance more accessible, ensuring that citizens can seamlessly avail themselves of government services via WhatsApp.

To expand public engagement, he stressed the need to increase the adoption of WhatsApp Governance,

encouraging its widespread use among citizens. Special emphasis should be placed on enabling voice-based services, allowing users to send voice messages effortlessly and receive the required services through an AI-driven system.

The Chief Secretary highlighted the importance of enhancing administrative efficiency by streamlining e-

file clearance within government departments. IT and Real-Time Governance Department Secretary Bhaskar Katamneni provided updates on the progress of WhatsApp Governance, revealing that AI-powered features are being integrated to enable citizens to access services not only through text messages but also via voice com-

mands. He also noted the rapid progress in data integration, reporting that every government department now has a Chief Data Technical Officer (CDTO) overseeing data operations. While most departments are already linked to the data lake, efforts are underway to ensure full integration.

To provide real-time weather updates to citizens and farmers, the government is establishing the Andhra Pradesh Weather Forecasting and Early Warning Research Centre (AWARE) Hub within RTGS.

GAD Political Principal Secretary Mukesh Kumar Meena, Director I&PR Himanshu Shukla, Excise Department Director Nishant Kumar, AP Maritime Board CEO Praveen Aditya, RTGS In-Charge CEO M Madhuri, and other key officials were present.



The Chief Secretary highlighted the importance of enhancing administrative efficiency by streamlining e-file clearance within government departments.

POLAVARAM-BANAKACHARLA PROJECT



Complete DPR by June 20: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to explore cost-effective operational models for the Polavaram-Banakacharla linkage project. During a review meeting with the Water Resources Department on Monday at the Secretariat, he suggested that the electricity required to lift Godavari waters from Polavaram could be generated locally through pumped storage and solar power plants, thereby reducing financial burdens.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to complete the Detailed Project Report (DPR) by 20 June 2025 and secure Central Water Commission (CWC) approval by 20 October

2025. He emphasised the need to expedite environmental clearances and initiate project work without delay.

The Polavaram-Banakacharla linkage project is estimated to cost Rs 81,900 crore and will discharge 2 TMC of water daily. It involves the construction of a 368.60 km open canal, a 20.50 km main tunnel, 6.60 km Siddhapuram twin tunnels, and a 17 km pipeline, along with nine lift systems. The project will require 3,377 MW of power and the acquisition of 54,000 acres of land, including 15,300 acres of forest land. Additionally, 18 residential areas across five villages will be rehabilitated for the Bollapalli Reservoir. The project will be implemented in three segments to facilitate water transfer across the regions.

The first segment, from Polavaram to Prakasam Barrage downstream via the Tadipudi flood canal, will cover 175 km with a discharge capacity of 18,000 cusecs. This segment requires 1,401 acres of land and is estimated to cost Rs 13,800 crore.

The second segment, from Vaikuntapuram to Bollapalli Reservoir, will carry water with a discharge capacity of 23,000 cusecs. It involves the construction of an 83.40 km open canal, a 12.05 km pipeline, and six lift systems, requiring 2,493 MW of power. Notably, 230 MW of power will be generated in this segment. The Bollapalli Reservoir will have a live storage capacity of 152 TMC, with an estimated cost of Rs 35,750 crore.

The third segment, from Bollapalli Reservoir to Banakacharla Regulator, will transport 23,000 cusecs of water via a 109.80 km open canal, a 5.7 km pipeline, the main tunnel, and the Siddhapuram twin tunnels. This segment is expected to cost Rs 32,350 crore.

Upon completion, the project will provide irrigation water to 12.4 lakh hectares of agricultural land. It will also address drinking water needs for villages along the 400 km canal route, improve groundwater levels, and generate 430 MW of electricity. The Bollapalli Reservoir is expected to boost fisheries and other economic activities, contributing Rs 12,294 crore annually to the state's economy, according to official estimates.

Two Araku Coffee stalls set up in Parliament

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As part of a nationwide initiative to promote Araku Coffee, two exclusive stalls have been set up within the Parliament premises. One of these stalls, located at the MPs' Refreshment Canteen (Sangam One), was inaugurated by Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Kiren Rijiju.

In a significant move to enhance Araku Coffee's visibility, the Lok Sabha Speaker has approved for these stalls to operate in Parliament until the 28th of this month. These stalls have been established under the supervision of the Andhra Pradesh Grijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC), aiming to introduce this premium coffee to Union Ministers and key Members of Parliament, thereby expanding its recognition and reach.

Araku Coffee, grown by tribal farmers along the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border, is an organic product cultivated using sustainable farming methods. More than 1,50,000 tribal farmers are engaged in its production, making it a symbol of their hard work and dedication. With its Geographical Indication (GI) tag, Araku



Valley Coffee has carved a distinct identity on the global stage. Efforts are underway to elevate it as a premium international brand, with strong backing from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu. The Coffee Board and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs are actively supporting this initiative to ensure its success.

The presence of Araku Coffee in Parliament canteens marks a moment of pride. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi has previously lauded its exceptional quality, and with the tireless efforts of tribal farmers, the coffee is set to gain nationwide recognition. To further this promotional effort, GCC has prepared special gift packs for the Prime Minister, Union Ministers, and Members of Parliament. These exclusive packs contain two filter coffee sachets, instant coffee bottles, and a booklet detailing the rich history and legacy of Araku Coffee.

Speaking about this initiative, the Vice Chairperson and

Managing Director of the Grijan Cooperative Corporation, Kalpana Kumari, highlighted the enthusiastic participation of dignitaries. The event was graced by the presence of Andhra Pradesh's Minister for Tribal Welfare and Women & Child Development, Gummadri Sandhya Rani, along with GCC Chairman Kidari Shrivani Kumar, several Central Ministers, and Members of Parliament. Attendees had the opportunity to relish the distinct flavour of GCC's Araku Valley Coffee during the event.

ACA's gesture to 30 orphaned kids

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a heartwarming gesture, the Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) gave 30 orphaned children the opportunity to watch the Delhi Capitals vs Lucknow SuperGiants IPL match live at the ACA-VDCA Stadium in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

ACA purchased 30 tickets with its own funds and donated them to Papa Home, a local orphanage, allowing the children to experience the excitement of a live IPL match.

ACA President and Member of Parliament (MP) Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni), along with ACA Secretary and Rajya Sabha MP Sana Satish and ACA Treasurer Dandamudi Srinivas, personally ensured the children's comfort and enjoyment throughout the event. They spent time interacting with them, sharing light-hearted moments and offering encouragement.

The children expressed their gratitude to ACA President Kesineni Sivanath for making their dream of watching an IPL match live a reality.

Consumer rights a priority: Manohar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Nadendra Manohar reaffirmed the government's commitment to safeguarding consumer rights while inaugurating the Second Additional District Consumer Redressal Commission Bench at the Bezvada Bar Association Building in Vijayawada City Civil Court Center on Monday.

He warned that strict legal action would be taken against those selling substandard or expired products and emphasized that the newly established consumer forum bench would help address consumer grievances efficiently. Plans are also underway to enhance consumer awareness across Andhra Pradesh to ensure people are well-informed about their rights.

Andhra Pradesh remains one of the leading states in resolving consumer disputes and compensating affected consumers, the minister said. So far, 1,33,736 cases have been registered with the Consumer Forum across the state, with most successfully resolved.



Consumers can file complaints involving disputes up to Rs 50 lakh at the District Forum and up to Rs 2 crore at the State Consumer Forum. Stressing consumer empowerment, the minister said, "The consumer is king, and no one should fear seeking justice."

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the state will introduce a digital consumer awareness campaign in schools and colleges to educate young consumers about their rights. Minister Manohar also expressed satisfaction that con-

sumers in Vijayawada now have local access to seek justice, eliminating the need to travel to Machilipatnam for filing complaints.

The event was attended by Civil Supplies Commissioner Saurabh Gaur, Vijayawada Additional Consumer Forum Chairman Ch Kishore, members K Shashikala, BBA general secretary A Siva Rama Prasad, president K Chandramouli, AP Bar Council member Ch Ajay Kumar, and former BBA president Somu Krishna Murthy, among others.

24% salary raise...

Continued from Page 1

In 2018, the then finance minister Arun Jaitley increased the salaries of MPs from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh.

Jaitley had also put a mechanism for automatic revision of salaries and allowances every five years by indexing it to inflation, thus doing away with the practice of MPs making recommendations for fixing their salaries.

A member of Parliament will

now get Rs 1.24 lakh per month as salary, Rs 87,000 per month as constituency allowance as against Rs 70,000 earlier, Rs 75,000 towards office expenses as against Rs 60,000 earlier.

The office expenses of Rs 75,000 include Rs 50,000 to hire the services of a computer literate person and Rs 25,000 towards stationery items. The MPs are also entitled to purchase durable furniture worth Rs 1 lakh and non-durable furniture of Rs 25,000 once during

their tenure. Earlier, these entitlements were capped at Rs 80,000 for durable furniture and Rs 20,000 for non-durable furniture.

The MPs get accommodation, varying from a hostel in Vitthalbhai Patel House to two-bedroom flats and bungalows in central Delhi.

They are also reimbursed for electricity, water, telephone and internet charges. They and their families are also reimbursed for 34 one-way air tickets from their constituency to Delhi and get benefits on rail travel.

TTD Board okays..

Continued from Page 1

It has decided to cancel donation passbooks of donors who previously supplied organic products to TTD. The reconstruction of select VIP and non-VIP guest houses in Tirumala will be undertaken. The allocation of 20 acres of land previously designated for the establishment of a Science City and Museum at Alipiri has been revoked.

The board will identify unauthorised and unlicensed shops in Tirumala and take appropriate action against them. It will explore possibilities for providing offline darshan of Srivara for elderly and specially abled devotees. The feasibility of reverting the Srivari VIP break darshan timing to 5:30 am, as per devotees' requests, will be reviewed. Six Supatham darshan tickets will be granted to TTD employees' family members once every three months.

A committee will be formed to address the concerns of 151 contract lecturers who have been serving in TTD colleges for the past 25 years. The formation of a New Agama Salaha Mandali has been approved. Rs one crore has been sanctioned for the development of the Srinivasa Sports Complex in Tirupati.

AP to create 2 m...

Continued from Page 1

He stressed the importance of policy reforms to eliminate barriers for potential investors. Every policy must be reformed to prioritise job creation, Lokesh remarked. He also directed officials to invite major national and international companies to invest in Andhra Pradesh and build trust with existing investors by ensuring incentives and support are provided promptly.

prioritising growth in the ports, tourism, and mining sectors, which offer substantial investment opportunities. He called for expediting the allocation of land and approval processes to facilitate industrial growth. Lokesh highlighted the need to attract investments in the tourism sector and expand opportunities in mining. He also assured that the government would work to create a business-friendly environment by addressing investor concerns and accelerating project clearances.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Industries TG Bharat, Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravikumar, Minister for Urban Development P Narayana, Minister for MSMEs and SERP Kondapalli Srinivas, and Minister for Mines Kollu Ravindra. Senior officials present included Ajay Jain, N Yuvaraj, Katamaneni Bhaskar, Praveen Kumar, Saikanth Varma, and M Abhishek Kishore.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Ekadashi: Mar 25 05:05 AM to Mar 26 03:45 AM
Dwadashi: Mar 26 03:45 AM to Mar 27 01:43 AM
Nakshatram: Shravana: Mar 25 04:26 AM to Mar 26 03:49 AM
Dhanishta: Mar 26 03:49 AM to Mar 27 02:29 AM
Rahukalam: 3:23 PM to 4:53 PM
Yamagandam: 9:21 AM to 10:51 AM
Varjyam: 07:36 AM to 09:06 AM
Gulika: 12:22 PM to 1:52 PM
Amritakalam: 05:41 PM to 07:15 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:57 AM to 12:46 PM
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 36°
Humidity: 69%
Sunrise: 6:08 AM
Sunset: 6:19 PM
Updated: March 24, 2025 5:00 PM

Prevent summer...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister also instructed officials to make arrangements for providing water for animals and birds to prevent dehydration during the scorching summer.

To safeguard students from dehydration, CM Naidu introduced the "Water Bell" system across state-run schools, ensuring that drinking water is available and children are encouraged to hydrate regularly. Recognising the increased risk of forest fires during the summer, CM Naidu ordered the use of drones to monitor fire incidents and mandated strict action against those responsible for negligence. He also stressed the need for vigilance in industrial zones prone to fire hazards.

To address urban water shortages, the Chief Minister approved Rs 39 crore for municipalities. He called for expanding water access through farm pond construction under NREGA and desilting reservoirs. For NREGA labourers, additional workdays will be provided, with working hours restricted to 6 AM to 11 AM to protect them from extreme heat.

The government will distribute ORS packets to workers and travellers to prevent heatstroke. Municipal workers will be relieved from outdoor duties between 12 PM and 4 PM during peak heat hours. CM Naidu also ordered hospitals to ensure adequate beds, medical staff and supplies to treat heat-related illnesses while implementing mosquito control measures in remote agency areas to prevent disease outbreaks. Chief Secretary Vijayanand and senior officials from various departments participated in the meeting.

'P4' set for...

Continued from Page 1

"The government will act as a facilitator connecting donors with beneficiaries," the Chief Minister said. "Participation is entirely voluntary, and no one will be pressured to contribute."

The initiative is independent of existing welfare schemes and specifically targets those requiring additional support. Officials have been directed to launch awareness campaigns to prevent misunderstandings regarding its objectives.

In the first phase, 20 lakh families will receive assistance, with the program continuing until poverty is eradicated in Andhra Pradesh. The Ugadi launch event in Amaravati is expected to be a grand affair, with arrangements to bring at least one representative from each village and one bus of participants from every constituency.

The Chief Minister reiterated his commitment to transforming Andhra Pradesh into a poverty-free state and called on the wealthy to take an active role in societal upliftment. With the P4 initiative, the government aims to create a collaborative ecosystem where community support drives social transformation.

Min hoists 'Blue...

Continued from Page 1

He clarified that the temporary suspension by a Danish environmental body was intended to ensure improved management, which the government successfully addressed to restore the status.

The minister stressed that while launching tourism projects is easy, their upkeep requires collective effort. He urged local representatives to educate visitors on responsible tourism, discouraging littering and plastic waste. Plans for a new Tourism Policy were also outlined, positioning the sector as an industry.

MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao, APTDC Chairman Dr Nookasani Balaji, APTDC Managing Director Amrapali Katar and District Joint Collector K Mayur Ashok were also present.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
No. 19 to 35/2024-25 Date: 17-03-2025
Online tenders are being invited to undertake annual repairs to 16 comprehensive drinking water schemes in Visakhapatnam, Anakapalli and Alluri Sitaramaraju districts at a cost of Rs. 1,293.50 lakh. Availability of tender schedules: From 11.00 am onwards on 25-03-2025. For details, contact <http://www.approcurement.gov.in> or call 0891-4805569.
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Visakhapatnam
DPR No: 190821, 191191, 191121, 191131, 191141, 191151

Collector's call to make NTR district TB-free

Wall poster released on World TB Eradication Day

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr G Lakshmisha, NTR District Collector, has directed officials to strive for the elimination of tuberculosis in the State. He highlighted the necessity of identifying individuals with tuberculosis and ensuring that they receive proper treatment along with nutritional assistance.

On World TB Eradication Day, the Collector launched a wall poster on the NTR District TB Control Organisation to enhance public awareness at the Pingali Venkaiah Meeting Hall on the collectorate grounds in Vijayawada on Monday. He also awarded appreciation certificates to gram panchayats recognised under the TB Mukti Scheme.

During his address, Dr. Lakshmisha emphasised the need for increased public awareness regarding TB eradication in the district. He urged officials and staff from the Medical and Health department to visit every village to identify TB patients. Alongside treatment, he stressed the importance of providing nutritional support to these individuals.



Moreover, he recommended that officials pay special attention to TB patients who also suffer from diabetes and hypertension. He encouraged health officials to relay information about TB patients tested at private hospitals to the District TB Control Officer. He cautioned that failure to do so would result in strict action against the responsible officials.

In addition, he mentioned that approximately 2,500 nutritional kits are being distributed to TB patients through 48 TB Mitras. In addition to offering treatment and free medica-

tions, the State government is providing monthly financial assistance of Rs. 1,000 to these patients. He urged Health officials to effectively manage TB cases by implementing the Test, Trace, and Treat (TTT) strategy.

Besides, he stated that the Health Department has recognised Torragudipadu in Nandigama mandal, Indugapalli in Vatsavai mandal, China Nandigama in G Konduru, and Eturu in Chandralapadu mandal as the district's TB-free villages. Furthermore, he mentioned that this year, Mulapadu in

Ibrahimpatnam mandal and Pallagiri in Nandigama mandal have also been designated as TB-free villages.

Present at the event were DRO M Lakshmi Narasimham, TB Control Officer Dr J Usha Rani, DMHO Dr M Subasini, DMO Dr Mothi Babu, and Deputy RMO Dr Shobha Rani, among others.

Meanwhile, a rally was held at the new Government Hospital, attended by Professor Dr Sudheena, Associate Professor Dr Aruna, and staff from the Department of Pulmonary Medicine.

CS congratulates Secretariat employees on Table Tennis success

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand congratulated state secretariat employees for winning bronze medals at the All India Civil Services Table Tennis Tournament held recently in Delhi.

On Monday, Madda Baby Sarojini, Assistant Secretary, Minority Welfare Department, and Sahadeva Satyavati, Section Officer, General Administration Department (GAD), presented their bronze medals and certificates of appreciation to the Chief Secretary at the state secretariat.

On this occasion, CS Vijayanand praised both athletes for their achievements and encouraged them to win more medals in the future. He extended special congratulations to them for their outstanding performance.



Ration rice black market thrives amid corruption, political nexus

Middlemen exploit subsidised rice scheme, bribing officials

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A widespread black market for government-subsidised rice, intended for the city's poorest residents, is thriving, with middlemen exploiting the system for substantial profits. These intermediaries are reportedly purchasing rice meant for low-income families at rates as low as Rs. 12 per kilogram and then reselling it to rice mills for Rs. 25 per kilogram. Reports indicate that around 500 tonnes of rice are illicitly transported each month from Gajuwaka alone. Alarmingly, local officials, including corporators, political figures, and police officers, are suspected of accepting bribes to turn a blind eye to this racket.

In the district, 529,000 ration cardholders are eligible to receive approximately 8,000 tons of subsidised rice monthly. However, a substantial portion does not reach the intended beneficiaries. Instead, brokers purchase it at Rs. 12-15 per kilogram and sell it to rice mills, forming a well-organised network that systematically collects and transports the rice for illegal profit. Gajuwaka and surrounding areas, including Pedagantyada, Malkapuram, and Scindia, have become hotspots for this trade. A former gutka trader and his associates have divid-



Seized vehicle carrying government-subsidised rice

ed these locations into operational zones to streamline their activities.

With a change in government, some political leaders publicly called for a crackdown on the ration rice mafia. Complaints were submitted to Civil Supplies and police officials, yet sources suggest key traders managed to pacify leaders with alleged agreements. Reports claim that some corporators from the Jana Sena Party and TDP, along with a local TDP leader, receive monthly rations in exchange for cooperation.

In the Gajuwaka circle, which has 146 ration depots serving 1,33,000 cardholders, approximately 2,000 tons of rice are distributed monthly. However, nearly 500 tonnes are allegedly acquired by four brokers, who employ teams to buy rice from cardholders at low prices before selling it to mills

in Sabbavaram and Chodavaram. Ration rice is transported to mills in Aripaka and Venkannapalem via vans, with a key figure in the rice mills association allegedly overseeing vehicle allocation. Reports also suggest that police along the transport routes receive Rs. 50,000 per station monthly in bribes, while some corporators from the ruling party allegedly get rations in exchange for their silence.

Recently, vigilants intercepted a vehicle carrying four tons of rice and handed it over to authorities. However, the police allegedly delayed registering a case for two days until pressured by the threat of a complaint to the Police Commissioner. Rice millers reportedly refine the ration rice slightly before selling it back to the government under the levy system, earning profits of up to Rs. 10 per kilogram.

Collector reviews preparations for Iftar banquet on March 27

Chief Minister expected to attend event

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has instructed all the officials concerned to work in coordination to organise the Iftar banquet for Muslim minorities. This gathering is set to occur at the A Plus Convention Hall in Vijayawada on March 27, with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu anticipated to attend, and the Collector urged officials to work diligently to ensure the event's success.

A coordination meeting was convened at the Collector's camp office on Monday, to discuss the preparations for the State-level Iftar banquet.

During the meeting, Collector Lakshmisha emphasised the importance of adhering to the planned arrangements to facilitate a smooth and spiritually enriching programme. In addition to the banquet setup, he highlighted the necessity for special provisions for drinking water and handwashing to prevent any issues. He recommended the deployment of sanitation staff



as needed to maintain cleanliness on the premises and the installation of mobile toilets.

He suggested that the Police Department implement robust security measures to prevent any unfortunate incidents. In view of the attendance of VVIPs, VIPs, dignitaries, and religious leaders at the event, he emphasised the need for smooth traffic management and appropriate parking arrangements. Officials from the Electricity Department were urged to ensure an uninterrupted power supply. He also directed the Medical and Health Department to establish a dedicated medical camp. The Collector proposed that

provisions for a public address system should be included as well.

The meeting was attended by Vijayawada RDO Kavuri Chaitanya, Waqf Board CEO Shaik Mohammed Ali, Minority Finance Corporation MD Yakub Basha, District Minority Welfare Officer Abdul Rabbani, Waqf Inspector Khawaja Mastan, and minority representatives Nagul Mira, MS Baig, Fataullah, Feroz, Rafi, Khawaja, Sattar, Faizan, Shami, Shakeel, among others, along with officials from the Revenue, Police, VMC, and Medical and Health departments.

Dr Keshavarao Babu appointed AP Medical Council member

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr Suryadevara Keshavarao Babu, known for his exceptional contributions to the medical field, has been appointed as a member of the Andhra Pradesh Medical Council. The State government officially issued orders confirming his appointment to this prestigious position.



Dr Keshavarao Babu, who completed his MBBS from Andhra University, is a renowned diabetologist recognised for his expertise in diabetes and hypertension treatment. In addition to his medical practice, he has authored several works in Telugu to raise public awareness about these health conditions and has left a distinctive mark in medical research.

He has held various key positions, including Medical Officer for ODA Project under the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation

(VMC), Medical Officer at VMC Urban Health Center and Health Officer for VMC School Health Project. His leadership extended to serving as the president of Indian Medical Association (IMA), Vijayawada. Currently, he is a member of the IMA State Working Council and also serves as the State president of the Hospital Board of India.

The Andhra Pradesh government, recognising his dedication and expertise, appointed Dr Keshavarao Babu as a member of the AP Medical Council to broaden the reach of his services. Expressing his gratitude, Dr Keshavarao Babu stated that he considers this position a responsibility and promised to serve with dedication.

Prominent figures from various fields and medical professionals extended their congratulations on his appointment.

Clarify stance on delimitation of constituencies: CPM to TDP and JSP

Expresses concern over these parties' absence from meeting convened by DMK

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

V Srinivasa Rao, the State secretary of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM), has urged the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and its coalition partner Jana Sena Party (JSP) to clarify their stances on the delimitation of parliamentary constituencies in India. He expressed concern that their absence from the all-party meeting convened by the DMK could negatively impact the State.

While addressing the press conference along with party State secretariat member Y Venkateswara Rao, Srinivasa Rao said that all southern States, except Andhra Pradesh, participated in the DMK-organised meeting on delimitation. He warned that this lack of participation could harm the State's interests and diminish its significance in Parliament. Rao criticised the TDP and the JSP for prioritising their relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the State's welfare, suggesting they are neglecting their responsibilities.



Further, he noted that while the YSRCP did not attend the meeting, it at least communicated its position through a letter, whereas the alliance parties intentionally chose to stay away. He questioned JSP president Pawan Kalyan that why Jana Sena members did not raise it in the Lok Sabha. He accused Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu of diverting attention from the core issue by discussing the proposed increase of 75 seats for women in the Assembly without addressing the delimitation matter.

He said that currently there are 25 parliamentary seats in the State, and he sought to clarify whether this number would rise or fall. He indicated that if seat distribution were based on population, most States would face disadvantages, with only a

few, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, benefiting. He argued that this approach would favour States governed by the BJP while failing to increase representation for other regions across the country. He pointed out that if representation were determined by population, it would lead to diminished parliamentary representation for those States that have significantly contributed to national progress.

In the meantime, he remarked that while the BJP may be acting in a conspiratorial fashion, the TDP and Jana Sena appear to be complicit in this behaviour within the State. He expressed that if delimitation occurs, the current trend shows an increase in the percentage of parliamentary seats, and it is essential to also consider increasing seats for States based on this percentage.

He raised concerns that if seat allocation is adjusted according to the current population figures, it would exacerbate regional disparities and pose a threat to national unity.

Man sentenced to life for killing wife

PNS ■ BAPATLA

The Ongole III Additional District Sessions Court Judge, D Ramulu, on Monday sentenced a man to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 1,600 for murdering his wife.

According to the police, Kathi Srinu (32), a resident of Maha Lakshmi Colony in Chinnaganjam village and mandal of Bapatla district, had ongoing disputes with his wife, Kathi Durga (30). Following their conflicts, she left him and moved in with her parents, Mallavarapu Anjaiah and Raghavamma, along with her children.



On June 6, 2024, at 11:00 am, Kathi Srinu forcibly entered his wife's house armed with a tree-cutting knife. After a heated argument, he attacked her, hacking her neck and shoulders. She died instantly. Following a complaint

lodged by the deceased's mother, Mallavarapu Raghavamma, then Sub-Inspector of Chinnaganjam Police Station, M Srinivasa Rao, registered the case under Case No. 101/2024 under Sections 452, 498-A, and 302 of the IPC.

The investigation was initially carried out by then Inkolli Circle Inspector Battula Srinivasa Rao, who arrested the accused and remanded him in custody. Subsequently, the present Inkolli CI, Y V Ramanayya, continued the investigation, examined physical evidence, and attached expert reports. The investigation was completed within six

months, and a charge sheet was filed in court on December 27, 2024.

Additional Public Prosecutor Y Prashanthi Kumari represented the prosecution.

After reviewing the evidence, the III Additional District Sessions Court, Ongole, sentenced Kathi Srinu to life imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 1,600.

Bapatla District SP Tushar Dudi commended CIs Battula Srinivasa Rao and Y V Ramanayya, along with SI S Ramesh, for their diligent investigation and successful prosecution of the case.

Congress govt will stand by Gajwel, says CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hundreds of Congress leaders and workers from Gajwel constituency, led by senior party leader Narsareddy, met Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Monday demanding that former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's Membership in the Assembly be cancelled for repeatedly skipping the House.

The delegation walked from Siddipet to Hyderabad drawing attention to what they described as the "deliberate silence" of KCR over public issues concerning Gajwel. Congress cadres said the



people of Gajwel had elected a representative to raise their voice in the Assembly, but KCR had failed to attend even a single session, leaving the constituency voiceless.

Revanth, who interacted with the group after their

arrival, said the sight of determined Congress activists walking with a purpose reminded him of the earlier "Dalit-Girijana Dandora" launched on the soil of Gajwel.

He lauded Narsareddy's leadership and his sense of

responsibility towards the people. "It is admirable to see someone so committed to his people," the Chief Minister said.

The Chief Minister also expressed a personal connection to Gajwel, assuring that the Praja Palana Government would continue to stand by the constituency in ensuring welfare and development.

Later, Gajwel Congress leaders said they would also be submitting a petition to the Governor at the Raj Bhavan, formally seeking action against KCR for breach of constitutional duty as an MLA.

Soft tennis: Anusha wins three international medals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

N Anusha, a member of the Indian soft tennis team from the State, distinguished herself at the second Indian International Soft Tennis Championship and the South Asian Soft Tennis Championship held in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh. She earned a silver medal as part of the Indian team. In addition, Anusha excelled in the South Asian Soft



Tennis Championship, where she secured bronze medals in both the women's doubles and mixed doubles events, representing the national team in these competitions. Animini Ravi Naidu, chairman of the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP), extended his

congratulations to Anusha for her impressive haul of three medals at the two international tournaments. Also, he said Anusha's victory made Vijayawada as well as Andhra Pradesh very proud.

Furthermore, the Andhra Pradesh Soft Tennis Association's chairman Daram Naveen Kumar, president V Srinu Babu, secretary D Dilip Kumar, and treasurer B Niraja commended Anusha for her outstanding performance.

Tribals protest against land record tampering

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

Tribal communities in the Golugonda region of Narsipatnam mandal staged a massive protest on Monday, accusing Tahsildar Srinivasa Rao of illegally altering land records and disregarding their long-standing cultivation rights. The protest, which began at the RTC complex and culminated at the Sub-Collector's office, demanded immediate corrective action.

At the heart of the dispute is

Survey No. 850 in Patamallampeta revenue village, where tribals of Gadabapalem have cultivated land for generations. They have established cashew and mango orchards, residential structures, a temple, and a church. K. Janardhan, State executive member of the All-India Agricultural and Rural Workers' Association, pointed out the absurdity of Duggirala Balakrishna, who emigrated to the United States 50 years ago, being listed as an agricultural landholder in the



records. The tribal community asserts collective ownership of 36 acres in Survey No. 850 and insists that any changes require their explicit consent. They also highlighted that co-owners had

issued a legal notice in 2022, objecting to any modifications. The community alleges that Tahsildar Srinivasa Rao, motivated by corruption, tampered with the records to facilitate the transfer of land valued at Rs 5

crore. AP Adivasi Sangham district convener Mosuri Raja demanded immediate disciplinary action against officials abusing their authority and jeopardising tribal land rights. Adivasi Sangham (ASM) State president Rechukatla Simhachalam pledged continued resistance, warning of a large-scale protest in Vijayawada if their demands are not met. The protest drew participation from various leaders and Adivasi women from different mandals.

Emphasis on raising awareness of country-made liquor's ill effects

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has stressed the need to raise awareness about the ill effects of consuming country-made liquor and unveiled wall posters to sensitise the public on the issue.

A meeting was organised on Monday by the Prohibition and Excise Department, attended by the Collector, SP Adnan Nayeem Ashimi, Joint Collector T Rahul Kumar Reddy, and other officials, who jointly released the awareness posters.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Nagarani emphasised that everyone must work towards eradicating the menace of illicit liquor, known locally as 'Natu Sara', by educating the public.

"The State Government will conduct awareness seminars and publicity programmes in villages and towns through



the 'Navodayam' initiative to inform people about the dangers of 'Natu Sara'. Along with explaining the health, social, and economic consequences of liquor consumption, efforts should be made to create public awareness and transform West Godavari into a liquor-free district," she stated.

She highlighted that some individuals distil illicit liquor on the outskirts using pollut-

ed water, black jaggery, paddy waste, and battery carbon, all of which are hazardous to health. Additionally, urea is used to ferment the jaggery wash liquid, and unscientific brewing methods further increase the risks for consumers.

Collector Nagarani warned that many people have lost their lives at a young age due to consuming such illegally

brewed liquor. She expressed concern that illicit liquor consumption could also drive individuals towards criminal activities.

SP Adnan Nayeem Ashimi cautioned that those caught distilling illicit liquor could face action under the PD Act. He underlined that brewing illicit liquor is a serious offence, carrying a punishment of up to eight years' imprisonment and

a fine of Rs 5 lakh.

Prohibition and Excise Deputy Commissioner B Srilatha urged the public to report cases of illicit liquor and ganja by calling the toll-free number 14405.

DRO Mogili Venkateswarulu and Prohibition and Excise Officer Dr R Kumareswaran were among those present at the meeting.

Arrangements reviewed for CM's Polavaram visit

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi inspected the arrangements for Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's visit to the Polavaram project on March 27.

Accompanied by Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy and other officials, the Collector visited the project site and assessed the preparations.

Later, she held a review meeting with officials and engineers. She emphasized the need for elaborate arrangements, as the Chief Minister would inspect key components of the project, including the diaphragm wall, upper and lower cofferdams, gap 1, and gap 2, and vibro compression.

The Chief Minister will also hold a review meeting on the progress of the works. The Collector directed that a photo exhibition showcasing the project's progress be set up.

She instructed district-



level officers to act as nodal officers to oversee arrangements and ordered the police to ensure strict security. Special arrangements should be made for legislators and dignitaries accompanying the Chief Minister, she added.

Given the intense summer, medical camps should be set up at all locations the Chief Minister will visit, with ORS packets and medicines for sunstroke prevention readily available, she said.

Earlier, the Collector inspected ongoing works at the diaphragm wall, upper and lower cofferdams, gap 1, gap 2, and vibro compression.

Joint Collector Dhatri Reddy, ITDA Project Officer Ramulu Nayak, Additional SP Nakka Suryachandra Rao, RDO Ramana, Polavaram Project Superintending Engineer Reddy Rama chandra Rao, and DE D Srinivas were present.

Coalition corporators push no-confidence motion

If motion succeeds, Mayor and Deputy Mayors will be removed

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Coalition corporators have officially filed a no-confidence motion against Mayor Golagani Hari Venkata Kumari of the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC). The formal submission, directed to District Collector and GVMC in-charge Commissioner MN Harendhira Prasad, signals a fierce power struggle for key municipal leadership roles.

The motion, which threatens to remove both the Mayor and the Deputy Mayors, has triggered intense lobbying among aspiring leaders within the coalition. Potential successors are actively seeking endorsements from influential figures. However, senior coalition members are maintaining a cautious stance, emphasising that discussions regarding leadership transitions will only proceed after the motion's successful passage.

The push for this no-confidence vote has introduced significant complications for coalition MLAs and MPs. Just a day after the notice was submitted, corporators from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP)

and Jana Sena Party (JSP) began strategic manoeuvring for the mayor and deputy mayor positions. With a year remaining in the current four-year term, established after the GVMC elections, the emboldened coalition is moving decisively.

A council meeting is anticipated within the next fortnight to formally address the motion.

If the motion succeeds, Mayor Venkata Kumari, along with Deputy Mayors Jiyanni Sridhar and Kattamuri Satish, will be removed, paving the way for a revamped leadership structure.

TDP floor leader Pila Srinivas is currently a leading contender for the mayor post. However, internal deliberations suggest a preference for a female candidate from the Backward Classes (BC) community to enhance representation and mitigate potential criticism.

Ward 5 Corporator Molly Hemalatha and Ward 26 Corporator Mukka Sravani, both from the Yadava community, are emerging as viable alternatives if Srinivas is not selected.

Simultaneously, a consensus is forming to allocate one deputy mayor position to JSP, with Ward 33 Corporator Bisetti Vasanthalakshmi gaining significant traction. However, if Srinivas secures the mayoralty, Vasanthalakshmi, who shares the same community, may face challenges to her candidacy. Ward 43 Corporator P. Ushasri is also advocating for a Kapu community representative in the mayoral role. Other names circulating for leadership positions include Ward 76 Corporator Gandham Srinivasa Rao for a deputy mayor role, and Molly Hemalatha and Ward 18 Corporator Golagani Mangaveni, who are pushing for greater Yadava representation.

Beyond the mayor and deputy mayor positions, the TDP floor leader role is sparking intense competition. Many corporators who recently switched from the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) to TDP and JSP are now demanding leadership opportunities, justifying their move by citing stagnation within their former party.

12 old-age homes under construction: Dola

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy has announced that 12 new old-age homes are being constructed across the State with all necessary facilities in coordination with the Central Government. Digital identity cards will also be issued to elderly people.

The Social Welfare Minister chaired the Senior Citizens State Council and the State Advisory Board for Disabled People meetings at the Secretariat in Amaravati on Monday.

During the review, the Minister discussed the protection of elderly people, the establishment of old-age homes, the disbursement of social security pensions to elderly and disabled individuals, the issuance of certificates to the physically disabled, the establishment of Pradhan Mantri Divyangjan Kendras (PMDKs), and the implementation of 5% reservations for differently abled individuals.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister stressed the importance of raising awareness among elderly people about their rights and ensuring the strict implementation of laws. He directed the police department to collect details of elderly individuals living alone and display them at village secretariats.



He further stated that all elderly people should be issued digital identity cards and instructed the police to take strict action against those who harass them. He assured that the government would take strong measures to safeguard the health and assets of the elderly.

Minister Bala Veeranjanya Swamy reiterated that the coalition government is committed to providing better facilities and welfare for elderly and differently abled individuals. He announced that pensions would be directly

deposited into the accounts of disabled students residing in hostels and colleges across various districts, ensuring they receive their benefits without inconvenience. Pension verification is being conducted to ensure that only genuine beneficiaries receive support.

Reaffirming that no social security pension would be cancelled, the Minister assured that all eligible individuals would receive their pensions. He emphasised that the government's goal is to ensure that everyone who qualifies benefits from welfare schemes.

He also stated that steps are being taken to implement the 5% reservation for disabled individuals. Proposals have been submitted to the Central Government for the establishment of five Pradhan Mantri Divyangjan Kendras in the State, which will be set up in Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Ongole, Tirupati, and Kurnool. The Minister added that officials have been instructed to install wheelchairs for differently abled individuals in all government offices and to ensure that everyone obtains an Aadhaar card.

Woman found murdered

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A woman was found brutally murdered in a deserted area between Kolanukonda and Ippatam in Guntur district late Sunday night. The victim, identified as Sajja Lakshmi Tirupatamma, was a resident of Ranigarithota, Vijayawada.

Guntur SP Satish Kumar said she was a widow and mother of two children, working in catering to support her family. On Sunday morning, she left home for Vijayawada but never returned. Her body was found around 8 PM near Kolanukonda, about 100 meters from the National Highway along the Guntur Channel.

She had a deep stab wound on the left side of her throat. A mobile phone with its torchlight on and a handbag was found at the scene.

Police are probing whether the victim or the assailant turned on the light.

A transgender person has been detained for questioning.

Tadepalli police have seized the phone as evidence and are investigating the motive. Further details are awaited.



Brahmotsavam booklet released

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD Chairman R Naidu, along with EO Syamala Rao, released the booklet of Sri Rama Navami annual Brahmotsavam at Vontimitta on Monday.

The event took place during the board meeting held at Annaiah Bhavan. Speaking on the occasion, the TTD

Chairman said the annual fete will be observed with grandeur from April 5-15 while the State festival of the celestial Sri Sita Rama Kalyanam will be observed on April 11.

Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary and JEO Veerabramham were also present, apart from the TTD Trust Board members.

Market Yard being developed with Rs 30 cr: Kolusu

PNS ■ ELURU

Minister for Housing and I&PR K Parthasarathi has confirmed that the Nuzvid market yard is being developed at a cost of Rs 30 crore and assured mango farmers of an 'air cargo' facility for exports.

The Nuzvid Mango Research and Kisan Mela, along with a workshop, was organised on Monday to discuss research on mango cultivation, market facilities for farmers, and the challenges they face.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Parthasarathi emphasised that Nuzvid mangoes have gained both national and international recognition.

He expressed concern that mango farmers are incurring



losses due to lower-than-expected yields. Further worsening their situation, a decline in mango quality has had a financial impact on farmers, he noted.

Parthasarathi assured that he would take up the matter with the government to provide an 'air cargo' facility for exporting mangoes to other countries. He also announced that cold storage facilities would be set up

next year and pledged efforts to provide fertilisers at subsidised rates. Additionally, he promised to establish mango farming clusters by engaging with both central and state governments.

The Minister stated that the insurance scheme for mango crops, which was neglected by the previous YSRCP government, would soon be implemented. He urged mango farmers to work diligently to further enhance the reputation of Nuzvid mangoes.

"Various infrastructure facilities are being developed at the Nuzvid market yard at a cost of Rs 30 crore for the benefit of mango farmers. It is the responsibility of farmers, traders, and scientists to utilise these resources effectively to ensure

high-quality mango yields and maintain the legacy of Nuzvid mangoes," he stated.

"To create awareness among farmers about necessary measures for quality mango production, a committee will be formed comprising horticulture, marketing, and mango research scientists, along with farmers.

This committee will visit mango-growing areas, assess soil fertility, and educate farmers on best practices to improve mango quality and restore the past glory of Nuzvid mangoes," the I&PR Minister remarked. The Minister also highlighted the need for more recommendations from scientists at the Mango Research Institute to benefit farmers.

INS Nistar nearing completion

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

INS Nistar, the first of two indigenously designed and constructed Diving Support Vessels (DSV) for the Indian Navy, is in its final stages of construction at Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL). A release from HSL issued on Monday confirmed that significant milestones in the vessel's development have been achieved, marking a crucial step in India's naval self-reliance.

According to the statement, the crew successfully conducted sea trials of the air/mix gas diving systems and the Observation Class Remotely Operated Vehicle (OROV) on March 21. These tests are essential to validating the ves-

sel's capability in deep-sea diving operations and underwater reconnaissance.

The air/mix gas diving complex onboard INS Nistar features an open-bottom bell and a side diving stage, enabling dives up to a depth of 75 metres. These advanced systems can be swiftly deployed for underwater surveys and inspections, playing a key role in planning saturation diving missions.

Additionally, the vessel is equipped with a marine crane capable of lifting 15 tonnes from the seabed. This capability enhances INS Nistar's role in salvage operations, particularly in challenging maritime conditions, ensuring efficiency in rescue and recovery efforts.

Jagan demands crop loss compensation

PNS ■ PULIVENDULA

Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy criticised the coalition government for neglecting farmers and demanded immediate compensation for those who suffered heavy losses due to the recent heavy rains, which damaged horticultural crops in the region, pushing farmers into distress.

He accused the coalition government of showing no concern for farmers who lost their standing crops due to gales and unseasonal rains on Saturday. Speaking to the media after assessing the extent of damage to banana crops and hearing the griev-



ances of farmers in Thatireddypalli, Lingala mandal, he noted that despite farmers informing the authorities, no assistance had been provided.

Demanding immediate compensation and relief, he said the YSRCP had set up

integrated cold storages at a cost of Rs 25 crore, but the coalition government had failed to hand them over to a user agency, which would have benefitted farmers in such situations. This facility was designed to procure farm produce, with a storage capacity of

about 500 metric tonnes, he said, adding that free crop insurance was a right granted to farmers during his tenure.

He criticised the coalition government for scrapping free crop insurance and depriving farmers of zero-interest loans. "We will put pressure on the government to come to the rescue of the farmers," he said.

Banana prices have fallen from Rs 26,000 to Rs 9,000 and further dropped to Rs 6,000, yet the government remains indifferent. He also accused it of failing to procure paddy, chillies, and other millets, exposing its anti-farmer stance.

He demanded that input subsidies and insurance be provided to affected farmers

across 4,000 acres where crops were damaged, vowing to mount pressure on the government to this effect. Recalling how such situations were handled during the YSRCP government, he said banana and other horticultural crops were even exported during Covid, ensuring farmers' prosperity.

He assured the farmers that he would speak to MP YS Avinash Reddy and extend whatever support the party could provide. "When our party returns to power, all pending amounts will be credited to farmers' accounts," he said.

MP Avinash Reddy also accompanied the former Chief Minister.

'Awarding of Amaravati contract works lacks transparency'

PNS ■ NELLORE

The YSRCP has criticised the coalition government for a lack of transparency in awarding contracts, accusing it of nepotism and institutionalising corruption in the process.

Speaking to the media here on Monday, former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy said the coalition government had removed judicial oversight and the reverse tendering system, which provided checks and balances on the bidding process and was widely appreciated, even by NITI Aayog.

The Amaravati capital construction works have been



awarded to individuals close to Chandrababu Naidu, reintroducing the mobilisation advance method, which previously faced criticism.

The 59 project packages have been granted to only eight companies linked to Chandrababu and the TDP, leading to large-scale misuse of

public funds.

The same system followed by Chandrababu Naidu during his 2014-19 term has returned, with syndicates and cartels securing contracts in exchange for kickbacks. The very same institutions that operated then are now in full play in the Amaravati tenure.

During his tenure, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy saved Rs 7,500 crore through reverse tendering across various projects. His system of judicial preview and reverse tendering introduced stringent checks and balances, ensuring transparency and preventing the formation of syndicates.

ACROSS THE STATES



Gambling racket run by women busted in Bareilly

Six women were arrested for allegedly running an illegal gambling operation in a residential area in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly, police said on Monday. Based on a tip-off, a police patrol team raided the location in Sanjay Nagar in Baradari area and caught the accused while gambling with playing cards, they said. A total of Rs 2,780 in cash and a deck of 52 cards were recovered from the scene, they added. Baradari police station in-charge Dhananjay Pandey said it was unusual as the gambling den was being operated exclusively by women. "As soon as our team arrived, we found six women playing cards and exchanging money. They were startled by the police but were caught red-handed," Pandey added. The arrested women were identified as Brajkishori alias Lambi, Pushpa, Premwati, Nanhi Devi, Meera, and Sadhana, he said. Police suspect that the operation may be linked to a larger gambling network and further investigation is underway, Pandey said. A case has been registered against the six under Section 13G of the Gambling Act, and legal proceedings are in progress, officials said.



Rajasthan minister's nephew dies in road mishap

Rajasthan School Education and Panchayati Raj Minister Madan Dilawar's nephew died in a road accident on Monday after a vehicle hit his bike in Baran district, a police official said. The accident took place at about 12:30 pm, when Bhanwarlal Dilawar (56), a teacher, was returning home from a school in the nearby village, and his bike was hit by an unidentified vehicle on the NH-90, leading to his death. When the police reached the spot, Bhanwarlal had already been taken to a hospital, where he was declared dead, Atru Police Station SHO Govind Singh said. Minister Madan Dilawar cancelled all his appointments to rush to his paternal Charadana village in Baran to attend the funeral. According to the deceased's brother, Uma Shankar Dilawar, Bhanwarlal had sustained critical head injuries and died on the spot. He is survived by his wife and three sons. An investigation is underway, the SHO said.



Delhi govt to prepare action report on school conditions

Delhi Education Minister on Monday informed the Assembly that an action report would be prepared on the deteriorating condition of schools in the national capital. Speaking at the ongoing Delhi Assembly Budget Session, Minister Ashish Sood addressed concerns raised by various MLAs regarding school infrastructure. A five-time BJP MLA from Gandhi Nagar, Arvind Singh Lovely, highlighted the poor condition of a school on Brahmmapuri Main Road and said several schools in the Trans-Yamuna region were in a similar state. He urged the minister to provide details of such schools, to which Sood assured that the necessary information would be collected and presented in the House. Similarly, BJP MLA Kulwant Rana pointed out the dilapidated condition of a school in Sahab Haderi. "The previous government constructed the school, but within two years, its roof collapsed. What was the reason behind this, and will the building be reconstructed?" he asked. Raising concerns about Pratihya Schools, BJP MLA OP Sharma from Vishwas Nagar claimed that several of them, built between 1993 and 1998, were shut down by the previous government.

Ruckus over reservation for Muslims in Karnataka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Monday as the ruling BJP members raised the issue of reservation to Muslims in public contracts in Karnataka leading to an uproar in the Upper House.

The upper house saw two adjournments before it was adjourned for the day.

The house witnessed uproarious scenes soon after it met for the day, with members of treasury benches raising slogans. While many of them were on their feet even before Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar sat on his chair, some of them entered the aisles.

As ruling BJP MPs created a ruckus, alleging that a Congress leader has vowed to change the Constitution to provide reservation to Muslims, Congress president and Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge asserted that no force can change the Constitution made by B R Ambedkar.

Dhankhar gave Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju the floor to speak on what the ruling party members were agitating about.

"It is not our intention to dis-

RAJYA SABHA ADJOURNED FOR THE DAY



"It is not our intention to disrupt this zero hour. Why I am standing here is because of an extremely important and sensitive matter which has come to our notice. MPs from NDA have come to me and raised this important issue."



rupt this zero hour. Why I am standing here is because of an extremely important and sensitive matter which has come to our notice. MPs from NDA have come to me and raised this important issue," Rijiju said.

He said a senior Congress leader who holds a constitutional post has said the party will change the Constitution to provide reservation in contract work to the Muslim community.

Though he did not name the leader, he was apparently referring to D K Shivakumar. "We cannot take this state-

ment lightly. Because, if it was a statement made by any ordinary person, then we could have replied outside. Since this statement has come from a person who is holding a constitutional position and in very clear terms he has stated that the Congress party will provide reservation to the Muslim community and for that they will change the Constitution of India," the minister said.

Stating that it is "extremely serious", he said, "this is not a matter that we can tolerate. This is an assault on the

Constitution of India, provided by Dr B R Ambedkar," he said, adding that Congress leaders carry the Constitution book in their pockets but are doing everything to undermine it.

When Dhankhar asked what he and his party wanted, Rijiju said the Congress president should make the party position clear and "tell the House and the nation why Congress wants to change the Constitution to provide reservation to Muslims".



Murmu asks tribals to be educated and take benefits of welfare schemes

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday called upon tribal men and women to take benefits of various welfare schemes for them, emphasising that this would be possible if they are educated.

The President, who is on a two-day visit to the state, said this while addressing the foundation day ceremony of Bharatiya Biswabasu Sabar Samaj, an association of Sabar tribes in Odisha.

The foundation is named after ancient Sabar king Biswabasu, who was considered the first servitor of Lord Vishnu, worshipped in a cave in the name of Shree Nilamadhav before taking the form of Lord Jagannath.

Beginning her speech by chanting "Jai Jagannath, Jai Nilamadhav and Biswabasu Zindabad", the President said

a nature-friendly lifestyle is a characteristic of Indian culture and it is also an integral part of tribal life.

"Tribal brothers and sisters worship forests, trees etc as gods. According to tribal beliefs, the souls of their ancestors reside in the forest. This belief is a great mantra of forest protection," she said.

Noting that the government is implementing various schemes for empowerment of tribal people and preserving and promoting their art and culture, the President urged them to be aware of the welfare schemes and take benefit of them. "The government schemes would be successful only with people's cooperation and participation. If you (tribals) are not aware of the schemes, you cannot get the benefits. And you can be aware of the schemes if educated. Therefore, I urge you to be educated and aware."



CBI arrests NHA GM in Rs 15L bribery case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested a general manager of the National Highways Authority of India (NHA) and three others, including a general manager of a private company, in connection with alleged bribery of Rs 15 lakh, officials said on Monday.

Ram Prit Paswan, the accused general manager of the NHA, had allegedly sought the bribe of Rs 15 lakh for "extending undue favours in processing and passing of the bills related to the contracts/works of the NHA", the CBI said in a statement.

Besides Paswan, the CBI has also arrested Suresh Mahapatra, the general manager (GM) of the accused company Ram Kripal Singh Construction Pvt. Ltd, who was allegedly giving the bribe. Two employees of the company -- Barun Kumar and Chetan Kumar -- were also arrested.

In addition to the arrested persons, the CBI has also named YB Singh, Chief General Manager (CGM) and Regional Officer (RO) posted at NHA Regional Office, Patna, Deputy General Manager Kumar Saurabh, Project Director Lalit Kumar, Site Engineer Anshul Thakur and AGM Accounts Hemen Medhi in the FIR.

The CBI has also named the company Ram Kripal Singh Construction Pvt. Ltd and its another GM Amar Nath Jha as accused in the FIR among others.

Key accused's house razed before HC orders stay

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Civic authorities on Monday morning deployed bulldozers and flattened a two-storey "illegal" house of Fahim Khan, a key accused in the Nagpur violence who has been booked for sedition, hours before the Bombay High Court stepped in and ordered a stay on the action.

The authorities also removed an "illegally" constructed balcony of a house of another accused Yusuf Sheikh in the Mahal area, where the violence took place on March 17, officials said.

The civic action came even as the High Court's Nagpur bench questioned why the owners of the houses were not given a hearing before demolishing the alleged illegal portions, and the rapped the administration for "high-handedness". Khan, a leader of the Minority Democratic Party (MDP) currently in jail, has been booked for sedition.

He is among over 100 persons arrested for the violence in the Maharashtra city where mobs went on a rampage amid rumours that a "chadar" with holy inscriptions was burnt during protests by VHP and

NAGPUR RIOTS



Bajrang Dal activists for the removal of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district. A few days back, the

Nagpur Municipal Corporation issued a notice to Khan, citing various lapses and lack of the building plan approval (for his house), sources said.

At around 10.30 am on Monday, three JCB machines of the NMC started demolishing the house, located at Sanjay Bagh Colony in the Yashodhara Nagar area, amid heavy police security and drone surveillance in the entire area, which was completely barricaded. The two-storey residential structure was razed to the ground by around 2.30 pm, the officials said.

The house, registered in the name of Khan's mother, was located on a plot of Nagpur Improvement Trust (Lease) and the lease ended in 2020, a civic official said.

India will be destroyed if RSS takes control of education: Rahul Gandhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country will be destroyed if the RSS takes full control of the education system, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi said on Monday.

The former Congress chief said the INDIA bloc constituents may have some slight differences in its ideologies and policies but they can never compromise on the education system of the country.

"One organisation wants to destroy the future and the education system of the country. The name of that organisation is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. If the education system goes into their hands, which is actually happening slowly, this country will be destroyed. No one will get jobs and the country will be finished," Gandhi said at a protest organised by affiliate student organisations of the INDIA bloc, against the National Education Policy.

"Students organisations must tell students that the vice chan-



cellors of Indian universities are dominated by the RSS. In the coming time, state universities' VCs will be appointed on the recommendation of the RSS. We have to stop this," he said at the protest held at Jantar Mantar.

Gandhi recalled that last week Prime Minister Narendra Modi made remarks on the Maha Kumbh in Parliament and asserted that the PM should have also spoken about unemployment and inflation. "The prime minister does

not speak a word about unemployment, inflation and education system. Their model is to hand over all resources to Adani and Ambani and hand over institutions to the RSS," Gandhi said.

To the agitators, he said, "You are students of the INDIA bloc, there may be some differences in our ideologies and policies but we can never compromise on the education system of the country. We will fight this fight together and push back the RSS."

UCC to end oppression of Muslim women: U'khand CM

PNS ■ RUDRAPUR (U'KHAND)

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Monday said the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) will give equal rights to every citizen of the state regardless of their religion or caste and end the oppression of Muslim women.

Addressing the gathering at a function held at Gandhi Park here to felicitate him on the completion of three years of his second term as chief minister, Dhami said his government is living up to the expectations of the people of Devbhoomi, who have given their mandate to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for a second consecutive term.

"The UCC, which was implemented on January 27, making Uttarakhand the first state in independent India to implement the law, will give equal rights to everyone. It will end the oppression of our Muslim sisters," he said.

He also held out the introduction of a strict anti-cheating (use of unfair means) law as a major



achievement of the state government. At least 100 people associated with the copying mafia have been sent to jail and more than 20,000 appointments have been made in a fair and transparent manner, the chief minister said.

"Women have been given a 30-per cent reservation in government jobs. A medical college is being built in Rudrapur. An All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is being built in Kichha. The medical college (in Rudrapur) will start operating by 2026. An international-level airport is being built in Pantnagar. Our government has approved the Jamrani dam under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the water scheme in Terai Bhavar," he said.

MODI'S MAHASAGAR VISION

India to carry out mega naval exercise with African nations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy will carry out a mega wargame with several African nations next month to expand its overall defence cooperation with the continent, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new vision for engagement with the Global South.

Modi announced the vision MAHASAGAR or "Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions" for India's engagement with the Global South during his recent visit to Mauritius.

Deputy Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti said the Indian Navy and the Tanzania Peoples Defence Force will co-host the exercise, titled "AIKEYME" or Africa-

Key Maritime Engagement, off Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania in mid-April and it is set to be inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

India and Africa have been cooperating in tackling maritime security threats, such as piracy, illegal activities including trafficking, unregulated and unreported fishing, through sharing of information and surveillance. However, the "AIKEYME" exercise is likely to significantly expand the ongoing cooperation.

"A large-scale multilateral maritime engagement exercise with African countries, titled 'Africa India Key Maritime Engagement' or 'AIKEYME', which means



unity in Sanskrit, is an initiative to enhance interoperability with African navies," Vice Admiral Sobti told reporters. The deputy chief of naval staff said the exercise is

planned over six days and will see the participation of Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and South Africa, in addition to the co-hosts.

The harbour phase of the

exercise would include tabletop and command-post exercises on piracy and information sharing, along with training on seamanship, he said.

The sea phase comprises seamanship evolutions, search and rescue, visit board search and

seizure, small-arms firing and helicopter operations, he added. The Indian Navy also announced the launch of another maiden initiative called Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) Sagar with an aim to boost cooperation with the friendly countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Under the initiative, one Indian naval ship is being deployed to the southwest of the IOR with a combined crew from India and nine other nations -- Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and South Africa. The ship, INS Sunayna, is planned to be deployed for more than a month in April and would be undertaking port calls at Dar-es-Salaam, Nacala, Port Louis, Port Victoria and Male.

Editor's TAKE

Need for judicial accountability

The erosion of judicial integrity weakens the very foundation of democracy

The judiciary is often regarded as the last bastion of justice, fairness, and accountability. However, recent reports of large sums of unaccounted cash allegedly found in the residence of a judge in the Delhi High Court have once again raised serious concerns about corruption within the judicial system. Despite numerous allegations of corruption, impeachment proceedings against a Supreme Court or High Court judge have been initiated only four times in India's history. This raises pressing questions about the effectiveness of the current mechanisms in place to tackle judicial corruption and the urgent need for reform.

Our judicial system provides two primary mechanisms to deal with allegations of corruption against Supreme Court and High Court judges. The first is an in-house procedure established by the Supreme Court in 1999. Under this mechanism, complaints against judges are examined internally by the Chief Justice of India or the concerned High Court Chief Justice. If the allegations are deemed serious, a three-member committee comprising senior judges conducts an inquiry. However, this process is informal, lacks transparency, and rarely results in significant disciplinary action beyond an advisory to resign or a withdrawal of judicial work.

The second mechanism is impeachment by Parliament, a process enshrined in the Indian Constitution. However, the high threshold required—support from a two-thirds majority in both houses—makes impeachment an impractical tool. It is indeed a tedious process which hardly ever result in impeachment.

It is intriguing why corrupt judges remain unpunished. Several factors contribute to the de facto impunity enjoyed by judges. The in-house procedure lacks transparency, as inquiry reports remain confidential. The public and legal community remain unaware of actions taken against corrupt judges. But the biggest reason why judges go unpunished for their misdeeds is contempt laws. India's strict contempt of court laws make it difficult to openly discuss or investigate corruption allegations against judges. This suppresses public scrutiny and independent journalistic investigations. Besides, unlike other government institutions, the judiciary largely regulates itself, leading to a conflict of interest. An independent body to oversee judicial conduct is absent. Impeachment, the only constitutional method for removal, is highly politicised and seldom pursued, making it an ineffective deterrent.

To restore public trust and ensure accountability within the judiciary, the transparency in the system is the first condition. The in-house procedure must be made more transparent. Inquiry reports should be made public, and disciplinary actions against judges must be disclosed to prevent a culture of secrecy.

Contempt laws must be relaxed to allow greater public discourse and media scrutiny of judicial corruption. Establishing an autonomous commission to investigate judicial corruption, comprising retired judges, legal experts, and public representatives, would ensure impartiality and reduce conflicts of interest. The current impeachment mechanism is ineffective due to its high procedural threshold. Judges should be required to publicly disclose their assets and financial dealings periodically, similar to elected officials. This can serve as a deterrent.

The judiciary serves as the bedrock of democracy, and any erosion of its integrity weakens the very foundation of justice.

A system or institution is only as strong as the individuals who uphold it. If those in positions of power falter, there must be a robust and fool-proof mechanism to safeguard the sanctity of the judiciary and restore public trust.

Leaderspeak



I have been a legislator for 36 years and I am well aware of my responsibilities. I possess basic common sense and would never propose altering the Constitution. My remarks have been taken out of context. They are misquoting me. I merely pointed out that several changes occur over time due to judicial rulings. Nowhere, did I suggest that we intend to modify the Constitution. We are a national party, we know what the Constitution is.

DK SHIVAKUMAR, DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OF KARNATAKA

Reviving the Yamuna

The newly elected Delhi government has placed the sustainable revitalisation of the Yamuna River at the forefront of its environmental agenda

The recently elected Delhi government has prioritised the sustainable cleaning and revitalisation of the Yamuna River in its environmentally friendly development plan. In line with this vision, the central government aims to convert the Yamuna into an exemplary river, establishing a standard for analogous restoration initiatives in other urban areas. Although efforts to reduce pollution from industrial effluents, drainage systems, and waste management are essential, the lasting effectiveness of this mission will significantly depend on scientific afforestation along the riverbanks.

The effort to beautify the banks of the Yamuna is an essential move towards revitalising the river's previous splendour. By combining sustainable tree planting with pollution management strategies, Delhi's authorities seek to establish a healthier, more robust river system that can act as an example for urban river restoration throughout the nation.

A crucial part of this strategy involves the organised planting of indigenous tree varieties and herbal plants. Creating herbal gardens in key locations throughout the river basin could greatly improve the ecological well-being of the Yamuna. This type of vegetation acts as a natural filter, capturing pollutants such as chemicals, fertilisers, and sediments before they enter the river, thus enhancing water quality. Furthermore, these plants offer essential habitats for birds, insects, and animals, promoting biodiversity and reinforcing the local ecosystem. Apart from ecological advantages, planting trees along the riverbanks is essential for stabilising soil and averting erosion, thereby lowering the chances of land degradation and flooding. The deeply established vegetation helps in groundwater replenishment by enabling rainwater to seep into the soil instead of being wasted as surface runoff.

Creating herbal gardens cum corridors that include medicinal plants, as well as indigenous trees and flora, close to the Yamuna River presents a unique opportunity with extensive advantages. In addition to improving the river's ecological well-being, this project presents considerable economic opportunities by providing medicinal herbs to the Ayurvedic and pharmaceutical sectors. The growing of these plants supports the Delhi government's larger initiatives to restore the Yamuna, tackle water pollution, and encourage sustainable water resource management.

As the demand for medicinal plants increases, species including Indian Barberrry (Daruhaldi), Licorice (Mulethi), Bael, Isabgol, Atis, Guggul, Amla, Senna, Brahmi, Jatamansi, Madhuanashini, Kalmegh, Shatavari, Ashwagandha, Chirayata, Katuki,



Shankhpushpi, Ashoka, Giloy, Kokum, and Safed Musli are especially valued in Ayurvedic medicine. Throughout India, farmers growing these crops-like Shankhpushpi, Atis, Kuth, Kutki, Kapikachhu, and Karanja have experienced notable rises in their earnings, aiding the growth of the Ayurvedic agricultural industry.

Several riverside plant species can further support this effort, including Latjeera, Moringa (Sahjan), Holy Basil (Tulsi), Khokli (Hulhul), Billy Goat Weed (Gandhi Buti), Garundi, Slender Amaranth (Chaulai), Apple of Sodom (Aak), Coco Grass (Nagarmotha), Egyptian Crowfoot (Murag), and Marvel Grass (Chimini). These plants not only contribute to ecological balance but also offer medicinal properties. For example, Latjeera is traditionally used to treat malaria, dysentery, asthma, hypertension, and diabetes, while Moringa is renowned for its high nutritional value and water purification abilities. Similarly, Tulsi plays a vital role in traditional Indian medicine, recognised for its immunity-boosting properties. Other suitable species for afforestation along the Yamuna include Mangium Babool, which thrives in alluvial soils, Peppermint, known for aiding digestion, Tamarind, which adapts well to various soil types and Senna, valued for its medicinal applications. Additionally, Chamomile is widely used for its calming effects, while Lemongrass, Shatavari, and Chebulic Myrobalan (Harad) offer both ecological and health benefits.

Beyond their medicinal value, these plants serve as natural water purifiers by filtering pollutants and improving water quality. They absorb harmful gases, mitigate noise pollution, reduce heat, and capture dust, making them effective air and water purifiers.

The cultivation of medicinal plants also supports biodiversity by creating habitats for diverse species, strengthening ecological balance.

Importantly, this initiative offers significant economic prospects for local communities. The growing, handling, and selling of medicinal plants can create a reliable source of revenue, encouraging business initiatives and enhancing the local economy. Additionally, conserving these plants aids in protecting traditional knowledge systems, guaranteeing that indigenous wisdom is transmitted across generations. Promoting herbal medicine can lessen dependence on synthetic drugs, fostering a transition to natural and sustainable healthcare methods. Thus by employing a comprehensive strategy that combines ecological restoration, economic development, and the safeguarding of traditional knowledge, the rejuvenation of the Yamuna River can act as a blueprint for sustainable management of

SATENDRA SINGH

urban rivers throughout India. A thoughtfully designed program aimed at nurturing and maintaining medicinal plants by the Yamuna River can act as an effective means for ecological restoration and economic growth. By encouraging areas rich in biodiversity, this initiative could draw visitors interested in traditional healing methods, thus boosting ecotourism and strengthening economic sustainability.

For the project to achieve meaningful success, an inclusive strategy that actively involves the local farming community is crucial. Farmers cultivating in the Yamuna floodplain must be recognised as key stakeholders, serving as ecological guardians in the river restoration initiative. Instead of seeing their involvement as a hurdle, these farmers ought to be viewed as essential collaborators in this distinctive urban medicinal planting initiative. Globally, countries like Singapore and South Korea have effectively rejuvenated urban riverbanks while integrating sustainable agricultural practices involving local farmers, already engaged in cultivating vegetables and other crops in the region. India can draw from these examples by adopting a balanced approach that maintains agriculture while enhancing the health of the Yamuna.

(The writer is a former Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management and DG-AYUSH, Health Department, Bihar Government. Views expressed are personal)

Keeping up with the Joneses

SECOND Opinion



SHARMILA VAIDYA

Keeping up with the Joneses is an old phrase that refers to the constant pressure of "keeping up" with the social status and wealth of one's friends and neighbours.

Research shows that this phrase originated with the Jones family, a wealthy and prominent New Yorker who began building elegant and grand mansions. In response, other New Yorkers tried to outdo them by constructing even more elaborate homes in the Hudson Valley.

In 1853, Elizabeth S. Jones built Wyndcliffe, a 24-room ornate mansion designed in the style of a Scottish castle. Soon, other wealthy families started building extravagant estates to showcase their wealth. This competition gave rise to the phrase "keeping up with the Joneses."

Interestingly, the sentiment behind this phrase has persisted even to this day. I have observed similar scenarios within my circle of friends. I remember, Anita and Sheila had been best friends for years. When Anita bought a beautiful three-bedroom house in an upscale neighbourhood, she couldn't wait to show her house to Sheila. "This place is amazing!" remarked Sheila as she admired the high ceilings and designer kitchen. It must have cost a fortune!

Anita beamed. "It was a bit pricey, but totally worth it."

The neighborhood is great, and the schools are top notch."

That evening Sheila went home feeling restless and envious of her friend. She and her husband had been considering upgrading their townhouse. Within three weeks, they found a house that was much bigger and grander than their friend's, located in a very upscale neighbourhood. However, they ended up spending more than they had budgeted. While they achieved their goal of finding a more impressive home, the financial strain left them constantly stressed.

It took me by surprise, when I read in the Forbes magazine that the average size of a home has tripled in the past 50 years, even with the family size consistently getting smaller. In addition, one in 10 Americans have to rent a storage unit, because they can't fit all of their stuff inside their giant homes.

Here is another scenario I observed. David, one of our friends, was ecstatic when he bought a luxury car. However, his excitement was short lived, when a friend arrived in a Mercedes - a more expensive car and a true status symbol. Suddenly, the pride David once felt began to fade. The same car he had proudly shown off to his neighbours and friends no longer seemed impressive. Before long, he stopped parking it outside his garage, as what once brought him joy now felt overshadowed.

There are many similar instances that we observe daily.

We take immense pleasure in portraying our best moments in life to the world, be it an expensive vacation, designer clothes, the latest gadgets or our busy social calendar. We are constantly trying to flaunt our perfect lifestyle to the world, especially on social media. Social media is one of the most powerful sources of displaying our choicest moments, which puts us in constant pressure and competition with each other. But why do we behave this way?

One can argue that it's just human behaviour, influenced by peer pressure, consumerism, commercialisation, social media or all of the above. However, there should be an understanding that this facade can make us feel inadequate, burdened with financial stress with mounting debt and emotional stress in the form of anxiety and depression. It is like two parallel lines endlessly chasing each other, never quite meeting. Does it ever end? Maybe—when we stop measuring our worth against others and start defining fulfilment on our terms.

Instead of chasing status symbols, we should focus on what genuinely brings happiness—strong relationships, meaningful experiences, and financial stability. Breaking free from this cycle requires shifting our perspective, redefining success, and embracing gratitude. After all, wealth is not about what we own but about how fulfilled we feel.

The moment we stop comparing and start living for ourselves, we finally win the race that never truly existed.

(The writer is Houston based educator and author. Views expressed are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Regulating the coaching centres

Madam—It is an appreciable step of Rajasthan government to enact "The Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill" which aims at regulating Coaching Centres to curb the menace of student suicides which we find in the media frequently. Due to the toxic environment of coaching centres and particularly at Rajasthan's Kota which has become the country's education hub and it has been playing havoc with the young minds.

The Speaker Om Parksh Birla is member of Parliament from Kota is also trying to find the ways how the best can be done in this direction. Kota, home to the coaching market worth ₹5000 Crore, has become a killing field where dreams die at the altar of unreasonable expectations fuelled by parental and peer pressure. Here it is worth mentionable that parents expectations play a major part in this unholy happenings and it is expected from the parents that they should be aware about the actual capabilities of their sons or daughters. A sense of numbness has set in with several cases of student suicides being reported every year for over a decade now. At least six students are reported to have died by suicide in the town since the start of this year. The Bill mandates that coaching centres with over 50 students must register and meet specific standards to qualify for registration, in a bid to ensure greater accountability.

YASH PAL RALHAN | JALANDHAR

Carnage in Gaza continues

Madam—Refer to, "Israel strikes again, kill 26 Palestinians in Gaza" (March 24). The Gaza crisis is a stark illustration of the global order's failures, revealing Western double standards and the impotence of international institutions. The conflict transcends the Israeli-Palestinian dynamic, exposing a systemic breakdown in upholding international law and human rights. The disproportionate response and the international community's inability to hold Israel accountable highlight a disturbing trend.

Powerful nations, particularly in the West, often prioritise geopolitical interests over universal principles, leading to accusations of hypocrisy and eroding the credibility of international norms. The silence or muted criticism from these actors emboldens perpetrators and deepens the sense of injustice among those affected. International institutions like the UN, designed to prevent such conflicts, appear powerless. Security Council resolutions are vetoed, and humanitarian aid is often insufficient or obstructed. This impotence fosters a sense of disillusionment, particularly in the global South, where Western-led governance models are increasingly viewed with skepticism.

The selective application of international law further fuels this perception, creating a breeding ground for resentment and instability.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

Government sets the goal to eradicate TB

Madam—Tuberculosis (TB) is not merely a physical ailment, it is a mirror reflecting societal inequalities, economic hardships, and human insensitivity. This disease primarily spreads among those trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition, and unsanitary living conditions. Indian society has long perceived it as a curse, yet the reality remains that it can afflict anyone, regardless of their social or economic background.

The Government of India has set an ambitious goal of eradicating TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global target of 2030. Recent data indicates a 17.7 per cent decline in TB cases between 2015 and 2023, with a 21.4 per cent reduction in mortality rates. While this progress is encouraging, the stark reality remains that over 2.7 Million new cases emerged in 2023 alone, underscoring the deep-rooted nature of the disease. Under the "Nikshay Poshan Yojana," TB patients receive a monthly allowance of ₹500 as nutritional support, but this amount falls short of meeting their dietary needs. Furthermore, the rise in drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases is making treatment increasingly complex and prolonged.

The fight against TB extends beyond the medical domain; it must also be waged in the realm of social awareness. This disease does not merely inflict physical suffering, it also subjects patients to societal exclusion and mental distress.

SACHIN TRIPATHI | SATNA

KUDOS TO THE PIONEER FOR ITS BRAND NEW LOOK

I am a long-time reader of the Pioneer and I just wanted to take a moment to appreciate the incredible transformation the newspaper has undergone. A year ago, there wasn't even a dedicated Vivacity page and now, the entire features section has evolved into something truly special. It's amazing to see a newspaper giving such dedicated space to books, art, culture and fashion, very few do that. The way the Pioneer is showcasing fashion even in today's edition is absolutely refreshing.

I'm writing this email specifically because of Agenda (Sunday, March 23). The interview with Saurabh Shukla, conducted by Sakshi Priya, was one of the best I've ever read. It didn't sound like another promotional piece, it felt raw, personal. The way it was structured, the choice of photographs and the overall presentation, everything was just perfect. As a reader, it feels immersive, like I am



actually part of the interview while reading it. Thank you for delivering such exceptional content. Also, I have to mention how much I appreciate the food section; it's such a great addition! Thank you for making the Pioneer such an engaging and meaningful read. It's a pleasure to pick up the paper every day.

AMIT DAS | KOLKATA

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

Reviving India's Sacred Groves

The historical, ecological, and socio-cultural importance of Sacred Groves cannot be overstated. There is an urgent need for a holistic conservation strategy to protect them, writes BKP SINHA and ARVIND JHA

FIRST
Column

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India has directed that all Sacred Groves across the nation should be officially classified as "forests" and "community reserves" under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. This decision is a major step in legally safeguarding these natural sanctuaries, known for their ecological and cultural significance.

In Indian culture, forests have always been revered not only for their ecological importance but also for their deep societal and spiritual significance. Ancient texts reflect this reverence by classifying forests based on their purposes, revealing the varied roles these ecosystems played. Mahavan, the vast, untouched wilderness, served as a crucial wildlife sanctuary, preserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological balance. Shreevan, on the other hand, provided communities with vital resources like timber, fruits, and medicinal plants, highlighting their economic significance. Upvan, green spaces designed for leisure and recreation, connected people with nature, often associated with royal families. Tapovan, sacred forests, were believed to be places of spiritual enlightenment for ascetics.

Among these classifications, Sacred Groves stand out as unique forest patches preserved through community-driven efforts rooted in spiritual beliefs and cultural traditions. Spread across India's diverse landscapes, they are known by different names, such as Devrais in Maharashtra, Devara Kadu in Karnataka, Orans in Rajasthan, Kaavus in Kerala, Devban in Himachal Pradesh, Sarana in Madhya Pradesh, Umanglai in Manipur, Law Lingdoh in Meghalaya, Devbhumi in Uttarakhand, Pavitra Van in Andhra Pradesh, and Gramthan in West Bengal.

These groves act as vital carbon sinks, regulate local microclimates, and serve as havens for medicinal plants and endangered species. What truly distinguishes these ecosystems is their decentralised conservation model, where local communities act as the primary custodians of these ecosystems. This approach, rooted in traditional knowledge, cultural values, and strong community ties, has often proven more effective than state-controlled initiatives, particularly in regions where community engagement and cultural practices remain deeply ingrained.

The significance of Sacred Groves was officially recognised in 1897 by Sir Dietrich Brandis, the first Inspector General of Forests in India. This early acknowledgment laid the groundwork for further research, including the pioneering work of Indian polymath DD Kausambi (1907-1966). Decades later, in 1975, conservation studies conducted by the Agarkar Research Institute in Pune brought these ancient ecosystems into the national spotlight.

These age-old sanctuaries are shielded by deeply ingrained societal and cultural taboos, a form of traditional environmental stewardship that has effectively protected them from destructive human activities like deforestation, poaching, and resource overex-



ploitation. This protection has allowed them to flourish as pristine ecosystems, providing sanctuaries for a rich diversity of plant and animal life. They serve as vital water recharge zones, maintaining groundwater levels and supporting agricultural activities in surrounding areas. Unlike artificial gene banks, which require significant energy, incur high costs and remain vulnerable to both natural and human-made disasters, these ecological havens offer a more sustainable and self-sustaining alternative for conserving genetic diversity.

Beyond their environmental significance, these sacred spaces hold immense cultural and spiritual value for local communities. They often serve as sacred sites for worship, places for social gatherings, and centres for traditional healing practices. They are also closely tied to local stories, myths, and rituals, which help bring people together and strengthen their bond with nature.

In today's hurried lives, we often find ourselves disconnected from the natural world. These sanctuaries provide a much-needed retreat, offering a peaceful setting to pause, reflect, and release the stresses of daily life. Surrounded by greenery and the calming sounds of nature, they help us find inner balance and tranquility, reminding us of our deep connection to the natural world and the life around us.

Despite their immense value, only around 14,000 Sacred Groves have been officially documented. Experts, however, estimate that the actual number

could be as high as 100,000 to 150,000, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive identification and conservation efforts to protect these invaluable ecological and cultural treasures.

The gradual loss of traditional beliefs and cultural practices that once safeguarded these spaces has left them increasingly vulnerable. Modern development projects, changes in land use, and agricultural expansion are encroaching on their boundaries, leading to deforestation and soil degradation. The spread of invasive species and the decline of village grazing lands (Gairans) further exacerbate the strain on these fragile ecosystems. Unfortunately, current conservation strategies often fail to address the underlying causes of degradation, as they remain disconnected from the lived realities of local communities. The politicisation of conservation, where short-term gains outweigh long-term sustainability, weakens the effectiveness of protection measures. Most importantly, the marginalisation of traditional custodians, the very people who have safeguarded these groves for centuries, deprives these ecosystems of their most effective protectors. Weak enforcement of legal frameworks also exposes these ancient landscapes to unchecked exploitation and degradation.

These treasured landscapes now stand at a critical crossroads, demanding immediate action for their survival. The Supreme Court's decision to classify Sacred Groves as "forests" and "community reserves" is a significant step, but effective

conservation requires a multi-pronged approach.

This should begin with thorough demarcation and surveys, both on the ground and through satellite imagery, to clearly define the boundaries of Sacred Groves and prevent further encroachment. Equally important are socio-economic surveys to understand the needs and dependencies of local communities for developing sustainable management plans that balance ecological protection with human welfare.

Biodiversity assessments are essential for identifying endemic or endangered species and prioritising conservation efforts in those areas. Similarly, studying ecosystem services—such as nutrient cycling, pollination, seed dispersal, and natural pest management—is essential for maintaining ecological balance, supporting agriculture, and combating climate change. These services, though often overlooked, are fundamental to both environmental health and human livelihoods.

A comprehensive economic valuation of Sacred Groves, encompassing both direct and indirect benefits, is crucial for illustrating their true worth. This valuation should include the cost of lost ecosystem services, the potential for sustainable economic activities, and the long-term economic implications of environmental degradation. By quantifying these economic factors, policymakers and communities can better understand the tangible benefits of investing in the conservation of these vital ecosystems. This economic lens provides a powerful argument for inte-

grating Sacred Grove protection into broader economic development strategies, demonstrating that environmental conservation and economic prosperity are not mutually exclusive, but rather, interdependent.

To preserve these ancient ecosystems for future generations, fostering a sense of ownership among local communities is essential. This sense of responsibility can be nurtured through active community engagement, particularly by involving women, who play a crucial role in sustainable conservation. Restoring degraded groves by removing invasive species, addressing encroachments, and establishing local monitoring systems can effectively secure their long-term protection.

However, to implement these strategies effectively, it is essential to streamline the roles of village-level committees to eliminate redundancy and enhance coordination. Selecting appropriate legal and institutional frameworks tailored to each grove's specific needs—such as utilising the Wildlife Protection Act for groves near wildlife areas or the Forest Rights Act for forest-dwelling communities—ensures more effective management. In non-forested regions, empowering Gram Sabhas or integrating Joint Forest Management programs can provide sustainable conservation solutions. These tailored approaches align conservation efforts with the unique circumstances of each Sacred Grove.

The Supreme Court has directed the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to formulate a comprehensive policy for the nationwide governance and management of Sacred Groves. This policy must account for the intricate relationship between various legal frameworks, such as the Village Panchayat Acts, the Wildlife Protection Act, the Forest Rights Act, the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, and the Biological Diversity Act, to establish a robust protective framework. Ensuring that all Sacred Groves are officially classified as "forests" under the Supreme Court's time-bound process (Writ Petition (Civil) No 1164/2023) is also vital for their protection.

Safeguarding these ecological and cultural treasures requires the unwavering commitment of all stakeholders—communities, policymakers, and conservationists alike. The urgency to act cannot be overstated, as their decline threatens not only ecological balance but also the cultural ethos that binds communities together. Empowering local communities and integrating their traditional ecological knowledge into conservation strategies are essential for ensuring the long-term preservation of these invaluable sites. Ultimately, the enduring legacy of Sacred Groves underscores how conservation and culture can coexist harmoniously, fostering a sustainable relationship between humanity and nature.

(The writers are former principal chief conservators of forests, UP and Maharashtra. Views expressed are personal)

Rising crimes against the elderly: A growing concern for senior citizens

The recent murder of an elderly couple in Northwest Delhi on Tuesday morning has, besides shaking the conscience of society, raised serious concerns about ensuring the security of elderly people in this country.

Tuesday's is not a single incident, rather incidents of crime against elderly persons frequently occur throughout the country, especially in bigger towns and metros.

The crimes against senior citizens in India have been continuously rising over the years. The NCRB Data from states is quite disappointing and shows that crimes against elderly people are increasing day by day. This makes it necessary to understand and address the causes that lead to crimes against the elderly and also to find ways to deal with this problem.

Past data reveals that a variety of crimes such as theft, robbery, cheating, forgery, and even murders frequently occur with elderly persons in India. At present, the biggest threat to elderly people is the commission of cybercrimes such as fraud and cheating with them by cyber fraudsters.

In India, particularly, those seniors are more susceptible to crimes who live in isolation from family and society, lack friends, and lack access to communication and transportation facilities etc. A lot of elderly people are gullible, forget things easily, and might feel ashamed to acknowledge they were harmed.

The criminals use data such as a victim's social security number, bank account details, PAN number, and driver's license number to finish a transaction or obtain additional personal information about them.

Security of elderly persons, though, should remain a primary concern, but, is often ignored. Compared to younger people, the vulnerability and susceptibility of elderly people to the commission of crime is obvious due to various reasons.

An increasing lack of physical and mental strength and easily believing people are among a few of the factors that make the elderly vulnerable to crime. Moreover, given the increasing number of nuclear families, with children living away from their parents, elderly people, especially, in urban households, are compelled to live alone which puts them at risk further.

The circumstances making older people live alone make them more vulnerable. The World Population Ageing Report from the United Nations estimates that 90 Million older people live alone globally.

Seniors who live alone in large homes are particularly vulnerable to physical crimes and become a target for financial scammers.

According to data from Helpage India, there are approximately at least 112 Million people over the age of 60 in India, and forty per cent

of them live alone. As a result, they are easy targets for criminal activity and are more likely to experience severe effects from abuse.

One of the main causes of elderly people's vulnerability is their lack of involvement in the community. Participating in social activities makes people feel safer than isolating themselves from others. Elders, who are unable to communicate with others and live alone, also remain apprehensive about their security and live under constant fear and anxiety.

In India, the joint and undivided family system played a significant role in the maintenance of traditional culture and also provided various types of security to family members. Older people were given better roles, prestige and privileges in such a family structure that ensured their overall security naturally.

However, the emergence of new forces in the administrative, ideological, and economic domains meant that India's cultural life inevitably underwent a transition. In the last century, the fundamental idea of a joint family has undergone considerable change because of the development of cities and industries leading to nuclear families causing severe effects on senior citizens' security among other things.

The adverse effect of this phenomenon though visible generally all over, seems more pervasive in bigger cities like Delhi and Mumbai, in particular.

As per the available data, Delhi is the most dangerous city in India's metro areas.

However, to address this issue, the city has developed a fairly comprehensive and formal action plan for protecting and offering security to its senior citizens.

The Senior Citizen Security Cell was founded in June 2004, at the Police headquarters.

Its principal objective is to supervise, advise, and coordinate with the local police in matters about senior citizen security and safety.

The cell has established Senior Citizens Toll-Free Helplines and registered senior citizens who live alone with the police to exercise extra caution.

Verification of domestic help, drivers, servants, and tenants is done through special drives and mobilization of NGO members to offer lonely citizens emotional help. Even the Delhi High Court issued an order requiring schoolchildren to assist in providing support to the elderly in their community.

The task of arranging and supervising the

interactions between the kids and senior citizens fell to the Delhi Police. They made requests to arrange for volunteer groups of students to visit the elderly person who the police had identified as vulnerable.

This initiative provides emotional aid to the elderly and serves as a link between the senior community and law enforcement.

Despite the above measures, Delhi still witnesses the occurrence of crimes against elderly people, but the Delhi model has certainly shown the path in this regard and it is advisable that other states also adopt the Delhi-like model for ensuring senior citizens' security on a priority. Besides, given the consistent rise in crimes against senior citizens, there is a need for people in general to be educated about ageism and ageist attitudes. Moreover, given the challenges elderly people encounter as a result of their infirmities special crime control measures are required for their safety and security. Therefore, the states must establish policies, health, and social services, as well as a distinct criminal justice system to address as well as counteract this threat urgently.

The increasing crimes against senior citizens in India call for immediate and sustained intervention. While efforts like Delhi's Senior Citizen Security Cell have shown promise, much more needs to be done nationwide.

Other states should adopt similar models, ensuring a proactive approach to senior safety, including police registration, background checks for household staff, and community support initiatives.

Beyond law enforcement, society must play a greater role in safeguarding the elderly. Families should maintain stronger connections with their senior members, and communities should foster inclusivity to prevent isolation.

Raising awareness about cyber fraud, financial scams, and physical crimes targeting seniors is crucial, along with encouraging them to report incidents without fear or hesitation.

The government must also enhance social and healthcare policies tailored to senior citizens, ensuring better access to support systems.

A distinct criminal justice framework focused on elderly protection, coupled with stringent legal measures, can help curb such crimes. Ultimately, the safety of senior citizens is not just a law enforcement issue but a societal responsibility.

By strengthening familial bonds, community participation, and governmental initiatives, we can create a safer environment for our elderly, ensuring they live with dignity, security, and peace.

(The writer is associate professor Faculty of Law University of Delhi. Views expressed are personal)

Our innate desire to be controller

We all wish to be. And we fail miserably because control cannot be in our hands. Lord Krishna explains, "The place of action and the doer and many different kinds of instruments and many different efforts and the fifth in this connection is the providence only." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 18.14)

The Lord further states, "Whatever action is begun by a man by body, speech and mind, these five are the causes of them." (18.15) Are not we always doing something with our bodies, speech and minds? Speech and mind have been separately mentioned because what we say makes a huge difference in our lives. It is not like any other sense. For example, there is an accident, in which both parties are at fault. In case they both apologise, the matter is amicably settled. Otherwise, a fight breaks out, if they become abusive. Similarly, what we do with our minds is subtle, not gross as is the case with other senses. Therefore, our minds occupy a special position in our lives.

What are these five causes? The place of action is determined by the circumstances. For example, are we in a hot place like Delhi in summer or a cold place like Toronto in winter? One is living in a nuclear family with a newly born or in a joint family, when there is a new arrival. In short, circumstances, make a huge difference and we have no control over them. The second cause is: who is doing it. One of us will be. But are we in control of ourselves? The answer sadly is no. Our natures control us and we are helpless about it. Returning to the same example, how will drivers react depends on their natures.

Naturally prone to get angry will fight and peaceful persons will settle the matter.

The third cause is the instruments employed. If someone has a superior cellphone, he will be able to perform better than one who is without one or has an outdated one. The fourth cause is the efforts made. Are we in control of these? No, our health, etc will determine how we will be able to perform. The last one is not in our hands, because what happens depends on our past 'karmaphalas'—acts done in the past. Success or failure will be on our account of them only, not much due to our present acts.

Then, are we in control? Not by a long shot. Only God is, or can be. Let us see the role of God from the angle of five causes. The circumstances, no matter what they are, are in control of God. After all, God is the Creator, which includes all possible types of circumstances. The doer, which is a soul, is in control of God also due to the karmaphalas done earlier by a soul, though a soul has free will. In any case, a soul has no real independence as such; it must be part of the Creation. All the implements, whatever they may be, originate from God only, he is the source of all. The efforts made are also controlled by God because God controls whatever we are

allowed to do. And the providence is part of God's justice system.

Having learnt that God is the controller and we are completely under His control, we should take advantage of this knowledge. We should take God's shelter as instructed by God, "In all respects take shelter of Me only. By My mercy you will achieve supreme peace and the eternal abode." (18.62) Additionally, we will qualify for opulence of six kinds, ie beauty, fame, knowledge, power, renunciation and wealth. From the Bhagavad-Geeta we learn, "Where there is the Yogeshvara Sri Krishna and where there is the archer Arjuna, there will be opulence, victory, wealth and definite principles. (18.78) Let us not deny that we are attracted towards them. We will also achieve victory or success in our endeavours. (18.78) Our acts will be according to the highest principles, which will qualify us for higher and more gains.

Unfortunately, we do not, at least most of us. Why? This is not such a mystery. Our egos don't allow us to think beyond ourselves. I may have failed countless times, but this time I will succeed in my plans, one thinks. What about all those, who failed before me? I am different; I am more intelligent. But the wise pay attention to God's instruction, "You have a right only in action, not ever in predetermining its fruits of action; your attaching to inaction also should not be there." (2.47) "Because compared to the

buddhi-yoga, which is acting without attachment to the fruits of action, material action is much inferior. Therefore, desire to take shelter in the buddhi-yoga. Those who try to predetermine the fruits are pitiable. (2.49) Because they will fail and the consequences will be lots of frustration, depression, etc. All we get is due to our past karma and nothing more. All our attempts to control are doomed to fail. God controls everything. How else can the creation last for billions of years? What is my experience in trying to control situations, results, etc? I will admit that like everyone else I try to control myself instinctively. The result is lots of anxiety and depression because they are in not my control. Yes, I have learnt that I cannot control, but the realisation is still far away. For example, someone is not well in the family. I do everything possible to see that this person recovers soon, including sincerely praying to God. Do I become peaceful then, assured that I am limited in what I can do? No, I don't. I feel bad that God, being omnipotent, does not act sooner. Or why have I been subjected to this misery having taken shelter from God? I do realise that past 'karmaphalas' will manifest. God's role comes subsequently. Then also God will decide when to act and how. I cannot control that. I am learning.

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

IN BRIEF



Gold plunges Rs 700 to Rs 90,550/10g

Gold prices plunged Rs 700 to Rs 90,550 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid persistent selling by the jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Besides, traders continued to liquidate long positions and book profit after a recent rally amid hopes for a potential Russia-Ukraine peace deal in view of talks between Ukrainian and US officials on Sunday in Saudi Arabia, to end three years of conflict. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had finished at Rs 91,250 per 10 grams on Friday. Falling for the third day in a row, gold prices of 99.5 per cent purity declined by Rs 700 to Rs 90,100 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 90,800 per 10 grams. "Gold prices retreated from record highs as geopolitical risks eased following discussions between Ukraine and the US on Sunday, exploring a potential peace deal with Russia. However, safe-haven demand for the yellow metal remains strong as tensions in the Middle East escalate, with Israel resuming strikes on Hamas in the Gaza Strip," Chintan Mehta, Chief Executive Officer at Abans Financial Services, said.



Tax depts withdraw 6,599 appeals from tribunals, courts

The tax departments have withdrawn 6,599 appeals filed before tribunals, High Courts and the Supreme Court following enhancement of monetary limits for filing such cases, Parliament was informed on Monday. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said CBDT has enhanced monetary limit for filing appeals by Income Tax Department before the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), High Courts and the Supreme Court to Rs 60 lakh, Rs 2 crore and Rs 5 crore, respectively. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has identified 4,951 appeals for withdrawal from ITAT, High Courts and the apex court. Similarly, following revised monetary limit, the Customs and the Central Excise & Service Tax departments have withdrawn 477 and 1,171 appeals, respectively. In case of Central Excise and Service Tax, the government has set monetary limit for filing appeals by departmental officers before Customs Excise & Service Tax Appellate Tribunal (CESAT) at Rs 60 lakh, High Courts Rs 2 crore and Supreme Court Rs 5 crore.



Yudo India to expand footprint in Maharashtra

Yudo India, a subsidiary of South Korea-based Yudo Group, on Monday, said it is expanding its operations in Maharashtra with a two-phase investment strategy to capitalise on India's growing injection moulding market. Yudo India, which has been recording 18-20 per cent year-on-year growth, also said it is ramping up local production to reduce import dependence and improve supply chain efficiency. In the first phase, the company is setting up a new manufacturing facility for the hot runner system in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, which is expected to be operational in the first half of this calendar year. It is also expanding its warehousing capacity in the state, the company said. A hot runner system is a molten plastic delivery unit used in an injection mold. The second phase will focus on increasing production capacity and localising key components to meet rising demand across industries, including automotive, packaging, white goods and electronics, it stated.

'India aims to become alternative to global ship-building industry'

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

India has launched wide-ranging efforts to expand port infrastructure and improve ease of doing business and these reforms are bearing fruit in the form of increased port efficiency, stronger cargo flows, and rising investor confidence, Minister of Shipping, Ports and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal has said.

Speaking at the Singapore Maritime Week being held from March 24-28, Sonowal said India is working to become a credible and competitive alternative to ship-building industries worldwide.

"Through policy incentives, ease of doing business, and infrastructure enhancement, we are laying the foundation for India to emerge as one of the top five shipbuilding nations by 2047," he said.

Highlighting the importance of Green and Sustainable Maritime Future, he said "we are enhancing port operations with green infrastructure, encouraging low-emission shipping, and building the foundation for a greener maritime economy. Indian shipyards are already innovating in the development of low-carbon vessels."

Further, India is establishing three Green Hydrogen



Hub Ports — Kandla, Tuticorin, and Paradip — to support the manufacturing of green hydrogen and its derivatives and to pioneer the use of alternative fuels in the maritime domain.

"We are also committed to developing Green Shipping Corridors, including the proposed India-Singapore Green and Digital Corridor, which aligns with our shared focus on clean energy, smart logistics, and sustainability," said Sonowal.

The Minister also stressed on the need for "Digitalization and Innovation for Future-Ready Shipping" and highlighted that the duty-free GIFT City in Gujarat is evolving into a global maritime

finance and ship leasing hub, offering a favourable tax and regulatory ecosystem and seamless access to global capital markets.

"Let us remember: oceans do not divide us — they unite us. Together, we can turn today's challenges into tomorrow's opportunities and create a maritime world that serves all of humanity," the Indian Minister said in a presentation on India's maritime plans.

To support this vision, India has committed USD 20 billion for infrastructure development focused on enhancing multi-modal logistics, port connectivity and trade facilitation, he informed. Indian ports today handle

around 6 per cent of global cargo. By 2047, this share is expected to grow to 15 per cent, the Minister said, adding that the proposed Maritime Development Fund will be instrumental in financing fleet expansion, shipyard modernization, and strategic maritime infrastructure.

"We are also engaging with global partners like the UAE and Singapore to establish Virtual Trade Corridors that will digitally connect ports, enabling seamless cargo movement and reducing bottlenecks," he informed the participants.

"India is addressing this with long-term, structural solutions. We are actively developing strategic corridors such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC), the Eastern Maritime Corridor, and the International North-South Transport Corridor. These initiatives will ensure more diversified and secure trade routes across continents," the Minister said.

The Minister is on a three-day Singapore visit where he is exploring new opportunities, partnerships and working out strategies for collaborations amidst the recent global events that have highlighted the fragility of maritime supply chains.

India to host 3-day FATF Private Sector Collaborative Forum

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will host a FATF Private Sector Collaborative Forum (PSCF) 2025 from March 25-27 which will discuss issues of global priorities, like payment transparency, financial inclusion, and digital transformation of financial systems, the finance ministry said on Monday.

The forum will be hosted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, in Mumbai.

It said that over the next three days, discussions at the forum will revolve around issues shaping the global anti-money laundering and countering terror financing landscape.

"Participants will explore how FATF can continue to address evolving threats while promoting financial inclusion through robust, risk-based supervision of regulated entities."

The dialogue will also focus on enhancing transparency in beneficial ownership and leveraging digital tools to strengthen AML/CFT compliance mechanisms," the ministry said. The PSCF 2025 agenda

reflects global priorities, including payment transparency, financial inclusion, and digital transformation of financial systems.

With financial crimes evolving due to technological advancements — such as cryptocurrency-related laundering



— India's expertise in leveraging technology and fostering a risk-based approach offers valuable insights for the international community. "Information-sharing practices within the private sector will be evaluated to identify ways to better address emerging financial crime threats. Furthermore, the forum will engage in deliberations on emerging terrorist financing risks, emphasising the need for measures that reinforce global resilience against these challenges," the ministry added.

About 18 lakh new registrations made under ESI scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 18.19 lakh new employees were added under the ESI scheme in January, a year-on-year rise of 2.34 per cent, an official statement said on Monday.

Of this, 8.67 lakh employees up to the age group of 25 years constituted 47.66 per cent of the new registrations, Ministry of Labour & Employment said in a statement. "The provisional payroll data of ESIC reveals that 18,19,219 new employees have been added in the month of January 2025," it said.

In January last year, 17,77,480 registration were made under the scheme.

The statement said 3.65 lakh female employees enrolled in the ESI scheme in January 2025. Besides, a total of 85 transgender employees have got registered under the ESI scheme in January 2025 which attests the commitment of ESIC to deliver its benefits to every section of the society.

As per the statement, 27,805 new establishments were brought under the social security ambit of the ESI scheme in January 2025, ensuring social security to more workers.

Investors' wealth swells by Rs 27.10 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets investors became richer by Rs 27.10 lakh crore as the BSE benchmark Sensex continued to rally for the sixth trading day, surging nearly 6 per cent during this period.

On Monday, the 30-share BSE bellwether gauge jumped 1,078.87 points or 1.40 per cent to settle at an over six-week high of 77,984.38. During the day, the benchmark zoomed 1,201.72 points or 1.56 per cent to 78,107.23.

The BSE benchmark gauge jumped 4,155.47 points or 5.62 per cent in six trading days.

Tracking the optimism in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms zoomed Rs 27,10,918.98 crore



to Rs 4,18,29,351.91 crore (USD 4.87 trillion) during this period.

"Benchmark indices extended gains for the sixth straight session on Monday, on positive global cues, building on the positive momentum from last week as bargain hunting con-

tinued. Broader mid and small-caps as well as all major sectors ended the day with strong gains in a continued broad-based rebound," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

He further said that after posting the best weekly gain in more than 4 years, last week, benchmarks continued their uptrend supported by positive global cues as Trump appeared to soften tone on reciprocal tariffs set to take effect on April 2.

"Continued foreign buying seen in recent sessions as USD weakens also lifted expectations of renewed buying interest after valuation correction," Aluri added.

From the Sensex pack,

NTPC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, State Bank of India, Tech Mahindra, Power Grid, Bajaj Finserv, Axis Bank, HCL Tech, Reliance Industries and Bajaj Finance were the biggest gainers.

Titan, IndusInd Bank, Zomato, Mahindra & Mahindra, Bharti Airtel, Nestle and Infosys were the laggards.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.32 per cent and smallcap index climbed 1.17 per cent. All BSE sectoral indices ended higher, with banking rallying 2.53 per cent, utilities (2.42 per cent), power (2.31 per cent), industrials (2 per cent), financial services (1.97 per cent), capital goods (1.95 per cent) and realty (1.51 per cent).

Assam Assembly passes state budget

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam Assembly on Monday passed the Rs 2.63 lakh crore state budget for the 2025-26 fiscal.

With the passage of the Assam Appropriation Bill, 2025, the state budget for the next fiscal was cleared, Speaker Biswajit Daimary said.

Finance Minister Ajanta Neog had on March 10 presented the state budget, announcing a series of cash incentives for people, particularly the youths and tea garden workers, and tax exemptions to the salaried section ahead of the assembly polls next year.

With a deficit of Rs 620.27 crore, she proposed no new taxes for the general public, but gave additional relief to nearly 1.5 lakh salaried people.

Assembly elections in Assam are likely to take place during March-April next year, making this the last full budget of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led second BJP government.

The finance minister had announced to extend the tax holiday for green tea leaves for two more years to alleviate the challenges faced by the industry, while offering a one-time cash benefit of Rs 5,000 to 6.8 lakh garden workers.

'India, US to focus on increasing market access, reducing tariff'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the US would focus on increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and enhancing supply chain integration, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Chaudhary said India 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, reduc-

ing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and enhancing supply chain integration," he said.

India and the US are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with an aim to double trade to USD 500 billion by 2030.

In line with his "America First" policy, US President Donald Trump has announced reciprocal tariffs from April 2 on numerous trading partners, including India, that impose higher levies on imports from the US.

Equalisation Levy on online advertisements to be abolished

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Monday proposed to abolish the Equalisation Levy or digital tax on online advertisements from April 1, a move that will benefit advertisers on digital platforms like Google, X and Meta.

These changes are part of the 59 amendments to the Finance Bill introduced by Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary in the Lok Sabha.

As part of the amendment, effective April 1, 2025, the 6 per cent Equalisation Levy on online advertisements will be abolished. This will reduce the tax burden on digital ad consumers and costs on platforms

like Google, X and Meta.

The Equalisation Levy on online advertisement services was imposed on June 1, 2016.

As per the amendments proposed in the Lok Sabha, Section 163 of Finance Act, 2016, levying Equalisation levy will not apply on or after April 1, 2025.

The Equalisation Levy was introduced by the Finance Act 2016 for online advertisement services, provision for digital advertising space, or any other facility or service for the purpose of online advertisement only.

The Finance Act 2020 has extended the scope of this levy to e-commerce supplies and services made on or after April

1, 2020. This 2 per cent Equalisation Levy on e-commerce transactions was abolished on August 1, 2024.

As per the amendment to the Finance Bill 2025, the levy on online ads will now be abolished from April 1, 2025.

The proposal to remove the Equalisation Levy on online advertisements, according to experts, is aimed at showing an accommodative stance to the US, which has threatened to introduce reciprocal tariffs from April 2.

Deloitte India Partner Sumit Singhania said the government's move to do away with the Equalisation Levy in its entirety is in sync with the pre-

sent endeavour of carrying out simplification of income tax legislation.

AKM Global Tax Partner Amit Maheshwari said although the 2 per cent levy garnered more criticism from the US, in anticipation of more tariff retaliation by them, the government is trying to show a more accommodative stance.

"The removal of the 6 per cent Equalisation Levy on online advertising is a step in that direction."

However, it remains to be seen if this step, coupled with already ongoing diplomatic measures, would lead to any softening of stance by the US," Maheshwari said.



Meanwhile, 50 per cent believe their employers provide sufficient flexibility while 10 per cent are unsure, indi-

cating a growing demand for adaptable work models in Indian corporates, it added. On career advancement,

47 per cent of respondents stated that their jobs lack adequate opportunities for career growth.

Over 89 per cent of respondents have expressed that they would be more satisfied with their jobs if companies prioritise employee wellness and mental health initiatives, the report said.

When evaluating whether their salaries are fair compared to the time and effort invested in their jobs, 68 per cent of employees feel under-compensated, leading to job dissatisfaction, it noted. "This survey highlights the

urgent need for companies to reassess their workplace policies, particularly in areas such as flexibility, career growth, and mental health support.

"Employers who prioritise work-life balance and fair compensation will not only enhance employee wellbeing but also drive long-term business success," Genius Consultants Chairman and Managing Director R P Yadav said. The challenge ahead is for corporations to implement meaningful changes that create a more engaged and satisfied workforce, Yadav added.

Employees dissatisfied with current work-life balance: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A majority of employees surveyed are dissatisfied with their current work-life balance mainly due to lack of flexibility in work hours, a report said on Monday.

A significant 52 per cent of respondents have expressed dissatisfaction with how they manage personal and professional responsibilities, while only 36 per cent have reported being satisfied with their current work-life balance, said the report by staffing and HR solutions provider Genius Consultants.

The report is based on a survey among 2,763 employees across sectors.

Further, it found that 40 per cent of employees feel their companies do not offer enough flexibility, such as remote work or flexible hours, to manage personal commitments.

A striking 79 per cent of employees admit that work-related stress negatively affects their personal life, which highlights the urgent need for organisations to address workplace stress through better policies and support systems.

Rupee jumps 31 paise to close at 85.67 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Rising for the seventh straight session, the rupee appreciated 31 paise to close at 85.67 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, wiping off all its losses in 2025, supported by a positive trend in domestic equity markets and fresh foreign capital inflows.

Besides, lower global crude price levels and continuing weakness in the greenback also bolstered sentiments, traders said.

However, lurking risks -- ranging from liquidity constraints to reciprocal tariff implementations -- continue to pose challenges for the local unit, they added.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.93, then touched an intraday high of 85.49 and a low of 86.01 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.67 (provisional), registering a gain of 31 paise from its previous closing level. On Friday, the rupee appreciated 38 paise to close at 85.98 against the US dollar.

This is the seventh straight session of gain for the rupee,

during which it has added 154 paise.

The local unit has recovered all its losses for 2025. On December 31, 2024, the rupee closed at 85.64 against the greenback.

"The Indian rupee recouped yearly losses as foreign banks and exporters sold the dollars ahead of the financial year-end adjustment, while state-level banks remained aside from buying amid the RBI's USD/INR swap," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

Parmar further noted that the sentiments turned positive ahead of the US representative visiting India ahead of April 2, reciprocal tariff implementations.

Moreover, the foreign funds buying in domestic equities also well supported the rupee. In the near term, the spot USD/INR is having support at 85.20 and resistance at 86.05, he noted.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.09 per cent lower at 103.99.





Sharvari has her 'fingers crossed' on working with SLB

Before stepping into the limelight as an actress, Sharvari began her career working behind the scenes as an assistant director. She honed her craft under filmmakers like Luv Ranjan and Sanjay Leela Bhansali, gaining hands-on experience in filmmaking. Looking back on her journey, the actress shared that this phase was instrumental in shaping her understanding of cinema. "I don't know if it gives me an edge over others, but I definitely think that it gave me a lot of experience and a lot of exposure, especially because I didn't come from a film family. I didn't know how films are made," Sharvari shared. Sharvari worked as an assistant director on films like *Pyaar Ka PUNCHAMA 2*, *Bajirao Mastani* and *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweeti*, observing the process up close. Among these, her experience with Sanjay Leela Bhansali stood out, as she was part of the team behind the epic period drama *Bajirao Mastani*.

The actress recalled how working on film sets helped her transition smoothly into acting. "For me, working behind the camera was so important because I got to learn how a film is made. When I stood in front of the camera as an actor, I was definitely more confident because I was aware of the process and the people working around me," she said.

Though Sharvari had the opportunity to assist Bhansali on *Bajirao Mastani*, she hopes to collaborate with him as an actor in the future. "It will be a dream come true," she admitted, adding that she has her "fingers crossed" for the opportunity.

Currently, Sharvari is gearing up for her next big release, *Alpha*, where she will be seen playing a super-agent alongside Alia Bhatt. Directed by Shiv Rawail, the film is part of Yash Raj Films' expanding spy universe, which includes blockbusters like *Ek Tha Tiger*, *Tiger Zinda Hai*, *War*, *Pathaan* and *Tiger 3*. Upcoming additions to the franchise include *War 2*, *Pathaan 2* and *Tiger vs. Pathaan*.

Parul Gulati transforms into a fierce dacoit for *Donali*

Parul Gulati is set to surprise audiences with a never-seen-before avatar in *Donali*, an intense crime drama helmed by E. Niwas. Stepping into the rugged world of Chambal's dacoits, Parul embraces a raw and unfiltered look that perfectly embodies the spirit of a fierce outlaw. The first look of her character has been unveiled, showcasing a striking transformation that is bound to leave audiences intrigued.

Shot extensively across Madhya Pradesh, *Donali* features a stellar ensemble cast, including Divyendu Sharma, Chunky Pandey and Barun Sobti. With its gripping narrative and authentic portrayal of Chambal's feared dacoits, the series promises to be a thrilling ride.

Parul's character exudes strength, resilience, and an unapologetic ferocity. Her look in *Donali* is unpolished and earthy, adding depth to the portrayal of a woman surviving in a lawless land. In the unveiled glimpse, she is seen wielding a desi katta (a locally crafted pistol) with absolute conviction—a detail that required extensive training and dedication. Her transformation goes beyond just the physical aspects. From mastering weapon handling to adapting the dialect and body language of Chambal's outlaws, Parul immersed herself fully into the role.

Sharing her excitement about the role, Parul described *Donali* as a career-defining experience.

"Playing a dacoit in *Donali* has been one of the most thrilling experiences of my career. This character is raw, gritty, and unapologetic—very different from anything I've done before. The look itself speaks volumes; it's stripped down, real and full of intensity. Holding a desi katta, mastering its handling, and understanding the psyche of someone who survives in the rugged terrains of Chambal was a journey



in itself. It wasn't just about looking the part but truly becoming it. The entire process—from training with weapons to adapting to the dialect and body language—has been both challenging and exhilarating. I can't wait for the audience to see this side of me."

Donali also features Barun Sobti in a pivotal role, adding to the excitement surrounding the series. With a storyline that delves deep into crime, power struggles and survival in one of India's most feared landscapes, the series is shaping up to be a must-watch.

EMRAAN HASHMI ANNOUNCES AWARAPAN 2

Emraan Hashmi gave his fans the perfect birthday treat on Monday by officially announcing *Awarapan 2*, the much-awaited sequel to his 2007 cult classic. The film is set to hit theaters on April 3, 2026, promising a return to the intense action and emotional depth that made the original a fan favorite. Announcing the sequel on social media, Emraan shared a cryptic yet powerful message, quoting a line that resonated deeply with his character Shivam from the original film: "Bas mujhe kuch aur der zinda rakh... #Awarapan2 in cinemas, 3rd April 2026." The film marks Emraan Hashmi's reunion with Vishesh Films, a banner that has played a pivotal role in his career, delivering hits like *Jamnat*, *Murder*, *Raaz*, *Gangster* and *Hamari Adhuri Kahani*. The sequel promises to honor the legacy of *Awarapan* while taking the narrative to new heights. Helmed by Nitin Kakkar, with a screenplay by Bilal Siddiqui, *Awarapan 2* will be produced by Vishesh Bhatt under the Vishesh Films banner. While plot details remain under wraps, the makers have hinted at a gritty action drama infused with deep emotions and a power-packed soundtrack, much like the first film. Currently in pre-production, *Awarapan 2* is expected to go on floors soon, with fans eagerly waiting to see what the sequel has in store.

Justice strikes again! As *Raid 2* brings Ajay Devgn back as Amay Patnaik on May 1

Ajay Devgn is set to reprise his role as fearless IRS officer Amay Patnaik in the much-awaited crime thriller *Raid 2*. The actor took to social media on Monday to reveal the release date of the highly anticipated sequel, promising another edge-of-the-seat experience for audiences. Sharing an intriguing poster of the film, Ajay wrote, "Naya Shehar. Nayi File. Aur Amay Patnaik Ki Ek Nayi Raid. #Raid2 knocking at your doors in cinemas near you on 1st May, 2025."

Directed by Raj Kumar Gupta, *Raid 2* brings fresh twists and high-stakes drama, featuring Riteish Deshmukh and Vaani Kapoor alongside Devgn. The film follows the no-nonsense officer as he tracks down another major white-collar crime, much like the 2018 blockbuster *Raid*.

The franchise is inspired by real-life income tax raids conducted by officers from the Income Tax Department, in collaboration with intelligence agencies. The original *Raid* received widespread acclaim for its gripping storyline and realistic portrayal of financial crime.

Raid 2 was officially announced in April 2020, with pre-production beginning in August 2022. Ajay Devgn reprises his role as Amay Patnaik, while Riteish Deshmukh takes on the role of the antagonist, Vaani Kapoor, stepping in for Ileana D'Cruz, joins the cast as the female lead.

According to recent reports, the first teaser of *Raid 2* is set to be unveiled alongside Salman Khan's upcoming film *Sikandar*, which hits theaters on March 30.



Akshay Kumar's *Kesari Chapter 2* takes a bold approach to retelling history



approach to storytelling grips viewers, making them feel the horror of the 1919 massacre before even a single frame appears on screen.

Akshay Kumar steps into the role of Sir C Sankaran Nair, the fearless lawyer who dared to challenge the British Empire following this brutal atrocity. The teaser delivers a gut-punching voiceover: "Don't forget that you're still a slave to the British Empire," adding weight to the film's powerful narrative.

Sharing the teaser on Instagram, Akshay Kumar wrote: "He held his head high. He beat them at their game. He told them where to go. A genocide India must know about. A revolution painted in courage. #KesariChapter2 teaser out now! In cinemas 18th April, worldwide."

Karan Johar, one of the producers, also shared his excitement: "When truth roared louder than the empire—a revolution painted in courage was born. #KesariChapter2 TEASER OUT NOW, witness the untold story of Jallianwala Bagh. In cinemas worldwide on 18th April."

Based on the book *The Case That Shook The Empire* by Pushpa Palat and Raghu Palat, *Kesari Chapter 2* sheds light on a lesser-known yet crucial part of India's fight for independence. The film not only highlights the horrors of the massacre but also the resilience of those who sought justice in its aftermath.

Directed by Karan Singh Tyagi, the film features an ensemble cast including R. Madhavan and Ananya Panday, promising a compelling historical drama. Backed by Dharma Productions, Cape of Good Films and Leo Media, *Kesari Chapter 2: The Untold Story of Jallianwala Bagh* is set to release worldwide on April 18, 2025.

Guru Randhawa announces *Without Prejudice*—A nine-track musical evolution

Singer-songwriter Guru Randhawa is set to captivate fans with his upcoming album *Without Prejudice*, marking an exciting collaboration with Warner Music India. This partnership is expected to bring a fresh and dynamic sound to Randhawa's music, expanding his reach to a global audience while staying true to his signature style. Sharing his excitement about this new phase in his career, Randhawa said, "This album represents evolution—not just mine, but of the music I want to create and the audiences I want to connect with. *Without Prejudice* is about breaking barriers and embracing fresh sounds that speak to a global audience while staying true to my roots. With Warner Music India by my side, I'm thrilled to embark on this journey and bring something truly special to my fans."

Randhawa's first studio album since 2023, *Without Prejudice* is set to redefine his musical landscape. The album consists of nine electrifying tracks—*Snapback*, *Sirra*, *New Age*, *Qatal*, *From Ages*, *Jaane Man*, *Kithe Vasde Ne*, *Surrey Connection* and *Gallan Battan*—each infused with a bold blend of Afropop and Indian pop influences. This fusion introduces a fresh sonic direction, showcasing Randhawa's versatility as an artist. The album also features collaborations with several talented artists, including Zehr Vibe, NSeeB, Bob, B. Randhawa, Kiran Bajwa and Prem Lata, adding a diverse and exciting mix to the project. The anticipation surrounding *Without Prejudice* is set to peak with the release of its first single, *Gallan Battan*, on March 28. Accompanied by a visually stunning music video, the track will give fans a glimpse into the new musical world Randhawa has crafted.

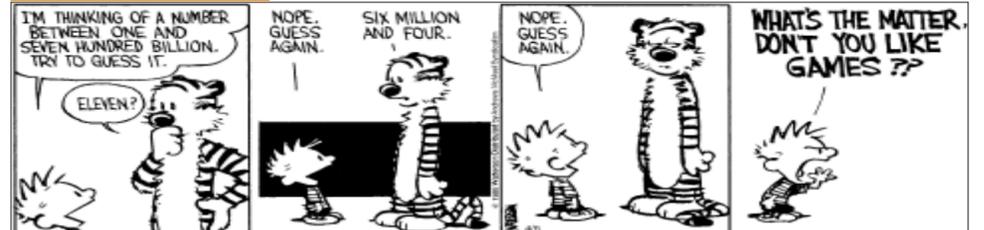


FUN

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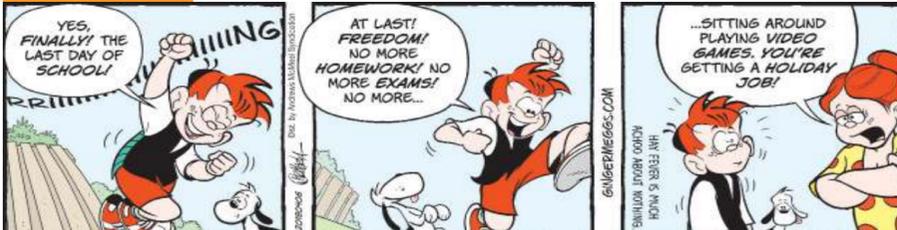
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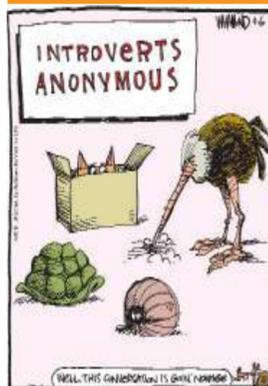
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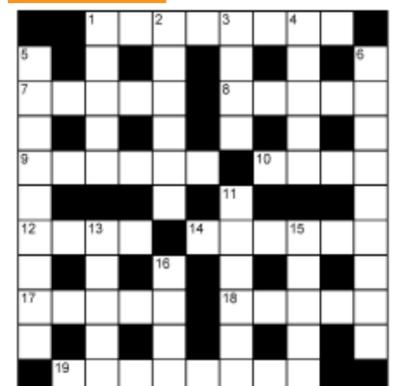
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

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

- In a battle
 - A baking ingredient
 - A clothing size
 - One or the other
 - A heavy metal
 - A small sharp carpet nail
 - Lump of gold
 - A smell
 - A body organ
 - A minder of sheep
- 5 A feeling of fondness or liking
- 6 An inscribed flat stone beside a grave
- 11 Speak unclearly
- 13 Fabric
- 15 Protect from danger
- 16 Hold tightly

DOWN

- White frozen dew
- Grow vegetables here
- Have a conversation
- A health professional



NO RULES, JUST VIBES

Inside the making of *5 Baje* with three of India's boldest artistes



TEJAL SINHA
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

The Indian hip-hop and indie music scene has been steadily evolving, with artistes fearlessly experimenting and blending genres to carve out new sonic landscapes. Enter *5 Baje*—a track that seamlessly fuses rap, R&B and indie vibes, bringing together the distinct styles of The Siege, Natiq and Shy Wry. More than just a song, *5 Baje* is a testament to artistic collaboration, vulnerability and breaking creative boundaries.

In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, the trio delves into the meaning behind their stage names, their dynamic creative process, and how *5 Baje* fits into India's ever-expanding underground music movement. They also share insights on navigating the fine balance between artistry and industry, the influence of genre-fluidity in modern music and what's next on their sonic journeys.

Excerpts from the interview

THE SIEGE: Your stage name 'The Siege' is bold and powerful. What's the meaning behind it, and how does it represent your journey in hip-hop?
 My government name is Siegen. I just shortened it to Siege, there's no deeper meaning behind this to be honest.

NATIQ: Your name, Natiq, means 'eloquent speaker'. How did you come up with it, and do you feel it represents your artistic identity?
 My nanu named me after the Urdu poet Ali Akbar Natiq. I had always liked how it was not a very common name, so I decided to release music under it, it also made it more personal. I'm not much of a speaker though, I'm very introverted. As an artist, I strive to put together sounds that communicate emotions clearly and powerfully, maybe like an eloquent speaker would. In that way, my name feels like a perfect fit for what I do.

SHY WRY: Your name Shy Wry has an interesting contrast. What's the story behind it, and does it reflect something personal about you?
 I've always had a shy personality when it comes to expression. However, I felt this nature contrasted with the kind of craft and dealings I was going to be engaged in. In 2018, I finally decided to start putting my songs out on YouTube. I had to come up with a name, and I knew I wasn't going to go official with my government name. "Shy," as the word suggests, means reserved or quiet and "Wry" means disappointment. This name serves as a constant reminder that

I would be an utter disappointment to myself if I shy away—remaining unexpressive in my craft.

THE SIEGE: *5 Baje* is an exciting collaboration blending rap, R&B, and indie. How did you approach crafting your verse for this track?
 I just heard this instrumental in my head and thought of mixing it up a little bit. The verse came to me naturally at 5 AM, the usual hours for introspection.

NATIQ: *5 Baje* sees you blending your signature R&B sound with rap and indie vibes. How did you ensure your style stood out on the track?
 I think it was more about letting all three artist's styles naturally blend than trying to make a particular style stand out. I prefer letting everyone do their thing and seeing where it goes, and most of the time, it falls into place. That was the case with *5 Baje* as well.

SHY WRY: *5 Baje* is a fusion of multiple genres. What was your role in shaping the track's overall sound?
 It's common for modern-day artists to move away from being confined to a single genre. However, they are often boxed into categories for the sake of nomenclature and classification.

We don't aim to serve that purpose or create more confusion—we're simply dedicated to delivering a fused blend of fresh sounds. You can take this as a hint that more genre-blending music is on the way. Our approach was never restricted; we simply brought the best of our capabilities to the table and let the results speak for themselves.

THE SIEGE: The underground hip-hop scene in India is constantly evolving. How do you think *5 Baje* fits into this movement?
 I'm hoping it encourages rappers to be a little more vulnerable in their songs and think of newer ways to collaborate. We've also made sure we introduce something new in every part of the song, and I hope it encourages such innovation even more.

NATIQ: The song carries a unique energy. What was the creative process like, and how did you and The Siege complement each other on this track?
 Siege has been a frequent collaborator for a while now and we've always tried to create something out of our comfort zone each time. The song started with a rough idea of the instrumental that I shared with Siege. I remember talking to him about creating something with Pop/R&B elements sometime during the making of our project *Bhaagna, Chhupna, Doobna* as well. The process is usually like a call-and-response thing—I send over the instrumental, he writes and records over it, then I do additional arrangement/production over it, and it was the same for this one. We bounced ideas off each other and figured things out as we went. For example, after



we had the vocals laid out, Siege suggested we try adding saxophone runs towards the end of the song. It worked out beautifully and gave the track a perfect ending.

SHY WRY: This song brings together artists from different backgrounds. How did that influence your creative approach to *5 Baje*?
 We can't really quantify who brought what and in what quantity. The whole process was all over the place. The beat went lying around for months on my WhatsApp until it was the right time to write on it. The process was like fishing for me—I waited. For Natiq or Siege, I'm sure the process would've been quite different as well.

THE SIEGE: Your discography has a mix of hard-hitting rap and introspective tracks. Do you see yourself experimenting with new sounds like *5 Baje* more often?
 I am working on stepping out of my comfort zone a little more often. I'm also trying to open up to collaborating with people and blending multiple talents together as a songwriter. So yeah, I hope the experimentation never stops.

NATIQ: R&B is still an emerging genre in India. Do you think *5 Baje* will help bridge the gap between rap, indie, and mainstream audiences?
 I tend to not see music as something bound by genres, as an artist and a listener both. I've always approached music with an open mind. With *5 Baje*, the goal wasn't to fit into a specific category but to create something that feels authentic, fresh, and something we enjoy making as well. I think a lot of Indian artists have chosen to not be bound by genres and experiment with all kinds of sounds in recent times and *5 Baje* is just another step in that direction.

SHY WRY: Balancing music and studies at IIM Rohtak must be challenging. How do you manage both, and do they ever influence each other?
 We have a trimester system here, so each year we have three terms to devour (or survive). I've been at this institute long enough to understand the intensity of its demanding hours each term. I time and manage my musical pursuits and academic submissions accordingly. Not a joke, it really was exhausting—sometimes unrewarding. Now that my MBA is over, I'm dedicated to creating and delivering more music in the coming months.

I've always tried to but failed to coordinate these two spheres simultaneously. Academics and music are like disjoint sets; they just can't coexist together for me. But it's not over for me—I'll continue this personal research to find the relationships between the two. Maybe those Venns will meet someday.



Modern battle against tuberculosis Innovations saving lives

India contributes nearly a quarter of the global burden of tuberculosis (TB) and continues to be a significant public health challenge in the country. Fortunately, the past two decades have witnessed innovations in diagnosis and treatment that are changing the TB care landscape and providing a stepping stone for TB control and eventual elimination in India. Advancements in TB Diagnosis A timely diagnosis is the first step for controlling TB. Conventional diagnostic tools like sputum smear microscopy have limited sensitivity and do not capture drug-resistant strains. India has responded to these challenges by adopting a range of novel diagnostic tools:

Truenat: Truenat, an invention of the Goa-based Molbio Diagnostics, is a point-of-care, chip-based molecular test for TB and rifampicin resistance. Truenat can be used to give an output within an hour helping in timely treatment decisions, and was approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020. Because it does not require much infrastructure and is portable, it is particularly useful in remote or resource-poor settings.

eCompliance: This system, which is based on biometrics, is used to ensure compliance with TB treatment protocols. eCompliance, for example, is a concept that employs a fingerprint or iris scan to track patients as they arrive to take their medications and is implemented by organizations like Operation ASHA. It improves the effectiveness of TB programs by reducing default rates and ensuring supervised treatment.

Innovations in TB treatment

As new strains of drug-resistant TB have come into play, new measures of approach to infection are required:

Bedaquiline: Developed by an international team of researchers including Indian scientist Anil Koul, Bedaquiline is an effective treatment for multi-drug-resistant

TB (MDR-TB). It has conditional marketing authorisation in several countries including India and is included in the national TB elimination plans. India is using it since 2019, when it was made available through over 500 drug-resistant TB centers to ensure the #EndTB program by the Health Ministry. Shorter Treatment Regimens: Shorter and simpler TB treatment regimens are being explored, led by researchers including Dr. Zarir Udwadia. Work has been done in developing these regimens for better compliance and results in the present patients.

Community: Based Approaches Building community engagement is critical for TB programs to work: **Operation ASHA:** This non-profit organization provides TB treatment via the DOTs (Directly Observed Therapy, Short-Course) approach, offering clinics in easily accessible and familiar locations (shop, temple, etc.) which decreases stigma and increases access to care. This model, which can be replicated in other countries, has been proven to be effective. Challenges and the Road Ahead Yet, such strides do not come without hurdles:

Awareness and Stigma: More is still needed for informing communities about symptoms of TB and alleviating the stigma associated with it. Healthcare infrastructure: In order to support the rapid scaling of new diagnostic and clinical tools, healthcare systems need to be strengthened.

Funding and resources: Motorised investments are needed for survival and growth of TB control programs. Take home lesson for India is that TB diagnosis and treatment innovations are changing the face of battle against a disease from ancient time. The country is a nation with high rate of TB (ceasing to be a public health problem) with marked utilisation of newer technologies as well as community approaches.

(The author, Dr. Sameer Bhati, Director of Star Imaging and Path Lab Pvt. Ltd.)

'I love telling female-driven stories, but I also want to direct male-centric stories'

PNS] HYDERABAD

Director Sonam Nair's *Duphainya* has struck a chord with audiences for its refreshing take on social issues like dowry, colorism and women's empowerment—all wrapped in an entertaining and heartwarming narrative. The series, which has received widespread appreciation, is not just about challenging societal norms but also about embracing the beauty of tradition, family and community living.

In a conversation about her latest work, Sonam Nair shares the inspiration behind *Duphainya*, the emotional moments on set, and how she envisions the future of storytelling for female filmmakers.

The journey of *Duphainya* began when writers Avinash and Chirag, along with creators and producers Shubh and Salona, approached Sonam with the script. What instantly drew her in was the way the story blended humour with strong messaging. "It had such funny scenes but such great messaging that I immediately said yes," she recalls in a chat with *The Pioneer*.

While the core themes of women's empowerment and societal expectations were evident, what resonated deeply with Sonam was the celebration of simple, traditional life. "Beyond the messaging, what really stood out to me was the beauty of a slow, close-knit village life, where community values still hold strong," she explains. "That's something we are losing in cities, and it's very nostalgic."

Filming *Duphainya* was an emotional experience, particularly because of its emphasis on relationships—especially the father-daughter bond. Sonam,

who shares a close relationship with her own father, found herself deeply connected to these moments. "My father was also very much like that—supportive, loving and always there. Those scenes felt very personal to me." The sense of community portrayed in the show also struck an emotional chord. "That feeling of belonging, of having people around you who care—that's missing so much in our modern lives," she reflects.

One of the most celebrated aspects of *Duphainya* is its strong female characters, who are both layered and relatable. Sonam credits the script for already having well-defined women, but she emphasizes that casting played a huge role in bringing them to life. "We had to ensure that the comedic element was maintained while also showing their strength and depth. That's why finding the right actors was so important. Shivan, who plays the lead, is just amazing. And our casting director did a brilliant job ensuring that every character felt real and authentic."

While *Duphainya* highlights women's empowerment, Sonam also wanted to ensure that male characters were well-developed and balanced. "This isn't just a female-centric story—it's about human relationships as a whole," she says.

The title *Duphainya*, which translates to "two-wheeler," carries multiple layers of meaning within the story. "It symbolises balance," Sonam explains. "One of the key themes of the show is the balance between tradition and modernity—the older generation holding onto traditions, while the younger generation pushes for change."

Beyond that, the title also reflects the tonal balance of the show. "For me, it was about maintaining comedy while also delivering emotional depth.

Having received widespread praise, *Duphainya* explores issues like dowry, colorism, and women's empowerment while celebrating the simplicity of small-town life. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Sonam Nair opened up about her latest project *Duphainya*—a show that beautifully blends humor with hard-hitting social themes



That balance was crucial." As a female director in the industry, Sonam is often asked about the representation of women in filmmaking. While she acknowledges that having women tell female-led stories is important, she also believes in breaking stereotypes. "I love telling female-driven stories, but I also want to direct male-centric stories. We shouldn't limit ourselves—just like male directors should feel free to explore female narratives, female directors should be able to tell all kinds of stories."

With *Duphainya* following the success of projects like *Mrs.*, which also tackled social issues in a fresh way, Sonam believes Indian audiences are becoming more receptive to narratives that challenge norms. "Of course, entertainment is key—I love making entertaining content. But I personally get drawn to stories that do a little more than just entertain. I like narratives that offer something deeper while still being enjoyable."

While *Duphainya* is still making waves, Sonam is already thinking about her next project. "I actually got some ideas while editing the show. For me, the most fulfilling part of filmmaking is when the audience truly connects with the story. So my next project will be something that excites me and resonates with viewers in a meaningful way."

I have to adapt and 'stay relevant': MS Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Rejecting speculation that he is the back-room decision-maker in Chennai Super Kings despite handing over captaincy to Rituraj Gaikwad, the talismanic Mahendra Singh Dhoni said he is instead focussed on reinventing himself and his strokes to "stay relevant" in the IPL.

Speaking to 'JioStar' after CSK's four-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in their lung-opener on Sunday night here, Dhoni spoke about the team dynamics under Gaikwad, his own form and also the regional commentary being done in the ongoing league.

"...Batsmen are now willing to take risks. They believe that with proper cricketing shots, they can play big strokes, and at the same time, they are improvising with their shot selection... Whether it's a reverse scoop against a fast bowler, a sweep, or a reverse sweep against a pacer.

"I am no different, I have to adapt as well. This is what is required of me for where I am batting. You have to try and stay relevant," Dhoni said.



"The way we played T20 in 2008 and the way we played IPL last year, it's very different. Earlier, there was a lot of turn in the wickets. Wickets were two-paced.

Now, India's wickets have become much better; they are more batter-friendly," he explained.

The 43-year-old, under whom CSK

won five IPL titles, handed over the leadership to Gaikwad at the beginning of the 2024 season. He said although he discusses things with Gaikwad, he refrains from persuading him to follow his advice.

"Rituraj has been part of us for quite some time. His temperament is very good, he's very calm, very composed. So those were the reasons we considered him for leadership.

"Before the start of the tournament, I also told him, 'If I give you advice, it doesn't mean you have to follow it. I will try to stay away as much as possible.' During the season, a lot of people speculated that I was making the decisions in the background," Dhoni recalled.

"But the fact is, he was making 99 per cent of the decisions. The most important calls — bowling changes, field placements — were all his. I was just helping him out. He did a brilliant job of handling the players," he added.

Another player with whom Dhoni shares a close bond is Royal Challengers Bengaluru star and national batting mainstay Virat Kohli. The veteran said their relationship has grown into a strong friendship over the years.

"It was always an honest exchange of ideas — whether a certain approach was right or if an adjustment could have been made. Initially, it was more of a relationship between a captain and a young player, but over time, as we kept interacting, we became friends," he said.

"Even today, we share that bond, though there's always a line of respect between a senior and a junior. Now that neither of us is captain, we get more time to talk before matches," he added.

The Jharkhand cricketer was quite pleased with the IPL broadcasters' decision to have regional commentary for the immensely popular league.

"...Listening to commentary gives you an outsider's perspective. It sparks new ideas like 'why don't we try this approach?...' Which can then be evaluated based on intelligence and data to see if it fits within the team's strategy," he said.

"I haven't heard a lot of regional commentary, but I know that Bihar (Bhojpuri) commentary is highly energetic. It reminds me of old-school radio commentary, where the commentators were very involved. I find that very interesting," he added.

Matthew Hayden praises Mahendra Singh Dhoni

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Mahendra Singh Dhoni's lightning-quick reflexes behind the stumps to get rid of Suryakumar Yadav during an IPL match here have left former Australian opener Matthew Hayden gushing about the former Indian captain's abilities, despite not being in his prime. Dhoni, 43, is nearing the end of his career, having hung up his international boots five years ago and playing just as a player for the Chennai Super Kings after leading the team to five IPL titles.

However, Dhoni showcased his brilliance once again on Sunday when he whipped off the bails in an instant off Noor Ahmad's delivery, sending Suryakumar back to the pavilion. "He (Dhoni) was on fire," Hayden, the former Australia batter and Dhoni's team-mate at CSK till 2010, said on ESPNcricinfo's T20 Time Out.

"I mean Noor Ahmad was firing down the leg side and it was just a movement across the ball. They're difficult when you're sitting there sort of partially obscured by the batsman.

"Then the stumping was just superb, just such quick timing, great hands, good vision. He's still got it!" The stumping of Suryakumar (29) was a crucial moment in the game as CSK broke a 51-run stand and eventually restricted Mumbai Indians to 155/9. CSK chased down the target with four wickets in hand and five balls to spare at Chepauk. "The stumping from MSD (MS Dhoni) was out of the world," said Noor during the post-match presentation.

"It feels great to have someone like Mahi Bhai behind the stumps, it is a great support for me." As per Star Sports, the stumping was executed in just 0.12 seconds.

Piyush Chawla, former India and CSK spinner, believes Dhoni must have practiced with Noor during pre-season camp to perfect the stumping.

"It does happen, it is a challenge if you have not kept against somebody," he said. "But I'm sure in the camp, he must have kept a lot of balls because if he's keeping for somebody new, he especially takes that person to the stumps and says, you bowl a few balls. (It has) not (happened) with me because I have bowled against him so many times and bowled to him in the nets also. But whenever somebody new comes, especially a wristspinner, he just makes sure he's keeping 10-12 balls so that he gets used to the wrist position."

Rachin Ravindra credits spin depth for win over MI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Chennai Super Kings hero Rachin Ravindra credited the team's spinners, led by the "world-class" Ravichandran Ashwin, for their comprehensive win over Mumbai Indians, saying the depth in spin gives them the right balance, covering any off-days from individual bowlers.

While Ashwin delivered a tidy 1/31, it was Afghanistan's Noor Ahmad who stole the limelight with a brilliant 4 for 18, helping restrict MI to 155-9.

"Ash (Ashwin) is a world-class performer. I played a bit against him, he brings a lot of experience, he brings a lot of his cricket knowledge, the way he speaks about spin bowling, the tips he gives," Ravindra said at the post-match press conference after CSK's four-wicket win.

"He reads the game, he is a great thinker of the game. It's an honour to

share the field with lot of these guys, greats of Indian game, guys I have grown up watching," he said.

"We have got a good spin depth, the balance of the team is nice. If someone is not having a great day the sixth bowler comes in."

Chasing 156, Ravindra remained unbeaten on 65 off 45 balls and shared 67 runs for the second wicket with skipper Rituraj Gaikwad (53 off 26) to lay the foundation for the win on Sunday night.

"It's always an honour to open for CSK, the history of it and you look back at the heroes like the Hussey's, the Watson's, the McCullum's. These guys have done so well. So it's great to be in this role but I will take game by game. It's a long tournament so..." Ravindra said.

CSK lost a few wickets in the middle to be reduced to 116/5 but Ravindra and Jadeja (17) then steadied the ship to take them to 152 for 6.

Lavishing praise on his skipper

Gaikwad and Jadeja, Ravindra said: "Rutu is an amazing player, the way he showed his class out there, scoring and hitting beautiful shots he did. It was fractionally a tricky wicket but I think it was a good wicket in general.

Jaddu's experience speaks for itself. He is a classy all-rounder and the way he finished lot of games in the past, his calmness is great and his clarity — RACHIN RAVINDRA, CSK PLAYER

"Mumbai bowled quite well. The dew wasn't a factor but the way he played showed his skill and class and made my job a bit easier," he said.

"Jaddu's experience speaks for itself. He is a classy all-rounder and the way he finished lot of games in the past, his calmness is great and his clarity. He knows his team well, he knows the conditions well and sharing the crease with

him was amazing."

The Chepauk crowd had hoped for the legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni to finish the game, but it was Ravindra who sealed the win with a six off Kiwi team-mate Mitchell Santner to take CSK home.

"It's difficult to soak in the moment, you are simply focussed on winning the game for the team but it's hard to ignore when Dhoni comes in, the noise and whistles. It was cool to share the crease with him for the first time," he said.

"He is a legend of the game, people love him here and so it was special. All the crowd was hoping I give him one and he finished the game but it was about finishing the job. Dhoni has finished so many games for CSK and I think there is plenty more to come."

Ravindra was also full of praise for young MI left-arm wrist spinner Vignesh Puthur, who had fine figures of 3/32 in his debut IPL match.

Iyer to lean on captaincy credentials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

Skipper Shreyas Iyer will lean on his captaincy credentials as he looks to turn around the fortunes of perennial underperformers Punjab Kings in this IPL, opening the season with a clash against Gujarat Titans here on Tuesday.

Iyer enjoyed huge success leading Kolkata Knight Riders to the IPL title last year, four years after guiding Delhi Capitals to the 2020 IPL final, and now faces the challenge of ending Punjab's 18-year-long wait for their maiden IPL title.

The Punjab team reached the semi-finals in 2018 and made it to the final once in 2014, but despite numerous squad changes and leadership shifts, they have failed to break into the top 5 in the last four editions, even after rebranding to Punjab Kings from Kings XI Punjab.

However, with Iyer at the helm, Punjab has a captain with proven leadership credentials. He will also reunite with coach Ricky Ponting at Punjab, providing the ideal platform to make a fresh start.

On the other hand, Shubman Gill, who is the vice-captain of India's ODI team, endured a tough season as GT

captain, with the team finishing in 8th spot in 2024 after a title win and runner-up finishes in 2022 and 2023 under Hardik Pandya.

Both Gill and Iyer are in great form, having played crucial roles in India's Champions Trophy-winning campaign in Dubai earlier this month.

Iyer finished as India's top run-scorer in the Champions Trophy with 243 runs in five games, while Gill also

Iyer finished as India's top run-scorer in the Champions Trophy with 243 runs in five games, while Gill also struck a century in the opening match against Bangladesh

struck a century in the opening match against Bangladesh and contributed significantly to India's triumph.

As for team dynamics, GT's batting strength will rely on a solid start from Gill and England's wicketkeeper-batter Jos Buttler, who will be looking to bounce back from recent poor form.

The middle-order will be in the hands of West Indian Sherfane Rutherford, Sai Sudharsan, and Masood Shahrukh Khan, with all-rounders

Rashid Khan, Rahul Tewatia, Glenn Phillips, Washington Sundar, and Mahipal Lomror expected to contribute.

On the bowling front, Mohammed Siraj will look to make a big impact and return to the national reckoning after missing out of the Champions Trophy, while Kagiso Rabada, Prasad Krishna, South African Gerald Coetzee, and veteran Ishant Sharma will provide added firepower to GT's pace attack.

GT's spin department will be led by Rashid Khan with left-arm spinner Sai Kishore providing valuable support.

Punjab Kings, on the other hand, will depend on skipper Iyer, Josh Inglis, Prabhsimran Singh, Marcus Stoinis, and Glenn Maxwell for their batting. The Punjab outfit also boasts a strong line-up of all-rounders in Azmatullah Omarzai, Stoinis, Marco Jansen, Shahank Singh, and Musheer Khan.

The pace bowling department will be led by Arshdeep Singh, who will be itching to get back in action after not getting a game in the Champions trophy.

He will have Lockie Ferguson, Kuldeep Sen, and Yash Thakur in the pace unit, while leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal and left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar will hope for a successful season.



MI spinner Puthur makes instant impact on IPL stage

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

A pat on the shoulders and a few words of appreciation from legendary MS Dhoni would go a long way for the unheralded Mumbai Indians' 24-year-old spinner Vignesh Puthur, who announced himself on the big stage of IPL with a three-wicket haul on debut.

It wasn't just his skills that made the world take notice of the Chinaman bowler from Kerala, his doggedness and self-belief were equally compelling.

Unsurprisingly, Mumbai Indians began yet another IPL with a defeat but the loss on Sunday had a silver lining with Puthur making his presence felt against a storied side like the Chennai Super Kings.

Puthur's three-wicket burst included prized scalps of Rituraj Gaikwad (53), Shivam Dube (9) and Deepak Hooda (3), who all failed to clear the ropes off the wily 24-year-old.

"(It is) never easy — (the) first game against CSK — it's a big game. But purely the way he responded, hats off to him," former India and current MI bowling coach Paras Mhambrey told the media after the match on Sunday night.

"He was able to hold his nerves and handle pressure superbly, (he) really got us in the game. Very happy about his performance," he added.

MI have unearthed talent like Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya from the far-reaches in the past and Puthur only serves a reminder of their robust scouting system.

"Amazing, MI is known for that — giving youngsters opportunities, the scouts do this for 10 months and he (Vignesh) is a product of that," said MI's stand-in skipper and India T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav after the match.

Son of auto driver and student of English literature

From Mallapuram in Kerala, Puthur, who is currently pursuing MA in English Literature PTM Govt College Perinthalmanna in the Calicut University,

Tamim Iqbal undergoes angioplasty after heart attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal on Monday underwent angioplasty after suffering a heart attack during a Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League match in Dhaka.

According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, the incident occurred in the first innings of the 50-over-a-side contest between Mohammedan Sporting Club and Shinepukur Cricket Club when the 36-year-old Iqbal felt pain in his chest.

Tamim, who was leading Mohammedan, felled for just one over before being rushed to a nearby hospital.

"Initially, a helicopter was arranged for Tamim's movement to the hospital, but he could not be flown from the BKSP ground in Savar. He was later taken to the Fazilatunnesa Hospital," the report quoted match referee Debabrata Paul as saying.

The treating doctors later issued an official medical bulletin.

"He returned to us in a critical condition. We can call it a heart attack, and we subsequently did an angiogram and angioplasty to remove the blockage. The medical procedure has gone smoothly. He is currently under observation.

"The swift coordination between the medical staff at BKSP and the hospital ensured Tamim was treated quickly," the bulletin read.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board had cancelled a scheduled board meeting this afternoon after the development. BCB president Faruque Ahmed is at the hospital, along with other members.

Iqbal had announced his retirement from international cricket for the second time in January this year. Earlier, in July 2023, he had made a similar announcement during an emotional press conference but reversed his decision within 24 hours following an intervention from then Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Iqbal, who last featured for the national team in 2023, has played 70 Tests and 243 ODIs, scoring 5,134 runs and 8,357 runs respectively for Bangladesh. He has also accumulated 1,758 runs in 78 T20Is.

Mexico wins CONCACAF Nations League tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Inglewood (US)

Raúl Jiménez scored his second goal on a penalty kick in the second minute of second-half stoppage time, and Mexico beat Panama 2-1 to win the CONCACAF Nations League tournament for the first time.

Jiménez, the 33-year-old Fulham striker, dominated the week at SoFi Stadium with all four of Mexico's goals in El Tri's two matches.

After he scored on a header in the eighth minute against Panama on Sunday night, he used a stutter-step approach before perfectly striking a penalty awarded when defender José Córdoba touched the ball with his inexplicably outstretched arm while chasing after it in the 90th minute. "It's fantastic to come back after what I've been through," Jiménez said.

"I'm really happy. This is just a great example that you never have to lose faith, and continue. You know what you're capable to do." This remarkable tournament is only the latest chapter in the comeback story of Jiménez, who incurred a serious head injury while playing for Wolves in November 2020. After fracturing his skull in a collision with Arsenal's David Luiz, he survived a life-threatening brain bleed and returned to competition nine months later.

The US had won the first three editions of this tournament, which brings together the nations of North and Central



America and the Caribbean. But with Jiménez in dominant form and veteran coach Javier Aguirre tweaking his formation to emphasize aggression, Mexico stepped up to claim another trophy in the stadium where it won the 2023 CONCACAF Gold Cup, both times in front of vociferously pro-Mexico crowds.

"We are enjoying our game," Jiménez said. "We are really happy. We knew since we arrived, since the (quarterfinals) against Honduras when we won our pass to the final four, we knew this game was going to be difficult, but we knew we had the quality. We know each other. We know how we can play better than the other

teams, and that's the key."

Adalberto Carrasquilla scored on a penalty in first-half injury time for underdog Panama, which staged a dramatic 1-0 upset of the host US on Thursday night to reach the final.

The championship match was briefly suspended with 10 minutes left in regulation after a large portion of the raucous crowd of 68,212 repeatedly shouted the homophobic Spanish slur that is commonly used at Mexican matches both foreign and domestic despite several governing bodies' attempts to eradicate it. The players took a water break while anti-slur messages appeared on the scoreboard and

over the public address system.

Misbehavior aside, Mexico feels right at home in the Los Angeles Rams' palatial stadium — or anywhere in Southern California, where El Tri is invariably treated as the home team. Mexico also beat Panama here two years ago in the Gold Cup on Santi Jiménez's late goal.

Jiménez played up front alongside Giménez in the Nations League semifinals and finals, with coach Javier Aguirre using an aggressive alignment to create offense. It worked splendidly thanks to Jiménez, who needed only a few minutes to get Mexico on top in the final.

"It was crazy," Giménez said.

"We didn't train it, but we're soccer players, and we know how to play in every formation. It's an honour for me to play with Raúl, and it was a good result because we understand each other. I was more like a No. 10, but still was very good to play with him."

After Roberto Alvarado put a long, beautiful cross into the box, Jiménez outmaneuvered a defender and bounced in a header that set off a raucous celebration at SoFi. Panama dominated possession and generated more shot attempts in the first half, and it finally paid off when video review determined center back Johan Vásquez committed a foul in the Mexico penalty area shortly before half-time. Carrasquilla barely got his shot above goalkeeper Luis Malagón's trailing legs to tie it.

FROM MAD TO MAD SQUARE: THE GANG RETURNS WITH MORE FUN!

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The college backdrop film *Mad*, released in October 2023, became a huge hit. Now, its sequel, *Mad Square*, will hit the screens this Friday, March 28. "The first one was set in a college backdrop, and now, in *Mad Square*, we've moved beyond college and attended Laddu's wedding. That's where the entertainment begins, and it's unstoppable," said the *Mad* gang, consisting of Narne Nithin, Sangeeth Sobhan and Ram Nithin. "When we complete *Mad* film, we all got emotional because we had become such good friends. It was like how emotions run high when a four-year college journey ends. Similarly, when the shooting of *Mad* finished, we felt the same emotions. But after 15 days of its release, we got the news of the

sequel and we were really happy," said the gang.

They added that when they started *Mad*, their confidence levels were low. "We were all new, without any established name, and we wondered if audiences would actually come to theaters to watch us. But after the film became a huge hit, we worked on this sequel with a much higher confidence level," said Ram Nithin. "We focused on delivering more entertainment in this sequel, and though we didn't do any special homework, we worked hard to keep the fun flowing," said Sangeeth Sobhan.

They emphasized that they aren't feeling pressure to deliver another hit. "We are still upcoming actors, and we did this project out of friendship and without pressure. The entertainment quotient is higher in this sequel, and we hope everyone enjoys it," said the gang. While Narne Nithin and Sangeeth Sobhan have some film background, Ram Nithin is completely new to the

industry. When asked if the three of them would act together in films produced by other production houses, Ram Nithin said, "This film is special to us and we believe it works best in this context." Sangeeth Sobhan added, "I haven't really thought about that idea."

Regarding the film's hero, they said, "In this film, the true hero is the story and the entertainment. If you ask who the hero of the film is, it's definitely the fun and the narrative." They also mentioned that in the first film, Narne Nithin's role as Ashok was serious and Ram Nithin's character, Manoj, was romantic, but in the sequel, both of them shift to comedy.

"This sequel is made purely for entertainment. For films like *Baahubali* or *RRR*, one expects a deep story, but *Mad Square* is a complete laugh riot where you don't expect a big storyline," said Narne Nithin. He also mentioned that their love interests, which carried

over from the first film, will continue in the sequel but won't appear on screen.

As for their remuneration, "Yes, as we joked in the trailer, it's Rs 116 each," they said with a laugh. They also added, "If the franchise continues, it would be great, but not immediately. If another sequel happens in the future, it could be a good thing."

On a personal note, Narne Nithin, who is the brother-in-law of top actor NTR, shared that NTR has always been supportive and gives valuable advice. "From the beginning of my career, he has been guiding me and I plan to continue taking his advice in the future," Narne Nithin said.



'Language is a window into different cultures'

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Shashaa Tirupati, an Indian-born Canadian playback singer, songwriter and music producer, has captivated audiences with her soulful voice across multiple Indian languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. She gained widespread recognition with *Vaan* from *Kaatru Veliyidai*, a song that won her the National Film Award for Best Female Playback Singer. Over the years, she has worked with celebrated composers such as A.R. Rahman and Pritam, solidifying her place in the industry.

She was part of the KOLABHER MUSIC CAMP 2025 by Indian Performing Right Society (IPRS) & Sony Music Publishing to empower female music creators.

In a candid conversation with *The Pioneer*, Shashaa spoke about her multilingual experiences, her long-standing association with A.R. Rahman and how she balances the commercial side of music with her artistic expression.

Having sung in over 20 languages, Shashaa believes that this diverse exposure has significantly shaped her musical style and artistic approach. She sees language as more than just a medium of expression—it is a window into different cultures.

"It opens you up to new sounds, styles and emotions. Everything you listen to, everything you consume, stays in your subconscious memory. When you're creating your own music, those influences come through in subtle ways. Having this level of exposure has helped me bring more diversity into my music."

Her rendition of *Vaan* was a career-defining moment, not just because of the acclaim it received but because of the deep emotional connection she felt while recording it.

"I got very emotional while recording *Vaan*—even thinking about it now makes me emotional. It's the kind of song that happens once in a lifetime. After that song, I even thought of naming my daughter *Vaan* whenever I have kids. It was that special to me."

Reflecting on the song's success, she added, "In retrospect, I'm not surprised that the song received so much recognition. Both Rahman sir and I won National Awards for *Kaatru Veliyidai* and looking back, it feels like the song truly deserved it."

She has worked closely with A.R. Rahman on multiple projects and she considers her association with him a significant learning experience. "One of the most valuable lessons I've learned from him is to



In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, National Award-winning singer Shashaa Tirupati opens up about her journey across multiple languages, her deep-rooted connection with music, and her collaborations with industry stalwarts like A.R. Rahman

keep moving forward. He is in his 50s, probably my dad's age, but the music he creates still sounds fresh, like it's coming from a 20-year-old. He constantly upgrades himself, evolves and does things that many of his contemporaries do not. That has been a big lesson for me," she said.

As a playback singer, Shashaa delivers songs based on a director's vision, but her independent projects allow her to showcase a more personal, unfiltered side of her artistry.

"Bollywood is for my commercial side and independent music is where I pour out all my emotions. I'm an introvert, so I feel a lot but don't always talk about it. My music becomes an outlet for everything I

deal with—be it depression, anxiety, or heartbreaks. That's the crux of my independent work."

She also revealed that her ability to switch between these two worlds is aided by her ADHD.

"It actually helps me transition quickly. I can shift from playback singing to composing an independent song without feeling overwhelmed," she shared.

She participated in Collab Music Camp 2025, a space where artists from diverse backgrounds come together to create music. She was amazed by the energy and talent at the camp.

"I did not expect this level of sound production or the way everyone bonded so well. It was unreal,"

she said. "That's the beauty of art—it brings people together. Collaboration is king, and when artists vibrate with each other, it reflects in the music."

She believes that creativity thrives in environments where artists feed off each other's energy.

"You can walk into a room and instantly feel if the creative energy is right. The enthusiasm at Collab was infectious, and that really helped in the creative process," she added.

With AI becoming an integral part of various creative fields, Shashaa sees both its advantages and its potential risks.

"AI can be a huge asset when it comes to songwriting, melody structuring, or production. You can use it to generate lyrics as a framework, which can then be refined by a lyricist. But AI should not become a crutch. If used wisely, it can be an incredible tool, but if misused, it could put musicians out of business."

Being in the music industry comes with its share of pressures and expectations. Shashaa acknowledges this but believes in making the most of every opportunity.

"There are moments when I've missed out on opportunities simply because I was in another city for a show when a last-minute studio call came. But you just do the best you can with what comes your way."

Among her many projects, Shashaa recalls *Rasaali* from *Achchan Yenbadhu Madamaiyada* as a particularly special song.

"Rahman sir told me he wanted to see the real Shashaa in that song. It felt like a big responsibility but also like he saw something in me that I hadn't yet recognised in myself," she reflected.

For those looking to pursue both playback singing and independent music, her advice is simple: master your craft.

"Hone your art. Keep getting better at what you do. Being a better singer isn't enough—become a better listener, learn production, try to create, and write. All of these skills will only help you grow as an artist," she said.

Shashaa has an exciting lineup of projects in the pipeline.

"I've just finished recording eight to nine Tamil and Telugu film songs, which will be releasing soon. I'm also working on two independent projects—one is a multi-visual EP with Iranian multi-instrumentalist Mehdad Ramzayi and the other is a classical fusion EP with a very contemporary sound," she revealed.

Rajendra Prasad under fire for insensitive comments on Warner

For celebrities, especially Telugu actors, they have huge fan followings. When attending public functions, these celebrities should aim to inspire others, particularly their followers. However, some have crossed boundaries in their remarks. Not long ago, at a film function where popular cricketer David Warner was present as the chief guest, senior actor Rajendra Prasad went off-script and made some loose comments.

This is not the first time Rajendra Prasad has made headlines for controversial remarks. This time, however, he crossed a line by using unparliamentary language when speaking about David Warner. Knowing that Warner doesn't understand Telugu, Rajendra Prasad took advantage of the language barrier, saying, "David Warner is not playing cricket; he's just doing reels," while mimicking the *Pushpa* walk. Then he continued to speak in a mocking tone, "Donga mun... koduku... orei Warnero... me warning."

What Rajendra Prasad thought might be a joke or an entertaining moment, appeared to many as disrespectful. David Warner, who didn't understand the Telugu language, was left laughing at the situation, unaware of the comments



made about him. Unfortunately, Rajendra Prasad's words seemed to lower the respect of Telugu people in front of the cricket world.

The actor's remarks have since sparked outrage online, with netizens trolling Rajendra Prasad for his comments, claiming that his behavior tarnished the reputation of the Telugu community.

In a similar incident, actor Sivaji made controversial remarks at the success meet of his recent film. While discussing his role's success, he used harsh language, saying, "nee ya... nee tha... deenem..." It makes one wonder where things are heading, as more and more celebrities seem to lose control when addressing a live audience, especially with thousands watching online and hundreds attending the events in person.

Prabhas' role in *Kannappa* will surpass expectations



Vishnu Manchu has once again opened up about his dream project. Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, the film is scheduled for release on April 25. Some members of the team participated in the Red Lorry Film Festival. Vishnu Manchu, during the event, shared, "I am usually a devotee of Lord Anjaneya, but after starting the journey with *Kannappa*, I became a devotee of Lord Shiva." He added that *Kannappa* will impress everyone. "Keep your expectations high; Prabhas' role will exceed them. I have learned a lot from the journey of *Kannappa*," said the actor.

Raghubabu, who plays a key role in the film, remarked that if anyone trolled this film, they would face punishment from Lord Shiva. "Don't troll this film; if you troll, you will be cursed," warned Raghubabu. He also said, "It's a blessing to get the opportunity to act in a film like *Kannappa*. Vishnu will reach another level with this film."

Director Mukesh Kumar Singh revealed that Vishnu had first gotten the idea for the story back in 2015. "In January 2016, I went to Sri Kalahasti and had a darshan of Lord Shiva. It was Shiva who sent me to this project. That's the divine play of Shiva," said the director.

Suhas confident about *O Bhama Ayyo Rama* after skepticism

Actor Suhas is now focusing on lead roles and is coming up with a new film titled *O Bhama Ayyo Rama*. The teaser for the film was released on Monday at an event in Hyderabad. During the event, the actor described the film as a romantic love story. "Initially, I had doubts about doing this film when director Ram Godhala approached me. I had done many films but never a romantic love story, so I expressed my concerns

to the director. However, he was full of confidence in me and narrated the story and I liked a few points, especially in the second half," Suhas said about the film.

The actor also mentioned that while his last few films received good appreciation, they didn't perform well commercially. "Some of the films received good appreciation, but the execution may not have been up to the



mark. I will take care of that in my upcoming films. Additionally, some of my older films released in between, which didn't perform well," Suhas added. He is now confident about *O Bhama Ayyo Rama*.

When asked if he has been losing some roles due to not doing character roles, Suhas responded, "I want to play lead

roles and if I get good villain roles, I am ready to do those as well." The actor is also making his Tamil debut soon. Another film, *Uppu Kappurambu*, where he stars alongside Keerthy Suresh as the lead, is also in the pipeline. "It will be released in both Tamil and Telugu," he said.

Malayalam actress Malavika Manoj, known for her role in *Joe*, plays the female lead in this Telugu film. Directed by Ram Godhala and pro-

duced by Harish Nalla under the V Arts banner, the film will be distributed by Rana Daggubati's Spirit Media. The highly anticipated teaser was unveiled on Monday, promising a fun-filled summer release.

Director Ram Godhala expressed his gratitude, saying, "Every filmmaker's dream of seeing their name on the big screen. This dream of mine has come true, thanks to Suhas and producer Harish."