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India to be 'Vishwa Guru' by 2047: VP Dhankhar 5

'CITY GAVE ME COUNTLESS CHANCES TO FULFILL MY DREAM' 10



Payal Rajput makes waves in a woman-centric FILM P12



QUOTE OF THE DAY

the pioneer

The Congress government should block Megha Engineering Infra Ltd in Telangana immediately or else the BJP will make Central agencies to enter the scene. What is the need of entering into an MoU worth Rs 15,000 crore with Megha Krishna Reddy who stays in Hyderabad city. We will reveal the secret behind this deceptive MoU. Chief Minister Revanth had demanded earlier that the BRS admin should blacklist Megha as it is corrupt and had looted Telangana



- Paidi Rakesh Reddy, BJP Armoor MLA

P4

DON'T MISS...

DGP inaugurates 'comman system'

Director General of Police (DGP) Dwaraka Tirumala Rao inaugurated the 'Advanced Integrated Command System' at Chirala One Town Police Station on Friday. He also inaugurated a waiting hall at the Karamchedu Police Station during his visit to Bapatla district. The DGP was welcomed by Guntur Range IGP Sarvashresta Tripati and SP Tushar Dudy. Speaking on the occasion, he urged police officials to leverage advanced technology for crime investigation and prevention. He emphasised the importance of installing CCTV cameras at vulnerable...

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Ten oppn MPs suspended

Ten opposition members attending the joint committee of Parliament meeting on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill were suspended on Friday as they accused its chairperson of reducing its proceedings to a "farce", while the committee readies to adopt its draft report next week. The appearance of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a moderate Hurriyat leader who is also the religious head of Muslims in Kashmir, before the panel to voice his disapproval of the proposed law was the highlight of the meeting but...

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Gold breaches Rs 83k mark for first time

Gold prices extended the rally for the eighth consecutive session and climbed Rs 200 to breach the psychological level of Rs 83,000 per 10 grams for the first time in the national capital on Friday amid aggressive buying triggered by global market uncertainties. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity rose Rs 200 to hit a fresh lifetime high of Rs 83,100 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 82,900 per 10 grams on Thursday. "Gold extended gains on Friday, with spot...

-PAGE: 8

Rohit shows some spark but falls

He pulled Umar Nazir for a trademark six, effortlessly lofted Auqib Nabi and Yudhvir Singh for a couple of more hits over the ropes to give a glimpse of his absolute best. But eventually, a fifty on Ranji comeback was not meant to be for India captain Rohit Sharma who fell for 28 here on Friday. Playing his first game for Mumbai in domestic red-ball cricket in nearly a decade, Rohit's first day on the field was a disaster with the 37-year-old falling for a 19-ball 3 in the opening hour of the Ranji Trophy clash...

-SPORTS

Vijayasai Reddy bids goodbye to politics

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a surprising development, V Vijayasai Reddy, the 67-year-old Rajya Sabha Floor Leader and national general secretary of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), announced his retirement from politics on Friday. His decision to retire is being seen as a major blow to both the YSRCP and its president, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, especially in the wake of the party's disappointing performance in the recent elections.

The decision has sent shockwaves through Andhra Pradesh's political circles, with Sai Reddy's departure potentially having significant implications for the YSRCP, particularly in terms of leadership and its influence at the national level. His exit marks the end of an era, as he has been one of the most influential figures in the state's political landscape for nearly four decades.

Continued on Page 2

A new chapter or strategy?

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayasai Reddy's sudden resignation from active politics and the Rajya Sabha, combined with growing legal troubles, has thrust the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader into the eye of a political storm. His departure has raised questions about his future in Andhra Pradesh politics, with sources close to Reddy citing internal party tensions and his increasing frustration as major factors behind his exit. At the same time, ongoing investigations by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Andhra Pradesh Criminal Investigation Department (CID) into allegations of financial misdeeds related to Kakinada Port have only added to the intrigue surrounding his decision.

2



"I am indebted to the YS family, who have believed in and supported me for four decades and 3 generations. I wish Jagan garu all the best

Amaravati in 3 yrs: Narayana

Tender process for capital construction to be completed by month-end

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister P Narayana announced that the tender process for the construction of Amaravati, the State capital, will be completed by the end of January. He confirmed that work on the project will begin in the second week of February, with the capital's construction set to be completed in three years.

On Friday, Minister Narayana visited the Neelapadu area of Amaravati, where ongoing work has been underway since 2019, including the construction of administrative towers, the High Court raft foundation, and other vital structures. Some foundations, including those for five towers and the High Court, are currently submerged under water, with efforts underway to drain the water.

Addressing the media, Minister Narayana acknowledged the significant sacrifice made by farmers who gave up their land for the development of the new capital city. He stressed that Amaravati would rank among the top five cities in the world upon completion. The minister outlined plans for the iconic buildings within the Government Complex area, including the Assembly, Administrative Towers, and the High Court, covering a total area of over 4 million square feet. Key structures include a 48-story GAD Tower (1.7 million square feet), four other towers (40 stories each) with areas ranging from 2.8 to 2.3 million square feet, and an 8-story High Court building (2 million square feet). The Assembly building is designed to stand 250 meters tall, offering a panoramic view from its summit.

Minister Narayana also mentioned that the construction of apartments for officials, public representatives, and employees, covering 2.4 million square feet, had already begun.

Continued on Page 2



- Construction work to begin in the second week of February
- Ongoing works in Nelapadu include foundations for administrative towers and the High Court
- Minister highlights the sacrifices of farmers who gave land for the capital's development
- Plans for iconic buildings include the Assembly, Administrative Towers, and High Court
- Construction of apartments for officials and employees is underway, with IIT expert recommendations being followed
- Legal hurdles delayed progress, but the current govt is resolving issues and accelerating work
- 40 tenders worth Rs 38,571 crore issued, with work set to speed up from February 2025
- Minister criticises the YSRCP govt for law and order issues but praises the coalition government's efforts
- CM Naidu's leadership is reviving the economy, and attracting significant investments

Two new Addl Judges sworn in at AP High Court

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A Hari Haranadha Sarma and Y Lakshmana Rao were sworn in as Additional Judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Friday.

Andhra Pradesh High Court Chief Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur administered the oath of office to the new Additional Judges.

"Two new Additional Judges appointed to the High Court of Andhra Pradesh were sworn in on Friday. With their appointment, the strength of High Court Judges has reached 30," said an official release.

Recently, the Supreme Court Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjeev Khanna, recommended elevating Sarma and Rao to the Government of India as Additional Judges.

High Court Judges, Advocate General D Srinivas, and others attended the swearing-in ceremony, the release said.

Leaders emphasise support for WTO, rule-based intl trading: P8

CM back from Davos visit, meets Union FinMin

Holds key talks on State's financial proposals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday morning. Naidu, who returned directly to Delhi after attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, held the meeting at the Ministry of Finance office in North Block.

The Chief Minister arrived in Delhi late on Thursday night, around 12:30 AM, after concluding his visit to Davos. The meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was of particular importance as Naidu planned to raise four to five key issues concerning the state.

The meeting lasted around 45 minutes, during which Naidu discussed financial cooperation for the state. With the Union Budget scheduled for presentation on February 1, Chandrababu put forth several requests on behalf of the state. Reports suggest that key topics included the Rs 11,440 crore package announced by the central government for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Naidu is also expected to express his gratitude for the support provided by the Ministry and discuss the pending funds for the Polavaram project, including the Diaphragm Wall and R&R package.

Later in the day, after returning to Amaravati from his successful Davos visit, the Chief Minister shifted focus to executing the proposals and discussions held with various organisations during the World Economic Forum summit.



Soon after arriving at his residence on Friday, the Chief Minister met with Chief Secretary Vijayanand and officials of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) to review the outcome of his Davos visit. During the meeting, he discussed in detail the proposals received during the summit and instructed the officers to take necessary steps to advance these proposals over the next six months.

Chandrababu informed the officers that representatives from different countries, CEOs of various organisations, and ministers from these nations would soon be visiting Andhra Pradesh. He directed the officers to be prepared for these visits. Pleased with the discussions held with CEOs and heads of various companies during the summit, the Chief Minister issued clear directions on how to proceed with implementing the proposals.

Chandrababu instructed Vijayanand to maintain regular communication with the CEOs and heads of the organisations, continuously monitoring the progress of these talks.

Naidu briefs TDP MLAs, MPs about talks with top firms

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, fresh from his successful tour of Davos and Delhi, received a warm welcome at his residence in Undavalli from Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni).

The CM's visit to Davos paved new avenues for industrial growth in the state. MP Sivanath presented a bouquet to the Chief Minister and congratulated him on the success of his trip.

Following this, a meeting was convened at the CM's residence, with MP Kesineni Sivanath, along with government whip MLA Tangirala Soumya, MLAs Gadde Ram Mohan, Sriram Rajagopal (Tataiah), Tenali Sravan Kumar, Nakka Anand Babu, Bhashyam Praveen, and B. Ramanjayulu in attendance. During the meeting, CM Chandrababu Naidu briefed the MPs and MLAs on his discussions with major companies in Davos, offering valuable insights into the key takeaways from his visit.



AP, TG lag in revenue receipts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA/ HYDERABAD

With just three months left before the closure of the financial year, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana lag behind the budgeted targets of total revenue receipts while borrowings are up to the mark, according to the figures released by the Principal Accountant General of the respective states.

Andhra Pradesh recorded 69.36 per cent of the total budgeted receipts at Rs 1.87 lakh crore by the end of December 2024. According to the figures by the Principal Accountant General of AP, the State has budgeted nearly Rs 2.70 lakh crore as total receipts for the financial year 2024-25.

State's tax revenues stood at little over Rs 98,000 crore as of December against the estimated Rs 1.60 lakh crore while the borrowings and other liabilities were at nearly Rs 74,000 crore, 108 per cent of the budgeted Rs 68,000 crore.

Stamps and registration fee collections in AP recorded just 47.33 per cent (of the estimates) at Rs 6,389 crore indicating bleak property transactions.

Telangana recorded 58.57 per cent of the total estimated revenues at Rs 1.61 lakh crore by the end of December 2024.

Continued on Page 2

We worship goddesses but ignore daughters: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Castigating a man for throwing out his estranged wife and minor daughters from the matrimonial home, the Supreme Court on Friday said such behaviour eliminated the basic difference between human and animal.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh asked, "What kind of a man you are if you don't even care for your minor daughters? What wrong have the minor daughters done in coming to this world?"

An irked bench went on, "He was only interested in having multiple children. We cannot allow such a cruel man to enter our court at all. Sara din ghar pe kabhi saraswati puja and kabhi laxmi puja. Aur fir yeh sab (you worship Goddess Saraswati and Laxmi all day, and then you do such things)."

Anguished with the facts of the case, the bench said it would not allow the man to enter court unless he paid the maintenance or part with some agricultural land to his daughters and the wife.

"Ask this man to part with some agricultural land or fixed deposit or maintenance amount in the name of his daughters and then the court may think of passing some favourable order," the bench told his counsel.

Continued on Page 2

Etikoppaka artisan to showcase dolls at R-Day fete

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Gorasa Santosh Kumar, an artisan from the quaint Etikoppaka village in Anakapalli, has been chosen to showcase his exquisite lacquer doll sculptures as part of the state tableau at the 2025 Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi. This prestigious recognition places Santosh among the foremost artisans in India, bringing national attention to the age-old art form that has been passed down through generations in his village.

The tableau, a vibrant depiction of Telugu culture, will feature a meticulously hand-crafted idol of Lord Venkateswara Swamy, alongside representations of Lord Ganesh, Haridasu, and Bommala Koluvu. The tableau will also portray scenes from everyday life, including a mother with her child, a girl in a garden, and a priest chanting Vedic mantras. Santosh Kumar's work has already received approval from the Defense Department, marking a significant achievement in his career.

Born in Elamanchili mandal, Santosh's journey into the world of art began under the tutelage of his parents, who introduced him to the traditional craft of making lacquer dolls. Despite having formal education only up to the seventh standard, Santosh honed his craft through sheer passion and dedication, becoming a master artisan in his own right.

Santosh's success follows in the footsteps of other celebrated Etikoppaka artisans like Srisailapu Chinnayachari and Chinthalapati Prasadbabu, who also received national recognition for their craftsmanship. His dedication to his craft has not only earned him acclaim but also ensured a steady livelihood through the creation and sale of his lacquer dolls.

As the main distributor for the Lepakshi company, Santosh plays a pivotal role in promoting the art form. He also devotes two months each year to training at the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Technology Centre in Maharashtra. His selection to represent Etikoppaka at the Republic Day exhibition is a momentous occasion, bringing his art to the national stage and underscoring the cultural significance of his village's traditional craft.

Etikoppaka dolls have garnered national attention, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighting their cultural importance in his "Mann Ki Baat" programme.

Continued on Page 2



Etikoppaka dolls have garnered national attention, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighting their cultural importance in his "Mann Ki Baat" programme. The Prime Minister's words have sparked renewed interest in indigenous crafts and their preservation. Santosh's achievement has also been warmly recognised by state and national leaders. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan congratulated him, acknowledging the honour this recognition brings to both the state and the village

MK Meena leads National Voters' Day oath ceremony

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



To promote awareness about the exercise of voting rights, the Election Commission of India celebrates National Voters' Day on January 25 every year across the country. As the 25th falls on a holiday this year, the 15th National Voters' Day oath ceremony was conducted a day earlier, on Friday, at the State Secretariat. Mukesh Kumar Meena, Principal Secretary (Political) General Administration Department, led the ceremony with Secretariat employees.

Addressing the gathering, Principal Secretary MK Meena stressed the importance of voting as the cornerstone of democracy. He reminded everyone that as citizens and voters of India, it is their responsibility to exercise their voting rights. He also highlighted the state's record in the last elections, where it achieved the highest voter turnout in the country, with over 80% participation.

Meena noted that the Election Commission of India conducts the electoral process in a democratic manner throughout the country and that the aim of National Voters' Day is to increase awareness about voting rights among all voters. He also mentioned that during the National Voters' Day celebrations, senior voters who have consistently exercised their voting rights are recognized and honored. Special efforts are also made to acknowledge those who raise awareness about the importance of voting and encourage others to vote.

Earlier, in the oath-taking ceremony, Meena and the participants made a pledge to uphold the democratic traditions of India. They affirmed their commitment to ensuring peaceful, free, fair and impartial elections, undisturbed by caste, religion, language or other external influences and promised to vote confidently in every election.

The National Voters' Day ceremony was attended by various officials, including DS (General) Kali Kumar from the General Administration Department, Mallikarjun, Chief Security Officer and several other department officials and staff members.

3-year-old girl raped in Chittoor, accused held

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

A three-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a youth in Kavetipuram village in Nagari mandal, police said on Friday.

The incident, which reportedly occurred a few days ago, came to light when the girl's mother noticed injuries on her daughter during a bath.

Upon questioning, the child revealed that an acquaintance, Mohan (26), had lured her with chocolate, taken her to his house, and sexually assaulted her while he was alone. The parents immediately filed a complaint with the Nagari police station. Cases have been registered under various sections of the POCSO Act.

Reacting to the heinous crime, Nagari MLA Gali Bhanu Prakash expressed his condolences to the victim's family over the phone and assured them that stringent action would be taken against the accused. Minister for Transport M Ramprasad Reddy also condemned the incident, stating that the coalition government would not tolerate such acts. He directed the police to ensure that the accused received the harshest possible punishment.

Smuggled ganja, cigarettes, Chinese garlic worth Rs 12.39 cr destroyed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Customs and Central GST officials destroyed smuggled goods, including domestic and foreign-origin cigarettes, ganja, and Chinese garlic, valued at Rs 12.39 crore, Commissioner Sadhu Narasimha Reddy said on Friday. The contraband was incinerated at the Jindal Waste Energy Plant in Edlapadu Mandal, Palnadu district, as part of a national campaign to combat the trade in harmful and counterfeit substances.

In a press release, the Commissioner detailed the confiscated items: 6.5 million sticks of foreign-branded cigarettes labelled "Paris," valued at Rs 6.5 crore; 5.7 million untaxed domestic cigarette sticks worth Rs 2.73 crore; 2,420 kilograms of ganja valued at Rs 2.96 crore; and 10 tonnes of Chinese garlic contaminated with fungus, worth Rs 20 lakh.

The Commissioner emphasised that these items were counterfeit and posed severe health risks. He reminded the public that storing or selling such products is a criminal offence and warned that violators would face strict legal action, including fines and penalties.

He advised consumers to remain vigilant and check for legally registered tobacco products with proper labelling, including warnings, expiry dates, manufacturer details, and batch numbers.

Commissioner Narasimha Reddy also urged businesses and consumers to avoid promoting counterfeit cigarettes. He reassured that Customs and GST officials are committed to curbing smuggling activities, safeguarding public health, and preventing illegal trade.

Minister and TDP leaders appear at Special Court in V'wada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Water Resource Minister Dr Ramanayudu, along with several TDP leaders appeared in the Special Court in Vijayawada on Friday.

The case dates back to August 2019, when the YSRCP government arrested and detained ASHA workers in police stations.

The Minister, who stood by the ASHA workers at that time, and several party leaders were charged with cases by the then government. For the past four years, they have been attending hearings in the Vijayawada Special Court.

The incident occurred when ASHA workers, who were on their way to participate in the 'Chalo Vijayawada' movement for their rightful demands, were forcibly arrested at the Palakollu Railway Station and detained in the police station.

Women and pregnant women, who had never been to a police station before, were detained from 6 AM to noon, causing distress to their families.

The workers were not even provided basic meals or legal assistance while in police custody.

The arrest of the ASHA workers, led by Minister Ramanayudu, who was the Opposition MLA at the time, was an attempt to suppress the fight against the anti-people policies of the then ruling YSRCP government. Under pressure from the ruling party, the Palakollu police registered cases against the Minister.

As a result, Minister Ramanayudu had to appear in court for the hearing.

Mango farmers thank MP Sivanath for his support



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Mango farmers from Reddigunta village in Mylavaram constituency expressed their gratitude to MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) for his efforts in ensuring a 50% subsidy on fruit covers. On Friday, the mango farmers, led by directors of the Reddigunta Farmers' Production Company (FPC) Chebrolu Srinivas Rao and Chebrolu Raju met MP Sivanath at the NTR Bhavan, Vijayawada Parliament office, to thank him for his support.

The farmers explained to the MP that under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) scheme, 800 hectares of mango crops have received fruit covers with a 50% subsidy, amounting to Rs 10,000 per hectare. They showed MP Kesineni the mangoes covered with fruit covers and explained the quality of the produce. In recognition of the high-quality mangoes being grown, MP Kesineni Sivanath honored FPC Director Chebrolu Srinivas Rao with a shawl. The MP assured the farmers that he would always be there to support the development of their farmer producer organizations.

FPC Director Chebrolu Kriparaju, mango farmers Chebrolu Raju, Chebrolu Sambasivarao, Naga Prasad and Horticulture Officer Narendra Kumar were present.

Etikoppaka...

Continued from Page 1

The Prime Minister's words have sparked renewed interest in indigenous crafts and their preservation. Santosh's achievement has also been warmly recognised by state and national leaders. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan congratulated him, acknowledging the honour this recognition brings to both the state and the village, while MP CM Ramesh expressed pride in Etikoppaka's newfound national acclaim, calling it an example for the entire country.

Santosh's journey is a testament to his exceptional skill, perseverance, and deep commitment to preserving the cultural heritage of Etikoppaka.

As his lacquer dolls are displayed at one of the nation's most prestigious events, they serve as a proud symbol of India's rich craftsmanship and the enduring legacy of artisans like Santosh, who continue to keep these traditions alive for future generations.

Vijayasai Reddy bids...

Continued from Page 1

In a heartfelt post on X (formerly Twitter), Sai Reddy, a two-time Rajya Sabha member, expressed his intention to formally resign from his parliamentary seat on Saturday, January 25. "I will not resign in the hope of another position, benefits, or money. This decision is entirely personal. There was no pressure. No one influenced me," he wrote, emphasising that his decision was entirely his own.

While announcing his retirement, Sai Reddy thanked the YS family, stating that he would be 'forever grateful' to YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for the opportunity to serve as a Rajya Sabha member twice.

He also expressed gratitude to the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy, his mentor and former AP chief minister, for guiding him throughout his political career. "I am indebted to the YS family, who have believed in and supported me for four decades and three generations. I wish Jagan garu all the best," he added.

Sai Reddy's decision to retire comes at a time when his name has been linked to a high-profile investigation. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had summoned him to their Hyderabad office on January 6, as part of an inquiry into his alleged role in pressuring stakeholders of Kakinada Sea Port Limited (KSPL) to sell their shares at undervalued prices. Additionally, the Andhra Pradesh Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has named him as a key figure in an FIR related to the case, based on a complaint filed by Venkateswara Rao, with the investigation underway.

Throughout his political career, Sai Reddy has been a pivotal figure in Andhra Pradesh politics, closely aligned with both YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and his late father, YS Rajasekhara Reddy. He was also one of the founding members of the YSR Congress Party and played a crucial role in its rise to power.

Despite his retirement from active politics, Sai Reddy made it clear that he would not join any other political party. Instead, he plans to focus on agriculture. In his announcement, he thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, stating that their encouragement over the past nine years had given him "immense strength and courage" and earned him recognition in the Telugu states. Sai Reddy acknowledged his political differences with the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the family of Chandrababu Naidu but also spoke of his long-standing friendship with Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan.

"I have political differences with the TDP, and with Chandrababu's family, but I have a long-standing friendship with Pawan Kalyan. My future is in agriculture," Sai Reddy said, signalling his intent to transition to a quieter life after decades of political service.

We worship goddesses but ignore...

Continued from Page 1

The court said, "What is the difference between an animal and a man who does not take care of minor daughters."

A trial court convicted the man from Jharkhand for torture and harassment of his estranged wife for dowry.

He was also accused of fraudulently getting her uterus removed and marrying another woman later.

The bench asked the man's counsel to inform the court the maintenance he was willing to pay the minor daughters and the estranged wife for their future upkeep. The bench posted the hearing on February 14.

The trial court convicted him in 2015 under Section 498A of IPC (subjecting married women to cruelty) and sentenced him to 2.5 years rigorous imprisonment besides a Rs 5,000 fine.

The case was registered in 2009 and he served 11 months in custody. On September 24, 2024, the Jharkhand High Court brought down the punishment to 1.5 years and enhanced the fine to Rs 1 lakh.

The couple married in 2003 and the estranged wife remained in the matrimonial home for about four months following which she was reportedly tortured over a Rs 50,000 dowry demand.

The high court said several panchayat meetings were convened but the husband was adamant in not following its decisions.

On June 30, 2009, it came on record, he had married another woman, and ousting his estranged wife from the matrimonial home along with the daughters.

The high court said there did not exist medical evidence to show the removal of the estranged wife's uterus but she supported her allegations.

It also said there was no cogent material to show he had remarried and therefore was not convicted under Section 494 of the IPC (bigamy).

Amaravati in 3 yrs...

Continued from Page 1

However, work was halted after the YSR Congress Party came to power. Following expert recommendations from IIT, work on submerged foundations is now progressing.

The Minister highlighted that legal hurdles caused by the previous government's lack of organisation had delayed the construction of Amaravati. He assured that, under the current coalition government, these issues are being resolved, and progress is accelerating. Recalling a visit by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to Amaravati, Narayana said the CM had instructed him to clear the jungle immediately. Narayana further stated that as Municipal Minister for the second time, he had been given explicit instructions to expedite Amaravati's construction.

To address legal issues, the government has formed committees, and two installments of land lease dues owed to farmers by the previous government have been settled. So far, 40 tenders worth ?38,571 crores have been issued for construction, and the Minister affirmed that work will accelerate from February 2025.

Minister Narayana also criticised the YSRCP government, claiming that law and order issues had caused difficulties for the people. However, he assured that under the current coalition government, the public now felt secure and content.

He further praised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, stating that the economy was being revived and put back on track.

The Minister also noted that, following the new government's formation, investments worth thousands of crores had been secured, with industrialists showing a growing interest in the state, particularly after the visit of CM Naidu and Nara Lokesh to Davos, which attracted significant investments.



UP and Dadra & Nagar Haveli Formation Day celebrated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor of Andhra Pradesh, S Abdul Nazeer, participated as the Chief Guest at the State Formation Day celebrations of Uttar Pradesh and the Union Territory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu. The event, held under the 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' programme, took place at the Durbar Hall of Raj Bhavan on Friday.

Extending his greetings to the people of Uttar Pradesh and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, the Governor noted that the State Formation Days are observed on January 24 and 26 respectively. He praised Uttar Pradesh as a cradle of Indian culture, highlighting its deep-rooted heritage. He also described Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu as regions blessed with natural beauty and a vibrant cultural legacy.

The programme featured classical dance by Amrutha Ruhika, a group song by students of the National Institute of Design (NID), Vijayawada, and folk dance performances by other students. The event was attended by PS Suryaprakash, Joint Secretary to the Governor, along with other officials and staff members.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	
Ekadashi:	Jan 24 07:25 PM to Jan 25 08:32 PM
Dwadashi:	Jan 25 08:32 PM to Jan 26 08:55 PM
Nakshatram:	
Anuradha:	Jan 24 05:08 AM to Jan 25 07:07 AM
Jyeshta:	Jan 25 07:07 AM to Jan 26 08:26 AM
Rahukalam:	9:40 AM to 11:04 AM
Yamagandam:	1:52 PM to 3:16 PM
Varjyam:	01:01 PM to 02:43 PM
Gulika:	6:53 AM to 8:16 AM
Amritakalam:	11:09 PM to 12:50 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	12:06 PM to 12:50 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny
Temp: 32°c
Humidity: 64%
Sunrise: 6:39 AM
Sunset: 6:00 PM
Updated: January 24, 2025 5:00 PM

A new chapter or strategy?...

Continued from Page 1

A central source of Reddy's frustration lies in his failed attempts to secure key positions within the YSRCP. Despite expressing interest in leading the crucial North Andhra region, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy appointed Botsa Satyanarayana instead, leaving Reddy feeling sidelined. This decision, along with opposition from Botsa's faction, exacerbated the tensions within the party, deepening Reddy's sense of alienation. Furthermore, Reddy's strained relationship with Jagan over the controversial Endowments Assistant Commissioner Shanti issue and the rise of close allies like Y.V. Subba Reddy and Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy has further distanced him from the party's inner circle.

Compounding his frustration are his legal issues. The ED and CID investigations into his alleged role in pressuring stakeholders of Kakinada Port to sell shares at undervalued prices have heightened the speculation about his future. These legal entanglements, coupled with his unhappiness over the handling of party matters, particularly the shift in leadership control over the YSRCP office in Delhi, have made Reddy's position increasingly untenable within the party.

Adding to the speculation, Reddy has sought permission to travel abroad between February and March, citing a personal or business trip. Critics argue that the timing of this request, amidst his legal troubles, is a strategic move to avoid the mounting scrutiny. The court's delay in ruling on his travel petition has only fueled these doubts.

Despite his claims of having no personal animosity towards his former party or its leadership, Reddy's shifting allegiances have raised eyebrows. His cordial relationship with BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, has led many to speculate that he may be positioning himself to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Furthermore, his surprising announcement that he plans to focus on agriculture, after being a key figure in the YSRCP, has left many questioning his true motives.

Reddy's resignation and his subsequent actions suggest a significant political realignment, with his next steps likely to reshape Andhra Pradesh's political landscape. His growing isolation within the YSRCP, combined with the mounting legal and party tensions, make it unclear whether his exit marks the end of his political journey or the beginning of a new phase in his career.

AP, TG lag in revenue receipts...

Continued from Page 1

According to figures by the Principal Accountant General of Telangana, the State has budgeted nearly Rs 2.74 lakh crore as total revenues for the financial year 2024-25.

Telangana's tax revenues stood at little over Rs 1.02 lakh crore as of December against the budgeted Rs 1.64 lakh crore while the borrowings were at over Rs 48,000 crore 98 per cent of the budgeted Rs 49,255.41 crore.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
TRIBAL WELFARE ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
NIT No.143 to 145/2024-25/SE/Tribal Welfare/DB Date: 24-01-2025
The following e-procurement notice has been issued for execution of three works in the Engineering Circle of Tribal Welfare, Visakhapatnam, with an estimated cost of Rs 2092.00 Lakhs. Date and time of commencement of tender schedules: 27-01-2025 from 4.00 pm onwards. Last date and time for submission of tender schedules: 10-02-2025 up to 4.15 pm. For details, contact e-procurement market place www.apeprocurement.gov.in or contact Phone: 0891-2783210.
R.O.No: 15227/CL/NOT/TWE/2021-22, Dt. 24.01.2025
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Tribal Welfare, Visakhapatnam

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Agriculture workers stage dharna demanding employment

PNS ■ KAKINADA

In response to a call by the Andhra Pradesh Vyavasaya Karmika Sangham, a large number of farm workers staged a dharna in front of the Collectorate here on Friday, demanding employment opportunities to curb the migration of labour from rural areas to urban centres.

The workers called for the provision of work under the NREGS and sought an end to political interference in the allocation of jobs. Their demands included work under NREGA at a daily wage of Rs. 700, employment for everyone without the need for a job card, and timely payment of wages.

Addressing the demonstrators, Thatipaka Madhu, state vice-president of the AP Vyavasaya Karmika Sangham, called for the establishment of industries in rural areas to create employment opportunities for the youth.

SP urges all women to download Safety App

App features a dedicated SOS button that can be used in emergencies

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Superintendent of Police R Gangadhara Rao has urged all women to download the Women's Safety App introduced by the Andhra Pradesh government for the safety and security of women and children.

The SP emphasised the importance and necessity of the Women's Safety App, particularly in business hubs, women's hostels, and factories. Police officials and staff members have been instructed to create awareness among women about the app's features and to encourage students and women to take advantage of its services.

The app features a dedicated SOS button that can be used in emergencies, such as when travelling alone or during nighttime. By pressing the SOS button on their phones, users can receive immediate assistance.

SP Gangadhara Rao explained that pressing the SOS button in critical situations sends alerts to the nearest police station and preset emergency contacts will also receive messages and live location updates. He further explained that the app allows real-time location tracking and police authorities can quickly identify the user in need of assistance.

Regarding Pre-Registered Contacts, the SP stated that the users can add family members or friends to a predetermined list for sharing messages and locations during emergencies and can call direct police helpline numbers during emergency situations. The app provides safety suggestions and precautions regarding women's security.

Rao mentioned that users can register complaints regarding harassment or other issues directly through the app by dialling 100. He highlighted that an alert can be sent to the control room by shaking the phone five times during an emergency, prompting police to reach out based on the user's location.

SP Gangadhara Rao added that this app plays a crucial role in strengthening women's safety within the Andhra Pradesh State Police Department. It can be downloaded by visiting the page https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.likhatech.disha.



All set for State-level Republic Day celebrations

Full-dress rehearsals held at Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has announced that all arrangements are in place for the grand celebration of the 76th Republic Day at Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium in Vijayawada. He said that top dignitaries including Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and others will attend the Republic Day celebration.

During the full-dress rehearsals held at the stadium on Friday, the performance was observed by government officials including Secretary Mukesh Kumar Meena, DGP Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, DIG B. Rajakumari, Protocol Director Mohan, City Police Commissioner B Rajasekhar Babu, Collector Lakshmisha and senior officials from various departments. Following the rehearsal, Lakshmisha confirmed that all preparations are complete for the festivities.

The events for the 76th Republic Day celebrations will commence with the arrival of the DGP at 8.51 AM, followed by Chief Secretary K. Vijayanand at 8.55 AM, High Court Chief Justice Dheeraj Singh Thakur at 8.56 AM, Chief Minister at 8.57 AM, and Governor Abdul Nazir at 8.58 AM. At 9:00 AM, the Governor will hoist the national flag. After inspecting the police parade, the Governor will return to the stage to accept the police honour salute and deliver the Republic Day message.

There will also be decorations showcasing various welfare development schemes implemented by various departments of the State government and awards will be given to the best-decorated tableaus and marching teams demonstrating excellent performances in the parade.

Participating in the celebrations will be contingents from the Indian Army, Kakinada APSP Third Battalion, Central Reserve Police, State police, Visakhapatnam APSP 16th Battalion, AP Social Welfare Residential School students, Bharat Scouts and Guides, and Youth Red Cross teams, among others. Police bands, including brass and pipe bands, will also perform.

Dr Lakshmisha added that the event will be attended by public representatives, judges, senior officials from various state departments, freedom fighters, and students from various schools and colleges.

Rs 3.9 crore approved for roadworks at Kotappakonda

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



The construction of the Kotappakonda road in Narasaraopet constituency has been initiated with an allocation of Rs 3.9 crore. Ch Aravind Babu MLA had brought to the notice of Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, Pawan Kalyan, the difficulties faced by devotees visiting Kotappakonda for the Maha Shivaratri festival due to the lack of proper road.

In response, the Deputy CM promptly approved the proposal and directed the construction of an eight-kilometre road with a budget of Rs 3.9 crore. He also instructed that the work be completed swiftly.

On Friday, MLA Aravind Babu visited Pawan Kalyan at his camp office in Mangalagiri to express his gratitude for the timely allocation of funds for the road project, ensuring that devotees will not face hardships during the upcoming festival. He also invited the Deputy Chief Minister to attend the upcoming Kotappakonda festival next month.



Nara Bhuvaneswari visits Akshaya Patra kitchen

Acknowledges crucial role the foundation plays in combating hunger

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Nara Bhuvaneshwari, wife of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, visited the centralised kitchen of Akshaya Patra Foundation located in Atmakur village, Mangalagiri mandal, on Friday. During her visit, she highlighted the significance of the government's mid-day meal scheme, Dokka Seethamma Mid-Day Meal Scheme, which provides meals to around 30,000 children daily. These meals are transported via nearly 25 insulated vehicles to government schools across the region.

The Akshaya Patra Foundation is an NGO that works towards addressing malnutrition among children in India by providing nutritious meals through its mid-day meal initiative. Bhuvaneshwari acknowledged the crucial role the foundation plays in combating hunger, ensuring that children receive healthy meals every day through government-supported schools.g

She also expressed her happiness over visiting the facility and inaugurated a rice-cleaning machine during her visit. This machine will enhance the quality of rice by improving the cleaning process, ensuring that children receive the best possible food.

Speaking at the event, Vamsidhar Dasa, president of Akshaya Patra Mangalagiri, mentioned that the organisation began its mid-day meal programme with just 1,500 children under the guidance of Acharyas Jagadguru Prabhupad. Akshaya Patra serves nutritious meals to over 24 million children across 13 States and two Union Territories of India.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including MLC P Anuradha, Vilasa Vigraha Dasa, Raghunandan Dasa, TTD Board member T Janaki Devi, Mangalagiri constituency Telugu Mahila president Bhoolakshmi, State Telugu Mahila general secretary Akula Jayasatya, State Telugu Mahila secretary Vinjamuri Ashabhala, Mangalagiri constituency Telugu Mahila general secretary Manchikalapudi Vaishnavi, TDP workers and Akshaya Patra staff.

Probe into controversial Master Plan-2041

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



The Andhra Pradesh state government has launched an investigation into the controversial Master Plan-2041 implemented by the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan City Authority (VMRDA). The probe comes in the wake of allegations that the plan, which was introduced during the YSRCP government's tenure, has been manipulated to benefit influential real estate figures.

The state government has ordered the VMRDA Commissioner to investigate discrepancies between the draft and final versions of the plan. The probe aims to identify any irregularities and hold responsible parties accountable. Accusations have emerged suggesting that political leaders with ties to the real estate sector altered key aspects of the plan for personal gain. One of the most contentious issues under scrutiny is the modification of road alignments, allegedly designed to benefit landowners with strategic holdings. Critics argue these changes have inflated land values, often at the expense of farmers and the general public.

Among the most debated revisions is the alteration of the coastal corridor route connecting Visakhapatnam, Bheemili, and Bhogapuram. The original route, which was supposed to follow the coast, was shifted at Nerellavalasa, diverting the road through hills before returning to the coast. This change is believed to have benefited a senior YSRCP leader, fueling public outrage.

In Visakhapatnam city, concerns have also been raised about road widening projects. One such project involves a 40-foot road near Daspalla lands, which was initially slated for an 80-foot expansion. However, the plan was later revised to widen the road to 100 feet on only one side, allegedly due to the presence of a building owned by a prominent individual. Similarly, the proposed 200-foot widening of the road from Siripuram Junction to AsilMetta Junction has sparked protests, with critics accusing a YSRCP leader of obstructing the plan in order to protect an apartment project along the route.

Further alterations in the plan include changes to routes in Dakamarri and the reclassification of residential zones as commercial areas, particularly in Seethammadhara's Balayya Shastri layout.

Sepak Takraw National Tourney kicks off

12 State teams participating in the league-cum-knockout tournament

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 68th School Games Sepak Takraw Nationals for Under-14 boys and girls officially commenced with great enthusiasm at the Koneru Basavaiah Chowdary (KBC) Zilla Parishad High (ZPH) School in Patamata, Vijayawada, on Friday. Samagra Siksha State Project Director B Srinivasa Rao inaugurated the four-day national tournament.

The tournament is being jointly organised by the School Games Federation of Andhra Pradesh (SGFAP) and SGF NTR district, with support from the Samagra Siksha and School Education Department. Twelve State teams are participating, and the matches will follow a league-cum-knockout format.

Samagra Siksha SPD Srinivasa Rao, along with the KBC ZPH School Development Committee, former MLA Yalamanchili Ravi, NTR District School Education Officer UV Subba Rao, and SGFAP Secretary G Bhanumurthy Raju, led the march past of the various State contingents. Following this, SPD Srinivasa Rao lit the sports torch.

Addressing the audience, Srinivasa Rao stated that the State government aims to implement reforms in the School Education Department. He emphasised that promoting sports and identifying outstanding players is a top priority for the government. To achieve this, the State government is making changes to the curriculum.

Later, the tournament organising officials introduced all State players, coaches and managers to guests Srinivasa Rao, Ravi, Subba Rao and Bhanumurthy Raju. Srinivasa Rao spoke to the players regarding the facilities being provided by the State government, and they expressed happiness over the arrangements.

School Games Federation NTR district secretary M Srinivasa Rao, SGFAP Assistant Secretaries KV Radhakrishna, AP Raju, tournament organising secretary S Ramesh, Headmaster G Ester Rani, School Management Committee chairperson Faizunnisa and others were present.

Day-1 Results

Boys: Tamil Nadu defeated Telangana, 15-9, 15-4, 15-11, Manipur defeated Maharashtra, 15-12, 15-05, 15-11

Girls: Delhi defeated Maharashtra, 11-15, 15-12, 17-4, Tamil Nadu defeated Telangana, 15-12, 15-5, 15-11

Slaughterhouses, meat shops to remain closed on R-Day



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation has declared that all slaughterhouses, fish markets, and meat shops will remain closed on January 26 (Sunday), on account of Republic Day. The decision comes following orders from higher authorities aimed at maintaining public health standards during the national holiday.

As per the notice issued by the Commissioner, no animals will be permitted for slaughter starting the night of January 25. Furthermore, all chicken and mutton shops, as well as fish markets within the city limits are barred from operating on the day.

The Commissioner has emphasised that strict legal actions will be taken against anyone found violating this directive, including slaughtering without permission or selling meat without proper authorisation. The notice serves as a reminder for all businesses engaged in the wholesale and retail of meat products to comply and ensure that their establishments are closed on Sunday.

DV Cell a boon to couples in conflict

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



The Domestic Violence (DV) Cell in Visakhapatnam's MVP Colony is playing a crucial role in addressing the increasing number of marital conflicts within the city. With a strong focus on reconciliation, the cell has successfully mediated numerous cases involving dowry demands, harassment, and a range of other issues.

A recent case involved a young woman from Gajuwaka who faced pressure from her husband to quit her job and live with her parents. This led to escalating tensions and discussions of separation. However, the DV Cell intervened, counselling both the couple and their families. Through these efforts, a mutual agreement was reached, allowing the couple to continue living in the city while maintaining regular contact with their respective families.

Another notable case involved a woman from Madhuravada who sought assistance after enduring eight years of marriage plagued by her husband's demands for additional dowry and ongoing harassment. The DV Cell intervened, counselling the husband on the legal implications of his actions. This intervention led to a resolution of the misunderstandings and a successful reconciliation, allowing the couple to rebuild their lives harmoniously.

Officials at the DV Cell have observed that ego clashes, suspicions, financial harassment, and differences of opinion are among the most common reasons couples seek separation. These issues are often exacerbated by external pressures, such as professional stress among working couples, and the complexities of modern technology and cell phone usage. DV Cell Officer Jyoti emphasized that "Most cases involve couples married for less than five years. Youthful egos and a lack of effective communication often amplify small issues."

In the past year, the DV Cell registered 3,716 cases. Of these, 474 were resolved through counselling, while 1,104 were settled in court. Numerous other cases remain under active counselling, where officials engage with the complainant, their spouse, and their respective families through a phased approach. Husbands are counselled on the legal repercussions of harassment and educated on building healthier relationships, while wives are guided on constructively addressing misunderstandings.

The counselling approach prioritizes compromise, emphasizing the societal challenges and personal impact of separation. Officials work diligently to resolve conflicts and foster mutual understanding, helping couples rebuild their relationships.

The DV Cell's efforts to foster dialogue and resolve disputes have significantly increased successful reconciliations, especially among young couples. By offering communication platforms and guidance, they save marriages and support families in distress, promoting harmony and societal well-being in Visakhapatnam.

SRM felicitates student Deepthi Jeevanji

First intellectually impaired Indian athlete to win a Paralympic medal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SRM University-AP celebrated the exceptional achievements of its student, Deepthi Jeevanji, a Paris Paralympian and recipient of the prestigious Arjuna Award for 2025. Deepthi, a commerce student at the Paari School of Business, made history at the Paris Paralympics 2024 by securing a bronze medal in the 400 m T20 event. She became the first intellectually impaired Indian athlete to win a Paralympic medal, cementing her place in the nation's sporting history.

The university hosted a special felicitation ceremony to honour Deepthi's accomplishments, which included the presentation of award cheques totalling Rs 40 lakh. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Manoj K Arora, Registrar Dr R Premkumar, Director of Campus Life and Maintenance Anup Suryavanshi, and former IIT Madras faculty Prof N Siva Prasad were present to celebrate her success. The awards included Rs 25 lakh for her Paralympic achievement, and Rs 15 lakh for winning the Arjuna Award.

Deepthi expressed her gratitude during the ceremony. "It is an immense honour to represent my country on such a prestigious global platform. The support from the management, staff, and my teachers at SRM University-AP played a crucial role in helping me achieve success."

In his speech, the Vice-Chancellor highlighted the university's commitment to fostering excellence in both academics and sports. "We are proud of her achievement and hope she participates in the next Paralympics, bringing home a gold medal for the country," he remarked. He also assured Deepthi of continued support as she advances in her sporting career.

The ceremony also served as a platform for the announcement of the university's upcoming National-Level Sports Fest, UDGAM 2025. The event, to be held later this year, will see participation from over 3,200 students from across the country. Deepthi Jeevanji unveiled the event brochure to the media.



DGP inaugurates advanced integrated command system

PNS ■ BAPATLA



Director General of Police (DGP) Dwaraka Tirumala Rao inaugurated the Advanced Integrated Command System at Chirala One Town Police Station on Friday. He also inaugurated a waiting hall at the Karamchedu Police Station during his visit to Bapatla district.

The DGP was welcomed by Guntur Range IGP Sarvashresta Tripati and SP Tushar Dudy. Speaking on the occasion, he urged police officials to leverage advanced technology for crime investigation and prevention. He emphasised the importance of installing CCTV cameras at vulnerable locations to maintain law and order effectively.

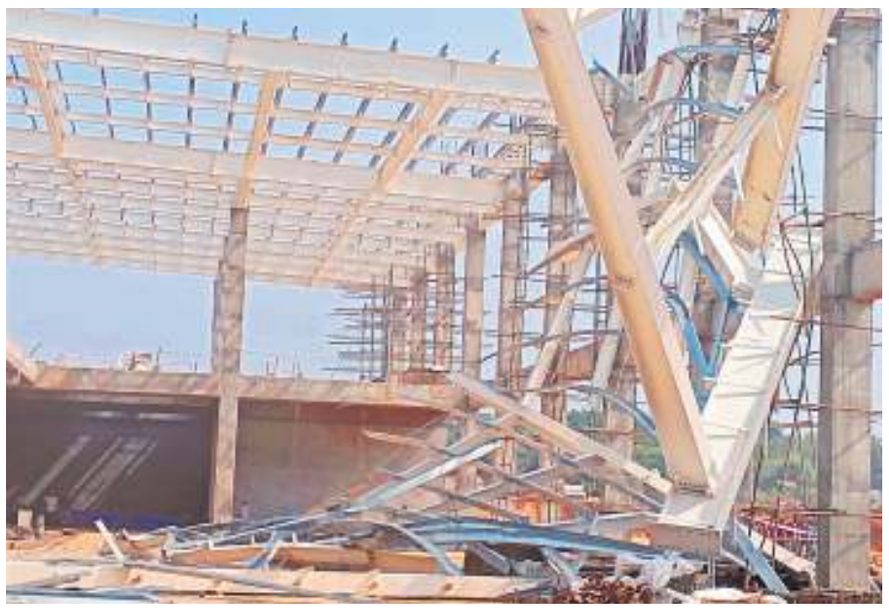
Highlighting recent developments, the DGP stated that 150 CCTV cameras have been installed in Chirala town, including 30 cameras along the coastal route from the port to Potti Subbayya Palem and 30 cameras on key access roads to the sea. These cameras, equipped with state-of-the-art technology, two-way communication, and a public addressing system, are integrated into a command and control centre at Chirala One Town Police Station. Additionally, drones, LED monitors, and a repeater system have been installed to enhance surveillance capabilities.

The DGP noted that the system enables direct orders to be issued from the command centre, with the PA system ensuring immediate communication with nearby individuals. He remarked that the integrated system would aid in crime control, criminal investigations, and safeguarding tourists, particularly in coastal areas.

Dwaraka Tirumala Rao announced plans to install over one lakh CCTV cameras across Andhra Pradesh to enhance surveillance. "In Vijayawada city alone, over 1,150 CCTV cameras have been installed," he said.

He highlighted instances where CCTV monitoring proved instrumental in crime prevention and resolution, including rescuing three pilgrims from a sinking boat and apprehending a miscreant who had abducted a newborn baby from a hospital.

The DGP appealed to apartment residents, shop owners, and restaurant operators to install CCTVs on their premises, assuring them of the police department's support. Chirala MLA M. Malakondaiah, Parchur MLA Yeluru Sambasiva Rao, and senior police officials were present on the occasion.



Portion of under-construction airport terminal collapses

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

A portion of the under-construction new terminal building at Rajahmundry Airport collapsed on Friday, leaving one worker injured.

The incident occurred when some iron grills gave way, causing the structure to cave in. Sources indicated that the collapse was due to the snapping of iron wires, leading to the sudden failure of a section of the terminal.

Union Minister for Civil Aviation K Rammohan Naidu has sought a detailed report on the mishap. Officials expressed relief that there were no fatalities in the incident. The new terminal is being built adjacent to the existing terminal. It may be recalled that the Civil Aviation Minister recently visited the airport to review the progress of the terminal works. The foundation stone for the new terminal was laid in December 2023 by the then Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia. The terminal is being constructed at Rs 350 crore.

Drinking water, street lights in PMAY, NTR colonies within 7 days: Minister

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET



Minister for Housing and I&PR K Parthasarathy has assured that drinking water, street lights, and roads will be provided to the PMAY and NTR colonies within seven days.

The Minister attended an awareness meeting held at the Uppalapadu urban housing layout in Narasaraopet mandal on Friday.

Addressing the gathering, the Minister reminded that the Jagananna Colonies have now been renamed as PMAY - NTR Colonies. "Electrification works from the main road to the colony are being carried out swiftly. Additionally, 1,500 more houses will be fully constructed by the end of March," he added.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing housing to every poor person in the next five years and urged for continued efforts to fulfil the dream of every poor person owning a house.

The Minister further highlighted that during the 2014-2019 period, the government had allocated Rs 2.50 lakh for housing construction to each beneficiary, whereas the previous YSRCP government had provided only Rs 30,000 from the state and Rs 1.50 lakh from the central government.

Parthasarathy stated that the construction of roads and other infrastructure would be undertaken using funds allocated by the Housing Department. He also assured that he would speak to the police to ensure that anti-social activities are prevented in the colonies and regular patrolling is conducted.

The Minister expressed confidence that the housing construction targets would be met within the set timeframe and mentioned that bills to the contractors are being processed. MLA Chadalavada Aravind Babu, Collector P. Arun Babu, and RDO Madhavilatha were among those who attended the meeting.

Collector urges motorists to wear helmets

PNS ■ ELURU



District Collector K Vetri Selvi has urged motorists to wear helmets while driving two-wheelers. The Collector, accompanied by SP KPS Kishore, participated in a road safety committee meeting held here on Friday. During her address, she issued an order for all government employees in the district to wear helmets from February 1.

The Collector emphasised the importance of wearing helmets for two-wheeler riders and mentioned that awareness programmes on this issue have already been conducted at various levels. "As part of a broader initiative, the first rule is that government employees commuting on two-wheelers must wear helmets starting February 1. Strict action will be taken against those who fail to comply, as per the rules. Road safety rules must be followed by both the public and authorities," she added.

Collector Vetri Selvi also directed college authorities to enforce the helmet rule for students. "Students riding bikes to college without helmets should not be allowed entry into the college premises," she said.

She instructed police officials to issue two warnings before taking any action for non-compliance. "Subsequent violations should lead to cases being registered. Authorities should ensure that the 'no-helmet, no-entry' policy is being followed in colleges. They should also arrange meetings with the management of the respective colleges to discuss the matter," she said.

The Collector also directed RTC officials to put up stickers on buses informing passengers that any violation of the speed limit should be reported to the relevant phone numbers.

Additionally, she asked R&B officials to explore options for widening the road at the Sathrampadu Bridge and submit proposals accordingly.

SP KPS Kishore, District Transport Commissioner KSMV Krishna Rao, and several other officials were present at the meeting.

Tender irregularities exposed in KGBVs and APMS procurement process

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM



Contractors exploit abnormally low bids to secure tenders, depriving students of essential vegetables while raising concerns over transparency in public resource management.

The practice of quoting abnormally low prices for certain items to secure tenders and subsequently exploiting higher rates for others has been uncovered in the procurement process for Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) and Andhra Pradesh Model Schools (APMS). These institutions operate under the direct supervision of the Samagra Shiksha (SS) additional project coordinator (APC) at the district level.

Last December, tenders were invited for the supply of vegetables and pulses, with the district purchase committee (DPC) finalizing them on December 31. The DPC, chaired by the district collector and convened by the joint collector (JC), awarded the tender to the lowest bidder, as per standard practice. The contract, which began on January 1, 2025, and runs until April 23, has since exposed significant irregularities.

Of the 29 vegetables listed, the contractor quoted an unfeasibly low price of Rs 1 per kilogram for approximately 20 items, including ginger, cauliflower, carrot, green chili, and beans. While this pricing met the technical requirements, it raised practical concerns given the prevailing market rates.

Reports allege that the contractor, in collaboration with senior assistant staff within Samagra Shiksha, exploited this pricing loophole to secure the tender. Once awarded, vegetables priced at Rs 1 per kilogram are rarely supplied, while those with higher quoted prices are prioritized, effectively sidelining essential items. This practice has deprived students in KGBVs and APMS of key vegetables, compromising their nutritional requirements.

Dr. Sampathirao Sasibhushan, the newly appointed APC for Samagra Shiksha, acknowledged the challenges. "By the time I joined, the tender process was already concluded. I am currently studying the system to identify and rectify these loopholes to ensure better service to students and prevent the misuse of public funds," he stated.

The situation underscores the need for immediate reforms in the tendering and procurement processes. Transparent systems that prioritize the welfare of students are essential to prevent the mismanagement of public resources meant for education and nutrition. Without swift corrective measures, such practices may continue to undermine the objectives of these institutions, leaving students vulnerable to inadequate nutritional support.



'Poor governance' drove away investors: Roja

PNS ■ NAGARI

Former minister and YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) spokesperson RK Roja criticised Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leaders N Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh for failing to secure investments during their recent trip to Davos, calling it a blow to the State's image.

Addressing the media at her camp office on Friday, Roja accused Naidu and Lokesh of tarnishing Andhra Pradesh's industrial reputation through poor governance. She claimed their alleged "Red Book Constitution" approach created a hostile environment for investors, driving them away.

"While neighbouring states like Telangana and Maharashtra secured investments worth Rs 1.32 lakh crore and Rs 15.75 lakh crore respectively, Chandrababu and Lokesh returned empty-handed, embarrassing the state. Despite Chandrababu's 14 years of administrative experience, his governance has failed to deliver," Roja stated.

She criticised the Rs 20 crore reportedly spent on promoting Lokesh during the Davos trip, claiming it yielded no results for the state. Roja also questioned why Pawan Kalyan, who politically supports Naidu, was excluded from the delegation, suggesting it stemmed from internal insecurities.

Field Assistant hacked to death by miscreants

PNS ■ KURNOOL



A village Field Assistant was brutally murdered by unidentified miscreants in Arikeri village of Aluru mandal on Friday.

According to the police, the deceased, Bandari Eeranna, was working as a Field Assistant in Arikeri. While he was on his way to monitor NREGA works on a motorcycle, some miscreants intercepted him and hacked him to death.

The murder occurred on the road, following which the assailants fled the scene. The police have registered a case and shifted the body to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for postmortem.

Aluru MLA Busini Virupakshi visited the crime scene and directed the police to apprehend the culprits immediately. He consoled the bereaved family and assured them of all necessary assistance.

YSRCP MLA B. Virupakshi strongly condemned the brutal murder of NREGS Field Assistant Veeranna, terming it a glaring example of the ruling coalition government's failure. He alleged that ever since the government assumed power, it has been targeting YSRCP supporters and workers.

"The state has become a hub of violence with continuous attacks, as if the people elected the government solely to harass YSRCP members," the MLA remarked. He criticised the government for neglecting governance and indulging in vendetta politics, which he claimed had resulted in the loss of innocent lives.

Blaming TDP workers for the attack, Virupakshi warned that those responsible would not be spared and would face strict consequences. He asserted that such incidents never occurred under the leadership of YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, adding that the law and order situation in the state has worsened since Chandrababu Naidu became Chief Minister.

The MLA demanded a response from Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on the incident and warned that failure to curb such violence could lead to serious repercussions.

Megha bagging contracts by paying kickbacks: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



The Megha Engineering Company is bagging contracts in Telangana by paying kickbacks to the party in power, the BJP's Armoor MLA, Paidi Rakesh Reddy, said.

He said that Megha Engineering Company owner Krishna Reddy is known for corruption and has been pocketing public funds.

Demanding that the TG Government should block the Megha Engineering Company immediately, he said that otherwise the BJP will ask Central agencies to enter the scene.

Addressing a media channel on Friday, Rakesh asked Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to explain the need for entering into an MoU worth Rs 15,000 crore with Megha Krishna Reddy at Davos when he is staying in Hyderabad.

"The same deal can be done here? We will reveal the secret behind the deceiving MoU. The CM when he was in the opposition, had asked the BRS Government to blacklist the Megha Engineering Company as it was corrupt one and had looted Telangana. However, after coming to power, Revanth gave four contracts to Megha Engineering Company. The Megha Engineering Company has been facing corruption charges and a CAG report says that it engaged in corruption while handling the Kaleshwaram Project," he said.

Rakesh said that the commission percentage was eight during BRS rule and that now it has increased to 14 per cent. He said that Revanth signed an MoU with the Megha Engineering Company in Switzerland to send bags to Delhi. Facts will come out shortly regarding where that money behind the MoUs with the Megha Engineering Company went, he said.

10 kg of ganja seized, 13 peddlers arrested

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM



Police seized 10 kilograms of ganja and arrested 13 drug peddlers in two separate operations over the past 24 hours.

Addressing the media at Kanchikacherla police station on Friday, Nandigama ACP ABG Thilak said that based on a tip-off, a police team conducted vehicle checks at Paritala. During the operation, they discovered 6 kilograms of ganja being transported in a car and arrested seven individuals.

In another operation, a police team conducted vehicle checks at Jujjuru village. They noticed a group of youngsters on two motorcycles who, upon spotting the police, attempted to turn back. The police intercepted them and found 4 kilograms of ganja hidden on the motorcycles. Six persons were arrested in this case.

Nandigama CI YVL Naidu registered cases in connection with both incidents. Investigations are underway.

the pioneer

Nation 05

VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | JANUARY 25, 2025

ACROSS THE STATES



35 acres of illegal poppy cultivation destroyed

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Friday said that a combined team of police, CRPF and forest officials destroyed 35 acres of illegal poppy cultivation in Kangpokpi district. Singh, in a post on X, said, "I commend the Kangpokpi Police, 133 Bn CRPF, Forest department, and the executive magistrate for their coordinated and resolute efforts in conducting the destruction drive of illegal poppy cultivation at Lhungjang village under Saikul police station." "The destruction of approximately 35 acres of illegal poppy cultivation is a significant step toward our shared vision of a drug-free Manipur. I urge all stakeholders and citizens to join hands in this fight against drug-related activities and illegal practices," Singh added.



JP Singh appointed India's new ambassador to Israel

Seasoned diplomat Jitender Pal Singh was on Friday appointed as India's new ambassador to Israel, a posting seen as important in view of the current situation in the Middle-east. Singh, a 2002-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) diplomat, is presently serving as the joint secretary in the crucial Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran (PAI) division of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). "He is expected to take up the assignment shortly," the MEA said in a brief statement. As India's pointperson for Afghanistan, he played an important role in execution of India's policy approach towards the Taliban set up in that country. In November, Singh met the Taliban's acting defence minister Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob and discussed ways to expand the relations between the two sides. The meeting is believed to have paved the way for Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's talks with Taliban regime's acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai over two weeks back. Singh's posting to Israel comes amid an upswing in India's bilateral ties with that country.



Indian fisherman dies in Pak custody; 8th in 2 years

An Indian fisherman, who was languishing in the Karachi jail even after completion of his sentence, has died, official sources said on Friday. The fisherman identified as Babu died Thursday, they said. He is the eighth Indian fisherman who died in Pakistan in last two years, the sources said. "Babu was arrested by Pakistani authorities in 2022. Despite completion of his sentence and confirmation of his Indian nationality, he was not released by Pakistan authorities," said a source. One-hundred-eighty Indian fishermen who have completed their sentences await release from Pakistani jail, the sources said. India has been continuously raising the issue of early release of prisoners with the Pakistan side.

Ten oppn MPs suspended

Rukus during JPC meeting on Waqf Bill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Ten opposition members attending the joint committee of Parliament meeting on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill were suspended on Friday as they accused its chairperson of reducing its proceedings to a "farce", while the committee readies to adopt its draft report next week.

The appearance of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a moderate Hurriyat leader who is also the religious head of Muslims in Kashmir, before the panel to voice his disapproval of the proposed law was the highlight of the meeting but not before opposition members' noisy protests drowned its proceedings till their suspension.

Opposition MPs alleged that Jagdambika Pal, the committee's chairman, was steamrolling the agenda at the government's behest with an eye on the February 5 Delhi polls.

They later wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to ask Pal to postpone the January 27 meeting and consult other members on the next date and agenda.

Pal accused opposition members, especially the Trinamool Congress' Kalyan Banerjee, of hurling abuses and insults at him in their bid to scuttle the proceedings.

They broke all boundaries, he said.

The suspension was for Friday and opposition MPs can attend the next meeting.

The January 27 meeting is set to consider the Bill clause by clause before finalising the report.

Opposition MPs have sought more time to allow them to frame their views after studying the views of stakeholders.

These members, including Banerjee, DMK's A Raja, Congress' Naseer Hussain, and BJP MPs traded allegations, with the former insisting that they protested in a civilised manner after not getting a response from Pal.

BJP MP Aparajita Sarangi termed the conduct of Banerjee, often the most vocal opposition member, as "disgusting" and said opposition members created a ruckus as part of a design to sabotage the meeting.

Banerjee said Pal informed them on January 21, when the committee members were in Lucknow meeting stakeholders, that the next meetings would be held on January 24-25. Raja wrote on behalf of opposition MPs, requesting the chairman to schedule the meeting after January 30 or 31 but in vain.

He said the agenda of Friday's meeting was changed late on Thursday and intimated to members close to midnight.

"The chairman is treating opposition members as domestic helps and ordering them around," Banerjee said.

He said Pal received several phone calls in the meeting and alleged that he was taking orders from senior government members.

Slamming his critics, Pal said he was steering the committee in the most democratic manner and allowed every opposition MP to register their view whenever they wanted.

It was the 35th meeting on Friday, he added.

The seasoned BJP MP claimed that opposition members were spreading propaganda against the Bill's proposals in a similar way they allegedly stoked fears over the implication of the abrogation of Article 370 and instant triple talaq.

Pal added that he adjourned the meeting twice so as to restore order and was forced to suspend them on a motion moved by BJP member Nishikant Dubey due to their "ruckus".

The suspended members were Banerjee and Nadeem-ul Haque (Trinamool Congress), Mohammad Jawed, Imran Masood and Hussain (Congress), Raja and Mohamed Abdullah (DMK), Asaduddin Owaisi (AIMIM), Mohibullah (Samajwadi Party) and Arvind Sawant (Shiv Sena-UBT).

Ready to work with other nations on water management: Patil

PNS ■ DAVOS



India is ready to collaborate with other countries on water conservation efforts, Jal Shakti Minister C R Patil told the global leaders here during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

Participating in a discussion here during the five-day summit ending on Friday, Patil also listed out the sustainable water management practices adopted by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

India is ready to share them for the benefit of the world community, he told the global leaders present at the meeting.

"India is prepared for collaborations on potential water management issues," he said and called upon the world to engage in water conservation efforts, highlighting the challenges that need attention.

He also urged all nations to come forward for equitable water management.

He reiterated India's commitment and readiness to promote global cooperation and initiate transformative discussions to ensure a water-secure future.

"Prime Minister Modi takes this issue very seriously. Water conservation, water security and ensuring access to water for all are his top priorities. There was a time when many areas of Gujarat faced a severe water crisis, but the visionary steps taken under his leadership have brought water security and stability across the region," he said.

Patil, the first Indian Water Resources Minister to participate in the WEF, said that PM Modi set a target of at least 75 Amrit lakes in every district, while today, over 60,000 lakes have been built or revived, contributing significantly to water resources and management efforts.

India to be 'Vishwa Guru' by 2047: VP Dhankhar

PNS ■ SAMASTIPUR (BIHAR)



"The growth witnessed by the country in the last 10 years is unparalleled. We are already the fifth largest economy and in five years from now, we will occupy the third spot... viksit Bharat is not a pipedream. It will be realised by 2047, when we celebrate the centenary of Independence. Bharat shall become the vishwa guru", said Dhankhar.

Vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday lavished praise on the Narendra Modi government at the Centre, asserting that the country has witnessed "unparalleled" growth in the last decade, causing people's aspirations to soar.

Dhankhar made the observations at Samastipur district in Bihar, the birthplace of former chief minister and Bharat Ratna awardee Karpoori Thakur, where a function was organised on the 101st birth anniversary of the late socialist leader.

"The growth witnessed by the country in the last 10 years is unparalleled. We are already the fifth largest economy and in five years from now, we will occupy the third spot... viksit Bharat is not a pipedream. It will be realised by 2047, when we celebrate the centenary of Independence. Bharat shall become the vishwa guru", said Dhankhar.

He lauded Modi for "zealously (junoon ke saath)" bringing in schemes that improved the quality of life of the common people by providing them with gas connections, electricity and toilets.

"The people have now tasted development. Their aspirations are reaching the skies", said Dhankhar, even as he urged the youth "do not constrict yourselves by thinking in terms of government jobs. The government's policies of today are meant to tap your unlimited potential. Make full use of the opportunities".

The VP also took a veiled dig at the governments preceding Modi's rise to power in 2014 for failure to give the likes of Karpoori Thakur and former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh their due.

"I recall the excitement in Rajya Sabha when the announcement of Bharat Ratna for Karpoori Thakur and Chaudhary Charan Singh was made. A thought sprung in my mind -- the honour came 36 years after Thakur's death. Why did it not happen earlier? There is now definitely a shift. Our heroes (Adarsh) are being pulled out of obscurity and being given what is their due".

'I am only magician who can give free electricity'



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal addressed a rally in the rural constituency of Najafgarh here on Friday, promising round-the-clock electricity supply for free if his party retains power in the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls.

Claiming to be the "only magician who can give free electricity", Kejriwal warned the voters against bringing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to power.

"If the BJP comes to power, your free electricity will be stopped and you will be slapped with bills of Rs 5,000 or more," he said.

Kejriwal slammed Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over the electricity-supply scenario in Uttar Pradesh. "I want to ask the Uttar Pradesh chief minister, why are there power cuts for five to eight hours in Lucknow? Why are there six-hour power cuts in Noida?" he asked.

The former Delhi chief minister also alleged that he was pressured to hand over the power companies operating in the national capital to a close ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi but claimed that he resisted the move to safeguard the interests of Delhiites.

The AAP supremo accused the BJP of continuously targeting and abusing him. He also took the opportunity to reiterate his party's development promises in the face of a tough electoral challenge from the saffron party.

SAIF ATTACK CASE



Custody of accused extended, father says he is being framed

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Police on Friday told a Mumbai court that they needed to conduct a facial recognition test of the Bangladeshi man arrested for allegedly stabbing Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan to ascertain that he was the one in the CCTV footage.

The court extended the police custody of Shariful Islam Shehzad Mohammad Rohilla Amin Fakir (30) till January 29, while defence lawyers questioned the actor's version of the incident, asking why he did not call the police immediately.

Shariful's father said he will soon approach Bangladesh foreign ministry and the Indian High Commission for the release of his son, who he claimed was being framed.

Shariful was arrested on January 19 for allegedly breaking into Saif Ali Khan's 12th floor flat in Bandra for robbery three days earlier, and stabbing the actor multiple times when confronted.

The police on Friday sought his further custody, claiming that while substantial progress had been made in the probe, more interrogation was required to investigate certain crucial aspects.

Public prosecutors told the court that facial recognition test of the accused was needed to be done at a Forensic Science Laboratory to ascertain that he was the same person seen in the CCTV footage recovered from the staircase of Khan's building.

The prosecution's statement followed reported claims made by the accused's father that the person seen in the CCTV footage was not his son.

Judicial magistrate K C Rajput extended Shariful's police remand till January 29, noting that it was necessary considering the nature of the offence and progress in the probe.

JALGAON TRAIN TRAGEDY

CRS probe not needed if passengers die due to own negligence, say experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



An independent probe from the Commissioner of Railway Safety is unlikely in the Jalgaon train tragedy in light of the conduct of the passengers who overlooked their safety, railway sources said.

On Wednesday, 12 passengers were mowed down by a train coming on an adjacent track after they stepped down from their train due to a rumour of fire in North Maharashtra's Jalgaon district.

Though the Railway Board on Thursday appointed a team of its five senior officials to probe the tragedy, a probe by the CRS is unlikely, experts say.

The CRS is an independent body under the administrative control of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and is empowered by various acts and rules to inspect, investigate and advise in the matters of safety of rail travel and train operations.

"As per the norm, the rail administration informed the CRS, Central Circle, Manoj Arora, about the accident and now it's his call to take the probe or not," a railway source said.

Arora could not be contacted to comment on the matter despite several attempts.

Meanwhile, a section of safety experts, quoting The Railway (Notices of the Inquiries into Accidents) Rules, 1998, said that the death of or injury to any train passenger is treated as a 'serious railway accident' and mandates CRS investigation.

They, however, said that if the death or injury is due to a passenger's own negligence, it cannot be treated as such and it's the discretion of CRS to initiate a probe or not.

More details of the Jalgaon train tragedy which emerged later suggested that passengers of the Pushpak Express, who got down from the train due to a fire rumour, had sufficient time to move to safer locations as the Karnataka Express which mowed down 12 of them arrived 20 minutes later.

Officials in New Delhi said that those who alighted from the train, which had stopped due to pulling of the emergency chain between Maheji and Pardhade stations at 4.45 pm on Wednesday, remained on the side tracks despite the imminent danger.

The approaching Karnataka Express, which ran over 12 passengers, passed by at around 5.05 pm, they said, while dismissing reports that some passengers of Pushpak jumped off the train in a hurry.

"The 1998 Rules has defined what constitutes a 'serious railway accident' and according to it death or injury of a single passenger can be treated as a 'serious railway accident.' Not only that, even loss to railway properties amounting to over Rs 2 crore can also be treated as a 'serious railway accident' for the sake of CRS inquiry," a retired CRS said requesting anonymity.

CBI busts Rs 350 crore countrywide crypto ponzi scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has conducted search operations across seven locations after registering a case of Rs 350 crore crypto ponzi scam against seven persons, officials said Friday.

The accused persons were allegedly running seven separate modules based in the cities of Delhi, Hazaribag, Bathinda, Ratlam, Valsad, Pudukkottai and Chittorgarh, taking money from gullible investors promising investments in cryptocurrencies, they said.

"These ponzi schemes were being promoted through multiple social media groups. An analysis of bank account transactions and cryptocurrency wallets has revealed that the illegal proceeds from these schemes were being converted into cryptocurrencies to obscure their origin," CBI's spokesperson said in a statement. It is alleged that they had conducted transactions of over Rs 350 crore in these schemes, the officials said.

On Thursday, the agency swooped down at locations in Delhi, Jharkhand, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan. During the searches, the CBI seized digital virtual assets totalling USD 38,414 (approximately) in the cryptocurrency wallets of the accused persons, which had been digitally secured for investigation.

"The searches resulted in the recovery of cash amounting to ?34.2 lakh(approx), along with significant digital evidence, including seven mobile phones, one laptop, one tablet, three hard disks, 10 pen drives, memory cards, SIM cards, ATM/debit cards, email accounts, and several incriminating documents," the statement said.

India demands action against elements disrupting screening of 'Emergency' in UK

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



India on Friday said it expects the UK to take strong and appropriate action against anti-India elements allegedly involved in disrupting the screenings of actor Kangana Ranaut's new movie "Emergency" in that country.

Freedom of speech and expression cannot be applied selectively and those obstructing it must be held accountable, External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

There were reports that the screening of the movie was disrupted in North-West London, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Slough, Staines and Manchester.

"We have seen several reports on how the film 'Emergency', which was being screened in several halls, was being obstructed," Jaiswal said.

"We consistently raised concerns with the UK government regarding incidents of violent protest and intimidation by anti-India elements," he said, responding to a question at his weekly media briefing.

"Freedom of speech and expression cannot be applied selectively and those obstructing it must be held accountable. We hope that the UK side will take appropriate action against those responsible," he added.

Jaiswal said the Indian high commission in London remained in touch with the Indian community members for their safety and welfare.

"We expect the UK side to take strong and appropriate action in this matter," he said.

"Emergency" is a biographical drama that is seen as an attempt to chronicle events that took place under the leadership of former prime minister Indira Gandhi during the period when she imposed Emergency in the country.

VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | JANUARY 25, 2025

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Rekindling historic ties

The President of Indonesia is the chief guest at the Republic Day, a fitting tribute to the friendship between two nations

India will celebrate its 76th Republic Day on January 26, 2025, marking a moment to reflect on the country's remarkable journey since its first Republic Day in 1950. This year's celebrations will have a special touch as Prabowo Subianto, President of Indonesia, will be the chief guest. His presence is a reminder of the deep historical and cultural ties between the two nations, which have seen their share of highs and lows but continue to thrive. Incidentally, the chief guest at the first Republic Day parade was President Sukarno of Indonesia, highlighting the camaraderie between two newly independent nations that had emerged from colonial rule. The relations between the two countries have come a full circle. The early years of India-Indonesia relations were marked by solidarity and mutual support. Biju Patnaik, a prominent Indian freedom fighter, played a key role in aiding Indonesia's struggle for independence, even flying its leaders to safety during critical moments. This partnership extended to global platforms like the Bandung Conference of 1955 , which laid the groundwork for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), co-sponsored by India and Indonesia.



India has come a long way since 1950. From grappling with post-independence challenges like poverty, illiteracy and infrastructural deficits, the nation has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing economies. It boasts advancements in science, technology, space exploration and global diplomacy, while remaining rooted in its democratic ethos. Similarly, Indonesia has evolved into a vibrant democracy and a leading voice in Southeast Asia. Both nations share a legacy of anti-colonial struggles and have worked together in various domains, including trade, culture and defence. The partnership between India and Indonesia has seen its ups and downs. In the 1950s, ties were warm and cooperative, but by the 1960s, geopolitical differences, particularly over relations with China and the 1965 India-Pakistan war, strained the relationship. Indonesia's support for Pakistan during that conflict and claims over parts of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands led to significant diplomatic tensions. However, the 1970s marked a period of reconciliation, with agreements on maritime boundaries and a renewed focus on cooperation. Today, Indonesia is one of India's largest trading partners in Southeast Asia, with bilateral trade reaching nearly $30 billion in 2023-24. The two nations have also strengthened defence ties, including a Defence Cooperation Agreement signed in 2018, signaling a strategic partnership in a region increasingly shaped by competition with China. Prabowo Subianto's visit as the chief guest at India's Republic Day parade holds symbolic and strategic importance. This visit underscores the growing warmth in India-Indonesia relations. The presence of the Indonesian president at this year's parade is a tribute to the enduring friendship between two nations that have weathered challenges and found common ground in their aspirations for peace, prosperity and global cooperation.

PICTALK



Children holding national flags in a mustard field ahead of Republic Day 2025, at a village near Balurghat PTI

The complex terrain of relationships



VINAYSHIL **GAUTAM**

Relationships, whether personal or professional, are a delicate balancing act of emotions, perspectives and communication



Relationships are a tricky business. Two people who, at one stage of life, can agree so well that they cannot see or believe in having any difference in the point of view that they will hold. Different perspectives are an enigma; affection, agreement and endorsement are all rolled into one. Identification with each other is more important than identity any day. Very often, it is the bedrock of affection and togetherness in action. The same couple, as time passes and because of hormonal changes in their systems, can and do start having different points of view. What is initially a pleasant disagreement can soon become an assertion of identity. Personality conflicts follow.

These personality conflicts can be a logical derivation, and very often, it is difficult to find the origin of the derivation itself. Coherent dialogue in a spirit of give and take can often be substituted by the urge not only to protect one's turf but also to prove oneself more talented and resourceful. It can often become the source of further identity conflicts. The skill to handle such disagreements cannot be taught and is often taken over by other habits.

These habits may include being short-tempered, incoherent talking and having a high pitch in conversation, which is seen as an extension of good logic. The aberrations are far too many to be recounted, and the results are easy to identify. Instead of working together to resolve the differences, it becomes a battleground to show who can prevail. The rest, as they say, is history. In an era, that is full of talk about skills, it is important at this stage of dialogue to focus on life skills. Two people who cannot get together try to demonstrate who has the right of way in a marital relationship.

The life story moves from one end of the spectrum to an often incoherent hurtling down the slope of not only a difference of opinion but also a difference in personalities. The analysis can go only so far because then logic gives way to preferences and passion. This is at the root of many marital discords, and it is difficult to reverse the gears and change the pitch. Unfortunately, while there are numerous dissertations in psychology and elsewhere on relationships, practical-oriented thinking in handling relationships is few and at best, commonsensical.

One is merely indicating the value of focused research and showing how a structured approach to problem-solving, even in everyday life, can be very valuable. There is a need to see research as an enabling situation for problem-solving, and many use the phrase 'applied research' for it. In the present day and age, more of the fashion world is about skill, and it is being generously used because of its attractive value in situations that cannot be practically handled. Sometimes it works; sometimes it does not.

The important thing is to realise that research requires insights and the adoption of a structured methodology, even in commonsensical situations. It is this aspect of research that can lead to a better quality of life, which can be termed as enabling research and it has to do with life skills. Solving this situation, which afflicts many interpersonal relationships, is simultaneously easy and yet difficult. It is easy to control if one can limit one's communication and how much one talks more wisely, keeping the number of words used in a conversation minimal. The truth is, that the more one seeks to talk and explain, the more complex it can become. Let simple things remain simple; it is a significant strategic choice.

> THE LIFE STORY MOVES FROM ONE END OF THE SPECTRUM TO AN OFTEN INCOHERENT HURTLING DOWN THE SLOPE OF NOT ONLY A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION BUT ALSO A DIFFERENCE IN PERSONALITIES

This approach works because passion subsides, irritations sort itself out and the choice of words and pitch of the voice can be better controlled. One only has to look around to notice how talking less is such an asset in keeping relationships positive. Interpersonal relationships apart, work relationships, also get affected and the impression of losing an argument, even in workspaces, is a personal defeat. This, by itself, is a self-defeating proposition. It is self-defeating because even if one wins the argument due to positional power or manipulative skills, the scars of a lost argument leave long-lasting damage to relationships. One can indeed often lose a battle to win the war. As indicated earlier, this applies to work situations as much as to real-life, non-work situations. Gentleness and soft words go far, especially when gentleness is received not as a proposition of the weaker person, but as a characteristic and indicator of mutual respect.

The best solution to many conflicts is when both come out as winners, and no one is growling, smitten by the dangerous feeling of having 'lost one's face'. Be that as it may, it is necessary to reduce differences, not to personalities, but to find the best way forward. This best way forward must focus on protecting everyone's ego and be in the interest of the larger good. Much will depend on the personality elements of the players in the situation and indeed the time available to sort it out. Many times, a shortage of time necessitates two decisions that are suboptimal and more to 'get along with a job' than 'finding the best option'. Using tentative words and a hypothesis open to correction and improvement may be the best recipe for conflict resolution. In such situations, the personalities do not win or lose; it is the cause that is handled in a far-sighted way.

Examples can be many, and one has to see what the issue at stake is how people perceive the result of the outcome and how they interpret it. In all cases, if there is a loser in an argument, it is best to make him feel that he has not 'lost' and that no personalities are involved. This can be a useful approach to handling institutional issues because every resolution of a conflict should be for the institutional good.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

Cooperative commodities exchange: A global vision for farmer empowerment



BINOD **ANAND**

This initiative leverages technology, blockchain and India's PACS network to empower farmers with fair pricing, sustainability and direct market access

The agricultural sector is the backbone of many economies, particularly in India, where nearly 60 per cent of the population depends on farming for their livelihood. Yet, smallholder farmers often remain at the mercy of intermediaries, fluctuating market prices and unequal access to global markets.

To address these challenges and promote equity, sustainability and growth, a bold initiative is proposed: the establishment of a Global Farmer-Centric Cooperative Commodities Exchange (GFCCE). This platform, rooted in the cooperative model, aims to empower farmers by ensuring fair pricing, direct market access, and sustainable practices.This ambitious project resonates with the global agenda of the World Cooperation Economic Forum to foster inclusive economic growth and social equity.

Empowering Farmers Through Technology

APEX Integration at the heart of this initiative lies technology—a powerful enabler that can bridge the gap between farmers and markets. The



GFCCE will leverage the Government of India's support to develop a robust and accessible digital platform integrated with blockchain technology to ensure transparency and reduce pilferage in the supply chain. Blockchain will create a tamper-proof record of transactions, from production to storage and distribution, enhancing trust and accountability.

The project will adopt a PACS-to-APEX (Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies to Apex-level organisations) approach, leveraging India's extensive network of over 95,000 PACS. These societies will act as the foundational nodes, aggregating produce from farmers at the village level. The commodities will then be funnelled through district and state-level federations, culminating at the national apex organisation, which will oversee operations, ensure fair pricing and manage exports. To address storage issues, a network of modern warehouses will be constructed and integrated with blockchain systems. These warehouses, equipped with real-time inventory tracking, temperature controls and pest management systems, will be strategically located across key agricultural regions.

Blockchain connectivity across warehouses will enable seamless tracking of stored produce, ensuring reduced wastage and pilferage. Farmers will also receive warehouse receipts, which can be used as collateral for loans, providing them with immediate financial support. This interconnected system will not only provide farmers with better access to markets but also ensure that the supply chain is efficient, transparent and secure. It will serve as the backbone for procurement planning and play a vital role in stabilising food prices.

Impact on Food Inflation

The GFCCE's blockchain-enabled supply chain and warehouse network will revolutionise procurement planning and control food inflation. With real-time data on production, storage, and distribution, government agencies will have accurate insights into commodity availability and demand patterns.

This data-driven approach will enable timely procurement decisions, ensuring that food stocks are adequately replenished and distributed. By reducing post-harvest losses and pilferage, the initiative will improve the efficiency of the Public Distribution System (PDS), preventing artificial shortages that often lead to price spikes. Additionally, the transparent pricing mechanism of the exchange will curb hoarding and speculation.

This system will also facilitate targeted interventions during periods of surplus or deficit. For instance, in the case of bumper harvests, surplus stocks can be stored efficiently and exported strategically to global markets, preventing a price crash domestically.

(The writer was a member of the high level MSP committee, Ministry of Agriculture; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TRUMP'S HYPOCRISY EXPOSED

Madam — The ultimatum from Trump to end the prolonging Ukraine-Russia war exposes his hypocrisy. He is aware that it is with the pumping of arms by his country and its allies in Europe that Ukraine is continuing the war. He is also aware that the sanction imposed on Russia had failed miserably, as the same EU partners are buying the same Russian oil from different sources like India. Pumping arms and funds into Ukraine on one hand and giving an ultimatum to end the war on the other is rightly understood by one and all as meaningless, non-serious, and merely publicity-orientated. The entire world knows that maximum wars are waged or promoted by his country.

Even while addressing after assuming office, he had demonstrated his imperial thirst by expressing his policy to take over the Panama Canal and Greenland, besides arbitrarily changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico into the Gulf of America. His threat to wage a tariff war goes against the very basic principles of globalisation that promote the free movement of goods, labour, and capital. The world also knows the key role played by the production of arms and promotion of arms trade in the economy of America. Therefore, America needs a war between some countries or the other. Mr. Trump speaking with concern over the huge human loss in Ukraine and Russia due to war is another display of his hypocrisy. Because more devastating impacts are experienced due to climate change, and his actions are hostile to the global efforts to overcome this serious issue. Therefore, one need not attach so much importance to his utterances or Quixotic actions.

A G Rajmohan | *Anantapur*

LIQUOR BAN AT RELIGIOUS SITES

Madam—CM of Madhya Pradesh Mohan Yadav has formally announced in Narsinghpur district that a liquor ban will be implemented in 17 religious places in 11 districts of the state. It is believed that the government will send an order to the administration of the cities of the districts where the liquor ban is to be implemented, and the licensed liquor shops will be closed. He also said that liquor will not be allowed to be sold at any cost in the places where God Ram and Krishna set foot.

These include Ujjain, Amarkantak, Maheshwar, Omkareshwar, Chitrakoot, Mandsaur, etc. In the Narsinghpur program, he also talked about the harm caused to the health of the family due to alcohol. I do not understand one thing: more or less all the politicians in India, in their speeches, there is a lot of mention of the ill effects & demerits of alcohol and the diseases caused by it. All those smart politicians are found appealing to the people that 'please stay away from consuming alcohol; it harms your health. Hey, when these leaders are so concerned about the health of the people, then why do they not declare a complete ban on the production and marketing of alcohol?

Jang Bahadur Singh | *jamshedpur*

SCAMMERS TARGET JOB SEEKERS

Madam — The rise of job scams has become a significant problem, with scammers deceiving job seekers by creating fake job postings. These scammers often promise unsuspecting victims the opportunity to work from home and earn a high income, but only after paying for training or equipment. Research the company thoroughly to verify its legitimacy and reputation. Use reputable job boards and websites to search for job openings.

Report any suspicious activities or job postings to the relevant authorities. By being aware of these job scam tactics and taking the necessary precautions, job seekers can protect themselves from falling victim to these fraudulent schemes.

Khushi Uchenia | *Ujjain*

UNESCO honours Mahakumbh



To foster the honour and delight of every Indian, the 45-day-long Mahakumbh Festival was listed in the UNESCO list as the largest peaceful religious congregation of pilgrims on earth. To disperse the Hindu aesthetic religious and spiritualism at the next level, Maha Kumbh is truly a festival of positivity and spiritualism in India. From Naga Sadhus to Aghoris to all the other pilgrims, Kumbh is an auspicious celebration of Hindu devotees to enchant spirituality for developing godly connection, inner peace, and spiritual harmony.

A dip in the Triveni Sangam of the three rivers of Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati will be considered as the precursor of all devil deeds done during the lifetime. A congregation of 450 million, including people from local and global communities, is one of a kind incidence. It is welcoming that UNESCO added this one-of-a-kind religious festivity to its list. It is a moment of extreme celebration and glee for every Indian back at home. We all welcome the UNESCO listing favourably and positively with utmost joy in our hearts.

Kirti Wadhawan | *Kanpur*

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | JANUARY 25, 2025

the pioneer

analysis 07

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FIRST COLUMN

SEEKING TRUE SHELTER IN THE DIVINE

Amid the chaos of desires, ego and karmphal, how do we find lasting peace



AJIT KUMAR **BISHNOI**

We are small, ignorant, helpless and unsafe. There should not be any doubt about our smallness with eight billion of us on the earth's planet itself. How knowledgeable we are or can be? Knowledge is unlimited. How much can we learn in one lifetime? Helpless we are from the time we are born till the time comes to dispose of our bodies. Just count how many people we need daily to survive well. And unsafe all of us are, as the Covid-19 pandemic proved.Therefore, we instinctively seek shelter all the time. An infant needs his parents. As one grows, one takes shelter from education to maintain oneself. Education /training over, time comes to seek shelter in a job or a business.

The idea is to have the shelter of enough money to be able to survive decently. Sex overpowers thinking beginning from a young age. Some are drawn towards fame like a sportsperson, while others get into politics, etc. for power. The most fortunate seek the shelter of God. Shelter of God is crucial to exist well. Let us see the degree of difficulty for a quality life. Our nature ('svabhava') is a huge handicap. Something or other from lust, anger, greed, jealousy, ego, etc. predominates if not more than one.

What chance is there to have a quality life? Lust derails almost everyone. One assumes that sex is pleasure, and it has so many forms. The worst thing is it's possessing our minds. Ego is not far behind. Have you met anyone who does not feel his or her superiority vis-



à-vis others? Greed does not allow us to assess our needs sensibly. More is better is the desire and there is no satisfaction. Anger is always lurking near the surface. It surfaces at the drop of a hat, literally. Then, there are karmaphalas always ready to manifest. We know how bad ones hurt. What most people don't realise are the ill effects of good karmaphalas. This is when one gets the feeling of invincibility and makes big mistakes.

People look for rewards during success, and we know what these rewards do to us. The third big enemy is old age, when we become weak and are mostly written off. Are we stuck? Far from it. God would not have made such a sorry Creation. Guidance and help are available to all of us if we accept the role of God in our lives. Ignorance, false pride or laziness stops us from taking God's help, who is the owner, controller and everything. You seek guidance sincerely and see what happens. But we don't; we prefer to be in cyclic thinking short-circuiting our own lives. We condemn ourselves by our obstinate attitude. God is prepared to help all of us at any time, but there is a rider.

We must deserve such help. How to determine who should get or who shouldn't? Therefore, the question everyone should be asking is: how do we become deserving of God's 'kripa' (favour)? Simply, you recognise yourself as a soul – part of God. Then, all spiritual activities will make sense.

Shouldn't parts take shelter from God? Shouldn't we be very respectful to God and pay obeisance to Him? What about the 'dhyan' (meditation) of the entity, who is everything? How about thanking God for all that He does for everyone like providing air, water and sunlight free. In short, we should stop taking shelter of anyone or anything except God, and remain there.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Winter's tale in Northern India: A season of discontent



HIRANMAY **KARLEKAR**

Northern India's winter is more than just a fleeting season; it is a relentless narrative of marrow-freezing cold, breath-choking pollution and a grim forecast for years to come



Of freezing marrows and choking breaths William Shakespeare, emperor of narratives, master of metaphors, celebrated craftsman of sentences and acclaimed presenter of deep insights into human nature, had a way of coming up with expressions surviving the passage of time. One of them is "winter of our discontent." Richard, Duke of Gloucester, says in Richard III, "Now is the winter of our discontent/ Made glorious summer by this sun of York;/ And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house/ In the deep bosom of the ocean buried." The expression, which adorns one of John Steinbeck's most famous novels as its title, should resonate particularly strongly with people in northern India still in the grip of a winter that is cold, damp and utterly polluted. The chances of things improving in the next few years, are, to put it mildly, bleak.

As the chilling flipside of global warming, the cold months will continue to be increasingly marrow-freezing, since, with Donald Trump taking over as the United States' president, the chances of a deceleration in the pace of climate change, have diminished significantly. This is not to look wistfully back over one's shoulder to a mythical place like the island valley of Avilion, where, pace Alfred Tennyson in a very different context, "falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, / Nor ever wind blows loudly." Climates and the weather have been notoriously fickle cousins throughout history. If any part of the past seems golden, it is because of the distance in time which lends it enchantment.

It had, when it was the present, its warts, some of them rather large and ugly. Floods and droughts took very heavy tolls when meteorological devices and skills for predicting their advent and coping with their aftermath, were far less advanced. In the absence of electrical heating devices, which we have, life could not have been terribly pleasant during the last ice age which had covered about 30 per cent of the earth's surface and ended 15, 000 to 20,000 years ago. On a more specific note, slavery was legal in most parts of the world–including the chest-thumping democracies of the West–as late as the second half of the 19th century. The weather, doubtless, has an impact on life and its moods, which influence thought, speech and feeling which, in turn, trigger action.

> AS THE CHILLING FLIP SIDE OF GLOBAL WARMING, THE COLD MONTHS WILL CONTINUE TO BE INCREASINGLY MARROW-FREEZING, SINCE, WITH DONALD TRUMP TAKING OVER AS THE UNITED STATES' PRESIDENT, THE CHANCES OF A DECELERATION IN THE PACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE, HAVE DIMINISHED SIGNIFICANTLY

All of these, at a certain elevated level, power the wheels of history. These also affect inter-personal relations, causing friction and hostility arising from anger and discontent, or cordiality and warmth caused by harmony. The sum total of the interaction among these factors determines the quality of a community's social existence in terms of tensions between collective bodies like class and caste, and stress caused by individual actions like crime, which is often caused by alienation resulting from marginalisation, poverty and anonymity in impersonal societies. A crime can be a perverse act of self-assertion, a sub-conscious statement like, "I kill, therefore I exist"—a variant of Rene Descartes much-quoted assertion, "Cogito ergo sum (literally, "I think, therefore, I am").

Another form of self-assertion can be participation—to say nothing of playing a leading role—in a mass movement. Eric Hoffer writes in The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements, "There is in us a tendency to locate the shaping forces of our existence outside ourselves. Success and failure are unavoidably related in our minds with the state of things around us. Hence it is that people with a sense of fulfilment think it a good world and would like to conserve it as it is, while the frustrated favour radical change. The tendency to look for all causes outside ourselves persists even when it is clear that our state of being is the product of personal qualities such as ability, character, appearance, health and so on." What is the result? Hoffer quotes Thoreau as saying, "If anything ail a man, so that he does not perform his functions, if he has a pain in his bowels even ... he forthwith sets about reforming — the world." (Italics by Hoffer; Thoreau has used the plurals "ail" and "have" as it was done by many in his time in such contexts).

Attempts to reform the world invariably lead to struggles with status quoists. Besides, social tensions and conflicts will increase following rising ocean levels, caused by global warming, submerging coastal areas. Inward migration of people from these regions would trigger clashes over land and resources in the interior areas. The same factors will also be in operation in other areas to which people may escape from regions made uninhabitable by temperatures rising too high to support life.

One can, of course, argue that people would be kind to global warming refugees, realising that they may have to leave their homes someday for the same reason. But then, kindness is not what a person encounters frequently in life; it is the same with gratitude, the lack of which weighed heavily on the Bard of Avon. "Ingratitude," he lamented in King Lear, "thou marble-hearted fiend…." He bewailed in As You Like It, "Blow, blow, thou winter wind, / Thou art not so unkind/As man's ingratitude." And he says in Twelfth Night, "I hate ingratitude more in a man/ Than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness,/ Or any taint of vice whose strong corruption/ Inhabits our frail blood." Character attributes like proneness towards gratitude are rooted deep inside one's DNA and are modified by the environment as one grows up. Seasonal changes can impact their intensity, as discomfort caused by extreme heat or cold can put one's temper on a short leash.

On the other hand, as Anton Chekhov put it, "People don't notice whether it's winter or summer when they're happy."

This brings us back to our starting point—northern India's butt-freezing, breath-choking winter. Can one be happy in its midst? The answer will be in the affirmative, as the news of a progeny scaling new heights at work or being gifted with a baby, will warm the cockles of one's heart. This, however, is most likely to be a passing phase, overwhelmed, sooner than later, by the many worries and sadnesses that quotidian existence brings and that, again, are ephemeral.

The more relevant question will be whether one can survive northern India's winter and for how long. The transition to the hereafter caused by pollution stalks one silently but lethally. The final truth in life is mortality.

All this has been said before, and will be said again, as one will hear the much-quoted proverb, "What can't be cured must be endured." It has joined the ranks of venerable cliches blessed with eternal life.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

Cultural heritage tourism: A path to sustainable growth and mutual understanding

Respecting the balance between tourism and heritage enables a mutually beneficial relationship that supports communities, preserves cultural identity and promotes global harmony

Cultural tourism, as defined in the 22nd session of the UN Tourism General Assembly in 2017, is an activity where a visitor's primary motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and engage with the tangible and intangible cultural attractions and products of a destination. These motivations shape the agendas of both the visitor and the tour guide at cultural heritage destinations, bridging the gap between the historical and the contemporary.

The Evolution of Cultural Heritage and Tourism

Cultural heritage has undergone a significant shift in perception, moving from an archaeological focus to the concept of "living heritage" and its reuse. Similarly, tourism has evolved from being largely centered on pilgrimage to a multifaceted industry encompassing learning, entertainment, experiences, and relaxation. This transformation has elevated tourism as a catalyst for inclusive economic growth and job creation across diverse sectors, such as hospitality, transportation, and entertainment. The industry's ripple effect benefits individuals and communities alike, engaging local businesses, transport operators, craftspeople, tourist guides, and the hospitality industry in a symbiotic relationship.

For these benefits to be fully realised, collaboration among stakeholders is essential. They must work collectively to offer authentic and meaningful experiences that resonate with travelers while preserving the



SUKHDEV **SINGH**

integrity of cultural sites.

Cultural Heritage as a Driver of Tourism

A rapidly growing segment within the tourism industry is cultural heritage, which encompasses natural and architectural sites, traditional crafts, cultural events, performances, and intangible knowledge. Recognised as both a commodity and an experience, cultural heritage attracts market players, planners, and governments aiming to expand the scope of tourism. It promotes inclusive growth, intercultural exchange and mutual understanding.

The relationship between tourism and cultural heritage is built on mutuality. While cultural heritage serves as a key attraction for tourism, the latter provides the financial and structural support required for its preservation and promotion.

Navigating Contradictions

Tourism operates on the principle of profit and economic growth, while cultural heritage centers on identity and inheritance. These differing foundations can create contradictions. For the tourism industry, cultural heritage is often commodified, whereas for her-



itage conservation, tourism acts as a feeder for sustainability. While these sectors can support one another to an extent, unchecked tourism practices can lead to significant challenges, including overcrowding, environmental and degradation.

To mitigate these issues, regulated practices in cultural heritage tourism must prioritise the symbiotic relationship between factors influencing tourist experiences and those fostering cultural understanding. Tour operators and tourists must respect the sanctity and protocols of cultural heritage sites. Travelers should be encouraged to appreciate local customs without overstepping boundaries, ensuring a balance between immersion and respect. Sustainable cultural heritage tourism, thus, becomes a pathway to fostering "culture for peace."

Economic and Cultural Benefits of Heritage Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism creates opportunities for income generation and employment. This is achieved by maintaining and showcasing heritage structures, sites, and products. Preservation and management efforts, such as cataloging and storytelling, directly benefit from tourism revenue. Simultaneously, the broader economic ecosystem, including hospitality, transportation, and entertainment, flourishes through increased visitor engagement.

However, cultural heritage is far more than a revenue-generating commodity. It serves as a repository of customs, values, and artifacts, connecting communities to their past and reinforcing their identities. Tourism, when responsibly managed, can amplify the significance of heritage sites by fostering research, introducing new narratives, and raising awareness. Reinvestment of economic returns into preservation ensures the longevity and authenticity of cultural heritage.

Challenges of Cultural Heritage Tourism

While tourism can elevate the value of cultural heritage, it also introduces challenges. Overcrowding, environmental degradation, and disruptions to the local population's way of life are common issues.

Sustainable and Responsible Tourism

To maintain a harmonious balance between tourism and cultural heritage, sustainable practices are essential. These include regulating visitor numbers, promoting eco-friendly initiatives, and ensuring that tourism revenue is reinvested into preservation efforts.

(The writer is retired professor of Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar and Vice-Chairman, INTACH; views are personal)

the pioneer

Money 08

VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | JANUARY 25, 2025

IN BRIEF



Amul cuts milk prices by Re 1 across India

Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which markets dairy products under the Amul brand, has reduced milk prices by Rs 1 per litre across India. However, the reduction in prices is only for one-litre packs. "We have reduced the prices of one-litre packs by Rs 1 per litre across India," GCMMF managing director Jayen Mehta said. "This is to encourage consumers to buy larger packs of milk and get incentive for the same," he said. In Delhi, the rate of Amul Gold milk has been reduced to Rs 67 from Rs 68 per litre while price of Amul Taaza will now be Rs 55 from Rs 56 per litre earlier. GCMMF's turnover increased 8 per cent to Rs 59,445 crore in the 2023-24 financial year. Mehta had earlier said that the cooperative is expecting double-digit growth in revenue during this fiscal on strong demand. GCMMF handled 310 lakh litres of milk per day on average during the last fiscal.

क.रा.बी.नि. ESIC

ESIC adds 16.07 lakh new members

Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has added 16.07 lakh new workers enrolled under the ESI scheme in November, about one per cent higher as compared to the year-ago month, according to the latest payroll data released on Friday. The ESIC had added 15.92 lakh new members in November 2023, a labour ministry statement said. According to the statement, the year-on-year analysis shows a growth of 0.97 per cent in net registrations compared to November 2023. The provisional payroll data of ESIC reveals that 16.07 lakh new employees have been added in November 2024, it stated. As many as 20,212 new establishments have been brought under the social security ambit of the ESI Scheme in November 2024, ensuring social security for more workers. The statement said that out of the total 16.07 lakh employees added during the month, 7.57 lakh employees, amounting to around 47.11 per cent of the total registrations belong to the age group of up to 25 years.



Denta Water IPO garners 221.52 times subscription

The initial share sale of Denta Water and Infra Solutions Ltd garnered 221.52 times subscriptions on the closing day of bidding on Friday. The initial public offer got bids for 1,16,29,62,200 shares against 52,50,000 shares on offer, as per NSE data. The quota for non-institutional investors bagged a massive 507.05 times subscription, while the Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) portion subscribed 236.94 times. The portion for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) garnered 90.33 times the subscription. Denta Water and Infra Solutions on Tuesday said it has raised a little over Rs 66 crore from anchor investors. The issue has a price band of Rs 279-294 per share. The IPO is entirely a fresh issue of 75 lakh equity shares worth Rs 220.5 crore at the upper end of the price band. Proceeds to the extent of Rs 150 crore will be utilised to meet working capital requirements, and a portion will be used for general corporate purposes. Founded in 2016, Denta Water and Infra Solutions Ltd has emerged as one of the key players in the field of water engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) services.

Leaders emphasise support for WTO, rule-based intl trading

PNS ■ DAVOS



The World Trade Organisation on Friday pitched for strengthening the rule-based multilateral trading system in view of increasing geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation and threats of unilateral measures.

As many as 23 members of the WTO took part in the informal ministerial meeting organised by Switzerland here on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

Switzerland Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin hosted the meeting, which was attended by WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and selected representatives of the private sector.

The meeting emphasised the important role of the WTO and the rule-based international trading system and discussed the current challenges facing the WTO and the priorities in the organisation's activities.

The private sector representatives presented the current challenges of global trade from their perspective in the first part of the event.

"The dialogue with the private sector focused on the importance of the rule-based multilateral trading system underpinned by the WTO, emphasising that stable regulatory conditions and legal certainty are paramount for the economy during periods of trade tensions," a Swiss government statement said.

In the second part of the meeting, the ministers exchanged views on the WTO's most urgent tasks and the priorities for the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference, which will take place in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, in just over a year's time.

Switzerland said it is closely integrated into global value chains and benefits greatly from smooth cross-border trade.

In his concluding remarks, Parmelin said the meeting underlined the significance of the WTO and the rule-based, transparent and predictable multilateral trading system.

Building on the achievements at MC13, ministers reaffirmed their commitment to delivering a successful result at the next Ministerial Conference.

Ministers also declared their determination to preserve and strengthen the rule-based multilateral trading system, especially now, in view of increasing geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation and threats of unilateral measures.

At the same time, ministers pointed to the need to adapt the WTO's instruments and rules to the current challenges in global trade and also reiterated the importance of having a fully functional dispute settlement system.

Ministers stressed the need to launch substantive negotiations on agricultural trade, while some ministers called for a comprehensive or balanced treatment of all relevant negotiation topics.

Others argued that priority should be given to the topics mandated in earlier ministerial decisions and ministers expressed their willingness to further engage in this matter.

Many ministers also called for a further extension of the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions at MC14. The conclusion of the extension on the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies was also mentioned as a key deliverable for the organisation.

UNION BUDGET 2025

Insurers expect tax benefits, concessions for healthcare

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Insurers are hopeful of a host of tax benefits, including concessions for the insurance and healthcare sectors, from the Union Budget 2025-26 to be unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1.



SBI General Insurance MD and CEO Naveen Chandra Jha said that as India advances toward financial inclusivity and universal healthcare, the upcoming Budget is expected to further strengthen the healthinsurance sector.

Initiatives like Bima Sugam, designed to achieve the goal of 'Insurance for All' by 2047, are expected to receive regulatory and fiscal support to address the protection gap, he noted.

"Additionally, the budget is likely to focus on expanding access in underserved regions through government-private partnerships, targeted subsidies, and advancements in digital infrastructure," Jha added.

Bajaj Allianz Life MD and CEO Tarun Chugh said India's economic growth presents immense opportunities for the insurance sector to enhance financial resilience.

"Aligning tax deduction of life insurance annuity products with the National Pension Scheme (NPS) and addressing the issue of tax on principal component on annuity products can evolve retirement needs effectively," he added.

Chugh also made a case for the introduction of a separate tax deduction for term insurance and extending the tax deduction on life insurance premiums under the new tax regime.

According to the Annual Report of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai), the country's insurance penetration in 2023-24 was 3.7 per cent compared to 4 per cent in 2022-23.

The penetration for life insurance industry marginally declined from 3 per cent in 2022-23 to 2.8 per cent during 2023-24.

Data centre market continues to grow: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's data centre market continued its growth during 2024, with an addition of 191 MW IT capacity during last year, while absorption was 407 MW, according to Savills.

In a statement on Friday, real estate consultant Savills India noted that the demand for data centres in India continues to rise, driven by factors like the increasing adoption of cloud computing, the expansion of big data, the Internet of Things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the rapid growth of e-commerce and digital transformation initiatives.

"In 2024, India witnessed an absorption of 407 MW IT capacity and the addition of 191 MW IT capacity across key cities," the consultant said.

Savills highlighted that this demand was fuelled by hyperscalers, BFSI (Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance), IT & ITeS, and service sectors, all of which heavily rely on data centre operators for colocation and related services.

The operational capacity stood at 1,110 MW IT as of 2024, reflecting a CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) of 22 per cent since 2014.

Sensex, Nifty snap two-day rally dragged by realty, healthcare stocks

PNS ■ MUMBAI



Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty surrendered early gains to close with losses in a volatile session on Friday, snapping their two-day winning streak as investors pared exposure to realty, oil & gas and healthcare stocks amid a mixed trend in global markets.

Unabated foreign fund outflows also dented investor sentiment.

After swinging between gains and losses, the 30-share BSE benchmark dropped 329.92 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at 76,190.46. During the day, it slumped 428.63 points or 0.56 per cent to 76,091.75.

The NSE Nifty declined 113.15 points or 0.49 per cent to 23,092.20.

On a weekly basis, the BSE index declined 428.87 points or 0.55 per cent, and the Nifty dipped 111 points or 0.47 per cent.

"Markets ended weak in volatile trade amid selling in auto, oil & gas and realty shares. A sharp appreciation in the rupee against the dollar limited the fall, but the undertone continues to remain cautious with a weak bias. Investors are likely to maintain caution ahead of the upcoming Union Budget announcement," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the 30-share bluechip pack, Mahindra & Mahindra, Zomato, Tata Motors, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank, Adani Ports and Bajaj Finserv were among the major laggards.

On the other hand, Hindustan Unilever, Tech Mahindra, Nestle, Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank were among the gainers.

The BSE smallcap gauge dropped 2.23 per cent, and the midcap index declined 1.60 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, realty tanked 2.50 per cent, oil & gas went lower by 2.30 per cent, industrials (2.22 per cent), energy (1.95 per cent), capital goods (1.89 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.79 per cent) and auto (1.69 per cent).

Teck and BSE Focused IT were the gainers.

Gold breaches Rs 83k mark for first time

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices extended the rally for the eighth consecutive session and climbed Rs 200 to breach the psychological level of Rs 83,000 per 10 grams for the first time in the national capital on Friday amid aggressive buying triggered by global market uncertainties.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity rose Rs 200 to hit a fresh lifetime high of Rs 83,100 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 82,900 per 10 grams on Thursday. "Gold extended gains on Friday, with spot gold in the domestic market hitting fresh all-time highs," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

The current bullish momentum in gold is driven by uncertainty surrounding the potential US tariffs plan and other policies from President Donald Trump, which has led to a recent surge in safe-haven buying, Gandhi added.

The yellow metal of 99.5 per cent purity also appreciated by Rs 200 to hit a record high of Rs 82,700 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 82,500 per 10 grams.

Additionally, silver climbed Rs 500 to Rs 94,000 per kg on Friday. The white metal finished at Rs 93,500 per kg in the last trading session.

India's forex reserves decline to $623.983 bn

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 1.88 billion to USD 623.983 billion in the week ended January 17, the RBI said on Friday.

Earlier, the overall kitty declined by USD 8.714 billion to USD 625.871 billion in the week ended January 10, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The reserves have been on a declining trend for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee.

The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September.

For the week ended January 17, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 2.878 billion to USD 533.133 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by USD 1.063 million to USD 68.947 billion during the week, the RBI said.

'Weaker rupee seen as boost for exports'

..But reality is more complex, says FIEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A weaker rupee is often seen as a boost for Indian exports by making goods more competitive globally, but the reality is more complex, the apex exporters' body FIEO said on Friday.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ashwani Kumar also said the recent depreciation of the domestic currency against the US Dollar represents a complex economic scenario with mixed outcomes.

"A weaker rupee is not a one-size-fits-all solution to boost exports. A strategic, multi-pronged approach is needed to address the root causes of depreciation while mitigating its adverse effects," he said.

Explaining it further, he said, that if the rupee depreciates by 2 per cent and the currencies of key competitors decline by 3-5 per cent, Indian exporters lose competitiveness in global markets.

"This relative disadvantage erodes any potential price advantage Indian goods might gain," Kumar added.

The domestic currency has depreciated over 4 per cent last year. The rupee closed at 86.22 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by a stronger American currency.

Kumar added that the depreciation also results in a rise in input cost, exchange rate volatility, inflationary pressure, and external debt burden. Many Indian exporters depend on imported raw materials and components. A weaker rupee significantly raises these input costs, often nullifying the perceived benefits of depreciation.

"Fluctuating exchange rates create uncertainty, making it difficult for exporters to price their products competitively and plan for the long term," he said adding that the depreciation inflates the cost of imported goods like oil and commodities, driving up production costs and fuelling domestic inflation and this reduces consumer purchasing power.



IndiGo Q3 profit falls 18 pc to Rs 2,448.8 cr on currency woes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest airline IndiGo on Friday saw its profit after tax slide 18.3 per cent to Rs 2,448.8 crore in the three months ended December 2024, as currency volatility took a toll on the bottom line.

With the increase in the number of capacity and passengers, the carrier's total income jumped 14.6 per cent to Rs 22,992.8 crore in the third quarter of the current financial year, according to a release.

In the year-ago period, the same stood at Rs 20,062.3 crore.

InterGlobe Aviation is the parent of IndiGo, which flew 31.1 million passengers in the latest December quarter.

In the 2023 December quarter, the carrier had a profit after tax of Rs 2,998.1 crore.

"Driven by strong demand for air travel, continued growth, and lower fuel cost, for the quarter ended December 2024, IndiGo reported a solid profit of Rs 38.5 billion, excluding the impact of currency movement against a profit of 30.5 billion during the same period last year.

"Including the impact of foreign exchange, the net profit for the quarter aggregated to Rs 24.5 billion," the release said.

Fuel cost, which accounts for a significant chunk of an airline's operational expenses, fell 6.1 per cent to Rs 6,422.6 crore in the latest December quarter even as total costs climbed 19.9 per cent to Rs 20,465.7 crore.

"We delivered a strong third quarter of financial year 2025, both operationally and financially.

We reported a total income of Rs 230 billion, reflecting a growth of 15 per cent and profit, excluding the impact of currency movement of Rs 38.5 billion. "Including currency impact, we reported a profit of Rs 24.5 billion, highlighting effective execution of our clear and well-defined strategy," IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers said.

Investment in infra, startup can push job creation: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government should provide investments and incentives in infrastructure, hospitality, startup ecosystem, EdTech and MSME sectors in the General Budget to boost employment and skill development, say industry experts.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the General Budget 2025 in the Lok Sabha on February 1.

On expectations from the forthcoming budget, Noormahal Group CMD Manbeer Choudhary said the hospitality sector in India plays a crucial role in job creation and is one of the largest contributors to the economy.

The Union Budget 2025 could be pivotal in enhancing the industry and significantly contributing to the vision of a USD 3 trillion tourism GDP by 2047, he added.

Choudhary stated that one of the longing demands is granting industry status to the hospitality sector, as this recognition could lead to improved access to finance, regularised policies, and a more strategic approach to tourism development.

The special allocation for infrastructure development, especially in tier II and III cities can boost tourism in the regional areas while generating employment opportunities for youth in their native place, he said.



T9L QUBE founder Gaurav Gaggar said the government will continue to prioritise the needs of startups and venture studios this year. Currently, one of the pressing concerns of the sector that persists is funding. Although removing the angel tax was one of the revolutionary steps toward easing investment flows, more such initiatives are expected this year, he pointed out.

Venture studios serve as one of the key factors contributing towards nation-building by boosting the startup ecosystem in the country, he said. The government should focus on simplifying foreign investment regulations and improving access to credit, which will bolster the financial landscape of the industry, he suggested.

The budget, he said, should also prioritise investment in research and development for sustained innovation.

The government-backed funds, tax incentives and benefits to venture capitalists dedicated to fostering startup companies could elevate India's dynamic startup ecosystem to unprecedented levels, he added.

As the Indian startup ecosystem has become one of the biggest employment generators, levelling up the ecosystem will support the government in addressing skill development and unemployment issues, he stated.

the pioneer
Vijayawada | Saturday January 25, 2025



We've always wanted to collaborate on a romantic film: Amol Parashar talks about Mithila Palkar

Internet's two favourite characters Chitvan from TVF Tripling and Kavya from Little Things aka Amol Parashar and Mithila Palkar have come together for a unique romantic story 'Sweet Dreams' streaming on Disney+ Hotstar from January 24.

The trailer offered glimpses of the refreshing and cracking chemistry between the duo creating excitement for the film.

Amol Parashar shares, "Working with Mithila has been an incredible experience. She's not just a fantastic co-actor but also someone who brings so much warmth and creativity to every scene. We've always wanted to collaborate on a romantic film, and Sweet Dreams gave us the perfect opportunity to bring that to life. Having Faye D'Souza as part of the film added a completely new and exciting dimension. Her natural ease and authenticity in portraying the therapist was exciting to watch. Together, I believe we've created something truly special that audiences will connect with and enjoy."

Proving his mettle with versatile performances, Amol Parashar has won the audience with projects like Tripling and Sardar Udham, amongst others.

For Amol Parashar, 2025 is shaping up to be a stellar year. With multiple releases lined up, including a rumored collaboration with his former TVF colleagues, he continues to prove himself as one of the most versatile actors of his generation. His portrayal of Chitvan Sharma in the cult web series TVF Tripling remains iconic, resonating deeply with Gen Z and millennials alike. Despite airing years ago, Chitvan's quirky personality still draws love from audiences of all ages.

Looking at an interesting line up, Amol Parashar is all set to impress the audience with his versatility.

Pop singers Sukriti & Prakriti Kakar release dance-bop 'Aa Zara'



Sukriti and Prakriti Kakar, the popular twin sister duo known for their Bollywood hits like 'Jhoome Jo Pathaan', 'Pehli Baar', and 'Kar Gayi Chull', as well as their independently released singles like 'Maafiyan', 'Kehndi Haan Kehndi Naa', 'Kya Say?' among others, have now unveiled their latest pop single titled 'Aa Zara' - an upbeat track that perfectly blends pop melodies with Afrobeat rhythms.

Performed by Sukriti & Prakriti Kakar, their new single delves into themes of desire, love, and passion, combined with irresistible energy and a pulsating beat that showcases the powerful magnetic attraction between two souls. With its Afrobeat influence, the song has an electrifying, rhythmic vibe that amplifies the energy, making it a dance anthem that will appeal to listeners worldwide.

Prakriti Kakar shares with excitement, "Working together on 'Aa Zara' has been a beautiful experience, as always. This song explores themes of desire and love, and we wanted to convey those raw emotions through vibrant melodies and rhythms. It was important for us to create an inclusive atmosphere where everyone involved felt valued. Our goal is to inspire listeners, especially women, to embrace their femininity and express themselves freely through our music. 'Aa Zara' truly reflects our belief that every individual is unique and deserves to shine."

Sharing her thoughts on the release, Sukriti Kakar says, "Creating 'Aa Zara' was an incredible journey that involved five months of intense planning. We wanted to ensure that every detail was curated to perfection, from the choreography to the outfits. Our choreographer, Yash Kadam, held auditions for all eight dancers, and we made it a priority for them to feel like this is their song too. In our video, every dancer plays a crucial role in bringing our vision to life. Unlike typical music videos where the main artist stands out in bright colors while dancers blend in, 'Aa Zara' is a celebration of equality and uniqueness. We hope this message resonates with our audience!"

With a unique blend of diverse melodies and rhythms, the track is sure to make everyone groove to its beats. 'Aa Zara' is now available for listening across leading streaming platforms along with a stunning music video featuring the artists in a different aesthetic showcasing some bold moves and captivating visuals that bring the song's passion and intensity to life.

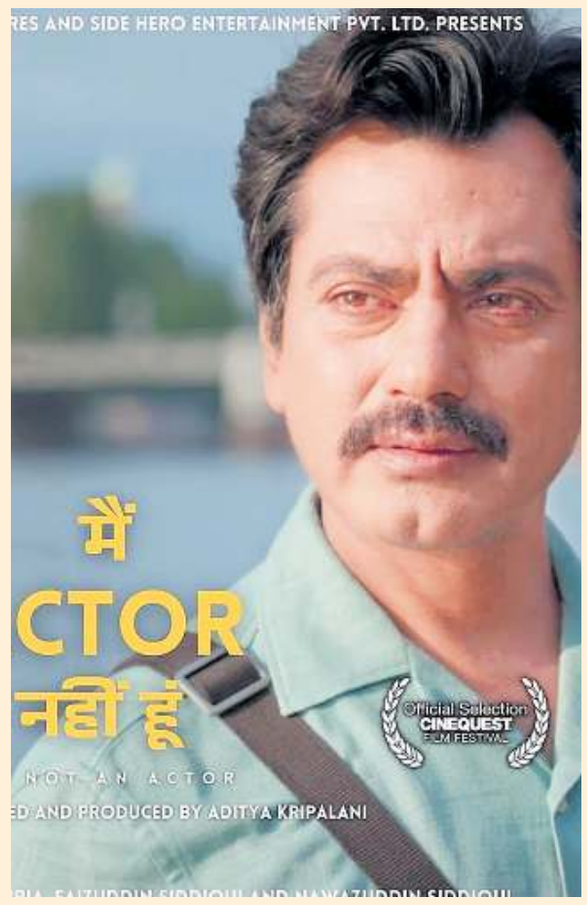
Randeep Hooda joins John Cena for director Sam Hargrave for the action film *Matchbox*; shoot commences in Budapest



Actor Randeep Hooda is set for his next Hollywood venture, as he teams up with celebrated director Sam Hargrave for an adrenaline-pumping action film, Matchbox. Sam who is a celebrated filmmaker known for directing Extraction 1 and 2, and is also the genius behind stunts and action in films including Avengers: Endgame and Infinity War, Thor Ragnarok, Suicide Squad amongst many others. Randeep will be seen sharing screenspace with one of Bollywood's biggest action star and wrestler John Cena.

This marks Randeep Hooda's second collaboration with Sam Hargrave after the roaring success of Extraction (2020), where Hooda captivated audiences worldwide with his intense portrayal of Saju. In a statement, Randeep Hooda shared, "Excited to be working with Sam again. We had a great time on our first collaboration with Extraction. Sam is a master of high-octane storytelling and action. Glad to be joining the team in Budapest".

Matchbox is being produced by Mattel films, Skydance films and is an Apple Original. The film which has been filming in Budapest will now have Randeep join the rest of the cast and production team. On the work front in India, Randeep has currently been shooting for Jaat which is being directed by Gopichand Malineni co-starring with Sunny Deol and is produced by the makers of Pushpa 2; Mythri Movie Makers and People Media Factory, and is set to soon start shooting for Vishal Bhardwaj's next.



NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI'S FILM

I'm Not an Actor will have world premiere at 2025 Cinequest Film Festival in California!

Nawazuddin Siddiqui is a powerhouse of talent in Indian cinema, celebrated for his incredible range and versatile performances. With a career spanning diverse genres, he has left an indelible mark. Nawazuddin's masterful craft and captivating screen presence have solidified his position as one of Bollywood's most versatile and legendary actors. While the actor has made waves with his films, many of his works have earned a place at renowned film festivals. Joining this list is his latest feature, I'm Not an Actor, which will have its world premiere at the 2025 Cinequest Film Festival in California this March.

For Nawazuddin, who also serves as a producer via his Side Hero Entertainment, the role offered fresh territory. He said, "The idea of me playing a banker who learns acting was exciting from the start. I'd never heard of a script like this." He further continued, "It seemed like the right kind of script to come on board with. Specially since Aditya has explored so much about the craft of acting in the film."

While speaking about the unique challenges faced due to its intercontinental live shooting approach, Nawazuddin said, "While I was freezing at 2 degrees [in Frankfurt], in India sometimes due to extreme heat, the cameras would overheat and we'd have to stop shoot for hours."

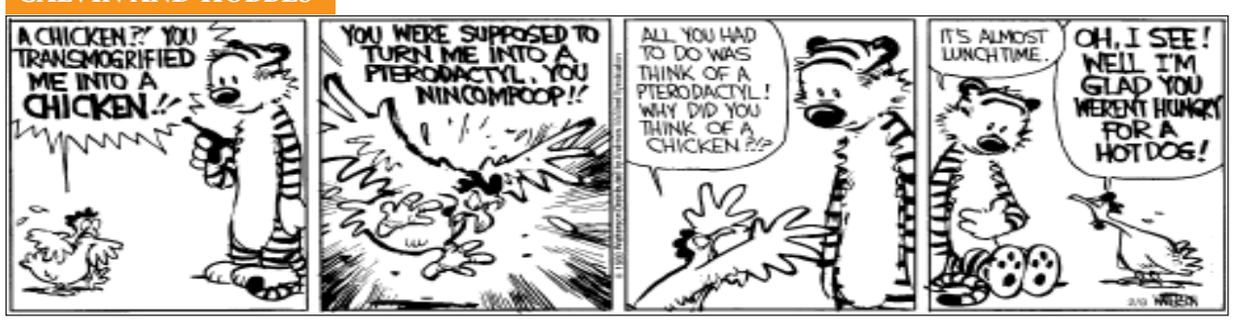
Apart from this, Nawazuddin Siddiqui has appeared in several films showcased at the Cannes Film Festival, including Monsoon Shootout, Miss Lovely and Manto. Remarkably, he is the only actor in the world to have eight films officially selected and screened at the Film Festival Junction.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

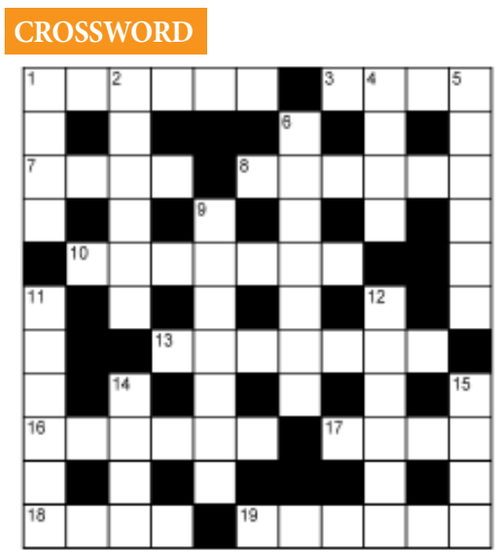
Yesterday's solution

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

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

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Opposite of brother
3 A fairy's magic stick
7 A bird's bill
8 To stay
10 Ripping
13 A deer's horns
16 Weapons with long blades
17 A tube in the body which carries blood
18 Seven days
19 A paper handkerchief

DOWN

1 Cries with big gasps
2 Frightened
4 A camel rider in the desert
5 An animal like a small horse with big ears
6 Houses for dogs
9 A small bomb made for throwing
11 A puzzle with lots of pieces
12 Welcomes
14 Stopped sleeping
15 One time

SOLUTION

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Saturday
January 25, 2025

WITH HYDERABAD AS HER BASE, LAVANYA REDDY HAS NOT ONLY CARVED A NICHE FOR HERSELF IN THE COMPETITIVE WORLD OF CINEMA BUT HAS ALSO BECOME A TRAILBLAZER IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY. IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT WITH *THE PIONEER*, LAVANYA, ONE OF TOLLYWOOD'S MOST SOUGHT-AFTER MAKEUP ARTISTS, OPENS UP ABOUT HER INCREDIBLE JOURNEY FROM A SMALL-TOWN BEAUTICIAN IN GUNTUR TO WORKING WITH SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN THE TELUGU FILM INDUSTRY

'City gave me countless chances to fulfill my dream'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com



Hyderabad, a city known for its rich heritage, vibrant culture, and booming film industry, has long been a hub for creative talent. Among the many success stories that the city has nurtured is that of Lavanya Reddy, one of Tollywood's most sought-after makeup artists. With an unwavering dedication to her craft and a passion that knows no bounds, Lavanya has carved a unique space for herself in the competitive world of cinema. From her humble beginnings in Guntur to working with some of the biggest names in the Telugu film industry, her journey is as inspiring as it is remarkable. In this exclusive chat, Lavanya shares her career milestones, her deep connection with Hyderabad, and her exciting plans for the future.

"Hyderabad is very close to my heart. My association with this city is one of the best choices I've ever made in my life. It gave me countless opportunities to fulfill my dream career," Lavanya says with pride. "I feel Hyderabad welcomes everyone from any corner of the world without any racism, and that's what makes it so special."

Born and brought up in Guntur on April 8th, 1992, Lavanya initially worked as a regular beautician in her hometown. However, a challenging experience in 2017 changed her life forever. "A client gave a bad review about my makeup work, and it hit me hard. But instead of giving up, I realized that makeup was my true passion and decided to pursue it professionally," she recalls.

After moving to Hyderabad, Lavanya trained under renowned makeup artist Mr. Naresh Thogathi. "That professional course changed everything for me. Soon after, I got a chance to work with Lakshmi Manchu, and that was my first step into the Tollywood industry," she shares.

From there, Lavanya's career took off. "I've worked with almost everyone in the industry," she says with a smile. Currently, she is the go-to makeup artist for stars like Catherine Tresa and Sreeleela. "It's been an incredible journey, and I'm grateful for all the opportunities that have come my way."

Lavanya also cherishes her work with the Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) cricket team. "It's always a pleasure working with the SRH Hyderabad team. They are such amazing people with down-to-earth attitudes. This isn't my first time working with them; I've had the privilege of collaborating with them in previous years too," she says fondly.

As a working mother, Lavanya has always believed in empowering other women. "I support and train women who are interested in the beauty industry. Nowadays, the doors to the wedding and movie industries are widely open for upcoming professional makeup artists. It's an exciting time for anyone entering this field," she says.

Lavanya's love for Hyderabad goes beyond professional opportunities. "I absolutely adore the weather and the vibe of the city," she says, though she admits that traffic can be a challenge. "Whenever I go out of town, even for small business trips, I find myself missing Hyderabad. It's love," she adds with a smile.

Reflecting on her journey, Lavanya credits her profession for helping her achieve independence. "Makeup has not only been my passion but also a means to become financially and professionally independent. It's empowering to know that I've built something meaningful through my work," she says.

Lavanya Reddy's story is a testament to the power of determination and passion. From Guntur to Tollywood, her journey inspires countless aspiring makeup artists to dream big and work hard to achieve their goals.



DIRECTED BY : Victor Mukherjee
PRODUCED BY : Jyoti Deshpande, Neha Anand, Pranjal Khandhiya
CAST : Mithila Palkar, Amol Parashar, Meiyang Chang, Sauraseni Maitra
STREAMING ON : Disney+Hotstar
RATING : 2.5/5

Sweet Dreams

A rom-com with heart, but not enough spark

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

PLOT

"Sweet Dreams" brings a unique twist to the rom-com genre, narrating the story of Kenny (played by Amol Parashar) and Dia (played by Mithila Palkar), two individuals who see each other in their dreams every night. Kenny is a charming influencer with a stable career but a tumultuous love life. After a breakup 10 months ago, he's haunted by recurring dreams of Dia, his seemingly perfect partner. Dia, on the other hand, is a corporate professional grappling with career and relationship uncertainties. Despite being in a serious relationship with Arjun (played by Meiyang Chang), Dia feels drawn to Kenny, who appears nightly in her dreams. When fate intervenes, the two spot each other during separate trips to Alibaug. Kenny, who is supported by his new friend Roop (played by Sauraseni Maitra), embarks on a journey to find Dia. Similarly, Dia begins to question her reality and chases after the dream man. The film follows their quest to connect in real life through the modern world of social media, with the help of their friends.

ANALYSIS

"Sweet Dreams" is built on an intriguing concept: the idea of finding love through dreams and questioning whether one should chase their fantasies or embrace reality. The premise feels fresh and has the potential to reinvigorate the rom-com space. Unfortunately, while the story's foundation is promising, the execution leaves much to be desired. Victor Mukherjee attempts to weave a modern fairy tale, but the storytelling falters due to its lack of depth and emotional engagement. The film's linear narrative fails to hold the audience's attention, and the pacing feels uneven. While the core idea raises interesting questions about love and compatibility, the treatment lacks the complexity or emotional intensity needed to leave a lasting impact.

HIGHLIGHTS

One of the strongest aspects of Sweet Dreams is its fresh and unconventional concept, exploring the idea of two individuals connecting through their dreams, which brings a unique twist to the rom-com genre. The film stands out for its charming performances, particularly by Amol Parashar and Mithila Palkar, who bring warmth and relatability to their characters. Additionally, the chemistry between Kenny and Roop, played by Sauraseni Maitra, is a highlight, as their bond develops beautifully, adding depth and a sense of stability to the narrative. These elements together infuse the film with moments of charm and intrigue, even when the overall execution falters.

DRAWBACKS

Despite its intriguing premise, Sweet Dreams falters in execution, struggling with a bland and uninspired narrative that fails to fully engage the audience. The lack of emotional depth in the storytelling makes it difficult for viewers to feel invested in Kenny and Dia's journey, leaving their romantic arc underwhelming. Additionally, the supporting cast feels underutilized, serving more as placeholders than meaningful contributors to the story. The climax, which should have been the emotional high point, falls flat and feels anticlimactic, robbing the narrative of a satisfying resolution. Moreover, the film's soundtrack, an essential component of any rom-com, is forgettable and does little to enhance the emotional beats of the story. These shortcomings collectively make the film less impactful than it could have been.

PERFORMANCES

Amol Parashar shines as Kenny, bringing charm and vulnerability to the character while effectively portraying his inner conflict between staying grounded in reality and pursuing an elusive dream. Mithila Palkar captures Dia's confusion and hesitations with finesse, making her character relatable, though her arc remains underdeveloped. Sauraseni Maitra is a standout as Roop, adding much-needed stability and maturity to the narrative while sharing delightful chemistry with Amol, which becomes one of the film's highlights. Meanwhile, Meiyang Chang and Faye D'Souza deliver competent performances, but their characters feel peripheral and contribute little to the overall story.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Victor Mukherjee's direction struggles to find consistency, as it fails to balance the film's dreamy premise with its real-world elements. The pacing is uneven, and emotional moments are often underplayed, leaving the audience disconnected. While the cinematography captures picturesque visuals, especially the Alibaug sequences, it doesn't add significant depth to the storytelling. The editing, though keeping the runtime to 1 hour and 49 minutes, makes the film feel stretched, with certain scenes dragging unnecessarily. The soundtrack, a crucial element in romantic films, is uninspiring and misses the opportunity to create memorable, emotionally resonant moments.

VERDICT

Sweet Dreams" has all the ingredients for a heartwarming rom-com but fails to deliver on its promise. While the performances, particularly by Amol Parashar and Sauraseni Maitra, add charm, the lackluster storytelling, weak emotional arcs, and unconvincing resolution prevent the film from making a lasting impact. It's a watchable film if you're in the mood for a lighthearted story, but it's unlikely to leave you with the warm, fuzzy feeling that great rom-coms do. "Sweet Dreams" is a forgettable watch that barely scratches the surface of its intriguing concept. It's a film that had potential but fell short in execution.

TACKLING CERVICAL CANCER

Challenges and solutions for India's women

IN INDIA, CERVICAL CANCER IS THE SECOND MOST FREQUENT DISEASE IN WOMEN AND A SERIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN. BECAUSE OF A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE, SCREENING, AND TREATMENT FACILITIES, IT CONTINUES TO TAKE THOUSANDS OF LIVES EVERY YEAR. ADDRESSING PREVENTION STRATEGIES TO LESSEN THE INCIDENCE OF CANCER IS A CHALLENGE FOR THE INDIAN POPULACE.

CERVICAL CANCER IN INDIA: REALITY CHECK

One-fourth of all cervical cancer cases worldwide occur in India. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports that in India, approximately one lakh women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 60,000 women are losing their lives to the disease each year. Alarmingly, studies report death of one woman passes from cervical cancer every seven minutes. Given that cervical cancer is mostly avoidable with early screening and immunisation, this fatality rate is concerning. Due to a lack of knowledge about the disease, stigmaassociated with gynaecological health, and restricted access to medical care, the burden is greater in rural areas.

OBSTACLES IN TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

• Low Awareness and Education: A large number of Indian women are ignorant of cervical cancer, its risk factors, and HPV vaccination and Pap screenings as preventative interventions. Women are prevented from getting appropriate medical advice or going through routine tests because of cultural taboos and stigma around talking about reproductive health issues.

• Inadequate Screening and Early Detection: Cervical cancer screening services, including Pap smears and HPV tests, are not easily accessible or generally available, particularly in rural areas. According to studies, just 3–5% of Indian women have regular cervical cancer screenings, while approximately 70% of women in affluent nations do so.

• Limited HPV Vaccination Coverage: Although some states have recently implemented it, the HPV vaccination, which can prevent up to 70–90% of occurrences of cervical cancer, is not included in India's universal immunisation program. The vaccination is not widely adopted because to its high cost, lack of awareness, and misconceptions.

• Gaps in Healthcare Infrastructure: Inadequate facilities plague India's healthcare system, particularly in rural areas where basic healthcare centres lack the funding necessary for follow-ups and screenings. Advanced-stage cases with few and costly treatment choices are the result of delayed diagnosis.

• Socioeconomic Barriers: Access to healthcare is further hampered by poverty, illiteracy, and gender inequity. Many women put the health of their families above their own, which causes screenings to be postponed or overlooked.



• Limited Oncology Workforce: Timely diagnosis and care are impacted by the lack of qualified oncologists and specialised treatment facilities, particularly in underprivileged areas.

STEPS TO LESSEN THE IMPACT OF CERVICAL CANCER

India needs to take a multifaceted approach that prioritises affordable treatment, prevention, and awareness in order to effectively combat cervical cancer.

• Raise Awareness and Education: Start national programs to inform women about the importance of early detection, risk factors for cervical cancer, and HPV infection. To combat stigma and misunderstandings, incorporate education on cervical cancer into community health initiatives and school curricula.

• Strengthen Screening Programs: Put in place extensive screening initiatives in both rural and urban regions. In situations where Pap smears and HPV testing are not available, low-cost alternatives such as Visual Inspection with Acetic Acid (VIA) can be used. Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and other healthcare professionals should receive training on how to do initial screenings and recommend patients for follow-up care.

• Increase Coverage of HPV Vaccines: As part of India's universal immunisation policy, the HPV vaccine should be made available to girls aged 9 to 14 for free or at a reduced cost. Address vaccination hesitancy by educating the public and busting myths about itseffectiveness and safety.

• Enhance the Infrastructure for Healthcare: Invest in mobile screening units to reach underserved communities and guarantee follow-up care. Open additional cancer screening and treatment facilities, especially in rural and isolated locations.

• Address Socioeconomic Barriers: Provide financial support and subsidised medical care to women from low-income families. Work together with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to increase community awareness and close the gap in healthcare delivery.

• Enhance the Workforce in Oncology: Provide additional training in cervical cancer management to gynaecologists, oncologists, and other medical professionals. Connect rural communities with urban specialists by utilising telemedicine tools.

• Innovation and Research: Encourage research on accessible, affordable diagnostic instruments and treatment modalities that are suited to India's heterogeneous populace. Promote public-private collaborations to create cutting-edge approaches to the treatment and prevention of cervical cancer.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS

Although India has made progress in combating cervical cancer, more work remains. Plans to incorporate the HPV vaccine into the national immunisation program were recently revealed by the government. However, the following legislative actions ought to be given top priority in order to have a long-lasting effect:

• Mandate routine screening at primary healthcare facilities as part of standard health examinations, require

• Establish a National Cervical Cancer Task Force to oversee developments and guarantee state-by-state coordination of efforts.

• As part of the National Health Mission, provide specific financing for screening, immunisation, and treatment initiatives.

• Collaborate with private organisations and NGOs to expand vaccination drives and awareness campaigns.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Despite being avoidable, cervical cancer still has a significant impact on Indian women. By removing the obstacles to prevention and treatment with effective awareness efforts, reasonably priced immunisation programs, and enhanced healthcare infrastructure, India can lower the incidence of cervical cancer. Furthermore, better results will be possible if women are empowered to put their health first and if the government and healthcare stakeholders continue to work together. Numerous lives can be saved by early diagnosis, prompt treatment, and preventative measures, guaranteeing a healthy future for women nationwide.

(The author, Dr Rahul S Kanaka, is a Consultant – Surgical Oncology, at Manipal Hospital, Yeshwanthpur, Sarjapur and Hebbal.)

the pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | JANUARY 25, 2025

Bumrah, Jadeja and Jaiswal named in ICC Test Team of the Year

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, veteran all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal deservedly found a place in the ICC's Test Team of the Year 2024 that featured four Englishmen with Australian Pat Cummins as its captain.

The team also had two New Zealanders, including the redoubtable Kane Williamson. Cummins was the lone Australian to make the all-star XI.

Bumrah was nothing short of magical in 2024, dominating every team and every batter he bowled to. He became the first bowler to average under 20 with a minimum of 200 wickets in Test cricket, solidifying his place in history.

In total, Bumrah took 71 wickets in 2024 at an astonishing average of 14.92, finishing as the highest wicket-taker in Test cricket for the year. Thirty two of these scalps came in the recent Border-Gavaskar series against Australia, which India lost 1-3.

He began the year with a stellar performance against England, taking 19 wickets in four matches, including a remarkable nine-wicket haul in Visakhapatnam. At home against Bangladesh, he further extended his tally with 11 wickets in just two games.

Although his outing against New Zealand was subdued, where he picked up three wickets, it was against Australia that Bumrah truly cemented his legacy as one of the greatest bowlers of all time.

Jadeja, meanwhile, scored 527 runs in 2024 at an average of 29.27 and picked up 48 wickets at an impressive average of 24.29.

Jaiswal established himself as a premier Test opener and a standout figure in Indian batting during 2024. After a challenging series in South Africa, he made an impressive comeback in the home series against England, amassing a staggering 712 runs. This included two double centuries and three fifties, showcasing his dominance.



The 23-year-old left-handed batter continued his fine form with three half-centuries in four innings as India thrashed Bangladesh at home. He was also one of the few bright spots in an otherwise disappointing series for India, as New Zealand achieved a historic whitewash on Indian soil.

In the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Jaiswal demonstrated his class with a magnificent 161 in the second innings at Perth, bouncing back strongly after a first-innings duck. He finished as India's top scorer in the series, accumulating 391 runs.

Over the calendar year, Jaiswal scored a remarkable 1,478 runs at an impressive average of 54.74, a tally second only to England's Joe Root (1,556 runs in 2024 at an average of 55.57), who was also named in the ICC all-star team.

Williamson was also one of the stand-out performers in 2024 as he accumulated 1,013 runs in 2024 at an outstanding average of 59.58, making him the sixth-highest run-scorer of the year.

Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis also figured in the team after his 1,049 runs in 2024 at an extraordinary average of 74.92.

Cummins led his team to series victories against the West Indies, New Zealand, and most notably India. He took 37 wickets in 2024 at an average of 24.02 and scored 306 runs, averaging 23.53.

ICC Test Team of the Year 2024:

Pat Cummins (c) (Australia), Yashasvi Jaiswal (India), Ben Duckett (England), Kane Williamson (New Zealand), Joe Root (England), Harry Brook (England), Kamindu Mendis (Sri Lanka), Jamie Smith (wk) (England), Ravindra Jadeja (India), Matt Henry (New Zealand), Jasprit Bumrah (India).

Zverev in Australian Open final as injured Djokovic left

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Spectators booed an injured Novak Djokovic as he left the court in Rod Laver Arena after quitting one set into his Australian Open semifinal against Alexander Zverev on Friday.

Dealing with a what he said was a torn muscle, Djokovic lost the opener 7-6 (5) when he put a forehand volley into the net, then began shaking his head and immediately walked over to shake Zverev's hand. The 37-year-old Djokovic packed up his equipment and walked off toward the locker room, pausing to respond to the jeers by giving two thumbs-up.

At his news conference, Djokovic said the pain in his taped left leg was "getting worse and worse." He hurt it during his quarterfinal victory over Carlos Alcaraz on Tuesday night.

"I knew," Djokovic said, "even if I won the first set, it was going to be a huge uphill battle for me."



He was bidding for an 11th championship at the Australian Open and record 25th Grand Slam title overall.

But this is the second time in the past four major tournaments he was unable to finish because of an injury: He withdrew from last year's French Open before the quarterfinals because he tore the meniscus in his right knee during a match.

Djokovic underwent surgery in Paris and, less than two months later, reached the final at Wimbledon, then won a gold medal for Serbia at the Paris Olympics.

The number two-seeded Zverev reached his first title match at Melbourne Park and on Sunday will face the winner of Friday's second semifinal between number one Jannik Sinner of Italy, the defending champion, and number 21 Ben Shelton of the United States.

Zverev, a 27-year-old German, is a two-time runner-up at other major tournaments, losing finals in five sets at the 2020 U.S. Open and 2024 French Open.

"My goal is still to compete with the big guys and to compete for these kind of tournaments and try to win them," Zverev said.

"For that, I need to get better. I need to improve on the court. I need to improve physically."

During his on-court interview, Zverev pleaded with the fans not to give Djokovic a hard time.

"I know that everybody paid for tickets and everybody wants to see hopefully a great five-set match," he said. "But you've got to understand - Novak Djokovic is somebody that has given this sport, for the past 20 years, absolutely everything of his life."

The only set of Djokovic vs. Zverev lasted one hour, 21 minutes and included 19 points that lasted nine strokes or more apiece. The first four games alone lasted 31 minutes, slowed both by the lengthy baseline exchanges and Djokovic's deliberate pacing between points, taking the 25-second serve clock down to - and occasionally slightly beyond - the full allotment.

The match was grueling - and would have been even without dealing with a leg problem that initially became an issue late in the first set against Alcaraz.

Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma in ICC women's ODI Team of the Year



PTI ■ DUBAI

Star batter Smriti Mandhana and all-rounder Deepti Sharma were on Friday named in the ICC women's ODI Team of the Year 2024 but none of their male counterparts found a place in the men's side that was dominated by Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The women's all-star team has three players from England, two Australians, two South Africans and one each from Sri Lanka and West Indies, besides the two Indians. South African batter Laura Wolvaardt, who scored 697 runs in 12 matches in 2024, was named captain of the ICC team.

The men were, however, absent from the ICC XI and that can be attributed to lack of ODI engagements for the country last year. India played only three ODIs -- an away series against Sri Lanka --, losing two of them while the third one ended in a tie.

The 28-year-old Mandhana accumulated 747 runs in 13 matches to be the highest run-scorer in women's ODIs in 2024. She is also in the running for the ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year award.

In the home series against South Africa, Mandhana was in sublime form, beginning with back-to-back centuries in the first two ODIs. She narrowly missed a third consecutive ton, falling for 90, though her remarkable tally of 343 runs in the series earned her the Player-of-the-Series award.

Mandhana had a shaky start in the first two ODIs against New Zealand in October, but ended the series on a high note with a brilliant century in the final match. With this hundred, Mandhana became the most prolific century-maker for India in the Women's 50-over format.

Deepti scored 186 runs and took 24 wickets in 13 matches in a fine all-round show in 2024.

Sub-continent shines in Men's all-star line-up

The men's all-star ODI team announced by the ICC features four players from Sri Lanka, three each from Pakistan and Afghanistan and one from the West Indies.

Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka was named skipper of the ICC team as well for his stupendous batting through the year.

In his 16 ODI appearances in 2024, Asalanka scored 605 runs at an average of 50.2 including a century and four fifties.

Sri Lanka played 18 ODIs in the year gone by, the highest among all teams, and won 12 of them.

U-19 Women's T20 World Cup: Pakistan, Nepal win fourth place play-off matches

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Pakistan and Nepal were hardly tested on way to winning their fourth-place play-off matches in the ICC Women's U-19 T20 World Cup here on Friday.

Pakistan, riding on young pacer Haniah Ahmer's four-wicket haul, crushed Samoa by 52 runs while Nepal got the better of Malaysia by seven wickets in a low-scoring match.

Put into bat, Pakistan scored 136/8 with Maham Anees and Fatima Khan scoring 28 and 25 respectively. Norah Salima was the most successful Samoa bowler taking three wickets for 20 runs.

Right-arm pacer Haniah then unsettled the Samoan batters, returning with excellent figures of 4/20, while Quratulain Ahsen (2/13) and



Fatima Khan (2/19) were the other wicket-takers as Samoa were all out for 84 in 18.5 overs.

Malaysia were off to an inauspicious start with Nepal striking off the very first ball to dismiss Nur Aliya Binti Mohd Hairun for a duck.

The team could not recover from the early loss and folded up for 45 runs with skipper Puja Mahato (4/9) and Rachana Chaudhary (3/5) emerging as the most successful bowlers.

In reply Nepal reached 47/3 in 11 overs to complete a seven-wicket victory with Mahato scoring 23 runs. Left-arm spinner Suabika Manivannan took all three wickets.

Indian GM P Iniyan wins title in Malaysia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Indian Grandmaster Iniyan Panneerselvam clinched the ninth Johor International Open chess tournament title in Malaysia with a dominating performance.

The 22-year-old from Erode in Tamil Nadu accumulated 8.5 points in nine games. He finished 1.5 points ahead of his nearest rival, winning against four International Masters and one Grandmaster.

The nine-round tournament, which ended on Thursday, had 84 participants from eight countries, out of which 24 were titled players.

In fact, at the end of the penultimate round where he beat Indonesian IM Nayaka Budhidharma, Iniyan had already secured the title as he was 1.5 points ahead in the points table.

Iniyan beat Vietnamese GM Nguyen Van Huy in the final round in an impressive performance.

Indian IM VS Raahul and Chinese IM Li Bo finished second and third respectively.

Iniyan, who had won the Chennai Open earlier in January, secured 15 rating points from the title win.

Rohit Sharma shows some spark but falls for 28 on Ranji Trophy return

PTI ■ MUMBAI

He pulled Umar Nazir for a trademark six, effortlessly lofted Auqib Nabi and Yudhvir Singh for a couple of more hits over the ropes to give a glimpse of his absolute best. But eventually, a fifty on Ranji comeback was not meant to be for India captain Rohit Sharma who fell for 28 here on Friday.

Playing his first game for Mumbai in domestic red-ball cricket in nearly a decade, Rohit's first day on the field was a disaster with the 37-year-old falling for a 19-ball 3 in the opening hour of the Ranji Trophy clash against Jammu Kashmir.

But on Friday, Rohit gave a far better account of himself to notch up a fluent 28, his best in first-class cricket since a 52 in the second innings of the Bengaluru Test against New Zealand last year.

It indeed has been that long for Rohit, who has since scored 0, 8, 18, 11, 3, 6, 3 and 9 in subsequent outings against New Zealand and Australia.

Back then in mid-October, India were cemented on top of the World Test Championship points table and the house was in complete order for the national side.

But it all came crumbling down following defeats to New Zealand and Australia which forced Indian superstars to play domestic cricket.

On Friday, he looked for a big one but it wasn't to happen. Rohit's knock of 28 was mixed with hits and misses in the initial stages, which all began with a tough dropped chance by Nazir in the fourth over when he could not grab a return catch on his follow through.

Rohit immediately responded with a pull shot for a six over the square leg.

A thick outside edge then flew between the fielder at gully and second slip, and on the final ball Rohit flashed hard and wide to put the ball away for another four on the off-side.

Dropped on one, Rohit had raced to 21 off 11 balls at one stage but he remained cautious mostly, even though there were a few times he was beaten.

With comparatively no moisture on the second day wicket here at the BKC, J&K bowlers also had to work hard to keep it tight but could not stop Rohit from freeing up his arms for a total of three sixes and two fours.

India keeps eye on Shami's fitness, looks to extend lead against England

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Unruffled by the lingering fitness concerns surrounding Mohammed Shami, the well-oiled machine that is India's T20 team will be eyeing an encore of its opening game performance against a stunned England in the second game of a five-match series, here on Saturday.

India lead the rubber 1-0 after a facile seven-wicket victory at the Eden Gardens on Wednesday. The hosts would certainly want to see Shami in action but his inclusion in the eleven, as things stand now, will depend on further evaluation of his fitness.

The 34-year-old was expected to feature in the first game and he was actively involved in the nets too, but his comeback was postponed possibly because the management wanted to take a deeper look at his readiness.

However, India did not miss Shami much in Kolkata where pacer Arshdeep Singh, with the new ball, and spinner Varun Chakravarthy, in the middle phase, wrecked England, producing impressive spells.

The Chepauk spin

The Eden pitch had enough help for both quicks and their slower colleagues but the corresponding 22-yard trampoline here could offer more assistance to the spinners, as it often has been the case in the past.

India would not be complaining whatever be the nature of the track. The home side boasts of quality and



variety in a line-up consisting Varun, vice-captain Axar Patel and Ravi Bishnoi.

From England's perspective, they would require much better contributions from experienced spinners Adil Rashid and Liam Livingstone to challenge the Indians.

Apart from pacer Jofra Archer, none of the other English bowlers could survive the onslaught of Abhishek Sharma and the mini cameo of Sanju Samson in the first match.

Sanju-Abhishek pair on a roll

Since coming together in the T20Is last year, Samson and Abhishek have had considerable success, often giving India a flying start.

The desired double-barrel firing has been occasional, but at least one of them has produced the goods rather consistently.

In Kolkata, Abhishek hurt England with a brutal knock, striking at over 230.

Samson has three hundreds in the last six innings, and it would not be unrealistic to imagine these two as the first-choice openers once India hit the road to next year's T20 World Cup at home.

They also offer that rare right-hand-left-hand combination at the top.

Here too, the Indian openers will have to give their side a solid start considering the tricky nature of the pitch.

England too will hope for a fiery start from their openers to clinch early momentum, as Phil Salt and Ben Duckett jointly made just four runs off seven balls.

Time for Surya to shine

It's not a matter of grave concern yet but skipper Suryakumar Yadav will be mindful of the fact that he has just two fifties in the previous 11 innings after the T20 World Cup final last year.

Further distilled, the stats will show that he has made no significant contributions in the last three matches, including a three-ball duck at Kolkata.

But such things often get papered over when the team is on a roll as the reigning T20 World Champions have steamrolled Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and South Africa in their last three assignments.

But he would not want to miss the party for long and will be eyeing a fruitful outing here.

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REVIEW

DHANYA BALAKRISHNA SHINES; BASED ON A REAL-LIFE STORY!

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Film: Hatya

Cast: Dhanya Balakrishna, Ravi Varma, Pooja Ramachandran, Bindu Chandramouli, Sivaji Raja, Srikanth Iyengar,

Cinematographer: Abhiraj Nair **Music:** Naresh Kumaran

Producer: S Prashanth Reddy **Director:** Srividya Basawa

Release date: January 24, 2025 **Rating:** 1.5/5

Some small films were released this week and one of them is 'Hatya'. Generally, director Ram Gopal Varma made movies with incidents that happened in Telugu States, but this time Srividya Basawa came up with this film 'Hatya'. A few films were already made in the backdrop of Rayalaseema politician YS Jaganmohan Reddy's uncle YS Vivekananda Reddy's murder. Srividya also has taken this murder story for 'Hatya' and she narrated it for somebody's favour; who is that? It is just a coincidence that this week only female directors' movies were released. Padmavathi Malladi came up with her film and now Srividya comes up with this one. The film is releasing without proper publicity as many people don't even know about it. Names of persons and places are changed because of censor problems.

Story:

Dharmendra Reddy (Ravi Varma) is a popular leader in Illendula and his murder was mysterious. Initially, they said it was a heart attack, but later revealed it was a murder. He is also uncle to Chief Minister Kiran Reddy (Bharath Reddy). So, he appoints a strict police officer Sudha (Dhanya Balakrishnan) to investigate his uncle's murder. The problem starts after Reddy's murder. Some people cleaned the house and the entire murder scene. So it is very difficult for the investigation team to get clues about the case. But still she starts her investigation and comes to know some interesting things that Dhamendra Reddy is in debt and he has a love interest Salima (Pooja Ramachandran). Sudha also sees Reddy's daughter Kavitha's (Bindu Chandramouli) angle for the movie. What happened in the end, who is behind Reddy's murder and what is the motive, is the crux of the story.

Analysis:

Director Srividya gave discrimination in the beginning of the movie that the story is completely ficticious with names and places not resembling anyone dead or living. Though she did that, people can still understand that this story is based on YS Viveka's murder case. This murder was a big sensation at that time and it is also a mysterious one. Even after six years, the investigation is still going on. More than that, most of the viewers know about this case and they read and heard about it in newspapers and also on television and social media. There are many stories that came out on this murder. So, how the director narrates the murder case is interesting.

Srividya narrates the first half interestingly with Sudha, the leader of the investigation team entering Reddy's house and starts enquiring from all corners. The way the team interrogates everyone related to this murder is interestingly narrated. But the director completely falls flat in the second half with the love story of Reddy, which is not up to the mark, and the way the investigation deliberately pointed out Reddy's daughter for the motive.

In reality, the CBI has taken over the case and it still it pending. But the director in the film wanted to do favour to someone. So, she pointed out that Reddy's daughter is behind the murder. If she leaves with different angles and without bias, the film is definitely interesting. At some point it is predictable that the director's story will go the way it is going and then interest is lost. The movie was made with good production values. The cinematography is good, especially in the first half of the investigation. Before the film's release, the director said that she didn't conclude in the end, but she ends the story with how and what happened.

When it comes to the performance, Dhanya Balakrishnan steals the show with her performance. After a long time she gets to play the main role in a film and in this one, she perfectly played the cop role. Her dialogue delivery, body language is good and she behaved in every scene naturally. Ravi Varma played the role of Dharmendra Reddy and he carried it in a very graceful manner. Definitely, this film is a good one for him as an actor. Pooja Ramachandran played the love interest of Reddy and she too did her part well. Ravi Teja's brother Raghu, Sivaji Raja also played as cops. There are actors who played the roles of Venkatesh Reddy, Peddireddy, Kavithamma, Kishore Reddy, Shaik Ali, Anand Yadav and Bhadrayya, and they all supported well. Most of the characters speak in the Rayalaseema dialect, which is a good thing.

Finally, 'Hatya' story is based on a real-life murder case, but director Srividya Basawa succeeded only half way through. If the director focused on the story more rather than to do favour a person through the film, she definitely failed. Earlier also, many directors made films favouring one particular political party and they failed at the box-office. 'Hatya' too falls in the same category.

Payal Rajput makes waves in a woman-centric film



Payal Rajput is making waves with her debut film 'RX 100' and after that she didn't get much success. Before last year she played the lead role in 'Mangalavaram', which was a great success and now, the actress signed another woman-centric film. The film was officially launched on Friday morning at a private studio and it is directed by Muni. She is playing the title role of this new film called 'Venkatalachimi'. Produced by Raja and NS Choudhary, they announced that the film is releasing in six languages.

According to the director, the film's story revolves around a tribal girl and it is an action-revenge drama. "When I wrote the story of 'Venkatalachimi', I thought of Payal Rajput for the lead role. The story is based on a tribal girl with action at its core," said director Muni. He added that the film will be released in Telugu, Hindi, Punjabi, Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil.

"After 'Mangalavaaram', I came across several scripts but none impressed me. When director Muni narrated this story, I was captivated. This story is so powerful that it might even make people remember me as 'Venkatalachimi' forever. I firmly believe this Pan-India project will take my career to the next level," said actress Payal.



PRAGYA JAISWAL OUT, SAMYUKTHA IN FOR *AKHANDA 2*



Nandamuri Balakrishna and Boyapati Sreenu combination is a successful one and they proved it with three blockbusters. Now, they are joining hands for the fourth time for the sequel of 'Akhanda 2: Thandavam'. The first part 'Akhanda' was a hit and now they are gearing up for the sequel. Boyapati already started shooting this film, canning some important scenes at the ongoing Kumbh Mela. Now, the news about this film is that Pragya Jaiswal is out of this project and Samyuktha is replacing her. The makers on Friday officially announced Samyuktha's name. It means Pragya Jaiswal is not there. Pragya attended the film's official launch, and her name was also there in the list. Actually, Pragya played as Balakrishna's wife in the first part and the director wanted to continue. Even Pragya talked highly about Balakrishna and many thought she will continue in the sequel. But to everyone's surprise, Pragya is not there in the cast and Samyuktha is added.

Raam Achanta and Gopichand Achanta are the producers of this film, while the film is presented by M Tejaswini Nandamuri, daughter of Balakrishna. The makers announced that Samyuktha comes on board to play the female lead in this film. Then what will Pragya's character be in this sequel? This is the question doing rounds. According to a source, director Boyapati changed the story to suit Samyuktha's character. The child in the 'Akhanda' is now grown up as a teen in this sequel, according to a source. Now, the makers wanted to rope in the girl who played in Salaman Khan's 'Bajarangi Bhaijaan' in this film as Balakrishna's daughter, added the source. The shoot of the movie is presently underway. And the sequel is being mounted on a bigger canvas with a high budget, says the makers.

Sunny Deol locks the April 10 date, what about Prabhas film?

Bollywood actor Sunny Deol joined hands with Telugu director Gopichand Malineni for the film 'Jaat'. It is touted to be an action thriller, and is all set to release. On Friday, the makers announced the release date as April 10, 2025. Interestingly, on the same date, Prabhas starrer 'The Raja Saab' is also supposed to be released, but it is now evident that Prabhas film is postponed to another date.

Produced by Naveen Yerneni and Y Ravi Shankar, along with People Media Factory, the makers officially announced the release date.

The teaser, which premiered on an unprecedented 12,500 screens globally, along with 'Pushpa 2', has already set the stage for what promises to be the most explosive action drama of the year. Sunny Deol, known for his powerful performances and larger-than-life action sequences, will remind everyone why he remains the best in action. The film also stars Randeep Hooda, Vineet Kumar Singh, Saiyami Kher and Regina Cassandra. Thaman is providing the music.



Thandel promotions in full swing

Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi are playing the lead in the film 'Thandel', directed by Chandoo Mondeti. Top producer Allu Aravind is presenting, while Bunny Vasu is the producer. The film is releasing on February 7. So, the makers started the promotions aggressively and released another song 'Hilesoo Hilesso'. Devi Sri Prasad is the music director.

The story is based on a real incident that happened near Srikakulam, with fishermen backdrop. Shreya Ghoshal and Nakash Aziz are singers of this song. Sai Pallavi and Naga Chaitanya's chemistry is adorable. Not only does the couple look loveable, but the song composition alongside the extraordinary vocals paired with wonderful visuals ensures this song to be a blockbuster love song. The movie is one of the most-awaited ones in the coming days.

IT raids going on, promotions also not stopped

On one side, the Income Tax (IT) officials raided big production houses like Mythri Movie Makers, and on the other side, the production house didn't stop promoting their upcoming films. After 'Pushpa 2' and 'Robinhood', the makers are now coming up with a small film titled '8 Vasantalu', which is a concept-driven film directed by Phanindra Narsetti. He had earlier directed a film titled 'Manu'.

Ananthika Sanilkumar of 'MAD' fame is playing the female lead which is also the main one in this film. The teaser of this film was released on Friday and it shows love and break-ups, pain and sorrow. They also revealed the characters' internal struggles and the theme of heartbreak. Phanindra Narsetti's poetic touch in the writing and narrative, paired with the clever reverse flashback, adds depth and resonance to the teaser. Ananthika Sanilkumar impresses with her mature portrayal of the character, while the teaser also introduces the pivotal roles of Kanna Pasunoori and Hanu Reddy. The makers are expected to announce the release date soon.

