VIJAYAWADA, FRIDAY, MARCH 28, 2025; PAGES 12 ₹4

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# The Pioneer

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India, Russia navigate complex geopolitical landscape: EAM 5



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L2: Empuraan: Stylish sequel with hollywood vibes, but lacks emotional SUBSTANCE P12



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

The Pioneer

*The Congress gave assurances indiscriminately to come to power. The Congress has now taken up the 'Delimitation' raga to divert public attention from the implementation of its assurances. The Congress Government has been saying that Telangana is rising but in debts. The state's financial condition is like 'Appula Apparao' and 'Rotation Chakravarthi'*



— *Alleti Maheshwar Reddy, BJLP*

P4

**DON'T MISS...**

## 'Guidelines for NALA Act repeal soon'

The Minister for Revenue, Registration and Stamps, Anagani Satyaprasad, has announced that guidelines for the repeal of the NALA Act will be released soon. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had declared the government's intention to repeal the NALA Act, which is seen as an obstacle to development, during the recent Collectors' Conference. In this context, representatives from the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) met with Minister Satyaprasad at the Secretariat in Amaravati on Thursday and...

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## Protest turns violent in Bhubaneswar

Around 25 people were injured as Congress supporters clashed with police in Bhubaneswar on Thursday after being stopped from marching to the assembly, seeking a high-level investigation into crimes against women that they allege have increased after the BJP came to power in the state last June. Among those injured were 15 police personnel, most of whom were hit by stones thrown by the protesters after being stopped on the Mahatma Gandhi Marg in the heart of the city, an officer said...

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## Indian billionaires' wealth a 3rd of GDP

The cumulative wealth of 284 Indian billionaires is a third of the country's GDP, a report said on Thursday. Gautam Adani, who helms the conglomerate headquartered in Gujarat's Ahmedabad, has emerged as the biggest wealth gainer globally with a Rs 1 lakh crore jump in his fortune to Rs 8.4 lakh crore, as per the Hurun Global Rich List. Reliance Industries' Mukesh Ambani saw a 13 per cent decline in his wealth to Rs 8.6 lakh crore, according to the yearly report which uses a...

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## RCB hopes to end 17-yr Chennai jinx

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's (RCB) hopes of exorcising a 17-year jinx hinge on their experienced batting unit finding its range when they face familiar foes Chennai Super Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Friday. The Royal Challengers have beaten the Super Kings only once at Chepauk — in the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2008. In the current RCB squad, only star batter Virat Kohli was part of that moment and now he will like to breach the CSK's fortress for...

-SPORTS

# Polavaram AP's lifeline: CM

**ASSETS PROJECT INAUGURATION ONLY AFTER REHABILITATION**

**ASSURES DISPLACED FAMILIES THAT THE PROCESS WILL BE COMPLETED BY 2027**

PNS ■ POLAVARAM

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has reaffirmed that the Polavaram project, considered the State's lifeline, will only be inaugurated after the complete rehabilitation of those displaced by the project.

"Rehabilitation of all the displaced will be completed before water is released from the project. The project will be inaugurated only after that," the Chief Minister stated during his visit to Polavaram on Thursday. He also inspected the ongoing construction through an aerial survey.

Addressing the displaced families, Chandrababu criticised the previous YSRCP government for neglecting their welfare. He noted that after the TDP-led NDA came to power in 2014, Rs 4,311 crore was disbursed as compensation. However, during the YSRCP tenure from 2019 to 2024, no compensation was provided, he alleged.

"Since the TDP-led NDA returned to power in 2024, Rs 829 crore has already been deposited in the accounts of the displaced," Chandrababu stated. He questioned whether former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had fulfilled his promise of paying Rs 10 lakh compensation to each displaced family.






- The TDP-led NDA came to power in 2014, Rs 4,311 crore was disbursed as compensation. However, during the YSRCP tenure from 2019 to 2024, no compensation was provided
- Since the TDP-led NDA returned to power in 2024, Rs 829 crore has already been deposited in the accounts of the displaced
- Every rupee of public money should benefit the people and not be misused
- Compensation will be provided to all eligible families and justice will be ensured

The Chief Minister also highlighted the merger of seven mandals from Telangana into Andhra Pradesh to facilitate the Polavaram project, crediting his government for convincing the Prime Minister to approve the merger.

Criticising the previous administration's handling of the project, the CM blamed their negligence for the collapse of the diaphragm wall, which was built at a cost of Rs 400 crore. He revealed that the new diaphragm wall under construction will cost Rs 990 crore. "Had we been re-elected in 2019, the project would have been completed by 2020," he asserted, expressing concern over rising costs due to the delay.

The Chief Minister stressed the need for transparency and accountability in public spending. "Every rupee of public money should benefit the people and not be misused," he said, recalling that during his previous tenure, he personally visited the project site 33 times and dedicated every Monday to monitoring Polavaram's progress.

Continued on Page 2



# Ports will play key role in State's growth: Min

***Timely completion of ports and harbours will enable State to utilise coastal stretch and natural resources***

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh's extensive coastline and abundant natural resources will play a significant role in the State's future economic development through port expansion, said Minister for Roads & Buildings, Investments and Infrastructure BC Janardhan Reddy.

The Minister conducted a review meeting on Thursday at the Andhra Pradesh Maritime Board (APMB) office in Mangalagiri, focusing on the progress of port and fishing harbour development. He also reviewed the functioning of the Andhra Pradesh Maritime Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (APMIDCL).

Janardhan Reddy expressed confidence that timely completion of the ports and fishing harbours under construction would enable the State to effectively utilise its long coastal stretch and natural resources. He stressed that, after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, the role of seaports has become increasingly crucial to the State's economic growth. He instructed officials to expedite the completion of these projects.

During the meeting, the Minister reviewed the progress of three major ports being developed under the EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) model and directed the Maritime Board officials to ensure their rapid completion. He also assessed the development of four fishing harbours under Phase 1 and the upcoming five low-cost fishing harbours planned for Phase 2. Besides, the Minister enquired about the progress of constructing six fishing landing centres.

Dr N Yuvaraj, Secretary, Investments and Infrastructure Department; Damacharla Satya, Chairman, Maritime Board; Praveen Aditya, CEO, Maritime Board; GV Raghava Rao, Chief Engineer, AP Maritime Board; and Ram Shankar Naik, Fisheries Commissioner, were present.



# Govt aims at slum-free AP by 2047: Narayana

***Implementation of 10 key principles under Vision 2047 will bring progress***

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister, Ponguru Narayana, has stated that the government is working towards transforming Andhra Pradesh into a slum-free State by 2047. He was speaking at the Swarna Andhra 2047 conference as the chief guest at the School of Planning and Architecture in Vijayawada.

The Minister emphasised that the implementation of 10 key principles under Vision 2047 will drive progress across all sectors, aligning with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's goal is to position the State as a model of comprehensive and balanced development by the time India celebrates 100 years of independence. He emphasised that Amaravati is not just a project for basic infrastructure, but is designed to offer quality living standards.

Narayana expressed delight at the Central government allocating funds for urban development in the budget. He mentioned that plans are being formulated for urban development in the State using those funds. He urged planners and architects to collaborate in utilising financial resources effectively for urban development.

On the occasion, Lanka Dinakar, the chairman of the 20 Principles Implementation Committee, stated that there would be a focus on sustainable urban development through strategic investments and collaboration, expanding infrastructure, and ensuring financial stability. He noted that a roadmap is being developed to make Andhra Pradesh a prominent State in India.

Continued on Page 2

# CREDAI AP applauds decision to abolish NALA Act

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

***Landmark reform to boost real estate growth, reduce costs and attract investments***

CREDAI Andhra Pradesh has welcomed the State government's landmark decision to repeal the Non-Agricultural Lands Assessment (NALA) Act, calling it a progressive step that will ease financial and administrative challenges for the real estate sector. The move follows persistent advocacy by CREDAI Andhra Pradesh, which had highlighted the burden imposed by high land conversion charges on both developers and the general public.

CREDAI Andhra Pradesh president Bayana Srinivas Rao, chairman Buddiga Srinivas, and general secretary D. Rambabu emphasised that scrapping the NALA Act will significantly reduce costs for property developers and landowners.

By eliminating conversion charges, the decision is expected to streamline the development process, attract more investment, and accelerate real estate growth in the State. "This crucial reform will make housing and infrastructure projects more affordable, ultimately benefiting homebuyers and the broader community," CREDAI leaders stated. They further acknowledged that the decision would stimulate economic activity and urban development by removing a major financial hurdle in land utilisation.

Expressing sincere gratitude to the Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Minister for Revenue, Stamps & Registration Anagani Satyaprasad, and Minister for MA&UD P. Narayana and the State Government, CREDAI Andhra Pradesh lauded the administration for addressing industry concerns and prioritising a pro-development approach. The organisation reaffirmed its commitment to working alongside the government to create a favourable environment for real estate expansion and economic progress in AP.

With this policy shift, the State is poised for accelerated urban growth, paving the way for increased investment in housing, commercial projects, and infrastructure.

## Applications invited for Kandukuri Awards

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In honour of the 177th birth anniversary of Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu, the prestigious and distinguished Kandukuri awards will be presented at the State level and district level on April 16 on the occasion of Telugu Theatre Day.

Artistes, technicians, writers, and directors who have rendered outstanding services in the field of theatre will receive the awards, said Himanshu Shukla, Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh State Film and TV Drama Development Corporation.

Applications have been invited from eligible candidates.

Continued on Page 2

# Lokesh facilitates heart transplant with special aircraft and green channel

***Intervenes after receiving a message from hospital requesting urgent assistance***

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A single message to the Minister for Education and IT, Nara Lokesh, made the difference between life and death. Responding swiftly, Minister Lokesh arranged a special aircraft at his own expense and facilitated a green channel to transport a heart from Guntur to Tirupati, enabling a life-saving transplant.

Cherukuri Sushma, a patient admitted to Ramesh Hospitals in Guntur, was declared brain-dead due to severe health complications. Her family decided to donate her organs, giving others a new lease of life. Upon receiving a message from the hospital requesting urgent assistance, Lokesh immediately intervened.

He personally financed the special aircraft required for the rapid transportation of the heart and coordinated with the relevant authorities to ensure a green channel was established, allowing for the swift and uninterrupted movement of the organ.

At 7 PM on Thursday, the Ramesh Hospitals medical team transported the heart to Tirupati via the green channel, with all necessary arrangements in place for a successful transplant.



Expressing their gratitude, the families of the donor and recipient, along with the staff of Ramesh Hospitals, praised Minister Lokesh for his timely and compassionate response. His quick action has not only made the impossible possible, but also highlighted the power of organ donation in saving lives.

# *KGH docs allegedly profit from referrals to pvt centres*

***Patients asked to undergo expensive MRI and CT scans at select facilities, which are available free of cost at KGH***

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Serious concerns are emerging over unethical medical practices at King George Hospital (KGH), where some doctors, particularly from specific departments, are allegedly engaging in profit-driven referrals to private diagnostic centres. Patients are reportedly being directed to undergo expensive MRI and CT scans at select facilities, despite these tests being available free of cost at KGH.

According to sources, these tests, priced between Rs 2,000 and Rs 5,000, come with a commission of 40 to 50 percent for referring doctors. Some medical professionals are even refusing to accept reports from other diagnostic centres, pressuring patients to visit only the designated private facilities under the pretext of unclear results. As a result, many patients who are entitled to free medical services at KGH are being burdened with unnecessary expenses, leading to widespread frustration.

KGH provides MRI and CT scans without any charge, ensuring that patients receive medical reports along with online image access for doctors. These digital images allow doctors to assess conditions and prescribe necessary treatments efficiently. However, some practitioners claim that these reports lack clarity, using this as an excuse to refer patients to external diagnostic centres—raising questions about their true intentions.



***Patients are reportedly being directed to undergo expensive MRI and CT scans at select facilities, despite these tests being available free of cost at KGH. According to sources, these tests, priced between Rs 2,000 and Rs 5,000, come with a commission of 40 to 50 percent for referring doctors.***

Beyond the issue of diagnostic referrals, allegations of doctors diverting patients to their private clinics and hospitals have also surfaced.

It is an open secret that some specialists encourage patients to seek follow-up treatment at their personal practice, creating a system where an initial visit to KGH is merely a gateway to costly private consultations.

Continued on Page 2

# Lok Sabha nod to bill on immigration, foreigners

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha passed the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 on Thursday, with Home Minister Amit Shah asserting that those who come to India for business, education and investment are welcome, but those who pose a threat to security will face stringent action.

Various amendments moved by Opposition members were negated and the bill was passed by a voice vote.

Shah said the bill is necessary to strengthen the country's security and economy, promote manufacturing and trade, get global recognition for the education system and help universities earn international repute.

Replying to a debate on the bill, he said the proposed legislation will strengthen the country's security, boost economy and business, besides encouraging the health and education sectors.

Shah also said the bill will ensure the country gets up-to-date information about every foreigner visiting India.

"This is very important. The main issue is that the immigration is not an isolated subject but it is directly or indirectly linked to various issues.

The bill will ensure a close monitoring of everyone who visits India, why do they visit India and how long they want to stay in India. It is absolutely necessary to know the details of every foreigner visiting India," he said after over the three-hour-long debate.

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MARCH 28, 2025



# YSRCP govt damaged Polavaram project: CM

## INEXCUSABLE ERRORS LED TO SIGNIFICANT DELAYS AND COST ESCALATIONS

**PNS** ■ POLAVARAM




Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, on Thursday, criticised the previous government for its mishandling of the Polavaram project, accusing it of acting with ego and vengeance. Speaking to the media after inspecting ongoing works at the Polavaram site and holding a review meeting with officials, Chandrababu stated that the previous administration made inexcusable errors that led to significant delays and cost escalations in the project.

"The previous government ignored the signals from the Polavaram Authority and the Centre, which advised caution. They made hasty decisions, particularly through reverse tendering, which resulted in a cost increase of ?2,782 crore," the CM said. He further pointed out that the previous government had neglected the project for six months, even changing contractors without considering the project's long-term impact.

Chandrababu, who has a personal attachment to the project, emphasised, "Polavaram is my sentiment. It hurts me to see the poor condition of the project." He added that this was his third visit to the site since assuming office as Chief Minister, and that in just nine months efforts were underway to bring the project back on track.

Terming Polavaram the "lifeline of the State," Chandrababu highlighted the benefits the project would bring once completed. "The project will stabilize 23.5 lakh acres of irrigation land and bring an additional 7.2 lakh acres under irrigation. It will provide drinking water to 28.5 lakh people, generate 960 megawatts of power, and supply 23 TMC of water to industries and citizens of Visakhapatnam," he said.

He also pointed out the critical water shortage in the State, with 4,000 TMC feet of water flowing into the sea this year. "If we can utilise even 400-500 TMC feet of water, we can completely avoid drought in the State," he added.

Chandrababu recalled that during the State's bifurcation, seven mandals in Telangana were merged into Andhra Pradesh through an ordinance to facilitate the project. He mentioned that the NITI Aayog had recognised the Centre's unsatisfactory record in completing the project and advised the state to take it up.

The Chief Minister stressed that the state had committed to completing 73 per cent of the project by 2019 and had already set a Guinness World Record by completing 32,215 cubic meters of concrete work in a single day. "In just 414 days, we built 1,397 metres of diaphragm wall," he said, highlighting the significant progress made after the current administration took charge.

Chandrababu also criticised the previous government for neglecting the project, stating that foreign experts had recommended a new diaphragm wall, which would cost ?990 crore. He said the ?440 crore spent earlier had been wasted. "The diaphragm wall will be completed by December this year, and the Left Bank Canal works will be completed by June 2026," he confirmed.

Chandrababu expressed confidence that both the Polavaram project and the Polavaram-Banakacherla project would be completed with the support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan.

# Guidelines for NALA Act repeal soon: Satyaprasad

## NAREDCO REPRESENTATIVES MEET MINISTER TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE

**PNS** ■ VIJAYAWADA



The Minister for Revenue, Registration and Stamps, Anagani Satyaprasad, has announced that guidelines for the repeal of the NALA Act will be released soon. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had declared the government's intention to repeal the NALA Act, which is seen as an obstacle to development, during the recent Collectors' Conference.

In this context, representatives from the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) met with Minister Satyaprasad at the Secretariat in Amaravati on Thursday and expressed their gratitude. The NAREDCO representatives acknowledged the Minister's significant efforts in facilitating the repeal of the NALA Act. As a token of appreciation, they honoured him with a shawl and a bouquet.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister highlighted that the Chief Minister consistently takes dynamic decisions for the State's development, and the decision to repeal the NALA Act is part of this proactive approach. He mentioned that the issue was promptly brought to the Chief Minister's attention as part of the "Speed of Doing" initiative, which expedited the decision-making process.

The Minister further stated that detailed guidelines for the NALA Act repeal would be issued shortly. He highlighted that repealing the Act would significantly boost the real estate and industrial sectors in the State.

NAREDCO representatives welcomed the government's decision, noting that obtaining NALA approvals currently takes up to a year and involves substantial fees. They expressed appreciation for Satyaprasad's dedicated efforts in ensuring the repeal of the Act.

Among those who met the Minister were NAREDCO representatives Gadde Chakradhar, Kiran Paruchuri, Durgaprasad, Seetharamayya, Jagan, Nagavamsi and Paparao.

# CM Naidu attends Iftar dinner

## Stresses economic empowerment and protection of Waqf Board properties

**PNS** ■ VIJAYAWADA



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu participated in an Iftar dinner organised by the State government in Vijayawada on Thursday, offering special prayers along with Muslim religious leaders. Addressing the gathering, he reaffirmed the Telugu Desam Party's commitment to the welfare of the Muslim community, stressing economic empowerment and the protection of Waqf Board properties.

Addressing the gathering, the CM highlighted the importance of Ramadan, describing it as a time for discipline, charity and spiritual reflection. "Ramadan is a sacred month that embodies devotion and prayer for the well-being of society.

The Quran teaches us that the financially stable should support the poor and I am proud to participate in this celebration with my Muslim brothers," he said.

The CM also reflected on the strong historical relationship between TDP and the Muslim community. He noted that under the party's governance, Muslims have benefited significantly, with notable initiatives such as the establishment of the Muslim Finance Corporation and the promotion of Urdu as the second official language during united Andhra Pradesh. "The TDP has always supported the Muslim community, from the construction of the Hajj House in Hyderabad to financial assistance under the 'Dulhan Scheme,'" he added.

In line with the TDP's manifesto, the CM announced an increase in the honorarium for Imams and Muezzins to ₹10,000 and ₹5,000, respectively. The recent State Budget saw a ₹1,300 crore increase in allocations for Muslim minorities, totalling ₹5,434 crore. "My mission is to lift the underprivileged out of poverty, ensuring that no one goes hungry or lacks access to basic needs like education and healthcare," he said.

# Govt forms District Level Assignment Review Committee

**PNS** ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has reconstituted the District Level Assignment Review Committee, superseding previous government orders (GOs 1st to 7th). Special Chief Secretary to the Government, RP Sisodia, issued the new orders following a proposal from the Special Chief Secretary & Chief Commissioner of Land Administration on Thursday.

The reconstituted committee will be chaired by the district in-charge Minister and will include key officials and public representatives.

Members will comprise the concerned District Minister(s), the Joint Collector (as Member-Convenor), MLCs representing the relevant constituency, the MLA of the concerned Assembly Constituency and the RDO/Sub-Collector of the area. Special invitees may also participate as required.

The committee's primary responsibility is to review and assign vacant government lands and ceiling surplus lands to eligible landless poor individuals for agricultural purposes.

# Registration Offices to remain open on March 30, 31

**PNS** ■ VIJAYAWADA

Special Chief Secretary RP Sisodia has issued orders declaring March 30 (Sunday) and March 31 (public holiday) as working days for all Sub-Registrar Offices, District Registrar Offices and Deputy Inspector General Offices across Andhra Pradesh.

The decision follows a report submitted by the Commissioner and Inspector General, Registration and Stamps, Andhra Pradesh, and was made after careful examination by the government.

As per the orders, these offices will function as usual from 11 AM to 5.30 PM on both days. RP Sisodia has directed the Commissioner and Inspector General, Registration and Stamps, Andhra Pradesh, to take the necessary steps to implement these orders.

# CM to launch P-4 scheme on Ugadi Day



**PNS** ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will launch the P-4 (Public, Private, People's Partnership) scheme, a State-level initiative aimed at eradicating poverty in Andhra Pradesh on March 30, said Chief Secretary K Vijayanand. The inauguration will take place in Amaravati from 5 PM to 7 PM, coinciding with the Ugadi festival. This programme is designed to bridge the gap between the affluent and the impoverished sections of society, fostering collaboration to uplift the marginalised.

The Chief Secretary, in a review meeting on Thursday, stressed the significant role of the P-4 scheme in creating a sustainable support system for the State's poorest.

"The goal of this programme is to connect 10 per cent of the State's high-net-worth individuals with the 20 per cent of people living below the poverty line, helping them overcome poverty through targeted partnerships and support," he explained.

To ensure a successful launch, extensive arrangements have been made, with over 11,500 people, including self-help group members, students, farmers and labourers, set to attend. Special RTC buses will transport participants from across the State, including approximately 7,000 people from districts near Amaravati such as Eluru, Krishna, NTR and Guntur. The remaining attendees will be brought from more distant areas like Manyam, Chittoor and Kurnool, with arrangements made for their safe and timely transport.

District collectors have been instructed to ensure the smooth transportation of attendees, with specific instructions on traffic management, security and the provision of essential services. A nodal officer will be appointed in each district to coordinate local efforts, while a liaison officer will be assigned to each bus.

For attendees coming from nearby districts, arrangements will be made for breakfast, lunch and dinner on the day of the event. Those traveling from farther districts will be provided with accommodation for two days, as they will need to leave a day earlier to reach the venue.

The Chief Secretary highlighted that this launch is not a routine public meeting but a specialised event with a distinct purpose.

"We want the attendees to feel valued and included, ensuring they enjoy the celebrations and experience the full benefits of the scheme," Vijayanand said.

The State's senior officials, including the IG of Stamps and Registration, Harinarayana, along with senior department officers, will oversee the logistics of the event. The successful execution of this launch will mark the beginning of a critical initiative aimed at improving the lives of the State's most vulnerable populations.

# Chandrababu destroyed Polavaram: Ambati

**PNS** ■ VIJAYAWADA



Former minister Ambati Rambabu has criticised Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for being responsible for the "destruction" of Polavaram, asserting that the project progressed rapidly under YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration.

He criticised 'pro-Chandrababu media' and claimed that the Polavaram project gained momentum immediately after Chandrababu assumed office. Rambabu pointed out that in 2014, when Chandrababu first came to power, his ministers promised to complete Polavaram by 2018, a commitment that was not fulfilled. He further noted that in 2019, Chandrababu claimed that if re-elected, the project would be completed by 2020-21, a statement Rambabu described as absurd.

He challenged Chandrababu's allegations that Polavaram funds were diverted by the State government during YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure, daring him to provide proof, promising a public gesture of respect if such evidence was produced. Rambabu explained that the agreement signed by Chandrababu required the State to initially fund the project, with the Central government reimbursing the expenses later, questioning how funds could be diverted under such an arrangement.

He questioned why Chandrababu agreed to take on the construction, originally a Central government responsibility, arguing that he lacked genuine commitment to Polavaram and instead favoured contractors and commissions. Chandrababu awarded contracts to his associates and failed to build the cofferdam before constructing the earth-cum-rock dam, a critical oversight.

Rambabu also credited Jagan, securing Rs. 12,557 crore from the Central government for Polavaram, but Chandrababu diverted these funds, using them for salaries. He labelled Chandrababu as a master of falsehoods and ineptitude, blaming his greed and mismanagement for the project's setbacks.

# Applications invited...

*Continued from Page 1*

The applications, along with relevant documents, must be submitted directly to the corporation's office located on the Pandit Nehru Bus Stand premises in Vijayawada by April 7.

Application forms can be downloaded from the official website, www.apsftvtdc.in. Previous recipients of the State-level awards are not eligible to apply again. However, those who have received district-level awards in the past are eligible to apply for the State-level awards.

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

| | |
|---|---|
| **Month & Paksham:** | Krishna Paksha |
| **Tithi:** | |
| Chathurdasi: | Mar 27 11:03 PM to Mar 28 07:55 PM |
| Amavasya: | Mar 28 07:55 PM to Mar 29 04:27 PM |
| **Nakshatram:** | |
| JPurva Bhadrapada: | Mar 28 12:33 AM to Mar 28 10:09 PM |
| Uttara Bhadrapada: | Mar 28 10:09 PM to Mar 29 07:26 PM |
| **Rahukalam:** | 10:50 AM to 12:21 PM |
| **Yamagandam:** | 03:22 PM to 04:53 PM |
| **Varjyam:** | 06:18 AM to 07:44 AM |
| **Gulika:** | 07:48 AM to 09:19 AM |
| **Amritakalam:** | 02:56 PM to 04:23 PM |
| **Abhijit Muhurtham:** | 11:56 AM to 12:45 PM |

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

**Forecast:** Mostly Sunny
**Temp:** 40°c
**Humidity:** 61%
**Sunrise:** 6:05 AM
**Sunset:** 6:20 PM

**Updated:** March 27, 2025 5:00 PM

# Polavaram AP's lifeline...

*Continued from Page 1*

The CM assured the displaced families that the rehabilitation process will be completed by 2027 without interference from middlemen. He acknowledged complaints about some names being omitted from the beneficiary list and promised to address the issue after a thorough inquiry. "Compensation will be provided to all eligible families and justice will be ensured," he pledged.

He further accused the previous government of diverting Central funds meant for the Polavaram project. "Had the project been completed on time, the displaced families would have been resettled by now and the State would have earned Rs 2,500 crore in revenue from the hydropower project," he remarked.

Chandrababu Naidu also promised additional support for the displaced, particularly for tribal communities who, he acknowledged, made significant sacrifices. "We will provide an additional Rs 75,000 to tribals who want to build their own houses," he announced. Concluding his address, the Chief Minister urged the displaced to remain confident and assured them of the government's full commitment to their welfare. "This is your government, a regime for all of us," he declared, promising further steps to increase revenue and improve living standards for the affected communities.

# Govt aims at slum-free...

*Continued from Page 1*

MA&UD Principal Secretary S Suresh Kumar commented on the necessity of having a plan for every undertaking, stating that miracles cannot happen overnight. He explained that to transform the State into one recognised uniquely within the nation requires a solid plan, and they are progressing in that direction. He noted that consistent efforts yield the best results and said that while there are no planned cities in the country, they are working to design Amaravati as a planned city. He assured that Amaravati would stand out as a clean and green city.

Followed by the inaugural programme, technical sessions were conducted on Financing Urban Development, Affordable Housing & Creative Redevelopment, Municipal Finance, Public-Private Partnerships and Urban Reforms and Urban Innovation & Mobility. During the technical session, the speakers highlighted the need for innovative models and policy reforms to ensure sustainable growth.

# KGH docs allegedly profit from...

*Continued from Page 1*

Patients often feel trapped in a cycle of repeated hospital visits, with some forced to return three or four times before receiving proper treatment. In contrast, those who opt for direct consultations at private clinics reportedly receive quicker attention, further fuelling suspicions of deliberate delays in public healthcare services. Despite widespread awareness of these issues among hospital authorities, no significant action has been taken to curb these practices. Additionally, several doctors are frequently absent from Outpatient Departments (OPDs), citing surgical duties or meetings with senior officials as reasons for their unavailability. The unethical conduct of certain medical professionals not only undermines public trust in government healthcare facilities but also imposes unnecessary financial stress on patients. Given the severity of these allegations, it is imperative that higher authorities, particularly the District Collector, intervene to ensure transparency and accountability within KGH.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**
**PANCHAYAT RAJ DEPARTMENT**
**E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE**

NIT No.44-50/DMF Grant/SEPRVSP/2024-25. Dt. 24.03.2025

The Superintending Engineer, PR Circle, Visakhapatnam invites percentage rate tenders for taking up six number of Road works and one building work in Anakapalli District with an Est. Cost of **Rs.1093.00 Lakhs.** Bid download after: **29.03.2025.** Details visit: **https://www.apeprocurement.gov.in. Ph.0891-2521739.**

**Sd/- Superintending Engineer,**
**PR Circle, Visakhapatnam**

DPR R.O.No: 15696/CL/ADVT1/1/2021-22, Dt. 27.03.2025

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# Work together to make Krishna country-liquor-free by May 1: Min

## District Coordination Committee meeting on Navodayam 2.0 held

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

The Minister for Mines, Geology, and Excise, Kollu Ravindra, has instructed officials to work together to make Krishna the first country liquor-free (Naatu Saara free) district in the State by May 1. He emphasised the need for coordinated efforts among all district officials. Besides, he announced that the State government is launching Navodayam 2.0, aimed at eradicating country liquor across the entire State.

The Krishna District Coordination Committee meeting for Navodayam 2.0, held at the Meekosam meeting hall on the collectorate premises in Machilipatnam on Thursday, focused on the country liquor initiative. On the occasion, Kollu Ravindra unveiled a wall poster promoting the complete eradication of Naatu Saara in the district.

Ravindra mentioned that the State government, under Navodayam 2.0, is working on raising public awareness on the dangers of country liquor. The Excise Department is conducting various programmes and awareness campaigns in villages, towns, and cities to inform people about the health risks associated with consuming country liquor. He reiterated that the ultimate goal of the government is to achieve a country-liquor-free State.

He also recalled the measures taken in 2016 during Navodayam 1.0, which led to 11 out of 13 erstwhile districts being declared country-liquor-free. At that time, he served as the Excise Minister. He noted that the department later faced challenges due to a lack of an enforcement wing, which impacted revenue.

Furthermore, he pointed out the growing revenue disparity between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, highlighting that in 2019 the difference was just Rs. 4,000 crore, but it increased to Rs. 40,000 crore by 2024. Ravindra stated that after the formation of the NDA government, Excise officials have been playing a vital role in the



State. He urged officials to inform the public that country liquor is often made using harmful substances, such as drainage water, black jaggery, urea, garbage, and mud.

Additionally, Minister Ravindra announced that his government plans to identify country liquor producers and provide them support through the SC, ST, BC, and Minority Corporations, as well as CSR funds. He mentioned that the State government has allocated Rs. 10 crore in the 2025-26 annual budget for this purpose. He also stressed that the government is serious about addressing the issue of ganja and is taking necessary steps. He instructed officials to establish a de-addiction centre at the Government Hospital in Machilipatnam.

The meeting was attended by Krishna District Collector DK Balaji, Superintendent of Police R Gangadhara Rao, Excise Deputy Commissioner Srinivasa Rao, Assistant Commissioner Srinivasa Chowdary, DRO K Chandrasekhar Rao, DRDA PD Harinath, DWAMA PD Siva Prasad, and other officials.

# Jagan slams coalition govt over Kasinayana temple demolition

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**



Affirming that Haindava Dharma slipped to its lowest ebb during the coalition governance, former Chief Minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said the contrast could be seen as to who safeguarded dharma vis-à-vis the demolition of sacred Kasinayana Kshetra.

Taking to social media X, Jagan said that though the Centre ordered to stall the construction work of Kasinayana Kshetra, on August 7, 2023, it was his government which stalled the move initiated by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests.

"As Chief Minister I wrote a letter on August 18 to the Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav to exempt the 12.98 hectares of land of Kasinayana Kshetra and the State would comply with the conditions laid for it without fail," he said.

With that the Centre yielded to the request and stalled its move. "During our tenure, there were no further attempts on this front. This is the commitment we have towards temples and religious affairs," he added.

In sharp criticism, he accused the coalition government of reversing this progress within six months of taking office. "The State has seen bulldozers raze a renowned temple under the government's supervision, with orders from the Collector, overseen by the RDO, and directives from the Special Chief Secretary of the Environment and Forest Department at the behest of Deputy Chief Minister and Chandrababu".

Labelling the demolition a "barbaric attack" on Hindu Dharma driven by "arrogant power," he challenged the government to respond, presenting what he called irrefutable evidence.

Jagan accused the coalition of hypocrisy, claiming that they only "issue orders, demolish with their own hands, and then spin tales to cover it up." He cited additional controversies under the current regime, including the Tirumala laddu propaganda and Tirumala stampede as further evidence of their failure to uphold temple sanctity.

Targeting the Deputy Chief Minister, who oversees the Forest Department, he questioned, "A self-proclaimed Sanatana Dharma advocate hasn't said a word about demolitions under his own department. Does he have any right to speak on Hindu Dharma?"

# 33rd annual day celebrations of MBU held with grandeur

**PNS ■ TIRUPATI**

The presence of Padma Shri Dr Madugula Nagaphani Sarma, actor R Sarath Kumar, and filmmaker and choreographer Prabhu Deva inspired students and added to the grandeur of the programmes on the occasion of Mohan Babu University (MBU)'s 33rd annual day celebrations held on Thursday. The event brought together students, faculty and eminent personalities.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of gold medals to meritorious students across various disciplines, including the Nandamuri Basava Tarakam Memorial Gold Medal, the Sri Manchu Narayanaswamy Naidu Memorial Gold Medal and several others recognising outstanding academic achievements.

Speaking at the event, MBU Pro-Chancellor Vishnu Manchu stated, "At Mohan Babu University, we are committed to shaping future leaders by fostering a culture of excellence and innovation. The annual day is a tribute to our students' hard work and a reflection of MBU's mission to drive academic brilliance."

Mohan Babu University is led by Padma Shri Dr Mohan Babu, a renowned actor, educator, and philanthropist. The university boasts a comprehensive array of 108+ graduate and postgraduate programmes.





# 70 Siddhartha Mahila Kalasala students get placements

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Seventy students from Sri Durga Malleswara Siddhartha Mahila Kalasala (SDMSMK) have secured placements as Data Annotators at Adept Talent Acquisition in Penamaluru near Vijayawada. More than 188 students attended the campus recruitment drive organised by the Adept Talent Acquisition at the SDMSMK in Vijayawada on Thursday.

During the campus recruitment, all 188 students attended the written test, of which 70 students successfully completed the second round of Group Discussion and the third and final round of HR Interview. Finally, they got the jobs as Data Annotators with an annual package of Rs.1.52 lakh.

Principal Dr S Kalpana, Special Officer Dr R Madhavi, president M Rajaiah, secretary P Lakshmana Rao, convener N Lalitha Prasad, Academic Officer LK Mohana Rao, and Placement Officer P Harika congratulated the students.

# APSRTC management gives priority for workers welfare: Minister

**PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM**

Minister for Excise and Mines Kollu Ravindra has assured the APSRTC workers that the RTC management would extend all required support to them.

The Minister inaugurated the newly constructed building of the RTC District Dispensary, that was built at a cost of Rs 80 lakh in the RTC bus stand premises in the city.

State RTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao and MD Dwaraka Tirumala Rao were also present. Later, the minister along with the RTC Chairman and MD inaugurated the breastfeeding room set up in the RTC premises under the auspices of the Women and Child Welfare Department.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister revealed that in recognition of his excellent service as DGP, the state Chief Minister has appointed Dwaraka Tirumala Rao as the RTC MD to help the struggling RTC. The minister said that the RTC drivers who take passengers safely to their destinations are commendable.

Kollu Ravindra stated that RTC had faced problems after it merged with the government, adding that efforts are being made to fully recover it. "The State government is giving Rs 1500 crore to APSRTC. The APSRTC gets an income of Rs 200 to 300 crore through cargo. Efforts are being made to convert APSRTC buses into electric vehicles. Efforts are also being made to generate electricity through various means such as renewable energy, solar energy, and wind energy by the RTC", he observed.

"Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu said that the implementation of free bus travel to women will become an additional burden on the government. However,



Government will provide additional funds to implement the scheme," the Minister made it clear

Kollu Ravindra said that the dispensary would be very beneficial for the RTC employees and workers, especially those who have eye related problems. He praised the RTC driver for taking passengers safely. He said that 80 RTC workers from Gudivada, Gannavaram, Avanigadda and other areas go to the district dispensary every day for treatment and assured that if necessary, he will also organize a medical camp on behalf of his trust.

The Minister emphasized the development of Machilipatnam bus stand which inundates knee-deep if there is heavy rain.

# Durga temple takes measures to beat the heat

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

To ensure the comfort of the devotees visiting the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada during the summer season, temple authorities have implemented several measures. They have constructed temporary shelters, or cool pandals, in front of the temple to provide shade and relief from the heat. Additionally, the flooring on the temple premises has been painted white to reduce heat absorption, creating a cooler environment for barefoot devotees.

The temple Executive Officer (EO), K Ramachandra Mohan, said in a press release on Thursday that these cool pandals were erected at the Rajagoparam, Mallikharjuna Maha Mandapam, and devotees' waiting areas. In addition to these measures, the temple authorities are providing drinking water, he added.

He added that buttermilk would be served to the devotees who are coming to the temple during the summer season from the Ugadi festival onwards.



# Incentives reinstated for Lepakshi employees

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

The Minister for Handlooms and Textiles, S Savitha, has announced the reinstatement of incentives for Lepakshi employees, a practice that had been halted by the previous administration citing the COVID-19 pandemic.



Traditionally, Lepakshi showrooms have offered incentives to employees to boost sales of handicraft products. However, the prior government suspended these incentives over the past five years. Under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the NDA government has decided to restore these benefits.

Currently, there are 97 Lepakshi showrooms across various cities in the State and country. These outlets reported profits of ?5.50 crore up to February in the 2024-25 fiscal year. To encourage employees and further increase sales, the government has sanctioned incentives totalling ?32.42 lakh for this period.

Permanent employees will receive incentives equivalent to two-thirds of their basic salary. Outsourcing staff employed at Lepakshi showrooms will be granted ?15,000 each, while daily wage workers will receive ?4,000 each. Minister Savitha expressed confidence that these incentives will motivate employees to work with renewed enthusiasm, thereby boosting handicraft sales.

# Every household will have CCTV camera: Anitha

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**



Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha stressed the importance of technology in crime prevention during the inauguration of a pilot project for installing CCTV cameras in Jaggayyapet on Thursday. The Minister highlighted the goal to control crime and establish Jaggayyapet as a model for safety through technological integration. "From televisions and refrigerators to air conditioners, we want every household to also have a CCTV camera," she asserted.

The project involves the installation of 509 new CCTV cameras in the Jaggayyapet Circle, aiming to enhance surveillance and deter criminal activities. Anitha announced plans to implement similar projects in her own constituency, Payakaraopeta, underscoring the government's commitment to leveraging technology for public safety.

She commended Jaggayyapet MLA Sriram Rajagopal and the NTR District Police, led by Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu, for their efforts in installing CCTV cameras. Anitha expressed gratitude to those who contributed to installing cameras in 71 villages within Jaggayyapet, noting that such initiatives would be expanded to every village in Andhra Pradesh to ensure public security.

Since the formation of the coalition government, Anitha noted that criminals have been deterred by the widespread use of CCTV cameras and drones. She highlighted the recent installation of 1,000 CCTV cameras and 28 drones in the NTR District Police Commissionerate, reflecting the government's dedication to enhancing surveillance capabilities.

# Strengthen security measures at Govt, private firms: DRO

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

Emphasising the importance of public awareness and preparedness against potential terrorist threats, District Revenue Officer (DRO) BH Bhavani Shankar has called for enhanced security measures across government and private establishments. Addressing a security review meeting at the collectorate here on Thursday, he urged institutions to adopt stringent security protocols and install alarm systems to ensure rapid response to emergencies such as fires or terrorist attacks.

The meeting focused on reviewing the operations of Octopus, an elite counter-terrorism unit. State Operations Officer DSP Jaggunayudu and In-Charge Officer DSP Madhusudhan Rao provided an in-depth briefing on Octopus's role in public safety.

They outlined the unit's current presence in Tirupati and Gannavaram and announced plans for an additional unit in Visakhapatnam.



# 'CM conspired to link Avinash Reddy to Viveka murder'

## Rachamallu Sivaprasad Reddy says Dastagiri and Sunil are protected by police

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu conspired to falsely link MP Avinash Reddy to the Viveka murder and tarnish YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's reputation, using Sunitha Reddy as a pawn with confessed killers Dastagiri and Sunil Yadav, former MLA Rachamallu Sivaprasad Reddy reiterated. He asserted Avinash's innocence, vowing to quit politics if a court ruled otherwise, staking the YSRCP's credibility.

Sivaprasad claimed that Dastagiri and Sunil, who admitted to Viveka's brutal murder, are financially backed and protected by police under Chandrababu's influence.

He questioned their sudden wealth, asking "how individuals who once struggled for Rs. 500 now possess crores".

He also mentioned Chandrababu's lawyer Siddharth Luthra's costly representation. "Who funds this, Sunitha or Chandrababu," he asked. Sunitha was aligning with her father's killers under Chandrababu's manipulation, calling it a shameful assault on justice.

For six years on, TDP and "yellow media" like Eenadu, Andhra Jyothi, ABN, and Mahanews spin false narratives to defame YS Jagan and harass Avinash, ignoring Viveka's second marriage and Bengaluru financial angles despite the CBI probe. He cited Viveka's PA Krishna Reddy's coercion by CBI officer Ramsingh, with no follow-up. He condemned that YSRCP worker Pawan Kumar Reddy was beaten by police after the duo's complaint over a movie clip.

Sivaprasad Reddy criticised TDP's "diversion politics" amid neglected issues like women's safety, farmers' woes, unpaid Aarogyasri dues, and broken promises, claiming Naidu's fear of YS Jagan fuels this vendetta using media and police. He referenced TDP's history, like NTR's ouster and Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga's murder, as proof of its hypocrisy on democracy.

# Keep vigil to combat black marketing: Collector

## Officials asked to take appropriate steps to control prices of vegetables and essential goods

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has emphasised the importance of closely monitoring the prices of vegetables and essential goods to ensure consumer confidence. He instructed officials to remain vigilant in order to combat black marketing. Officials should take appropriate steps to control the prices of vegetables and essential goods based on current market conditions and fluctuations in production, he stated.

On Thursday, the Collector convened a meeting of the District Level Price Monitoring, Control, and Market Intervention Committee at the collectorate in Vijayawada.

The meeting discussed the differences in vegetable prices between February and March of this year compared to the same months last year, as well as the prices set in the Vijayawada farmers' markets according to the conditions at the Vijayawada Rajiv Gandhi Wholesale Vegetable Market and Kaleshwara Rao Retail Markets. Additionally, changes in the prices of rice, red gram, palm oil, and other essential commodities were discussed.

During the meeting, the Collector remarked that if the prices of any commodity increase suddenly, a robust response should be implemented.

Marketing interventions and other measures should be taken to ensure that consumers are not adversely affected. He noted that Vijayawada, as the gateway to Amaravati, is developing rapidly.

Further, he said with future needs in mind, a workshop will be organised with stakeholders in April to design and implement plans that protect the interests of farmers, consumers, and the business community.

He assured that the suggestions made during the brainstorming session would be taken into consideration.



# AEO inspects arrangements for Brahmotsavam at Vontimitta

PNS ■ KADAPA

Elaborate arrangements are being made for the annual Brahmotsavam at Vontimitta Sri Kodandarama temple, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary has said.

As the annual Brahmotsavam at Vontimitta Sri Kodandarama temple in Kadapa district is set to commence in the next ten days, the Additional EO, accompanied by JEO Veerabrahmam and other officials inspected the ongoing arrangements at Vontimitta temple located near here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, the AEO said the mega religious annual fete would be observed from April 5-15 with Sri Rama Navami coupled with Dhwajarohanam on April 6 and the state festival of Sri Sitarama Kalyanam on April 11. The AEO directed the officials to complete the development works in the temple as decided within the stipulated time.

As the Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will participate in the celestial Kalyanam around a lakh devotees are being anticipated, the AEO instructed the officials to decorate the Kalyana Vedika venue attractively.

He later inspected the galleries of Kalyana Vedika and their capacities, Annaprasadam serving arrangements, German sheds, flower and electrical illumination to be made and others in detail. He also visited the VIP Guest House for the Chief Minister and made a few suggestions to the officials concerned.

CE Satyanarayana, SE (Electrical) Venkateswarlu, GM IT Sri Sesha Reddy and Deputy EO PV Natesh Babu were among those who accompanied the AEO.

# Collector explains development plans through vision document

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY



East Godavari district Collector P Prasanthi has said that she has explained the development plans of the district during the Collectors' conference through the vision document.

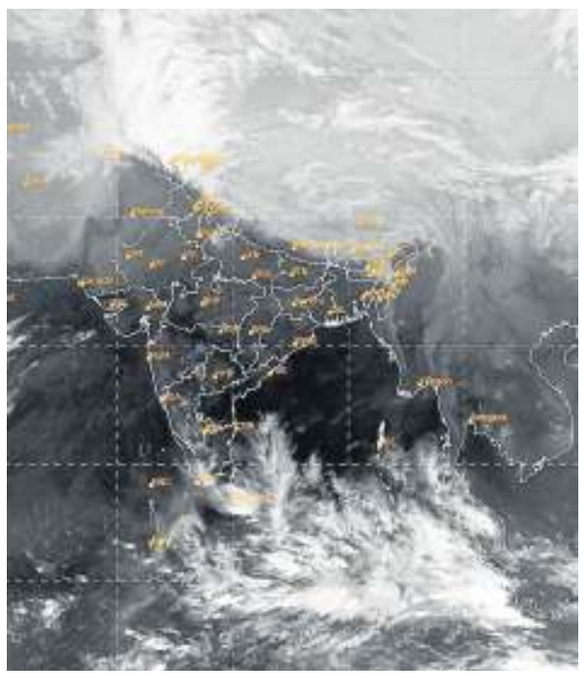
In a statement here on Thursday, Collector Prasanthi said that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu responded positively to the proposals related to infrastructure, service sector, tourism-related sectors, national highways, and employment guarantee working days for nursery farmers and he directed the officials concerned to take steps accordingly.

Collector Prasanthi mentioned that the presentation was given in the Collectors' conference held in the Secretariat at Amaravati regarding the district's comprehensive progress and also GVAP-based progress.

The Collector said that 11 proposals had been approved by the Chief Minister including modernization of the Red Canal towards a permanent solution, Torrigadda Scheme, employment guarantee workdays for 200 to 400 small and marginal farmers under the NREGA Scheme, coffee gardens in Kadiyam nurseries, extension of NREGA, correspondence on the handover of land under the control of the Railway Department, tourism development in Kadiyam nurseries, release of Rs 94.98 crore dues pertaining to land acquisition, allocation of Whitefield Paper Mill lands to SEZ, issuance of pending widow pensions, up gradation of Kovvur CHC from 50 to 150 beds hospital and appointment of Special Officers to monitor the works of Godavari Pushkaralu.

Regarding the Errakalava works, proposals have been made for permanent restoration of the right and left banks of the Errakalava rivulet and structures from KM 0.00 to KM 33.390 for a design discharge of 20,250 cusecs in Gopalapuram, Nidadavolu and Tadepalligudem constituencies in East and West Godavari districts at an estimated cost of Rs 295.30 crore, she observed.

The formation of an expert committee is awaited to finalize the design discharge of the Errakalava rivulet and preventive measures have been requested to be taken to prevent further inundation, she revealed. "The Chief Minister responded positively to the proposals, held a meeting with irrigation officials in this regard and instructed the State Chief Secretary to take appropriate action," the Collector claimed.



# Thunderstorm with lightning likely in North Coastal AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours and on March 30 and 31, Meteorological Centre said on Thursday.

In a daily weather report here, it said the same situation is likely in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on March 30 and 31.

Maximum temperatures will gradually rise by 2-4 degrees Celsius in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next five days. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at one or two places in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours and from March 30 to April 2.

Dry weather is likely to prevail in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days and in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on March 28 and 29.

Rain occurred at one or two places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and dry weather prevailed in Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours. The highest maximum temperature of 40 degree celsius was recorded at Nandyal in Rayalaseema on Wednesday, the report added.

et said Wednesday's North-South trough from South Chhattisgarh to Gulf of Mannar now runs North Madhya Maharashtra to North Kerala across interior Karnataka at 0.9 km above mean sea level. Hot and humid weather conditions are likely to prevail at isolated places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh on March 28 and 29.

# 'Centre will release Rs 97 cr for Suryalanka Beach development'

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY



Minister for Tourism Kandula Durgesh has announced that the Central Government has agreed to release Rs 97.52 crore for the development of Suryalanka beach under the Swadishi Darshan scheme 2.0.

Talking to the media here on Thursday, the Tourism Minister said that the Suryalanka beach located in Bapatla district would be developed with international standards to attract tourists.

Kadula Durgesh said that he met Union Tourism Minister Gajendrasingh Shekavat during his New Delhi visit recently and appealed to him to release funds for the development of various tourism projects in AP.

The AP Tourism department had sent proposals to the Union Tourism Minister seeking funds for the development of Suryalanka beach. As the Central Government agreed to release funds, the Suryalanka beach would be developed as a most attractive tourist destination in the state in coming days, Durgesh observed.

Kandula Durgesh expressed his gratitude to Union Tourism Minister Gajendrasingh Shekavat for his consent to release funds for the development of Suryalanka beach.

Tourism Minister Durgesh highlighted that the Central Government had already released Rs 172.34 crore for the development of Akhanda Godavari and Gandikota tourism projects.

## Aspirants of constable posts stage dharna demanding early exam

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Aspirants of constable posts took out a rally through the main streets on Thursday protesting against the inordinate delay in conducting the main examination. They raised slogans demanding the conduct of the main examination, without further delay.

DYFI state Secretary G Ramanna, who led the dharna while addressing the protesters, said that the state government issued a notification on 26 November 2022 for the recruitment of 6100 police constable jobs, and in the preliminary exam conducted in January against 4.52 lakh candidates, 92,000 secured eligibility.

But the physical event was conducted only recently after two years of relentless fight. He said the government was dodging the main exam under some pretext or the other. He warned that they would be forced to organize ` Chalo Vijayawada ' stir if the government failed to respond and do justice to the police constable candidates.



# 18 tractors being given to panchayats for garbage removal: Dola

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy has said that 18 tractors were given to 18 village panchayats for garbage removal.

Minister Veeranjaneya Swamy on Thursday said that the goal of the Government is to keep the rural areas clean and as part of that tractors were being distributed to gram panchayats under the Swachh Andhra program.

"Under the Swachh Andhra programme, the State government sanctioned tractors to 18 gram panchayats in 6 mandals under Kondapi constituency," the Minister revealed. Veeranjaneya Swamy handed over the tractors to the MPDO office in Kondapi mandal kendra today to the respective gram panchayats.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the goal of the State Government is to keep the rural areas clean, adding that as part of this, tractors were being distributed to gram panchayats with a population of 2,000 under the Swachh Andhra program.

The Minister observed that in the first phase, 903 tractors were purchased in the State at a cost of Rs 55.44 crore through the Swachh Andhra Corporation. Out of this, 120 tractors were allocated to Prakasam district at a cost of Rs 7,36,80,000, while 18 tractors were purchased for Kondapi constituency at a cost of Rs 1.10 crore and allocated to 18 village panchayats in six mandals in the constituency, he revealed.

Minister Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy noted that the Swachh Andhra programme is being organized on the 3rd Saturday of every month as per the instructions of the Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, with the aim of keeping the state clean.

The Minister informed that drain cleaners were sanctioned to the major panchayats. "Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu will launch the 'P4' program on Ugadi to bring about a poverty-free society," the Minister announced.

District Panchayat Officer Venkata Naidu and officials and public representatives participated in the programme.

## MP urges Centre for permanent solution to Kolleru lake issue

PNS ■ ELURU



Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar has urged the Central Government to provide a permanent solution to the Kolleru lake issue, ensuring security and stability for the residents living there.

During the Parliament session on Thursday, MP Putta Mahesh Kumar raised his voice in the Lok Sabha, representing the people of Kolleru.

The MP highlighted that over three lakh people have been living in the Kolleru region for decades. He stated that Kolleru Lake is a prominent tourist destination, attracting global visitors who come to witness the migratory birds. He emphasized the need for defining clear boundaries for the Kolleru region. The Supreme Court's recent directives regarding land demarcation have severely impacted the local farmers and residents, leading to the loss of nearly 21,000 acres of farmland for small and marginal farmers.

MP Mahesh Kumar brought this critical issue to the attention of the Central Government. He mentioned that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan are actively engaging with the Central Government to find a permanent resolution to the problem. Despite frequent hearings in the Supreme Court, the personal grievances of the farmers and residents remain unaddressed.

MP Mahesh Kumar expressed deep concern that the recurring Kolleru issue has threatened the livelihood of the locals, potentially forcing them into mass migration if a solution is not found.

He strongly urged the Central Government and the Union Minister for Forests and Environment to intervene and ensure a long-term resolution to the Kolleru residents' persistent problems.

# BC hostel student drowns in tank, hostel warden suspended

PNS ■ GUNTUR



A BC hostel student was drowned in an irrigation tank at Vatticherukuru village and the BC Welfare Minister suspended the hostel warden.

The deceased boy Bikkam Kishore (13) was studying 9 th class by staying in the BC hostel at Vatticherukuru in Veldurthi mandal.

The deceased student Kishore, along with two other students, went to the irrigation tank to have a bath, since there was no water facility in the BC hostel in which he was staying.

While having bath, Kishore slipped and drowned in the tank while the other two students came to shore safely. The body was fished out and the police registered a case. The deceased boy belonged to Gangalakunta village. Poignant scenes were witnessed at the GGH with grieving parents inconsolably.

Meanwhile, BC Welfare Minister S Savitha expressed grief and shock over the death of a hostel student by drowning in an irrigation tank.

She ordered the suspension of the hostel warden. In a statement here on Thursday, Minister Savitha lamented that the hostel warden's negligence led to the death of a student. "It is unfortunate that a 9 th Class student, who was staying in the BC hostel, drowned in an irrigation tank.

Orders were issued to suspend Hostel warden Sarada Rani for dereliction of duty," the Minister said. She conveyed her sympathies to the bereaved parents.

The Minister instructed all hostel wardens in the State to be vigilant and give importance to the safety of hostel inmates.

The indifference, committed by the hostel warden that caused the death of a student, is unforgivable, she said. She directed the hostel wardens to take steps to ensure that such an unfortunate event does not recur.

# City police deploy drone surveillance

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Visakhapatnam city police have taken a significant step towards enhancing public safety by deploying drone-based surveillance. This initiative aims to bolster crime prevention, facilitate swift detection, and improve overall security measures across the city. Speaking to The Pioneer, Police Commissioner Shanka Brata Bagchi described the initiative as a transformative advancement in law enforcement. By integrating cutting-edge technology, authorities seek to curb anti-social activities and enhance their operational efficiency.



Currently, six drones are actively patrolling various parts of the city, with plans underway to expand the fleet significantly. Over the next three months, the authorities intend to procure an additional 20 to 30 drones, ensuring that every police station in Visakhapatnam is equipped with at least two units. This expansion is expected to provide comprehensive surveillance coverage across the region.

These state-of-the-art drones are equipped with advanced features, including high-resolution day and night vision cameras, searchlights, and sirens. Their primary role is to monitor remote and inaccessible areas, capturing crucial footage that can aid in identifying and apprehending offenders. Commissioner Bagchi emphasised that the use of drones will serve as a deterrent to criminal activities, particularly in areas known for issues such as public drinking, gambling, and drug-related offenses.

# BRS trying to join Congress-led INDIA, says Maheshwar

## Telangana Govt raising more loans: Maheshwar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharatiya Janata Legislative Party (BJLP) leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said the BRS is trying to join the Congress-led INDIA.

He said the Congress gave assurances indiscriminately to come to power. The Congress has taken up the 'delimitation' raga to divert public attention from its assurances, and all family-based parties are opposing the BJP, he added.

Maheshwar asked the Congress Government to explain what action it is going to take against the BRS, which destroyed the state's economy.

"What is the reason behind the Congress Government supporting the illegal acts of BRS leaders? Why is the CM who had said that he would expose the Kaleshwaram, Mission Kakatiya and Bhagiratha scams not taking any action even after 15 months? Is there a deal between the Congress and the BRS," he said.

Speaking on the Appropriation Bill on Thursday in the Assembly, Maheshwar said that it is not proper for the Congress Government to spread the lie that the Centre is not giving funds to Telangana. He said that Telangana is now stuck in debt, and the government has to take loans to clear them.

He said the BRS is the first culprit and the Congress the second culprit for Telangana getting stuck in debt.

"The Congress Government has been saying that Telangana is rising. However, Telangana is now increasing its debt. The financial condition of the state is like "Appula Apparao" and "Rotation Chakravarthi," Maheshwar said.

He said that it is painful that the government did not spend the Rs 10,000 crore raised by mortgaging government lands. He demanded that the government should release a white paper on bills paid to contractors and sarpanches.

"The Congress Government too hiked budget estimations like the BRS government. The Congress and the BRS are friendly parties. We got eight seats in the Assembly and Parliament, and our party is the main opposition. The government is running on revenue from land sales, LRS and liquor sales. The state is being run on liquor. The BRS and the Congress transformed the state into a liquor state. The state will become a Sri Lanka if it does not reduce its debts. The Congress has no moral right to continue in power if it does not implement its assurances," the BJLP leader said.

ACROSS THE STATES



## Honeybees attack foreign tourists at Ajanta caves

Honeybees attacked a group of foreign tourists at the world-famous Ajanta cave complex in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district, in which an Australian national suffered minor injuries, officials said on Thursday. At least 10 members of the group were bitten by honeybees during the incident that occurred on Wednesday around 11.30 am, they said. "Thirty-three foreign tourists arrived in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar city by travelling in Deccan Odyssey luxury train. These tourists were on a visit to the Ajanta caves when around 10 of them were bitten by honeybees. An Australian tourist suffered minor injuries in the incident," said Jaswant Singh, a local tour operator who accompanied this group of international visitors to the world heritage site. The incident occurred near cave number 10, he said. "A medical team and those carrying other visitors in palanquins helped these tourists. They did not require further medical attention," he said.



## TN gets its 2nd Biodiversity Heritage site notified

The Tamil Nadu government announced on Thursday that it has notified the Kasampatty Veera Kovil Sacred Grove, near the Alagarmalai reserve forest in Dindigul, as a Biodiversity Heritage site under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002. This marks the second biodiversity heritage site in Tamil Nadu, following the notification of Arittapatti in Madurai in 2022. Nestled in the heart of Kasampatty village, the Veera Kovil Sacred Grove spans 4.97 hectares. "This revered grove has stood the test of time. It is surrounded by lush mango plantations, enhancing the natural beauty and fertility of the land," the state government said in a release. The grove serves as an ecological bridge, supporting wildlife and maintaining environmental balance. Beyond its religious significance, it plays a crucial ecological role by preserving biodiversity and regulating the local climate. "Veera Kovil Sacred Grove is protected by locals, who worship the deity Veeranan," the release stated.



## Sikkim to host intl conclave on tourism development

Yangang, a small hamlet in the southern part of Sikkim's Namchi district, is set to host the International Youth Conclave for Tourism Development next month as part of the celebration of 50 years of statehood, organisers said on Thursday. Organised by the Yangang Tourism Development Committee (YTDC) in collaboration with the Sikkim Tourism Department, the event will bring together 176 delegates from India and abroad to discuss sustainable tourism practices and the future of tourism development. The conclave will be held from April 12 to 14. The central theme, "Celebrating Sikkim's 50 Years of Statehood", aims to showcase the state's journey in tourism, highlighting its growth, challenges, and future opportunities. The event will focus on emerging tourism destinations, with special attention to Yangang, positioning it as a hub for sustainable tourism and cultural preservation, the organisers said in a statement. Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang has also emphasised that tourism remains a top priority for the government, aligning with the vision of Sunaulo, Samriddha and Samartha Sikkim.

# India, Russia navigate complex geopolitical landscape: EAM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



- This relationship with deep historical roots, and a long tradition of trust and mutual respect, continues to expand and deepen, in the backdrop of a dynamic world order.
- Every shift in realignment, India and Russia have demonstrated an exceptional ability to adapt and to find new opportunities for mutual benefit, and for contributing to regional and global stability and prosperity.
- Investments by both sides in each other's economies continues to grow. Our participation in multilateral forums such as the BRICS, the SCO and the G20, and our collaboration at the United Nations and other international platforms, underscores the comprehensive nature of cooperation between India and Russia.

In today's rapidly evolving order, India and Russia navigate a "complex geopolitical landscape", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Thursday, as he underlined that the "era of multipolarity" necessitates greater cooperation between the two nations.

In an online video address to the conference -- 'Russia and India: Towards a New Bilateral Agenda' -- he said "further enhancement of the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between India and Russia continues to be a shared foreign policy priority".

The conference is being hosted by the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC) and the Indian Embassy in Moscow.

In his address, Jaishankar said India "immensely values" its relationship with Russia and the two nations "remain committed to nurturing this deep friendship and exploring new frontiers of cooperation".

"This relationship with deep historical roots, and a long tradition of trust and mutual respect, continues to expand and deepen, in the backdrop of a dynamic world order," the external affairs minister said.

Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov is also taking part in the conference.

Jaishankar said through "every shift in realignment, India and Russia have demonstrated an exceptional ability to adapt and to find new opportunities for mutual benefit, and for contributing to regional and global stability and prosperity".

India-Russia diplomatic engagements continue to be marked by frequent high-level exchanges, robust institutional mechanisms, and a commitment to each other's core interests, he said.

"In today's rapidly evolving order, India and Russia navigate a complex geopolitical landscape. The era of multipolarity necessitates greater cooperation between our two nations," the external affairs minister said.

He further said while areas like energy, defence and civil nuclear cooperation have traditionally "dominated our engagements", trade, technology, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, connectivity and digital economy are emerging as "new points of collaboration".

India and Russia have set an ambitious target of increasing bilateral trade to a USD 100 billion by 2030, he said.

"Investments by both sides in each other's economies continues to grow. Our participation in multilateral forums such as the BRICS, the SCO and the G20, and our collaboration at the United Nations and other international platforms, underscores the comprehensive nature of cooperation between India and Russia," Jaishankar said.




## SC: We believe in vasudhaiva kutumbakam, unable to remain united

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Raising concerns over the "erosion" of the institution of family, the Supreme Court on Thursday said in India people believed in the maxim "vasudhaiva kutumbakam" but failed to remain united even with the close kin.

A bench of Justices Pankaj Mithal and S V N Bhatti said the concept of "family" was being eroded leading to a one-person-one-family system.

"In India we believe in vasudhaiva kutumbakam, i.e., the earth, as a whole, is one family. However, today we are not even able to retain the unity in the immediate family, what to say of building one family for the world. The very concept of 'family' is being eroded and we are on the brink of one person one family," the bench said.

The top court's observation came on a plea filed by a woman seeking eviction of her eldest son from her house.

It came on record that one Kallu Mal, who passed away eventually, and his wife Samtola Devi had five children, including three sons and two daughters. The parents did not share cordial relations with the sons and on August 2014 Kallu Mal made a complaint to the local SDM, alleging mental and physical torture by his eldest son.

## Odisha to serve cooked midday meals to students

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has decided to provide cooked midday meals to students of classes 9 and 10 in state-run schools from April 1, an official said on Thursday.

The decision was taken to increase the nutritional level of students, and enhance enrolment, attendance and retention at the secondary level, School and Mass Education Department Additional Secretary SK Mohapatra said.

The state government will bear additional expenditure of Rs 570.71 crore annually to implement the decision, he said in a letter to the state nodal officer of PM Poshan, Girish Chandra Singh.

The government also decided to provide three nutrition-rich laddoos to students of classes 1 to 10 every week from April 1, he added.

The laddoos will be distributed to the students during morning assembly on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, Singh said in a letter to the district collectors.

The cost of each laddoo is Rs 3.50, he said.

An additional egg will also be provided to the students covered under the PM Poshan scheme. At present, two eggs are being provided each week.

BATTLEGROUND BHUBANESWAR

## Protest turns violent as Cong workers clash with police, 25 injured

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR



Around 25 people were injured as Congress supporters clashed with police in Bhubaneswar on Thursday after being stopped from marching to the assembly, seeking a high-level investigation into crimes against women that they allege have increased after the BJP came to power in the state last June.

Among those injured were 15 police personnel, most of whom were hit by stones thrown by the protesters after being stopped on the Mahatma Gandhi Marg in the heart of the city, an officer said.

To tackle the situation, police baton-charged the Congress workers, used tear gas shells, and water cannons.

Congress leaders alleged that police used excess force on the protesters who were demanding an all-party House Committee to probe the cases, and instead could have arrested them. Police said they were compelled to use force as the Congress activists hurled stones, bottles and plastic chairs at the on-duty security personnel after breaking the first barricade.

"Fifteen police personnel were injured in the stone pelting by the protestors. The conditions of four of them were serious. A TV journalist also sustained a head injury," Additional Commissioner of Police (ACP) Narasingha Bhola said. The Congress leadership had assured the police that they would not violate the law, but they attacked the police personnel, he said.

"Stringent action will be taken against the lawbreakers," he added.

Deputy Commissioner Police Jagmohan Meena said, "Some people in the crowd have also sustained injuries. All are being treated at the Capital Hospital."

## Zero tolerance against drug abuse: Himachal CM

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Zero tolerance policy against drug abuse would be adopted in the state, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu announced in Vidhan Sabha on Thursday.

Responding to a discussion on a resolution brought by Congress MLA Kewal Singh Pathania regarding the elimination of drugs and making a permanent policy against it, Sukhu said that strict action within a month will be taken against government officials and employees found involved in drug smuggling.

## Complete India-Bangladesh border on war-footing: TMC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Rajya Sabha Trinamool Congress member Sukhendu Sekhar Ray on Thursday asked the Centre to complete fencing along the India-Bangladesh border on a war-footing.

Raising the matter during the Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, the TMC member said the total length of the India-Bangladesh border is 4,096.7 km, of which 865 km is yet to be fenced. West Bengal, among all other states in India, has the longest land border with Bangladesh -- 2,217 kilometre -- he said.

One of the major challenges reportedly being faced in completing the feasible stretches of fencing projects relate to unwarranted objections and problems created by the Border Guard of Bangladesh, he said. Ray spoke about one such recent problem created by the Border Guard of Bangladesh at Sukhdevpur in Malda district of West Bengal which was foiled by local people with the help of police and Border Security Force.

He pointed out that there have been instances of people from across the border infiltrating into villages of Cooch Behar district, looting valuables and foodgrains.

There is an alarming situation in that border area of Cooch Behar, he said.

"With the emerging situation in Bangladesh, the government is required to be more vigilant and adequate measures should be initiated on a war footing to complete the fencing of feasible stretches of the Indo-Bangla border," the TMC MP said.



## Spell out response to Trump's tariff war

### Chidambaram urges govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram on Thursday asked the government to spell out India's response to US President Donald Trump's threat of tariff war, alleging that no discussion in Parliament or consultation with Opposition parties has been held over the matter.

Initiating a discussion on The Appropriation (No. 3) Bill, 2025 and The Finance Bill, 2025 that were moved in Rajya Sabha for consideration by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, he cautioned that a tariff and trade war would lead to depressed exports, lower FDI, higher inflation and currency depreciation.

He said India must stand with saner voices in the world such as Canada, Britain, France, Germany and Japan and collectively do everything to prevent a tariff and trade war. Referring to Trump's statement that the US will impose tariffs from April 2, the former finance minister said,"What is the government's response? What is India's response? There has been no statement of policy, no discussion in Parliament, no consultation with Opposition parties. The government is holding its cards close to its chest, if it has any cards at all." Chidambaram further said,"A tariff war will lead to a trade war. The whole world will be hurt..."

He also alleged that Sitharaman had announced customs duty reduction on items including motor vehicles, passenger cars, goods, transport vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles and even toys in the Union Budget 2025-26 under the pressure from Trump.

## 'No financial aid from Centre for Wayanad rehabilitation'

PNS ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)



Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday said despite efforts by everyone to ensure financial aid from the Centre for the rehabilitation of Wayanad landslide victims, no help has been forthcoming from the union government, which only gave a "negligible" assistance.

She also said that the model township project undertaken by the Kerala government for the rehabilitation of the landslide victims was the first step towards rebuilding their lives and giving them hope for their future.

The Congress MP from Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency was speaking at the foundation laying ceremony of the township.

The foundation stone was laid by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who too claimed that to date no help has come from the central government for the rehabilitation of the victims of the landslide which hit the Chooralmala-Mundakkai areas of this hill district last year.

Vijayan contended that only an insufficient amount as a loan was given by the Centre for the rehabilitation work.

He was referring to the Centre sanctioning a loan of around Rs 529.50 crore under its capital investment scheme for the rehabilitation of landslide-hit areas of Wayanad.

A major landslide struck the Mundakkai and Chooralmala regions on July 30 last year, almost completely decimating both areas, killing over 200 people, and injuring many other.

## Rahul reiterates charge he is 'never allowed to speak' in Parl

### INDIA leaders meet Speaker

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday claimed he is "never allowed" to speak in Parliament, as a host of INDIA bloc leaders met Speaker Om Birla to raise the issue of the Congress leader being denied the opportunity to speak in the House the previous day.

"I am never allowed to speak brother...I don't know what they are scared of," Gandhi told reporters on the Parliament complex on Thursday when asked about his allegations the House was being run "non-democratically". His latest charge come on a day several opposition leaders met Speaker Birla over Gandhi being denied the opportunity to speak in the House on Wednesday. They also flagged an alleged "politicisation" of the institution of Speaker.

Congress' deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi said an INDIA bloc delegation comprising leaders from the Congress, SP, TMC, DMK, Kerala Congress, RJD, IUML, RLP and the MDMK, met the Speaker during Zero Hour.

"We have given a letter, which was signed by many parties including the RSP and Shiv Sena (UBT). We conveyed our collective concern and collective disappointment before the Speaker on how the ruling side is violating the traditions, rules and culture of the House," Gogoi told reporters after the meeting Thursday.

He said the main matter was the context and issue over which the Speaker made a statement on the LoP on Wednesday.

## School enrollments drop in last 2 yrs: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The country has reported a worrying drop in school enrollments in 2023-24, especially at the elementary level where numbers declined by around eight percentage points compared to 2021-22, according to government data presented in Parliament on Thursday.

Replying to a question on the living standards of tribal people, Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Durgadas Uikey told Lok Sabha that the gross enrollment ratio of tribal students at the elementary level declined from 103.4 per cent in 2021-22 to 97.1 per cent in 2023-24.

In comparison, the GER of students from all communities dropped sharply from 100.13 per cent in 2021-22 to 91.7 per cent in 2023-24.

At the secondary level (classes 9-10), the GER of tribal students dropped from 78.1 per cent in 2021-22 to 76.9 per cent in 2023-24, the data showed.

For students from all communities, the GER at the secondary level decreased from 79.56 per cent in 2021-22 to 77.4 per cent in 2023-24.

At the senior secondary level (classes 11-12), the GER of ST students dropped to 52 per cent in 2021-22 to 48.7 per cent in 2023-24.

In comparison, the GER of students from all communities at this level dropped from 57.56 per cent in 2021-22 to 56.2 per cent in 2023-24.

On Wednesday, Congress MP Pramod Tiwari demanded a clarification from the government on the "significant decline" in school enrolment in recent years, alleging that the Narendra Modi dispensation was not serious about education.

Referring to a report of the United District Information System for Education (UDISE), a database developed and managed by the Union education ministry, he said in Rajya Sabha that it showed an unprecedented decline in school enrolment in recent years and how the Modi government had failed to secure youngsters' futures.

The decline reflects rising economic disparity and financial mismanagement, Tiwari said.

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MARCH 28, 2025



Editor's TAKE

# Eight years of transformation

## Yogi Adityanath's leadership has ushered a paradigm shift in Uttar Pradesh

As Yogi Adityanath completes eight years as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the State's remarkable transformation stands as a testament to his governance. Once plagued by poor law and order and sluggish economic growth, Uttar Pradesh has now emerged as a hub of development, security, and industrial expansion. Through a strong focus on governance, infrastructure, and welfare, Yogi Adityanath has successfully turned the State into an engine of progress.

Uttar Pradesh was once notorious for its high crime rate and ineffective law enforcement. Under Yogi Adityanath's leadership, a stringent crackdown on crime has led to a drastic reduction in criminal activities. The establishment of police commissionerates in seven districts and the creation of the Special Security Force (UPSSF) have significantly bolstered law enforcement efficiency. More than 222 criminals have been neutralised in encounters, and over 8,000 have been injured in police operations.

One of the most significant transformations under Yogi Adityanath has been in infrastructure development. Seventeen cities have been developed as Smart Cities, and 125 new municipal bodies have been established. Six expressways have been completed, with 11 more under construction, enhancing connectivity across the State. The much-anticipated Jewar airport, set to be operational soon, will further boost transportation and trade. Cities like Noida, Greater Noida, Lucknow, Kanpur, and Agra now feature well-developed metro networks, revolutionising public transport.

Uttar Pradesh's agricultural sector has witnessed unprecedented progress over the past eight years. The State has become India's largest producer of fruits and vegetables, surpassing four crore tonnes annually. Under the PM KUSUM scheme, 76,189 solar pumps have been distributed to farmers, while 27 modernised agricultural markets have been established to ensure better price realisation. A major highlight of the Government's tenure has been the strengthening of power infrastructure. Rural areas now receive 20 hours of electricity, while district headquarters enjoy 24-hour power supply. Initiatives such as the Ayodhya Solar City project and the Bundelkhand Expressway solar corridor are paving the way for Uttar Pradesh to become a leader in green energy.

The Yogi Government has prioritised welfare schemes aimed at uplifting marginalised communities. Over 56 lakh houses have been built, and 2.62 crore toilets constructed under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. During the COVID-19 pandemic, free ration was provided to over 14.7 crore people, while 1.86 crore LPG connections were distributed, promoting clean cooking fuel in households.

Uttar Pradesh has also witnessed a surge in religious tourism and cultural development. The construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and the transformation of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor have reinforced the State's spiritual identity. Events like the Kumbh Mela have attracted record-breaking numbers, solidifying UP's position as a premier destination for religious tourism. Healthcare infrastructure has seen major advancements, ensuring improved medical facilities across the state. Under the Jan Arogya Yojana, over 49 lakh families have received free health insurance. Additionally, Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a major economic hub, now contributing 45 per cent of India's total mobile manufacturing output. Yogi Government's investor-friendly policies have attracted significant domestic and international investments, fostering industrial growth. From restoring law and order to driving economic growth and infrastructure development, the State has set a new benchmark for governance and progress under under the dynamic leadership of Yogi Adityanath. While challenges remain, the foundation has been laid for Uttar Pradesh to continue its journey toward becoming one of India's most developed States.

# The game changer in world trade

## The India-MiddleEast-Europe Economic Corridor could revolutionise the world trade and can be an answer to China's 'Belt and Road Initiative'




The India-Middle-East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is one of the strategic breakthrough ideas of the 21st century for economic and transcontinental relationships across the globe. Never since the Belt and Road Initiative has such a serious attempt been made to define trade across land, sea, and human habitation.

If successful, global trade will never be the same again. IMEC consists of two main segments: the East Corridor, which connects India to the Middle East, and the North Corridor, which links the Middle East to Europe. In the first case, the route travels through sea and land across the territorial jurisdictions of the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, and in the case of the north corridor, it links the Middle East to Europe via Israel and Greece. Put together, it enhances supply chain efficiencies exponentially.

Put simply, it builds up technological advancement, moving it towards sustainable commerce. It will affect the availability of global clean energy and alter living styles to eliminate fossil fuels.

The use of fibre optics at this scale has never been attempted before. The Belt and Road Initiative would not have the technological bite or the potential for a breakthrough in energy initiatives.

Put simply, the corridor involves eight key participants: India, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan, Israel, France, Germany, and Italy. The support of the US is crucial. The shipping time is reduced, and regional cooperation is key.

The advantages are, of course, reduced transit times, taking the content of shipment beyond the Suez Canal and building upon energy and digital technologies. The outcome would be a seminal impact coupled with economic input.

Linking up Middle East partnerships with European Union connectivity is set to redefine global commerce. Economic diversification will follow.

In this era, reduced timing is the key to development. Ports, shipping, and multimodal connectivity hold the key. Many feel that it takes the principle of 'neighbourhood first' beyond rhetoric and creates new partners in the domain of international commerce.

The kind of parallel investments required, in cognate areas, could well redefine the nature of investments which trade and commerce would require. The existing sea routes require a newer kind of shipping, and internal harmonisation in some sectors may become necessary. This would require new standardisation and a revision of areas such as the Motor Vehicles Act.



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

So far, the talk has been, predominantly, of an undersea grid, the time has come to act on it. Put simply, one approach, one focus, one grid could become a reality, and green hydrogen would be a matter of routine. Standards and styles of living will get impacted.

Human Resources Development would be linked to trade and connectivity, and the nature of education will further change to link up with the needs of many nations including the Middle East.

Some have envisaged the possibility of skill corridors. Such an intervention takes time and requires a conversation beyond intellectual protocols.

Much of the rollout will depend on how skills are organised amid concerns of localisation and cross-border flows. Skilled manpower riding on the strength of hard infrastructure, could enable IMEC to bring cultures closer together and make IMEC not only an economic warhorse but also a way to link skills with resources. Along with connectivity and energy projects, the whole process will require more agile banking and finance. It may become a surrogate for commerce in parts of the long link between India and Europe through which this route will traverse.

All this would have an impact on cross — border transfers of money. Digital exchanges would receive a push to ensure commerce grows along with human welfare.

There are other possibilities that may be difficult to forecast at this stage. Illustratively, Iraq has shortlisted 11 international firms to operate the Grand Faw Port. These include China Merchants Port Group, Adani, ICTSI, Cosco, ABM Global Shipping, and more. A decision is anticipated in early 2025.

It would be natural to consider alternate proposals across the length of a link from India to Europe, and the Turkish President has some views on this. He has felt unhappy about the proposal bypassing Turkey. The result has been talk of the 'Iraq Development Road Project,' but that is another story.

The India — Middle East — Europe Economic Corridor could revolutionise the world trade as it has the potential to not only ease the trade but also increase the world connectivity. Put simply, here is the possibility where an economic corridor redefines the future of trade and commerce for well over half a century and possibly more. It may be an idea well worth supporting, observing constructively, and more.

(The writer is an internationally acclaimed management consultant. Views expressed are personal)

# Debunking myths around cancer

SECOND Opinion



BHAVNA BANSAL

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide, with millions of new cases reported each year. In 2022 alone, approximately 20 million new cancer cases were diagnosed globally, and 9.7 million lives were lost to the disease. In India, the numbers are equally alarming, with around 100 out of every one lakh people diagnosed with cancer. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), more than 14 lakh cancer cases were estimated in 2023.

Despite advancements in early detection and treatment, many myths surrounding cancer testing prevent people from undergoing timely screening. These misconceptions can delay diagnosis, leading to more complicated treatment procedures and poorer outcomes.

## Common myths about cancer testing

A. Cancer screening is necessary only if there are symptoms present:

Most people believe they should be tested for cancer only if they have some symptoms. Many cancers, including breast cancer, cervical cancer, and colorectal cancer, go undetected in very early stages. Regular screenings, such as mammograms, pap smears, and colonoscopies, usually identify problems before the cancer becomes major, thus greatly increasing survival chances.

B. A biopsy can cause the spread of cancer:

One of the longest-living myths states that biopsies can cause the spread of cancer. This myth keeps patients away from opting for critical diagnostic treatment. Doctors follow strict guidelines to ensure that the biopsy is done in such a way that the spread of any cancer cells is avoided. Scientifically, it has been acknowledged that biopsy procedures are safe and integral to establishing a correct diagnosis.

C. Cancer tests are inaccurate and yield false positives: specific tests may not be considered accurate, but contemporary cancer screenings are reliable enough to be considered correct. Rule-out tests often deal with false-positive results to confirm the diagnosis. These tests have their maximum chance of success when done at early detection, which outweighs their minimum chances of being wrong.

D. If no one in my family has cancer, I don't need screening: Family history can elevate the risk for some cancers, but most cancers occur in people without genetic predisposition. Cigarette smoking, poor dietary habits, and lack of exercise strongly influence the development of most cancers. In other words, everybody should be screened.

## Diagnosis and treatment

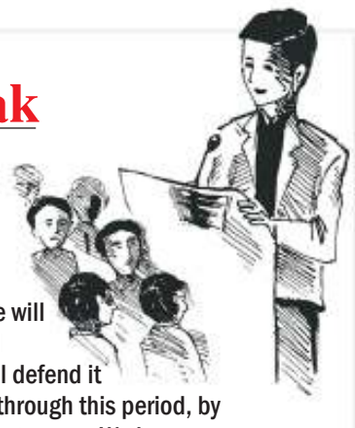
Advancements in medical science have made early cancer detection more accurate and treatment more effective. Screening very early lets doctors recommend less invasive procedures and better survival rates. Treatment options depend on the type of cancer and the stage at which it is diagnosed. Surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, immunotherapy, and targeted therapy are widely used treatments available.

Timely diagnosis can change treatment outcomes from positive to negative. Currently, cancer care is personalised. The treatment plan is derived from a combination of genetic markers, tumour types, and individual patient needs. The right medical interventions can control many cancers, providing better quality of life and survival rates. Moreover, exposing myths surrounding cancer tests goes a long way to boosting early detection. Awareness, education, health screenings, and medical intervention empower people to take charge of the health course.

Raising awareness about cancer screening and dispelling myths is crucial for early detection and effective treatment. Many cancers can be managed successfully if diagnosed in time, significantly improving survival rates. Regular screenings, informed medical decisions, and lifestyle modifications play a key role in cancer prevention and management. By prioritising education and proactive health measures, individuals can take control of their well — being. Early diagnosis saves lives, making it imperative to spread accurate information and encourage timely screenings.

(The writer is senior consultant and HOD, Histopathology — Oncquest Laboratories. Views expressed are personal)

Leaderspeak



"We will defend our workers. We will defend our companies. We will defend our country. And we will defend it together. This will hurt us, but through this period, by being together, we will emerge stronger. We have announced, of course, retaliatory tariffs. We have other options for those retaliatory tariffs. This is a direct attack, to be clear, a direct attack on the very workers that I stood in front of ... this morning at the Ambassador Bridge."

**Mark Carney, Prime Minister of Canada**

# Letters to the Editor

### Turkey's democracy in peril

Madam — Refer to your editorial, "Turkey in turmoil" (March 26). Since coming to power in 2003, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) have systematically targeted political opponents, journalists, and activists. However, the arrest of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu marks a troubling escalation.

Imamoglu, a rising Opposition leader from the Republican People's Party (CHP), was detained on March 19 on corruption and terrorism — related charges, allegedly due to his ties with pro — Kurdish political groups.

His arrest came just before he was expected to be named the CHP's presidential candidate.

On March 23, an Istanbul court ordered his formal arrest, and the Interior Ministry swiftly removed him from office-making him the fifth CHP mayor dismissed recently.

The move has triggered massive protests, as many see it as a politically motivated attack on democracy. In response, the CHP held an open primary election, claiming 15 million voters participated-a strong public rebuke of Erdogan's tactics. Erdogan, whose term ends in 2028, is constitutionally barred from running again unless snap elections are called or the Constitution is amended.

With no clear successor in the AKP, he may push for early elections to reset his term limits.

**AMARJEET KUMAR | HASARIBAGH**

### Are we more civilised?

Madam — While Aurangazeb, the last Mughal Emperor to rule India who lived in the 17th century has been branded as uncivilised, uncultured and barbaric and a religious fanatic who allegedly demolished Hindu temples and hence, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal demanded removal of his tomb from Maharashtra.

But, we are now in the 21st century, four centuries after Aurangazeb died and we call ourselves more cultured, refined, educated and civilised than the likes of the 17th century Aurangazeb. Then how is it that our civilised and cultured mind has driven us to seek to dig out the remains in a tomb, kill people, torch their houses and business places and also intimidate women in the name of religion?

Further, we have also bulldozed the dwelling place of a person who is only alleged to have instigated people to revolt which again, is yet to be proved in the court.

This cruel and hasty act of the Maharashtra government has been highly condemned as barbaric not only by the opposition parties but also the Bombay High Court that has rightly halted the demolition.

This being the scenario, one should ask his conscience, who is more barbaric, the so called uncivilised 17th century ruler or we, who live in the 21st century and boast that we are more cultured and civilised?

**THARCIUS S FERNANDO | CHENNAI**

### Reservation reality check

Madam — Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha and BJP President JP Nadda and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju claimed on the basis of a statement by Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar that he had talked about changing the Constitution to give reservation to Muslims. Has DK Shivakumar really said this? On the other hand, DK Shivakumar has called it a blatant lie and has warned of legal action.

Congress Chief whip in Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh has also given a privilege notice accusing JP Nadda and Kiren Rijiju of lying. But our lapdog media is not mentioning this denial and privilege notice of Congress. It is only discussing the allegation that Shivakumar has talked about giving reservation to Muslims.

The whole country and the world is being forced to believe this today. But this is only half truth. The complete truth is that Muslim castes which are socially and educationally backward get reservation as recommended by Mandal Commission and approved by Parliament and Supreme Court.

Apart from this, poor Muslims can also get the benefit of reservation on economic basis. The history of Muslim reservation in Karnataka is quite old.

**JANG BAHADUR SINGH | JAMSHEDPUR**

### JUSTICE, SENSITIVITY AND THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S DIGNITY

Justice is not just about interpreting laws, it reflects a society's moral and ethical values. A controversial ruling by the Allahabad High Court, which stated that touching a minor girl's breasts and pulling her pajama string does not amount to rape or an attempt to commit rape, was not just a legal misinterpretation but a failure of justice. It minimised the trauma of the victim and sent a dangerous message about how crimes against women and minors are viewed in the legal system.

The Supreme Court's intervention in staying the verdict was more than a legal correction, it was a reaffirmation of justice and dignity. This decision reinforced the idea that crimes against women and children must not be trivialised under technical legal interpretations.

A just society is not only defined by its laws but by the way they are interpreted. Justice must be dispensed with sensitivity and fairness. When courts reduce sexual offenses to technicalities, they fail victims and weaken public trust. Crimes against minors cannot be excused by drawing artificial distinctions between molestation and attempted rape.

Any violation of bodily autonomy must be treated as a grave offense.

Women's dignity has long been upheld in Indian society, yet their safety is often compromised. When a court declares that pulling a minor's pajama string is not an attempt to commit rape, it emboldens predators and normalises unacceptable behaviour. Judicial decisions shape societal attitudes — when courts fail to uphold victims' dignity, they encourage impunity.

The Supreme Court's intervention restored faith in justice by ensuring that laws align with dignity, security, and equality. This decision was not just about legal precision but about moral responsibility. It reassures victims that the judiciary will stand for their rights and not trivialise their suffering.

**SACHIN TRIPATHI | SATNA**

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

The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MARCH 28, 2025



# Uttar Pradesh Unlocked by winds of change

**My Government has an unwavering commitment to the relentless service, progress, and the State's transformation into Uttam Pradesh. Eight years is only a milestone in the transition of my State into Viksit Uttar Pradesh**

FIRST Column

Revered Shri Atal*ji*'s words, "*Kintu, apni dhyeya yatra mai hum kabhi ruke nahi, kisi chunauti ke sammukh, kabhi jhuke nahi…*" perfectly embody my Government's unwavering commitment over the past eight years — dedicated to relentless service, progress, and the transformation of Uttar Pradesh. Guided by the principles of *Kartavya Sadhana* and "priority to the deprived," we have pursued a mission to ensure the security, prosperity, and upliftment of 25 crore citizens, overcoming challenges without pause or compromise.

Under Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi*ji*'s effective leadership, Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a remarkable transformation. The State once labelled BIMARU, is now a premier destination for business and investment. The mantra of good governance, a commitment to the welfare of the poor, the philosophy of *Antyodaya*, and the goal of a self-reliant Uttar Pradesh have reshaped the State's identity, propelling it into "growth gear."

Uttar Pradesh's development journey is proof of turning vision into reality. We inherited a State plagued by lawlessness, disorder, and crime. Yet, through a secure environment, robust infrastructure, seamless connectivity, and business-friendly policies, we have reshaped it into a thriving investment hub. In the past eight years, we have received investment proposals exceeding ₹45 lakh crore, with over ₹15 lakh crore already implemented. This has directly provided jobs to more than 60 lakh youth and created countless employment opportunities. It is well-established that security fosters development, while efficient connectivity accelerates progress.

The new Uttar Pradesh stands as living proof of this transformation. The timeless wisdom of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya — that true *Antyodaya* lies in uplifting the person at the bottom — forms the foundation of our Government's vision. Over six crore people have been lifted above the poverty line in the past eight years. Under the *Antyodaya* model, 15 crore underprivileged citizens now receive free monthly food grains, 1.86 crore families have free gas connections, and over 2.86 crore farmers benefit from the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi every month. Additionally, 5.21 crore beneficiaries are covered under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, securing medical protection of up to ₹ five lakh, while over 56.50 lakh families have received free housing.



YOGI ADITYANATH

Unlocking Uttar Pradesh's potential requires a strong foundation of human capital. A significant transformation has taken place in healthcare infrastructure — while there were only 12 medical colleges in the State until 2017, today there are 80, including 44 Government and 36 private institutions. With AIIMS operational in Gorakhpur and Rae Bareli, the vision of "One District, One Medical College" is becoming a reality. Through Ayushman Bharat and other healthcare initiatives, we are ensuring affordable, quality treatment for every citizen in their district.

Our farmers are the backbone of a self-reliant India. In the sugar sector, Uttar Pradesh now has 122 operational sugar mills. Since March 2017, three new mills have been established, six revived, and 38 expanded-creating employment for 1.25 lakh people. Sugarcane farmers have received payments totalling ₹2,80,223 crore, ₹66,703 crore more than what was disbursed in the 22 years between 1995 and 2017.

A progressive society flourishes when its women are empowered. Over the past eight years, the Uttar Pradesh Government has remained steadfast in its commitment to ensuring women's security, dignity, and self-reliance through Mission Shakti. By offering free education up to graduation, we have expanded opportunities for young women, enabling them to pursue their aspirations without financial constraints. Additionally, initiatives like Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana, Nirashrit Mahila Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, and PM Svanidhi Yojana have brought meaningful change, improving the lives of countless women across the State.



> ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IS AT THE CORE OF OUR GOVERNANCE. FARMERS ARE THE ARCHITECTS OF A SELF-RELIANT INDIA, OUR YOUTH THE DRIVERS OF TRANSFORMATION, AND MATRU SHAKTI THE FOUNDATION OF OUR SOCIETY. UTTAR PRADESH IS A THRIVING HUB OF TALENT, TRADITION, AND PROGRESS

Economic empowerment is at the core of our governance. Over 95 lakh women in rural areas have been integrated into the Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission, fostering financial independence. The allocation of 2,510 fair-price shops to women's self-help groups and the provision of rural residential records (*Gharauni*) in the name of female household members have ushered in a new era of dignity and economic progress for women.

The aspirations of our youth are taking flight. Over 96 lakh MSME units have turned job seekers into job creators, reducing unemployment from 18 per cent in 2016 to just three per cent today. More than 8.5 lakh youth have secured Government jobs through a transparent recruitment process, including over 1.38 lakh women. The UP Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act has reinforced fair examination practices, instilling confidence in competitive exam aspirants.

These eight years have marked a historic era of renewed faith, economic strength, and cultural resurgence. The long-awaited return of Lord Shri Ram Lalla to his sacred temple is a momentous occasion after centuries of struggle. The grandeur of the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, the organisation of Mahakumbh, the development of Shri Ayodhya Dham, the rejuvenation of Kashi, and the beautification of Mathura-Vrindavan have placed Uttar Pradesh at the heart of India's spiritual revival.

*Deepotsav* and *Rangotsav* now shine with unmatched grandeur, drawing global visitors.

Under the 'Reform, Perform, Transform' mantra, Uttar Pradesh has become a premier destination for both religious and industrial tourism. Initiatives like the Ramayana circuit, Buddhist circuit, Spiritual circuit, Shaktipeeth circuit, Krishna or Braj circuit, Bundelkhand circuit, Mahabharata circuit, and Jain circuits have placed sacred centres like Ayodhya, Kashi, Mathura, Chitrakoot, Saharanpur, Shravasti, and Gorakhpur on the global tourism map, offering world-class facilities.

Uttar Pradesh's economic success has been achieved without imposing any new taxes. Despite offering the lowest diesel and petrol rates in the country, the State is emerging as a revenue-surplus economy, driven by the ideals of *Ramrajya*. The 'One District-One Product' (ODOP) scheme has transformed every district into a thriving industrial hub, while major projects like the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor are establishing the State as *Udyam Pradesh* — a powerhouse of industry and innovation. Every citizen is a partner in this journey. Farmers are the architects of a self-reliant India, our youth the drivers of transformation, and Matru Shakti the foundation of our society. Uttar Pradesh is not just a State, it is a thriving hub of talent, tradition, and progress.

This milestone is just the beginning. Our vision is a Viksit Uttar Pradesh — one that not only becomes India's largest economy but also fulfils the aspirations of its 25 crore citizens. With unwavering commitment, we will continue our journey of transformation, ensuring prosperity for generations to come.

(The writer is the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh)

# India and China walk a fragile tightrope at 75 years

The seeds of doubt between China and India were sown in the 20th century, with British attempts to align Tibet with British India, leading to the 1904 Expedition to Tibet, which the Qing Dynasty viewed as a direct affront to its sovereignty. By 1965, India (IB) and the CIA secretly planted a nuclear-powered surveillance device on Nanda Devi to monitor China's nuclear tests, but the mission failed, and the lost plutonium device, radioisotope thermoelectric generator, remains unaccounted for to this day, deepening the mistrust between the two nations.

On April 1, 1950, India became the first non — socialist bloc country to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. In a few days, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of this relationship. Two giants — China and India — occupy the heart of this vast and diverse landmass, their destinies irrevocably intertwined. As Wang Yi noted, Mao used the metaphor of a "cooperative pas de deux of the dragon and the elephant" to describe the importance of China and India working together harmoniously. With populations exceeding 2.85 billion, these nations wield the power to shape the future not only of Asia but of the entire world. Yet, despite their economic rise and deep historical connections, their relationship remains one of profound ambivalence, laced with suspicion, insecurity, and an unresolved legacy of conflict. If the peace in Asia is to hold, it hinges on this question: can India and China shed the weight of history and build a future of cooperation, respect, and stability?

The answer to this question is not as simple as it might seem. In the aftermath of the 1962 Sino-Indian War, India and China were forced into a narrative of hostility, which directly contradicted Nehru's bold assertion, *"Hindi — Chini Bhai — Bhai"*(Indians and Chinese are brothers).

The war, with its brutality and China's swift victory, continues to echo through the decades, its scars never fully healed. For India, China's military might have loomed large as an existential threat, shaping its foreign policy and strategic alliances. The West, particularly the United States, has become an increasingly important partner for India as the country seeks to counterbalance China's rise in the region.

The spectre of the Sino — Indian War, an uncomfortable memory for the Indian psyche, serves as a continuous reminder of the unpredictable and dangerous nature of the bilateral relationship. China, for its part, remains largely indifferent to India's anxieties, with Nehru's words after the Sino-Indian War of 1962 continuing to haunt the Indian psyche: 'We were misled into thinking that China was our friend. We have been deceived into thinking that China would respect our interests and security. But they have shown their true face.'

Yet, despite tensions and the occasional flare — ups of military skirmishes, particularly along the contested areas of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), it is clear that the trajectory of the Indo-China relationship is more nuanced than simple antagonism. Both nations have made remarkable strides in modernising their economies.



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

China's rise as an economic juggernaut, coupled with its geopolitical ambitions, has forced India to rethink its position in the world. However, India's rise has been slower and less controlled, hindered by domestic chaos, systemic corruption, and a democratic framework that, while empowering, often hinders swift and decisive decision-making. Unlike China, India succeeds, as Kishore Mahbubani put it, not because of its government, but despite it. This paradox defines Indian democracy: a system that operates in constant dysfunction yet still manages to deliver results.

India's struggles are evident in stark contrast to China's model of governance. In China, the centralised power of the Communist Party has allowed for rapid reforms and unprecedented growth, lifting millions out of poverty and placing the country at the forefront of the global economic stage.

For China, this ascent has been marked by the pursuit of hegemony — asserting its influence over its neighbours through both economic means and military presence. India, on the other hand, has faced internal divisions that have stymied its growth.

There is a bitter irony here. As India and China grow-albeit at different rates — the mutual suspicion between them only deepens. For India, China's meteoric rise is seen not just as an economic miracle but as a strategic and ideological threat. Meanwhile, China views India's increasing closeness with the West with wariness, sensing an attempt to encircle it, weaken its dominance, and tip the balance of power in Asia.

These fears are not unfounded. India's deepening ties with the United States, the QUAD alliance, and its growing influence in the Indo — Pacific region have been framed by many in Beijing as a deliberate attempt to counter China's ambitions.

Yet, in recent months, there have been signs of a shift. Last week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated the need to normalise relations with China — a statement that was both a recognition of the reality of the global order and a tacit acknowledgement that conflict between India and China would spell disaster not just for Asia but for the world.

Modi, in his effort to elevate India as a global power, has become acutely aware of the importance of stabilising ties with China, opting for dialogue over discord, healthy competition, and strategic focus.

His push for a more pragmatic approach-setting aside the past and focusing on the future-has met with mixed reactions domestically.

Indian nationalists, emboldened by their country's rise, have questioned the wisdom of making overtures to China, accusing the government of compromising India's sovereignty. But this is a necessary conversation — one that transcends partisan politics and jingoistic nationalism, focusing on what is best for India and Asia as a whole.

Despite their historical antagonisms, both nations are too enmeshed in the global economy to risk full-scale war. The rise of these giants presents a unique opportunity for the world's largest democracies to forge a united Asia, not one divided by rivalry but strengthened by shared prosperity. Yet this requires more than just diplomatic rhetoric — it demands a profound shift in mindset. India and China must overcome centuries — old grievances and recognise that their fates are intertwined.

The future of Asia hinges on whether these two civilisations, long divided by borders, can rekindle an ancient spirit of cooperation. This is particularly crucial as BRICS, with India and China as key enablers in remapping the Global South, progresses with its vision to reshape the world order.

While differences remain, particularly over de-dollarisation, the BRICS nations remain inseparable partners in addressing the urgent challenges ahead. Together, they aim to overcome the diminishing influence of the West, which is increasingly failing to hold its position in the global arena. If India and China fail to find peace, the entire continent risks becoming the tinderbox of a future global conflict.

The stakes have never been higher. India and China, two ancient civilisations and modern giants, stand at a crossroads. Their shared history is marred by conflict and mistrust, yet their futures are inextricably linked. As Asia's foremost powers, they must choose between rivalry and cooperation. Economic interdependence and global challenges demand pragmatic diplomacy, not hostility.

Despite past tensions, recent diplomatic efforts signal a possible thaw in relations. If they can transcend their historical grievances, India and China have the potential to reshape the global order.

Their choice will determine whether Asia becomes a beacon of stability or a battleground for future conflicts. The stakes are immense.

(The writer is a journalist based in Colombo. Views expressed are personal)

# Indian Railways: Time to move on bold, new tracks

The railway station — a place of countless goodbyes, new beginnings, and untold stories. It is where millions of dreams converge, where weary travelers especially farmers and habitants from Rural India find comfort, and where the pulse of the nation beats strongly. For many agriculturist and young Indians, the railway is not just a mode of transport — it is a bridge to opportunity, a passage to a better future. But what happens when that bridge becomes unsafe? What happens when the very place meant to carry dreams forward becomes a site of tragedy?

The recent stampede at New Delhi Railway Station (NDLS), which resulted in loss of innocent lives, was more than just an accident — it was a wake-up call. It exposed the deep-rooted challenges of overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and the lack of modern safety measures at our busiest railway hubs. As India surges ahead in its ambition to become a developed nation by 2047, our railway system must evolve to match this vision. With rising aspirations, increased urban migration, and ever — growing passenger numbers, we must ask ourselves-are we truly prepared for the future of Indian Railways?

Railways are the backbone of India's economy and social fabric, moving over 23 million people every day. But with great numbers comes great responsibility. If we want a railway network that is safe, modern, and capable of handling the rising demands of an ambitious India, we need urgent reforms in station design, crowd management, and passenger experience. This is not just about preventing another stampede — it is about building an India where every journey is safe, efficient, and dignified. The question is — are our stations built for this future? If we do not act now, overcrowding will not just lead to safety hazards but will also diminish passenger experience, slow down economic mobility, and create bottlenecks in urban transport systems. One of the biggest concerns at NDLS is the unpredictability of passenger movement, leading to congestion, last — minute rushes, and logistical bottlenecks. In Tokyo's Shinjuku Station, the world's busiest, an AI — powered crowd tracking system monitors footfall density and suggests alternative routes in real time. Similarly, London's King's Cross Station utilises sensor — driven monitoring to optimise train schedules based on real-time crowd movement. For NDLS, integrating a dynamic crowd monitoring and predictive analytics system can help prevent sudden overcrowding by guiding passengers to less congested areas, improve safety through real — time alerts for emergency evacuation protocols, and minimise last-minute platform changes, which often lead to mass panic and dangerous stampedes. Additionally, station security should incorporate smart ticket verification zones ensuring only legitimate passengers enter the platform areas-a method successfully used in Japan and China.



BINOD ANAND

Modernisation should not be limited to expanding infrastructure — it must also focus on making railway stations safer and more inclusive for all. Railway stations in developed countries have incorporated gender — sensitive infrastructure, with separate waiting lounges for women, enhanced CCTV surveillance, and well-lit platforms ensuring safety, as seen in Stockholm Central Station in Sweden. NDLS should introduce safe zones for women and children, install AI-powered facial recognition surveillance, and provide gender-neutral restrooms.

Hygiene and cleanliness remain significant challenges for Indian railway stations. NDLS should implement automated waste segregation units, self — cleaning toilets, and bio — waste recycling units to create a hygienic transit environment. Water conservation measures, rainwater harvesting, and energy-efficient smart lighting will also contribute to sustainable station operations. To ensure a more soothing and environmentally conscious railway experience, floriculture — based waiting areas, vertical gardens, and air — purifying green walls can be introduced, like Oslo Central Station in Norway and Kyoto Station in Japan, which have successfully integrated green spaces into transit hubs. This will improve passenger well — being while making railway stations visually appealing. Indian railway stations generate massive amounts of organic waste daily, which can be converted into clean energy, powering station lighting and operational functions.

With solar roofing, and water conservation systems, India can lead a railway revolution based on green energy. Beyond infrastructure, railway security forces like the Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railway Protection Force (RPF) must transition from a purely enforcement — based role to a people — friendly support system. We must think beyond just building infrastructure and focus on making railway stations hubs of innovation, sustainability, and service. With AI — powered crowd control, bio — energy — driven efficiency, and a people — friendly railway police force, NDLS can become a global model for smart transit hubs. If executed well, railway modernisation will not only improve infrastructure but also transform millions of lives, ensuring that every journey taken on Indian Railways is safe, smooth, and full of dignity. In 2047, when India celebrates 100 years of independence, let our railway stations stand as monuments of progress, where no passenger fears for their safety, where no traveler is left stranded in overcrowded platforms, and where every Indian-rich or poor-feels proud of the journey they embark upon.

(The writer is Executive President World Cooperation Economic Forum. Views expressed are personal)

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## IN BRIEF



### Gold rises Rs 365 to reclaim Rs 91,000/10 gram-mark

Gold prices increased by Rs 365 to Rs 91,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a strong trend in the overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 90,685 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also rose by Rs 365 to Rs 90,600 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 90,235 per 10 grams. "Gold maintains its gains as the global risk sentiment has been increased, following the new auto tariffs announced by the US President Donald Trump on Wednesday," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Silver prices also went up by Rs 200 to Rs 1,01,700 per kg. It had ended at Rs 1,01,500 per kg on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, gold futures for April delivery surged by Rs 828 or 0.94 per cent to trade near a record high of Rs 88,466 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

On March 20, the yellow metal prices rose to hit a lifetime high of Rs 89,796 per 10 grams. Spot gold in the international markets climbed by USD 34.77 or 1.15 per cent to trade near a record high of USD 3,054.05 per ounce.




### Lubrizol aims to double India share

Speciality chemicals maker Lubrizol is targeting to double its share of revenues from India, Middle East and Africa region to 20 per cent of the business in the next five years, a top official said on Thursday. Rebecca Liebert, the president and chief executive of Berkshire Hathaway company, said India contributes less than 90 per cent to the region's revenues, and it sees a lot of opportunities in the country across sectors as the economy grows. Lubrizol is a wholly-owned arm of Berkshire Hathaway. The US-headquartered company, which reported revenues of USD 6.4 billion in 2023, has been present in India since 1966. Currently, it is witnessing a dip in revenues from Europe and home market of the US, while India, China, Brazil, and South East Asia are reporting fastest growth, she said, replying to a question on the markets who's share in the revenue pie will decline. On a visit to the financial capital of India, Liebert said it is investing at least USD 350 million in building capacities which will get commissioned by 2028, and added that the investments over a five-year period will be higher.



### BoB goes live with PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme

Bank of Baroda on Thursday announced that it has gone live with the new Pradhan Mantri Vidyalaxmi (PM-Vidyalaxmi) Scheme to provide financial support to meritorious students. The PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme is an initiative by the central government for students seeking financial assistance to pursue higher education and to ensure that financial constraints do not deprive the youth of India from pursuing quality higher education. Applicants can digitally apply for an education loan under the PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme from Bank of Baroda through the PM-Vidyalaxmi portal, the public sector lender said in a release. The bank has 12 dedicated Education Loan Sanctioning Cells (ELSC) and 119 Retail Assets Processing Cells (RAPC), in addition to more than 8,300 branches, to cater to the needs of students from across the country. Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay Mudaliar, executive director, Bank of Baroda, said the PM-Vidyalaxmi Scheme is a path-breaking initiative that seeks to provide financial support to deserving students and will ensure that quality education is accessible to all.

TRUMP'S AUTO TARIFFS

# Uncertainty over India's $7 bn component exports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



US President Donald Trump's decision to slap a 25 per cent tariff on all auto imports has cast uncertainty over India's nearly USD 7 billion of exports to America, which industry fears could squeeze margins.

Automobiles and car parts imported to the US would face a 25 per cent tariff starting April 2.

While India is not a big exporter of cars to the US, Tata Motors' luxury car subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) is deeply entrenched in the American market. About 23 per cent of JLR's over 4,00,000 units sold in FY24 were in the US. These were all exported from its UK plants.

JLR's profitability is likely to be impacted as passing on added costs to consumers may dent its market share, analysts said.

The options before it are to pass the cost to consumers, cut expenses, or absorb the hit. A fourth option is to set up a US manufacturing facility to mitigate the damage.

Indian auto ancillary firms will see the biggest hit as they export a lot of components to the US. Sona BLW Precision Forgings, Bharat Forge, and Samvardhana Motherson International Limited (SAMIL) will be vulnerable to the tariff blow.

Sona BLW derives 43 per cent of its revenues from US exports, while Bharat Forge gets 38 per cent from sales to the US.

According to industry estimates, India's auto component exports to the US were USD 6.79 billion in FY24, while the country's imports from the US stood at USD 1.4 billion at 15 per cent duty. Prior to Wednesday's announcement by Trump, the US charged almost 'nil' duty on imported components.

"It is the Indian auto components industry that is more likely to face the heat due to the US tariff as exports from here to the US are significant. Indian vehicle makers are less likely to be impacted as there are no direct exports of fully built cars from India to the US," an industry executive told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

Anuj Sethi, Senior Director, Crisil Ratings said the Trump Administration's move to impose a 25 per cent tariff on key automobile components, such as engines, transmissions, powertrain parts, and electrical parts from May 2025 or later, would compress the operating margins of Indian component manufacturer-exporters by 125-150 basis points from the current 12-12.5 per cent range, assuming full absorption of the tariffs.

About a fifth of the revenue of India's auto component sector is derived from exports. Of this, 27 per cent is to the US market alone.

### India on track to achieve 500 GW renewable energy target: Joshi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is on track to achieve the 500 GW renewable energy target by 2030 as investment commitments of Rs 32 lakh crore have been received, Union Minister for New & Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said on Thursday.

Addressing a session at Times Now Summit 2025, Joshi said renewable energy project bids are out for a capacity of around 169 GW, and the country has crossed 223 GW of non-fossil-fuel capacity, including 103 GW solar and nearly 50 GW wind capacity.

He also said that the government has come out with viability gap funding as far as offshore wind projects are concerned.

"We are quite on track … I am quite confident that we will achieve 500 GW by 2030 and we are the third largest producer of renewable energy in the entire world," Joshi said.

According to the minister, there are investment commitments of Rs 32 lakh crore in the domestic renewable energy sector which is growing at a healthy pace.

# Indian billionaires' wealth a third of country's GDP

## Adani biggest wealth gainer

PNS ■ MUMBAI



The cumulative wealth of 284 Indian billionaires is a third of the country's GDP, a report said on Thursday.

Gautam Adani, who helms the conglomerate headquartered in Gujarat's Ahmedabad, has emerged as the biggest wealth gainer globally with a Rs 1 lakh crore jump in his fortune to Rs 8.4 lakh crore, as per the Hurun Global Rich List.

Reliance Industries' Mukesh Ambani saw a 13 per cent decline in his wealth to Rs 8.6 lakh crore, according to the yearly report which uses a cut-off at January 15. His USD 100 billion fortune has helped him reclaim the title of being the richest Asian.

Adani, who had suffered a significant setback to his fortunes after the Hindenburg report pointing to governance lapses in the conglomerate, saw a 13 per cent increase in his fortunes in the last year.

The country is home to 284 billionaires whose cumulative wealth rose by 10 per cent to Rs 98 lakh crore, or a third of the country's GDP, the report said.

Interestingly, amid the concerns on concentration of wealth in few hands, the list pointed out that India has surpassed China in the average wealth of every billionaire is Rs 34,514 crore as against Rs 29,027 crore in China.

The list, which considers January 15 as the cut-off, said that 175 Indian billionaires have seen a rise in wealth over the past year, while 109 saw their networth decline or remain the same.

Roshni Nadar with a networth of Rs 3.5 lakh crore became the richest Indian woman, and fifth richest woman globally, after her father transferred 47 per cent stake in HCL to her.

# RBI may cut repo rate by 25 bps in April: Ind-Ra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The RBI's monetary policy committee is expected cut benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points in its policy review meeting next month to push growth, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said on Thursday.

"We expect the headline inflation in FY25 to cool off to 4.7 per cent. Monetary easing may be limited to 75 bps in FY26," Ind-Ra Chief Economist and Head Public Finance, Devendra Kumar Pant said.




However, if the impact of US reciprocal tariff turns out to be higher than expected, there may be higher easing by RBI, Ind-Ra said in a statement.

The RBI's monetary policy committee is scheduled to meet 6 times in the next fiscal 2025-26 beginning April 1. The first meeting is slated for April 7-9.

"Ind-Ra expects the monetary policy committee (MPC) to opt in for a 25bps cut in policy rates in its forthcoming April 2025 meeting," the rating agency said.

Higher and stubborn inflation had prompted the RBI to tighten the monetary policy, and it raised the policy rate by 250 bps between May 2022 and February 2023, reaching 6.5 per cent.

In February 2025, the repo rate was cut by 25 bps to 6.25 per cent. Ind-Ra expects the headline retail inflation in March quarter of FY25 to fall below 4 per cent, after a gap of 21 quarters. It expects RBI to go in for maximum three rate cuts in FY26, aggregating to 75 bps.

# Sensex rebounds 318 pts on expiry day amid FII buying

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rebounded by nearly 318 points on Thursday on buying in blue-chip HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, L&T, and Bajaj Finance amid foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 317.93 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 77,606.43 amid the monthly derivative contracts expiry day. During the day, it surged 458.96 points or 0.59 per cent to 77,747.46.

The NSE Nifty rallied 105.10 points or 0.45 per cent to 23,591.95.

From the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Zomato, State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Titan were the biggest gainers.

Tata Motors tanked over 5.5 per cent after US President Donald Trump announced he would impose 25 per cent tariffs on imported cars.

Sun Pharma, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel, HCL Tech and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the laggards.

"Domestic indices maintained optimism throughout the day, driven by sustained foreign fund inflows and the purchase of blue-chip stocks. However, the 25 per cent tariff on auto imports imposed by Trump has affected auto stocks and raised concerns within the pharma sector.

"Despite these challenges,



the broader market demonstrated resilience, supported by expectations of double-digit earnings growth in FY26, driven by easing inflation and a downward trend in interest rates, which are anticipated to improve domestic fundamentals," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 2,240.55 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 0.90 per cent and midcap index climbed 0.46 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, utilities jumped 2.09 per cent, services (1.61 per cent), realty (1.38 per cent), oil & gas (1.32 per cent), energy (1.22 per cent) and power (1.16 per cent).

Auto and telecommunication were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower. Equity markets in Europe were quoting lower. US markets ended in the negative territory on Wednesday.

### BSNL revenue impacted by 4G delay, stiff competition: MoS Telecom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Revenue of BSNL has been impacted due to delay in the rollout of 4G services as well as stiff competition in the mobile segment, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for telecom, Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar said BSNL has awarded purchase orders for one lakh 4G sites out of which 83,993 sites have been installed and 74,521 are on air as on March 8.

"The revenue of BSNL is impacted due to delay in rollout of 4G services as well as stiff competition in the mobile segment," the minister said.

In response to a question on voluntary retirement scheme, Sekhar said the government approved the first revival package in 2019 to reduce the operating cost of BSNL by debt restructuring through sovereign guarantee bonds as well as VRS.

# Office demand rises 15 pc in 7 major cities: Colliers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Office space leasing rose 15 per cent during January-March period to 159 lakh sq ft across seven major cities on higher demand from domestic and foreign companies, according to Colliers.

The gross office leasing stood at 138 lakh sq ft in the year-ago period.

Real estate consultant Colliers India on Thursday released the data for the India office market.

As per the data, the gross leasing of office space in Bengaluru increased 13 per cent to 45 lakh square feet in the current quarter from 40 lakh square feet in the year-ago period.

In Chennai, the gross leasing of workspace surged 93 per cent to 29 lakh square feet from 15 lakh sq ft.

Office leasing in Delhi-NCR grew 32 per cent to 33 lakh sq ft from 25 lakh sq ft.

Mumbai witnessed 16 per cent growth in office leasing to 22 lakh sq ft from 16 lakh sq ft.

In Pune, the office leasing rose 50 per cent to 12 lakh sq ft from 8 lakh sq ft.

However, the demand in Hyderabad and Kolkata was low.

In Hyderabad, the leasing activities fell 41 per cent to 17 lakh sq ft from 29 lakh sq ft. Kolkata also saw 50 per cent decline in office leasing to 1 lakh sq ft during January-March 2025 from 2 lakh sq ft in the corresponding period a year earlier.



Of the total 159 lakh sq ft leased during this quarter, 137 lakh sq ft area was leased directly to corporates. Technology companies, BFSI firms and engineering & manufacturing sector took 75 per cent of these 137 lakh sq ft on rent.

The remaining 22 lakh sq ft office spaces were given on lease to co-working operators for setting up their centres and then further sub-renting to corporates and individuals.

"Key markets are seeing strong Grade A space uptake, driven by corporate expansions, rising investments in commercial real estate, amidst promising domestic growth prospects," said Arpit Mehrotra, Managing Director, Office Services, India, Colliers.

# Tripura's bilateral trade with Bangladesh declining: Min

PNS ■ AGARTALA

Tripura Industries Minister Santana Chakma informed the Assembly on Thursday that the state's bilateral trade with Bangladesh started declining from 2022-23 FY.

The cause of the decline was the downfall in exports from Tripura to the neighbouring country.

Replying to a written question moved by CPI(M) lawmaker Nirmal Biswas, the minister said the trade volume has reduced from Rs 1008.40 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 715.98 crore during 2023-24.

While the northeastern state exports stones, pulses, chilly, ginger, cumin seeds and fruits, Bangladesh sends fish, cement, PVC doors, pipes and cotton waste.

"Out of Rs 1008.40 crore bilateral trade in 2021-22 financial year, Bangladesh exported goods valued at Rs 767.00 crore while its import amount stood at Rs 241.40 crore during the year," she said.

Chakma said that in 2022-23, the overall trade has reduced to Rs 758.09 crore while it has further declined to Rs 715.98 crore in 2023-24.

"More or less, Bangladesh's export remains the same but the export to Bangladesh has shown a steep downfall in the two years - 2022-23 and 2023-24. The export amount has fallen from Rs 121.37 crore in 2022-2023 to Rs 12.31 crore in 2023-24," according to a document tabled in the Assembly.

Chakma said that the state has taken steps to improve the functioning of Land Customs Stations to increase bilateral trade with the neighbouring country.

The northeastern state has nine Land Customs Stations to facilitate bilateral trade with Bangladesh.

# Internship opportunities in India double in 3 years: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Internship opportunities in the country have doubled over the past three years as organisations are trying to equip young professionals with industry-ready skills, a report has said.

Internships are taking centre stage as companies gear up to equip young talent with real-world skills, said a report by global job site Indeed.

According to data from Indeed, India witnessed a 103 per cent increase in internship postings over the past three years (February 2022 till February 2025), underscoring how businesses are doubling on internships to bridge the gap between academics and industry expectations.

The report by Indeed is based on an analysis of data on its platform from February 2022 to February 2025.

It further revealed that as industries evolve-especially with the rise of AI, data analytics, and digital transformation, companies are using internships not only to offer hands-on experience but also to spot and groom top talent early on.

Delhi, Karnataka, and Maharashtra lead the pack when it comes to internship searches, accounting for 7.2 per cent, 6.8 per cent, and 6.2 per cent of total searches, respectively, it added.



***India witnessed a 103 per cent increase in internship postings over the past three years (February 2022 till February 2025), underscoring how businesses are doubling on internships to bridge the gap between academics and industry expectations***

Meanwhile, the report further revealed the average internship stipend in India stands at Rs 25,432 per month, but cities like Hyderabad, Bangalore, Mumbai, Pune, and Gurgaon offer stipends above this national average.

On the flip side, cities like Chennai and Kolkata fall on the lower end of the spectrum, added the report.



The Pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | MARCH 28, 2025





# Adarsh Gourav teases drastic makeover for upcoming film with Shanaya Kapoor

In an industry where actors often get typecast, Adarsh Gourav stands out as a true shape-shifter—an artist who molds himself entirely to fit the characters he portrays. From a naive teenager in *Rukh* to a cunning driver in *The White Tiger*, from a gangster in *Guns & Gulaabs* to a charming fitness trainer in *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*, Adarsh's ability to adapt is nothing short of remarkable. His recently released film *Superboys of Malegaon* where he played an aspiring filmmaker and a quirky local influencer in *Tu Yaa Main* with Bejoy Nambiar, further cementing his reputation as one of the most versatile actors currently.

Sharing his thoughts on his chameleon-like transformations, Adarsh Gourav said, "For me, acting is about complete immersion—physically, emotionally and mentally. I don't just play a character; I become them. Every role demands a different version of me, and that's what excites me the most. Whether it's Dhruv in *Rukh*, Balram Halwai in *The White Tiger*, or Jugnu in *Guns & Gulaabs*, I have always aimed to bring authenticity to the screen. That means reshaping my physicality, altering my mannerisms and deeply understanding the psyche of the person I'm portraying. I believe crafting each character's unique look is important as it appears to tell stories. The way a person walks, dresses, or even holds themselves can reveal so much about their life experiences. Playing Neil Pereira, a fitness trainer in *Kho Gaye Hum Kahan*, required me to build a physique that looked naturally athletic, while Nasir Shaikh in *Superboys of Malegaon* had to embody the hunger and passion of a struggling filmmaker. And now, for *Tu Yaa Main*, I'm stepping into the shoes of a small-town social media influencer—a role that demands an entirely different approach."

He further continues, "I never want to repeat myself. That's my biggest fear as an actor. If I look and feel the same in every film, I am not doing justice to the craft. The joy of acting lies in the transformation, in disappearing so completely into a character that the audience forgets the actor behind it. That's my goal every single time."

# SANJAY DUTT'S LOOK IN *THE BHOOTNII* BRINGS ALL THE THRILL & SUSPENSE



The wait is almost over! The much-anticipated trailer for the horror-action film, *The Bhootnii*, is set to release on March 29, just a day before Salman Khan's Sikandar arrives in theaters on March 30. The trailer will also be attached to Sikandar, giving fans a thrilling double treat on the big screen.

Now, the makers have officially confirmed the news with a striking new poster, showcasing Sanjay Dutt in a menacing look that's sure to send shivers down your spine.

The official Instagram handle of Soham Rockstar Entertainment dropped the electrifying poster, unveiling Sanjay Dutt in a fierce black outfit, gripping two flaming sword-like weapons, exuding raw power and intensity. Alongside the poster, the caption read:

"*Jinse Bhoot, Pret, Jin aur Pishaach bhi jaaenge darr ke bhaag, Baba lagayenge sabki waat*! Trailer drops on March 29! Get ready for *The Bhootnii*—in cinemas on April 18, 2025!"

# Under constant threat, Salman Khan opens up: 'DESTINY IS WRITTEN'

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan, who has been facing persistent death threats from gangster Lawrence Bishnoi for the past two years, has finally addressed the looming danger over his life. Despite the heightened security around him, especially after the passing of his close friend and politician Baba Siddique, the actor remains focused on his professional commitments.



With his highly anticipated film *Sikandar*, co-starring Rashmika Mandanna, set to release this weekend, Salman spoke about the ongoing threats at a press event on Wednesday. The 59-year-old star maintained a calm and philosophical stance, saying that he has left everything to fate.

"My life is in the hands of God. It's predetermined how long I will live, and that's it," Salman remarked. He further added, "Sometimes, I have to take so many people along and that becomes an issue."

The threats against Salman Khan have escalated over time, leading to heavy security reinforcement around his residence and during his public appearances. Lawrence Bishnoi, currently imprisoned in Ahmedabad's Sabarmati Jail for attempted murder and extortion, continues to pose a threat through his gang members.

In April last year, alleged members of the Bishnoi gang opened fire outside Salman's Bandra residence, heightening concerns about his safety. Additionally, Navi Mumbai police uncovered a plot to target the actor while he was en route to his Panvel farmhouse. The threats persisted even in October when an individual sent a WhatsApp message to Mumbai's traffic police helpline, demanding a Rs 2 crore ransom, threatening to kill both Salman Khan and Maharashtra NCP leader Zeeshan Siddique if they failed to comply.

Despite these dangers, Salman Khan continues to work tirelessly, ensuring that his professional life is unaffected. With *Sikandar* ready to hit the big screens, the actor remains committed to his fans and projects.

His unwavering dedication and calm demeanor amid these challenges highlight his resilience. As he steps into yet another action-packed role on screen, off-screen, he continues to navigate real-life threats with equal determination.

## STANDALONE



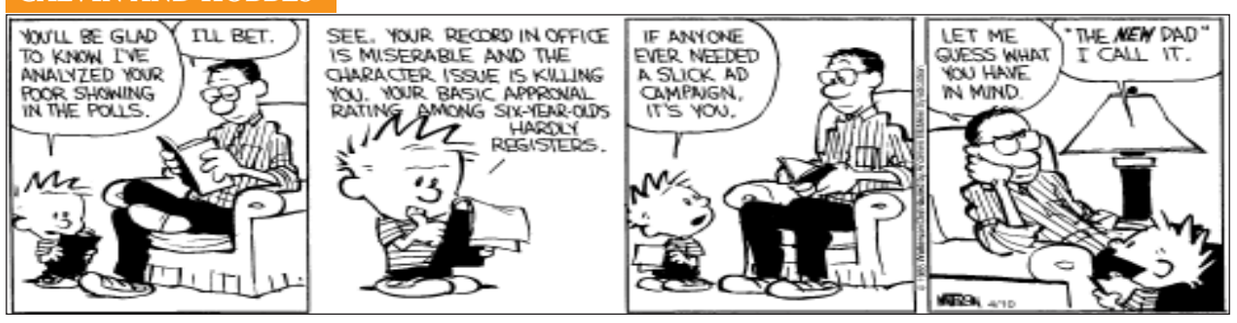
Sunny Leone made a stunning appearance as the showstopper at the grand finale of Jaipur Times Fashion Week, leaving the audience in awe with her elegance and poise. Dressed in a mesmerising ensemble by Archana Kochar, Sunny exuded royalty as she walked the ramp with confidence, effortlessly embodying the spirit of high fashion. The energy in the room soared as Sunny took centre stage, proving yet again why she remains a favorite in the fashion and entertainment world.

## FUN

### ARCHIE




### CALVIN AND HOBBES



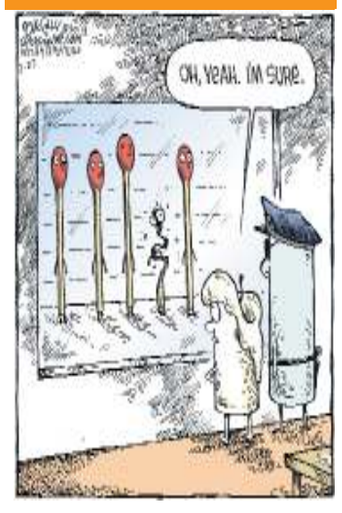

### GARFIELD



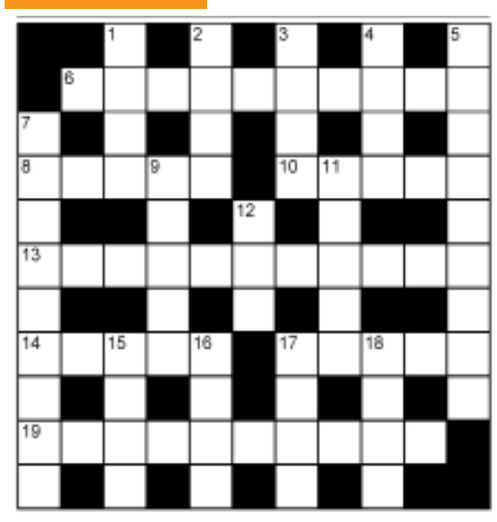

### REALITY CHECK




### SPEED BUMP




### CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**

6 A two-wheeled vehicle
8 Unclean
10 Our planet
13 A party for something special
14 Close-fitting
17 Money used in France before the euro
19 Cooked too long

**DOWN**

1 Number in a quartet
2 Replica
3 Throbbing pain
4 A mark from a healed cut
5 Car engine repairers
7 Schooling
9 Use these to bite
11 Change
12 Attempt
15 Got bigger
16 Mark correct
17 You need this to stay alive
18 Chopping tools

SOLUTION

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### NANCY




### GINGER MEGGS




### SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★☆☆

**Yesterday's solution**

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

**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.

The Pioneer
# Vijayawada

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FRIDAY MARCH 28, 2025

# ‘Breaking typecasting isn’t easy, but *SOM* proved I can do more’

**In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Saqib Ayub opens up about his transformative journey in cinema, from his heartfelt role in *Superboys of Malegaon* to the standing ovation at TIFF that left him in tears. Shedding his usual gangster roles, Saqib embraces a new dimension of storytelling with *Superboys of Malegaon*, where he plays a struggling filmmaker chasing his dream**

TEJAL SINHA
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Saqib Ayub, a talented actor known for his dynamic range of roles, shares a candid reflection on his journey in cinema, particularly his experience with *Superboys of Malegaon (SOM)*. The film is set in a world where a deep passion for cinema prevails despite the limitations of resources. Saqib, who has always been an ardent film enthusiast, talks about how stepping into this world only reinforced his love for the art form. In an exclusive chat with ***The Pioneer***, he says, “I’ve always loved cinema, so when I stepped into this world, it just felt like a reinforcement of my passion for the art.” Rather than a change, the *Bambai Meri Jaan* star feels that being part of such a story gave him a positive reinforcement, fueling his passion for both entertainment and the arts.

His character in *Superboys of Malegaon*, Irfan, is on a wild, green-chasing journey to pursue filmmaking. He describes Irfan as an embodiment of two characters — Shaqeel, a successful performer, and Irfan, a person who didn’t quite make it big in life. He explains, “Irfan is a mix of Shaqeel, who is successful and Irfan, who hasn’t quite made it yet. I didn’t really have to bring in personal experiences because the script and the director’s guidance were clear.” While the characters hail from a small-town background and Saqib, on the other hand, comes from an upper-middle-class family, he emphasises that the ample material in the script and guidance from the director and writer were enough to create a believable and engaging character.

When it comes to the directing style of Reema, the *Farzi* actor shares that one of the most memorable aspects of working with her was her clarity of vision. Reema doesn’t leave much room for improvisation, which surprised him at first. He says, “I was a bit surprised initially because I’ve done a lot of improvisation before, especially when it comes to comedy. But Reema’s approach was very specific, and I think it worked perfectly for this film.” He notes that although improvisation often leads to humour, in this case, the film’s minimalistic approach to comedy still landed effectively. Saqib was in awe of Reema’s ability to execute her vision so precisely, understanding exactly what shots she needed and how she wanted the film to unfold.

The experience of watching *Superboys of Malegaon* premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) was a life-changing moment for him. He recalls the overwhelming emotion he felt when walking the red carpet, surrounded by fans and media. He says, “Walking the red carpet at TIFF felt surreal. When the film ended, we got a standing ovation from 2,500 people. I had tears in my eyes, and the whole team did too. It was overwhelming.” He describes how, after the film concluded, the entire cast and crew were overwhelmed with emotions. Tears flowed freely, a raw expression of the joy and relief of seeing the hard work come to fruition. The *Love Adhura* star also shares the surreal feeling of being recognised by strangers in the streets of Toronto, something he never imagined possible before.

Reflecting on his previous roles, he admits that playing a common man, as he does in *Superboys of Malegaon*, was a refreshing change from the rebellious gangsters or villains he’s often cast as. He says, “This was a nice change for me, as I’ve mostly played more intense roles. Playing a character who was just trying to find his way wasn’t as difficult as some of the other roles I’ve done. But I hope this performance helps break the typecasting I’ve faced.” He hopes that this role helps redefine his career and that he can step into more complex and varied roles.

As he looks to the future, he has some exciting projects lined up. One of the standout ventures is *FirstCopy*, a series on Amazon Prime that follows a piracy ring in the early 2000s film industry. Saqib plays a Gujarati character, a departure from his own background, which he describes as both fun and challenging. He shares, “Playing a Gujarati character was challenging for me because it’s far from my own background. But it was so much fun to step into those shoes.” He also has *HIT 3*, his South India debut. He plays a killer in that and it’s a film that deviates from his usual roles, as he plays a much darker character. Though there are just a few scenes, almost all of it is with actor Nani. On the lighter side, Saqib is also working on a slice-of-life comedy *Darwaza* and a film called *Love in Vietnam*, where he plays a loud, boisterous friend, a role he relishes for its change of pace. Through his upcoming projects, Saqib hopes to continue showcasing his versatility and expand his range as an actor. He reflects, “Superboys of Malegaon has allowed me to break away from the gangster roles and play something more grounded and relatable. I’m excited for the future and the chance to continue evolving as an actor.” Whether he’s playing a common man or stepping into a more intense character, Saqib is excited about the future and the new opportunities that lie ahead in his career.




## Transforming negative thoughts

***Did you know that “I think, therefore I am” isn’t just a philosophy but a fact?***

Our thoughts shape our reality. When negativity dominates our minds, it drains our energy, clouds our judgment, and limits our potential. But the good news is—negative thinking isn’t permanent. With awareness and intention, we can transform it into a mindset that nurtures growth, resilience and joy.

**• AWARENESS IS KEY**

Transformation begins with recognition. When a negative thought arises, pause and observe: “Is this thought helping or harming me?” Awareness interrupts the cycle and gives you the power to choose differently.

**• REFRAME THE NARRATIVE**

Negative thoughts often stem from fear, past experiences, or self-doubt. Instead of “I’m not good enough,” try “I am growing and learning every day.” Shifting your perspective fosters empowerment.

**• MINDFULNESS AND GRATITUDE**

Mindfulness teaches us to be present rather than trapped in self-criticism. Gratitude rewires the brain to focus on what is working instead of what isn’t. A simple daily practice—“What are three things I’m grateful for today?”—can dramatically shift your mindset.

**• SELF-COMPASSION OVER SELF-JUDGMENT**

We speak to ourselves more than anyone else. If your inner voice is harsh, replace it with kindness. Talk to yourself like you would to a dear friend. Compassion is the bridge between self-doubt and self-confidence.

**• ACTION CREATES CHANGE**

A single positive action can disrupt negative patterns. Whether it’s movement, journaling, or seeking support, taking actions helps shifting focus from problems to solutions.

Transforming negative thoughts isn’t about ignoring struggles—it’s about choosing a mindset that empowers rather than limits. Change begins with a single thought, and that thought can reshape your life.

***(The author, Esha Bhardwaj, is a Life & Emotional Wellness Coach.)***

# REINVIGORATING CASINO TOURISM IN INDIA!

PNS|HYDERABAD

The mainstay of the Indian casino business, Deltin, is making a daring move by rearranging its deck to deal a fresh hand that turns it into an opulent hospitality sanctuary. The gaming experience will be enhanced by this amazing transformation, which will effortlessly integrate it with upscale leisure and entertainment! In this exclusive interview, Manoj Jain, COO of Delta Corp., tells us everything there is to know about the replacement of the Deltin Royale with a larger, more extant ship that will offer top-notch amenities and gaming possibilities! The grand makeover is a game-changer, transforming the Indian gaming landscape with unparalleled luxury and entertainment. With its unmatched elegance and entertainment, the major makeover is a game-changer for the Indian casino gaming industry.

***How can you design an experience that transcends gaming and feels as much about exclusivity, luxury and narrative as it does about chance?***

It was the first to establish India as a destination for upscale gaming and entertainment, bringing top-notch gaming to the country on par with Macau and Vegas! It offers a special combination of excitement, energy, entertainment, food and drink and excellent service. The tourists come from a variety of backgrounds: some come for the entertainment, some for our fine dining, some for the excitement of live gambling and some simply to have a good time.

***Do you think Deltin will create an environment similar to that of Vegas or Monaco when it comes to casino tourism in the future, or does the Indian market demand a different approach?***

India’s gaming culture is evolving, but instead of imitating Monaco or Vegas, it needs a unique approach tailored to the Indian market! Unlike Western nations where gaming is ingrained in the entertainment culture, India’s casino tourism is driven by a mix of luxury experiences, aspiration and curiosity.

***The ambiance of a high-stakes poker room, the hum of a roulette wheel and the soft lighting all contribute to the cinematic grandeur of the casino experience. How can this be transformed into a distinctively Indian luxury experience that appeals to both aspirational tourists and discerning gamblers?***

It has led the way in upscale gaming, entertainment and hospitality for over ten years. With its unique blend of excitement, positive energy, captivating performances, delicious food and drinks and attentive personnel, the experience has something to offer everyone. We don’t believe that any rival values its TG as much as we do. The greatest asset and the cornerstone of any plan is undoubtedly our capacity to interact with customers. This is what sets us apart and draws in visitors!

***What are the subliminal clues—ambiance, service and design—that you employ to immerse guests in a realm of luxury and mystery from the moment they board the Deltin Royale or enter the Deltin Suites?***

Every touchpoint at Deltin is intended to transport visitors into an exclusive, thrilling and decadent environment as soon as they enter. We think that visitors are welcomed into an experience rather than just entering. The boarding jetty itself, for instance, is where the change begins, where friendly, well-trained hosts establish the mood. A sense of exclusivity is created by the carefully chosen lighting, music and fragrance, as well as the captivating ferry boat ride that transports visitors to the floating casino. In a similar vein, Deltin Suites skillfully combines modern design, Goan grace and subtle luxury. Warm colors, rich textures and grandeur are all combined in interior design. Whether at the tables, in a VIP lounge, or sipping a specialty cocktail at our bars, the layout of the space makes sure that every visitor feels like they are in the middle of the activity. Lighting is important on casino floors; spotlights on tables increase attention and excitement, while soft ambient glows in common spaces foster a sense of relaxation. A continuous, immersive escape from reality is reinforced by the purposeful removal of windows and clocks. Details are what make a space luxurious. Anticipatory hospitality, or recognising visitors’ needs before they even express them, is the cornerstone of our service concept. A delicate trademark scent permeates our surroundings, which are intended to inspire both excitement and relaxation at the same time.

***In what ways does it serve the modern luxury consumer who demands individuality, customised experiences and exclusivity?***

We understand that today’s Indian luxury traveller is seeking engaging, carefully tailored experiences that are highly personalised, emotionally impactful and exclusive—not just extravagance. VIP gaming floors, devoted concierge services and customised relationship manager experiences are all available to our frequent and premium visitors. Our unique loyalty programs guarantee that discerning gamers receive unmatched customer care. The partnerships with leading influencers, sports figures, Bollywood superstars and performance artists guarantee that our guests enjoy opulent entertainment in a private setting. Services that feel like they were created especially for them are valued by today’s luxury consumers. We go above and beyond to create moments of delight, whether it’s a specially planned pool party, a casual conversation with a Bollywood star, or a surprise luxury present waiting in a guest’s suite. For the adventure-seeking tourist, luxury is about being fully immersed. Every visit is made unforgettable by the components we incorporate. The modern luxury consumer seeks recognition, emotionally charged experiences, and a sense of belonging to something extraordinary—things that money cannot purchase.

Not only do we provide luxury at Deltin, but we also customise it for each visitor, making sure they have memories that will last a lifetime. We define and provide next-generation enjoyment in this way. We refer to it as the “Deltin Life.”



***Casinos have historically been perceived as a male-dominated industry, but this is beginning to change on a global scale. Is there a change taking place in India?***

Of course. India is not an exception to the shifting notion of casinos as a male-dominated industry. Because of increased financial independence, changing social norms and a wider embrace of experiential luxury, we are witnessing a notable increase in the number of women participating in gaming and luxury hospitality. We are aware of this change and are working to create a friendly, inclusive, and gender-neutral experience for our female visitors! We are actively creating a casino hospitality experience that is inclusive, decadent and empowering as women in India redefine luxury, travel and gaming. We are here to make sure that women’s gaming experiences are as sophisticated and engaging as they want as more of them enjoy the excitement of gaming. It is in the forefront of establishing possibilities for women in the gaming and hotel industries, so it’s not just about women as visitors. In order to provide a new viewpoint on the gaming experience, we are expanding the number of women working in important casino operations. It ensures that the luxury hospitality experience is created with diversity at its heart by creating an atmosphere where women flourish in leadership positions.



***Casinos are based on amazing, unseen stories, from high-stakes competitions to private VIP parties. Could you describe a pivotal event—an evening that perfectly encapsulated the casino’s reputation as India’s top gaming destination?***

Numerous memorable evenings have taken place at, where luxury, mystery and high-stakes gaming combine to produce moments that will live on in legends. We hosted over 150 celebrity-attended events across our venues in 2024 alone, when guests from throughout the country participated and won over $500 million in contests and prizes. Among the significant events that left a lasting impression are the Deltin Poker Tournament, Immortals-Mega Poker Cash Festival, The Ultimate Showdown, Game of Gold, Deltin Star Weekend, MegaPlay, Epic Weekends and numerous more. The brand has received numerous industry honours, including the “Iconic Brands of India,” “Hospitality Icons,” “Industry Partner Award” from the Tourism & Hospitality Skill Council, “CSR Times Award” for the Deltin Foundation’s humanitarian endeavours and more. When visitors from 45 different nations participated in a game at Deltin Royale in Goa, it also set a world record!



The Pioneer
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# RCB hopes to end 17-year Chennai jinx

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai



Royal Challengers Bengaluru's (RCB) hopes of exorcising a 17-year jinx hinge on their experienced batting unit finding its range when they face familiar foes Chennai Super Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Friday.

The Royal Challengers have beaten the Super Kings only once at Chepauk — in the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2008. In the current RCB squad, only star batter Virat Kohli was part of that moment and now he will like to breach the CSK's fortress for a second time.

But that's easy to dream. As ever, the Chennai outfit is constructed to win their home matches on a pitch that offers considerable help to spinners.

They have the ever-familiar Ravindra Jadeja and have brought back 'old boy' Ravichandran Ashwin through last year's players' auction.

The Chennai side has also added Afghanistan left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad too to the squad, and the troika did well against fellow five-time champions Mumbai Indians a few days back.

The triumvirate bowled 11 overs against Mumbai, conceding an appreciable 70 runs for five wickets.

The pitch is expected to retain its character for this match as well, and the RCB batters, led by Kohli, will have to lift their game several notches to outwit an experienced bowling unit.

Outwit is the key word here. The Royal Challengers' batting unit should be clever more than downright aggressive to score off CSK's three-pronged spin unit, and Kohli should lead that charge.

Negating spin has not always been a strong point of Kohli's batting but in the last two years or so he has showed massive improvement in that department.

Central to that change is his willingness to play more sweep/slog sweeps against spinners, and Kohli will have to bring all those expertise to the table on a blockbuster Friday evening.

But then Kohli alone won't able to tackle a competent bowling machine, and he will require full-hearted support from Phil Salt, skipper Rajat Patidar, Liam Livingstone, Jitesh Sharma etc.

Looking at the Chepauk pitch, RCB might even consider bringing in Jacob Bethell, possibly for Tim David, who also provide a left-arm spin option.

They will also keep an eye on the fitness of pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who missed the first match against KKR due to a niggle, and if the veteran is fit then he will come in for Rasikh Salam.

On the other hand, the Super Kings will be eager for their middle-order to find its groove as Shivam Dube, Deepak Hooda and Sam Curran faltered against MI in the last match. They should lend more support to Rachin Ravindra and captain Ruturaj Gaikwad, while hoping for another strong cameo from MS Dhoni if it comes to that.

The CSK will also closely monitor the fitness of ace pacer Matheesha Pathirana, who missed the game against Mumbai.

Nathan Ellis may sit out if the Sri Lankan regains his fitness in time.

## Teams

**Chennai Super Kings:** Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), MS Dhoni, Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Matheesha Pathirana, Noor Ahmad, Ravichandran Ashwin, Devon Conway, Syed Khaleel Ahmed, Rachin Ravindra, Rahul Tripathi, Vijay Shankar, Sam Curran, Shaik Rashid, Anshul Kamboj, Mukesh Choudhary, Deepak Hooda, Gurjanpreet Singh, Nathan Ellis, Jamie Overton, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishnan Ghosh, Shreyas Gopal, Vansh Bedi, Andre Siddarth.

**Royal Challengers Bengaluru:** Rajat Patidar (c), Virat Kohli, Yash Dayal, Josh Hazlewood, Phil Salt, Jitesh Sharma, Liam Livingstone, Rasikh Salam, Suyash Sharma, Krunal Pandya, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Swapnil Singh, Tim David, Romario Shepherd, Nuwan Thushara, Manoj Bhandage, Jacob Bethel, Devdutt Padikkal, Swastik Chhikara, Lungi Ngidi, Abhinandan Singh, Mohit Rathee.

# Cricket dream shattered, Nathwani excels in para TT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Para table tennis player Rishit Nathawani always wanted to become a professional cricketer but a devastating sports injury during a casual kabaddi match in 2017 left him paralysed from the neck down.

But Nathwani didn't lose hope. He turned to para table tennis to continue his sports journey and won the gold medal in men's Class 5 event at the Khelo India Para Games 2025 here.

"I got hurt in my back," Nathwani recalls. "There was internal bleeding, which caused my nerves to break and the spine moved a little. This caused paralysis from the neck down."

The prognosis was grim. Doctors were pessimistic about his recovery, suggesting that he might never leave his bed. But Nathwani and his family refused to accept this fate.

Spending two months in rigorous rehabilitation at the Kokilaben Hospital in Mumbai, Nathwani gradually regained movement in his upper body. His initial goal was to return to professional cricket, but as physiotherapy progressed, he realised his path would be different.

"After my injury, my first goal was to recover fully and get back to professional cricket," he said.

"I did two years of physiotherapy and recovered a lot, but my legs had not recovered."

Para table tennis entered Nathwani's life almost by chance. During a road trip with his mother, he encountered his first coach, Ashok Pal, who was teaching para table tennis in a small shop. Encouraged by Pal's belief in his potential, Nathwani began training.

"He told me that I could win the nationals if I played," recalled Nathwani.

In 2021, at the age of 19, he won a silver medal in his first national tournament, setting the stage for future success.

Nathwani's immediate goal is to improve his world ranking and then qualify for the 2028 Los Angeles Paralympics.

But he understands the journey requires dedication, planning to participate in at least six international tournaments annually to maintain and improve his ranking. Behind Nathwani's success is unwavering family support, especially from his mother, Vidhi Nathwani.

"When Rishit got injured, the doctors told us that he should think about leaving sports, saying he wouldn't even get out of bed," she recalls.

Nathwani and his mother are also advocates of para sports awareness.

"Many para people don't know about sports they can play. When they watch these games on TV, they'll realise they can also participate and excel," Nathwani said.

# Tyrone Mings named on Euro 2028 board of directors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Aston Villa defender Tyrone Mings was named on Thursday on the board of directors for the European Championship in Britain and Ireland in 2028. The 32-year-old Mings is the only player among the three independent non-executive directors helping to organize the tournament.

Mings has played for Villa since 2019 and has made 18 appearances for England, for which he was part of the squad at the 2021 tournament.

He has missed large chunks of the past two seasons because of injuries and will be 35 when Euro 2028 takes place, likely meaning he won't be involved in the England squad then.

Confirmation of Mings' involvement came in the announcement of the company — officially named "UK & Ireland 2028 Limited" — tasked with delivering Euro 2028. English Football Association chair Debbie Hewitt will also chair the Euro 2028 board. A tournament anchored in England with modern stadiums generating huge matchday revenues was a safe choice for UEFA eyeing its bottom line after the high-maintenance, low-revenue Euro 2021 that was staged during the pandemic in half-empty venues across 11 countries.

UEFA cash reserves after the pandemic dropped to 360 million euros in its most recent financial report, and Euro 2028 is set to lift the number back above UEFA's target of 500 million euros.

The men's Euros, held every four years, is the foundation of UEFA's finances and funds development payments to its members. Everton's new waterfront stadium at Bramley-Moore Dock is set to open for the start of next season, replacing the club's long-time home of Goodison Park, and was included in the list of venues hosting Euro 2028 matches announced in April 2023. Bramley-Moore Dock is currently staging test events.

# Alexandra Eala stuns Swiatek

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Miami Gardens

Teenager Alexandra Eala pulled off another upset at the Miami Open when she knocked off five-time Grand Slam champion and second-seeded Iga Swiatek 6-2, 7-5 in the quarterfinals. The 19-year-old left-hander, who received a wild card into the WTA 1000 event, is the only player representing the Philippines on the women's professional tour and entered the tournament ranked 140th.

> I do not have a lot of experience on the WTA Tour, that's for sure, but I do have experience with compartmentalising
>
> — ALEXANDRA EALA, PLAYER

During her history-making run, Eala reached her first WTA semifinals by beating her third major champion, this time in 1 hour, 37 minutes.

"I'm in complete disbelief right now, I'm on cloud nine," Eala said in her on-court interview.

Along the way, she defeated 2017 French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko and reigning Australian Open champion Madison Keys, who is ranked Number 5. That was Eala's first win over a top-10 player.

She hadn't even beaten a top-40 player until Miami. After Swiatek hit long on match point, Eala seemed teary-eyed as she looked up.

"I really tried to soak it all in, because this has never happened to me before, and that's why I was looking at the screen,' Eala said. "I really wanted to keep that moment in my mind.'

In the fourth round, Eala won on a walkover over injured Paula Badosa, giving her added rest. Though Eala represents the Philippines, she has lived the last six years in Mallorca, training at the Rafael Nadal Tennis Academy.

"I would love to think that I make a difference,' Eala said. "That's the only thing I can do to give back to my country is to help inspire, to inspire change and positive change, to inspire people to pick up a racket, to watch more tennis, watch more women's tennis.'

Swiatek broke Eala in the first game, but the teenager broke right back. The first two games took 15 minutes to play and she never lost her poise.

"I don't have a lot of experience on the WTA Tour, that's for sure, but I do have experience with compartmentalising,' Eala said.

# Wrestler Dmitry Baboryko banned for two years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lausanne

Russian wrestler Dmitry Baboryko was banned for two years on Thursday after taking a breast cancer drug that counters the effects of using steroids. Baboryko tested positive for tamoxifen at the under-23 world championships last October in Albania, the International Testing Agency said on announcing the ban on behalf of the United World Wrestling governing body.

He accepted the two-year sanction including being disqualified and stripped of the silver medal from the heavyweight 130-kilogram class in Greco-Roman wrestling, the ITA said.

Russian wrestlers can compete in UWW events as approved neutral athletes who have not directly taken part in or publicly supported the war against Ukraine. None competed at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Wrestlers representing the "Authorized Neutral Athletes" team won the most medals at the under-23 worlds in Albania, though it is formally excluded from the medal table led by Iran.

# I'm used to bowling with someone who is better than me, says Moeen Ali

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Guwahati



A candid Moeen Ali, who temporarily but successfully filled the void of Sunil Narine during Kolkata Knight Riders' IPL match against Rajasthan Royals, says he is "used to bowling with someone who is better than me."

Part of a KKR attack that also has Varun Chakaravarthy in its ranks, Moeen worked well in tandem with the Indian mystery spinner and choked RR in the middle overs to restrict them to 151 for nine in their contest here on Wednesday.

"My job was to keep it tight, so that he can build the pressure and maybe get wickets. I'm used to bowling with someone who is better than me and has more mystery than me. My job is to bowl as tight as I can and hopefully that builds pressure for that person to then get wickets," Moeen said at the post-match press conference.

"Varun is bowling outstandingly well as we know and he is a brilliant bowler. He has improved so much over the last two-three years. It is amazing to bowl with somebody like that," he added.

While the 37-year-old Moeen rose to the challenge to return impressive figures of 2/23 from four overs, his younger spin colleague Chakaravarthy finished with 2/23 in his full quota of four overs.

RR enjoyed a fruitful Power Play, scoring 54 runs in the first six overs but the introduction of spin changed the complexion of their innings.

Moeen dismissed Yashasvi Jasiwal in his second over but his best moment of the game came when he sent back Nitish Rana with a classic off-spinner that turned away sharply from the left-handed batter to hit the middle stump.

"That ball was a nice one. I was just trying to spin it as much as I could. I knew that there was a bit of pressure being built and I just tried to bowl in a good area, spin it as much as I could.

"I don't have the skill as other bowlers but my job is to contain as much as I can, not get hit for six over my head. If they play good shots and hit me for fours and sixes, then I'm pleased with that. My skill is that I think like a batter, so I think what they think and it works in my favour."

Narine was unavailable for the match in Guwahati due to illness, forcing KKR skipper Ajinkya Rahane to turn to the former England international hours before the game.

T20 is an unforgiving format and Moeen admitted that bowlers need to evolve to keep challenging the batters.

"India is a great place to bat. But on wickets like this, you aren't going to get 300, you probably aren't even going to get 200. It's great to have these games in between those (high scoring) games.

"Big scoring games are great to see but it also gives a false sense of security, which is a bit too much. The game is developing fast and people are just fearless at the moment. The bowlers do have to come up with something, it is more important than ever before," Moeen said.

Hasaranga And Theekshana are world class: Bahutule

Like the KKR tweakers, the RR spinners Maheesh Theekshana and Wanindu Hasaranga could not live up to the expectations on a track which helped the slow bowlers.

"We have spinners in Hasaranga and Theekshana who are obviously world-class international players. At times I thought they were short (today) whereas if they had just owned the lengths a bit longer, there was definitely a lot of purchase for the spinners," RR's spin-bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule said.

Theekshana went wicket-less and conceded 32 runs in fours overs, while Hasaranga gave away 34 runs in three overs while taking the wicket of Rahane.

"But again I just feel that they just got into the IPL championship, so now I am sure that in the coming games they will have an impact.

"I just trust all the spinners, all the bowlers in the team. I just want to say that it's again a young side, a very promising side batting wise, bowling wise. They are looking forward to every game and I am sure they will come good in the coming matches," Bahutule said.

# Jessica Pegula moves into third Miami Open semifinal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Miami Gardens



Jessica Pegula stopped the string of upsets at the Miami Open by ending the stalwart run of Britain's unseeded Emma Raducanu.

The fourth-seeded Pegula won 6-4, 6-7 (3), 6-2 in a two hour, 25 minute battle, to move into her third Miami Open women's semifinal in four years. Pegula, the last American in the field, faces the teenage wild card from the Philippines, Alexandra Eala, on Thursday.

Pegula's match ended at 11:23 pm. And forced the postponement of the men's quarterfinal between Novak Djokovic and Sebastian Korda until Thursday.

Raducanu, who won the 2021 US Open, came in ranked 60th world after experiencing multiple coaching changes and injuries.

Pegula won the first set. But Raducanu flashed her power in taking the second set, though not before she appeared to struggle physically with Miami's high humidity that reached 70 per cent.

Grimacing through points and showing signs of overheating, Raducanu posted five set points on Pegula's serve but couldn't convert. Pegula then held to close to 5-4.

At that juncture, medical personnel took Raducanu's blood pressure and pulse rate as the chair umpire declared a medical timeout. The medical officials rubbed ice bags on Raducanu's legs and put cold towels around her neck.

Raducanu sprang to life and dominated the tiebreaker 7-3.

In the third set, Pegula rallied, going up an early break at 2-0. On her third break point, Pegula put away Raducanu's short ball and ended the match by breaking Raducanu at love.

In a nearly three-hour, men's quarterfinal, a cramping, 14th-seeded Grigor Dimitrov barely survived the oppressive humidity to outlast No. 23 seed Francisco Cerundolo 6-7 (6), 6-4, 7-6 (3).

Dimitrov was led off the court by a tournament doctor and ATP physio after sitting in his chair for over 25 minutes, saying he was feeling "dizzy."

Dimitrov, a Miami Open finalist in 2024, saved a match point in the third set when trailing 5-6 before forcing a tiebreaker. He squandered seven set points in the opening set and lost the tiebreaker 6-4.

He will face the Djokovic-Korda winner in the quarterfinals.

The high seeds were falling earlier on Wednesday. Soon after unseeded wild card Eala stunned Number 2 seed Iga Swiatek in a straight-set women's quarterfinal, men's top seed Alexander Zverev got bounced by Number 17 seed Arthur Fils of France, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in a fourth-round men's match postponed by rain.

Fils, who beat American Frances Tiafoe in his previous match in a marathon three setter, will face Jakub Mensik in Thursday's quarterfinals. In the third set, Fils broke Zverev at 3-3 and kept the German moving. On match point, Fils pounded a ball down the left sideline that the top seed couldn't retrieve.

Fils, 20, received treatment on his back after the first set but rallied to win the next two, winning in two hours.

"I was feeling not great in the rallies," he said. "I've had a little problem in my back since I was young, so sometimes it hurts me a little bit. I had to find a rhythm, more aggressive and come into the court to play my game and not let him play.

"Because when you let him play, he is one of the best tennis players in the world. I'm really happy about the way I did it."

Eala, ranked 140th, is on the verge of becoming the first star player to ever come out of the Philippines after topping Swiatek 6-2, 7-5.

Eala became the third wild card to reach the Miami Open semifinals, following Justine Henin in 2010 and Victoria Azarenka in 2018.

She never rattled as the first four games went to at least one deuce and five of the first six games were service breaks. Swiatek held serve just twice in the match and committed 32 unforced errors in the one hour, 39-minute battle. Eala has beaten three major winners during her remarkable run — Jelena Ostapenko, Madison Keys and Swiatek, a five-time Grand Slam winner from Poland.

"There is a lot of emotions, definitely,' said Eala, who had never beaten a top 40 player.

# Iga Swiatek given extra security protection

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Miami Gardens

Iga Swiatek was given extra security protection at the Miami Open after being verbally attacked during a practice session by a man who had sent the five-time Grand Slam champion harassing messages via social media.

"We monitor the network to catch these types of issues. Constructive criticism is one thing, and threats, hate speech or even disturbance during training is another — this cannot be condoned," a statement from Swiatek's team said Wednesday.

"We reported the matter to the tournament organizer, as well as to the WTA ... Which reacted immediately and took additional precautions, such as additional security, for which we are very grateful."

The episode — first reported by BBC Sport — comes a little more than a month after a stalker was removed from a match being played by 2021 US Open champion Emma Raducanu in Dubai.

"Ensuring the safety of the players is crucial — they are the ones at the center of the event — and it is our job to protect them," the statement from Swiatek's team said. The Number 2-seeded Swiatek lost to wild card Alexandra Eala in the quarterfinals Wednesday. Asked afterward whether the security situation disrupted her match preparation, Swiatek replied: "No, I wouldn't say so."

"Player safety is our top priority. The WTA works closely with tournaments and their security teams on best practices for international sporting events to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

"There are comprehensive security protocols in place to make sure that any incidents are handled promptly and effectively," the WTA said.

"The details of these are not something we discuss publicly, but we are steadfast in our commitment to maintaining a safe environment for players and everyone attending one of our events."

The Miami Open issued a statement saying: "We take the safety and security of all players and tournament attendees extremely seriously. We constantly evaluate any potential threats and take every measure to respond appropriately. To ensure the effectiveness of these efforts, we do not disclose the details of our security operations."

At the Dubai Championships last month, Raducanu said, she could barely breathe and her eyes filled with tears when a stalker who had approached her earlier in the tournament was in the stands during her match.

Raducanu spoke to the chair umpire, and the man was ejected from the court and later detained by police.

In 2022, an obsessive fan was given a restraining order after going to Raducanu's home three times.

# *L2: EMPURAAN:* STYLISH SEQUEL WITH HOLLYWOOD VIBES, BUT LACKS EMOTIONAL SUBSTANCE

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The Malayalam film *Lucifer* (2019) was a massive hit and marked Prithviraj Sukumaran's directorial debut. Starring Mohanlal alongside Prithviraj, Tovino Thomas, Manju Warrier and many others, the film was a game-changer. Now, after six years, Prithviraj returns with the sequel, *L2: Empuraan*, which has been released in multiple languages. The first installment's success, especially its Malayalam version and OTT releases, left audiences eagerly anticipating this sequel. Here's how the film fares:

## PLOT

The film opens with a violent riot in Gujarat in 2002, where Balraj Bajrangi (Abhimanyu Singh) is involved in the deaths of many people. Years later, Kerala's Chief Minister Jatin Das (Tovino Thomas) announces a new political party in alliance with Balraj Bajrangi and his right-wing faction. Jatin's sister, Priyadarshi Ramdas (Manju Warrier), opposes her brother's political move and takes a stand against him. Meanwhile, investigative journalist Govardhan (Indrajith Sukumaran) uncovers the truth behind the CM's alliance, all while searching for Stephen Nedumpally (Mohanlal), who disappeared five years ago. Everyone wants Stephen to return and restore order in Kerala. But where is Stephen? Why is he secretly living under the name Khureshi Ab'raam? And will he come back to fight for the cause? These questions set the stage for the unfolding drama.

## ANALYSIS

Prithviraj Sukumaran's *L2: Empuraan* takes the action to an international level, expanding the scope beyond the confines of Kerala. The film begins with the Gujarat riots, featuring Balraj Bajrangi and his violent acts, setting up the film's political backdrop. A teenage survivor of the riots hints at a future revelation that fans can easily predict. The plot then shifts to Kerala, where the political ramifications of Jatin Das' controversial move unfold.

Soon, the story veers into foreign locations, where Interpol agents working as double agents further complicate the narrative. It is in these scenes that Mohanlal's character, Stephen Nedumpally, is introduced with a jaw-dropping action sequence, highlighting his star power and aura. The introduction is electric and a well-executed bomb explosion heightens the suspense. However, the film struggles with coherence between the different narrative threads, which may leave some viewers disconnected. While the final half hour offers a satisfying conclusion, the journey feels uneven.

While L2: Empuraan delivers on action, style, and production quality, the story is somewhat predictable. The film's emphasis on external action and spectacle detracts from the emotional drama that could have made it more impactful. There is little emotional exploration, especially with the relationship between Jatin Das and Priyadarshi Ramdas. Had the director focused more on the political and emotional conflict between the siblings, it could have been a more engaging experience. Instead, the film sometimes feels like it's moving through the motions, with its beats being easily anticipated.



**Cast:** Mohanlal, Prithviraj Sukumaran, Tovino Thomas, Manju Warrier, Abhimanyu Singh, Jerome Flynn, Kishore, Suraj Venjaramoodu and others
**Cinematography:** Sujith Vaassudev **Music Director:** Deepak Dev
**Writer:** Murali Gopy
**Producers:** Antony Perumbavoor, Gokulam Gopalan, Subaskaran
**Director:** Prithviraj Sukumaran **Rating:** 2.5/5

## PERFORMANCE

Mohanlal undoubtedly steals the show. Although his screen time is limited, his mere presence on-screen is enough to send the audience into a frenzy. His mass appeal, combined with his stylish and suave portrayal, makes up for the lack of emotional depth in his role. His character mainly indulges in action scenes, giving him less room to showcase his emotional range. Nonetheless, his few moments on-screen offer a spectacular spectacle.

Prithviraj Sukumaran appears only in the second half but makes his presence felt. His chemistry with Mohanlal is worth the wait. Tovino Thomas shines in his portrayal of the Chief Minister, delivering a solid performance. Manju Warrier also plays a pivotal role in the second half and does justice to her character. Abhimanyu Singh excels as the menacing Balraj Bajrangi, while Kishore and Jerome Flynn deliver their roles with conviction.

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Prithviraj Sukumaran's direction is a visual treat, packed with stylised, high-production-value action sequences that match international standards. The choreography of the action scenes is impressive, especially the sequence where Mohanlal's character saves Manju Warrier in the forest—a moment that surely earned applause. The cinematography is top-notch, with breathtaking shots, especially of the foreign locales and every action set-piece is captured with precision.

The background score by Deepak Dev is another highlight. Every time Mohanlal appears on screen, the music elevates his presence, contributing to the tension and drama. The slow build-up of Mohanlal's introduction might disappoint his fans, as they expect more screen time for their favourite star. Despite his limited presence in the first half, when Mohanlal does appear, his magnetic screen presence and stylish portrayal of Stephen create an electrifying experience. Prithviraj also appears in the second half, and the duo of Mohanlal and Prithviraj on-screen is a treat for fans, making it a high point of the film.

## VERDICT

In the end, *L2: Empuraan* offers a visually stunning experience with Hollywood-level action, direction, and cinematography. While the film's style and technical craftsmanship are undeniable, its lack of strong emotional drama and predictability may disappoint those looking for a more compelling storyline. Still, fans of the franchise and action movie lovers will find enough to appreciate, especially in the electrifying moments when Mohanlal graces the screen.

# Ram Charan embraces an unapologetically fierce avatar in *Peddi*



Ram Charan celebrated his birthday on March 27 and to mark the occasion, the makers of his upcoming film, directed by Buchi Babu Sana, released the first look of the actor. Titled *Peddi*, the film is produced by Venkata Satish Kilaru and features Ram Charan in an intense and rugged avatar, a transformation that has already captivated audiences.

Shedding his superstar aura, Ram Charan embraces a raw and earthy persona in *Peddi*. The first look poster presents him in a gritty and rugged attire, exuding power and intensity. Meanwhile, the second poster showcases him gripping an old cricket bat, with a rustic village stadium illuminated by floodlights in the backdrop. These visuals have sparked curiosity, hinting at a gripping rural drama.

Adding to the film's star power, Kannada superstar Shiva Rajkumar plays a key role, while Janhvi Kapoor has been cast as the female lead. The film also features Jagapathi Babu and Divyenndu Sharma of *Mirzapur* fame in significant roles.




# NTR's Japan visit turns special as a fan speaks Telugu for him

Telugu cinema continues to make its mark internationally, with many Telugu films gaining a strong following in countries like China and Japan. Among the many stars with a global fanbase, Jr. NTR enjoys immense popularity in Japan, especially after the release of his film *Baadshah*. Over the years, several Japanese fans have even traveled to Hyderabad to meet the actor.

Currently, NTR is in Japan, promoting his latest film *Devara*. During his visit, he was met with overwhelming love from his Japanese fans, but one fan's gesture particularly touched him.

A Japanese fan, deeply moved by *RRR*, revealed that she learned Telugu after watching the film. Speaking in fluent Telugu, she expressed her admiration for NTR. As a passionate lover of cinema and languages, the actor was deeply moved by this heartfelt moment.

### SHARING HIS EMOTIONS, NTR SAID:

"My visits to Japan always give me beautiful memories, but this one hit differently. Hearing a Japanese fan tell me she learned Telugu after watching *RRR* truly moved me. The power of cinema to be a bridge across cultures and inspire someone to learn a new language is something I will never forget. One more reason to celebrate Indian Cinema as it travels the world."

# Ester takes on a lead role in a female-centric relevant film

Actress Ester is currently juggling multiple projects across Telugu, Kannada and Tamil cinema. She has been selective about her roles, ensuring they hold significance in the film, even if the screen time isn't lengthy.

"I am trying to choose better and different scripts compared to my previous work," Ester shared, emphasising her desire to explore unique and challenging characters.

The actress has now signed a female-centric film, which is set to be officially announced on Ugadi with a title and poster reveal.

"It's a female-centric film woven around a very interesting and relevant subject in recent times. My role is unlike anything I've done before, and audiences haven't seen me in such a character," Ester revealed.

She also praised the film's team, particularly director GVK and DOP J Prabhakar Reddy, for their dedication and seamless working experience. The project is scheduled for a May or June release, and she is eagerly looking forward to it.

Additionally, Ester is in discussions for new projects and is currently working on two Kannada films and four Telugu films, with another Telugu film set for release this year.

# Mamitha Baiju makes Telugu debut in a bilingual film with Pradeep Ranganathan

Malayalam actress Mamitha Baiju, who has appeared in multiple Malayalam films, became an overnight star with *Premalu*. The film was also released in Telugu under the same title and received immense success, making Mamitha a widely recognised name among Telugu audiences. Following this success, many speculated that she would soon make her Telugu debut. While the actress has already signed a few Tamil films, including a role in Tamil superstar Vijay's *Jana Nayagan*, she has now officially signed her first Telugu film, in which she will star opposite Pradeep Ranganathan. This upcoming project is a Telugu-Tamil bilingual film, where Pradeep Ranganathan plays the lead. He is already well-known in Telugu cinema for *Love Today* and the latest one to the list *Enter the Dragon*, both of which performed exceptionally well despite being dubbed releases. The film is directed by Keerthiswaran, who is making his directorial debut after previously working as an assistant director on several high-profile projects. With Mamitha Baiju as the female lead, the project is highly anticipated. The film's music is composed by Sai Abhyankkar and its shoot is currently underway.



# *Court* success revives Priyadarshi's box office prospects



Ram Jagadeesh made his directorial debut with *Court: State vs A Nobody*, which was released on March 14 and became a huge success. Despite being a small-budget court drama, the film has garnered widespread appreciation, with Priyadarshi playing one of the key roles. The film also marked a comeback for actor Sivaji, whose portrayal of Mangapathi received immense praise.

For Priyadarshi, this success comes as a relief, especially after his previous film *Darling*, in which he played the lead role, failed at the box office. Starring Nabha Natesh as the female lead, *Darling* was removed from theaters within three days of its release. However, the triumph of *Court* has now given Priyadarshi newfound confidence, as he was one of the film's pivotal actors.

The success of *Court* has also turned the spotlight on his upcoming film *Sarangapani Jathakam*, where he plays the lead role. Directed by Indraganti Mohana Krishna and co-starring Roopa Koduvayur, the film is set to release on April 18. The producers are now optimistic about the film's box-office prospects, leveraging Priyadarshi's renewed momentum from *Court*. They are also hopeful about securing lucrative OTT and digital deals, banking on his current wave of success.

