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INDIA-OMAN **TO REVIEW PROGRESS** 

Mahesh Sriram's debut in Telugu cinema after Hollywood TRIUMP

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\*LATE CITY VOL. 7 ISSUE 84

the pioneer Union Minister of State Bandi Sanjay Kumar openly refusing to fund housing projects is a blatant violation of federal principles. This is not just a breach of the federal spirit but an outright denial of states' rights. No ruling party at the Centre has the authority to encroach on the rights of states

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Kavitha, BRS MLC, Telangana

## **RRR** identifies his 'tormentor'

Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, K Raghurama Krishna Raju (RRR), participated in a parade at the Guntur sub-jail on Sunday to identify the individual who allegedly tortured him during his custody under the CID police in 2021. Speaking to the media at the jail, RRR confirmed that he identified the accused in the presence of the district judge. "I received a summons from the court to attend the parade and identify the person who tortured me while I was in CID custody. I attended the parade today and identified the ..

## **Rules for mandatory** adoption of IST

In a move to standardize timekeeping, the government has drafted comprehensive rules mandating the exclusive use of Indian Standard Time (IST) across all official and commercial platforms, with the Consumer Affairs Ministry seeking public feedback by February 14. The Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2024, aims to establish a legal framework for standardising timekeeping practices, mandating IST as the sole time reference for legal, administrative.



## Hospitality sector seeks infra status

Lack of infrastructure status. rationalisation of tax rates, easier visa processes and more incentives by state governments to promote investments are some of the key issues that need to he sector to realise its full potential, Hotel Association of India President K B Kachru said ahead of the Budget. In an interview, Kachru, emphasised upon the need for India to be marketed in a better fashion, and noted that countries like Japan, South Korea and Thailand have..

-PAGE: 8

## U19 WC: India crush Bangladesh

Reigning champions India continued their dominant run in the ICC Women's U19 World Cup with a resounding eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in their Super Six encounter here on Sunday. With this comprehensive win. India have now registered their fourth consecutive victory in the tournament, maintaining their unbeaten streak and further establishing themselves as strong title contenders. A disciplined Indian bowling attack, spearheaded by left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma's...

# Focus on welfare, growth: Guv

## NAZEER HOISTS NATIONAL FLAG AT IGMC STADIUM DURING R-DAY FETE



Governor Abdul Nazeer hoisted the national flag at Vijayawada's IGMC Stadium and received a guard of honour

Governor Justice Abdul Nazeer marked the 76th Republic Day by

addressing the people of Andhra

Pradesh, highlighting the State

government's focus on develop-

held at the Indira Gandhi

Municipal Corporation Stadium

in Vijayawada, where the Governor hoisted the National

Flag and received a guard of

The main celebrations were

PNS VIJAYAWADA

ment and welfare.

CM Naidu, Dy CM Pawan Kalyan, and leaders participate

Tableaux showcase key achievements in various sectors like education, health, and agriculture

attended the event.

Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Minister Nara

Lokesh, and other dignitaries

The Governor witnessed vibrant

tableaux showcasing achievements

in industries, tourism, education,

housing, health, and skill develop-

ment, as well as initiatives in

agriculture, fisheries, women and

child welfare, and water resources.

Nazeer extended his greetings

and reflected on the State's finan-

cial challenges, attributing them to

In his speech, Governor Abdul

 Governor blames previous mismanage-ment for financial woes but credits NDA-led efforts for stabilisation

Central funds were praised for reviving projects like Amaravati and Polavaram

previous YSR Congress Party gov-

ernment. He noted that projects

were stalled due to heavy debts but

credited the NDA-led govern-

ment for stabilising the situation

under Chief Minister Naidu's lead-

The Governor highlighted the

Union government's support for

restarting projects like Amaravati,

the Polavaram project, and the

Visakhapatnam Steel Plant rehabil-

He also introduced the state's

ambitious 'Swarnandhra Vision

The 'Swarnandhra Vision 2047' aims for economic growth, poverty eradication, and global trade leadership

Plans to promote entrepreneurship and attract investments to make Andhra Pradesh poverty-

nomic growth, poverty eradication, and global trade opportuni-

Governor Nazeer announced an increase in pensions from Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 and emphasised housing for all and initiatives for SCs, STs, minorities, OBCs, and

"Our goal is to make every family economically independent, nurture entrepreneurship, and attract investments," he said, adding that Andhra Pradesh is on the path to becoming a poverty-



# Tech-savvy Naidu uses AI at presser

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu demonstrated his commitment to embracing advanced technology by conducting a press conference on Saturday using Artificial Intelligence (AI). Remarkably, the press meet was held without videographers or cameramen, relying entirely on an AI-operated system.

The AI camera setup, installed at the Chief Minister's residence in Undavalli, featured a four-camera multi-video system that provided seamless live coverage of the event. As the Chief Minister entered the meeting hall, the system automatically focused on him and began recording. The AI technology ensured that the Chief Minister remained at the centre of the frame, making real-time adjustments to capture the best video output.

Traditionally, such a setup would require eight operators, but this AIpowered system functioned efficiently with just one person. The AI camera setup, installed at the Chief Minister's residence in Undavalli, featured a fourcamera multi-video system that provided seamless live coverage of the event.

Operating in "no-man" mode, it eliminated the need for multiple individuals moving around, thus avoiding any disruptions during the event.

During the press conference, the Chief Minister shared insights from his recent visit to Davos. The state-of-the-art AI system was introduced under the initiative of Minister Nara Lokesh, who played a pivotal role in its implementation. Interestingly, rather than using overnment funds, Lokesh chose to finance the installation at the CM's camp office in Undavalli with his funds, reflecting his dedication to technological innovation.

# revival efforts at VSP

Chief Minister N Chandrababu the mismanagement under the

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Union Steel Secretary Sandeep Poundrik is set to visit the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) on 28 for an internal review meeting with the plant's executive cadre. The visit comes as the Visakha Ukku Parirakshana Porata Committee observes January 27, marking three years since the strategic sale of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) was announced.

The review meeting is expected to focus on the recently announced Rs 11,440 crore revival package for RINL. Committee members and union leaders hope to engage with the Secretary to highlight additional measures needed for the plant's Key demands include the merg-

er of RINL with the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), allocation of captive iron ore mines, a fouryear tax holiday, and registration of the plant's lands in RINL-VSP's name. The allocation of captive mines is seen as critical to reducing production costs, while a tax holiday could provide financial relief of Rs 14,000 crore. Registering the plant's lands under RINL-VSP would enhance its asset value to approximately Rs 70,000 crore.

Committee member J. Ayodhya Ramu stated that they are prepared to present these points during the visit, underscoring their ongoing efforts to secure the plant's long-term viability.



The review meeting is expected to focus on the recently announced Rs 11,440 crore revival package for RINL.

Committee members and union leaders hope to engage with the Secretary to highlight additional measures needed for the plant's revival

future. Meanwhile, there is speculation about a possible visit by Union Steel Minister Kumaraswamy on January 29 or 30.

The Steel Plant's revival is considered vital for the local economy and India's steel industry, with stakeholders urging sustained policy and financial support to ensure its

# Steel Secy to review Uphold spirit of Constitution: Chief Secy

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K Vijayanand has stressed the importance of every citizen adhering to the spirit of the Constitution to fulfil the aspirations of its framers. Speaking at the 76th Republic Day celebrations held at the State Secretariat's First Block, he paid floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi and Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, before hoisting the national flag.

In his address, the Chief Secretary highlighted that India holds the distinction of having the world's largest written Constitution. He praised the vision of its framers, who crafted it



citizens and reduce economic inequalities, thereby laying the foundation for a progressive nation. He tion the state as a leading force in a urged everyone to uphold the Constitution's ideals and work

to provide equal opportunities for all towards preserving its core principles. Vijayanand also outlined the government's ambitious plans to posideveloped India by 2047

Collector sacks official after CM's intervention

#### end of NE monsoon rains PNS GUNTUR

A daily weat

Conditions are becoming favourable for the cessation of Northeast Monsoon rains over Tamil Nadu, adjoining coastal Andhra Pradesh, and Rayalaseema in the next two days, according to the Meteorological Centre.

**Conditions favourable for** 

Sunday mentioned that shallow to moderate fog is likely to occur at isolated places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 48 hours. Light to moderate rain is expected at one or two places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh on 30, 31 January, and 1

# Students starve on R-Day as drunk warden shirks duties

**PNS** ■ ANANTAPUR

Republic Day turned distressing for 110 students of a BC boys' hostel in CK Palli, Sri Satya Sai district, as they were left without lunch due to the negligence of their hostel warden.

According to students, the warden was allegedly inebriated and failed to arrange lunch. When confronted, he reportedly dismissed their concerns, asking them to manage with food from outside. While a few students managed to buy snacks, the majority were left hungry, prompting widespread outrage.

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Sai District Collector, T.S. Chetan.



Naidu, expressing strong displeasure, Voicing concern over the incident, immediately spoke to the Sri Satya he directed the Collector to ensure

food arrangements for the students without delay.

BC Welfare S. Savitha instructed the Collector to dismiss Hostel Warden Narayana with immediate effect. The Collector promptly issued dismissal orders and assured the Chief Minister that a thorough inquiry would be conducted, with a detailed report submitted soon.

The Chief Minister was deeply upset that students had to endure such neglect, especially on Republic Day," an official source noted. Parents and students have expressed gratitude for the swift intervention by the government, hoping for better management in the Taking swift action, Minister for future to avoid such incidents.

# India parades might, heritage and development

India's new tactical missile Pralay, T-90 tanks, a skit depicting tri-services synergy on the battlefield, scores of dances and a parade of tableaux marched down Kartavya Path on Sunday in a magnificent display of military power, culture and development to celebrate the 76th Republic

Like every year, defence hardware took centre stage of the 90-minute multifaceted colourful parade that began at 10.30 am, marching, dancing and rolling down the ceremonial boulevard, past the podium of the Supreme Commander, President Droupadi

On the VVIP dais, Murmu was joined by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, the chief guest for this year's parade. A contingent of his country's military band was given the

honour of leading the parade. The two presidents arrived in the tra-



which made a comeback in 2024 after a gap of 40 years. They were escorted by the President's Bodyguard, the most

senior regiment of the Indian Army. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, various Union ministers, the country's top military brass, foreign diplomats, senior officials and thousands of spectators from president to attend the Republic-Day

ditional horse-drawn buggy, a practice across the country gathered on a sunny winter morning to witness the impressive show that also included a fly-past by helicopters and fighter and transport aircraft. C-130J Super Hercules, C-295, C-17 Globemaster, Dornier, AN-32, Rafale, Jaguar and Su-30, among other aircraft,

took part in the flypast. Subianto was the fourth Indonesian

celebrations. Sukarno, the first president of Indonesia, was the chief guest at India's first Republic Day celebrations in 1950.

In a first-of-its-kind display, more than 5,000 folk and tribal artistes showcased 45 dance forms from various parts of the country, covering the entire Kartavya Path, to ensure that all guests had the same viewing experience. parade for the first time.

The Sangeet Natak Academy curated the 11-minute cultural performance, titled "Jayati Jaya Mamah Bharatam".

The choreographed presentation was brought alive through the rich and colourful legacy of the country's tribal and folk forms as a tribute to tribal icon Birsa Munda.

From wooden toys to the Maha Kumbh -- sixteen tableaux from across states and Union Territories and 15 from central ministries, departments and organisations rolled down the ceremonial boulevard, showcasing the rich cultural heritage and diverse traditions of the country. Also on display were some of the cutting-edge defence platforms, including BrahMos, Pinaka and Akash, with the army's battle surveillance system "Sanjay" and the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) surface-tosurface tactical missile "Pralay" registering their presence in the ceremonial

## Six people dead as lorry rams two auto-rickshaws

PNS WARANGAL

At least six people, including a child, were killed in a major road accident on the Warangal-Khammam highway near Mamunur on Sunday. The incident happened when a lorry, laden with iron bars, lost control and rammed into two auto-rickshaws carrying passengers from behind. The impact caused the iron bars to fall onto the vehicles.

The deceased are identified as Santosh, Pooja, Kiran, and Mukesh, all migrant farm labourers from

Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh. The lorry veered off the road and overturned. The lorry also fell on

the auto-rickshaws. Police suspect that the lorry driver may have been under the



said that the heavy vehicle coming from Khammam towards Warangal, loaded with iron, lost control and fell onto two autos travelling in the opposite direction. As a result, four people died on the spot, while one person died at MGM Hospital. Two others who were injured were rushed to MGM Hospital for treatment.

# Monday Mirchi

#### CHIEF SECRETARY PICK

The buzz around the new Chief Secretary's appointment is going about with twists and turns. It seems Chief Minister Revanth Reddy might just be eyeing an SC or BC officer for the coveted post, making social justice the hallmark of his selection. Insiders hint that with hardly any Reddys in the running among the top bureaucrats, the CM could be setting a precedent in promoting diversity over traditional hierarchies. For the uninitiated, Revanth has already woven social justice into his decision-making by ensuring inclusivity in the Chief Minister's Office itself. While the civil services grapevine remains abuzz, one thing's for sure—this pick will be closely watched for its symbolic value and its nod to the broader narrative of empowerment.

#### JAYESH RANJAN: MASTERING THE ART OF LOVING THE JOB, NOT THE BOSS

When it comes to showcasing bureaucratic finesse, Jayesh Ranjan seems to have mastered the rule: love your job, not your boss. Whether under BRS or Congress, he continues to deliver with unmatched skill, pulling off a staggering Rs. 1.7 lakh crore in investments - a testament to what a committed bureaucrat can achieve. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, too, seems to have taken note, giving Jayesh the freedom to shine. At a recent CII meeting, Revanth even allowed him to answer industry queries, a move that left many impressed. The scene stood in stark contrast to the BRS era, where KTR's dominant presence often meant Jayesh had little space to step in. Even on the global stage at Davos, Jayesh stood out. Visuals from the event show him passionately marketing Telangana, with everyone else keenly listening. Whether it's navigating political transitions or pitching the state on international platforms, Jayesh Ranjan proves that loving the work you do makes all the difference.

#### KARIMNAGAR CP ABHISHEK MOHANTY SPARKS BUZZ WITH REPEATED NO-SHOWS

Karimnagar Commissioner of Police Abhishek Mohanty has been raising eyebrows with his consistent absences from key meetings. The buzz grew louder when he skipped a meeting attended by Union Ministers and local state ministers. Adding fuel to the fire, Mohanty even gave the Disha meeting a miss, leaving many wondering about his priorities. When Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar landed at the airport, Mohanty was nowhere to be seen, leaving Karimnagar Collector to face the heat from

Ponguleti. A little bird told us that Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy wasn't pleased, openly questioning Collector Pamela Satpathy about Mohanty's absence and even suggesting his transfer to local leaders. Whispers in political circles hint that Mohanty, who fought tooth and nail to stay in Telangana, is now being branded as a Nepo kid" by critics for not stepping up to the role. Bureaucrats state that it might turn into an IAS versus IPS war if DGP doesn't take Mohanty to task. IAS circles are buzzing that Mohanty hasn't even deputed ACP to Union Minister"s event and a IAS officer had to face ire because this IPS thinks he is much senior. Whether this is a temporary blip or a sign of deeper issues, one thing's for sure Karimnagar's top cop is under scrutiny.

#### AJITH REDDY'S ZURICH GREETING FOR NAIDU SPARKS GOSSIP

B Ajith Reddy, Special Secretary to Telangana Chief Minister, has become the talk of the town after being caught on camera enthusiastically greeting Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu in Zurich. In a video shared by Naidu's team, the AP CM was seen walking out to a crowd of followers, among whom was Telangana CM's secretary. This unexpected gesture has stirred murmurs back home, especially among bureaucrats who have long been critical of having IDES officers in the Telangana CMO. Whispers suggest that such actions only add weight to their narrative, with some saying it doesn't quite match the stature expected of the CM's secretary.

#### THE NEW FAD: COLLECTORS TAKE TO THE FLOOR

A new trend seems to be taking root among district collectors, with many choosing to sit on the floor during interactions to showcase their humility and connect with the people. Khammam Collector Muzzamil Khan was recently seen sitting cross-legged on the floor, engaging with students in a school, while Narayanpet Collector Sikta Patnaik opted to sit with villagers during a Praja Palana Grama Sabha. While these gestures are earning applause on social media, whispers among senior bureaucrats suggest there's more to it than just a display of humility. We've done far more impactful things in our time but didn't have social media to project. Whether it's genuine or strategic, the floor seems to be the new stage for collectors striving to strike a chord with the masses - and with their followers online.

--Yours truly

Also present were Defence

Service personnel, sportsper-

sons, Padma Awardees, media

persons, freedom fighters, and

special invitees, including

women sarpanches, merit stu-

dents, and representatives of

NGOs. Earlier, Governor

Abdul Nazeer toured the

venue and personally greeted

the guests attending the 'At

sweets to children attending

The programme was attend-

Kumar,

Mallikarjuna, and several

Secretariat officials and

## Vasamsetty lauds Setti Balijas at Mumbai gathering

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Labour, Boilers, and Health Insurance, Vasamsetty Subhash, extended greetings to fellow Indians on the occasion of the 76th Republic Day during a ceremony in Mumbai. The Minister, who was the chief guest at the Mumbai-Andhra Setti Balija community meeting, hoisted the national flag and highlighted the importance of this historic day.

Speaking at the event, the Minister said, "Seventy-five years ago, on this day, India embraced the Constitution, bringing an end to foreign rule characterised by discrimination and inequality. The Constitution laid the foundation for justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, uniting the people of India.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Subhash lauded the contributions of the Setti Balija community, originally from the Godavari districts, for their hard work, perseverance, and values. He praised their achievements across the country and their role in various

"The Setti Balija community has inspired countless people through their dedication and commitment to human values. Their legacy is a source of pride," he remarked.

# **Power sector making long** strides, avers APGENCO MD

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh has reaffirmed its position as a renewable energy leader by securing investments worth Rs 3.92 lakh crore under the Andhra Pradesh Integrated Clean Energy Policy (AP ICE) 2024, creating 3.3 lakh job opportunities. The state aims to attract Rs 10 lakh crore in investments and generate 7.5 lakh jobs in the renewable energy sector, furthering India's clean energy transition.

At the 76th Republic Day celebrations held at Vidyut Soudha in Vijayawada on Sunday, KVN Chakradhar Babu, Managing Director of APGENCO, hoisted the National Flag, joined by senior officials, including Kirthi Ch, Joint Managing Director of APTRANSCO, and T. Panasa Reddy, Chief Vigilance and Security Officer of APGENCO.

In his address, Chakradhar Babu commended the progress in the power sector under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar. He emphasised the robust electricity infrastructure and the government's initiative of providing free power to over 21 lakh agricultural consumers, which has greatly benefited farmers.

Highlighting renewable energy efforts, he mentioned the

Managing Director of APGENCO KVN Chakradhar Babu hoisted the National Flag in the presence of APTRANSCO MD Kirthi Khekuri and APGENCO Chief Vigilance and Security Officer T Panasa Reddy and senior officers on the occasion of the 76th Republic Day celeberations at Vidyut Soudha in Vijatyawada on





Chief Secretary K Vijayanand compliments Rama Singh Thakur, in-charge Chairman of APERC upon being presented with Lifetime

PM-KUSUM scheme, aiming to solarise 1,000-1,200 agricultural feeders with a capacity addition of 3,725 MW. The PM Suryaghar Muft Bijili Yojana will install rooftop solar panels for 10 lakh beneficiaries. By 2026, all government buildings in the state will be solarised through partnerships with NEDCAP and NTPC

Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Limited. Chakradhar Babu also announced key infrastructure projects, including the 1,350 MW Upper Sileru Pumped Storage Project (PSP), to be completed by February 2029, and hydropower projects at Lower Sileru and Polavaram, which will add significant capacity by 2027. APGEN-

CO, in collaboration with NHPC, will also develop PSPs with a combined capacity of 5,070 MW. Andhra Pradesh's transmission

managed by network, APTRANSCO, is recognised as one of the most efficient in the country, boasting 373 EHT substations, over 33,000 circuit kilometres of transmission lines, and a system availability of 99.82%. The state recorded a peak demand of 13,712 MW in May 2024 and maintains transmission losses at just 2.69%.

Chakradhar Babu highlighted APGENCO's ISO 9001:2015 certification for its Quality Management System, reflecting its global standards adherence. He expressed gratitude to employees

and consumers for their contributions and urged continued dedication to strengthening the sector.

A Lifetime Achievement Award was conferred upon Rama Singh Thakur, In-charge Chairman of the AP Electricity Regulatory Commission, in recognition of his contributions to the power sector.

The award was presented by Chief Secretary K. Vijayanand. Senior officials, including Director Grid APTRANSCO A.K.V. Bhaskar and Additional Secretary Peddi Roja, along with distinguished guests, marked a milestone in the state's journey towards sustainable energy and develop-

# Assembly sessions must be held for at least 75 days a year: Ayyanna

PNS VIJAYAWADA

To facilitate comprehensive discussions on public matters, Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly Speaker, Ch Ayyanapatrudu, emphasised that Assembly sessions should be held for a minimum of 75 days annually. Speaking on the occasion of the 76th Republic Day celebrations, he paid floral tributes to the portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, and later unfurled the national flag.

In his address, Ayyanapatrudu conveyed Republic Day greetings to the people and highlighted that the Indian Constitution, which came into force on January 26, 1950, has completed 76 years. He underscored that the Constitution granted citizens freedom, equality, dignity, and voting rights. Through these rights, the Constitution empowered the people to elect their government. He also noted that the framers allowed for amendments to be made, strengthening it over time. The

Constitution has been amended 106 times so far. Despite its long implementation, challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, corruption, inequality, gender discrimination, terrorism, religious extremism, substance abuse, and violence against women continue to persist. He called for a collective effort to address these issues and urged everyone to uphold the spirit of the Constitution, ensuring that government welfare schemes bene-

The event was attended by Deputy Speaker K Raghurama Krishna Raju, Chairperson of the at the Andhra Pradesh

20 Point Programme Lanka

Welfare benefits for all key to eliminating social inequality: Moshen

Legislative Assembly premises. Dinakar, Madiga Corporation President Undavalli Sridevi, The event began with Chairman Moshen Raju paying floral tributes to Mahatma Assembly Secretary-General S. Gandhi's portrait, followed by Prasanna Kumar, Deputy Secretary the hoisting of the national flag. In his address, he extended Raj Kumar, and other dignitaries. În a separate event, Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council Republic Day wishes to the people of the state and empha-Chairman Koye Moshen Raju sised the significance of the day. stated that social inequalities can only be fully eradicated He reminded that while India when welfare schemes from achieved independence in both the central and state gov-1947, the Constitution of India

came into effect on January 26,

1950. Reflecting on the fact that

the nation has celebrated 76

Republic Days, he pointed out

that social inequalities still

persist. Chairman Moshen Raju stressed that the various welfare programs being implemented by the central and state governments aim to eliminate these inequalities. He affirmed that only when these initiatives reach every individual, especially the poor, will true equality prevail in society. He also expressed concern

over the reduction in the number of working days for legislative bodies, particularly Assembly sessions, which he believes undermines democracy. He stressed that Assembly sessions should be held for at least 75 days a year, citing how budget sessions during NT Rama Rao's tenure as Chief Minister in 1983 often lasted up to 45 days and sometimes extended until midnight.

The event was attended by Assembly Secretary-General Prasanna Kumar Secretaries Raj Kumar and Subba Reddy, along with other

ly to prevail in North Coastal AP for the next seven days, and in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema for the next four days. The report further noted that dry weather had prevailed over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours. The lowest minimum temperature recorded in the plains of Coastal AP was 13 degrees Celsius at Arogyavaram on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday.

# **Conditions....**

Continued from Page 1

However, dry weather is like-

#### ed by Principal Secretary (GAD) Mukesh Kumar Meena, Additional Secretary

employees.

the event.

Continued from Page 1

TODAY

Trayodashi

Chaturdashi:

Nakshatram:

Purva Ashadha

Rahukalam

Varjyam:

**Temp:** 33°°

**Humidity: 64%** 

Sunrise: 6:39 AM

Sunset: 6:01 PM

Yamagandam:

**ALMANAC** 

PNS VIJAYAWADA

On the occasion of the 76th

Republic Day, Governor S

Abdul Nazeer and First Lady

Sameera Nazeer hosted an 'At

Home' function at the Raj

The event was attended by

Chandrababu Naidu and his

Justice of the High Court of

Andhra Pradesh Justice Dhiraj

Singh Thakur, and Deputy

Chief Minister K Pawan

Kalyan. Other dignitaries in

attendance included Deputy

Chairman Zakia Khanam,

Raghurama Krishna Raju, IT

Minister N. Lokesh, MA &

UD Minister P. Narayana,

Agriculture Minister K.

Speaker

Minister

Bhayan lawns on Sunday.

He emphasised that these goals require the collective dedication of the government tively. machinery. Calling on After the ceremony, the employees and officials to Chief Secretary distributed

work with sincerity, he underlined the importance of ensuring that welfare schemes reach every eligible beneficiary effec-

Guv hosts 'At Home' at Raj Bhavan

Achennaidu, Finance Minister

P. Keshav, Textile Minister S.

Savitha, I&PR Minister

Parthasarathi, Civil Supplies

Minister N. Manohar, MPs,

MLAs, MLCs, Judges of the

High Court of Andhra

Pradesh, Chief Secretary,

Director General of Police, All

India Service officers, political

leaders, and representatives

from various fields

**Uphold spirit of Constitution...** 

Krishna Paksha

Jan 26 08:55 PM to Jan 27 08:35 PM

to Jan 28 07:36 PM

to Jan 27 09:02 AM

to Jan 28 08:58 AM

8:16 AM to 9:40 AM

11:04 AM to 12:28 PM

06:36 PM to 08:12 PM

04:11 AM to 05:47 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:06 PM to 12:51 PM

Updated: January 26, 2025 5:00 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

1:53 PM to 3:17 PM

Jan 27 09:02 AM

Jan 27 08:35 PM

P4 policy a boon to State tourism: Durgesh PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Minister for Tourism Development Kandula Durgesh has expressed optimism that the Public, Private and People's Partnership (P4) mode will help promote tourism development and announced that tourism conclaves are organised to attract investors.

Addressing a press conference here on Sunday, the Tourism Minister listed out the measures being taken for the development of the tourism sector in the state and to attract tourists.

He announced that 'Regional Tourism Investors Engagement' would be organized in Visakhapatnam on January 27th in which the tourism projects to be taken up in six north AP districts would be discussed, adding that 150 prospective investors have been invited to the event. He said that discussions would be held with each investor in the meeting and MoUs would be signed with 14 investors to take up tourism projects. "I am confident that AP will be at the top in the country in the next five years in the tourism sector," he hoped. Minister Durgesh recalled that a tourism summit was already organized in Vijayawada in December 2024 and proposals were received from about 200 investors, adding that some pro-

grammes have been implemented. He made it clear that a tourism investor summit would be organized in February, stating that the opportunities for the development of the tourism sector would be explained during the summits.

"If investors come up with suitable proposals, the overnment will provide the necessary support. If and policies are available, they will be given or if the investors have land, they will be provided with concessions under the single window system," he observed. "Taj, Oberoi, Mayfair, IRCTC and other companies have come forward to invest in AP. An MoÛ has already been signed with IRCTC. Oberoi has come forward to invest in five areas in the State. They have already visited the Pichuka Lanka area," he disclosed, adding that after the board meeting, they will come forward to develop that area.

The Tourism Minister pledged to develop the Maredumilli area by first informing investors about the local opportunities by starting the Maredumilli Utsav. Since the Rampachodavaram and Maredumilli forest areas require permission from the respective departments to develop them, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has formed a cabinet sub-committee comprising the forest, endowment and tourism departments in this regard, so that there are no obstacles to tourism development.

# Etikoppaka toy tableau shines at Delhi R-Day parade

ernments reach every poor

remarks during the 76th

Republic Day celebrations held



PNS VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh's tableau, featuring the renowned Etikoppaka toys, captivated the audience at the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path in New Delhi, standing out as a major attraction.

Etikoppaka toys, crafted by artisans from the village of the same name, are celebrated for their rich heritage, intricate designs, and vibrant colours. Known for their smooth finish, these wooden toys have earned national and international acclaim, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi praising them during his Mann Ki Baat programme.

The tableau showcased the timeless artistry of these The tableau showcased the timeless artistry of these toys, drawing admiration from thousands of spectators. It highlighted the exceptional craftsmanship of Andhra Pradesh's artisans and symbolised the state's pride in preserving its indigenous arts.

toys, drawing admiration from thousands of spectators. It highlighted the exceptional craftsmanship of Andhra Pradesh's artisans and symbolised the state's pride in preserving its indigenous arts.

The selection process for the tableau was rigorous, involving six evaluation rounds. I&PR Joint Director P Kiran Kumar, who has contributed to tableau presentations for 22 years, emphasised its significance. 'This tableau represents the hard work behind preserving traditional crafts. We are confident it will receive the recognition it deserves," he stated.

By spotlighting the Etikoppaka toys, the tableau underscored Andhra Pradesh's commitment to nurturing its cultural heritage while gaining national recognition for its artistic legacy.

#### **Govt plans direct** farm sales, boost farmer income, says Chouhan

PNS NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday said the government is working on a model to allow farmers to sell their produce directly to consumers, reducing middlemen's role.

Interacting with about 400 farmers after the Republic Day parade at Pusa campus, Chouhan emphasized that the "farm to consumer" model will help farmers get maximum benefits, an official statement said.

"Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and farmers are its soul. Without farmers, India cannot prosper," he said.

While agriculture is a state subject, the Centre will support farmers comprehensively, Chouhan stated.

"The contribution of the agriculture sector and farmers would play a key role in making India a developed nation. The Centre along with state governments will support you," he said.

He highlighted ongoing efforts including procuring crops at Minimum Support Price (MSP), promoting technological solutions, strengthening Krishi Vighyan Kendras, encouraging natural farming and crop diversification.

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# **Collector highlights efforts** for farmers' welfare

Hoists National Flag at Republic Day celebrations held at police parade grounds



The 76th Republic Day celebrations were held with grandeur at the police parade grounds in Machilipatnam, Krishna district, on Sunday. District Collector DK Balaji hoisted the Indian national flag and received the guard of honour from marchpast contingents, accompanied by Superintendent of Police (SP) R Gangadhara Rao.

On this occasion, Collector Balaji, Joint Collector Geethanjali Sharma, and SP Gangadhara Rao presented appreciation letters to several district-level officers and staff



for their exemplary contributions to the district's development.

Addressing the gathering, Collector Balaji highlighted the district administration's commitment to farmers' development and welfare. He detailed several achievements, including a 100 per cent loan facility provided to farmers during the Kharif season, amounting to Rs. 5,863 crore. He also mentioned that 2.24 lakh farmers benefited from the PM Kisan Scheme, receiving Rs.45 crore, and Rs.60 crore in input subsidies were distributed to 40,559 farmers affected by nat-

ural calamities. In Vijayawada, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) also celebrated the 76th Republic Day on the office premises. Incharge Commissioner Dr D Chandrasekhar hoisted the national flag, and Mayor Rayana Bhagya Lakshmi unfurled the VMC flag. They received a guard of honour from the NCC, Army, Navy, Air Wing, and students.

At the Deputy Transport Commissioner (DTC) office in Vijayawada, DTC A Mohan hoisted the national flag and extended Republic Day greetings to the staff. He paid tributes to Dr BR Ambedkar for his role as the architect of the Indian Constitution, recalling his services to the nation.

Various political parties also marked the occasion with celebrations at their respective offices. CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna hoisted the Tricolour at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada, while Republic Day events were organised at the offices of CPM, Congress, and other political parties.



PNS TIRUMALA

Implementing more pilgrimfriendly initiatives and improving the facilities of darshan, accommodation, Annaprasadam and prasadams through feedback system is top priority of TTD, said Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary. The Additional EO hoisted the national flag at the 76th Republic Day celebrations held on the Gokulam Rest House premises in Tirumala on

Speaking on the occasion, he called upon the employees to work together and provide better services to the devotees who come from all over the world to

# More facilities for pilgrims with feedback system: Addl EO

Over 96 pc devotees satisfied over arrangements made by TTD for Vaikuntha Dwara Darshanam



"Over 96 per cent of devotees have expressed immense satisfaction over the arrangements made by TTD for 10-day Vaikuntha Dwara Darshanam in Tirumala.

"The data was gathered by collecting feedback from the devotees on the various arrangements implemented by TTD with the help of Srivari Sevaks. The goal is to provide the devotees with more convenient darshan and other facilities in a transparent manner by improving amenities from time to time through a feedback system," he

He added that the annual Brahmotsavam in October last was a great success thanks to

Venkaiah Chowdary said that changes have been made in Annaprasadam and queue lines for the convenience of devotees. We are also setting up state-ofthe-art machines to provide more quality food to the devo-

The Additional EO said that over 6.83 lakh devotees visited Vaikunta Dwaram from January 10-19, a better number than previous vears.

He assured that the problems in the allotment of accommodation in Tirumala will be resolved and the repairs in some cottages will be completed soon, and cottages will be made available to the devotees

Steps will be taken to strengthen the IT department of TTD and provide hassle-free and more transparent services to the devotees.

The e-hundi system introduced by TTD recently is giving good results. The devotees are making donations easily through UPI in the kiosks set up at many places in Tirumala.

Concluding his speech, the Additional EO said TTD is contemplating means to handle emergency situations caused by heavy pilgrim influx, and ensure that such incidents do not repeat in future.

CE Satyanarayana, VGOs Ramkumar, Surendra, and other HoDs were also present.



# Skill Development-HRD tableau adjudged the best

# Floats of Horticulture Dept & CRDA secure 2nd and 3rd prizes respectively

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The 76th Republic Day parade was held at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium in Vijayawada on Sunday, featuring 18 tableaux that represented the aspirations of the State government led by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. Inspired by the vision document "Swarnandhra @ 2047", the parade was a grand display, with each tableau crafted by various government departments.

Following the tableau procession, prizes were awarded to the top three floats. The Skill Development and Human Resources Department, which includes the departments of Health, Medical and Family Welfare, and Women and Child Welfare, secured the first prize. The Horticulture Department's "Quality Products" tableau won second place, while the APCRDA, in collaboration with the Municipal Administration & Urban Development and Panchayat Raj & Rural Development, clinched

After the celebrations, a procession featuring the tableaux was organised. The procession began at the IGMC Stadium and traversed several key locations, including Benz Circle, Ramavarappadu Ring, Gunadala, Eluru Road, Police Control Room, and Bandar Road, before returning to the IGMC Stadium. This provided the people of the city an opportunity to view the tableaux, which highlighted the government's commit-

Notable among the floats was the Housing Department's tableau, which focused on its goal of providing homes and house sites for deserving individuals by 2029. The Tourism Department's float highlighted the state's rich heritage and culture, while the Samagra Shiksha and School Education Department tableau emphasised the government's focus on educational development in Andhra Pradesh. Additionally, the

third prize with their "Global-Best Logistics" tableau.

ment to the state's future development and welfare.

Health, Medical, and Family Welfare tableau illustrated the message that victory over cancer is achievable through early screening.

Other departments such as Water Resources, Fisheries, APCRDA, Panchayat Raj and Development, Horticulture, Energy, Real Time Governance Society, Agriculture, Health, Skill Development, Industries, SERP, Swachh Andhra Corporation, and Forestry also presented their tableaux to highlight their respective priorities.

# V'wada rly divin records best-ever freight performance



PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada railway division has recorded its best-ever freight performance in the financial year 2024-25, earning Rs 3,155 crore through goods transport.

Narendra A Patil, DRM, hoisted the National Flag on the occasion of Republic Day and inspected the parade contingents of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) at the event, accompanied by Valleswara B. Thokala, Senior Divisional Security Commissioner, Vijayawada Division.

Addressing the gathering, Narendra A. Patil mentioned that the Vijayawada railway division also achieved record passenger earnings of Rs 1,035.21 crore by transporting 49.435 million passengers.

Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, 20 railway stations are being redeveloped at a cost of Rs 518.23 crore to provide world-class amenities to rail passengers. In the current financial year, Vijayawada Railway Station made history by crossing the Rs 500 crore mark in annual earnings and securing Non-Suburban Group (NSG)-1 status. Vijayawada Railway Station has also been awarded the star exemplary 'Eat Right Station' certification. On the automatic block signalling front, the division commissioned a record total of 128.63 km of rail line in the critical Visakhapatnam-Vijayawada section. The Vijayawada Division also saw the highest number of 90 originating Specials during Sankranti, with the best punctu-



PNS GUNTUR

**CGST** the 76th Republic Day with great fervour and enthusiasm. Sadhu Narasimha Reddy, Commissioner, CGST Guntur Commissionerate, unfurled the Tricolour and attended the parade on the occasion.

The celebration included a vibrant cultural programme, featuring kids from Kendriya Vidyalaya Nallapadu, who mesmerised the audience with their songs, and classical and folk dances. The event also included a magic show, dragon show and spring dances, which left the audience spellbound.
As part of the celebration, let-

ters of appreciation were given by the Commissioner to hardworking and dedicated officers of CGST Guntur, recognising their outstanding contributions to the department.

Speaking on the occasion, Sadhu Narasimha Reddy emphasised the crucial role of

# Grand Republic Day celebration at GST Guntur Commissionerate



the CGST Department in collecting revenue and supporting the government. He congratulated officers who tirelessly worked in seizure and incineration of illegal cigarettes, ganja

and Chinese garlic worth Rs 12.5 crore recently. He urged officers to work diligently towards additional revenue mobilisation, detection of tax evasion, and seizure of illegal

cigarettes. He further informed Guntur Commissionerate has already collected Rs 5,370 crore against the revenue target of Rs 7,600 crore for the financial year

2024-25, detected GST tax evasion of Rs 345 crore and CGST recovered Rs 146 crore from such evasion. He also appreciated the efforts made by the

#### **YS Jagan pats** Padma awardees

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has extended his warmest congratulations to the distinguished personalities from the Telugu States who have gious Padma Awards, for their extraordinary contributions to their respective fields and bringing immense pride to the region.

He applauded Dr D Nageshwar Reddy for his trailblazing advancements in the field of medicine, Nandamuri Balakrishna for his iconic contributions to the arts, KL Krishna for enriching literature, and Madugula Nagaphani Sharma for his dedication to preserving and promoting art and culture. The former CM also commended Mandha Krishna Madiga for his tireless advocacy in public affairs, Miriyala Appa Rao (posthumously) for his invaluable contributions to the arts, and Vaddiraju Raghavendra Acharya Panchamukhi for his exceptional work in literature and education.

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

SRM University-AP celebrated India's 76th Republic Day with grand festivities on campus, which included a flag hoisting ceremony and special honours for its student-athlete and Olympian, Jyotika Sri Dandi.

The event began with Vice Chancellor Prof. Manoj K. Arora hoisting the national flag, accompanied by Registrar Dr. R. Premkumar, Deans, Directors, faculty, staff, and students. The ceremony also featured a parade by the university's security staff. Jyotika Sri Dandi, a student of the Easwari School of Liberal Arts, was present at the event. She represented India in the Women's 4x400m Relay at the Paris Olympics 2024. Ín his Republic Day address,

Prof. Arora reflected on India's rich heritage, the freedom struggle led by visionary leaders, and the significance of the nation's Constitution in promoting unity across its diverse culture. He highlighted India's remarkable progress on the global stage, particularly in education, sports, and space

# SRM AP celebrates 76th R-Day, felicitates Olympian Jyotika Sri Dandi



programmes. "India is on its way to becoming a developed nation by 2047, and we must work together to achieve this Prof. Arora said,

emphasising the importance of collective effort in shaping the nation's future.

The celebration also included the felicitation of Jyotika Sri Dandi for her exceptional achievement at the Paris Olympics. The university presented her with a cheque for Rs 20 lakh in recognition of her contribution to Indian sports and the university. Expressing her gratitude, Dandi credited SRM University-AP for its unwavering support in her academic journey, offering scholarships and top-tier training facilities. "With two Olympians already among its ranks, I am confident that SRM University-AP will produce the best athletes and academicians in the next decade,"

In a gesture of continued support for student-athletes, Pro-Chancellor Dr. P. Sathyanarayanan announced a grant of Rs 70 lakh to reward students who have excelled in national and inter-university sports competitions. Cash prizes ranging from Rs 15,000 to Rs 1,00,000 were awarded to outstanding student-athletes for their exemplary perfor-

# AP girls' team reaches Sepak Takraw national finals

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The host team from Andhra Pradesh has made it to the finals in the girls' category of the School Games Sepak Takraw National Tournament for under-14 boys and girls, currently being held at the Koneru Basavaiah Chowdary Zilla Parishad High School in Patamata, Vijayawada.

In the girls' semi-finals on Sunday, the Andhra Pradesh team delivered an outstanding performance, defeating Delhi with commanding scores of 15-2 and 15-3, securing their place in the final and guaranteeing at least a silver medal. However, in the boys' quarterfinals, the Andhra Pradesh team fell short, losing to Delhi and missing out on a medal opportunity.

The boys' category also saw some intense matches, with Bihar defeating Delhi 15-10



Andhra Pradesh girls' team members celebrate their victory in the semi-final match against Delhi at the KBC ZPH School at Patamata in Vijayawada on Sunday

and 15-11 to secure a spot in the final. In the second semifinal, Manipur triumphed over Gujarat with scores of 15-10 and 15-7, advancing to the

finals. The boys' final, where Bihar will face Manipur, is scheduled for Monday, promising an exciting conclusion to the tournament.

the pioneer



# Farmers' welfare govt's priority: Collector

East Godavari district Collector P. Prashanthi reaffirmed the administration's commitment to supporting farmers, promoting natural farming, and prioritising the welfare of the people.

The Collector hoisted the

national flag during the 76th Republic Day celebrations held at the Government Arts College campus on Sunday. Addressing the gathering, she highlighted the district's developmental initiatives and welfare schemes to benefit the underprivileged.

She elaborated on the Vision 2047 framework, which includes plans to achieve Swarnandhra 2029. A comprehensive strategy is being formulated to achieve a 15% growth rate in agriculture and

allied sectors by 2029. Under the PM Kisan Yojana (PMKY), Rs 20.14 crore has been credited into the accounts of 1.7 lakh farmers, and cultivation rights documents have been issued to 1,09,630 tenant farmers. Of the 1.10 lakh metric tonnes of fertiliser allocated, 71,500 metric tonnes have already been distributed.

Collector Prashanthi noted that natural farming is being practised over 40,000 acres in the district, and Rs 574 crore



was disbursed to 29,500 farmers through 107 agricultural cooperative societies during the last Kharif season. Plans for the 2027 Godavari Pushkaralu are also being

implemented. In the agriculture-allied sectors, a plan aims to increase the GVA growth rate of horticultural crops from 16% to 25% by 2047. The micro-irrigation scheme, with a subsidy of Rs 27 crore, has so far covered 6,400 hectares.

Under the SC component,

Rs 3.6 crore has been provided to 102 beneficiaries through the Unnati scheme, and Rs 23.90 crore to 609 beneficiaries through bank linkages. Similarly, under the BC component, Rs 747.24 crore has been extended to 40,836 beneficiaries for self-employment programmes, while Rs 30.63 crore was disbursed to 1,456 BC and EBC beneficiaries through the BC Corporation and Rs 27.15 crore to 750 people through the Kapu Corporation.

Regarding housing schemes, the Collector announced that 65,750 houses under the PMAY and NTR Nagar schemes, constructed at Rs 1,171 crore, and 6,349 houses in rural areas, built at Rs 114 crore, would soon be handed over to beneficiaries.

SP D. Narasimha Kishore, JC S. Chinna Ramaudu, MLA Gorantla Butchiah Chowdary, and RUDA chairman Boddu Venkataramana Chowdary were among those present at the event.



## **RRR** Identifies his tormentor while in AP CID custody

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, K Raghurama Krishna Raju (RRR), participated in a parade at the Guntur sub-jail on Sunday to identify the individual who allegedly tortured him during his custody under the CID police in 2021.

Speaking to the media at the jail, RRR confirmed that he identified the accused in the presence of the district judge. received a summons from the court to attend the parade and identify the person who tortured me while I was in CID custody. I attended the parade today and identified the accused," he said. However, he refrained from disclosing the person's name.

According to Raju, the police paraded seven persons resembling the accused, and he successfully identified the person. "I could easily identify him as the kerchief covering his face slipped off during the incident. He was close to my face and was seen ordering someone to switch on a mobile phone while I was being tortured," Raju recalled.

# Team NTR should work for district's growth: Collector

Calls upon everyone to work together to develop district across all fields, in alignment with 'Swarnandhra @2047'

PNS VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has urged all district officials to unite and work as 'Team NTR' with the goal of positioning the district as the number one in all sectors within the State. Lakshmisha drew inspiration from the ambitious vision of Swarnandhra @2047 and emphasised the importance of achieving the 10 key components outlined in the initiative.

During the 76th Republic Day celebrations, the Collector unfurled the Indian national flag at the police parade grounds as well as the district collectorate in Vijayawada on Sunday. He received guard of honour from the march past contingents and extended Republic Day greetings to the people of the district.

In his address to the gathering, Collector Dr G Lakshmisha called upon everyone to work together as Team NTR to advance the district across all fields, in alignment with the aspirations of Swarnandhra. He reiterated that collective commitment, innovation, and dedication are crucial for achieving this shared vision. He encouraged collaborative efforts across all departments to ensure holistic and sustainable development, aiming to make Andhra Pradesh a benchmark for progress by 2047.



He stressed the importance of making a commitment to achieving the goals outlined in the vision document unveiled by the State government, which includes 10 principles for growth. These principles focus on poverty eradication, employment generation, skill and human resource development, water security for every household, agricultural technology for farmers, a worldclass distribution system, energy cost control, complete pro-NCC, NSS, and NGOs. duction across sectors, a clean Andhra with integrated policies, and the use of integrated technol-

ogy at all levels, he explained. Additionally, Collector Lakshmisha, along with

Assistant Collector Shubham Nokhwal, DRO M Lakshmi Narasimham, and other officials, presented appreciation letters to staff and individuals who have provided exemplary service in their duties. A total of 517 people received these letters, including officials from various departments such as Revenue, Police, Medical Health, Municipal, Agriculture, and Industries, as well as representatives from

Vijavawada RDO Kavuri Chaitanya, Nandigama RDO K Balakrishna, Thiruvur RDO K Madhuri, Rural Zone DCP KM Maheshwararaju, among others,



# Three-year-old fire accident victim succumbs

A 3-year-old boy, who sustained burn injuries in a fire accident in Eluru district, succumbed to his injuries on Sunday. Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendla Manohar visited the victims undergoing treatment at the GGH here on

Official sources said that 14 people were injured in the fire accident, which occurred at Sobhanadripuram village in Mandavalli mandal, Eluru district, on the night of January 24. Seven of the injured were admitted to GGH here and are currently receiving treatment. One of the injured, the 3-year-old boy, passed away while undergoing treatment. The condition of two others is said to be very critical

Nadendla Manohar visited the ICU ward and interacted with the injured. He also inquired with the doctors about their condition and the treat-

Minister Manohar calls on victims undergoing treatment at GGH

ment being provided. Speaking to the media later, the Minister stated that 14 people had sustained varying degrees of burns in the fire mishap and were admitted to the GGH for better care. He confirmed that the 3-year-old boy had succumbed to his injuries, while two victims were battling for their lives with 80% burns. Four others suffered 60% burns.

The Minister extended his condolences to the bereaved family and assured them of all necessary support. He also mentioned that he would inform the Chief Minister about the incident and ensure financial assistance from the Chief

Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF). It was noted that all the injured were from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and earned a living as daily wage workers. The doctors at GGH and in Eluru are doing

their best to save the victims. Admitting the absence of a dedicated burn ward at the GGH, Minister Manohar recognised it as a significant lapse. He stressed the need for setting up a burn ward at the GGH and promised to raise the issue at the GGH development committee meeting to ensure its

establishment. Manohar further pledged to restore the past glory of the GGH and ensure that it provides the best medical treatment to its patients. RDO K. Srinivasa Rao, DMHO Dr. Vijayalakshmi, GGH Superintendent Dr. SSV Ramana, and JSP district president Gade Venkateswara Rao

accompanied the Minister.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Government Whip and Gannavaram MLA Yarlagadda Venkata Rao has instructed Revenue Department officials to take swift action to remove encroachments on the land allotted to the Vijayawada Working Journalists Mutually Aided Cooperative House Building Society Limited. The land, located in Nunna near Vijayawada, was allocated 17 years ago to provide house sites for journalists, but remains inaccessible due to encroachments.

On Sunday, the general body meeting of the society was held at the designated land in Nunna. MLA Yarlagadda Venkata Rao attended the meeting as the chief guest and officially installed the society's signboard on the property. Following this, he inspected the encroachments and held discussions with Vijayawada Tahsildar Suguna Kumari, steps to remove the illegal occu-

# MLA directs Revenue officials to resolve journalists' land issue

Instals Vijayawada Working Journalists' House Building Society Ltd's signboard on the property



While addressing the gathering of journalists, the MLA expressed his concern over the delay in handing over the land. He promised to invite the attention of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to the matter and assured the journalists that he would work toward a resolution within one year. The MLA vowed to raise the issue in

Acknowledging the contributions of journalists in highnoted the irony that they often standing issue.

cannot bring attention to their struggles through their own platforms. He recalled that the late Chief Minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy had issued a Government Order (GO) to allocate the land for journalists, which was later reinforced by another GO during the TDP government from 2014-19. Despite these efforts, the land has yet to be handed over, leaving journalists waiting for neartwo decades.

The meeting was attended by society president S Venkata Rao, general secretary Satish, and other leaders, who expressed their gratitude for the MLA's support and determi-

# **Minister warns of stern action against** negligence towards hostel inmates

Collector issues orders removing the HWO at CK Palli Boys' Hostel from his position

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for BC Welfare, EWS, Handlooms and Textiles S Savitha expressed strong displeasure over an incident at the BC Hostel in CK Palli, Sathya Sai district, where students did not receive their midday meal. Following the Minister's instructions, the BC Welfare Department officials ensured that meal provisions were made for the students. The Minister also directed the District Collector to take action against the Hostel Welfare Officer (HWO) for negligence.

Savitha spoke with the District Collector and BC

Welfare Department officials ensured that food was provided on Sunday. She enquired as to why the students at the CK Palli Boys' Hostel were not provided with lunch and expressed her anger over the lapse. She strongly criticised the neglect towards the students, stating that such behaviour is unacceptable. She ordered that the students be provided with meals immediately and said that there should be no shortage of food, even for the evening meal.

The Minister instructed the District Collector to remove HWO Narayana Swamy from his duties immediately. Following her directive, BC Welfare Department officials

to the students. District Collector TS Chetan issued orders removing the HWO from his position and initiated

an inquiry into the incident. Minister Savita pointed out that parents trust the authorities and admit their children to hostels, believing that their children will be well cared for. She stated that it is the collective responsibility of all officials to protect the students. She further warned that negligence towards hostel students would not be tolerated, and if necessary, such HWOs and other staff members would be removed from their

ly as well. In the current finan-

cial year, 16,653 youth have been provided jobs through

micro, small and medium scale

industries which are sanctioned

Rs 115 crore to set up units. As

many as 1,600 acres of govern-

ment land have been identified

by operating a land bank for industrial development," the

Proposals were made to build

a 750 Kilowatt Solar Park as a

pilot project in Dwaraka Tirumala in the district, she

noted. SP KPS Kishore, Joint

Dharmaraju, sub-collector

Smaran Raj and Additional SP

Naka Suryachandra Rao were

among those who were present.

Collector disclosed.

# Sanjay's statement undermines federal spirit: Kavitha



PNS HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kavitha strongly criticised Union Minister of State Bandi Sanjay Kumar's recent remarks in which he reportedly said that no funds would be allocated for housing projects in Telangana. Speaking at a seminar on constitutional protection organised by the Telangana Jagruthi Student Wing on Republic Day, Kavitha condemned the statement as a blatant violation of federal principles and an infringement on the rights of states.

Sanjay had said that if the project is named Indiramma Indlu then the Centre won't give

In her keynote address, Kavitha emphasized the need to safeguard the Constitution and ensure transparency in governance. The seminar approved 19 resolutions, focusing on constitutional values, state's rights and effective implementation of directive principles.

Kavitha announced that these resolutions, along with a letter she authored, would soon be submitted to the Governor by the students.

Lashing out at Sanjay, Kavitha questioned the propriety of a Union Minister openly refusing

to fund housing projects. "This is not just a breach of the federal spirit but an outright denial of states' rights," she said. She criticized the Centre, asserting that no ruling party at the Centre has the authority to encroach on the rights of states.

Taking a jab at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been advocating constitutional protection across the country, Kavitha questioned his silence on constitutional violations in Telangana. "Rahul carries the Constitution like a pocket diary, touring the country while preaching about saving it. But why has he remained silent about violations here in Telangana?" she asked.

"We welcome Rahul Gandhi to Telangana. But if you truly stand for the Constitution, start by protecting it here in the state where your party is in power," she added. Kavitha also criticised the Congress Government in Telangana for its failure to address critical issues. Referring to the communal violence in Asifabad a few months ago, she said that hundreds were rendered homeless, but no Congress leader raised their

# Collector: Rs 4,435 cr crop loans extended to farmers develop the district industrial-

PNS ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has made it clear that Rs 4,435 crore loans have been extended to the farmers during the current financial year so far and priority is being given to address the problems of farmers.

Collector Vetri Selvi hoisted the national flag on the occasion of Republic Day here on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector reiterated the commitment to implement welfare schemes efficiently and at the same time carry out development programmes.

"In the current financial year, Rs 4435 crore loans have been provided to farmers as crop loans, and Rs 27 crore has been provided to 1,30,359 farmers under the PM Kisan scheme. As part of the welfare of tenant

farmers, crop cultivator rights certificates are being issued to 75,560 tenant farmers, and Rs 143 crore has been provided to them as loans," the Collector

The Collector mentioned that during the Kharif season, 3,32,337 Metric Tonnes of paddy produce was purchased from 41,856 farmers at the 228 Rythu Seva Kendras and Rs 765.35 crore was credited into the farmers' accounts within 24 hours of the purchasing the paddy produce, she acknowl-

The horticulture farmers are raising dragonfruit, cardamom and cinnamon in the district and they are being encouraged by the district authorities. Eluru district has stood at the top in the State in the aquaculture sector by pro-

She said that Nuzvid mango is recognized internationally and to further enhance that image, the Nuzvid Market Yard

ducing over 12 lakh tonnes of

aqua produce in 1.68 acres," she

would be developed for Rs 30 crore for the benefit of farmers, she highlighted.

In respect of the Polavaram project, the Collector noted that the diaphragm wall work of the Polavaram project has

begun and the State government has recently credited Rs 789 crore into the accounts of the displaced persons who provided land for the construction of the project.

Collector P Dhatri Reddy, DFO Subhakaran and MLAs Chintamaneni Prabhakar, Dr.Kakineni Srinivas, P

'Steps are being taken to



## ACROSS THE STATES



## **Manipur govt forms special** cell to tackle extortion

extortion cell under the home department, chief secretary Prashant Kumar Singh said in a statement here on Sunday. The initiative is designed to create an efficient and robust response mechanism to tackle extortion-related activities and ensure the safety and security of the public, the statement added. The cell will include representatives from the state police, central armed police forces, the Assam Rifles and the Army. The statement added "reports have indicated that various individuals including government officials have been threatened with severe consequences via calls, messages or letters by unlawful organisations if extortion demands are not met. These activities pose a significant threat to the law and order situation in the state." The government has urged citizens to cooperate in combating these unlawful activities and to report any incidents of threats or extortion to the new cell via toll-free number 1800 202 3326.



## Shah Jahan's 370th 'urs' begins at Taj Mahal

ommemoration of the 370th death anniversary of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, who commissioned the Taj Mahal, began on Sunday. A three-day 'urs (death anniversary)' began with the offering of 'chadar' on the graves of Shah Jahan and his wife Mumtaz Mahal, an official said. Prince Vajpayee, the archaeology department's senior conservation assistant for the Taj Mahal, said the Taj Urs Committee and the department employees opened the UNESCO heritage site's basement tomb at 2 pm and placed 'chadar' on the graves of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal During this, Fatiha was read and prayers were offered. Qawwals performed Sufi 'kalam' outside the main dome, he said. Shah Jahan commissioned the Taj Mahal in 1631 to house the tomb of his beloved wife. Mumtaz Mahal. The tomb is the centrepiece of the complex that also includes a mosque and a guest house.



## **CM Stalin boycotts** 'At Home' reception

amil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Sunday did not take part in the traditional 'At Home,' reception hosted by Governor R N Ravi on the occasion of Republic Day and he visited Madurai to participate in events to felicitate him for getting the Centre's tungsten mining initiative cancelled. In the function held at Raj Bhavan, leaders of opposition parties -- the AIADMK, BJP, DMDK and Puthiya Tamizhagam-- took part. Chief Minister Stalin and his cabinet colleagues had attended the 'At Home' reception on the occasion of Independence Day in 2024. Governor Ravi, who has been critical of the DMK regime over several issues and policy matters, had in his address on the Republic Day eve had targeted the Stalin-led government. Ravi had alleged that many state-run universities in Tamil Nadu were in a dire financial crisis. In Madurai, CM Stalin, recalling his assurance that tungsten mining would not be allowed till such time he remained in office, said the village elders visited him in Chennai and invited him for the felicitation

## 'Kejriwal came coughing, left Delhi gasping for breath

PNS NEW DELHI

BJP MP Anurag Thakur on Sunday attacked former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal over the recurring deterioration in the city's air quality, witnessed in the past many

Taking a dig at him, Thakur said Kejriwal came to Delhi "coughing" from Haryana 11 years ago and has since left the

city "gasping for breath." The former Union minister also claimed that once the "AAP-DA" government is removed from Delhi, the BJP



will ensure clean roads, clean water, a clean Yamuna, and clean air for the people of the city. "Aap-da," meaning disaster, is a derisive term Prime Minister Narendra Modi devised for the party in one of his rallies in the city.

# India, Indonesia call for code of conduct in South China Sea

India and Indonesia have pitched for a "full and effective" code of conduct in the South China Sea in accordance with the relevant international laws amid China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the

region.
The situation in the South China Sea figured in wideranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on Saturday, according to a joint statement.

In their meeting, the two sides agreed to position a liaison officer from Indonesia at India's Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR). The Indian Navy established the IFC-IOR in Gurugram in 2018 to keep track of shipping traffic as well as other critical developments in the region under a collaborative framework with like-minded countries.

Modi and Subianto, while condemning terrorism in all forms, vowed to India-Indonesia anti-terror and called for concerted efforts to combat the menace without any "double standards". Both the leaders called upon all countries to take concerted action against UN-proscribed terrorist organisations and their affiliates, the statement released on Sunday said.

The Indonesian president arrived here on Thursday on a four-day visit. Subianto was the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations at the majestic Kartavya Path on Sunday.



Modi and Subianto, while condemning terrorism in all forms, vowed to India-Indonesia anti-terror and called for concerted efforts to combat the menace without any "double standards". Both the leaders called upon all countries to take concerted action against UNproscribed terrorist organisations and their affiliates, the statement released on Sunday said

In their talks, the prime minister and the visiting leader also explored ways to boost India-Indonesia economic ties and emphasised the importance of expeditious implementation of an MoU inked by the two sides last year for the use of local currencies for bilateral transactions, according to the statement.

Modi and Subianto were of the view that the use of local currencies for bilateral transactions would further promote trade and deepen financial integration between the two economies. The joint statement, referring to the situation in the maritime domain, said the two leaders reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, stability, freedom of navigation and

overflight in the region. They also called for unimpeded lawful maritime commerce and promoting peaceful

resolution of disputes in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea).

"In this regard, they supported the full and effective implementation of the declaration on the conduct of the parties in the South China Sea (DOC) in its entirety and look forward to the early conclusion of an effective and substantive code of conduct in the South China Sea (COC) that is in accordance with international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, the statement noted.

The ASEAN countries too have been insisting on a binding code of conduct (COC) on the South China Sea largely in view of China's consistent attempts to assert its expansive claims over the region



#### ONE NATION, ONE TIME

## Govt drafts rules for mandatory adoption of IST

PNS NEW DELHI

In a move to standardize timekeeping, the government has drafted comprehensive rules mandating the exclusive use of Indian Standard Time (IST) across all official and commercial platforms, with the Consumer Affairs Ministry seeking public feedback by February 14.

The Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2024, aims to establish a legal framework for standardising timekeeping practices, mandating IST as the sole time reference for legal, administrative, commercial, and official documents.

"IST shall be the mandatory time reference across all sectors, including commerce, transport, public administration, legal contracts, and financial operations," as per the draft rule. Key provisions include, prohibition of time references other than IST for official and commercial purposes, mandatory display of IST in government offices and public institutions and requirement for time-synchronization systems to ensure reliability,

availability, and cybersecurity.
The proposal comes as part of efforts to ensure precise timekeeping in critical national infrastructure, including telecommunications, banking,

defence, and emerging tech-

nologies like 5G and artificial

intelligence.

"Precise time with nanosecond accuracy is essential for strategic and non-strategic sectors," a senior government official told PTI.

Exceptions will be allowed for specialised fields such as astronomy, navigation, and scientific research, subject to prior government approval.

The Department of Consumer Affairs is collaborating with the National Physical Laboratory and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to develop a robust time generation and dissemination mechanism. Violations of the proposed rules will attract penalties, with periodic audits planned to ensure compliance across sectors.

Public stakeholders have been invited to submit comments and suggestions on the draft rules by February 14.

# Lankan Navy arrests 34 Indian fishermen, seizes trawlers

PNS ■ COLOMBO

The Sri Lankan Navy arrested at least 34 Indian fishermen and seized three trawlers for illegal fishing in two separate incidents, the authorities said on Sunday.

The fishermen have been arrested for illegal fishing in two separate incidents on January 25 and 26, the Navy said. Both arrests came off the coast of the northeastern Mannar district in the Navy's continued regular patrols in illegal fishing, the Navy said.

The arrested fishermen have been handed over to the relevant officials for further action. The Indian High Commission here earlier this week said some 41 Indian



fishermen who had been sim-January 12, eight Indian fishermen were arrested and two fishing trawlers were seized. The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel

even firing at Indian fisherilarly arrested previously for men in the Palk Strait and poaching in Sri Lankan seizing their boats in several entering Sri Lankan territor-

ial waters.
The Palk Strait, a narrow strip of water separating Tamil Nadu from Sri Lanka, is a rich fishing ground for fishermen from both countries.

# Himachal farmer, selected for Padma Shri revolutionised apple cultivation

PNS SHIMLA

A progressive Himachali farmer, Hariman Sharma revolutionised apple cultivation by developing a variety that can be cultivated under warmer conditions in the lower hills.

It was earlier believed that apples could only be grown in the mid and the higher hills under cold conditions. Sharma's innovation, however, busted that myth.

99' variety that can blossom at altitudes as low as 1,800 feet and is resistant to scab, a familiar disease that plagues the fruit. It is a unique innovation that has become popular not only in India but in



countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Zambia and Germany, the farmer from Ghumarwin in Bilaspur district said.

horticulturists have planted awards list.

14 lakh saplings, he added. The National Innovation Foundation has adopted the variety for studies and further development, and planted 33,000 saplings in 29 states. Sharma has himself distributed more than 1.9 lakh saplings to 6,000 farmers. Sharma's name was announced on Saturday for the Padma Shri award. He will be conferred with the award in the "Others (Agriculture)" category, tion and innovation in transforming the lives of countless farmers while strengthening the agriculture economy.

He is the lone name from So far, more than a lakh the state in this year's Padma

# Disapproving marriage does not amount to abetment of suicide: SC

PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has said expressing disapproval for marriage does not amount to abetment of suicide under section 306 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma made the observation while quashing a chargesheet against a woman who was accused of abetting the suicide of another woman



who was allegedly in love with her son. The allegations were based on disputes between

the deceased and the appellant's son, who had refused to marry her. The appellant was accused of opposing the marriage and making disparaging

remarks against the deceased. The court said even if all evidence on record, including the chargesheet and witness statements, are taken to be correct, there is not an iota of evidence against the appellant.

"We find that the acts of the appellant are too remote and indirect to constitute the

IPC. There is no allegation against the appellant of a nature that the deceased was left with no alternative but to commit the unfortunate act of

The court said it is discerned from the record that the appellant, along with her family, did not attempt to put any pressure on the deceased to end the relationship between her and the appellant's son

suicide," the bench said.

## CRPF seeks security cover transfer from CISF

PNS NEW DELHI

The CRPF has sought the Union home ministry's permission to transfer the VIP security cover of its incoming chief G P Singh to it from the CISF,

official sources said on Sunday. The Union government had on January 19 appointed Singh as the new Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) director general and he is expected to

take charge this week A 1991-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer, Singh is currently working as the Assam director general of police. The sources said the CRPF has sought permission from the Ministry of Home Affairs for the transfer of the security cover of its new DG from the CISF to its protection wing for VIPs and high-risk dignitaries.

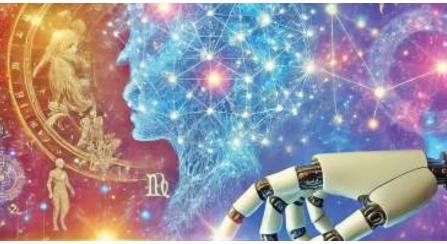
# AI reshaping astrology landscape!

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an exciting convergence of technology and tradition, AI is reshaping the astrology landscape in India, enabling quick access to personalised insights, and appealing to a tech-savvy generation keen to explore their destinies through innovative digital platforms.

Industry experts foresee a future in which AI complements rather than replaces human knowledge and expertise. This intriguing fusion is not just a passing trend, it's reshaping how millions of people in India engage with the stars and their destinies.

"In India, AI is transforming traditional practices by digitising horoscopes, offering instant personalised readings, and enabling users to access astrological guidance anytime, anywhere, which has made astrology more approachable and popular. "Our AI astrologers are enabled to respond within



seconds -- the responses are not only quick but more accurate too which resonates deeply with the users," AstroSage AI

founder Punit Pandey said. AI-powered astrology apps offer a user-friendly interface, making it easy for users to interact and gain helpful insights and have various additional features like daily predictions, compatibility reports, and personalised advice, he

Astrosage's AI feature has answered over 25 million queries since its 2024 launch, reflecting a positive user response, Pandey said.

Users appreciate the accuracy and speed of the insights, often noting that the readings feel tailored to their needs and help them focus on solutions instead of problems, he said.

At the heart of this transformation lies sophisticated tech-

nology. Large Language Models (LLMs) and machine learning algorithms are aiding the processing of astrological data.

"We use a mix of advanced technologies to bring astrology into the digital age. Machine learning plays a huge role in spotting patterns and improving predictions. Natural language processing helps us create intuitive chatbots that understand and respond to offline user queries," InstaAstro

CEO Nitin Verma said. Verma further noted that Big Data analytics enables us to process years of astrological insights, while recommendation algorithms help match users with the right astrologers based on their unique needs.

Younger generations are incredibly open to this integration. They see it as a natural progression -- combining the convenience of technology with the depth of tradition. For them, astrology delivered through apps and platforms

#### Industry sees future where AI enhances traditional practices

feels relevant and modern, yet still rooted in something timeless, Verma said.

"In cities with high social media usage, Gen Z makes up more than 60 per cent of our astrology enthusiasts. What's particularly interesting is that approximately 55 per cent of these young users specifically seek relationship guidance through our AI-powered platform," Astroyogi co-founder and COO Aditya Kapoor said.

He noted that these digital natives appreciate the convenience of accessing astrological insights anytime, anywhere-whether through an app or a chatbot. Feedback from users paints a picture of delight and curiosity. Many users said the insights they receive are remarkably tailored to their lives, enhancing their overall experience with astrology.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

# 75 glorious years

Seventy-five years on, the Indian Republic stands resilient, ready to tread the path toward a brighter tomorrow

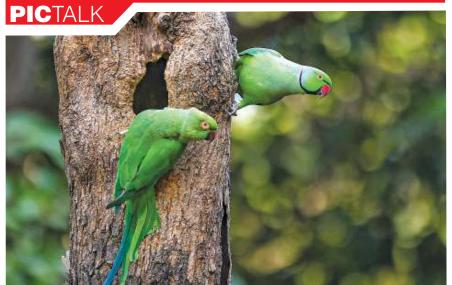
ndia stands at a monumental crossroads as it celebrated 75 glorious years of being a Republic on Sunday, resident Droupadi Murmu and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto's presence symbolis India's robust diplomatic ties. With 10,000 special guests attending, this year's celebrations highlight the spirit of Jan Bhagidari, emphasising the people as architects of India's progress. The 76th Republic Day, marked by the theme of 'Shashakt aur Surakshit Bharat' (Empowered and Secure India), reflects the nation's aspirations.On this historic occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged countrymen to rededicate themselves to preserving the ideals of the Constitution. As the country marks this milestone, it becomes imperative to reflect on the achievements, challenges, and aspirations that define modern India. The adoption of the Constitution on January 26, 1950, was a bold assertion of India's identity as a sovereign, secular, and democratic republic. Over seven decades, the nation has weathered numerous challenges, from



political upheavals to external threats, while safeguarding its democratic fabric. India's ability to hold free and fair elections consistently remains a testament to the vision of its founding leaders. From the license-raj era to the liberalization reforms of 1991, India has evolved into the world's fifth-largest economy. Significant strides in technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship have positioned India as a global powerhouse in sectors such as information technology, pharmaceutical, and space

India's rich cultural diversity has continued to thrive amidst rapid modernisation. The promotion of regional arts, languages, and traditions, along with advance-

ments in education and healthcare, has strengthened the social fabric. India's influence on the global stage has grown significantly, with active participation in forums like the United Nations, G20, and BRICS. Its leadership in championing climate action, digital inclusion, and south-south cooperation underscores its emergence as a responsible global leader. However, there are numerous challenges that are yet to be addressed. Despite impressive economic growth, India continues to grapple with stark inequalities. Issues like rural poverty, unemployment, and an uneven distribution of resources hinder holistic progress. Social harmony has often been tested, with caste, religious, and regional divides occasionally flaring into discord. Bridging these divides remains critical to ensuring the unity celebrated on Republic Day. While strides have been made in governance, corruption and inefficiencies in public administration still impede progress. The effective implementation of policies is often undermined by bureaucratic hurdles. As India celebrates its achievements, the path ahead demands renewed focus and commitment. Upholding the values of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity enshrined in the Constitution must remain a collective priority. Ensuring the inclusion of marginalised communities in the democratic process is essential for a more equitable society.



A pair of parakeets are seen near its nest, in Jaipui

Mobile phones in jails: A

# growing security nightmare



The continued use of mobile phones by criminals incarcerated in jails remains a critical issue that the government has yet to address effectively

ne pressing issue that the government has yet to effectively address is the continued use of mobile phones by criminals incarcerated in jails-an issue that persists even in high-security prisons. The seizure of mobile phones from inmates has become an all-toocommon occurrence, posing a significant challenge to law enforcement agencies attempting to dismantle the nexus of organised crime operating from behind

A primary reason for the rampant use of mobile phones inside jails lies in the unholy alliance between gang leaders within the prisons and certain jail authorities.

This collaboration, coupled with the ineffective use of modern technology to prevent unauthorised mobile phone usage, has allowed the problem to spiral out of control. The issue has reached such alarming proportions due to the lack of strategic deployment of advanced solutions that are readily available today.

The consequences of mobile phone usage within jails extend far beyond facilitating criminal activities. It poses a direct threat to national security, compromises the safety of prison staff, and jeopardises public safety.

While maintaining a robust telecommunication network within prisons is critical in today's mobile-driven world, the problem arises when authorities fail to leverage the latest technologies to either restrict or control mobile phone usage in designated areas. One technology that has been available for years is the mobile jammer, which disrupts mobile networks within a limited radius. However, this solution has proven ineffective, as it does not guarantee 100 per cent disruption of mobile services and, in some cases, hampers the network's functionality outside the prisonaffecting areas like residential neighbourhoods. Despite its widespread use in jails across

have become apparent. In 2017, the "Tower-Harmonious Call Blocking System" (T-HCBS) was introduced, but it has yielded minimal results.

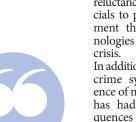
Even after the installation of T-HCBS towers, the use of mobile



phones in prisons continued unabated. Telecom companies have failed to provide a mechanism for real-time monitoring of the system's effectiveness, leaving authorities without the tools needed to measure its success or identify shortcomings.

A recent investigation by the Delhi police in connection with a shootout at a Tilak Nagar car showroom uncovered a shocking revelation. The two main suspects, who are currently incarcerated in Tihar Jail, were using 5G-enabled phones to bypass mobile jammers. Although Tihar Jail, which houses around 20,000 inmates, is equipped with over 15 mobile jammers, these devices are outdated, designed for 4G networks, while the current technology in use is 5G. This discrepancy highlights the urgent need for the installation of updated jammers and infrastructure in Delhi's jails-a process that could take several months.

The scale of the problem is underscored by the discovery of over 500 phones and internet dongles during surprise raids conducted across three Delhi prisons in the past two years. Despite the Delhi government and the Ministry of Home Affairs acknowledging the issue and establishing a high-powered committee two years ago to address the problem, progress has been hin-



TELECOM **COMPANIES HAVE** FAILED TO PROVIDE A MECHANISM FOR REAL-TIME MONITORING OF THE SYSTEM'S EFFECTIVENESS, LEAVING **AUTHORITIES** WITHOUT THE **TOOLS NEEDED** ITS SUCCESS OR IDENTIFY

SHORTCOMINGS

dered by red tape and slowmoving bureaucracy. The primary obstacle remains the reluctance of government officials to prioritise and implement the appropriate technologies needed to tackle the

In addition to aiding organised crime syndicates, the presence of mobile phones in jails has had unforeseen consequences for residents living near prison complexes. This interference with the mobile network has caused a decline in property values in the vicinity of the jail, a stark contrast to the property booms seen in

other parts of Delhi. The lack of a reliable mobile network has created serious problems for residents, particularly in emergencies, and has significant economic consequences as businesses and daily services reliant on mobile communication are disrupted. This problem is not unique to Tihar Jail or Delhi; similar issues have been reported from prisons in other metro cities. While mobile communication technologies continue to advance rapidly, there are blocking mobile networks within high-security prisons. These advanced systems do not merely block mobile calls but also enable real-time detection and location tracking of illicit mobile phone usage within the facility.

aged systems are available that can maintain desired signal levels within a jail, granting authorities full control over the mobile network.

These systems allow jail management to track, locate, and identify radio signals, pinpointing the source of illegal mobile phone use. By using such technologies, jail authorities can quickly identify and neutralise unauthorised mobile devices in the prison, making it a powerful deterrent against criminal activity.

The real question, however, is how long will it take for Indian jails to receive the necessary technological upgrades to combat the proliferation of contraband mobile phones? This problem is widespread across the country, from Tihar Jail in Delhi to Yerawada Jail in Pune, Kot Bhalwal Jail in Jammu, and Naini Jail in Allahabad-homes to some of the nation's most dangerous criminals, gangsters, terrorists, and mafias.

It is clear that timely intervention from government authorities to equip prisons with modern solutions that can advanced technology to block effectively address the issue of unauthorised mobile networks detect illegal phone use, and track mobile phone locations is urgently needed to restore control and curb the spread of criminal activities within our jails.

> (The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

# A chance encounter in Delhi: A story of hope amidst the chaos



and moved to the edge of the

pond. Tenderly, so as not to

cause any harm, I scooped

the first bird into my palm;

the paranoid birds overhead

mistook me for a predator and made some aggressive moves. But, as I delicately

placed it on hard ground,

they realised that I was not

Delhi, a city full of surprises, often unveils its charm in the most unexpected ways. While much has changed over the years, its enduring spirit continues to soar

urprises never cease to Scrop up in my beloved Delhi, although, when I reminisce, I find this Delhi to be so very different from the place where I was born and grew up-in a few years from now, I will be touching the magical mark of sixty years-Insha-Allah!!! These are surprises that keep the passion to continue living here alive, despite the megapolis tottering on the edge of a bottomless abyss. I encountered one such surprise more than two decades ago, when I chanced upon an opportunity to care, to lovedispassionately. Then, I worked in the vicinity of Delhi's sprawling International Airport. At some distance from my office were robust pockets of greenery. As I strolled on the edge of a stagnant water body, immersed in thoughts, the shrill chirping of two birds circling overhead broke

Wary-expectedly so-of duplicitous humans, they maintained a distance from me- trying to scoop down to my level, but then taking off at the last moment. Something in their incessant better view. Lo and behold, shrug off my indecisiveness

my reverie.

chirping pointed to a high level of desperation, of an impending crisis. Not the one to be blessed with Dr Do Little's prowess, instinctively, I shrugged off the noise to a behaviour anomaly that might be inherent in avians of this species. But the next moment I was proved

The magnitude of the disaster struck me like a sledgehammer-on the muckinfested, rotting, stagnant surface of the pond, I saw a tiny tremor, so minute that one could easily have missed it. It aroused my curiosity, and I leaned over to have a

trying to break free from the strangulating grip of the muck were three tiny birds, barely the size of an index finger- in all probability offspring of the panic-stircken pair hovering above. Perhaps they had fallen into the pond, carried by a dust-storm that had lashed the capital a few hours earlier. As they waged a fast-losing battle to stay afloat in the poisonous pool (sympto-matic of most water bodies in the capital), the strings of my heart (already weakened

by a blood pressure prob-

Somehow, I managed to

lem) felt a strong tug.

a foe-immediately, the chirping subsided; I finished the balance task in peace. After I had rescued the last bundle of joy and placed it on the welcoming lap of Mother Earth, I felt reassured that the worst was Contended, I commenced my trudge into civilised environs. Barely had I taken a few steps, when I looked behind and saw the protective parents cuddling their young ones-exemplifying all that is human but is sadly

getting diluted. The unexpected encounter lifted my spirits sky-high, as even in the fast-decaying Delhi, my beloved Delhi, hope continues to flow eternally. And where there is hope, a better future can never be far away.

(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

#### **EIGHT WORKERS KILLED IN BLAST**

Madam — A massive explosion at the Ordnance factory at Bhandra in Maharashtra, a key defence establishment. killed at least eight workers. The blast was so severe that it completely turned the unit into a huge pile of rubble, burying workers under the debris. Injured persons have been admitted to hospitals. The accident in a key defence factory is quite unfortunate. The Maharashtra government has announced a solatium of 5 lakh rupees each for the families of those killed in the blast. The cause of the explosion is not yet determined.

The accident has occurred at the RDX manufacturing section of the factory. The ordinance factory at Bhandra is an important defence unit engaged in highenergy explosives like RDX and HMX, which go into the filling of a wide range of ammunition-from artillery shells to rockets in the form of propellents. The present accident is not the first one in the ordinance factory. In the past two blasts at the Central Ammunition Depot at Wardha, one in 2016 and another in 2018, at least 25 workers, including two army officers, had been killed. The Indian Ordnance Factories have not only supported India through the wars but also played an important role in building India with the achievement of technology and have ushered in the Industrial Revolution in India. Lack of safety measures in the factory should have been the reason for the huge

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

#### **DOUBTS ON SAIF ALI KHAN'S ATTACK**

Madam - Leaders like Nitish Rane, Sanjay Nirupam, and Jitendra Awhad doubt whether actor Saif Ali Khan was really attacked, reflecting their poor mindset. One of the leaders compares Saif's stabbing as "garbage." Another leader finds the Hindu-Muslim angle and says when a Hindu actor like Shushanth Singh Rajput dies, no one comes forward to say anything. It is a matter of shame that the BJP leaders find a religious angle in every

# Chinar trees to be geo-tagged



t is heartening to note that the Jammu and Kashmir government has come up with a unique initiative of a 'Digital Tree Aadhaar' programme, targeting the conservation of the iconic Chinar trees, which are vital

to the region's cultural and ecological heritage. The initiative of the J and K government is laudable, especially at a time when rapid urbanisation poses threats to these trees, necessitating advanced technological interventions

for their survival. Under this drive, Chinar trees are being geo-tagged and embedded with QR codes that capture detailed information, including geographical location, health stats, and growth patterns. This approach allows conservationists to address potential risks effectively while creating a comprehensive Chinar tree database. Approximately 28,000 trees have reportedly been surveyed, with data continuously updated, aiming to preserve these trees.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

issue. One thing is sure: Saif quickly recovered because our doctors have given an effective treatment. On the other side, it is still being questioned whether the person who is arrested and the CCTV footage person are not the same.

The police were swift enough to confirm that the attacker was Bangladeshi. It is still suspect that the police have caught the real assailant or an innocent person. The BJP leaders are alleging that Bangladeshis are entering our country and creating trouble. If it is so, then it is the total failure of the central government in controlling them. One thing is clear: frequent unusual incidents are happening in Mumbai and it is proved that Mumbai is not a safe place. Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

#### **MISUSE OF PUBLIC FUNDS**

Madam — Distribution of public funds in cash (via DBT) is becoming rampant by the governments (both Union and State) under various names and schemes to various sections of society in the name of social justice. Whereas the very concept of such an award of money is unethical and

unwarranted because people believing in the workaholic system find it difficult to earn enough while those who happen to be in the list of category, class, caste, or section under the beneficiaries of handsome amounts of money from the state get the

money without any work. Be it the cash to SC ST OBC students, to religious and linguistic minorities students, to women, to farmers, to Maulanas of Masjid, or now to Pujari of Mandir, to unemployed youth, or to any other section of society, it is being promised and more or less delivered. Isn't it the corruption of the worst kind? Why should anyone get money in cash, which is not easy to earn? Sadly, some sections of the society getting such benefit turn nonperforming and have a negative contribution to the national growth. This must stop forthwith along with other freebies if we really want our progress and prosperity as a developing

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala Cantt

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# **FIRST COLUMN**

## **OVERCOMING AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS**

Meditation and deep breathing can help reduce stress, anxiety and self-doubt



oday at least one out of ten is being the victim of catastrophising (expecting the worst outcome), overgeneralising (believing that a single failure defines overall ability) and filtering (focusing solely on negatives while ignoring positives). Recent studies have proven that over 70,000 thoughts that come into an individual's mind every day consist of negative ones wherein some of them are the fuel for depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. Automatic Negative Thoughts often abbreviated as ANTs are like unwelcome guests in an individual's mind. They are a psychological phenomenon that can significantly impact mental wellbeing and performance in various aspects of life. These thoughts are spontaneous and fleeting, that arise without conscious effort.

Triggered by specific situations, they even involve pessimistic thoughts that arise in response to everyday situations, often leading to increased stress, anxiety and self-doubt. It is very important for an individual to understand and address them for fostering a positive mindset and improving emotional resilience. ANTs are characterised by their automatic nature, as they occur spontaneously without conscious effort. These thoughts are often distorted and irrational, stemming from deep-seated fears or

For instance, a student who performs poorly on one test might think, "I'm a complete failure," despite having performed well in other areas or in professional settings, after a presentation that received constructive criticism, an individual might think, "Everyone hated it," even though the feedback was largely positive and aimed at improvement. Similarly, in social situations, a person who notices someone yawning might assume, "I'm boring," disregarding the possibility that the person might simply be tired. These examples highlight how ANTs can distort per-



ceptions and negatively affect confidence and behaviour. The impact of ANTs can be profound. They contribute to a range of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. By distorting reality and reinforcing negative beliefs, ANTs can hinder decisionmaking, problem-solving, and interpersonal relationships. In academic and professional settings, these thoughts can undermine confidence, reduce motivation, and impair performance. Fortunately, there are effective strategies to compat AIN is and develop a more positive thought pattern. One of the most widely used approaches is cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), which focuses on identifying, challenging, and replacing negative thoughts with constructive ones.

For instance, when faced with a thought like, "I'll never succeed," individuals can challenge its validity by reflecting on past successes and recognising their capabilities. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep breathing, can also help in managing ANTs. These techniques encourage individuals to observe their thoughts without judgment and creating space to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively. Another useful tool is journaling, which involves writing down thoughts and analysing accuracy can help uncover patterns and triggers. Also, the act of writing helps to crystallise it and get it out of head. Building a strong support system is equally important.

Sharing feelings and concerns with trusted friends, family members, or therapists can provide valuable perspectives and emotional relief. Positive affirmations and self-compassion can further counteract the negative effects of ANTs by fostering a sense of worth and capability.Remember, by recognizing its presence and implementing strategies such as CBT, mindfulness, and support-seeking, individuals can break free from the cycle of negativity and cultivate a healthier and more optimistic outlook. Addressing ANTs not only enhances mental wellbeing but also empowers individuals to navigate life's challenges with confidence and resilience.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

# Japan's struggle for relevance amid China's rise



As China rises as a dominant force in a multipolar world, Japan must navigate the challenge of balancing its historical baggage with maintaining its relevance



n December 2024, Japan's Ministry of Defence, through its influential think tank, issued a report that presents an unflinching look at China's meteoric rise and its implications for the global balance of power. Titled The Rising Global South and China, the report offers a sobering analysis of how China's strategic outreach to the Global South—its diplomacy, economic investments, and military presence—poses not only a challenge to the existing international order but also to Japan's place in the world. While the report forms a key element in Japan's evolving worldview regarding its neighbour, it is but one piece of a much larger, more complex puzzle.

The evolving dynamics between China and Japan demand a deeper exploration, not just ALWAYS ALIGNED, of economic rivalry, but of historical tensions, ESPECIALLY WHEN ideological shifts, and global transformations that are redefining power structures across Asia and beyond. Why, one might ask, is it crucial to understand Japan's view on China CHINA. WHILE THE has left it on the back foot as China has aggressively pursued its vision in 2025? The answer lies in the seismic shifts currently reshaping the international order, where China is positioning itself as the hege mon of a new, multipolar world, and Japan must navigate an increasingly treacherous geopolitical terrain. This is not simply about Beijing's growing economic influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) or its dominance in trade and investment in Africa, Latin America, and

The contest runs deeper, revealing an ideological, military and moral confrontation where Japan's historical burdens, particularly its unresolved wartime past, complicate its ability to assert leadership in the face of China's rapid expansion. "Based on field research in Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Angola, and elsewhere, the report points out that the expansion of Chinese aid under the principle of non-interference in internal affairs may reduce the effectiveness of Western 'democratisation pressure' that uses aid as leverage."

Consider, for a moment, China's overwhelming presence in the Global South. While Western powers remain preoccupied with their domestic crises, Beijing has formed vast strategic partnerships, economic dependencies, and infrastructural invest-



THE STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF US ARE NOT IT COMES TO

CHINA'S RISE, JAPAN IS CAUGHT IN A PRECARIOUS BALANCING ITS

NEED FOR SECURITY AND **ECONOMIC** COOPERATION WITH CHINA AGAINST THE **DEMANDS OF ITS** AMERICAN ALLY

From Africa's mineral-rich lands to West Asia's energy corridors, China has inserted itself as both a benefactor and an enforcer, using its vast financial resources to extend its influence.

It has become the world's largest creditor, with loans amounting to over \$1.3 trillion since 2000, a sum that far outstrips Japan's modest for-eign assistance initiatives. In the face of this, Japan's model of development aid-praised for its trans-JAPAN AND THE parency and sustainability—has paled in comparison. Japan's approach, while effective in certain regions, lacks the scale and sheer audacity of China's outreach. Moreover, Japan's preoccupation with economic stability and its often subdued geopolitical ambition US FOCUSES ON for a new international order.

It is not just economics at play here. CONTAINING There is a deepening ide divide. The language China uses to frame its influence in the Global South is couched in the rhetoric of anti-imperialism, South-South cooperation, and solidarity with the developing world.

POSITION, developing world.

This resonates profoundly with nations that have long been subject to the whims of Western powers. Beijing, adept at using its soft power, positions itself as the cham-pion of the Global South, contrast-ing its rise with the history of exploitation by colonial and imperial forces. By leveraging its economic might, China is building a coalition of nations willing to challenge the existing global system, one dominated by the US and its allies. This ideological appeal has found a strong foothold in parts of Africa and Asia, where many developing nations view China's rise as an opportunity to break free from the shackles of Western dominance. For Japan, the legacy of its imperial past complicates its post-war identity, which is grounded in pacifism,

democratic values, and economic growth. While China's rise is perceived as a return to national glory, Japan remains burdened by its wartime actions, which continue to fuel tensions, particularly with Beijing. This unresolved history hampers Japan's diplomacy, overshadowing its economic and diplomatic efforts, as issues of reparations, historical memory, and political reconciliation persist. And yet, Japan cannot simply be reduced to a passive recipient of China's strategic

The reality is that Japan, with its robust economy and advanced technological sector, still holds significant sway in certain parts of the Global South, particularly in Southeast Asia.

Japan has long been a key player in the economic development of this region, offering not just financial assistance but a model of governance

But the rise of China has shifted the balance, and Japan is now forced to reckon with the reality that its traditional model—built on the principles of mutual benefit and technical expertise—may not suffice in the face of China's far-reaching ambi-

There are many reasons why China is winning over many countries that were once bullied by the West in different ways. China's approach is a wake-up call for those countries still under colonial hangovers. Furthermore, as the report made an interesting observation, Japan's relationship with the United States, while essential for regional stability, is becoming increasingly complicated.

The strategic interests of Japan and the US are not always aligned, especially when it comes to China. While the US focuses on containing China's rise, Japan is caught in a precarious position, balancing its need for security and economic cooperation with China against the

demands of its American ally. Japan's position in this dynamic is fraught with tension—caught between the pressure to align with the US and the reality of an increasingly powerful China on its doorstep.

The question that now looms over Japan's future is not just one of economic survival but of moral and ideological relevance. As the Global South looks increasingly to China for leadership, Japan must reimagine its role in this shifting world order. Japan's model of development, founded on transparency, democracy, and sustainability, is being overshadowed by China's strategic depth and bold vision.

Japan must not only bolster its own economic and diplomatic presence but must also confront the difficult task of reconciling its historical baggage with its aspirations for a secure and prosperous future. To do this, it may be unwise for Japan to stand as a mouthpiece or pape for NATO, learning from the havoc this double-speak military alliance creates. With Trump's return, the competition for the soul of the international system intensifies—a system where shared values and principles, rather than hegemonic power, increasingly define the rules of engagement.

In these circumstances, Japan's ability to adapt, offer a compelling vision for the future of the Global South, and balance its security needs with its diplomatic and economic outreach will determine whether it remains a relevant player or becomes a relic of a past world order, or merely a puppet of a warmongering alliance intent on destabilising the Asia-Pacific.

The coming years will reveal whether Japan can rise to this challenge, or whether China's inexorable march towards global dominance will leave it in the dust.

(The writer is a journalist and a policy analyst; The views expressed

# ISRO's PSLV-C60 Mission and POEM-4: A game-changer for India's space exploration

This mission positions India among a select group of nations capable of space docking and sets the stage for revolutionising space experimentation

ndia's space exploration has reached a significant milestone with the recent launch of the PSLV-C60 mission by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). This mission featured the Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) alongside the PSLV-Orbital Experiment Module (POEM-4), propelling India into an elite group of nations capable of space docking. Additionally, ISRO's collaboration with startups, researchers, and academic institutions showcases its commitment to fostering deep-tech advancements while reducing the high costs of space experimentation.

**Enhanced Resources** Traditionally, the upper stage financial barriers for of a launch vehicle becomes researchers, academic institudormant after payload deployment. However, ISRO has cre POEM-4 reflects ISRO's abil- tion addresses two key chal-



ANKIT ANAND atively repurposed the PSLV's fourth stage into POEM, an orbital platform equipped with telemetry, command support, and a power supply. This transformation enables technical and scientific research in space while optimising resource use and lowering financial barriers for tions, and businesses.

ity to turn constraints into opportunities, providing an affordable avenue for space experimentation. This democratisation of space access marks a turning point for India's space sector, opening the doors to innovations pre-viously hindered by high costs and limited resources. **Empowering Startups** 

ISRO's POEM-4 has significantly benefited startups and academic institutions by enabling cost-effective in-orbit technology testing. Mumbai-based Manastu Space Technologies, for instance, is developing the Vyom 2U Green Propulsion System, which replaces toxic satellite fuels with an environmentally friendly hydrogen peroxidebased alternative. This innova-

lenges in space explorationsafety and sustainability—and incorporates advanced features like a high-temperature catalyst, optimised thruster design, and proprietary green propellant MS-289. With ISRO's support, Manastu is preparing for an upcoming PSLV mission to validate its technology, potentially positioning India as a global leader in sustainable satellite opera-

GalaxEye, another innovative startup, has developed affordable synthetic aperture radar (SAR) modules. Unlike optical imaging, SAR technology penetrates clouds, providing precise and uninterrupted satellite imagery crucial for disaster management, environmental monitoring, and more. Validating its SAR modules in



space through POEM-4 positions GalaxEye to deliver costeffective global imaging solu-Additionally, TakeMe2Space, a startup working on space-based data centers and processing power modules, utilised POEM-4 for initial technology validation. This achievement, despite the startup's limited funding, highlights ISRO's commitment to nurturing deep-tech innova-

tors and breaking down entry barriers for emerging players. **Driving Economic Growth** and Innovation

ISRO's approach with POEM-4 aligns with its broader vision of fostering public-private collaboration to stimulate economic growth. By offering advanced testing infrastructure at reduced costs, ISRO accelerates the commercialisation of innovative solutions. Manastu Space's collaboration

with the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) exemplifies the power of such syn-ergies. With funding from DŘDO's Technology Development Fund, Manastu developed the iBooster system through years of intensive research. Its successful delivery underscores the potential of

partnerships between government institutions and startups to advance national defense and space capabilities.

**Push for innovations** The PSLV-C60 mission and the POEM-4 initiative position ISRO as a leader in frugal yet impactful innovation. By repurposing resources and promoting collaboration, ISRO demonstrates that groundbreaking advancements do not require massive budgets but thrive on ingenuity and inclusivity.

Dr. Pawan Goenka, Chairman of IN-SPACe, aptly summarized the initiative's significance: "POEM is a practical solution deployed by ISRO that allows Indian startups, academic institutions, and research organizations to test their space technologies with-

out the need to launch entire satellites. By making this platform accessible, we are reducing entry barriers and enabling a wider range of entities to contribute to the space sector." Toward a Multi-Trillion-**Dollar Space Economy** 

India's ambitions of becoming a multi-trillion-dollar economy find a strong ally in ISRO's innovations. The space sector, driven by public-private partnerships, support for deep-tech startups, and inclusive access to space, is poised to play a key role in this vision. Initiatives like POEM-4 lay the groundwork for a thriving space ecosystem that fosters innovation, economic growth, and global leadership.

(The writer is , founding partner at Riceberg Ventures; views are personal) VIJAYAWADA | MONDAY | JANUARY 27, 2025

# MONEY MATTERS



## **Goa minister launches 0Y0 Accelerator Program**

oa tourism minister Rohan Khaunte on Sunday Caunched OYO's Accelerator program which seeks to mentor and help small first-generation hoteliers to expand their business operations in the coastal state. Khaunte and OYO's Chief Operating Officer Varun Jain were present on the occasion. The minister also distributed Rs 25 lakh to the five beneficiaries of OYO's Accelerator Program. A spokesperson of Goa Tourism said that OYO is planning to add over 500 hotels and generate more than 5,000 new jobs in the state over the next one year through this joint initiative with the department. These properties will be located across all key regions - north, central and south Goa, he said. As part of the Accelerator programme, OYO is encouraging firstgeneration hoteliers to innovate and enter new markets, expand their customer base, and increase earnings by offering them mentorship, access to technology, dedicated relationship managers, and financial support. "These hoteliers will also be able to take advantage of OYO's network of over 15,000 corporate accounts and more than 10,000 travel agents across India to boost business



## **Shreeji Shipping Global to** raise funds via IPO

hreeji Shipping Global Ltd, which provides shipping and logistic solution for dry bulk cargo, has filed draft papers with markets regulator Sebi seeking its approval to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The IPO is entirely a fresh issue of 2 crore equity shares, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). The company is planning to use Rs 289.4 crore out of the IPO proceeds for acquisition of dry bulk carriers in the supramax category in the secondary market, and further use Rs 19.5 crore for repaying debt. As of September 2025, the company had a total borrowings of Rs 264.54 crore, the draft papers filed on Friday showed. The flagship company of Jamnagarbased Shreeji Group primarily focuses on non-major ports and jetties, particularly along the west coast of India. Until September 2024, it has provided services at more than 20 ports and jetties including major Indian ports at Kandla, nonmaior ports at Navlakhi, Magdalla, Bhavnagar, Bedi and Dharmatar and overseas port at Puttalam Port (Sri Lanka) According to a D&B Report, cargo handled at ports in India is expected to grow at an annual rate of 10.80 per cent to 2,849 MMTs by Fiscal 2030 from 1,540 million metric tons (MMTs) in Fiscal 2024



## **Hindustan Zinc likely to** turn net debt-free : Report

edanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) is likely to turn net debt-free by the next financial year despite significant investment in capacity expansion, according to a report. According to brokerage firm Ventura Securities global demand for base metals -- zinc and lead, is expected to grow at a CAGR of 6/7 per cent... Domestically, India is a net exporter of zinc while having a deficit in lead supplies. Both these circumstances are favourable to HZL. "HZL is expected to turn net debt-free by FY26," it said. The country's largest producer of zinc, lead and silver had earlier said that it expects to reduce its debt to about Rs 2,000 crore by March-end from about Rs 6,000 crore at the end of the September quarter. Silver is fast gaining traction for investment demand and its use cases in industrial applications is only rising. The timely expansion in silver production capacities augers well given the exploding demand, the report said. HZL has planned capacity expansion of Rs 16,000 crore, including sustaining capex, for the period FY 24-27 for funding the roaster plant in Rajasthan's Debari, fumer and fertilizer plant at Chanderiya (sulphuric acid forward integration), in the desert state and 450 mw renewable energy addition

# India-Oman to review progress of FTA talks

India and Oman will review the progress of talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries during the visit of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal to Muscat this week, an official statement said on Sunday.

Though the negotiations for the proposed agreement were concluded, Oman has sought revision of its market access offers on some products. On January 14, India and

Oman held the fifth round of talks for the agreement, which is aimed at boosting bilateral economic ties.

The negotiations for the agreement, officially dubbed as Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), formally began in

In such agreements, two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on a maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and attract investments.

The talks on India-Oman CEPA which are at an advanced stage are likely to get further impetus during the visit. Both sides are negotiating and exploring a commercially significant, balanced, equitable, ambitious and mutually beneficial CEPA, the commerce ministry said.

Goyal will also attend the joint commission meeting with Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion Qais Mohammed bin Moosa al-Yousef during January 27-28.

A business delegation is



accompanying the Minister for the Joint Business Council

On the sidelines, Goyal is also expected to meet Sultan bin Salim Al Habsi, Minister of Finance and Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee for CEPA; and Sheikh Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, President, Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

Oman is the third largest export destination among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for India. India already has a similar agreement with another GCC member UAE which came into effect in May 2022.

The bilateral trade has declined to USD 8.94 billion (exports USD 4.42 billion and

imports USD 4.5 billion) in 2023-24 from USD 12.39 billion (exports USD 4.47 billion and imports USD 7.91 billion and 2022-23.

India's key imports are petroleum products and urea. These account for over 70 per cent of imports. Other key products are propylene and ethylene polymers, pet coke, gypsum, chem-

icals, and iron and steel.

GTRI (Global Trade Research Institute), Indian goods worth USD 3.7 billion like gasoline, iron and steel, electronics, and machinery may get a significant boost in Oman, once both sides reach a comprehensive free trade agreement. These goods at present face a 5 per cent import duty in Oman.

Oman's import duty ranges from 0 to 100 per cent along with the existence of specific duties. A duty of 100 per cent is applicable on specific meats, wines and tobacco products.

Reduction in import duties under the CEPA will allow Indian products to enter the Omani market at competitive

With a population of 1.4 billion compared to Oman's 5 million, India represents a vast consumer market for Oman.

JK Cement to

acquire majority

JK Cement, one of the leading

cement producers, has said it

will acquire a 60 per cent stake

of Saifco Cements in a deal through which it will enter into

stake in Saifco

Cements

PNS NEW DELHI

#### **MARKETS THIS WEEK**

## **US Fed rate decisions, Budget,** earnings major driving factors

PNS NEW DELHI

In an eventful week ahead, stock market investors will take cues from major events like the US Federal Řeserve's interest rate decision, the upcoming Union Budget and Q3 earnings, analysts said

Besides, global factors, trading activity of foreign investors, rupeedollar trend and movement of international oil benchmark Brent crude would also influence trading in the equity market, according to experts.

"All eyes are now on the upcoming Union Budget, scheduled for February 1, as the market looks for a meaningful trigger to shift sentiment positively. The ongoing Q3 earnings season has been lacklustre so far, especially in the consumption and financial sectors. "On the global front, the

Committee (FOMC) policy meeting will be critical, Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said. Additionally, movements in

the US bond yields and the Dollar Index will remain important to track. Signs of reversals in these two areas could drive positivity in global markets,

> Meena said. For the Indian equity market, FII flows will continue to play a crucial role, he added. Stock markets will

remain open for trading on February 1, Saturday, for the Union Budget presentation, BSE and NSE had announced last month.

This week is important, not just for the equity markets but for the economy as well, with the Union Budget scheduled for February 1 (Saturday)," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

# Hospitality sector seeks infra status

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lack of infrastructure status, rationalisation of tax rates, easier visa processes and more incentives by state governments to promote investments are some of the key issues that need to be addressed for India's hospitality sector to realise its full potential, Hotel Association of India President K B Kachru said ahead of the Budget.

In an interview, Kachru, emphasised upon the need for India to be marketed in a better fashion, and noted that countries like Japan, South Korea and Thailand have been able to grow their GDP by giving importance to the tourism

He emphasised upon the need for India to identify and promote MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) destinations with high potential, and work towards building the required infrastructure to draw tourists

"We need investment. Investment can't be done by the government alone. Private



sector has to come in and invest. What would motivate them to invest in the country is they must have a respectable (return on investment) ROI then only they will invest," the Hotel Association of India President said.

Highlighting that "taxation is a big issue" in India, Kachru pointed out the differential rates of taxation and stressed upon the need to rationalise the tax rates and follow best practices of countries such as Singapore, Sri Lanka and

Moreover, he said, at the

state level, governments have to be forthcoming in inviting people and giving them some incentives to invest their

'... There was a time when we used to have close to 100 licenses to start a hotel. It has been substantially reduced. But still, I think we need to, we need to make it easier for people to operate hotels... Principally, everybody accepts that there should be a single window, but till that stage comes, I feel we should reduce approval processes to the minimum," Kachru said.

the Jammu & Kashmir market. The JK Group firm will acquire a 60 per cent stake in

Saifco Cements, which has an integrated manufacturing unit at Khunmoh in Srinagar, at a valuation of Rs 174 crore, according to a joint statement. Saifco's integrated manufacturing unit in Srinagar is spread across 54 acres of land and has a clinker capacity of

0.26 MTPA and grinding capacity of 0.42 MTPA. Besides, it has captive limestone reserves spread over 144.25 hectares with a total minable reserve of 129 million

tonnes. "The acquisition will help the company expand its footprint into the state of Jammu and

Kashmir Region," it said. IK Cement has a manufacturing capacity of 24.2 MTPA

having a strong presence in markets such as Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. Its turnover for FY24 was at Rs 86.30 crore. JK Cement Managing

Director Raghavpat Singhania According to him, 60-70 per said this acquisition is a significant step forward in accelerating JK Čement's growth jour-

#### Aequs to set up MRO facility, plans to hire more people 1,800 staff and the plan is to add PNS ■ BELAGAVI (KARNATAKA) tions for the aerospace and expand... consumer durables side, we initially focused on

Bullish on growth opportunities, contract manufacturer tronics components -- current-Aequs is set to strengthen its ly has around USD 120 million bilities, expand consumer segment footprint as well as set up an MRO this year.

The company will also ramp up manpower by around 1,000 people in the financial year ending March 2026, according to its Chairman and CEO Aravind

Aequs -- which provides vertically integrated product solu-

PNS NEW DELHI

The government in its coming

Budget must extend fiscal ben-

efits under the PLI (production

linked incentive) scheme to sec-

tors such as handicrafts and

leather that can create more

It also suggested that the

existing PLI schemes must con-

tinue in sectors that have seen

success, such as electronics, auto

and semiconductors. The gov-

ernment in 2021 announced

PLI schemes for 14 sectors,

including telecommunications,

white goods, textiles, manufac-

turing of medical devices, auto-

mobiles, speciality steel, food

products, high-efficiency solar

PV modules, advanced chem-

jobs, Deloitte said on Sunday.

consumer goods industries, including high precision elec-

Airbus, Boeing, Collins and Safran are among the aerospace customers of Aequs, which also has facilities in France and the

Elaborating on the future plans, Melligeri mentioned about expanding into the precision consumer electronics space and setting up the Maintenance, Repair and

'PLI benefits to handicrafts,

leather help create more jobs'

istry cell battery, drones, and pharma, with an outlay of Rs 1.97

Deloitte further suggested

that to improve global liquidity

(once the Western central banks

start easing their monetary poli-

cies), the government can raise

the ceiling for investment size

and remove location restric-

tions to attract more foreign

"Multi-brand retail and e-

lakh crore



Overhaul (MRO) jointly with Canada's Magellan Aerospace Corporation in 2025. Initially, the facility will start with works for turboprop engines.

"Consumer electronics is also a field where we feel we can

commerce are some sectors that

may benefit from this," Rumki

Majumdar, Economist, Deloitte

the biggest challenges will be to

revive merchandise exports that

have contracted by 3 per cent in FY24. To achieve the USD 1-tril-

lion target by 2030, the govern-

ment will have to create a

roadmap. "We expect the gov-

ernment to soon complete the

FTA (free trade agreement) talks

with Oman, Peru, the UK, the

European Union, Chile, the

South African Customs Union

and the Gulf Cooperation

Council," Majumdar said, adding

that this could boost India's

exports in these regions amid

global uncertainties.

Further, she said that one of

India, said.

domestic market and now we will focus on the exports side,"

Aequs operates a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Belagavi, Karnataka that offers an end-to-end manufacturing value stream, including forging, machining, surface treatment and aero assemblies. It is also the country's first

notified precision engineering SEZ. At present, the company's aerospace vertical has around 300 to 400 more people this fiscal, Melligeri said. Overall, Aequs expects to

he said during an interaction increase its overall manpower, here this week. increase its overall manpower, which is currently around 4,000, by another 1,000 more people. Melligeri said precision man-

ufacturing is its core strength and added that on the consumer segment, "we are talking to some smart ring makers... it is a growing market".

cent of the value addition to the products is happening in the

# **BUDGET 2025** Tech industry bats for deep tech

# fund to bolster startup ecosystem

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's apex IT industry body Nasscom has batted for tweaks in safe harbour rules and widening the scope for utilisation of SEZ reinvestment reserves in its Budget wishlist, while advocating for creation of a central deeptech fund to bolster startup ecosystem in India.

Creation of a grant framework for the deeptech ecosystem, and making the deferment of the time of payment of tax on Employee Stock Option Plan available to employees of all DPIIT-recognized startups also tops the Budget expectations of the industry.

The Union Budget for financial year 2025-26 is scheduled to be presented in Parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1,

For the USD 250 billion export-led Indian IT industry, the Budget comes amid continued global macro headwinds, geopolitical risks, and growing unease about possibility of sudden policy and tariff moves by the ÛS, where President Donald Trump has promised to script a new, glorious chapter for America with his headline-

grabbing second-term. Issues under transfer-pricing regime, expanding the scope for



utilisation of SEZ reinvestment reserve for tech companies, as well as measures to promote startup in India figure high on Nasscom's budget expectations. Among the key asks is also

making deferment of the time of payment of tax on Employee Stock Option Plan (ESÓP) available to the employees of more startups. The deferment - even if you

look at only DPIIT-registered startups - is actually available

only to about 2.5 per cent of these startups.

"While the DPIIT has roughly around 1.43 lakh startups registered on its portal, of which 3.600 odd are certified by the 3,600 odd are certified by the inter-ministerial board, and only these startups can get this benefit," Ashish Aggarwal, Vice resident taxpayers.

President and Head of Public Policy at Nasscom told PTI.

Given that the employee is required to pay full tax and there is only a deferment of the time of payment, the benefit should be available to all DPIIT recognised start-ups, not limited to 3,605 start-ups who have obtained IMB certificate under IT Act, according to Aggarwal.

In fact, there is a merit in going beyond," he said.

Along with making the deferment available for all DPIIT recognised startups, safeguards can be added to say that eligible ESOPs will be available only to employees of DPIIT registered start-ups, and that ESOPs will be offered only to Indian

# Demand revival aids automobile exports growth

PNS NEW DELHI

Automobile exports from India rose 19 per cent year-on-year in 2024 led by a robust dispatch of two-wheelers, passenger vehicles and commercial vehicles, according to SIAM data.

Overall shipments rose to

50,98,810 units last year, up 19 per cent from 42,85,809 units exported in 2023.

Last year saw revival in demand for the Indian automobiles from emerging markets

like Latin America and Africa," Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers Director General Rajesh Menon told PTI when asked about reasons for exports growth last year.

In 2024, passenger vehicle exports grew 10 per cent to 7,43,976 units as compared to 6,77,956 units in January-December period of 2023.

Utility vehicle shipments rose 33 per cent year-on-year to 3,23,621 units while van ship-



ments also jumped 14 per cent annually to 8,207 units.

Passenger car dispatches, however, declined 4 per cent last year to 4,12,148 units as compared to 4,27,876 units in 2023. Two-wheeler exports rose 23 per cent to 39,77,162 units as compared to 32,43,673 units shipped in 2023, led by motorcycles which grew by 24 per cent to 33,97,586 units.

Scooter shipments rose to 5,73,230 units last year from 4,91,329 units in 2023.

# what's brewing?

# AP DHILLON DEBUTS AT PARIS MEN'S FASHION WEEK; MAKES APPEARANCE AT PHARRELL WILLIAMS' LOUIS VUITTON SHOW

n a monumental fusion of haute couture, music and cultural integration, acclaimed Punjabi music phenomenon AP Dhillon joined an elite roster of global celebrities as Pharrell Williams headlined the official launch of Paris Men's Fashion Week on Tuesday night with his highly anticipated Louis Vuitton Men's Fall/Winter 2025-26 show.

This historic appearance marked the first time an India-born Punjabi music artiste attended Paris Men's Fashion Week, further cementing the luxury house's commitment to cultur-

al diversity under Williams' creative direction. The show, which marks Nigo's return to Louis Vuitton following his celebrated 2020 capsule collection with the late Virgil Abloh, drew an exceptional array of culluminaries. including Jackson Wang, Bam Bam, Victor

Wembanyama, Leon Marchand, BTS's J- al luxury that has become Williams' Hope, AP Dhillon, Travis Scott, Future Pluto Hendricks, Don Toliver, Pusha T, Big Smoke, Boozy, Sabrina Elba, Idris Elba, Bradley Cooper, ASAP Nast, Aron Pierre, Adrien Brody, J Balvin, Dylan Wang, Slick Rick the Ruler, and Tyshawn Jones. These attendees, representing a wide range of artistic and cultural influences, contributed to a night that celebrated global diversity and creativity.

Dhillon, representing a new wave of South Asian influence in luxury fashion, command-ed attention in a meticulously crafted Louis Vuitton ensemble - a masterful blend of streetwear aesthetics and traditional Louis Vuitton luxury, featuring innovative interpretations of the house's

iconic design aesthetics. The singersongwriter, rapper, and record pro-ducer wore an elevated workwear blouson, crafted from silk-wool double-face fabric layered over Japanese denim skate jeans in a versatile light blue wash, paired with the signature LV Checker range of military-inspired boots. The look highlighted the marriage of streetwear utility with tradition-

'IT WAS A FUN

**AND REWARDING** 

**PROCESS' SAYS** 

ith its release just around the corner, Loveyapa has audiences buzzing with

excitement. The captivating trailer and soulful

songs have already created a strong connection

with viewers. Marking their theatrical debuts.

Junaid Khan and Khushi Kapoor bring a fresh and

promising on-screen pairing to this much-anticipated

film. As the debutant actress is now on a promotional

rehearsals and the challenges she faced while filming.

Speaking about the same, Khushi Kapoor said, "I think

Gaurav's timing was really critical throughout the film.

Whenever he had to shoot a scene, I would go and give

The timing of our dialogue delivery had to be perfect-

it couldn't overlap at any point. It was tricky because

you have to react as if you're hearing the lines for the

first time. But we rehearsed so much that, by the

technicalities, like speakers overlapping, that

Loveyapa, set in the realm of modern romance,

shades, the film is poised to resonate with audiences

of all ages. Loveyapa is poised to be one of 2025's

posed minor challenges. It was a fun and

offers a heartwarming tale enriched with

unforgettable performances, lively music, and

breathtaking visuals. Celebrating love in all its

most exciting cinematic offerings. Mark your calendars for 7th February 2025 to embark on this

time we got to the set, it was just the

rewarding process." she added.

enchanting journey of love!

him the cue, and whenever it was my turn, I'd rely on

videos we had shot earlier."

spree, she was seen opening up about dialogue

(HUSHI KAPOOR

**ON LOVEYAPA!** 

The show, which transformed the Louvre into an unprecedented fashion spectacle. hallmark. AP Dhillon, who made his continues Williams' tradition of utilizdebut at the fashion week, shared: "Being present at this intersection of culture and luxury, especially in a space as iconic as the Louvre, represents a pivotal moment not just for me, but for the entire creative comm u n i t y . Pharrell's vision for Louis Vuitton

vious presentations at the Pont Neuf, Jardin d'Acclimatation, and UNESCO headquarters. Dhillon's presence at this landmark show alongside the colshow, laboration between Williams and streetwear pioneer Nigo, underscores Louis Vuitton's commitment to embraces authentic multiculturalbridging diverse culism, and I'm hontural influences in conored to be part of this temporary luxury fashion narrative that's reshaping the fashion landscape.

# and popularizing streetwear's visibility in high fashion. Did you know crucial scenes in Deva were shot with an extremely limited crew to ensure absolute secrecy

ee Studios and Roy Kapur Films' upcoming film Deva, starring Shahid Kapoor and This scene is integral to the story-Pooja Hegde, is nearing its release, and the excitement among the audience is reaching a fever pitch. Following its electrifying trailer and songs, audiences are eagerly awaiting this one-of-a-kind spectacle on the big screen. While the audience is already hooked after catching a glimpse of this action thriller, the film also features a crucial scene that was shot with an extremely limited crew to ensure absolute

As per an industry source, "One

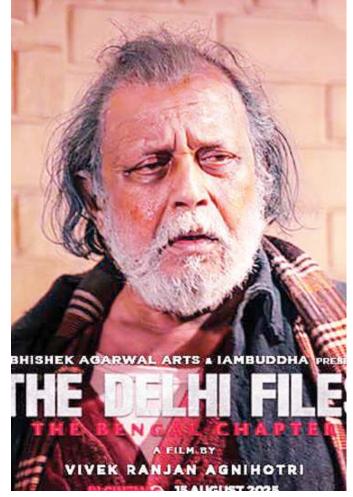
line, and the makers wanted to protect its impact at all costs. The atmosphere on set was intense, with only key personnel involved to maintain confidentiality. Every precaution was taken to avoid leaks, as this moment is expected to leave a lasting impression on the audience.'

ing Paris's most prestigious land-marks as backdrops for his col-

lections, following his pre-

Directed by acclaimed Malayalam filmmaker Rosshan Andrrews and produced by Zee Studios and Roy Kapur Films, Deva is an electrifying and explosive action thriller set to release on





# **Mithun Chakraborty stuns** in the first power-packed visual from *The Delhi Files:* The Bengal Chapter

**7**ivek Agnihotri has built a reputation for creating well researched and truth based bold, thought-provoking films that tackle real stories and sensitive issues which have taken place in our history. Known for exploring crucial aspects of history and society, his work often uncovers hidden truths and sparks meaningful conversations. His next film, The Delhi Files, has generated significant anticipation, given his track record of delving into real-world events and controversial topics. Amidst rising anticipation, Mithun Chakraborty's first look from The Delhi Files is out that reveals him

in a gripping and intense avatar.

The first look of Mithun Chakraborty from The Delhi Files is out, featuring him in a powerful video reciting the Constitution of India with a burned tongue amidst a vacant corridor. Mithun appears rugged, with a white beard, reciting the Constitution passionately. This glimpse has generated immense excitement, highlighting Mithun's intense portrayal. The film, directed by Vivek Agnihotri, is expected to spark crucial conversations about India's history, politics, and social dynamics, continuing Agnihotri's tradition of bold and thought-provoking story-

telling.
The Delhi Files is a deeply emotional film that brings a significant chapter of Indian history to life on a grand scale. It explores the poignant Bengal tragedy, uncovering a lesser-known part of India's past. With its impactful story-telling, breathtaking visuals, and stellar performances, the film promises to deliver a thoughtprovoking and unforgettable cin-

ematic journey.

The Delhi Files: The Bengal Chapter will be directed by Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri and Jointly produced by Abhishek Agarwal and Pallavi Joshi. The film, presented by Tej Narayan Agarwal & I Am Buddha Productions, will be released worldwide on 15th August

#### **ARCHIE**









#### **CALVIN AND HOBBES**



REALITY CHECK





**CROSSWORD** 



#### GARFIELD







# MORTY SHINKLETOOT: THE ONLY HUMAN BEING IN HISTORY NOT TO PLAY THE DRUM SOLO ON HIS STREETING WHEEL DURING PHIL COLLINS "IN THE AIR TONIGHT"



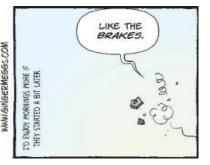




## **GINGER MEGGS**







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Rules

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18 A young woman

small dog 17 Mountains

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13 Someone who works with

wires, lights, switches

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Monday January 27, 2025

# Hidayat Khan on the rendition of Jana Gana Mana

# 'IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY, **BUT A HARMONIOUS EXPERIENCE'**

**TEJAL SINHA** 

tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

epublic Day holds a profound place in the heart of every Indian. It marks the birth of the Indian Republic, a day that honours the spirit of freedom and the adoption of the Indian Constitution. More than just a national holiday, it is a vibrant celebration of the unity that binds a nation so rich in diversity, where traditions, cultures, and languages converge to create a unique tapestry of shared identity. This year, the celebrations are set to be marked by a unique and poignant musical tribute. Renowned sitar virtuoso Hidayat Khan, son of the legendary Vilayat Khan, has released his deeply moving rendition of the Indian National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, on this very day. Infused with a soulful sitar alaap, resonant tabla rhythms and a powerful vocal solo, his interpretation is not only a tribute to India's cultural heritage but also a deeply personal expression of nostalgia and reflection.

Recalling his emotional response to revisiting Jana Gana Mana, Khan shared how the project transported him back to his childhood. "The last time I sang Jana Gana Mana was in eighth grade in Dehradun. Revisiting it now brought back a flood of childhood memories. It's amazing how music has the power to transport you-just playing it on the sitar instantly took me back to that warm, nostalgic, and carefree time. It was a deeply moving experience, filled with warmth and a sense of connection to my roots. I can vividly recall those icy mornings, rushing to school, and standing in the assembly to sing Jana Gana Mana," Khan reminisced. "It's a charming and heartwarming memory, a snapshot of life in a beautiful small town in India that shaped so much of my identity," recalls the maestro in an exclusive chat with The Pioneer. For him, this project was not just an artistic endeavor but also a reflection of the values he grew up with. He noted that despite living in New York for

many years and traveling across the globe, the anthem symbolized the enduring principles that have shaped his life. "It didn't feel like a heavy responsibility, but rather a peaceful and harmonious experience. Revisiting this deeply symbolic piece allowed me to reconnect with my roots and reflect on the values that continue to quide me even today.

When asked about how he envisioned the anthem evolving through the sitar, an instrument so closely tied to his family's legacy, he emphasized the personal nature of his approach. "The sitar is deeply connected to my emotions and my family's heritage, so it felt like the most natural way to express how I see India. Everything I've learnedfrom my father, my forefathers, and the many gurus who have guided me-shapes how I communicate through my music. This piece is a reflection of all those influences coming together. I hope when people hear the anthem and watch the video, they can experience my journey and vision of India." Interestingly, Khan chose to keep the rendition

deeply rooted in traditional Indian aesthetics rather than incorporating global influences. "I intentionally presented this rendition in the most organic and traditionally Indian way. The piece begins with an alaap, which unfolds the melody in a subtle and abstract manner. This is followed by the rhythmic section, which builds the mood, leading to the final vocal rendition of Jana Gana Mana. The predominant instruments and sounds are purely Indian, acoustic, and organic. The goal was to let the natural essence of our traditions take

As the conversation shifts to the evolving landscape of music in today's fast-paced world, he provides an insightful perspective on classical music's role in preserving profound traditions like the anthem. In a time when music is often consumed in short snippets, he underscores the power of depth over length. "In today's fast-paced world, where music is often consumed in snippets, it's worth remembering that some of the greatest maestros of

In an exclusive conversation with **The Pioneer**, sitar virtuoso Hidayat Khan opened up about the profound personal journey behind his rendition of the national anthem, Jana *Gana Mana*. As he revisited the anthem. Khan

was transported back to his childhood in Dehradun, where memories of singing it in school flooded his mind. For him, this project is more than just a musical expression; it's a heartfelt tribute to his heritage, a reflection of the values passed down by

his family

Indian classical music recorded on 78 rpm records, soul of the music, offering a moment of stillness which were just three minutes long. Despite the brevity, those recordings had an unimaginable and profound impact, proving that it's not the length of the piece but the depth of its expression that

Hidayat emphasizes the timeless power of classical music, stating, "Classical music, even within a short span, can encapsulate the essence of something as profound as the national anthem. It preserves the

and reflection amidst the noise of modern life. That's the timeless power of classical music-it doesn't just fill time; it transforms it. Turning to the cultural significance of his project,

he hopes his rendition of Jana Gana Mana will spark a deeper conversation about India's rich heritage. "My goal with this rendition is to showcase the beauty and emotional depth of acoustic Indian classical music and instruments. I hope listeners can connect with the sensibility and aesthetics we've woven into this piece. If it inspires people to reflect on India's rich cultural and musical heritage, then I believe we've achieved something meaningful."

One of the most daunting aspects of reimagining the anthem, according to Hidayat, was striking the delicate balance between honouring the anthem's original essence and adding his own artistic touch. He explains, "The most challenging part was finding the right balance between honoring the anthem's original essence and adding my own artistic interpretation. Jana Gana Mana is so deeply ingrained in our collective consciousness and carries immense cultural significance. As an artist, it was important to me that my rendition didn't distort its meaning but rather presented it in a way that allowed for personal expression while still respecting its solemnity. It was a delicate task, ensuring that the music felt both authentic to the anthem and true to my own artistic voice."

When asked how he ensured that his version would resonate with modern audiences while staying true to its origins, Hidayat expressed a refreshing view of musical appreciation. "I don't see audiences as strictly modern or traditional, or defined by age. For me, there's a certain aesthetic and sensibility that guides my music, and that's the audience I aim to reach." He further emphasizes that music transcends labels, offering something universal. "Whether someone is from a different tradition or age group, I believe that if they can connect to the vision and the emotion behind the music, the piece

Ayurveda's secret to healthy skin

will resonate with them. It's not about labels, but about creating something that speaks to the heart.' Despite the weight of the project, Hidayat reveals that he didn't experience moments of self-doubt or hesitation during the creative process. Once the vision for the rendition was clear, the work unfolded naturally. His deep connection with his father's teachings also played a significant role in shaping this project. Reflecting on how his father's influence continues to guide him, he notes, "Every time I hold my sitar, a part of my father's spirit and teachings comes through. His contributions to the world of music are immeasurable, and there's no way to engage with the sitar without being deeply inspired by him. His influence is embedded in everything I create, and that inspiration is always present

especially in a project as meaningful as this.' As an artiste, Hidayat is keenly aware of the anthem's significance as a unifying force in India's culturally diverse landscape. "The beauty of India lies in its diversity," he says thoughtfully adding, "It's an extraordinary melting pot of cultures, where every 50 miles, the language, food, and traditions may change, yet we all live under the same umbrella. Despite these differences, when we come together and sing the national anthem, there's a moment where all that diversity fades, and we are united-Indian at heart, soul, and body. The anthem becomes a powerful reminder of our shared identity and collective spirit."

Reflecting on the deeper meaning behind his rendition, Hidayat shares that his team and he have poured their hearts and souls into this re-imagining of Jana Gana Mana. "Through it, we hope to convey the vast heritage and culture from which we come, he says. "We want to reflect how we've evolvedabsorbing influences from around the world while still preserving our roots." The soul of the rendition, he believes, lies in its message of unity. "The soul we wish to bring to the anthem is one of unity: one soul, one message, one voice. It's a celebration of diversity, embracing the world, and honoring

## **BEHIND THE HAIR**

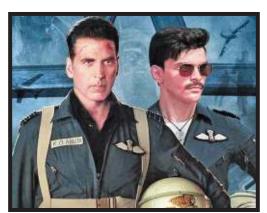
# Darshan talks about Akshay Kumar and Veer Pahariya's Sky Force looks

hen it comes to crafting memorable hair designs in cinema, Darshan Yewalekar is a name that stands out. Renowned for his ability to blend creativity with authenticity, Yewalekar once again showcases his mastery as the hair designer for the highly anticipated film Sky Force. Tasked with recreating the look of an era while celebrating India's aviation heroes, his work on the film has received widespread acclaim.

The brief was clear—stay true to the time period while ensuring each character had a distinctive identity," Yewalekar explained. For a story set in a bygone era, his process began with thorough research. "Photographs from that time were scarce, so I had to rely heavily on references and my creative instincts to design hairstyles that felt authentic and relevant to the narrative," he added.

A highlight of the project for Yewalekar was working closely with Akshay Kumar, who leads the film's stellar cast. "Akshav sir is incredible to collaborate with." Yewalekar shared. "He places immense trust in your vision, but his insights always add depth to the character. For Sky Force, we worked on subtle hair transitions to reflect his character's journey over time."





Force officers, which meant avoiding anything overly dramatic or stylized." Yewalekar explained. Despite these constraints, he managed to create distinctive looks for each character, ensuring their personalities shone

The entire cast, including Sara Ali Khan, Nimrat Kaur, and the ensemble, benefited from Yewalekar's meticulous attention to detail. His designs seamlessly blended historical authenticity with cinematic flair, bringing each character to life in a way that resonat-

As Sky Force continues to earn rave reviews. Yewalekar's work stands as a testament to his expertise in combining storytelling with visual artistry. His ability to create hair designs that are both meaningful and memorable ensures that the film's characters remain etched in the hearts of viewers long after the credits

had to adhere to the strict grooming standards of Air

ed with the audience.

ollywood is ready to light up the silver screen in February 2025 with a lineup of films that promise to capture hearts and keep audiences on the edge of their seats. From love stories to historical dramas and comedies, here's a list of the 5 mustwatch Bollywood movies releasing this roll.

#### Loveyapa - 7th February 2025

A fresh romantic tale featuring a youthful and charming pair, Loveyapa promises to be the perfect start to Valentine's month. With Junaid Khan and Khushi Kapoor in the lead, this film celebrates young love and its

emotional journey.

#### Inn Galiyon Mein - 28th February 2025

Bringing the complexities of modern relationships to the forefront, this romantic movie examines how love and social media intertwine in today's world. This thought-provoking film marks the big-screen debut of Avantika Dassani alongside Vivaan Shah. Javed Jafferi plays a pivotal role in this gripping story, which is produced by Vinod Yadav and Neeru Yadav and coproduced by Alcor Productions. Inn Galiyon Mein is set to release on 28th February 2025.

old winters can lead to dryness, roughness, and sensitivity of skin. The following ingredients are chosen for their ability to restore moisture, nourish the deeper layers of skin, and thus counter the ill effects of harsh winters on skin. They align with the principle of "snehana" (oleation) as per Ayurveda, and work synergistically to combat

#### 1. Sesame Oil

- Properties: Rich in ceramides, antioxidants, and essential fatty acids.
- Benefits: Deeply moisturizes and nourishes the skin, protects the lipid barrier, and prevents dryness. Its warming quality makes it ideal for combating Vata dosha imbalance during winter.

#### 2. Almond Oil

- Properties: Packed with Vitamin E and fatty
- Benefits: Helps hydrate and repair dry, flaky skin, promotes elasticity, and gives a natural glow. Balances Vata and Pitta doshas. Being rich in Vitamin E, almond oil locks hydration in the cells, making your skin soft and bouncy even in winter.

#### 3. Saffron (Kumkum)

- Properties: Rich in antioxidants and
- carofenoids. • Benefits: Enhances complexion, fights free radicals, and promotes skin regeneration. It is beneficial in countering the skin dullness commonly observed in winters.

#### 4. Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera)

- Properties: Contains bioactive compounds
- like withanolides. • Benefits: Promotes collagen production,

reduces stress-induced dryness, and enhances skin resilience. Supports Vata balancing during winter.

#### 5. Ghee (Clarified Butter)

- Properties: Rich in essential fatty acids and vitamins A, D, and E.
- Benefits: Provides intense hydration, reduces flakiness, and heals chapped skin. Balances Vata and Pitta doshas.

#### 6. Turmeric (Haridra)

- Properties: Contains curcumin, a potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant.

  • Benefits: Prevents dullness, soothes redness,
- and keeps skin glowing in harsh weather. Balances Kapha and Pitta doshas.

#### 7. Sandalwood (Chandana)

- Properties: Cooling, soothing, and moisturizing with natural emollients.
- Benefits: Locks in moisture, soothes irritation, and reduces inflammation. It is particularly useful for balancing Pitta dosha.

#### Honey (Madhu)

- Properties: Humectant with natural antibacterial properties.
- Benefits: Retains skin moisture, exfoliates gently, and heals winter-related cracks. Balances Kapha and Vata doshas.

(The author, Dr. Swathi, is the Head of Research & Product Development, at Purely Yours.)

# From drama to action: February releases has it all!

2025

A grand historical saga featuring powerhouse performers including Vicky Kaushal, Rashmika Mandanna, Akshaye Khanna, Ashutosh Rana, and Divya Dutta, Chhaava is a must-watch for fans of gripping narratives and epic visuals. This epic drama explores the life of Chhatrapati Sambhaji

Chhaava - 14th February

Maharaj, the courageous son of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Set

against a dramatic backdrop, the film is expected to make a big impact at the box office. **Bad Ass Ravi Kumar - 7th** 

February 2025

This action-packed entertainer combines over-the-top stunts, witty humor, and chart-topping music. With Himesh Reshammiya's signature flair and Prabhudeva's exceptional choreography, this film is sure to leave audiences thrilled.

#### Mere Husband Ki Biwi -21st February 2025

A hilarious take on love triangles and relationship chaos, Mere Husband Ki Biwi promises to be a laugh riot. Featuring Arjun Kapoor, Bhumi Pednekar, Shakti Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh, Anita Raj, Dino Morea, and Aditya Seal, this movie is perfect for a fun outing with friends and family.

# **Australian Open: Townsend, Siniakova win the women's doubles**

**PTI** MELBOURNE

**¬**aylor Townsend of the Únited States returned United States returned to the court on which her career first took flight, teaming with Katerina Siniakova to beat Hsieh Su-Wei and Jelena Ostapenko 6-2, 6-7 (4), 6-3 in the women's doubles final Sunday at the Australian Open.

"This is super-special to me," Townsend said. "The last time I played on this court I was 15 and in 2012 I won the juniors here and that was the kick-start.

beginning of me being able

to live out my dream."
Top-seeded Townsend and Siniakova of the Czech Republic led 6-2, 5-3 and served for the match for the first time at 5-4 in the second set. But third-seeded Hsieh

and Ostapenko rallied to take the second set in a tie-break and to hold an early break in the third.

Taylor and Siniakova were able to fall back on proven teamwork on crucial points. This was their third Grand Slam together: they won Wimbledon last year and reached the semifinals of the US Open. They were also able to exploit

a hint of weakness on Hsieh's serve with Ostapenko at the net, breaking her four times in the match including in the ninth game of the final set. Siniakova then served out the "Honestly, being here is so special to me because this tournament was the providing the finishing touch at the net.

The match was played in warm conditions on the Australia Day national holiday. The temperature was around 22C (71.6F) midafternoon and the court was warm, causing the ball to



skip through quicker, Townsend to level at 3-3. particularly from the left- But another Hsieh ser handed Townsend.

Siniakova and Townsend raced to a 5-1 lead inside 30 minutes and while Hsieh managed to hold at 5-2 in the best game of the set, Siniakova held to love to close out the first set in 37 minutes.

Win or lose Siniakova was going to extend her stay atop the WTA doubles rankings to 136 weeks, the fifth-best run of all-time. She has reached the semifinals or better at the last five grand slams.

The second set, much the same as the first, began with Ostapenko and Townsend holding serve, then Hsieh was broken at 2-1.

Ostakpenko held at 2-3 and there was noticeable lift in intensity from the third seeds, a recognition of the importance of the moment and they managed to break

But another Hsieh service break gave Townsend the opportunity to serve for the match at 5-4 but again, Ostapenko and Hsieh rallied to level at 5-all. Hsieh then managed a crucial hold with
Ostapenko occasionally
starting at the back of the court, rather than at the net. Siniakova's hold sent the set into a tie-break in which Ostapenko and Hseih picked up two points off Townsend at 5-4 and 6-4 to level the match.

The complexion of the game had changed and the third seeds were able to break Siniakova for the first time in the opening game of the third set, though Siniakova and Townsend immediately broke Ostapenko to level at

Hsieh was broken again in the ninth game and this time Siniakova didn't miss.



# Chappell calls ICC an event management company

Describing the ICC as an management company", former Australia captain Ian Chappell has observed that the financially stronger boards are getting their way in producing self-serving schedule while harming the interest of Test

Chappell also felt that a viable two-tier system for Test cricket should have been in place by now but added that there are other pressing matters that need urgent attention to keep the game's traditional format

"On the subject of a two-tier Test system, former West Indies pace-bowling champion Michael Holding noted: 'For all its faults, at least FIFA actually runs soccer. The ICC must run cricket." Chappell wrote in his

column for 'ESPNcricinfo'. "Therein lies a perplexing problem. The ICC doesn't run cricket, and unless there's a major change of heart, the financially desirable nations will continue to have a huge say in producing a self-serving schedule?

Chappell though agreed that the game's financial engine influence proportional their to

contribution. 'Then there's the major issue of the financial split. The big three – India, Australia and England – despite being the wealthiest cricket nations claim a large slice of the money divided among cricket bodies, and yet they agitate for an even larger share.

"India's powerful presence in the ICC is in direct proportion

to their contribution of around 70 per cent of cricket's income. It's a complex issue to which cricket hasn't found a workable solution."

A proposal to split Test cricket into two divisions, which will ensure more high-stakes matches featuring bigger teams such as India, Australia and England, is under discussion.

Such a system could, however, also harm smaller teams, resulting in fewer Tests for them and also threatening

inclusivity in the sport.
Chappell, one of Australia's finest captains, believed a system of promotion and relegation should be there with certain criteria.

"There should have been a two-tier Test system in place years ago.

"In reality only a limited number of teams are capable of competing long-term in the five-day game. West Indies earned the right to financial assistance with their capacity to draw crowds, and it's criminal they've been allowed

to languish," he said. Chappell further Afghanistan and Ireland should not be laying Test cricket as they don't fulfil all requirements.

"A system that includes promotion and relegation is feasible but there need to be certain criteria attached before a team attains Test status. Those should include: Do they have a viable first-class competition? Do they have legitimate grounds for holding five-day games? Do the grounds have adequate facilities? Are they financially

# U19 WC: India crush Bangladesh

**PTI** ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Reigning champions India continued their dominant run in the ICC Women's U19 World Cup with a resounding eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in their Super Six encounter here on Sunday. With this comprehensive win,

India have now registered their fourth consecutive victory in the tournament, maintaining their unbeaten streak and further establishing themselves as strong title contenders.

A disciplined Indian bowling attack, spearheaded by left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma's impressive spell of 3/15, restricted Bangladesh to a paltry 64 runs in their 20 overs -- their lowest total of the tournament.

Despite their struggles, Bangladesh's total was the highest conceded by India in the tournament so far, having previously bowled out West Indies (44) and Malaysia (31) for under 50.

In response, India's chase was off to a blazing start, led by the in-form Trisha Gongadi, who once again proved her class with a fluent 40 off just



She peppered the boundary ropes with eight fours, showcasing an aggressive intent and putting Bangladesh's bowling attack under immense pressure. By the time she was dismissed after the powerplay, India needed just five more runs to

seal the win. Sanika Chalke (11 not out) and skipper Niki Prasad (5 not out) ensured there were

no further hiccups, guiding India to victory in just 7.1 overs. Their bowlers have been the cornerstone of their consistently campaign, delivering under pressure and keeping the opposition under 100 in all matches played so

Put in to bat, Bangladesh started with aggression but their approach backfired as they lost three quick wickets within the first four overs, reeling at 9/3 before limping to 16/3 at the end of the powerplay.

Indian seamers VJ Joshitha (3-1-6-1) and Shabnam Shakil (2-0-7-1) made full use of the extracting conditions, conditions, extracting movement and bounce to stifle Bangladesh's batters. With the early breakthroughs, the Indian spinners took charge and tightened their

grip on the game. Vaishnavi was instrumental in

dismantling the middle order,

breaking a crucial 31-run partnership between skipper Sumaiya Akter and Jannatul Maoua for the sixth wicket, which saw Bangladesh crumble from 53/4 to 64/9. Gongadi (2-0-6-1) also chipped in with her leg-spin, ensuring no respite for the Bangladeshi batters.

Bangladeshi batters.
Bangladesh skipper Sumaiya fought a lone battle with 21 from 29 balls, providing some stability to the innings alongside Jannatul Maoua, who scored 14 off 20 deliveries.

They were the only two batters to reach double figures as India's bowlers maintained relentless pressure.
Bangladesh's innings was

marred by poor running between the wickets and frequent dismissals, making it difficult for them to accelerate at any stage.
Despite their struggles, they

managed to play out the full 20 overs, which will be a small takeaway for them going forward. PTI India will look to carry this

momentum forward when they face Scotland in their concluding Super Six fixture

# Jyothi Yarraji clinches gold in 60m hurdles

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reigning Asian champion Jyothi Yarraji clinched gold in her first race of the season, that too with a national record, winning the 60m hurdles event by clocking 8.04 seconds at the Elite Indoor Meeting in

Nantes, France.
The 25-year-old Yarraji, in fact, broke her own earlier national record of 8.12 seconds twice in a matter of few hours on Saturday.

She first clocked 8.07 seconds in the heats and then bettered her time in the final at the Stadium Pierre-Quinon in the World Athletics Indoor Tour bronze level meet.

Her timing is, however, still short of the qualifying mark of 7.94 seconds for the World Indoor Championships to be held in Nanjing, China in March.

Yarraji, who was recently conferred with the Arjuna Award, had won 60m gold in Asian Indoor Championships in 2024 with a time of 8.12 seconds in Tehran, Iran. She also holds the national

time of 7.65 seconds at the CMCM Indoor Meeting in

12.91 seconds.

7.68 seconds.

Luxembourg. The previous national record in the event was 7.70 seconds, which was set by Siddhanth Thingalaya in 2017. The 22-year-old Shirse is also

outdoor 100m hurdles record

of 12.78 seconds. She is the

reigning 100m hurdles Asian

champion and won a silver

medal in the Hangzhou Asian

Games in 2023 with a time of

Meanwhile, in the men's 60m

hurdles event, Tejas Shirse

won a bronze with a time of

This was Shirse's second race

of the season. On January 19,

he had set a national record

the national record holder in 110m hurdles with a time of

# another home win

**PTI** KOLKATA

Reigning Shield champions Mohun Bagan Super will look to extend their remarkable home form when they take on Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super League here on Monday.

The Mariners currently lead the ISL table with 37 points from 17 matches, boasting an impressive record of 11 wins and four draws.

been They have scintillating form, winning each of their last seven home games and remaining unbeaten in their previous five fixtures with three wins and two draws. In contrast, Bengaluru FC are

experiencing a rough patch,

winless in their last four outings (draw-1, loss-3). Sitting third in the table with

28 points from 17 games, the Blues will be desperate to break their poor run and narrow the nine-point deficit to Mohun Bagan.

If they manage to do so the Sunil Chhetri side will complete a historic league double over the Mariners after its commanding 3-0 win earlier this season.

Mohun Bagan have scored in each of their last 16 home matches, underlining their attacking prowess. Bengaluru FC have conceded

in each of their last 12 matches, marking their longest streak without a clean sheet in ISL history.

# Mohun Bagan eye Mbappé scores first hat trick for Real Madrid

Kylian Mbappé tucked the ball under this shirt as he raised both hands to return the applause to the Real Madrid fans who savored his first hat trick for his

The France star had just led a 3-0 victory at struggling Valladolid that extended Madrid's lead of La Liga on Saturday, keeping it in position to retain the title iust after the midway point of the campaign.

Gone was the inconsistent play and missed penalties from Mbappé during his first months with Madrid following his move from Paris Saint-Germain. The France captain has started pouring in goals with back-to-back multi-goal games and has Madrid in pole position with Atletico Madrid and Barcelona

"I'm very happy for the hat trick but even happier for the win," Mbappé said in fluent Spanish. "It was very important to win after Atletico's result because that



gave us a bit more pressure to take

advantage of it."

Madrid's fourth straight triumph in the league combined with Atletico Madrid's 1-1 draw with Villarreal let Carlo over its city rival. Barcelona was in third place at 10 points back before hosting Valencia on Sunday. Madrid trailed thenleader Barcelona at one point, but since getting blown away in a 4-0 clasico debacle, it has found its stride and is in championship mode. "My adaptation to the team is over. I feel

comfortable on the field and you can see that from the way I am playing with my teammates," Mbappé said. "This gives us confidence, but you know that until the 38th round this is not over. We have to keep winning because there is a long way

No contest in Valladolid

The game between the front-runner and the bottom side fit its billing as a mismatch.

Valladolid could draw only one save from Thibaut Courtois in the opening moments. It was all Madrid the rest of the way even though Vinícius Júnior didn't play as he completed a two-game suspension.

#### Sinner beats Zverev, wins second Australian Open title

**PTI** ■ MELBOURNE

There's all sorts of ways beyond merely the score to measure just how dominant Jannik Sinner was while outplaying and frustrating Alexander Zverev during the 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-3 victory Sunday that earned the 23-year-old Italian a second consecutive Australian

championship.
The zero break points Sinner faced. Or the 10 he accumulated. The 27-13 advantage in points that lasted at least nine strokes. Or the way Sinner accumulated more winners, 32 to 25, and fewer unforced errors, 27 to 45. The way Sinner won 10 of 13 points that ended with him at the net. Or the way he only let Zverev go 14 of 27 in that category, frequently zipping passing shots out of reach.

And here is one more bit of evidence: Listen to what Zverev told Sinner during the on-court trophy ceremony: "You're the best player in the world, by far. I was hoping that I could be more of a competitor today, but you're just too good. It's as

That's coming from the guy who is ranked No. 2 behind Sinner, who has held the No. 1 spot since last June and is not showing any signs of relinquishing it. This was the first Australian Open final between the men at No. 1 and No. 2 since 2019, when No. 1 Novak Djokovic defeated No. 2 Rafael Nadal — also in straight

"It's amazing," Sinner said, "to achieve these things." That includes being the youngest man to leave Melbourne Park with the trophy two years in a row since Jim Courier in 1992-93 and the first man since Nadal at the French Open in 2005 and 2006 to follow up his first Grand Slam title by repeating as the champion at the same Those earlier setbacks both

tournament a year later. Since the start of 2024, Sinner has won three of the five major tournaments, including the U.S. Open in September, and his record in that span is 80-6 with a total of nine tournament titles. His current unbeaten run

the past 12 months for Sinner, it seems, is a doping case in which he was cleared by a ruling that was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency. He tested positive for a trace amount of an anabolic steroid twice last March but blamed it on an accidental exposure involving two members of his team who have since been fired. Sinner initially was exonerated in August; a hearing in the WADA appeal is scheduled for April.

While Sinner became the eighth man in the Open era (which began in 1968) to start his career 3-0 in Grand Slam finals, Zverev is the seventh to be 0-3, adding this loss to those at the 2020 U.S. Open and the 2024 French Open.

came in five sets. This contest was not that close. Not at all. "We're trying to do all the right work," Zverev said. "I'm just not good enough." Just before Zverev began

speaking into a microphone during the trophy ceremony, a voice cried out from the stands, covers 21 matches. making reference to two of the The only thing that's clouded player's ex-girlfriends who



accused him of physical abuse. During the match, there truly was only one moment that felt as if it contained a hint of tension. It came when Zverev was two points from owning the second set, leading it 5-4 and at love-30 on Sinner's serve. But a break point — and a set point — never arrived.

Zverev dropped the next four points, making it 5-all, and Sinner emerged with the ensuing tiebreaker. No surprise there: He went 4-0 in those setdeciders over the past two weeks and has grabbed 16 of

his past 18. A year ago, Sinner went through a lot more trouble to earn his first Slam, needing to get past Novak Djokovic who quit one set into his semifinal against Zverev on Friday because of a torn hamstring — first, before erasing a two-set deficit in the final against 2021 U.S. Open champion Daniil Medvedev. This time, the 6-foot-3 (1.91meter) Sinner applied pressure with an all-around style that does not really appear to have any holes as his sneakers

squeak from a sprint to a slide

that often nearly ends in the splits and he uses his long limbs to deliver deep groundstrokes. On this night, he proved superior in just about every meaningful way, other than aces. Returning serves from Zverev that reached 138 mph (223 kph), Sinner got the lone break of the opening set with a passing shot for a 5-4 lead. Zverev walked back behind the baseline, shaking his head while talking to his father and brother, who were seated in the front row of their courtside coaches' box.

There was more negative body language after Sinner served out that set at love to continue his crescendo, the final note an ace at 120 mph (194 kph). Zverev trudged to his bench, shoulders sagging, and dropped his racket on an equipment bag, a gesture that conveyed annoyance more than anger. Later, it became the latter: Zverev cracked one racket on the court and used a racket to hit another on the sideline.

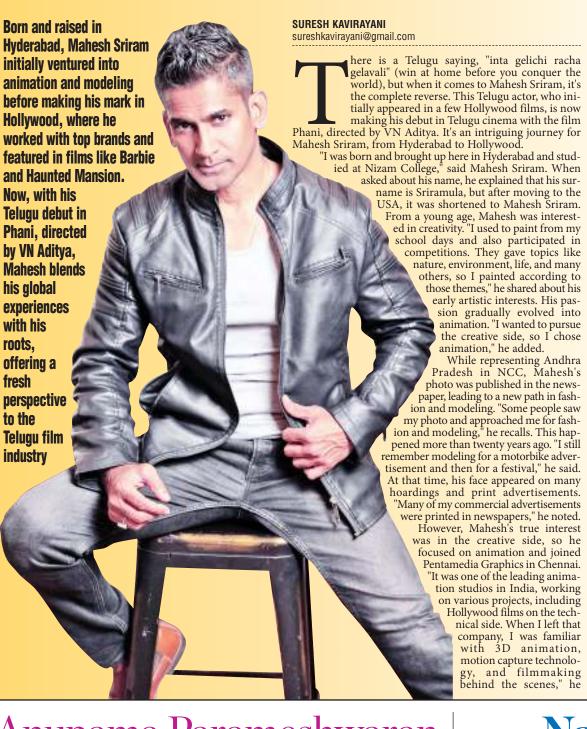
Understandable, given what Sinner was doing on the other side of the net.

Vijayawada | Monday January 27, 2025

# tollywood

#### FROM PAINTING TO ACTING

# MAHESH SRIRAM'S DEBUT IN TELUGU **CINEMA AFTER HOLLYWOOD TRIUMPH**



Afterward, he moved to the UK, where he worked for three years in London. "Working in India, the UK, and other European countries helped me merge with different cultures and gain a wealth of knowledge," he said. He was also invited to the Cannes Film Festival, and all these experiences even-

tually opened doors for him in the USA.

"Working in the USA was a completely different experience.

I worked with top brands, participated in fashion shows, judged beauty pageants, and performed as a showstopper. I gained immense knowledge, especially regarding discipline, while working with directors and teams for commercials," Mahesh shared. His modeling career, which spanned nearly six years, ultimately led to his acting debut in Hollywood films.

Mahesh explained the process of breaking into Hollywood: "To get into a Hollywood film, you first need an agent, whether you're a model or an actor. They guide and train you. After that comes the audition process, where casting directors approach agencies, who then contact agents to shortlist actors. Once you're selected, it's a completely different experience," he said. Mahesh appeared in a brief role in the high-budget Hollywood film Barbie, and later landed a significant role in Haunted Mansion. "I got to work with Jamie Lee Curtis and Danny DeVito, which boosted my confidence. I play a Maharaja in the film," he added.

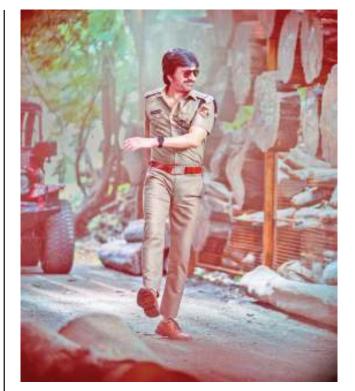
Currently, Mahesh is busy with two Hollywood projects, one of which features him in the lead role. "The shooting is almost complete, with just ten days left. Now, I am in Hyderabad, and

complete, with just ten days left. Now, I am in Hyderabad, and once I'm done here, I will join the Hollywood shoots," he said. Meanwhile, Mahesh is also acting in a Telugu film titled Phani, directed by VN Aditya. The filmmakers were looking for an actor based in the USA, and a friend of Mahesh suggested his name. "VN Aditya reached out to me over Zoom a few times, and after meeting him in the USA, I signed the film. The shoot is completed, and the story revolves around a couple and a snake," Mahesh explained. The title Phani refers to a snake. "The couple living in the USA have big dreams, but an incident changes everything. It's a thriller, and I believe the film has turned out really well," he said.

Reflecting on his experiences in Hollywood, Mahesh mentioned the discipline he learned working there. "Time management and discipline are extremely important," he said. He also runs his own animation company, which handles corporate projects, commercials, and animations. "That's how I can balance my work in movies," he explained.

balance my work in movies," he explained.

Mahesh expressed his happiness about acting in a Telugu film. "Telugu is my root, and it's where I come from. I'm thrilled to be a part of this film," he said. When asked about juggling work in both Telugu and Hollywood, he responded, "I am willing to work in both industries." He believes Telugu cinema has gained global recognition, and Indian actors are now respected in Hollywood. "The big difference in Hollywood is that you have to compete with international actors in a highly competitive market, which is a significant challenge," he shared. He added that with his growing experience, it's now much easier to get into Hollywood films than it was before.



# **MASS JATHARA GLIMPSE Ravi Teja brings** back his iconic swag in full force

n the occasion of Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja's birthday, the Mass Jathara glimpse was unveiled, sending fans into a frenzy. The glimpse brings back the vintage Ravi Teja magic that audiences have cherished over the years. From his unmatched energy to his iconic swag and electrifying vibe, this is a complete package of MASS ENTERTAINMENT.

Adding to the nostalgia, the glimpse features the iconic dialogue, "MANADHE IDHAN-THA," which doubles the impact by taking fans back in time while delivering a fresh punch for today's audience.

Director Bhanu Bogavarapu perfectly captures the mass pulse with an engaging, power-packed glimpse, while Bheems Ceciroleo's high-voltage background score amplifies the energy through-

out. With Ravi Teja at the helm, the glimpse reminds us why he continues to rule the mass entertainment space. The team behind the magic includes a powerhouse of talented technicians. With Vidhu Ayyanna's cinematography, Navin Nooli's editing, and Nandu Savirigana's dialogues, everything is perfectly aligned for a massive entertainer.

And of course, the dynamic producers Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Śoujanya, under Sithara Entertainments, Fortune Four Cinemas, and in collaboration with Srikara Studios, continue to deliver premium cinema experiences. With Mass Jathara, they add another blockbuster to their crown.

The Mass Jathara glimpse has already raised expectations, and more updates will be shared in the coming days.

# Anupama Parameshwaran calls *Parada* her favourite film so far

Malayalam with the film Premam ten years ago, and soon after, she ventured into Telugu cinema with A.. Aa.., eventually establishing herself with several Telugu films. Now, she is set to appear in the upcoming film Parada, directed by Praveen Kandregula, with Sangeetha and Darsana Rajendran also playing key roles.

"Over these ten years, I have done nearly 25 films, and my most favorite character is Subbu from Parada, and my favorite film is also Parada."

nupama Parameswaran is currently busy with films in Telugu, Tamil, and Malayalam. She made her debut in said Anupama. Reflecting on her decade-long journey, she shared, "I feel happy that I have completed ten years in the industry, and at the same time, I feel a sense of responsibility.

The actress expressed pride in the effort put into Parada. "Everyone worked really hard for this film. Not only did we all put in our best effort, but we also truly loved this film and worked with that passion," she said. Anupama confidently stated, "I don't usually guarantee anything for a film, but I assure you-come and watch Parada with your family, and I guarantee you'll enjoy it.



# Nandamuri Balakrishna dedicates Padma Bhushan to fans and father, NTR

eteran actor, politician, and prominent figure in Telugu cinema, Nandamuri Balakrishna, has been conferred with the prestigious Padma Bhushan Award India's third-highest civi honor. This recognition celebrates his remarkable contributions to the world of cinema, public service, and his enduring legacy as a member of the illustrious Nandamuri family.

On receiving this esteemed accolade, Balakrishna expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Government of India for recognizing his work and honoring him with such a distinction. Reflecting on this momentous occasion, he shared a note of appreciation that underscored his gratitude and acknowledgment of those who have been instrumental in his journey.

In his message, Balakrishna extended his sincere thanks to all those who have supported him throughout his illustrious career. "I am deeply thankful to everyone who has conveyed their wishes and blessings on this occasion," he stated.

He went on to acknowledge the contributions of his colleagues and collaborators in the film industry. "I express my gratitude to my fellow actors, technicians, producers, distributors, exhibitors, family members, and the entire film fraternity who have been a part of this long and eventful

journey," he said. Balakrishna's heartfelt note paid a special tribute to his fans, whose unwavering love and support have been a cornerstone of his success. "I am forever indebted to my fans, who have stood by me as the proud successor of my father, the late

Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao garu, and to the countless audiences who continue to shower their unwavering love and support upon me," he said, highlighting the enduring legacy of his legendary father towering figure in Indian cinema

and politics. Balakrishna also took a moment to congratulate his fellow Padma awardees, recognizing their achievements and contributions to their respective fields.

Nandamuri Balakrishna has enjoyed a prolific career spanning several decades, with an extensive filmography that has cemented his position as one of Telugu cinema's most iconic stars. Beyond his cinematic accomplishments, his foray

into public service and his commitment to philanthropy have further distinguished him as a respected figure in Indian society.

This Padma Bhushan honor is a estament to his relentless dedication and the impact he has made in both the arts and public service. Balakrishna concluded his message

with a heartfelt declaration of his connection to his fans and admirers:

"Then... Now... Forever... Always yours, Nandamuri Balakrishna.' The Padma Bhushan is a well-

deserved recognition for Nandamuri Balakrishna, whose contributions continue to inspire generations, not just in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana but across India



# South stars shine as Padma Awards honour iconic talent

celebrating the prestigious Padma Awards. The central government has conferred the Padma Bhushan on Telugu actor Nandamuri Balakrishna. contributions. Not only is he a renowned actor, but he is also a politician, having been elected three times consecutively as an MLA from the Hindupur constituency. Beyond professional

as one of the best in providing quality cancer treatment. His dedication to the institute reflects his commitment to improving the lives of others. The Telugu

film industry is thrilled to see him honored with the Padma Bhushan. Similarly, Tamil actor Ajith Kumar has been honored with the Padma Bhushan. Not only is he a celebrated actor, but he also gained recognition for securing third place in the recent Dubai Car Race. bringing pride to India. Another Padma Bhushan recipient is Malavalam actress Sobhana, who has made a mark in Telugu and Tamil cinema as well. A

the Nandamuri Basavatarakam Cancer

Institute, which has earned a reputation

several accolades, including a National Award, and is well-deserving of this recognition

From Kannada cinema, veteran actor Ananth Nag was awarded the Padma Bhushan. With over five decades in the industry, Nag has acted in nearly 300 films across Kannada, Telugu, and Hindi. His remarkable career has earned him numerous State Awards, cementing his place as one of the finest actors in Kannada cinema.

With these prestigious awards, the four major South Indian film industries-Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannadaare celebrating the recognition of their stars at the national level

# Rajamouli and Mahesh Babu set to leave for South Africa for film shoot

Many are eagerly awaiting updates on the film collaboration between Rajamouli and Mahesh Babu. Typically, Rajamouli announces details about his projects before they begin, but this time, he has remained tight-lipped about the upcoming film with Mahesh. Although the film was officially launched a few days ago, many

assumed that the shooting had already begun. However, Rajamouli recently took to social media to share a humorous video where he captures a lion and takes its passport. This video guickly sparked a flood of memes. Since Mahesh Babu is known for his frequent family trips throughout the year, the video humorously suggests that Rajamouli has taken Mahesh's passport to put an end to his holiday plans, signaling that the shooting of the film is



about to begin. Both Mahesh Babu and Priyanka Chopra responded to the video with witty comments. Mahesh Babu shared a dialogue from Pokiri, saying, "Okkasari commit aithe naa maata nene vinanu" (Once I commit, my word is final). Priyanka Chopra responded with "Finally," further fueling excitement. In her earlier

posts, she had also hinted at the film, referring to it as a "new chapter." There is another interpretation of Rajamouli's video. The lion being caged and the passport being shown could symbolize the team preparing to leave for South Africa, known for its safaris, with everyone ready with their passports for the upcoming travel. With all these signs pointing toward it, Rajamouli is all set to begin

# Thalapathy Vijay's final cinematic journey begins with Jana Nayagan

career,

Balakrishna is

KVN Productions proudly unveils the first look of Jana Nayagan, marking the beginning of an extraordinary Vijay's journey as a superstar and his impactful public service. This title perfectly embodies his persona and the journey that will celebrate the illustrious career of Thalapathy Vijay. Directed by H. Vinoth, this film stands as a landmark project, bringing the curtains down on Vijay's cinematic journey. The first-look poster captures the essence of Jana Nayagan, showcasing Vijay standing confidently on an elevated platform, taking a selfie with an electrified crowd of supporters, symbolizing his unparalleled connection with his fans. The backdrop of an energetic, jubilant audience highlights Vijay as The People's Leader-the perfect tribute to his legacy. The title Jana Nayagan, translating to The People's Leader, reflects

mark he has left across generations.

Accompanied by the musical genius of Anirudh Ravichander, the film promises to be a cinematic extravaganza, blending high-octane entertainment with deep emotional resonance.

Produced by Venkat K. Narayana under the banner of KVN Productions, Jana Nayagan is set to be a celebration of Vijay's enduring charisma and his unmatched impact on Indian cinema. KVN Productions is on a roll with an exciting lineup of blockbusters, and this one already looks like a sure-shot hit!

