

Rahul Gandhi coined the slogan, 'As much as we are, that much is our share.' Going by that, with 46.3 per cent Hindu BCs and 10 per cent BC Muslims, the total BC reservation should be 56 per cent. Why is Rahul Gandhi, who travels across the country talking about the Constitution, backing out when it comes to BCs? If the government has genuine intent towards BCs, it should release the survey data for public scrutiny. Let all the 3.5 crore survey forms be made available for review, and a 15-day period should be given for scrutiny

- Kalvakuntla Kavitha, BRS MLC

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'Only BJP can increase Delhi's pace of development'



LARGE NUMBER

OF INVESTORS COMING TO EXPLORE BIZ OPPORTUNITIES: GOYAL



I won't change my stand and character for someone:

BUNNY VASU



DON'T MISS...

Sri Chaitanya's central kitchen licence revoked

The Food Safety department has revoked the licence of the central kitchen of Sri Chaitanya Educational Institutions, located at Khanamet, Madhapur, for a period of 15 days. The move comes after the Task Force team from the Commissioner of Food Safety found numerous violations during an inspection, despite prior warnings. The licence was initially suspended on January 27 following repeated non-compliance. A senior officer from the Food Safety department confirmed that the revocation was implemented after the...

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Visually challenged can read Constitution

Governor of Karnataka Thawar Chand Gehlot launched on Monday a Braille-enabled version of the Indian Constitution, to mark 75 years of the Constitution. The project was done in collaboration with Sankara Eye Hospital Bengaluru and CII Young Indians (YI) Bengaluru. "This initiative aims to empower those who are blind or have low vision by enabling them to read and understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens," said Dr Kaushik Murali, President of Medical Administration...

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RBI may cut interest rate by 25 bps: Experts

The RBI is likely to reduce the key interest rate by 25 basis points this week after keeping it on hold for two years, complementing the Union Budget initiatives to push consumption-led demand, though the sliding rupee continues to be a concern. As the retail inflation has remained within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone (less than 6 per cent) for most of the year, the central bank can take rate action to boost growth hit by sluggish consumption, opined experts. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the repo rate...

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Praggnanandhaa beats Gukesh

The Indian juggernaut in international chess remained unstoppable as Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa fought through exhaustion and nerves to defeat world champion D Gukesh in a clash of compatriots to clinch the Tata Steel Masters title for the first time in his prolific career. The bespectacled 19-year-old from Chennai, a city that has become the cradle of Indian chess, came from behind to upstage the 18-year-old world number three 2-1 in the tiebreaker of the event's 87th edition here on Sunday...

-SPORTS

CM angry over Cabinet Sub-Committee revealing caste census details?

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU
 venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com
 ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is angry over the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Caste Census revealing details of the caste census at the media conference held on Sunday after the Planning Commission submitted the report to the Cabinet Sub-Committee, it is learnt.



The Chief Minister is unhappy with the Cabinet Sub-Committee for revealing the break-up of communities in the caste census report. It is learnt that the Chief Minister directed the Cabinet Sub-Committee to reveal details only after the Cabinet's approval and discussions in the Assembly.

It may be recalled that the Cabinet Sub-Committee revealed the community break-ups found during the caste census. Committee Chairman N. Uttam Kumar Reddy had addressed the media along with Committee members Damodara Raja Narasimha, Ponnam Prabhakar and Seethakka.

The Cabinet Sub-Committee cancelled its press conference on SC categorisation scheduled for Monday at 3 pm. The CM is not happy with the criticism on social media about details of the Caste Census report, it is learnt. It is learnt that the government is going to make an important announcement in the Assembly on SC categorisation in the context of the Delhi Assembly elections.

It may be recalled that the Congress

Continued on Page 2

Discrepancies in caste census!

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The total population of Telangana, Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Muslims in the recently released caste survey report of the Congress Government is mysteriously lower than the 2014 Samagra Kutumba Survey carried out by the BRS government.

The allegations of discrepancies in Telangana's caste census data have sparked controversy, with Backward Classes (BC) intellectual forums raising concerns over the reported decline in populations compared to the 2014 figures. The latest data, released by the state government, has come under scrutiny for showing a significant reduction in key demographic groups.

According to the data, the BC population dropped by over 21 lakh, SC numbers have decreased by 1.75 lakh and the Muslim population has fallen by 1.66 lakh, while the ST population has marginally increased.

The total population of the state, which was over 3.63 crore in 2014,

Survey reports decline in population figures



According to the data, the BC population has dropped by over 21 lakh, SC numbers have decreased by 1.75 lakh, and the Muslim population has fallen by 1.66 lakh, while the ST population has marginally increased

has reportedly decreased to 3.54 crore in 2024, raising doubts about the accuracy of the enumeration process.

The data indicates that the percentage of BCs, which stood at 51 per cent in 2014, has now declined to 46.25 per cent. Hindu BCs reportedly make up 46.25 per cent of the population, while Muslim

Continued on Page 2

Results of caste census in TG shocking: Rahul

The Leader of the Opposition (LOP) in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi commented that the results of caste census in Telangana are shocking. Rahul Gandhi said that 90 per cent of the population are Dalits, Adivasis and backward classes. That is the story across the country.

He said, "I am convinced that the OBCs are not less than 55 per cent. Dalits are 16 per cent, Adivasis are 9 per cent and Minorities are 15 per cent across the nation".

He said that the BJP has the OBC MPs, Dalit MPs, Adivasi MPs but they have no power.

On the other hand, the Bhongir MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, while speaking on Rahul Gandhi's

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No proposal to increase working hours to 70 or 90 hrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Monday told Parliament that it is not considering any proposal to increase the maximum working hours to 70 or 90 hours a week.

Recently, some of the corporate leaders proposed to increase the maximum working hours to 70 and even 90 hours a week. "No such proposal to increase the maximum working hours to 70 or 90 hours a week is under consideration of the government," stated Minister of State for Labour & Employment Shobha Karandlaje in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

She informed the House that labour being a subject under the Concurrent List, the enforcement of labour laws is done by state governments and the central government in their respective jurisdictions.

While in the Central sphere, the enforcement is done through the inspecting officers of the Central Industrial Relations Machinery (CIRM), the compliance in the states is ensured through their labour enforcement machineries, she stated.

As per the existing labour laws, working conditions, including working hours and overtime, are regulated through the provisions of the Factories Act 1948 and the Shops and Establishments Acts of the respective state governments.

Railways allocated Rs 5,337 crore for TG, MMTS dues touch Rs 491 crore

2

Judicial panel submits report on SC categorisation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Retired High Court Judge Shameem Akhtar handed over the report of the One-Man Judicial Commission to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on SC Categorisation's Chairman N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, co-chairman Damodara Raja Narasimha and member Ponnam Prabhakar on Monday at the Secretariat.

The Cabinet Sub-Committee will make recommendations to the Cabinet based on Justice Shameem Akhtar's report. The Cabinet will meet on Tuesday to take a final decision on SC categorisation. There is a chance that the government will table the report on SC Categorisation in the



One-man Commission on SC Categorisation Shameem Akhtar handed over the report to Cabinet Sub-Committee chairman N Uttam Kumar Reddy, co-chairman Damodara Rajanarsimha and member Ponnam Prabhakar on Monday

Assembly for discussion. The Cabinet Sub-Committee had a meeting in the evening and dis-

cussed the report submitted by the One-man Judicial Commission, Shameem Akhtar.

KCR gets legal notice over absence from Assembly

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A legal notice has been served on BRS leader Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) regarding his prolonged absence from the Telangana Assembly despite holding the post of the Leader of the Opposition.

The notice, issued by Advocate Paduri Srinivasa Reddy on behalf of the Federation of Farmers

Associations General Secretary D. Vijayal Reddy, questions KCR's failure to attend Assembly sessions and perform duties as the opposition leader.

The notice, addressed to KCR, Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Chief Minister Anumula Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, and other key officials, highlights the role of

Continued on Page 2

Is TG BJP going for a working president to balance caste equations?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana BJP unit is also following the Congress line by bringing in a proposal to appoint a Working President to balance caste equations after appointing a new chief.

The Telangana BJP is witnessing stiff competition from its leaders for the president post. In the beginning, only Eatala Rajender, Dharmapuri Arvind and N. Ramchander Rao were in the race. However, now new names like Muralidhar Rao and DK Aruna have come up. If the party

president's post goes to Muralidhar Rao or DK Aruna, then the party will create a Working President post and appoint a BC to it.

This proposal was brought by the BJP as Alleti Maheshwar Reddy from the Reddy community is the BJLP leader. If the Telangana BJP President post goes to a Reddy or a Velam then there is a chance that opposition may come from BCs. The party created the Working President post to rectify this.

The party may give the Working President post to a BC leader. Eatala

have discussed it with the CM.

On the Cabinet expansion front, there is immense pressure from opposition leaders regarding the absence of minority ministers in the Cabinet. Sources said that there will definitely be people who will be angry once things are finalised, but the Chief Minister believes it is high time that these posts are filled.

Of the 12 Ministerial posts four are held by the Reddy community. Despite giving Mahmood Ali the Home Minister portfolio, the BRS faced criticism for lack of Muslim representation. The Cong with almost no minority members is facing a severe backlash from the community as many Muslim leaders had hoped that the new administration would ensure better representation for them.

Telangana's tax contributions outpace Central allocations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's financial give-and-take with the Centre over the last five years paints a picture of increasing tax contributions but inconsistent allocations under Central Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and grants.

While the state's GST collections have surged, the funds flowing back from the Centre haven't kept pace, raising concerns about fiscal balance. As per data tabled in the Lok Sabha on Monday, Telangana's total GST revenue, combining CGST, SGST, IGST and CESS, touched Rs 59,942 crore in 2023-24, an increase from Rs 51,831 crore in 2022-23 and Rs 45,081 crore in 2021-22. However, its share in the devolution of Union taxes stood at Rs 22,579 crore for 2024-25 (till January), lower than the Rs 23,742 crore in 2023-24.

Funding under Centrally sponsored schemes has been erratic. Telangana received Rs 12,281 crore in 2024-25 (till January),

slightly lower than the Rs 13,890 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 13,093 crore in 2022-23.

and infrastructure projects, have seen unpredictable trends, making long-term financial plan-



Funding under Centrally sponsored schemes has been erratic. Telangana received Rs 12,281 crore in 2024-25 (till January), slightly lower than the Rs 13,890 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 13,093 crore in 2022-23

These allocations, which supporting a challenge for the state. The state's share in vertical tax

devolution, as per the 15th Finance Commission, remains at 2.102 per cent, leaving Telangana with a smaller slice of the pie compared to larger states.

In the GST compensation saga, the state received back-to-back loans of Rs 2,380 crore in 2020-21 and Rs 4,569 crore in 2021-22 to make up for revenue shortfalls. However, with the Centre making it clear that there's no proposal to extend GST compensation, Telangana may need to find alternative revenue sources to fill the gap.

The special assistance scheme for capital expenditure brought Rs 1,948 crore to Telangana in 2023-24, down from Rs 2,500 crore in 2022-23. In contrast, states like Uttar Pradesh saw massive allocations, raising questions about fund distribution.

Meanwhile, under the Additional Central Assistance (ACA) for Externally Aided Projects, Telangana's tally has been zero in recent years. In 2019-20, the state received Rs 207 crore, but since then, there has been no further aid.

Telugu film producer K P Choudhary hangs himself

PNS ■ PANAJI

Telugu film producer K P Choudhary committed suicide on Monday by hanging himself from a ceiling fan in a rented house in a village in North Goa, police said.

The body of Choudhary (44), known for producing Rajinikanth-starrer 'Kabali' in Telugu, was found in the bedroom of the rented premises in Siolim village, Superintendent of Police (North) Akshat Kaushal told reporters.

Anjuna Police received a call at 11.26 AM on Monday informing them that K P Choudhary had committed suicide by hanging himself, police said in a release.

"A police team rushed to the spot and noticed that Choudhary had killed himself by hanging from a ceiling fan in his bedroom, using a bed sheet," police said.

Meanwhile, Kaushal said that police recovered a suicide note from the bedroom of the deceased. "We have received a suicide note and are verifying its details," he said, refusing to elaborate. Police conducted the panchama of the spot and immediately informed Choudhary's family members.

"The body is preserved in the morgue of the Goa Medical College and Hospital for conducting postmortem on Tuesday," police said.

Outstanding agricultural loans Rs 1.42 lakh crore in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The total outstanding agricultural loans in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as of March 31, 2024, in commercial banks, cooperative banks and regional rural banks indicate that both states have significant loan burdens and rank among the top five states in outstanding farm loans.

As per data tabled in Parliament, in Telangana, the total loans stand at Rs 1,42,520 crore, with commercial banks accounting for Rs 1,14,700 crore, cooperative banks Rs 8,093 crore and regional rural banks Rs 19,727 crore. Even if the loan waiver amount of around Rs 21,000 crore is deducted, farm loans amount to Rs 1.20 lakh crore.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman clarified in the Lok Sabha that there is no proposal to com-

pletely waive the loans of farmers at this stage. In Andhra Pradesh, the total outstanding agricultural loans amount to Rs 3,09,809 crore with commercial banks accounting for Rs 2,43,550 crore, cooperative banks Rs 20,670 crore and regional rural banks Rs 45,589 crore.

Tamil Nadu remains at the top with Rs. 3,84,139 crore in outstanding agricultural loans, while Maharashtra follows with Rs 8,38,249 crore. Karnataka accounts for Rs 1,57,627 crore in outstanding loans, making it the third highest, followed closely by Andhra Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh rounds up the top five with Rs 2,29,887 crore.

According to data provided by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Tamil Nadu tops the list of states.

MMTS DUES TOUCH RS 491 CRORE

Railways allocated Rs 5,337 crore for TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the Union Budget presented on February 1, the Railways received significant allocations, with Telangana set to benefit from a record allocation of Rs 5,337 crore for fiscal 2025-26.

On Monday, during a virtual press conference from New Delhi, Ashwini Vaishnav, the Minister for Railways, briefed the media on the Rail Budget's highlights for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

The programme held from Rail Nilayam in Secunderabad, was also attended by Arun Kumar Jain, the General Manager of South Central Railway and other senior Railway officials.

Telangana has been sanctioned a record budget allocation of Rs 5,337 crore for 2025-26. Vaishnav said that this figure represents nearly a six-fold increase compared to the average annual allocation of Rs 886 crore received by the



Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav attending a virtual conference from Delhi on Monday along with the South Central Railway GM, Arun Kumar Jain, who joined the conference from the Secunderabad Railway Nilayam

combined Andhra Pradesh state during 2009-14.

A total of Rs 41,677 crore is being invested in railway development projects across Telangana.

Responding to a question on pending dues by Telangana Government for MMTS, Arun Kumar Jain, the General Manager of South Central Railway, said that until now they have not received any funds from the Telangana

Government and that pending dues for MMTS is Rs 491 crore.

The Railway Minister said that Telangana's railway network is now 100 per cent electrified. Telangana is also ahead in installing the Kavach system, with the Centre of Excellence for Kavach located in Secunderabad.

Currently, 1,465 km of Kavach has been commissioned across the South Central Railway (SCR) jurisdiction,

and trials for the latest version 4.0 are underway. The target is to deploy Kavach throughout the entire railway network within the next six years.

Five Vande Bharat trains are already operating in Telangana, serving seven districts with nine scheduled stops. The redevelopment of 40 railway stations in the state has been initiated under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. Approval has been granted for procuring 50 new Namo Bharat trains, 200 Vande Bharat trains and 100 new Amrit Bharat trains. Their launch dates would be announced in due course, he said.

The Railways has embarked on an extensive project to replace 7,000 km of old tracks. Upgrades will enable trains to run at speeds of up to 160 kmph on key routes, while other sections will support speeds of 130 kmph and the remaining network at 100 kmph.

Is Congress removing its social media wing chairman?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress is going to remove its social media wing chairman Manne Sathish Kumar. It is learnt that it is searching for another chairman.

This development took place due to the Congress's social media survey on January 29 on its official X account regarding 'Farmhouse Rule' and 'Peoples Rule' in which the Congress received a poor response with 33 per cent votes while the BRS bagged 67 per cent votes.

The survey had 92,551 participants of which 67 per cent voted for the BRS and 33 per cent chose Congress rule. This resulted to a serious discussion in and outside the Congress as the survey result was like a 'self goal'. Amidst these developments, the Congress high command reportedly directed the TPCC to remove him from the social media wing chairman post.

'Both Telugu states will complicate matters if they demand more'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Even after nearly a decade after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, several unresolved issues continue to linger between the two Telugu states.

Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan held a meeting with officials from both states to discuss long-pending matters, particularly concerning the distribution of assets and debts of institutions listed under Schedules 9 and 10 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act.

Sources said the Home

Ministry conducted a detailed review of the Bifurcation Act's implementation after almost two years.

The key point of discussion revolved around reaching a coordinated resolution between Telangana and AP. The Union Home Ministry emphasized that both states must adopt a positive approach to the distribution of funds and resources.

"The two states should resolve the issues through coordination. The central government will support infrastructure projects in both

Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. However, if both insist on demanding more, it will only lead to further complications," the Home Ministry reportedly advised during the meeting.

Officials have decided to seek legal counsel on institutions listed in the 9th and 10th Schedules and determine the next course of action. It is learnt that the Home Secretary assured the representatives that a final decision on pending matters will be taken in the upcoming meeting.

BJP MPs' words full but funds nil, says Kiran

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Pointing out that the Centre's discrimination against Telangana is endless, the Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, said that the words of BJP MPs are full but funds are nil.

Posting on X regarding this on Monday Kiran said, "The Centre's endless discrimination against Telangana... Unrelenting injustice to Telangana in the Central budget... Not allocating a single paisa is a sign of BJP's bias."

No contribution for the Turmeric Board. No mention of Mulugu Tribal Development. There are zero allocations in this budget. Despite two Central ministers, there is zero funding for the state. Although 211 acres were allotted to Mulugu University, the Centre has stopped funding the construction of buildings.

The implementation of

bifurcation promises is zero. Rs 15,000 crores for AP, empty words for Telangana. Centre grants funds to backward districts of AP, but Telangana is given an empty hand.

Thousands of crores for the construction of Polavaram, but not a single penny for Telangana's irrigation projects. AP needs industrial corridors, Telangana lacks incentives. AP gets Rs 57,000 crore in Central taxes, Telangana gets only Rs 27,000 crore. No setting up of IIT, IIM, Navodaya, Sainik schools in Telangana. If Telangana gives a rupee to the Centre as taxes, only 42 paisa will come back to Telangana as funds. The Centre is taking 48 paisa belonging to Telangana in its account, but is ignoring Telangana's demands. Injustice to Telangana in all fields. There are no new projects for Telangana from the Centre...no additional benefits. BJP MPs and Union Ministers are full of words, but funds are empty.

Telangana votes are needed. But Telangana development is not for the BJP. BJP is a traitor to Telangana.

Chase out the BJP and protect Telangana. Election budget... a budget that betrayed the dreams of the common man. It has been announced that the amount of Kisan Samman Yojana will be increased to support crop investment, but there is no proposal for that in the budget. The Centre, which promised to provide monthly pensions to farmers above 60 years of age six years ago, has not mentioned pensions in this year's budget either. The agriculture sector's allotment was cut by Rs 4,000 crore compared to last year. Rs 4,000 crore have been cut to weaken the crop insurance scheme. Urea subsidy cut by Rs 1,000 crore. This is not a budget for the common man. It is a budget for the rich. A budget that hits the poor and gives to the rich."

Congress manipulated BC population figures: Kavitha

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kavitha has accused the Congress Government of misrepresenting the population figures of Backward Classes (BC) in Telangana. She asked how the BC population could have declined compared to previous estimates and demanded that the state government introduce a Bill in the Assembly to increase BC reservations instead of holding mere discussions.

Addressing a press conference in Karimnagar on Monday, Kavitha said, "Rahul Gandhi coined the slogan 'As much as we are, that much is our share'. Going by that, with

46.3 per cent BCs and 10 per cent reserved BC Muslims, the total BC reservation should be 56 per cent. Why is Rahul Gandhi, who travels across the country talking about the Constitution, backing out when it comes to BCs?"

During her visit to Peddapalli district, Kavitha paid floral tributes at social reformer Mahatma Jyotirao Phule's statue in Karimnagar. Later, addressing the media, she pointed out the discrepancies in the population surveys conducted over the years.

"According to the 2011 Census, Telangana had 83 lakh households and a population of 3.5 crore. The comprehen-

sive survey conducted under KCR in 2014 showed 1.03 crore households and 3.68 crore people. The latest survey by the Congress Government claims 1.15 crore households and 3.7 crore people. If 20 lakh new houses were added between 2011 and 2014, logically, in the 10 years from 2014 to 2024, around 60 lakh new families should have been added. This means the BC population should be between 50 to 52 per cent. However, the Congress government has reduced it to 46.2 per cent. Can Chief Minister Revanth Reddy put his hand on his heart and say these figures are correct?" she asked.



BC Commission wants more powers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bharti Vikramarka held discussions with the Telangana BC Commission at the Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Praja Bhavan regarding concerns raised during the commission's recent tour of erstwhile districts.

The commission also deliberated on the need for legal amendments to grant it more powers, emphasizing that strengthening the commission's authority is vital to address the concerns of BC communities effectively.

The discussions covered

procedural challenges and the legislative steps required to implement these changes.

The meeting focused on objections regarding caste name changes and other grievances submitted by various communities.

BC Commission Chairman Niranjan, along with members Rapolu Jayaprakash, Tirumalagiri Suresh and Bala Lakshmi Rangu, presented their findings from the commission's visit to 10 erstwhile districts. They detailed the requests received from communities and engaged in an extensive discussion with the Deputy CM on their implications.

Theenmar Mallanna crossing limits, says Bhongir MLA Anil

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Making it clear that speaking against the party is wrong whoever it may be, the Congress's Bhongir MLA, Khumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, said that Congress MLC Theenmar Mallanna (Chinthapandu Naveen Kumar) is crossing limits while speaking.

It is not proper to cross one's limits while speaking, he said and added that speaking against a particular community is also wrong.

Addressing the media at the CLP Media Hall on Monday, Anil said that they had ensured the victory of Theenmar Mallanna by spending money in the Nalgonda Graduate MLC elections. He said that Theenmar Mallanna was wilfully targeting a particular community and made it clear that the party would not spare him and that the high command would take action against him.

Those who missed Caste Census can give details to mandal officials: Ponnam



BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Monday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Transport and BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar who is also a member of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Caste Census asked people who did not give their details to the government during the Caste Census to give them to mandal-level officers.

He said that BRS leaders did not give their details to the government except MLC Kavitha. Addressing the media on Monday at the Gandhi Bhavan, Ponnam said the government completed the Caste Census like a movement and the Planning Commission gave a report on the caste census to the Cabinet Sub-

Committee. The Cabinet Sub-Committee will submit it to the Cabinet and the Cabinet will take a decision on it after discussions. "The government completed the Caste Census as the Congress had promised before elections. The people who did not give their details should submit it now to mandal-level officials. The heads of the BRS did not give their details. The party had welcomed the decision taken by the government and had also supported it. The opposition parties can also express their opinions in the Assembly. The time has come to do justice to BCs and no one will remain silent if anyone tries to block it. It is a historical programme," Ponnam said.

Congress govt facing increasing public anger: Payal Shankar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that the Congress Government underestimated the population of BCs in the caste census survey, the BJP's Adilabad MLA, Payal Shankar, said the Congress government is facing severe opposition from the people.

The Congress government has been trying to deflect public opposition from the government. However, the Congress

Government will face the same fate as the BRS government, Payal Shankar warned.

Addressing the media at the State BJP office here on Monday, Shankar said that people are happy with the Central budget. The people think that they have not seen such a budget in the last 75 years and Congress leaders should speak about their 6-guarantees before speaking about the budget, he added.

KCR gets legal

Continued from page 1

the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Telangana Assembly. It points out that the post was vacant for over four years (2019-2023) due to the absence of a party with the required 10% representation. KCR assumed the role on December 16, 2023, after the BRS secured opposition status.

It emphasizes that the primary responsibility of the LoP is to hold the government accountable and challenge its policies. "The Leader of the Opposition

must discourage the ruling party from acting against the interests of the state and commoners," the notice states, citing references from the national media on KCR's absence. It also references Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's past criticism of KCR, questioning, "Why is KCR running away from the Assembly?"

The notice brings up Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy's remarks, in which he sought reasons for KCR's non-attendance. Further, it cites a similar legal battle in Andhra Pradesh, where former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had to move the High Court for official recognition as the LoP.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: ...
Saptami: Feb 04 04:37 AM to Feb 05 02:31 AM
Ashtami: Feb 05 02:31 AM to Feb 06 12:35 AM
Nakshatram: ...
Ashwini: Feb 03 11:16 PM to Feb 04 09:49 PM
Bharani: Feb 04 09:49 PM to Feb 05 08:33 PM
Rahukalam: 3:19 PM to 4:44 PM
Yamagandam: 9:40 AM to 11:05 AM
Varjyam: 06:55 AM to 08:25 AM
Gulika: 12:30 PM to 1:54 PM
Amritakalam: 03:03 PM to 04:33 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:07 PM to 12:52 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Cloudy
Temp: 33°
Humidity: 48%
Sunrise: 6:47 AM
Sunset: 6:13 PM
Updated: February 3, 2025 5:00 PM

Discrepancies in ...

Continued from page 1

BCs constitute 10.08%, bringing the total BC percentage to 56.33%. However, BC groups argue that their actual population share remains much higher and that the figures have been manipulated.

BC organizations argue that such a drop contradicts demographic trends and natural population growth rates. "The census data does not align with expected projections. If the population growth rate was around 3.5 crore in 2011 and had reached 3.63 crore in 2014, the numbers for 2024 should have increased proportionally. Even if a 1% increase is considered the population should go up to 4 crore. Even those missed in the caste survey if added come to 3.6 crore only. Does that mean the population didn't increase," the BC forums asked.

Another major point of contention is the increase in the percentage of Other Castes (OC), particularly among Hindus, from 8% in 2014 to 13.31% in 2024. The shift has fuelled speculation about potential errors or deliberate distortions in the census methodology.

The BC forums demanded an independent review of the census process, calling for greater transparency in enumeration methods.

They said that wrong data could impact crucial policy decisions, including reservations and welfare schemes. "If these figures are not corrected, it will lead to injustice for BC communities in the distribution of resources and political representation," the statement added.

Results of ...

Continued from page 1

speech, said, "He was very practical, clear in his line that the Presidential speech should be more concentrated towards consumption, production and also the technology of this country where the youth should have to focus. Our country is still dependent on China for the production side.

We are only working on the consumption side. Our asset is consumption but we are not concentrating on production. Make in India is an utter flop and in this Budget, the Presidential speech was not concentrated on the production, youth, per capita income and employment. None of these issues have been addressed. It was a clear speech, very simple which people of the country could understand."

CM angry over Cabinet ...

Continued from page 1

Government in Telangana appointed Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy as the Chairman of the Cabinet Sub-Committee for implementation of the Supreme Court's verdict regarding SC Categorisation on September 12, 2024.

The government appointed Health Minister Damodara Raja Narasimha as the co-chairman and IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu, BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar and Panchayatraj Minister Seethakka and Nagarkurnool MP Mallu Ravi as members of the Cabinet Sub-Committee.

The government also appointed former High Court judge Shamim Akther as a single member Judicial Commission as per the recommendations of the Cabinet Sub-Committee.

The Commission submitted its report to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Monday at the secretariat. The Cabinet Sub-Committee will submit the report to the Cabinet on Tuesday after discussing it.

The recommendations of the one-member judicial commission and sub-committee on SC classification will be presented to the Cabinet at the Cabinet meeting scheduled on Tuesday at 10 am.

Later, a special session of the Assembly will be held on the same day and it will hold a brief discussion on the recommendations made by the sub-committee on classification.

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City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | FEBRUARY 4, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

ICLA: Indian Conference On Logic And Its Applications 2025

Venue
Indian Statistical Institute
February 3 to 5, (10 am)

ISM Cologne 2025

World's Largest Trade Fair For Sweets & Snacks
Venue
Bake Mate
February 2 to 5, (9 am)

Luxury Lifestyle Sale

Venue
YMCA, Narayana (Cultural Venues)
February 5 (10 am)

Bandhani Sale Exhibition

By Ipshita Mahapatra
Venue
Labels, The pop up space
February 4 to 6 (10 am)

Hyderabad Historical Run 3.0

Venue
Charminar
February 2 to 9 (6 am)



Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka meets Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annapurna Devi in Delhi on Monday

Minister Seethakka urges Centre to fund breakfast scheme and Anganwadis

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Women and Child Welfare Minister Danasari Anasuya Seethakka met Union Minister for Women and Child Development Annapurna Devi in Delhi on Monday, seeking additional funding for the proposed breakfast scheme for children. She submitted budget proposals to implement the scheme, emphasising the need to enhance nutritional support for Anganwadi children.

During the meeting, which lasted an hour, Seethakka, along with TG Foods Chairman MA Faheem and Women and Child Welfare Commissioner Kanti Wesley, detailed the necessity of upgrading existing infrastructure across Telangana's 35,700 Anganwadi centres. She explained how the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) has made Telangana a frontrunner in providing comprehensive nutrition to women and children.

Currently, the State supplies hot meals, eggs and snacks to 8.6 lakh children aged three to six under the Supplementary Nutrition Programme. However, post-COVID, several children have been suffering from malnutrition. The Telangana government now aims to introduce a breakfast scheme to further improve their nutrition and encourage regular attendance at pre-schools. This scheme is expected to benefit 8.6 lakh children, with an estimated cost of Rs 8 per child per day, amounting to Rs 206 crore annually.

Seethakka requested Central assistance for implementing this scheme and additional funding for Anganwadi operations. In response, Union Minister Annapurna Devi appreciated Telangana's initiative and praised the breakfast scheme as a significant step towards child nutrition. She assured Seethakka that the Centre would extend support and consider the budgetary allocation in upcoming discussions.

Annapurna Devi also expressed interest in visiting Telangana soon to study the state's women and child welfare programmes. Seethakka thanked the Union Minister for her positive response and support.



Minister Ponnababbar at the inauguration of the GHMC development projects

Min Ponnababbar inaugurates GHMC projects worth Rs 10.09 crore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister Ponnababbar inaugurated several beautification and development projects of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation on Monday.

The ceremony, held at the NFCL Junction in Panjagutta, saw a total investment of Rs 10.09 crore and was attended by Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, Deputy Mayor Mote Sriletha Shobhan Reddy

and GHMC Commissioner Ilambarathi.

Minister Ponnababbar emphasised that the initiative aims to transform junctions across GHMC into pleasant public spaces through comprehensive beautification efforts. He detailed plans for vertical gardens, vibrant painting projects to inspire future generations, and enhancements to drinking water supply, street-lighting and sanitation. "We are committed to regularly reviewing

and resolving issues related to sanitation, water supply and street-lighting to further elevate the Hyderabad brand," he stated. The Minister also encouraged citizens to share their suggestions and ideas, promising that their input would drive even greater improvements.

GHMC Commissioner Ilambarathi said that in addition to beautification, efforts are underway to improve sanitation across the city. He highlighted measures to prevent illegal dumping of construction waste through strict monitoring by the enforcement division, noting that approximately Rs 42 lakh has been collected in fines so far. "We have installed dustbins at commercial complexes and business clusters and are taking special initiatives to permanently eliminate encroachments on garbage collection areas," he said.

Bike thieves arrested, six stolen vehicles seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bachupally Police have arrested two notorious bike thieves, Ongolu Ramesh Babu alias Vinod and Chandramolu Gundappa alias Arjun, and recovered six stolen motorcycles worth Rs 4 lakh. Another accused P Narsimha is absconding. The arrests were made based on CCTV footage analysis, which led to the identification of the suspects using one of the stolen bikes.

The case originated from a complaint by K Mahesh, an IT employee from Kousalya Colony, who had listed his Suzuki Access bike for sale on OLX. On January 23, 2025, he received a call from an interested buyer who later visited his residence for a test ride. However, instead of returning, the individual fled with the bike. Following his complaint, a case was registered under Cr.No. 59/2025 U/S 318(4), 303(2) BNS, and an investigation was taken up by DSI Chandrasekhar.

During the inquiry, the police found that the accused had stolen a total of six bikes using the same method. They would target sellers on OLX, pretend to be interested buyers, and convince the seller to allow them a test ride before fleeing with the vehicle. Three of the stolen bikes were linked to cases registered at Bachupally police station, while the others were traced to Miyapur, Jagadgirigutta and KPHB police stations.



Sri Chaitanya's central kitchen licence revoked for 15 days

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

The Food Safety department has revoked the licence of the central kitchen of Sri Chaitanya Educational Institutions, located at Khanamet, Madhapur, for a period of 15 days.

The move comes after the Task Force team from the Commissioner of Food Safety found numerous violations during an inspection, despite prior warnings. The licence was initially suspended on January 27 following repeated non-compliance.

A senior officer from the Food Safety department confirmed that the revocation was implemented after the management met with the Commissioner and sought additional time to address the issues.

Although the management initially asked for a 10-day period to make repairs, the Commissioner allotted 15 days. The officer cautioned that if further violations are found during the next inspection, the establishment could face permanent closure.

The department noted that the staff at the central kitchen are currently engaged in minor cooking activities while prioritizing the necessary civil repairs. Additionally, penalties have been imposed for each violation, and an additional collector is reviewing the case and the process may take up to two months to finalize the penalties.

The central kitchen, which caters to over 8,000 students, had been closed for four days from January 27, during which alternative arrangements were made to serve the students. The Task Force inspection on January 24 revealed several deficiencies, including:

Missing water analysis reports, pest control records and FOSTAC certificates for employees. Unhygienic, improperly cleaned refrigerators. Patchy, wet flooring with scattered food waste. Broken drains lacking protective mesh to prevent insect entry.

These repeated non-compliance issues, coupled with the potential health risks to consumers as outlined under the FSS Act, 2006, led the concerned Designated Officer to immediately suspend the establishment's licence.

DGP's emphasis on victim-centric approach for public welfare

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

DGP Dr Jitender emphasized the importance of a victim-centric approach, skilled investigations, community policing for achieving public welfare.

Speaking at a meeting organised by the Indian Police Foundation (IPF) on Monday, the DGP highlighted the importance of reviewing and improving policing methods regularly.

The event, titled Better Policing Through Police Reforms, was held under the leadership of IPF, an organisation engaged in research on police reforms, led by Vice-President Dr Ish Kumar, a retired IPS officer.

The foundation consists of both retired and serving IPS officers. IPF conducts research on six key areas: internal police reforms, technology-driven policing, prison reforms, forensic science research, crimes against women and police health and well-being.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Jitender stressed the need for continuous evaluation of



DGP Dr Jitender and senior police officers Abhilasha Bisht, Shikha Goel, Additional DGPs Sanjay Kumar Jain, Swati Lakra and IGP M Ramesh at the IPF meeting

police operations to enhance effectiveness. He stated that regular inspection of police stations and offices by senior officials could bring significant improvements. He reiterated that the Telangana Police department is committed to adopting new policies and reviewing its strategies to maintain its position as a leading law enforcement agency.

He urged police personnel to act with professionalism and integrity to provide better services to victims. The DGP also instructed officers to promptly register FIRs on public complaints, prioritize

women's safety and uphold responsibility to enhance the department's reputation.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Ish Kumar stated that the internal police reform project is currently being implemented in Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Telangana. In Telangana, Police Training DGP Abhilasha Bisht is acting as the nodal officer, while retired SP M Malla Reddy is supervising the project. Dr Ish Kumar mentioned that public feedback from various police station jurisdictions would be collected to design appropriate training programmes.

HPV vaccination drive free of cost for women

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Apollo Cancer Centres and CURE Foundation's Free Vaccination drive will be conducted throughout February. HPV vaccinations would be administered free of cost to women.

It is to raise awareness and prevent cervical cancer. The programme was officially unveiled by Meenakshi Choudhary, Actress, on Monday at Apollo Hospital premises.

The event was attended by Dr Vijay Anand Reddy, Director of Apollo Cancer Centres, Hyderabad; Dr Padmaja Lokireddy, Sr Consultant Haemato Oncologist and Bone Marrow Transplant, Apollo Cancer Centres, Hyderabad. The vaccination drive is

between 9 am and 6 pm, at Apollo Cancer Centres, Jubilee Hills. Additionally, the hospital has extended its support to young girls in orphanages across Hyderabad, ensuring they receive the vaccine at no cost.

Speaking about this crucial step in the fight against Cervical Cancer, Dr Vijay Anand Reddy emphasized the critical role of this initiative. He said, "This is a significant step forward in our collective fight against cervical cancer. Through widespread vaccination, we aim to protect future generations and prevent unnecessary suffering."

"We are taking the responsibility to initiate the programme in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad for the underprivileged girls in

orphanages and also to create awareness in the other strata of the society about the importance of vaccination to protect young girls from cervical cancer. Today we vaccinated 150 orphan girls, we will keep the program open till the end of the February to vaccinate more," he added.

Actress Meenakshi Choudhary said, "It's a matter of pride for me to be associated with this program for lot of things, because it's something I hold extremely close to my heart."

Among women the most common cancers are breast cancer and cervical cancer, most of which can be cured, but lack of awareness about these cancers being treatable is holding women back from leading a healthy lifestyle."

Creative talent gets a platform

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Trailer-Making Competition Delhi Roadshow made a stop at Gurutegh Bahadur 4th Centenary Engineering College, offering young filmmakers a platform to showcase their creativity. Organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and Reskill, with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Netflix as the creative partners, the initiative aims to nurture storytelling and video editing skills among aspiring filmmakers.

As part of the WAVES 2025 initiative, the competition is backed by Netflix Fund for Creative Equity, providing participants access to the streaming giant's extensive content library. Over three months, competitors will hone their skills in trailer production, learning the nuances of editing, narrative structuring, and visual storytelling.

All participants submitting a valid trailer will receive a certificate of participation, while the top 50 will be awarded a certificate of excellence and special recognition from FICCI and Netflix. The top 20 finalists will be honoured with a trophy, exclusive merchandise and a chance to attend WAVES 2025.

TG gov't's commitment to foster women entrepreneurs outlined

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's commitment to fostering women-led entrepreneurship took centre-stage as Governor Jishnu Dev Varma and IT, Electronics & Communications, and Industries Minister Sridhar Babu visited WE Hub, the state's flagship initiative supporting women entrepreneurs. The visit underscored the government's focus on creating an inclusive business ecosystem that empowers women in both urban and rural areas.

During the interaction, the Governor emphasized the role of women entrepreneurs in economic growth, stating, "Empowering women is crucial for a sustainable future. The Telangana government is committed to providing equal opportunities and fostering an environment for their success."

Minister Sridhar Babu highlighted the impact of government schemes, including Mahila Shakti and Mahalaxmi, in enabling women to turn ideas into thriving businesses. "Our focus is on equipping women, especially from Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns, with the

skills and resources they need to succeed," he said.

WE Hub CEO Sita Pallacholla spoke about the organisation's mission, stating, "Our success is measured through the achievements of the women we support. We are committed to ensuring that every woman, from urban centres to the remotest villages, has the opportunity to build and scale her business."

Women entrepreneurs showcased their innovations, ranging from tech startups to handcrafted products, demonstrating the far-reaching impact of WE Hub's initiatives. Entrepreneurs from as far as Manthani participated, highlighting the initiative's role in bridging rural-urban business gaps.

The Governor and Minister engaged with the entrepreneurs, offering support and encouragement to strengthen women's role in the economy. WE Hub continues to provide mentorship, funding, market linkages and technological support, reinforcing the government's commitment to women-led enterprise development in Telangana.



The demolitions of illegal constructions by HYDRAA in Shamshabad

HYDRAA saves park, road from encroachment in Shamshabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) saved a park and a road in Shamshabad from encroachments.

The authorities in Shamshabad and Ranga Reddy district carried out demolitions on Monday following complaints of encroachments. A 998-square-yard park in Southern Paradise (Sri Sampath Nagar) was reportedly encroached upon and a complaint was made to the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency

(HYDRAA). Another complaint was lodged against illegal construction in Captain-2 Colony, Ootpally village, Shamshabad mandal where a 33-foot-wide road was encroached upon, and a compound wall was built.

After the investigation, authorities confirmed the encroachments and proceeded with demolition. The fencing and tin shed around the encroached park were removed.

Additionally, the illegally constructed compound wall on the road was also demolished.

HYDRAA Prajavani gets 71 complaints

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Prajavani received more than 71 complaints on Monday regarding illegal encroachments, prompting Commissioner AV Ranganath to order the immediate removal of all unauthorised structures obstructing roads.

In his directive, Commissioner Ranganath highlighted that many of the complaints pertained to encroachments on parks and roads - similar to those seen around gated communities. He emphasised that the affected roads must be maintained as per the approved layout and any structures built along them should be removed without delay.

Authorities have taken proactive steps by verifying the complaints using Google Maps to compare current conditions with those from a decade ago. HYDRAA officials visited the various sites, discussed the issues with local representatives and offered remedial



HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath receiving complaints at Prajavani on Monday

suggestions to the complainants. The officials have also been identified for direct communication and complainants were advised to provide complete details when the teams arrive for investigation.

Encroachments on areas originally allocated for septic tanks, are now being used for unauthorised purposes. The Commissioner stressed that any such encroachments must be demolished immediately.

In the Kapra municipality near Vampuguda, illegal construction of compound walls has been reported in the NR I area of certain kalanis, where

septic tanks had been previously designated. Similarly, in Chandanagar Circle 21 at Matusri Nagar park, a portion of the park and an existing septic tank have been encroached.

Another set of complaints involved allegations by Nallamallareddy regarding land disputes in Medchal Malkajgiri district, Ghatkesar Mandal, Korremul village panchayat (survey numbers 716 to 718).

Additionally, concerns were raised over the Yapral Nagireddy Chainukattu Cheruvu in Malka Jigiri municipality, Alwal Mandal, where function hall organisers have encroached on the lake.

High school students' numeracy skills improve in Telangana

It is, however, to be noted the ASERT survey highlights poor reading and mathematical skills among primary school pupils

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

The ASER Survey 2024 highlights poor reading and mathematical skills among primary school students in the undivided Karimnagar district, with students struggling to read textbooks and solve basic subtraction problems. However, students in higher classes have shown improvement in division skills, according to a comparative study of the Annual Status of Education Reports for 2022 and 2024.

Despite several government reforms aimed at improving education—such as the introduction of digital classrooms, new teacher appointments, promotional

schemes, and various programs under initiatives like Mana Vooru-Mana Badi and Amma Adarsha Pathasalalu—there has been little noticeable improvement in the academic performance of primary school students.

The Education Department and teachers have made concerted efforts to raise educational standards through programmes like Tholimettu, FLN, READ, and the establishment of libraries and digital classrooms, with the district administration providing special training for teachers. Yet, according to the 2024 ASER survey, these reforms have not led to significant improvements in student outcomes.



For representation purpose only

The survey also points to a decline in government school enrollments, with a concerning number of students remaining out of school. The percentage of students in classes 6-14 enrolled

has reached 51.6 per cent, while the number of out-of-school children is reported to be zero.

In terms of academic performance, only 16.1 per cent of students in classes 3-5 could read fluently, and just 49.5 per cent were able to perform subtraction problems easily. In comparison, the 2022 ASER survey showed slightly higher percentages—54.5 per cent for reading and 51.6 per cent for subtraction skills. Furthermore, the 2024 survey revealed that 45.2 per cent of students in classes 6-8 struggled with reading, while only 35.7 per cent could solve division problems correctly, a slight improvement over the 34 per cent reported in 2022.

Women pull each other's hair, exchange blows over bus seats

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Squabbles continue among women over seats in RTC buses. Incidents of women pulling each other's hair and exchanging blows in public are being increasingly witnessed in the State of late.

The bus crew has been expressing their helplessness in either averting such squabbles or separating the women fighting with each other. Anyone who tries to intervene ends up in trouble. They fight fiercely. If the argument stays verbal, it's fine, but once it turns physical, things get out of hand.

Such a situation arose on Monday at Kaleshwaram bus station. While waiting for a bus, the passengers, particularly women, became impatient. When a bus arrived, women started fighting aggressively for seats, cursing and physically attacking each other. They even pulled each other's hair and fought.

The TGSRTC management failed to press additional buses into service on Vasanta Panchami day. There were not enough buses for the devotees, which led to tension building and squabbles



Women fighting with each other fiercely over bus seats at Kaleshwaram bus station in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district on Monday

breaking out.

This is not the first time that the women fought with each other over seats in buses. Such incidents happened even in Hyderabad and also in districts.

Contractor locks Tahsildar office over pending bill

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a dramatic protest over unpaid bills, a contractor locked the office of the Ibrahimpatnam Tahsildar, demanding payment for construction work he completed years ago. The incident took place in the heart of Ibrahimpatnam mandal where Gandikota Danaiah, a contractor from Polkampally village, expressed his frustration over the non-payment of bills for the construction of the Zilla Parishad guest house.

According to sources, the guest house was built four years ago when the



Contractor Danaiah staging a protest at Tahsildar office at Ibrahimpatnam on Monday

old Tahsildar office was in a dilapidated condition. At the time, authorities assured Danaiah that funds would be released soon and urged him to complete the project quickly. However, despite multiple requests, the bill

remained unpaid. Struggling with mounting debts, the contractor claimed he had to sell his land and take out loans to finance the construction. His financial distress even led his family to attempt suicide in the past.

VASANT PANCHAMI

Sri Gnana Saraswathi Devasthanam witnesses unprecedented rush

PNS ■ NIRMAL

On the occasion of Vasant Panchami, the Sri Gnana Saraswathi Devasthanam in Basara saw a significant surge of devotees. Temple officials reported that a large number of devotees, not just from Telangana but also from neighboring states like Andhra Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra visited the temple. The crowds began gathering in long, winding queues as early as 3 am, performing special prayers after taking a holy dip in the Godavari river, which flows on the outskirts of Basara.

Hundreds of parents gathered at the temple and nearby venues to perform Aksharabhyasam, an initiation ceremony for a child into the world of alphabets. The usually quiet temple town of Basara came alive with the arrival of devotees, who travelled by every mode of trans-



port.

Devotees performed special prayers at the famous pilgrimage site of Kaleshwaram Mahasaraswati Temple also. They conducted Aksharabhyasam for Goddess Saraswati. From the morning onwards, a large number of devotees from Telangana, Maharashtra, and Chhattisgarh gathered at the temple.

The celebrations of Vasant Panchami at the temple were conducted with grandeur, and

the temple resonated with the sounds of devotion and joy from the gathered devotees.

In Karimnagar devotees thronged divine temple of Sri Mahadurga, Sri Mahalaxmi, and Sri Mahasaraswati located in Chaitanyapuri, Karimnagar. Known as the goddess of learning and the deity of wisdom, and regarded as a symbol of initiation into letters for children, devotees visited the temple in large numbers to seek blessings from Sri Mahasaraswati.

Police Commissioner assures all support to police athletes

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Warangal Police Commissioner Ambar Kishor Jha has said that the police athletes who have shown exceptional talent in sports will be supported in every possible way. On Monday, he congratulated the police athletes who earned medals by showcasing their talent at the state-level Police Sports and games held in Karimnagar district. The Police Commissioner attended a felicitation event organised at the Warangal Police Commissionerate office, where he personally congratulated the medal-winning police athletes.

While addressing the athletes, he

expressed his appreciation for their excellent performance at the state-level and promised that police officers would receive full support to dedicate their time to sports. He said that special attention would be given to them, ensuring that they do not face any issues while pursuing their athletic endeavors. He expressed hope that these athletes would achieve similar success at the national level as well.

The event was attended by additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Ravi, Assistant Commissioners of Police Nagayya, Parthasarathi, Surendra, Madhusudhan, Ananthayya, R. Chandrashekar, Srinivas, and Sridhar.



Warangal Police Commissioner Ambar Kishor Jha felicitating police athletes in Warangal on Monday

Parents urged to give quality education to children

PNS ■ SIDDIPEET

Minister for Transport Ponnam Prabhakar on Monday stated that education is the greatest asset which cannot be taken away. He urged parents to ensure that their children receive good education and help them become responsible citizens.

On the occasion of Vasant Panchami celebrations, he visited the Saraswati Devi temple in Wargal and offered special prayers. Speaking to reporters later, he emphasised the importance of parents paying attention to their children's education and ensuring

they do not become child labourers.

Instead, children should be provided with good education to make them knowledgeable, and their efforts should contribute to securing a prestigious position for the State and the country.

"If children become talented and well-educated, excelling in various fields, the reputation of both their parents and the state and nation would rise," he said. He also mentioned that with the blessings of Goddess Saraswati, children would attain greatness, but this required the support of their parents. He noted that Telangana has



Minister for Transport Ponnam Prabhakar offering prayers at a temple in Wargal in Siddipet district on Monday

sacred shrines for Saraswati Devi in Wargal and Basara, and the State government would develop the temples, as well as the educational institutions in these areas.

The state government is also working to improve the education system by enhancing infrastructure in model schools, ensuring that education becomes accessible to people from all communities and regions.

Among those present were former MLA from Gajwel, Tunkunta Narsa Reddy, former Municipal Chairman Gadi Palli Bhaskar, AMC Chairman Narendra Reddy and Mohan.

Teenager Sujay transforming tribal lives in Adilabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

While most teenagers are concentrating on academics and personal goals, Surakanti Sujay Reddy has chosen a unique path dedicated to service and social change. Hailing from Ichoda in Adilabad district, Sujay is deeply involved in uplifting tribal communities through his voluntary organisation, Samroha. His efforts, particularly in child nutrition and financial literacy for women, are already having a positive and measurable impact in the remote villages he serves.

During his visits to his native village, Sujay was deeply moved by the poor health conditions of tribal children. Determined to address the issue, he launched the Nutrition Project, ensuring daily nutritional support for children in Kolamguda, a hamlet under the Ankapur gram panchayat. For the past

two years, he has been providing 200 milliliters of milk and leafy vegetables every day to 38 children, significantly improving their health. Villagers acknowledge that before this intervention, frequent illness among children hindered their ability to study, but Sujay's efforts have changed their lives.

Realising that economic stability plays a crucial role in eradicating malnutrition, Sujay initiated a Financial Literacy Project to educate tribal women. Many families in Kolamguda lacked even basic knowledge of savings and banking procedures, leaving them vulnerable to financial crises.

Through systematic awareness sessions, Sujay has helped several families open savings accounts and gain essential financial management skills. His focus has been on empowering mothers, ensuring they can make informed financial



decisions for their families. Speaking about his motivation, Sujay said, "I saw children in my village suffering from malnutrition, and I knew I had to do something. Good health starts with good nutrition, and economic stability ensures families can sustain it in the long run. Through Samroha, I want to create a lasting impact, not just temporary relief."

Sujay's journey in social

service began early. Inspired by his parents, Surakanti Vijaya Shanthi and Srinivas Reddy, he established Samroha in the ninth grade. Now pursuing his Intermediate studies in Hyderabad, he balances academics with his passion for community service. Whenever he returns home during holidays, he assesses the health of tribal children and introduces necessary interventions.

His work has drawn admira-

tion not only from the villagers but also from educators and social workers.

His vision is to expand Samroha's welfare initiatives, addressing poverty, health, and education in tribal communities on a larger scale. Sujay's story stands as a testament to how even a young individual, armed with compassion and determination, can create lasting change in society.

INJUSTICE TO TELANGANA IN UNION BUDGET

Cong leaders demand resignation of BJP MPs

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Kothur mandal Congress President J Sudarshan Goud has demanded the immediate resignation of all eight BJP MPs from Telangana, alleging that the state has got short shrift in the Union Budget. Addressing a Congress dharna at the Collectorate, organised as part of the Rangareddy district Congress Party's protest, he questioned the BJP's failure to secure funds for Telangana.

Sudarshan Goud criticised the budget, accusing the BJP-led central government of neglecting Telangana while prioritising northern states. He particularly targeted Union Ministers G. Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar, who had previously claimed they



Congress leaders staging a protest in front of the District Collectorate in Rangareddy district on Monday

would fight for the state's interests but, according to him, have remained silent on the issue. He questioned whether Narendra Modi was the Prime Minister of the entire country or only the northern states, pointing out that significant funds were allocated to Uttar

Pradesh during its elections while Telangana was overlooked.

Expressing strong discontent, he called for the resignation of BJP MPs, asserting that if they stepped down in protest, the Congress would stand by them.

ACROSS THE STATES



Delhi HC summons Shashi Tharoor in defamation case

The Delhi High Court on Monday summoned Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on a defamation plea filed by BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav posted the matter on April 28. "Let the plaintiff be registered as a suit. Issue summons to the defendant (Tharoor). List before the joint registrar on April 28," said the court. In his suit, Chandrasekhar claimed Tharoor made false and defamatory statements at various public fora in April, 2024 that severely damaged his professional and personal reputation. Chandrasekhar has sought to restrain Tharoor from making any defamatory statements. While seeking a public apology, he sought Rs 10 crore in damages from Tharoor for allegedly defaming and tarnishing his reputation. The BJP leader filed the defamation case over Tharoor's purported statements during an interview to a television channel where the latter allegedly said Chandrasekhar offered money to voters during 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The BJP politician is represented by law firm Karanjawala



Duke of Edinburgh visits British-era bunker in Mumbai

The Duke of Edinburgh Prince Edward visited a British-era bunker at Raj Bhavan in Mumbai, an official said on Monday. The bunker is spread over 15,000 square feet and has 13 rooms. After it was discovered in 2016, restoration was carried out and it was converted into a museum, Raj Bhavan Public Relations Officer Umesh Kashikar said. The duke visited the bunker and also met Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan on Sunday. He was also shown some of the historically significant sites in Raj Bhavan premises. Prince Edward, the youngest son of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and the youngest sibling of King Charles III, started the visit with the Raj Bhavan lawn, which overlooks the sea. He was informed that the lawn was the venue for the reception hosted in honour of then Prince of Wales, his brother Charles in 1980. Prince Edward later visited the 'Jai Lakshmi' VIP guest house usually reserved for the President and the Prime Minister of India.



Ex-serviceman killed, wife and niece injured in J&K

In the first non-combatant killing of the year, terrorists shot dead an ex-serviceman and injured his wife and 13-year-old niece in an attack in South Kashmir's Kulgam district on Monday, officials said here. Details so far indicate that two terrorists armed with pistols arrived at the residence of Manzoor Ahmad Wagay in Beehi Bagh, approximately 10 kilometers from the district headquarters, and opened fire on his family members, which included his wife and niece. According to initial statements recorded by police and army officials, Wagay, a former member of the Territorial Army, sustained additional bullet wounds while attempting to protect his niece. The terrorists, believed to be from banned Lashkar-e-Taiba, fired upon Wagay as he returned home, and all three victims were rushed to a nearby hospital, where Wagay succumbed to injuries. Police have taken cognizance of the incident and initiated an investigation into the attack. The incident marks the first attack on a civilian this year as Wagay had retired from the Territorial Army in 2021. Family members said that after his military service.

'Women-led startups making global mark'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Monday said some of the women-led startups from India are making a global mark. Not only this, he said, even in difficult sectors like space, women-led projects have been hailed worldwide and cited the example of India's solar mission "Aditya L1" which is led by Nigar Shaji who became known as ISRO's "Sunny Lady".

"Women-led development is a key priority of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's governance agenda with the vision that women-led startups will place India on the global map in the years to come and our women entrepreneurs have the potential to realise that goal," said Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel.

Speaking to a delegation of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry-Ladies Organisation (FICCI-FLO), led by its YFLO (Young FICCI Ladies Organisation) Delhi President Payal Kanodia, the minister said Modi has laid out the vision of Indian startups lead-



ing the global innovation race, with women-led businesses at the forefront across sectors. He said that from 2014 onwards, women's empowerment has got a practical meaning with many of the welfare schemes, including entrepreneurship-promoting schemes like PM MUDRA and PM Vishwakarma, largely benefiting the women workforce.

Singh said, women entrepreneurship is being promoted in a big way under the leadership of Modi. He said the paradigm shift in women's empowerment

has enabled womenfolk to increasingly assume leadership roles in every sphere of life and every profession, moving away from a long-held participatory role. Singh said the Modi government has taken several revolutionary steps to provide employment avenues to its youth populace by launching various schemes and revolutionising the work culture in the country.

The government did this by combining the best features of Indian tradition with modernity, keeping in view the diversity of the country, Singh added.



SC junks plea for recalling TN Governor

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a plea seeking directions to recall Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi for walking out of the legislative assembly without delivering the customary address.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjay Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar was hearing a plea filed by C R Jaya Sukin who alleged that the Governor "violated the entire Constitution" and "insulted the people of Tamil Nadu" by abruptly leaving the Assembly session. The governor on January 6 exited the assembly session without delivering the customary address, reportedly in protest against the Tamil Nadu state anthem being played instead of the national anthem at the start of the proceedings.

The governor called it "disrespect" to the Constitution and the national anthem. The petitioner sought directions to the President of India to recall the Governor, citing Article 156 of the Constitution, which states that a Governor holds office at the pleasure of the President.

2020 DELHI RIOTS

Court acquits 6, raises doubt over prosecution's case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has acquitted six persons in a 2020 Delhi riots case, raising doubts over the testimony of two key police witnesses regarding identifying the accused.

Additional sessions judge Pulastya Pramachala was hearing the case registered by Gokulpuri Police Station against the accused persons.

According to the prosecution, the six accused were part of a riotous mob that committed arson, theft and mischief by fire or explosives across various properties and shops in Gokulpuri on February 25, 2020.

In an order dated January 24, the court said the prosecution relied upon two key prosecution witnesses, assistant sub-inspectors, Vanvir and Jahangir, to establish the identity of the accused persons but they were examined only in December 2020.

"This delay in examining these two police officials, who were posted in the same police station, certainly casts doubt over the veracity of the prosecution's case. The investigating officer (IO) did not tender any reason for such delay in recording the statement of these witnesses," it said. The court noted the statements of both the police offi-



cial about being the beat officers of the locality and that they knew the accused persons before the riots.

"If they knew the names of the accused persons and if they had seen these persons in the mob of rioters, then there was no need and occasion for them to identify the accused persons in any video," it said. Their testimonies, however, referred to identifying accused persons in a video, which Vanvir said, did not pertain to the incidents, the court said.

The court said Jahangir could not identify three accused persons in the court. "I do not find it appropriate to rely upon the evidence of PW 16 and PW 18, to assume participation of accused persons in the incidents in question," it said.

It acquitted the six accused persons, Arjun, Gopal, Dharamveer, Umesh, Dheeraj and Manish, saying the charges against them were not proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

Now, visually challenged can read Indian Constitution

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Governor of Karnataka Thawar Chand Gehlot launched on Monday a Braille-enabled version of the Indian Constitution, to mark 75 years of the Constitution.

The project was done in collaboration with Sankara Eye Hospital Bengaluru and CII Young Indians (YI) Bengaluru. "This initiative aims to empower those who



are blind or have low vision by enabling them to read and understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens," said Dr Kaushik Murali, President of Medical

Administration, Quality & Education at Sankara Eye Foundation India, in a press statement issued on Monday.

The Braille version will be distributed to key institutions, ensuring wider access, he added. Darshan Mutha, National Chair of Accessibility at CII Young Indians, said the initiative aims to raise awareness about the importance of inclusivity and create a more accessible world for all.

DELHI POLLS

Win at least 55 seats in Delhi: Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Monday asserted his party will win 55 out of the 70 seats in the Delhi assembly, and reiterated his claim the BJP will discontinue all free schemes in the city if it were to come to power.

In a post in Hindi on social media platform X, Kejriwal said, "According to my estimate, the Aam Aadmi Party is going to get 55 seats but if women put in a lot of effort -- they should go out to vote and also convince the men in their family to vote for the Aam Aadmi Party -- then it can get more than 60 seats."

The party had won 67 seats in the 2025 assembly polls and 62 in the 2020 elections.

On the last day of campaigning for the February 5 polls, Kejriwal addressed a rally in south Delhi's Chhatrapur and urged people to vote for the AAP.

"Let me tell you why you have to vote for the AAP. You gave me a responsibility 10 years ago and I have done a lot of work for Delhi. There is 24-hour electricity supply for the people of Delhi," he said.



High-octane campaign ends

AI spoofs, roadshows set stage for February 5 battle

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The high-octane campaigning for the February 5 Delhi Assembly elections concluded at 6 pm on Monday, with big guns from all three major parties holding roadshows, public meetings, padayatras and bike rallies in a final push to sway voters.

As the canvassing wrapped up, the mandatory silence period began, which would remain in effect till voting begins at 7 am on Wednesday.

The Aam Aadmi Party remains confident of securing a third consecutive term, highlighting its governance record and welfare schemes.

On the last day of campaigning on Monday, AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal, along with

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, addressed three rallies, including one in Kalkaji, to mobilise supporters.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), aiming to reclaim power in Delhi after more than 25 years, held 22 roadshows and rallies across the city. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP President J P Nadda, and several BJP chief ministers were at the forefront of the canvassing on Monday.

The Congress, seeking a revival after failing to win any seats in the last two elections, also intensified its efforts. Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi held separate roadshows in Kalkaji and Kasturba Nagar, aiming to regain the party's lost foothold in the capital.

'Only BJP can increase Delhi's pace of development'

3PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said the world today listens to India due to the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi while earlier the country was not taken seriously on global platforms.

Participating in a roadshow in Chhatrapur to seek votes for BJP candidate Kartar Singh Tanwar on the last day of campaigning for the Delhi polls, Singh said the ruling AAP has cheated the people and asserted that only the saffron party can increase the



city's pace of development.

"Earlier, India's voice was not taken seriously on global forums but now under the leadership of PM Modi, the world listens to India carefully. India was the 11th largest economy in 2014, now it is at the fifth position and will be at the third spot in the

coming years. "Delhiites have seen that the country is growing rapidly under the leadership of PM Modi ji but due to the AAP government, Delhi has not been able to develop at the same pace. The people of Delhi have been constantly misled and deceived," Singh said.

Exuding confidence that the BJP will get a two-thirds majority in Delhi, Singh said, "The people of Delhi have understood the truth and have made up their mind that the real development of Delhi will happen only after the BJP comes to power".



70 lakh voters added in Maha, alleges Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that about 70 lakh voters, equivalent to Himachal Pradesh's population, were added to the electoral rolls in Maharashtra between the Lok Sabha and state elections, and demanded the Election Commission furnish data to opposition parties in the state.

Speaking to the Motion of Thanks on the President's address, Gandhi raised several questions over the integrity of the Maharashtra polls held in November last year in which the BJP-led Mahayuti won a massive mandate, and said he was confident the EC would not provide the details sought by the opposition parties.



'Constitution gave us right to speak, not Manu Smriti'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday invoked the Constitution's significance in empowering all sections of society, saying it was the Constitution, not Manu Smriti, that enabled the Finance Minister to present the Budget and gave everyone the right to speak in Parliament.

Leading the Opposition's charge during the debate on the Presidential address in the Rajya Sabha, Kharge launched a sharp attack on the government while warning against "Manuwadi" ideologies.

"It is because of the Constitution the Finance

Minister got the opportunity to present the Budget, not because of Manu Smriti. We have got the right to speak because of the Constitution. Don't listen to Manuwadi," he said.

Kharge was carrying a copy of Manu Smriti to the Upper House and asked if the Chair had read it fully.

The Manu Smriti is an ancient Hindu legal and ethical text attributed to a legendary figure Manu, considered the first man and lawgiver according to Hindu mythology. It contains 2,694 verses across 12 chapters that outline social duties, laws, rituals, and Hindu cosmogony.

REMARKS ON PRESIDENT BJP MPs file privilege notice against Sonia Gandhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A group of BJP MPs from the tribal community filed a breach of privilege notice on Monday against Congress parliamentary party leader Sonia Gandhi for using "derogatory and slanderous" words against President Droupadi Murmu.

Led by BJP leader and former union minister Faggan Singh Kulaste, they met Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and sought disciplinary action against Gandhi, contending her

remarks lowered the dignity of the office of the President.

The notice was filed over Gandhi's remark on President Murmu after her address to a joint sitting of Parliament on Friday. Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were seen discussing the speech on the Parliament complex.

"The poor lady, the President, was getting very tired by the end... she could hardly speak, poor thing," Sonia Gandhi was purportedly heard saying in a video doing the rounds on social media.

2 cr take 'Amrit Snan' without hitch at Maha Kumbh

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The third 'Amrit Snan' at the Maha Kumbh proceeded smoothly on Monday with lakhs of people taking a dip on the occasion of Basant Panchmi and akharas resuming the grand processions curtailed last week when a stampede killed at least 30 people.

By 4 pm, an estimated two crore devotees had taken the ritual dip at the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati, according to figures shared by the Uttar Pradesh government.

After the stampede that

broke out at the Sangam on 'Mauni Amavasya' (January 29), the state government mounted up safety measures with Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath directing officials to adopt a 'zero-error' approach.

Unlike the Mauni Amavasya dip when crowd pressure built up at the Sangam, many devo-

tees this time took to other ghats instead of jostling for space at the confluence exhibiting self-awareness amid heightened security and crowd con-

trol measures in the Mela area, according to officials.

Chief Minister Adityanath monitored the situation from his official residence in

Lucknow since 3.30 am, they said. DIG (Maha Kumbh) Vaibhav Krishna told PTI Videos that in light of the January 29 stampede, additional force was deployed at all pressure points for crowd management.

"Everything is running smoothly today," he said during a pre-dawn patrolling in the Mela area. Later in the day, the DIG and some other senior officers went around the Mela area on horseback to assess crowd management. "Our crowd management has been good today, which is visible. No untoward incident has been reported from anywhere yet."





FIRST COLUMN

A PARENTING GUIDE FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

This new era of parenting demands a thoughtful, proactive approach to raising future-ready generations



SHAINY SHARMA

The 21st century has introduced new challenges and opportunities in parenting. As we raise Generation Alpha (born 2012-2024) and Generation Beta (born 2025-2039), it is crucial to adapt parenting strategies to their digital upbringing, rapid technological advancements and changing societal norms. Ensuring these children grow up healthy, happy and disciplined requires a balance of traditional values and modern approaches.

There is no denying that, unlike previous generations, Generation Alpha and Generation Beta are growing up with easy access to technology, which affects their lifestyle habits. It is of utmost importance that parents/guardians take proactive steps to ensure their children's wellbeing such as providing balanced nutrition such as a diet rich in proteins, vitamins and fibres while limiting processed foods and sugary snacks; reducing screen time and promoting physical activities such as cycling, swimming and team sports to improve fitness and social skills; setting screen-free bedtime routines to ensure quality sleep, which is crucial for the cognitive and emotional development and encouraging children to spend time offline by engaging in hands-on activities like painting, gardening and DIY projects.

Not only these, but in an era of social media influence and fast-paced lifestyles, parents/guardians need to support their children by creating a strong emotional connection; encouraging resilience and a growth mindset; guiding them in reducing digital overload, and engaging them in mindful activities such as yoga, meditation, journaling, or simple relaxation exercises to help them cope with



stress. Above all, what matters the most is the art of discipline. With instant gratification becoming a norm in the digital age, parents/guardians must realise that these generations will grow up in an AI-driven world, requiring skills beyond academics. Parents/Guardians can help prepare them by encouraging critical thinking and creativity and providing problem-solving challenges, STEM activities and artistic outlets.

They can also provide proper guidance on responsible internet usage, cybersecurity and online ethics, followed by developing social skills in a hybrid world. Raising healthy, happy and disciplined Gen Alpha and Gen Beta children requires a thoughtful blend of love, guidance, and adaptability. Parents/Guardians must embrace new-age parenting by integrating digital awareness with traditional values while fostering emotional resilience and self-discipline.

By prioritising wellbeing, education and strong moral foundations, one can ensure these generations grow into responsible, fulfilled, and future-ready individuals. Also, by providing proper nutrition, encouraging physical and mental wellbeing, fostering social skills, and setting positive examples, parents/guardians can create an environment where children thrive. It is aptly said that a happy and healthy child is not just the result of luck but of consistent efforts, care and understanding from those who nurture them.

(The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

The impact of tariffs: Global shifts and the US dilemma



ATUL SEHGAL

From China's rapid economic ascent to the stagnation facing developed nations, trade tariffs have profound effects, influencing international trade



The present world is witnessing a situation of several impending tariffs on international trade. Tariffs in international trade are an instrument to reduce imports from specific countries and to promote indigenous production of goods and services. Countries grow rich by producing and selling value-added goods and services. The buyers of these goods and services can be within the country or outside. Obviously, more buyers are outside than inside and for this reason, exports hold the prime key to countries' enrichment.

The newly installed government in the USA is proposing to impose trade tariffs on several countries ostensibly to reduce the burden of taxes on the domestic population and promote indigenous manufacturing of goods. For any country, it is the balance of trade i.e. the excess of exports over imports that determines its buying capacity in the international market as well as the strength of its monetary currency vis-a-vis the international ruling currency US Dollar. This is true of every country except the USA because its currency is not pegged to gold whereas other currencies are. For this reason, we see how post World War 2 (1939-1945), Japan and Germany developed fast a big indigenous manufacturing capability based on modern technologies and through extensive exports of valued added industrial goods like machinery, automobiles and other technological products.

The currencies of these countries gradually strengthened and a stage was reached when their products became price uncompetitive in exports. For example, the Japanese Yen which was equivalent to approximately 0.01 USD in the year 1994 is now traded for USD 0.0064 in 2025. This was true of most of the developed countries at that time (1990 to 2000). The result was that diminishing price competitiveness in exports led to an industrial and economic decline. This led to the consti-



THE CASE OF THE USA IS TYPICAL AND DIFFERENT. IT HAS BEEN EXPORTING HIGH-TECHNOLOGY GOODS AND LIBERALLY IMPORTING LOW-END CONSUMER GOODS FOR A LONG PERIOD

tution of WTO and GATT through which this stagnation hit the economies of the developed countries that sought a revival of high trade and growth. However, the advent of China and its rapid rise on the world economic horizon changed the scenario dramatically and rather unexpectedly. The controlled tariff regime and its regulation under the GATT were greatly leveraged by China through a unique model of economic growth based on high borrowing, mega-scale production and export focus.

While all the above was going on, even the Chinese economic model began to falter because it was unsustainable, being heavily debt and export-dependent. The stagnating economies of Europe and many other countries sought to revive growth through tariffs. Tariffs are basically import duties enabling higher costs of landed goods imported from specific countries. The agreed tariffs under GATT helped the developed countries to grow, albeit to a small degree because of the limitations imposed by demographic factors and technological obsolescence, besides the economic blizzard unleashed by China.

The result of the above developments was that in the last 5-10 years, countries have become increasingly protective and insular in their trade practices and have started putting tariff barriers to protect and bolster their domestic industries.

The case of the USA is typical and different. It has been exporting high-technology goods and liberally importing low-end consumer goods for a long period. But high technology goods including arms and ammunition export could not keep pace with its requirements due to ever-changing secu-

rety scenarios, absorption or development of high technology in countries like India, Brazil and South Africa. This has led to the debt of the USA touching an astronomically high figure of 33 trillion USD. This is long-term unsustainable. With the growth of domestic technologies and production facilities in the erstwhile third-world countries, of which India is a prime example, export prospects of US-made products have fallen considerably.

This is also due to the emergence of Chinese multinational companies which are giving a serious challenge to the existing MNCs in Europe and the USA. But the tariff war by the USA on specific countries of the world is not going to be a panacea for its impending economic ills. Its population will have to be made more productive.

With a very high cost of production due to the high cost of services and labour, the US economy is presently not in a favourable position to compete for international exports of lower-end consumer goods in general. Even for high technology goods like warfare and space technology products, it cannot today compete with emerging industrial economies like China and India. What is happening to the USA is quite opposite to what happened to Japan and Germany in the late nineties and thereafter. The continuing strengthening of the USD is due to the flight of the dollar from various countries to the USA by the operations of FIs and FII. Excess of money supply in the US economy will lead to runaway inflation which will further impact adversely its middle and lower class population. The imposition of high tariffs on imported goods will have the same effect.

If the USA chooses to abolish income tax alongside import tariff increase, it could very well end up with huge domestic fiscal deficits which will have to be met by debt or currency printing. Thus what the present US government contemplates could well land it into an economic inflationary spiral.

This situation will be exactly a more intense version of what the government desires to remedy presently. It could be almost something like falling from the frying pan into the fire.

The possibility of all this happening becomes pronounced because of the coming together of BRICS nations and the usage of parallel currencies for international trade. Also, the fact that many countries could well retaliate with counter-tariffs on the USA after the US imposed tariffs strengthens further the above possibility.

Given this, the best course of action for the US would be to link once again its currency with gold — a process of reversal of what was done in 1971. This will lend stability and sustainability to the US economy and also to the global economy. In general, the matter of trade tariffs is best left to individual countries, looking at their resources and economic circumstances.

Global countries have always been historically interdependent because of their specific areas of strengths and weaknesses in resources. The naturally existing areas of resource abundance and deficiency will remain. However social and political factors are dynamic and will always impinge on policy pronouncements. The prudent and perseverant will win even in this arena.

(The author is a management consultant based in New Delhi; views are personal)

The colours of identity: Unraveling the layers of race, bias and belonging

Among the many facets of identity, skin colour remains one of the most prominent yet divisive markers of difference

Variety. A singular word that carries depth, stretching across every horizon within our periphery. Everything, whether tangible or intangible, holds a streak of diversity, existing in more than just one form. The human race is the finest testament to this theory, embodying an expansive fluctuation of diversity in ways unparalleled. No two humans are exactly the same, no matter the similarity. From the obvious—gender, ethnicity, nationality—to the microscopic strands of DNA, variety defines existence.

Among the many dimensions of human diversity, skin colour stands as one of the most visible yet most divisive. The spectrum of human skin spans hues of black, brown, white, and even shades of yellow,



ALINA HUSSAIN

forming a palette that should symbolise coexistence. However, rather than being embraced as a natural manifestation of diversity, this spectrum has historically been distorted into a hierarchy. The darker shades, unfairly positioned at the bottom, contrast starkly with the privileges afforded to the lighter tones at the top. This stratification of color has shaped life experi-

ences, often determining opportunities, treatment, and social perceptions. India, with its rich cultural and genetic diversity, encapsulates nearly the entire range of this scale. To the global eye, Indians and their South Asian neighbours fall in the middle—brown. This stain of brownness seeps beyond national borders, appearing across continents where South Asians have migrated and settled. However, unlike colors on a painter's palette, which blend to create new shades, human societies tend to resist seamless integration. Instead, racial identities remain dissonant, sometimes even immiscible. The concept of being "white-washed" is one such manifestation of this resistance—an observation aimed at those who adopt

Western customs, implying a dilution of their native culture under the influence of whiteness. South Asians, however, have long held a deep connection to their cultural roots. Even in foreign lands, communities of brown-skinned individuals tend to cluster together, finding comfort and belonging among their own. This natural act of unity transcends national identities, allowing individuals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to identify simply as brown in predominantly white societies. Migration dissolves political boundaries, fostering a sense of kinship rooted in shared experiences rather than nationality. The primary reason for South Asian migration to the West



has historically been the pursuit of a better livelihood. The roots of this movement can be traced back to 19th-century colonisation, where white Europeans established themselves as the superior race while relegating the browns and blacks to a lower status. This racial hierarchy was not only imposed but deeply internalised, embedding itself into the psyche of societies across generations. The consequences of this structured superiority

continue to persist, subtly influencing perceptions and opportunities to this day. Though the era of overt, institutionalised racial discrimination has passed, its remnants linger. Silent racism manifests in subtle yet persistent ways—being followed in a store, being presumed guilty before proven innocent, or being typecast into stereotypes like "smelly" or "uncivilised."

The unspoken biases that people of color endure may be so ingrained in social interactions that they sometimes question whether their experiences of discrimination are real or imagined. But just because racism has grown quieter does not mean it has disappeared. At times, however, this silence gives way to overt expressions of prejudice. The question

then arises: can racism be unlearned? Can deep-seated biases, cultivated over centuries, be eradicated? Some argue that racism is built on a foundation of illusion—a false construct designed to uphold power structures rather than any scientific or logical basis. Commerce, globalisation and education might pave the way toward dismantling these biases, but the journey is long and uncertain.

Yet racism is not a one-way street. Just as people of color face discrimination in white-majority societies, white individuals experience racism in South Asian countries as well. Whether rooted in resentment from the colonial past, an ingrained inferiority complex, or sheer ignorance, racism in India and other parts of the

region is equally loud and apparent. This internal bias is a lingering vestige of colonial influence, stubborn and deeply embedded in the collective consciousness.

Ultimately, our skin color is an inescapable part of our identity. But as history has shown, social constructs evolve. Just as oppression once seemed an immutable reality but has gradually been challenged and deconstructed, so too can racial prejudices fade with time. While the road to a world free of color-based biases is long, there remains a glimmer of hope—a strip of rainbow amidst the storm, promising a better, more inclusive tomorrow.

(The writer is a law student and a freelance writer; views are personal)



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Quest for clean energy

With a strong financial backing, the country is poised to make nuclear power a cornerstone of its energy mix

As India continues its journey toward energy transition and sustainability, the role of nuclear power has become increasingly vital. The Union Budget 2025-26, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, earmarked Rs 20,000 crore for the Nuclear Energy Mission, aiming to significantly enhance India's nuclear energy capacity. This ambitious initiative is set to propel India towards achieving at least 100 GW of nuclear energy capacity by 2047, a significant leap from the current 8 GW. Presently, nuclear energy constitutes less than 2 per cent of India's total energy mix. With an installed capacity of 8 GW, India's nuclear sector lags behind other energy sources, such as coal, solar and wind. The Modi government is prioritising nuclear power as a stable and clean energy source. The July 2024 Budget had already set the stage for nuclear expansion by highlighting the need to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 to allow private sector participation in nuclear power generation. The 2025-26 Budget builds upon this foundation by reinforcing the push for small modular reactors (SMRs). India's ambitious renewable energy targets include achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030. While solar and wind energy play a crucial role in this mix, they are subject to weather conditions and require large-scale energy storage solutions. Nuclear energy, on the other hand, provides continuous, low-carbon power without the intermittency issues of renewables. SMRs, with a capacity of up to 300 MW, offer distinct advantages over conventional nuclear reactors. Their modular design allows for quicker assembly, reduced costs and enhanced safety features. By promoting indigenously developed SMRs, India aims to increase its self-reliance in nuclear technology and reduce dependency on foreign nations. The allocation of Rs 20,000 crore under the Nuclear Energy Mission signals a clear intent to boost nuclear power generation. This funding will support research and development in indigenous nuclear technologies, particularly SMRs. Infrastructure development will be a key focus, with plans to set up at least five SMRs by 2033 as part of a long-term nuclear expansion plan. Despite its benefits, nuclear energy in India faces several challenges. Regulatory barriers exist due to the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, which currently limit private sector involvement and require amendments. Public concerns on safety remain a significant issue, as nuclear accidents worldwide have created scepticism, necessitating stringent safety protocols. Technological monopolies present another challenge, as nuclear technology is concentrated among a few global players, making domestic capacity-building initiatives essential. But a push for nuclear energy is the need of the hours. It will reduce country's carbon footprint, enhance energy security, and meet its growing electricity demands sustainably.



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PICTALK



People fly kites at the annual Basant Panchmi festival in Amritsar

Budget 2025: A game changer for MSMEs and startups



MANISH SINGHAL

With focus on financial accessibility, technology and market linkages, the budget will strengthen India's startup ecosystem and boost employment

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of India's economic structure, contributing nearly 30 per cent to GDP, 45 per cent to our exports and generating employment for over 200 millions. The budget for 2025-26 holds much promise for the 5.7 crore MSMEs in India. As India chases its 'Viksit Bharat' dream, Agriculture, the MSME sector, Investment and Exports have been identified as the key engines for driving growth. MSMEs account for about 27 per cent of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), positioning themselves as the backbone of economic activity and growth.

Ranging from small-scale artisans and local service providers to growing businesses across rural and urban India, MSMEs are diverse and significantly contribute to industrial output and innovation in India. In line with the government's recognition of MSMEs as the 'second engine' of economic expansion, the 2025-26 Budget introduces key reforms to enhance financial accessibility, technological adoption, and market linkages. A notable step was the enhancement of the credit guarantee cover for MSMEs from Rs 5 crores to Rs 10 crores, leading to additional credit of Rs 1.5 lakh crore over the next 5 years. By enhancing the investment and turnover limits, the 20.09 million registered MSMEs (19.4 million micro-enterprises, 5,54,000 small enterprises and 52,000 medium enterprises) now have greater and easier access to capital for technological upgradation and to build efficiencies. Traditionally, MSMEs have battled limited access to affordable and timely credit, inadequate infrastructure, and complex regulations. The increased guarantee cover addresses one of the major pain points for MSMEs and start-ups while the budget's continued emphasis on skilling promises an ongoing supply of skilled labour.

As of January 2025, India has over 159,000 recognised startups, securing its place as the



world's third-largest startup ecosystem. The special funding options for start-ups and first-time entrepreneurs in the budget are likely to encourage more individuals to start businesses, innovate and generate employment. In this regard, to additional Rs 10,000 crore Fund of Funds Scheme (FFS) and the proposed Deep Tech Fund will provide crucial capital for startups, particularly in AI, Climate Tech, and Agri Tech. Enhanced MSME support and policies will improve the ease of doing business and further accelerate growth for future entrepreneurs. The new simplified taxation and regulatory framework will attract private capital, which in turn will further accelerate growth. Many MSMEs are labour-intensive. Key industries like leather, and textiles are major employment generators. The focus on improving productivity and quality of the leather industry goods through Government schemes that support design, machinery etc will positively impact the sector's export potential and generate employment too. With the Government's aim to make India a global hub for toys, MSMEs can consider setting up units in identified clusters to create an ecosystem that manufactures world-class toys while pro-

THE DIRECT TAX BENEFITS PROVIDED IN THE BUDGET WILL BOLSTER CONSUMPTION-LED DEMAND THROUGH ENHANCED DISPOSABLE INCOMES IN THE HANDS OF TAXPAYERS. THIS WILL FURTHER GIVE IMPETUS TO MSME PRODUCTION AND ENHANCE THEIR OVERALL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

moting Indian toy makers, who can perhaps use the infrastructure in these clusters to explore overseas markets. Food processing is another sector that has received attention in the budget and which can make the MSME sector in our country more robust. It gives our farmers an opportunity to sell their produce, gives businesses an opportunity to add value and also generates employment in the north-east region which needs more economic opportunities. The direct tax benefits provided in the Budget will bolster consumption-led demand through enhanced disposable incomes in the hands of taxpayers. This will further give impetus to MSME production and enhance their overall growth and development. Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and has rightfully received attention in the budget. Most of our farmers hold small and medium land areas and come under the MSME category. By focusing on 100 districts with low productivity, moderate crop intensity and below-average credit parameters, the farming output will get a boost. Missions promoting pulse cultivation, and fruit and vegetable cultivation are bound to improve agricultural practices, infrastructure,

employment opportunities, access to credit and promote the food processing industry. It will also help develop the backward areas of rural India and curtail urban migration significantly. The substantial increase in credit through Kisan credit cards is also commendable. India's traditional textiles have received a lift with the mission to improve cotton production using sustainable practices and technological support. Not just cotton farmers, but the Indian textile industry has a chance to reclaim its past glory, especially with the political upheaval in neighbouring Bangladesh pushing textile units there into a tailspin. The proposal to transform India Post into a large supply chain across rural India will link up rural artisans to entrepreneurs and markets. While these measures could significantly enhance the growth trajectory of MSMEs and startups, solidifying their role as key drivers of the Indian economy, the need for simpler cross-border payments to enable seamless global trade and include service exports under interest equalisation schemes could further reduce operational hurdles and encourage more units to be set up. (The writer is Secretary General, ASSOCHAM, views are personal)

The human touch in AI: Why we anthropomorphise machines



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

As AI continues to evolve, it is crucial to maintain clear boundaries between machine intelligence and human cognition

In an era increasingly defined by artificial intelligence (AI), a curious psychological phenomenon has emerged—humans are anthropomorphising AI tools. From virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa to large language models like ChatGPT, people often ascribe human-like emotions, intentions and even personalities to these systems. While this tendency may seem benign or even endearing, it has profound implications for society, ethics, and the way we perceive technology. By giving AI tools human-like names, voices and personalities, developers create a sense of familiarity and comfort. For instance, when Alexa responds with a cheerful "Hello!" or when ChatGPT uses conversational language to explain complex topics, users are more likely to feel at ease. This human-like interaction fosters trust, making people more willing to rely on AI for tasks ranging from scheduling appointments to providing emotional support. A lot of evidence points to psychological causes for this behaviour. As a species, we have an innate propensity to



attribute human characteristics to things that do not exist. Even inanimate things, like animals and objects, can have feelings and purposes. The advent of AI has amplified this tendency to an unprecedented degree by creating tools that can engage in decision-making, interactive communication and natural language processing in ways that are reminiscent of humans. Incorporating human-like characteristics into AI systems takes advantage of this natural propensity, making them appear more relatable and trustworthy. While the benefits of anthropomorphising AI are evident, the practice is not without its pitfalls. When AI tools are designed to mimic human behaviour too closely, users may forget they are interact-

ing with a machine. This blurring of lines can lead to over-reliance, misplaced trust, and even exploitation. For instance, a user might confide deeply personal information to a chatbot, unaware that their data could be stored, analysed, or misused. Deploying AI tools in delicate situations raises even more serious ethical concerns. Take into account the application of AI in counselling and treatment. Although a chatbot designed to mimic human behaviour can offer some assistance, it can't replace a human expert when it comes to empathy and moral reasoning. Users' potential misunderstanding of AI as a substitute for human therapists highlights the importance of openness and limits. The ethical ramifications of anthropomorphisation need to be considered by regulators and lawmakers as AI becomes more integrated into everyday life. AI tools do not yet possess awareness, emotions, or free will; thus, companies must be forthright in informing consumers of these limits. Another important point is

that AI could be used in a deceptive way. Companies and governments might use human-like AI to make convincing and emotionally engaging connections. AI chatbots used for customer service or political campaigns might quietly sway people's views and choices, which raises concerns about ethics and whether users agree to this influence. While AI can enhance productivity, creativity, and convenience, it is essential to maintain a clear distinction between human intelligence and machine intelligence. Designers should focus on developing efficient and useful AI without encouraging unrealistic emotional attachments. Additionally, individuals should cultivate a healthy scepticism toward AI interactions, recognising the sophisticated abilities yet realising that they are fundamentally non-human. The moment humans forget social interactions and machines start social interactions, it's the end of humanity. (The writer is the Dean-Academic Affairs, at Garden City University; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AMERICA RAISES TARIFFS

Madam—The United States has decided to increase tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China. This step can be considered significant in enhancing America's self-reliance and strengthening domestic industries. From the American perspective, this policy aims to boost their economy, increase domestic employment opportunities, and reduce the trade deficit. It will lead to a higher demand for local products in the US, thereby strengthening its production capacity.

For India, this situation could open new opportunities. The additional 10 per cent tariff on China may benefit Indian exporters, as it could make Indian products more competitive in the US market. Sectors such as textiles, IT and automobiles are particularly likely to experience growth in exports. Moreover, this decision could also support India's 'Make in India' initiative. If India strengthens its manufacturing capabilities, it could become a better alternative to China for the US. This situation has the potential to further deepen India-US trade relations. Thus, while this policy might pose challenges for some countries, it could create new opportunities for developing nations like India. If India aligns its production and export strategies effectively, it can emerge as a key player in global trade.

R K Jain | Barwani

TAX RELIEF FOR MIDDLE CLASS

Madam—This year's Union Budget of FY 2025-26 is one of the most special ones among every such Union Budget being presented in Modi's prime ministerial term. One of the welcoming aspects of the budget is its substantial focus on the middle class section of society. So far, in the last decade, the Budget's on the table were serving the two extremes of the society, either the poor class or the rich class. In an attempt to please these extreme sections of society, the government often misses the opportunity to cater to the aspirations of the larger line of society formed by the middle class. The cherry on the cake for the

Women U-19 win T20 World Cup



India beat South Africa by nine wickets in the 2025 U-19 T20 World Cup final at the Bayuemas Oval in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur. Champions India won all their group-stage matches against West Indies, Malaysia and Sri Lanka before getting the better of Bangladesh and Scotland in the Super Six. In the semifinal, they defeated England to make it six wins on the bounce. Meanwhile, South Africa topped Group C with wins over New Zealand, Samoa, and Nigeria.

In the Super Six round, South Africa defeated Ireland but had to share points with the USA after the game was abandoned due to rain. In the semifinal, they defeated Australia by five wickets to seal their spot in the final. In the final, India defeated South Africa by nine wickets to win the coveted trophy. Jayanthi S Maniam | Mumbai

middle class people is the increase in the personal income tax slab from erstwhile 7 to 12 lakhs. Just like the government tries every possible attempt to lure the state of Bihar with multiple announcements, similarly, the government's focus on the middle class is welcoming. The nutritional scheme-like revamping of the poshan abhiyaan, the establishment of five centres of excellence for skilling, Saksham Anganwadi, the National Manufacturing Mission, and so on are among the welcoming initiatives from the side of the government. We hope that the middle-class section of society will happily enjoy the upcoming year with quality improvement on their wellbeing and attentive focus. Hopefully the middle class businessmen as well as the salary class will gain from the welcoming developments announced in the budget 2025-26. Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

SONIA GANDHI DRAWS FLAK

Madam—Apropos of the headlines (February 1) 'Rashtrapati Bhavan Slams the Congress' and PM Modi's scathing attack

on Congress, Sonia Gandhi's unsavoury comments on President Draupadi Murmu have been widely criticised in public. The slangs like 'boring', 'tired', and 'poor lady' demean the supreme constitutional authority and supreme commander of armed forces. In the presidential elections, Congress had opposed President Murmu. Embroiling the president in a political wrangle must be condemned. Congress is setting new records of low politics. The ruckus the Congress party created on Hindenburg reports in the Parliament, media, and demonstrations met the inevitable tragic end when the Hindenburg Research wound up its operations. Nothing could be proved, but of course, it misled the people. Congress has not spared any constitutional authority from the Election Commission, CAG, Supreme Court and now the President herself. Congress has finally written its script of losing credibility as a political party. Vinod Johri | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

IN BRIEF



Rupee falls 55 paise to breach 87 level against USD

The rupee plunged 55 paise to close at an all-time low of 87.17 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, as global market sentiments were impacted after the Trump administration slapped tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China. Forex traders said the Indian rupee touched a fresh all-time low on a surge in the US Dollar index and weak global markets after Trump Tariffs on Canada Mexico, and China triggered fears of a broad trade war. Donald Trump slapped Canada and Mexico with 25 per cent duties and China with a 10 per cent duty. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a weak note at 87.00 and touched an intraday low of 87.29 against the American currency during the session. The local unit finally settled at a record closing low of 87.17 (provisional), lower by 55 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee settled flat at 86.62 against the American currency. "We expect the rupee to trade with negative bias on strong US Dollar and FI outflows amid a weak trend in the domestic markets."



Lupin gets USFDA nod for generic HIC drug

Drug maker Lupin on Monday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market a generic medication for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. The company has received tentative approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for Darunavir, Cobicistat, Emtricitabine, and Tenofovir Alafenamide tablets, the company said in a statement. The company's product has been found to be therapeutically equivalent to the reference listed drug Symtuza tablets, 800 mg/150 mg/200 mg/10 mg of Janssen Products, LP, it added. Lupin is the exclusive first-to-file for this product, it stated. As per the IQVIA MAT December 2024 data, Darunavir, Cobicistat, Emtricitabine, and Tenofovir Alafenamide tablets had estimated annual sales of USD 1,374 million in the US. Shares of Lupin were trading 1.29 per cent down at Rs 2,028.70 apiece on BSE.



'US duties provide export opportunities for India'

The imposition of customs duties by the US on imports from China, Canada, and Mexico provides huge export opportunities for India to America, exporters say. The tariffs would affect exports from China, Canada, and Mexico to the US as they would push prices of their goods in the American market, making them less competitive. "The move can create opportunities for Indian exports due to the trade diversion effects as US buyers will seek alternative suppliers to avoid higher costs," Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said. He said the extent of benefits depends on India's production capacity and competitiveness. "The sectors which are likely to gain are electrical machinery and components, auto components, mobile, pharma, chemicals, apparel, fabrics," Sahai added. US President Donald Trump on Saturday signed an order to impose stiff tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada and China, fulfilling a campaign promise but raising the prospect of increased prices for American consumers.

Cipla to infuse ZAR 900 mn in South African arm

Pharma major Cipla Ltd on Monday said it will invest about ZAR 900 million (nearly Rs 415 crore) in equity share capital of its South African arm Cipla Medpro South Africa Proprietary Ltd. Cipla Medpro South Africa Proprietary Ltd (CMSA), is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cipla, and is the holding firm for the group operations in South Africa. The group is involved in the manufacturing, marketing, and supply of pharmaceutical products. "The investment will be utilised to reduce intergroup debt and improve the capital structure of CMSA and its subsidiaries," Cipla said in a regulatory filing. The transaction is expected to be completed on or before February 28, 2025 or such other date mutually agreed between the parties, it added.

Large number of investors coming to explore biz opportunities: Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A large contingent of investors from four European nation bloc EFTA and Israel are visiting India next week to explore business opportunities, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said.

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

Visit of more than 100 investors from EFTA member countries assumes significance as it has signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with India on March 10, 2024.

Under the pact, India has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates, and cut and polished diamonds at lower or



zero duties. The pact is expected to come into force by the end of this year.

Goyal said EFTA representatives are coming with over 100 investors. More than 200 investors are expected to visit from Israel. The three-day visit will start from February 10.

"Big companies are coming. People with interests in technology and setting manufacturing units (are coming)," he added.

The EFTA bloc committed an investment of USD 100 billion -- USD 50 billion within 10 years after the implementation of the agreement and another USD 50 billion in the next five years -- which would facilitate the creation of 1 million direct jobs in India.

This is a first-of-its-kind

pledge agreed upon in any of the trade deals signed by India so far.

EFTA countries are not part of the European Union (EU). It is an inter-governmental organisation for the promotion and intensification of free trade. It was founded as an alternative for states that did not wish to join the European community.

India is separately negotiating a comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU, the 27-nation bloc.

India-EFTA two-way trade was about USD 24 billion in 2023-24 against USD 18.65 billion in 2022-23. The trade gap is in the favour of the bloc.

Switzerland is the largest trading partner and investor in India followed by Norway in the bloc.

India received USD 10.72 billion in foreign direct investment from Switzerland during April 2000 and September 2024.

FM to address RBI board on 8th

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to address the Reserve Bank of India's central board on February 8 and highlight key points of the Budget FY26, including significant income tax relief to boost demand. The meeting

would take place a day after the RBI announces the outcome of the Monetary Policy Committee meeting amid wide expectation of a rate cut by the central bank to boost moderating GDP growth. The post-budget meeting has been scheduled for February 8

where the finance minister will address the board members and talk about announcements made in the Budget 2025-26 that strike a fine balance between growth and fiscal prudence, sources said. It is customary for the finance minister to address the RBI board

after the budget. Unveiling the Budget on February 1 in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said, "our endeavour will be to keep the fiscal deficit each year such that the central government debt remains on a declining path as a percentage of the GDP."

Sensex snaps 5-day rising streak, declines by 319 points

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed lower on Monday tracking weak global markets amid concerns over US President Donald Trump imposing tariffs on some of its trading partners.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 319.22 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 77,186.74, snapping its five-day rally. Intra-day, it tumbled 749.87 points or 0.96 per cent to 76,756.09. The NSE Nifty declined 121.10 points or 0.52 per cent to 23,361.05.

From Sensex shares, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, Hindustan Unilever, Asian Paints, ITC, Power Grid, NTPC and Reliance Industries were the major laggards.

Among the gainers, Bajaj Finance jumped over 5 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Bharti Airtel and Maruti also ended higher.

The 25 per cent tariff on most imports from Canada and Mexico and 10 per cent tariff on goods from China will take effect from Tuesday.



The BSE smallcap gauge tanked 1.77 per cent and mid-cap index declined 0.89 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, capital goods tanked 4.29 per cent, industrials (3.79 per cent), power (3.30 per cent), utilities (2.71 per cent), oil & gas (2.52 per cent) and metal (1.99 per cent).

BSE healthcare, IT, consumer durables, teck and BSE Focused IT were the gainers. As many as 2,877 stocks declined while 1,139 advanced and 168 remained unchanged on the BSE. Meanwhile, India's manu-

facturing sector growth started the year 2025 on a strong footing and touched a six-month high in January, fuelled by the steepest upturn in exports in nearly 14 years, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose from December's one-year low of 56.4 to 57.7 in January supported by the fastest upturn in new export orders since February 2011.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled sharply lower.

Markets in Europe were trading with deep cuts. US markets ended lower on Friday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.15 per cent to USD 76.50 a barrel.

The BSE Sensex has closed marginally up 5.39 points at 77,505.96 on Saturday. The Nifty dipped 26.25 points to 23,482.15. The domestic equity markets were open on Saturday due to the presentation of the Union Budget

Gold jumps Rs 400 to breach Rs 85,000-mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices jumped Rs 400 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 85,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday on the back of continued demand by jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Traders said sharp depreciation in rupee and firm trends in the international markets lifted gold rates to record high levels.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at Rs 84,900 per 10 grams on Saturday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose for the fourth straight session by climbing Rs 400 to hit another record high of Rs 84,900 per 10 grams. The yellow metal ended at Rs 84,500 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. Rallying for the fifth consecutive session, silver increased Rs 300 to Rs 96,000 per kg on Monday. The white metal finished at Rs 95,700 per kg in the previous market close.

India, UK to resume talks on proposed trade agreement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the UK are expected to resume the talks for the proposed free trade agreement from February 24, an official said.

The UK trade minister is likely to visit the national capital soon, the official said.

The talks for the proposed FTA began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles.

The agreement is aimed at boosting bilateral trade and investments.

In such pacts, two countries either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties of maximum goods traded between them. They also ease norms for promoting trade in services and bilateral investments.

The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty.

On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary

items.

Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services, including banking and insurance.

The talks for the agreement may get an impetus as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman



on Saturday proposed to raise the foreign investment limit to 100 per cent in the insurance sector as part of new-generation financial sector reforms.

Presenting Union Budget 2025-26, the Finance Minister has said the foreign direct investment (FDI) limit for the insurance sector will be raised from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

The two countries are also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT).

There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which includes goods, services, investments and intellectual property rights.

RBI may cut interest rate by 25 bps, say experts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The RBI is likely to reduce the key interest rate by 25 basis points this week after keeping it on hold for two years, complementing the Union Budget initiatives to push consumption-led demand, though the sliding rupee continues to be a concern.

As the retail inflation has remained within the Reserve Bank's comfort zone (less than 6 per cent) for most of the year, the central bank can take rate action to boost growth hit by sluggish consumption, opined experts.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the repo rate (short-term lending rate) unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February 2023.

The last time the RBI had reduced the rate was during the Covid times (May 2020) and thereafter, it was gradually raised to 6.5 per cent.

Newly appointed Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra will be chairing his first Monetary Policy

Committee (MPC) meeting starting Wednesday.

The decision of the six-member panel will be announced on Friday (February 7).

"There is a higher probability of a rate cut this time for two reasons. First, the RBI has already announced liquidity enhancement measures, which



have improved conditions in the market. This appeared to be a prerequisite for cutting rates," said Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda.

Sabnavis further said the Union Budget has provided a boost and it may be appropriate to lower the repo rate in tandem to support the same.

The Reserve Bank has announced measures to infuse Rs 1.5 lakh crore worth of liquidity in the banking system on January 27.

Govt working on uniform toll policy: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The road transport ministry is working on a uniform toll policy to benefit national highway users, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Monday.

Gadkari also asserted that now India's highway infrastructure matches that of the US.

"We are working on a uniform toll policy. It will address the problem faced by the commuters," he told PTI in an interview, without elaborating further.

Gadkari was responding to a question on simmering discontent among users of



National Highways on account of high toll charges and sub-par road-user experience.

The longest-serving road transport and highways min-

ister said that the ministry has decided to initially implement a barrier-less global navigation satellite system (GNSS)-based toll collection system on national highways.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Gadkari said, has been taking the complaints made by commuters on social media very seriously and is taking strong action against contractors involved.

At present, while private cars constitute about 60 per cent of the traffic on national highways, the share of toll revenue from these vehicles is barely 20-26 per cent.

Toll charges have increased on highways even as more and more stretches have come under the tolling system over the past 10 years, often leading to rising user discontent.

Total toll collection in India touched Rs 64,809.86 crore in 2023-24, a 35 per cent rise over the previous year. The collection was Rs 27,503 crore in 2019-20.

All user fee plazas on National Highways are established as per the provision of National Highways Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008 and the respective Concession Agreement.

'AI skills will boost career growth'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 94 per cent of Indian professionals surveyed believe that mastering AI skills will fast-track their career growth, according to 2025 Global Workplace Skills Study conducted by Emeritus.

The study underlined that India is experiencing a transformative wave of Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration in workplaces, prompting working professionals to learn the necessary skills and tools for the future.

The study, which surveyed over 6,000 respondents across 18 countries aged 21-65 work-



ing across sectors such as finance and insurance, manufacturing, software & IT services, and education, among others, revealed that Indian professionals are leading the global AI adoption curve. "An impressive 96 per cent

of Indian professionals are using AI and generative AI tools at work, significantly higher than the 81 per cent in the US and 84 per cent in the UK. As a result, 95 per cent of Indian workers report increased productivity due to

these technologies, outpacing the global average," it revealed.

Indian professionals are prioritising AI skills to stay competitive, with 90 per cent considering AI and generative AI crucial for future career success.

Moreover, 94 per cent view AI expertise as essential not only for career advancement but also for diversifying across industries -- far surpassing the global average of 87 per cent.

Notably, machine learning is among the top five most sought-after skills in India, with professionals twice as likely as global counterparts to focus on it, as per the report.

White-collar hiring up 4 pc: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

White-collar hiring activities in January witnessed 4 per cent growth driven by traditional sectors, including FMCG, pharma and insurance, according to a report released on Monday.

"In 2024, January had greeted us with a disappointing 11 per cent de-growth in hiring. In contrast, 2025 seems to have started on a positive note.

The 4 per cent hiring growth is tempered as IT recovery settles in, however, strong growth in most core sectors, including FMCG, pharma, insurance and hospitality is a good sign and augurs well for a cracking 2025 in terms of white collar hiring," Naukri Chief Business Officer Pawan Goyal said in a statement quoting NaukriJobSpeak Index.

The report revealed a steady hiring environment with strong performances in core sectors like FMCG (16 per cent), insurance (15 per cent), and pharma (11 per cent), and hospitality by

8 per cent, while IT hiring remained flat, the report added.

The Naukri JobSpeak is a monthly index representing the Indian job market and hiring activity based on new job listings and job-related searches by recruiters on the resume database of Naukri.com.

Meanwhile, Rajasthan emerged as a standout performer in January's hiring landscape with cities like Jodhpur and Udaipur recording impressive growth rates of 35 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively.

Jaipur also continued its upward trajectory with 21 per cent overall growth, said the report. This regional dynamism extends beyond IT, with multiple sectors showing strong growth in non-traditional hubs, it added. It was also witnessed in the aviation and aerospace industry, which recorded an exceptional 33 per cent year-on-year growth, with Delhi-NCR witnessing a staggering 77 per cent surge in hiring.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
 EE-Div 16/EE/Divn.16/SBZ/GHMC
 Nit No: 41/Cr-16/Engg-Div-16/SBZ/GHMC/2024-25 Dt. 03-02-2025
 Name of the work: Civil works in Ambespet Circle-16, Secunderabad Zone, GHMC, Tender
 Amount Rs. 3.94 Lakhs SI. No. 1 to 6 Start Date: 03-02-2025 From 3:00 PM. Last Date &
 Time for receipt of Bid: 07/02/2025 at 3:00 PM. Sr. KRAMESH BABU, Executive Engineer,
 Division-16, Circle-16 Ambespet, Sec'd Zone, GHMC Cell: 6309025091/ 8790374055.
 Address of the Concerned Executive Engineer: Div-16, SBZ, GHMC Abds, Greater
 Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. Further details can be seen at E-Procurement
 www.tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer
 Div-16, SBZ, GHMC

'I'm happy Sidharth Shukla and I could dominate Bigg Boss just the way we did'

In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, Karan Veer Mehra reflected on his journey through the high-pressure world of reality television, from winning Khatron Ke Khiladi 14 to becoming the back-to-back champion of Bigg Boss 18. Whether navigating misunderstandings over his sharp humour or staying focused on personal connections over strategy, he proved that real victory comes from being genuine

TEJAL SINHA
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Winning Khatron Ke Khiladi 14 was no small feat, but Karan Veer Mehra didn't stop there. He went on to conquer Bigg Boss 18, and become a back-to-back winner of two of India's most challenging reality shows. With his trademark resilience, sharp wit, and unwavering authenticity, he proved that he wasn't just playing a game - he was living it. Whether facing extreme stunts or navigating the mind games of the Bigg Boss house, he remained true to himself, earning not just the trophy but the admiration of countless fans. As he steps into the next chapter of his journey, he reflects on the rollercoaster ride that tested his strength, shaped his perspective, and reinforced his belief that real victory lies in staying true to who you are.

While many contestants enter these competitions with a clear game plan, he insists his journey was about authenticity and self-discovery, in this exclusive chat with The Pioneer. Reflecting on his Bigg Boss 18 experience, he described it as a "mini-life" he lived inside the house. "It made me learn a lot of things, and I hope to implement all of that in the real world now. I really enjoyed being inside and would have loved to stay longer," he shared. Known for his fitness discipline, he became synonymous with rigorous workout sessions in the Bigg Boss house. However, he acknowledged that this was

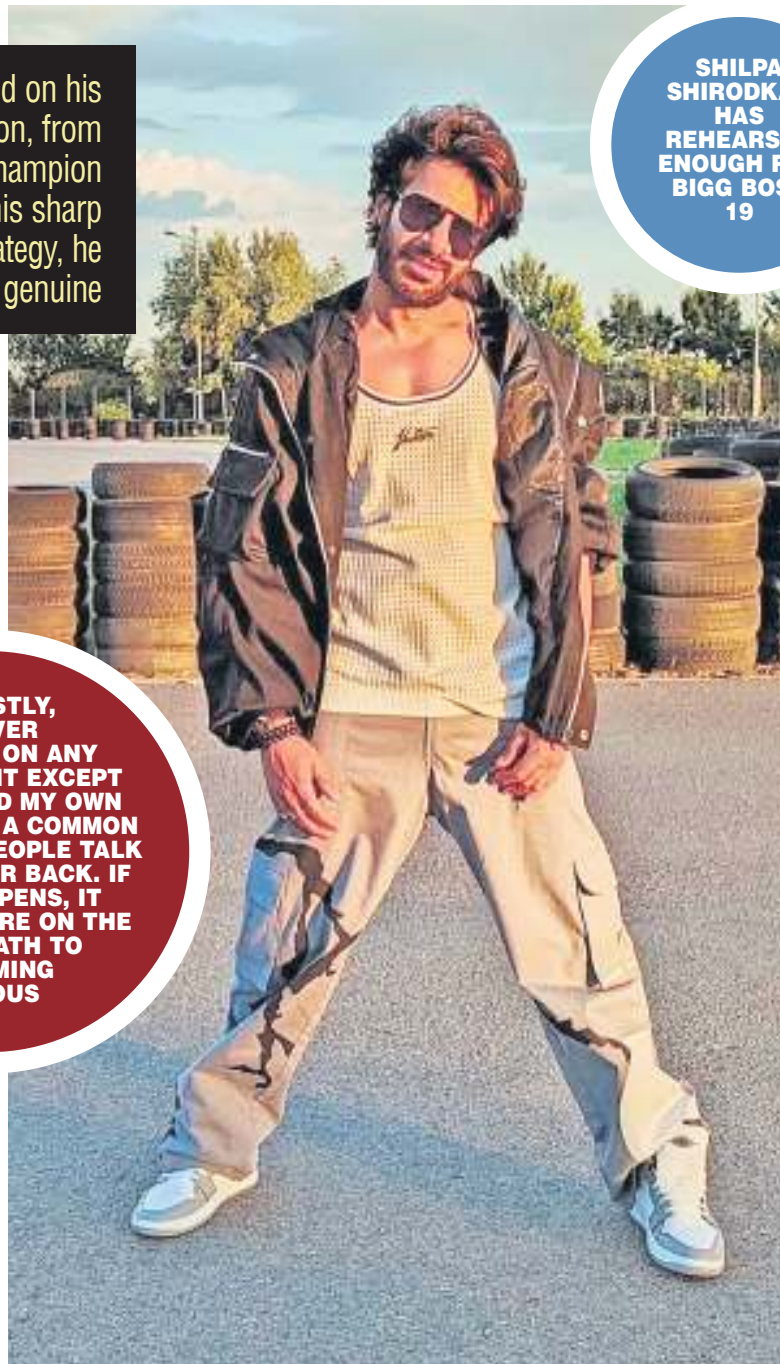
a reason that initially made him focus on himself rather than the rest. "I was not really chilling - I was too much in the gym. That's what I was made to realize," he admitted.

Apart from his workouts, Mehra's sharp wit and one-liners also stirred controversy. He explained that his humor was often misinterpreted. "I was coming up with one-liners that people couldn't comprehend. Once they told me that my one-liners were actually demeaning, that's when the fights began. That's when I had to start clearing my point of view," he explained.

Unlike many contestants who strategize to form alliances, he approached relationships organically. "I never forced a relationship. It started off with a task - 'Rajmata' and her two Yuvraj. You have to understand, the only person who plays the game is Bigg Boss himself. You just have to be honest and true to yourself," he remarked.

Speaking about his Bigg Boss housemate Vivian, he described him as 'a nice guy' who needed more time to process situations. "I think 105 days weren't enough for him. Maybe if he had stayed longer, he would have understood the relationships more clearly," he said.

Addressing speculation about post-



SHILPA SHIRODKAR HAS REHEARSED ENOUGH FOR BIGG BOSS 19

HONESTLY, I NEVER FOCUSED ON ANY CONTESTANT EXCEPT MYSELF AND MY OWN PEOPLE. IT'S A COMMON FACT THAT PEOPLE TALK BEHIND YOUR BACK. IF THAT HAPPENS, IT MEANS YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT PATH TO BECOMING FAMOUS

show get-togethers, he clarified that he harbors no grudges. "If I throw a party - which I'm definitely talking about myself - I will invite everybody, including Vivian and Nouran."

He also spoke about Eisha's public apologies for her behavior in the house but admitted that he never paid much attention to the drama surrounding other contestants. "Honestly, I never focused on any contestant except myself and my own people. It's a common fact that people talk behind your back. If that happens, it means you're on the right path to becoming famous."

"Let me be the king who has won hearts. I don't aspire to be a legend; I'm simply enjoying my kingdom," Karan shares with a smile, as we discuss the viral cake picture that took over social media after Vivian's party.

Reflecting on his Bigg Boss 18 victory, Karan acknowledges, "I must have been a tough competitor, and that's why some people didn't clap when I won. I always say, it's okay to lose a battle, but never act like a loser. Unfortunately, some people behaved like that. I would never have done that."

As the conversation shifts, Karan hints at what's next for the Bigg Boss universe, mentioning Shilpa's upcoming season. "She's finally ready for her next season. She's rehearsed enough for Bigg Boss 19," Karan humorously teases, suggesting there's more to come in the world of reality television.

On his bond with fellow contestant Chum, Karan revealed that they are still adjusting to life outside the house. "We're still acclimatizing to the fact that we've come out of the house. We're taking it slow. Of course, we are very good friends, and what happens from here will happen naturally," he shared.

He acknowledged that he was seen as a strong competitor, which led to mixed reactions. "It must have been tough competition, and that's one of the reasons some people didn't clap when I won. But I always say, it's okay to lose a battle, but don't behave like a loser. Some people, unfortunately, did just that," he remarked.

Throughout his Bigg Boss 18 journey,

Mehra experienced numerous high points. He recalled the intense task, where he carried his fellow contestant Edin for about four hours, as well as fun moments like dancing, jumping in the pool, and late-night parties.

However, he admitted to one small regret. "I cut Rajat's beard, though he looked good in it, but later, I kind of regretted it. I even offered to let him cut my beard in return."

Many fans have compared Bigg Boss 18 to the legendary Bigg Boss 13, a season that remains one of the most popular in the show's history. Mehra was humbled by the comparison and proud of how his season was conducted.

"I'm a big fan of Bigg Boss 13, and I'm happy that our season is being compared to it. The digital reach has expanded, so obviously, every season will keep growing. But what I'm really proud of is that this was a clean season - no excessive abusive language, no physical fights, and none of the extreme incidents like throwing urine, which I had seen in earlier seasons. I hope every season from now on is compared to Bigg Boss 18," he said.

He was also honored to be mentioned in the same breath as the late Sidharth Shukla. "Sidharth was a very different guy - large-hearted and strong. He won Khatron and the Bigg Boss. I'm just happy that only two of us could dominate Bigg Boss the way we did. Let that be history," he stated.

Despite winning, he insisted that he never entered Bigg Boss with a competitive mindset. "Not for a moment did I think I couldn't go till the end - because I wasn't in a race. I wasn't trying to impress someone. I wasn't playing for the trophy. I was just living," he said.

He revealed that he was so immersed in the experience that he could have stayed even longer. "I told the makers, 'This is just getting started. I could have stayed another 105 days.' I was just living a parallel life," he reflected.

Now that he has conquered reality television, Mehra is focused on what's next. "The next step is going to be the main step. I just want to make sure I don't let my audience down. I want to do something as big as Bigg Boss, if not bigger," he said.

This wedding season, skip costly polluting gifts

The great Indian wedding is deeply rooted in cultural traditions and specificities. The rituals may vary from region to region, but the celebratory spirit remains universal. Weddings are also occasions where family members and friends express their affection via thoughtful gifts for the couple. This wedding season, why not consider a few environmentally friendly gift options to make the celebrations even more meaningful?

GIFTING A GROVE

Planting a sapling in the couple's name is a meaningful gift as it nourishes ecologically sensitive areas by preserving biodiversity, expanding wildlife habitats and naturally purifying the air. Social enterprises like Grow-Trees.com provide a unique way - the 'Grove concept' - to celebrate weddings through group gifting that creates a lasting impact. Friends and family can plant trees to honour the couple, symbolising their union and commitment to a greener future.

ECO-FRIENDLY KEEPSAKES

A keepsake is a small, meaningful item meant to be cherished forever. Why not make it even more special by choosing eco-sensitive options? Consider gifts like lockets with real flowers, handmade diaries, hand-painted tote bags crafted from natural fibres, or steel, copper, and earthen curios and utensils. These thoughtful yet impactful

gestures not only create lasting memories but also reflect a commitment to the environment, adding deeper significance to your gift.

ZERO-WASTE WEDDING KITS

Are you thinking of a wedding gift hamper? Why not choose a zero-waste option? For instance, a bamboo box filled with eco-friendly items such as a seed kit, a diary or journal made from recycled materials, a stainless-steel straw set, a jute or linen tote bag, recycled pens, a handmade luxury soap bar, and a coconut shell soy wax candle. These earth-friendly hampers are not only thoughtful for the bride and groom but also beneficial for the planet.

PLANTABLE WEDDING CARDS

The bride and the groom too can make their wedding zero waste by making mindful choices. They could opt for seed paper invitations that can be planted to grow into beautiful plants. These thoughtfully crafted cards leave a minimal carbon footprint, allowing the couple to plant a love for posterity. The seeds can be carefully chosen based on the season of the wedding, as certain varieties thrive better during specific months.



Winter hair woes? Tips for your healthy locks

Our hair suffers the most during the winter months, which can result in increased hair loss and other issues. Knowing how winter impacts our hair is crucial so that we can take the appropriate precautions to keep them nourished and healthy. Let's look at some easy ways to keep your hair healthy and fight winter hair fall.

OIL MESSAGES

For a refreshing and soothing experience, try oil massages for your hair during the winter. Hair oils encourage the production of natural oil by moisturising hair follicles and increasing blood flow to the scalp. Massage with some warmed coconut, olive, or almond oil, then rinse. For optimal effects, heat the hair oil until it is lukewarm before applying it to the scalp. Oil your hair twice a week.

CONSUME HYDRATING, NUTRIENT-DENSE FOODS

Your hair, like your body, longs for the nice things in life. Make sure your diet is well-balanced and full of important minerals and vitamins, including omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins A, E, and D. Stuff it

full of hydrating meals, such as fresh vegetables and juicy fruits. These include every vitamin and mineral your hair requires to remain healthy and beautiful.

AVOID CHEMICAL TREATMENTS

You must exercise patience because hair loss does not occur suddenly. Stick to a hair care regimen that includes shampoo, conditioners, oiling, and hair masks and avoid trying out new products. Frequent testing and chemical treatments could worsen the damage and exacerbate hair loss. Select reliable hair brands and use the appropriate product for

your hair type and issues.

USE HYDRATING HAIR CARE PRODUCTS

Select hair care products designed especially for dry, winter-prone hair. Get deep conditioning treatments for your hair on a regular basis. By nourishing and rehydrating your hair, they can keep it from becoming fragile and brittle. Even while it could be tempting to have a hot shower in the winter, too much heat can make you feel dry. Instead, use lukewarm water to prevent the loss of essential oils in your hair.

ANTI-HAIR FALL AYURVEDIC SUPPLEMENTS

Winter can worsen hair fall as the cold weather makes the scalp dry and brittle, leading to hair loss. Combat this with an anti-hair fall Ayurvedic supplement enriched with potent herbs like Bhringraj, Amla, Brahmi, and Ashwagandha. These ingredients strengthen hair from the roots, improve blood circulation to the scalp, and nourish hair follicles, reducing seasonal hair fall. Infused with natural antioxidants, this supplement also helps balance doshas, promoting overall hair health.



(The author, Dr. Swathi Ramamurthy, is the Head, R&D at Purely Yours.)

CARDIOVASCULAR RISKS SPIKE FOR MOTHERS OF TWINS

Women who give birth to twins face twice the risk of developing heart-related complications compared to those with singleton pregnancies, according to a new study published in the European Heart Journal. The research high-

lights a significant rise in cardiovascular risks for mothers of twins, particularly within the first year post-partum.

Conducted by researchers from Rutgers University, the study analyzed data from 36 million hospital deliveries across the U.S.

Wood Johnson Medical School, explained the physiological burden of carrying twins. "The maternal heart works harder for twin pregnancies than for singleton pregnancies,

and it takes weeks for the maternal heart to return to its pre-pregnancy state," she said.

Lin emphasized that even mothers of twins who did not experience pregnancy-related high blood pressure should be aware of the increased short-term cardiovascular risks. The study found that among twin pregnancies with normal blood pressure, the rate of hospitalizations for heart-related conditions was nearly twice as high as in singleton pregnancies.

For mothers of twins who had preeclampsia or other hypertensive disorders during pregnancy, the risk of hospitalization for heart disease soared more than eightfold compared to mothers of singletons with normal blood pressure.

Interestingly, the study also noted that while the risk of heart disease is initially higher in twin pregnancies, the long-term mortality rate—including deaths from heart disease—was greater in mothers of singletons who had high blood pressure during pregnancy. This suggests that while twin pregnancies pose an immediate cardiovascular challenge, mothers of singletons with hypertension may have underlying heart health risks that persist beyond the first year postpartum.



what's brewing?



Anusha



Ananth Diamonds Telangana flagship showroom was inaugurated by Ch. Sailaja Kiron - Managing Director, Margadarsi, attended by Rekha Rani - Commissioner, Handloom & Textiles, AP, along with Ananth Diamonds Managing Directors Venkata Bhanu Prakash and Vishnu Priya at Road No.46A, Jubilee hills



Vishnu priya



Hemani



National Silk Expo 2025 inauguration by Celebrity Secrets Founder Dr Madhavi Chowdary at Road No. 12, Kalinga Cultural Hall, Banjara Hills



Saraspathi



Dr Madhavi Chowdary



Rekha Rani



Sailaja kiron



Swatantra Rani



sekhar and Bhanu prakash

PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



Aanchal



HUX- Symbol of Quality opens it's experience centre at Banjara Hills, Hyderabad. Marketed by Maruti Aluminium Corporation, this place is indeed a place that serves the need of your home, office, lounge and other interiors



Priyanka



Pallavi



Shruti



Ruchika



Rahini

Tourism Malaysia is set to launch its largest-ever roadshow mission (Sales Mission) to India, taking place from February 3-7, 2025. The mission will visit key cities Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Kochi, featuring a delegation of 62 sellers from Malaysia. This mission aims to emphasize growing opportunities in the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sector, as well as wedding tourism, alongside traditional leisure travel, with a special focus on India's southern region. Hishamuddin Mustafa, Director, Tourism Malaysia, Chennai, Datuk Manoharan Periasamy, Director General, Tourism Malaysia and Nuwal Fadhilah Ku Azmi, Director, International Promotion, Asia and Africa seen at the press meet at Marriott



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



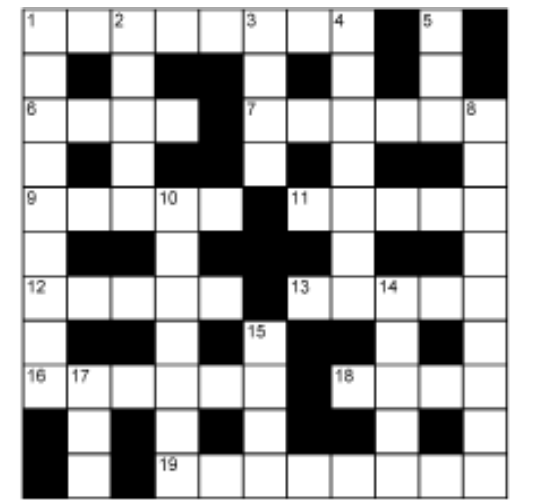
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- Sparkling precious stones
- A machine for weaving
- This vehicle has no wheels and is pulled over snow
- Make a rough estimate
- Clamber up
- Prepare for a sports match
- Where a cow stores its milk
- A dry land with few plants
- A long soft seat
- A group of words which makes sense

DOWN

- Extremely pleased
- Overhead
- A bird makes this
- Detected with the nose
- False hair on the head
- Bears do this in the winter
- These spin webs
- Die under water
- Astound
- A female sheep



GINGER MEGGS



I won't change my stand and character for someone: Bunny Vasu

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Bunny Vasu is the talking point in the industry as his film 'Thandel' is releasing on February 7. Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi are playing the lead in this love story directed by Chandoo Mondeti. Bunny Vasu is also one of the few people who worked closely with top producer Allu Aravind and his son Allu Arjun. Interestingly, he is also very close to Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan.

Actually, his name was on the list to contest in the last elections, but at the last minute, he dropped out. When asked about it, he said he is close to Pawan Kalyan and also to Allu family. So with the differences cropping up between those two families, people talk more about Bunny Vasu, whether he is under pressure and also can he handle the situation well?

"Yes, hundred per cent it is true and I can handle the situation and I have the talent and courage. But for me, the timely incidents and the situation are causing some embarrassment. But when I was open and genuine, people could misunderstand. But in the long run, my stability and how I took my stand definitely proved me as being perfect," said Bunny Vasu. He added that he won't change anything for someone. "Whatever they think about me, I won't change my character and also my stand. I will go with my flow. Then only everything will fall in place," said Bunny Vasu.

He even got an opportunity to contest in the last elections, but he took a decision not to contest. "Yes, it is true that I got an opportunity to contest in the last elections. But I think two things, one is I have to look at financial strength, because politics is not that

THANDEL PRODUCER BUNNY VASU TALKS ABOUT WHY HE DIDN'T ENTER INTO POLITICS, THE ALLU AND MEGA FAMILY DISPUTES, HANDLING ISSUES REGARDING THE ALLU ARJUN INCIDENT, THE RISK TAKEN FOR HIS FILM AND MANY MORE...

easy, I have a few responsibilities as a family person. When I decide to contest, I have to spend time with people and I can't sit here. If I give the commitment to Kalyan garu, I have to abide by it. If I can't stand by my commitment, he will put me aside, and it would be very difficult for me to reach Pawan Kalyan again. So, I decided not to take it, which is my call," said Bunny Vasu about his political entry.

When asked whether there are reports that he is distancing himself from Geetha Arts, he said in a diplomatic way, "My attachment with Geetha Arts is 25 years and after Aravind garu, our generation is going and now we have to train for the next generation which will go for the coming 10 years."

In the recent incident that happened around Allu Arjun, he was not guided properly and asked about that, he said he will wait till the legal issues are over. "What is the situation and what happened there, we have discussed very deeply and we have clarity about it. Now, the issue is in court and once it is cleared I will speak about it definitely," said Bunny Vasu.

The makers of 'Thandel' announced that Allu Arjun will be the chief guest, but he didn't turn up. When asked about why he didn't attend the event, he said, "Till evening 6

pm everything looked good. But I don't know what happened as I was busy with the event till 11.30 pm. Morning when I asked Aravind garu about it, he said Arjun had some health issues, so he didn't attend." He added that he woke up today and was busy with the promotions of the film. "Once after the promotions, I will go and meet Allu Arjun," he said.

Talking about his 'Thandel', he said, it's a high budget film and also a risky one. "As the story demands, we put money according to it, though we have a budget in our mind, it has gone higher," he said. "That's why in most of the areas we are releasing the film on our own, which is definitely a risky one. We have to make the film a hit and get our money back," he said. He added that the digital rights are sold out. Apart from Telugu, the film is releasing in Tamil and Hindi. The ticket price was also normal in Telangana, but he applied for a Rs 50 hike in Andhra Pradesh. "It is not yet confirmed, but I applied for a Rs 50 hike in Andhra Pradesh and it is under process," he said.

About the film 'Thandel' he said it all started with his classmate Bhanu, who introduced Karthik with this story. "Karthik inspired by true incidents and wrote the story. We did our research and met many people and got to know a few incidents. So with the true incidents we created a love story. So, it is fiction

with some real incidents," said Bunny Vasu. In the trailer, he said they showed only the love story which everyone knows. "But there is a very interesting story and you all will definitely be surprised. What happened in Pakistan, the situation in India at that time, how they survived in Pakistan are not known to many," he said.

They shot this film in many areas. "We shot at Mangalore coast, Kerala, Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam and Wagah border and many other places. There is only one scene we shot in the studio, but most of the sea scenes were shot at sea," he said.

There are a few films made about Indian prisoners struggling in Pakistan jails. "But each one has a different story and I took one story. More than that these stories are there in newspapers and other platforms. So, anyone can pick up a story and we took one story with a love angle in it," he said.

Karthik narrated a story to Bunny Vasu and he accidentally met Naga Chaitanya the next day. "I went to meet him for some personal work. So, he asked me if there was any story. Immediately I told this story and he was excited to do it. But I told him about the fisherman's life and the slang, and the look. I was shocked to see him after he moulded himself for the character and the slang. You will definitely be surprised after seeing Chaitanya's performance, especially the last half-an-hour in peaks," he said about the film.



Archana talks high about Karmasthalam

Archana Sastry is back to films after a few years gap and now coming up with a film titled 'Karmasthalam'. Rocky Sherman is the director, while Srinivas Subrahmanya is the producer. From the film, the makers recently released Archana's look which stands out prominently. Talking about the film, Archana said that it is a concept-based one. "This film is based on the concept of Mahishasura Mardini, and I am thankful to Rocky sir for bringing such a wonderful subject to life with a powerful title like 'Karmasthalam'," said Archana. The actress said when the director narrated the story to her, she was a

bit doubtful about how the new director handled it. "But he narrated it brilliantly. Many people can tell a great story, but translating it on to the screen is a different challenge altogether," said Archana. She added that director Rocky has done an exceptional job. "I am extremely happy and satisfied to be part of this film which is releasing in all languages," she said. "This movie is very special to me, and it holds a place close to my heart. The first look is stunning, and I still remember the day we shot the fight sequences, which have turned out incredibly well. If the poster is creating such an impact, the film will surely leave an even greater impression. I thank everyone who worked on this project," said Archana.



Finally, Prabhas look from Kannappa is out

Vishnu Manchu's prestigious pan-Indian project 'Kannappa' generated much curiosity among the people, because of the story and also how Prabhas is going to look in it. Now, the makers released the look of Prabhas, as he appeared as powerful Rudra in the film. The poster introduces Prabhas in a powerful role that is both divine and awe-inspiring, further amplifying the anticipation surrounding the film.

Prabhas' character, named Rudra, is portrayed as a figure of immense power and spiritual significance. Described as the raging storm, the guide through times past and future and is ruled by Lord Shiva's command, the character embodies a perfect blend of divinity and strength.

His calm expression contrasts strikingly with the backdrop of destruction, symbolized by a statue of Lord Shiva in the background. Now, this picture of Prabhas is going viral on the internet and social media.

There are a few scenes between Prabhas and Vishnu Manchu, which are going to be the highlights of the film, says a source. Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh and produced by Mohan Babu, the film is all set to hit the screens on April 25.

ANIL SUNKARA TO PRODUCE A MULTI-STARRER

Producer Anil Sunkara is all set to come up with a multi-starrer soon. According to a source, the producer has roped in Sai Durgaha Teja and Teja Sajja for his upcoming film to be directed by Veeru Potla. The film will be officially launched in the coming days as the producer may announce the film soon.

If you recall, Anil Sunkara earlier did a couple of films, 'Bindaas' and 'Eedu Gold Ahe' with Veeru Potla as director. Both were commercially successful and were released long back.



"From then onwards, Veeru Potla has come up with a period story with some fantasy elements, which is very interesting and Anil Sunkara wanted to make it as a multi-starrer," said a source. Though this project was delayed for a few reasons, but now, Anil feels that it is the right time to produce it.

Veeru Potla started his career as a writer with blockbuster films like 'Varsham' and 'Nuvvostanante Nenoddantana'. He then turned as director with 'Bindaas' which was an instant hit.

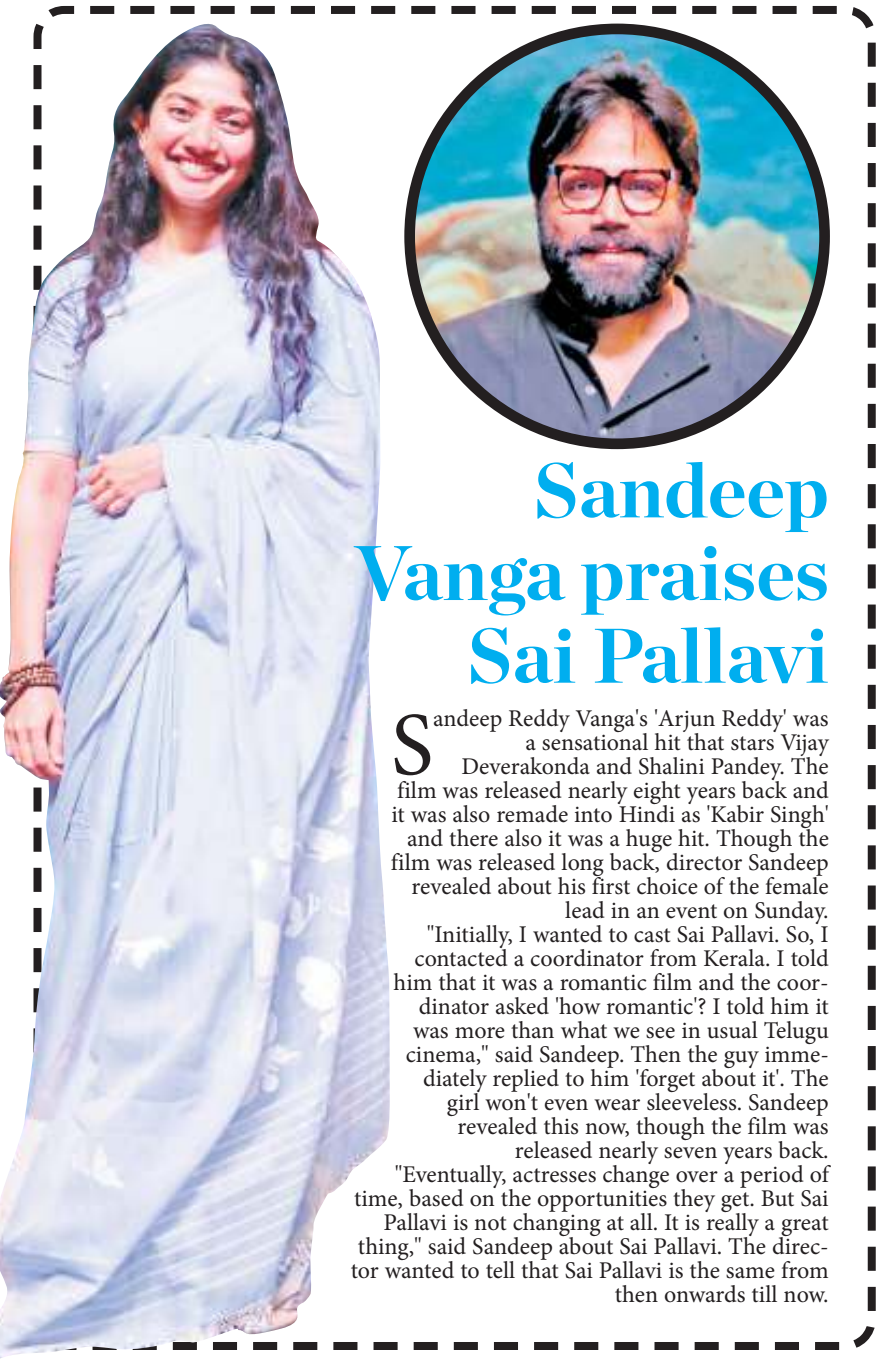
Kiran Abbavaram's new film K-Ramp launched

Among the young actors, it is Kiran Abbavaram, who is in demand. The actor's last film 'KA' was very successful at the box-office and he is now on a roll. The actor's new film titled 'K-Ramp' was launched on Monday morning at a private studio in Hyderabad. It is produced by Razesha Danda and directed by a newcomer Jains Nani. He is making his debut as a director with this film.

Generally, Kiran is encouraging new talent, in his earlier films too. His last film 'KA' was also directed by a debutante. Now, 'K-Ramp' is also introducing a new director and he is now coming up with a variety of subjects.

The recently released title poster offers a glimpse of Kiran Abbavaram, which hints at a high-octane action sequence. The title logo, featuring a medicine bottle, and a football, is sparking a lot of intrigue. What the story will unfold into remains a mystery, making the title poster an exciting conversation starter.

Yukti Thareja is playing the female lead, while Chaitan Bharadwaj is the music director. Senior actor VK Nareish is playing an important role in it. It seems the story revolves around a father and son.



Sandeep Vanga praises Sai Pallavi

Sandeep Reddy Vanga's 'Arjun Reddy' was a sensational hit that stars Vijay Deverakonda and Shalini Pandey. The film was released nearly eight years back and it was also remade into Hindi as 'Kabir Singh' and there also it was a huge hit. Though the film was released long back, director Sandeep revealed about his first choice of the female lead in an event on Sunday.

"Initially, I wanted to cast Sai Pallavi. So, I contacted a coordinator from Kerala. I told him that it was a romantic film and the coordinator asked 'how romantic?' I told him it was more than what we see in usual Telugu cinema," said Sandeep. Then the guy immediately replied to him 'forget about it'. The girl won't even wear sleeveless. Sandeep revealed this now, though the film was released nearly seven years back.

"Eventually, actresses change over a period of time, based on the opportunities they get. But Sai Pallavi is not changing at all. It is really a great thing," said Sandeep about Sai Pallavi. The director wanted to tell that Sai Pallavi is the same from then onwards till now.

Praggnanandhaa beats Gukesh to clinch Tata Chess title

PTI ■ WIJK AAN ZEE

The Indian juggernaut in international chess remained unstoppable as Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa fought through exhaustion and nerves to defeat world champion D Gukesh in a clash of compatriots to clinch the Tata Steel Masters title for the first time in his prolific career. The bespectacled 19-year-old from Chennai, a city that has become the cradle of Indian chess, came from behind to upstage the 18-year-old world number three 2-1 in the tiebreaker of the event's 87th edition here on Sunday. This was after both players ended up tied on 8.5 points after losing their 13th-round games. While Gukesh lost to fellow Indian Arjun Erigaisi, Praggnanandhaa went down to Vincent Keymer of Germany. In the tie-breaker, there was huge drama typical of two young players looking to win each and every game they played in the tournament as they played the tie-

break. "I am still shaking, it was such a crazy day. I don't know how to express. I didn't really expect to win. Somehow things went my way," Praggnanandhaa told the official tournament website after his triumph. Asked if it was the most tense day of his chess career, which began when he was a mere two years of age. "Today is more special because I won the tournament. Definitely most stressful day," he responded. The teenager became the first Indian after Viswanathan Anand to win the title. Anand won it thrice (2003, 2004 and 2006) individually when it was called the Corus Chess Tournament, named on the title sponsor of that time. The legend also shared the honours twice (1989 and 1998) in its earliest form of Hoogovens Tournament. Praggnanandhaa faced the Benoni with reversed colours in the first game of the tie-break and it seemed like he had equalised easily in the middle game. However, Gukesh had other



thoughts as he kept trying and won, thanks to a blunder by Praggnanandhaa that cost him a full rook. In a must-win second game of the tiebreaker, Praggnanandhaa employed the Trompowsky opening, and this time Gukesh could claim a slight advantage with his black pieces. "I was just trying to relax, to rest a bit. It was a very difficult game. Against Vincent I didn't play anywhere close to the level I was playing here. I should buy something for Arjun. At some point I thought Gukesh was better," the former world youth champion quipped. "For sure, (this win) it is the highlight. When I came here, I wanted to win but the field was very strong. I didn't really think about it much until yesterday," he added. "I am completely exhausted. I was also quite tired. I just want to get some rest now." During the tie-break, by just keeping his position together, Praggnanandhaa patiently waited and capitalised on an unforced

error from Gukesh to first knock down a pawn and then his technical abilities were enough to see the normal blitz games through with a 1-1 score. This took the match into sudden death, where Praggnanandhaa drew white and once again Gukesh was better with some imaginative play on the queen side that netted him a pawn. The sudden death had a time control of two minutes and thirty seconds for white against three for black but that did not deter Praggnanandhaa from trying to defend an inferior endgame. Just while the position looked completely drawn and another game was on the cards, Gukesh lost control in the battle of nerves and first lost a pawn then his last remaining knight. Praggnanandhaa showed perfect technique to take the full point and his maiden victory at the Masters. For Gukesh, this was the second year running when he tied for first position and lost the tiebreaker. In the previous edition, Gukesh had lost to Chinese Wei Yi.



Bevan inducted to Cricket Australia's Hall of Fame

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former batter Michael Bevan, widely regarded as one of the greatest ODI finishers who displayed impeccable game awareness and mastered difficult run chases with minimal risk, has been inducted to Cricket Australia's Hall of Fame. The 54-year-old, who was a part of Australia's 1999 and 2003 World Cup-winning teams, made 6912 ODI runs at a brilliant average of 53.58 in 232 games, batting in middle-order, mostly at number six. During his career that ran from 1994 to 2004, Bevan exemplified maximum returns at minimum risk, and was a genius in keeping the required rate during chases in check by picking singles and twos that would often lull the opposition and ultimately steer Australia over the line. "Congratulations to former Australian player Michael Bevan on his induction to the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame," Cricket Australia posted on X. Speaking to 'cricket.Com.Au', the imposing left-hander, who has also dabbled in coaching, said his ODI success was down to a deep understanding of the format. "When I reflect on my one-day career, and get an understanding of why I performed like I did, how I was able to manage the innings, or the run rate...I think that was sort of natural to me," he said. "Minimising risk,

understanding which bowlers to target, what types of shots to play in certain situations, and the ability to understand when to put your foot down, and when to take the foot off the accelerator as well... (were) the principles that I used," he added the owner of 67 unbeaten ODI knocks who struck 46 half-centuries and six hundreds in the format. He could never really replicate that success in Tests and Bevan said he accepted that the traditional form was not really meant for him quite early. Bevan played only 18 Tests. He made his debut in 1994 and played the five-day game only till 1998. "I wasn't ready to play Test cricket. I had my own demons," he said. His long-time captain Steve Waugh was a huge fan of his work ethic in the nets and in his book, he mentioned that Bevan "would literally invent strokes to fuel his search for greatness and his desire to attain new levels of excellence." Bevan could maneuver Australia out of trouble with his tenacity and the ability to find the gaps in the tightest fields to keep the scoreboard ticking and eventually chase down targets for victories by the thinnest of margins. "...I felt with the one-day game, I always did what I did - I had the ability to win close games, and that was always there. It wasn't something that I learned or had to go through, it was really just intrinsic, which is kind of a bit weird," he said of his career.

Buttler praises Abhishek Sharma's innings

PTI ■ MUMBAI

England captain Jos Buttler has heaped high praise on Abhishek Sharma for smashing a whirlwind 54-ball 135 in India's 150-run win in the fifth T20I here, describing the record knock as one of the finest examples of "clean ball striking". Abhishek entered record books with the second fastest T20I century by an Indian batter off 37 balls and hit 13 sixes -- the most in an innings for any player from the country, powering the hosts to 247 for nine. "Yeah, (we are) obviously disappointed (with the result), they (India) played a fantastic batting innings. I think credit to Abhishek Sharma, I thought that's as clean a ball striking as I've seen, I thought he played fantastically well," Buttler told the media after India recorded their second biggest T20I win by runs on Sunday. Buttler denied England were "shellshocked" from Abhishek's onslaught on his bowlers but said there were only two options for his side -- either to go boom or bust. "We always sit down and think



what more could we have done or how we could have stopped him, but some days I think you have to give a lot of credit to the opposition, I thought he played brilliantly well," Buttler said. "Shellshocked's not quite the word, I think. It can be difficult sometimes when a player gets on a roll and they play as well as he did," Buttler said. "Looking back at the last IPL, him and Travis Head were the same at the top of the order for Sunrisers (Hyderabad) and obviously he's brought that into India." "He (Abhishek) played a brilliant innings and sometimes you want to credit

the opposition. You always think of what more could you do, how could we get him out, how could we slow him down and, but yeah, credit to us for, you know, sticking in there and fighting back and keeping them down to 240 after the start they got," Buttler said. The England captain acknowledged the pitch remained the same for his batters as the visitors were bowled out for 97 in 10.3 overs with Phil Salt scoring a 23-ball 55. "I've played in a few games like this and it generally goes one of two ways, you either get actually somewhere near or you fall in a heap and today was that day," he said.

"The way Phil Salt went out there and struck the ball, it was obviously a really good wicket, you needed someone to go with him and one or two guys to catch fire and that's the way you're going to chase that down. "Like I said, you either get quite close in games like this and surprise yourselves or it doesn't work but, no, we certainly won't change the way we want to play. We need to, you know, keep backing that, be even more committed and you're desperate to do well and execute that," he said. Buttler said he wouldn't want England to change their style of play after a 1-4 series loss to India. "We've had our moments actually in all the games bar the first one probably and today. We had moments in Chennai, Pune and obviously the game we won in Rajkot," he said. "As we get more experienced, more committed to the style we want to play and the nuances of the game of how we're going to win those moments, then (we would) go on to win the match and win series," he added.



CT 2025 Trophy tour concludes in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The trophy tour for the ICC Champions Trophy concluded in India with the coveted prize touring cities of Mumbai and Bengaluru ahead of the tournament beginning February 19. The upcoming edition of the eight-team 50-overs tournament will be held in Pakistan and Dubai from February 19 to March 9. "The Trophy Tour has covered all eight participating nations during its global journey and, with the conclusion of India leg, it will now travel to its final stop in Pakistan," the ICC said in a statement on Monday.

The tour in Mumbai included trophy's visits to the Wankhede Stadium, Shivaji Park, the Gateway of India, Carter Road, historic Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, and Bandstand among other locations. It was also displayed during the celebrations to mark the completion of 50 years of the Wankhede Stadium. In Bengaluru, the trophy visited venues including Nexus Shantiniketan Mall, Bengaluru Palace, Freedom Park, KR Market, Town Hall, St Mary's Basilica, M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Church Street and Vidyarthi Bhavan.

We want to play high-risk, high-reward cricket in T20s: Gambhir

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India head coach Gautam Gambhir said the team is ready to push the barriers in T20 Internationals with the adoption of a fresh "high-risk, high-reward" approach, and the target is now "to get 250-260 regularly" in the format. That shift in mindset was evident in India's 4-1 mauling of England in the just-concluded five-match series. In the fourth T20I at Pune, India kept attacking England despite losing wickets to eventually set a match-winning 181 for 9, and at Mumbai on Sunday, the hosts raced to 247 for 9, their fourth highest total in this format. "That's the kind of T20 cricket we want to play. We don't want to fear losing a game of cricket. We want to play high-risk, high-reward cricket.

And these guys have adopted that ideology really well," Gambhir told the host broadcaster after the match on Sunday. Gambhir said they are looking to post tall totals in the vicinity of 250 in every game, and he doesn't mind getting out for a low score in some matches while attempting to achieve the task. "We want to try and get to 250-260 regularly. And in trying to do that, there'll be games where we'll get bundled out for 120-130. And that is what T20 cricket is all about. "Unless and until you don't play that high-risk cricket, you won't get those big rewards as well. Most importantly, I think we're on the right track. Come those big tournaments, we want to



continue playing this way and we don't want to fear losing anything," he added. "I think the ideology of this T20 team is based on selflessness and fearlessness, and I think in the last six months, these guys have done

it day in, day out." Gambhir used the breathtaking 54-ball 135 of Abhishek Sharma to further validate his point. "We want to keep backing players like Abhishek Sharma. We have to be patient with

these boys. I haven't seen a better T20 hundred against bowlers who are bowling at 140-150 kph consistently," he added. Gambhir also lauded spinner Varun Chakravarthy for reinventing himself and coming back stronger to international cricket. "I think his transformation from IPL to international T20 cricket has been phenomenal. This series was probably the benchmark as well because England is a high-quality side. "They've got some really quality cricketers and the kind of surfaces we've played on - I think they were fantastic batting wickets and the way he's bowled those tough overs has been phenomenal," said Gambhir. Chakravarthy was the highest wicket-taker in the series with 14 scalps at an average of 9.85

and economy rate of 7.66. There were talks about rifts in the Indian dressing room after the team's disastrous outing in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series against Australia. Gambhir said everything will fall in place once the team returns to winning ways. "They (these players) have played a lot of cricket against each other. That's all Indian cricket is all about us. "When results start going your way, everything goes well. Our players know what it means to represent 140-150 crore Indians," he added. On the controversy surrounding Harshit Rana coming in as a concussion sub for Shivam Dube in the previous match at Pune, Gambhir said rather lightly: "He (Dube) probably bowled four overs today."

Head wins Allan Border medal, Sutherland receives Belinda Clark honour

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Star batter Travis Head was named the winner of the prestigious Allan Border Medal for the top Australian men's cricketer, while young all-rounder Annabel Sutherland was awarded the Belinda Clark Medal at the Australian Cricket Awards held here on Monday. Head, who had an outstanding year across all three formats with 1,427 runs since the start of the polling period, received 208 votes to secure the top honour, surpassing Josh Hazlewood (158 votes) and Pat Cummins (147 votes). "Pretty hard to believe. It's been a good year. Very pleased I've been able to fit in, do a role, and lucky I've been able to play all formats. It's a nice accomplishment, and I'll enjoy it," Head said in a recorded interview from Galle. The 31-year-old Head also took home the Men's ODI

Player-of-the-Year award and finished second in the Twenty20 and Test Player-of-the-Year awards. Head won the ODI honours despite figuring in just five of the 11 ODIs that Australia played during the eligibility period. His standout performance, including a magnificent 154 not out against England at Trent Bridge, helped him edge past Alex Carey, Steve Smith, and Xavier Bartlett for the top prize. For Sutherland, it was a first Australian Cricket Award, which came just days after her maiden Test century at the MCG, becoming the first woman to make a ton on that ground. The 23-year-old all-rounder began the 12-month voting period with an impressive 210 against South Africa at the WACA and later scored her third Test century -- a brilliant 163 in the Ashes. Sutherland received 168 votes, surpassing Ashleigh Gardner



(143 votes) and Beth Mooney (115 votes) to win the Belinda Clark Medal. "Pretty surreal. To win an award named after Belinda Clark is pretty special," said

Sutherland. Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood claimed the Men's Test Player-of-the-Year award. It marked his first Australian Cricket Award, with



Hazlewood taking 30 wickets at just 13.16 in Tests against the West Indies, New Zealand, and India. Young cricketer Sam Konstas, who made an impressive debut at 19 during

the Boxing Day Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India, was named Young Cricketer of the Year. Konstas scored 113 runs across the last two Tests,

including a memorable 60 off 65 balls on debut. He became an instant sensation after he took down star India pacer Jasprit Bumrah, who had been a menace to Australian batters throughout the five-Test series, which Australia ultimately won 3-1. Though the award night was devoid of the stars, as they were busy in the ongoing Test series in Sri Lanka, all-rounder Mitchell Marsh stole the spotlight with a hilarious Bumrah anecdote that had the audience in stitches at the Crown Casino here. "My little nephew, Ted, is four years old. We played backyard cricket the other day, and he came in with Bumrah's action... And the nightmare continues," Marsh joked. In other awards, Ashleigh Gardner was named Women's ODI Player of the Year after finishing as Australia's leading run-scorer in the format with 385 runs. Beth Mooney was crowned Women's T20 Player

of the Year for the third time, having scored 618 runs during the voting period. Leg-spinner Adam Zampa won Men's T20I Player of the Year after taking 35 wickets in 21 T20Is, edging out Head by three votes. Cameron Green was awarded the Community Impact Award for his efforts in raising awareness about kidney disease. The award ceremony also saw Michael Clarke, Michael Bevan, and Christina Matthews inducted into the Australian Cricket Hall of Fame. Other awardees included Beau Webster and Georgia Voll, who won Men's and Women's Domestic Player of the Year, and Chloe Ainsworth, who was named Young Cricketer of the Year. Glenn Maxwell and Cooper Connolly were named joint winners of the BBL Player of the Tournament, while Ellyse Perry and Jess Jonassen shared the WBBL Player of the Tournament award.