



sunday pioneer

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Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN

Will bolster economic activities: PM Modi

Automobile industry will be NUMBER ONE in world in next 5 years: Gadkari

The trio that struck GOLD in Tollywood

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

There is hope and admiration for the TDP in Telangana. It is great that without having a single MLA in Telangana, the membership is 1.60 lakh. Earlier, the membership was 4 lakh even though the party had 23 MLAs then. This proves the love of Telangana people for the TDP

— Nara Lokesh, IT Minister, AP

P4

DON'T MISS...

'Swachh' drive taken up in NTR dist

In response to the State government's call to maintain cleanliness across villages, towns, and cities, Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas programmes were conducted across the NTR district on Saturday. The state government has designated this initiative every third Saturday. As part of the programme, the NTR district administration organised an event at Gollapudi village in Vijayawada Rural Mandal. MP Sivanath flagged off the Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas rally, accompanied by Mylavaram...

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'Clean environs key to health'

Minister for Housing and I&PR, K Parthasarathy, highlighted the importance of maintaining a hygienic environment for a healthy life and urged public support for the success of the 'Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas' programme. The Minister, accompanied by officials, participated in the programme held at Tukkuluru village in Nuzvid Mandal on Saturday. Addressing the gathering, Minister Parthasarathy emphasised that cleanliness must become a way of life. "The Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas..."

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India joins mega wargame La Perouse

The Indian Navy is participating in a mega wargame along with naval forces from eight nations including the US and France against the backdrop of increasingly fractious geopolitical environment and China's military muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific. The naval exercise 'La Perouse' is underway in the straits between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as well as Malacca, Sunda and Lombok. These straits are largely considered as very crucial for global maritime trade. The nine-day exercise that began on January 16 aims...

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Power supply in rural areas improved

Power supply to rural areas has improved significantly by 9 hours and in urban areas by 1.4 hours over the last decade, Union Power Minister Manohar Lal has said. The minister a meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Members of Parliament for the Ministry of Power on Thursday discussed the implementation of revamped distribution sector scheme (RDSS), an official release said. In the meeting, the minister pointed out that over the past decade, power availability in the urban areas has improved from 22 hours to 23.4 hours, while in rural areas, it has increased significantly from 12.5 hours to 22.4 hours, the Power Ministry said in the release. On RDSS scheme, the Minister said that smart meters benefit both consumers and...

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CM vows to build poverty-free society with NTR's inspiration

PNS ■ MYDUKUR

Founder of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the late Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), will forever hold a place in the hearts of the Telugu people as a leader who tirelessly worked for their self-respect, remarked Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday.

Speaking at a gathering held to commemorate the 29th death anniversary of NTR, the Chief Minister reflected on NTR's lasting legacy. "NTR is an indelible memory for the poor and a beacon of courage for the downtrodden. Inspired by his vision, we will work towards creating a poverty-free society," Chandrababu Naidu affirmed. He garlanded NTR's statue and paid floral tributes to the TDP founder. The Chief Minister fondly recalled NTR's immense contributions, stating, "NTR redefined politics as a means to serve the poor and uplift their lives. It was he who brought the TDP to power within just nine months of its inception, an unparalleled achievement in global politics." Highlighting NTR's role in securing the identity of Telugus, Chandrababu Naidu said, "When Telugus were often mistaken as Madrasis, it was NTR who instilled a sense of pride in our community, shaking even New Delhi with his impact."

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"NTR redefined politics as a means to serve the poor and uplift their lives. It was he who brought the TDP to power within just nine months of its inception, an unparalleled achievement in global politics."

Call to take part in 'Swarna Andhra-Swachh Andhra' initiatives

PNS ■ MYDUKUR

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu urged the five crore people of Andhra Pradesh to actively participate in the Swarna Andhra-Swachh Andhra initiative. Launching the programme at Mydukur in Kadapa district, he commended the large number of people who joined the movement. "Let us work towards a clean Bharat, as envisioned by Mahatma Gandhi. Following the

2024 elections, we decided to implement the Swachh Andhra Pradesh programme, and I am pleased to inaugurate it here," he said.

Naidu emphasized the need for statewide involvement, with the programme held every third Saturday of the month. He also praised sanitary workers and administered a cleanliness pledge to the attendees. Reflecting on his past initiatives, he recalled launching the Clean and Green programme in

1995. He also highlighted the importance of personal responsibility in maintaining cleanliness, citing Japan's strict littering culture.

Naidu pledged to provide safe drinking water to every household and ensure clean surroundings by October 2025, setting Mydukur as a model. He also announced plans for solar power and internet access under the Surya Ghar scheme, stressing youth job creation and state development.



FILE PHOTO

Centre to review TTD's safety steps at Tirumala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In response to the recent incidents at Tirumala, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has intervened to address the lapses in security and crowd management. A crucial review meeting has been scheduled for January 20, 2025, with TTD officials to assess the situation and implement necessary corrective measures.

The tragic stampede on January 8, 2025, and the fire on January 13, 2025, have raised serious concerns over the temple management's handling of crowd control and safety protocols. Sanjeev Kumar Jindal, Additional Secretary (Disaster Management) at the MHA, will lead the meeting, which aims to address the growing security and crowd management issues at the temple complex. Jindal is expected to arrive in Tirupati on the evening of January 19, 2025, aboard the Vande

Bharat Express from Chennai.

This unprecedented intervention reflects increasing concerns over the governance of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), with allegations of political interference undermining the institution's core responsibility: ensuring the safety and well-being of millions of devotees. Despite its sacred role in managing the temple, TTD has come under criticism for prioritising political interests over effective governance.

The TTD governing body, responsible for overseeing one of the holiest temples in India, finds itself at the centre of a governance crisis after two tragic incidents within a week. With the review meeting ahead, the management is under intense pressure to demonstrate accountability and restore public confidence, especially in light of the recent tragedies that have tarnished the temple's reputation.

Naidu to promote 'Brand AP' in Davos

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos to promote the 'Brand AP' initiative and attract investments to the State. The event, which brings together global business leaders, offers a valuable opportunity to showcase the State's potential and secure investments. Since taking office, the CM has successfully attracted investments, with companies like Google already committing to Andhra Pradesh. In just seven months, the state has secured investment agreements exceeding ₹4 lakh crore, with major projects such as ArcelorMittal Steel and BPL set to begin soon. The government aims to create 20 lakh jobs over the next five years, with a task force led by Minister Nara Lokesh focused on investment attraction. More than 15 new policies,



including the Industrial Development Policy, MSME Policy, and Electronics Policy, have been introduced to attract investors. These initiatives will be highlighted at the WEF to appeal to both national and international companies.

The CM's delegation will depart Amaravati on Sunday evening, making a stop in Delhi before reaching Zurich at 1:30 am. Upon arrival, the CM will meet with the Indian Ambassador and interact with industrialists, including 10 at the Hilton Hotel and members of the Telugu diaspora at the Hyatt Hotel.

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'India will be No 1 or 2 under Modi by 2047'

VIJAYAWADA: Asserting that a "double-engine" government is essential for the development of Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stating that the country could become the world's number one or two economy by 2047 under his leadership. Addressing a meeting at Mydukur in Kadapa district, Naidu said that the 21 LS seats won by the NDA in the state, out of a total of 25, have become like a "Sanjeevani" (a life-infusing elixir). He added that Andhra Pradesh, which is "financially on a ventilator," is surviving on the oxygen being supplied by the central government.

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Drone spotted over Deputy CM's office

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A drone was spotted flying over the camp office of Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, raising serious security concerns among his staff. The incident prompted the camp office personnel to immediately alert the Director General of Police (DGP), the Guntur District Collector, and the Superintendent of Police (SP). This comes in the wake of several recent security lapses during Pawan Kalyan's tours. During his visit to North Andhra, a fake IPS officer was apprehended by the police. Furthermore, a power outage disrupted the inauguration of the Vijayawada Book Festival, drawing widespread criticism. In light of these incidents, the sighting of a drone over



the Deputy CM's camp office has intensified concerns about the adequacy of his security arrangements.

Following the drone sighting, local police have initiated an investigation to determine the operator of the drone and the source of its control. Authorities are reviewing CCTV footage from the camp office as well as surveillance cameras along the nearby national highway to gather information and identify any potential suspects.



'TDP focusing on increasing cadre base in TG'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education, Electronics, IT, and RTGS, Nara Lokesh, announced that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is actively working on revitalizing its presence in Telangana and will soon unveil its action plan for the future. He shared that nearly 160,000 people have already registered as party members in the state, indicating strong support and optimism for the TDP among the people of Telangana. He emphasised, "Our primary goal is to strengthen the TDP in Telangana."

On the occasion of NTR's 29th death anniversary, Minister Nara Lokesh paid floral tributes at NTR Ghat along with his mother Bhuvaneshwari. The slogan "Amar Rahe, Johar NTR" echoed at the ghat as tributes were offered. Following this, multi-faith prayers were held at the ghat.

Addressing the gathering, Minister Lokesh said that NTR is not just a name but a legendary figure who left his mark both in cinema and politics. "He revolutionized both industries, leaving a unique legacy through the diverse films he made. In politics, he created a wave within just nine months and brought the TDP to power," he added.

POLAVARAM PROJECT New diaphragm wall work begins

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an important development for the Polavaram Irrigation Project, the construction of a new diaphragm wall officially commenced on Saturday, marking a key milestone in the long-awaited progress of the project. This crucial infrastructure is part of efforts to resume the stalled project, with the new wall expected to improve its stability and functionality.

The new diaphragm wall, with an investment of ₹990 crore, will stretch across 1.396 kilometres and have a thickness of 1.5 metres. The work is expected to be completed by December 2025. To ensure swift progress, three hydraulic cutters are being used, with one already operational. The second cutter is scheduled



to begin operations by the end of January, while the third is expected to be operational by February-end. These measures aim to ensure consistent progress, even during the rainy season.

The inauguration ceremony was led by Polavaram Project Chief Engineer C Narasimha Murthy, who performed the traditional poojas to mark the occasion.

Continued on Page 2

Shah in city, holds meet with CM, Dy CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who arrived in Vijayawada on Saturday for the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Raising Day celebrations, was accorded a warm reception by coalition leaders. The welcome ceremony at Vijayawada International Airport in Gannavaram saw ministers Nara Lokesh and Anitha, BJP State president Daggubati Purandeswari, and other leaders greeting the Home Minister.

Amit Shah then proceeded to the Chief Minister's residence in Undavalli, where he was received by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan.

During the nearly hour-long meeting, the leaders held detailed



discussions on various AP-related issues. Chief Minister Naidu also hosted a special dinner in honour of the Home Minister. The meeting was attended by BJP state president Purandeswari and other coalition leaders.

Amit Shah stayed overnight at a private hotel in Vijayawada. On

Sunday, he and the Chief Minister are scheduled to participate in the NDRF Raising Day celebrations near Gannavaram.

The interaction is viewed as a crucial step in strengthening ties between Central and State leadership while addressing key issues for Andhra Pradesh's development.

OBTUSE ANGLE



Cleanliness is govt's priority: CS Vijayanand

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary K. Vijayanand has announced that the government is implementing special measures to maintain cleanliness in towns and villages under the Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas programme, emphasising the critical role of hygiene in ensuring public health.

On Saturday, Chief Secretary Vijayanand participated in the programme at Katuru village in Vyyuru Mandal, Krishna district. He was



joined by Penamaluru MLA Bode Prasad, District Collector D.K. Balaji, Joint Collector Geetanjali Sharma,

Vijayanand said that C M Chandrababu Naidu has envisioned this programme as a continuous effort rather than a one-day event.

local officials, and public representatives. During the event, extensive

cleaning activities were undertaken, including clearing roads, drainage systems, and village surroundings. Villagers were educated on the significance of the Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas initiative and the broader importance of maintaining cleanliness. Saplings were planted at the village secretariat, and dustbins for segregating wet and dry waste were distributed among the residents. Chief Secretary Vijayanand also

administered an oath to the villagers, encouraging them to commit to cleanliness.

Addressing the media, Chief Secretary Vijayanand highlighted that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has envisioned this programme as a continuous effort rather than a one-day event. Conducted every third Saturday of the month, it aims to instil a culture of cleanliness and hygiene among citizens.

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KTR's Formula E Legal Tussle Hits a BJP Speed Bump

The Delhi judicial corridors have become the unexpected pit stop for KTR's Formula E race, with whispers suggesting BJP's fingerprints all over the scene. From the lawyer representing the state government to the judge assigned to the case, both reportedly share a history of prominence during Narendra Modi's tenure as Chief Minister and Prime Minister. Interestingly, this isn't the first time the same judge has come into play. During Kavitha's previous legal battle on Liquor Scam, their involvement left her camp far from pleased. With memories of that outcome looming large, KTR seems to have made a calculated move to withdraw the petition, sidestepping what many predicted would be an uphill battle. While Congress has stayed on the sidelines of this saga, the BJP's behind-the-scenes role has become the talk of the town. Whether it's strategy or sheer coincidence, KTR's retreat has sparked chatter about the state's legal fights being tangled in a web of political influence.

Seethakka's Tribal Glam Sparks BRS Gossip

Minister Seethakka turned heads with her vibrant tribal attire at a recent event, pairing it with a striking waistband and an array of jewellery. While many admired her stunning look, it didn't take long for BRS supporters to latch onto the glittering accessories. They wasted no time pointing out the contrast between her style and the Chief Minister's earlier remarks that a "normal Telangana woman doesn't wear jewellery"—a statement famously linked to the decision to strip Telangana Talli of her ornaments. The whispers quickly turned into a buzz: "If Telangana Talli couldn't keep her jewellery, how can a minister flaunt it?" chuckled one BRS loyalist. Seethakka, however, seemed

However, one of the reporters commented after the chat that the Union Minister G Kishan Reddy should conduct chitchat with an agenda or else Kishan Reddy should face the questions posed by the scribes and answer to them whatever they may be instead of insulting them.

Kishan Reddy seeks blessings of media

Telangana BJP president and Union Minister of Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy, who almost insulted one of the scribes who attended his chitchat on Saturday for asking a question regarding BRS working president KTR's criticism on BJP and Congress, sought the blessings of the Media. Kishan Reddy literally appealed to the scribes to give adequate

REPORTERS' DIARY

unfazed, carrying her regal tribal aesthetic with confidence. As the gossip circles lit up, some wondered whether this was style, symbolism, or simply a jab at the CM's stance. Either way, it seems Seethakka knows how to keep everyone talking.

space instead of publishing his news in the third page amidst scribes' laughter. Kishan Reddy lamented that the media is giving top priority to the Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy publishing his news banner everyday. He said that the same media is not giving priority to his news though he is striving hard for the sake of development of Telangana. Kishan Reddy also gave an example that the media published as a banner item when CM said that the Metro Rail will be expanded up to Medchal. However, the same media did not give the same priority when he announced Komuravelli Railway Station. Kishan Reddy replied to the question of the scribes that "all most all parties have their own newspapers and why not BJP is not launching its own newspaper", that the party discussed this with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on setting up of newspapers for the party. He said that PM Modi opposed the idea of setting up newspapers on behalf of the BJP. However, the party will extend its support to the newspapers launched by third parties and support the BJP, Kishan Reddy said appealing to the media to give adequate space for his news.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate, K Venkateshwarlu)

BJP's Mysterious Tweet Wipe Sparks Buzz

A curious development has left political circles abuzz as a tweet from BJP's official handle targeting Congress leader Revanth Reddy's brother vanished without explanation. Insiders reveal that the Congress leader's brother, known for keeping a safe distance from political theatrics, was deeply upset about being dragged into the spotlight. Reportedly, the brother reached out through backchannels, expressing his displeasure over the unwanted attention. A senior BJP leader is believed to have stepped in, calming the waters and ensuring the tweet was promptly taken down. The swift deletion has sparked speculation about BJP's motives—was it an act of courtesy or a move to sidestep controversy? Either way, the incident has fueled chatter about where the line is drawn when political battles cross into personal territory.

Scribes question on KTR irks Kishan Reddy

Telangana BJP president and Union Minister of Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy irked over scribes in the chitchat conducted on Saturday when one of the scribes asked a question about BRS working President KT Ramarao's criticism that the BJP and BRS are one. Kishan Reddy responded to the question seriously terming KTR as a waste one and the question is also a waste one. Kishan Reddy said that the question is trying to prove that the BJP leaders also waste one. Kishan Reddy also suggested the scribes to pull those who criticize in this manner. However, Kishan Reddy acted smartly and did not react straightly when the scribes tried to remind the BJP leaders' criticism against BRS and Congress parties that they are one.

Pemmasani urges NRIs to donate for public service

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Union Minister of State for Rural Development and Communications, Dr. Pemmasani Chandrasekhar, along with former minister Alapati Rajendra Prasad, inaugurated a new school building and sports complex at the District Council High School in Nandivellu village on Saturday. The facilities, constructed for two crore rupees, are aimed at enhancing educational opportunities in the region.

The school staff and students extended a warm floral welcome to the dignitaries,

setting a festive tone for the inauguration. In his address, Dr. Pemmasani Chandrasekhar emphasized the transformative power of education, particularly for

underprivileged individuals. Citing a quote from legendary actor and politician Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, the minister said, "Mother and motherland are greater than heaven," underscoring the importance of community and local pride. He also called for remembrance of NTR on his death anniversary.

"Education introduces the poor to the world. Regardless of fate, schools shape students into knowledgeable and progressive individuals," he stated. He further highlighted the pivotal role of teachers in nurturing students from apprehen-

sive learners to confident intellectuals capable of navigating the world.

Dr. Chandrasekhar also emphasized the importance of character, comparing it to a fragile glass that can shatter if not nurtured properly. "True satisfaction comes from serving society," he said, urging Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to engage more in community service.

Former minister Alapati Rajendra Prasad stated that the new facilities would significantly improve the educational environment, empowering students and fostering community development in the region.

Over 50,000 suspected cancer cases in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Medical Health Department of Andhra Pradesh has launched an extensive awareness campaign to educate the public about the growing cancer epidemic, which claims over 40,000 lives annually in the state.

The screening programme, which started on November 14 of last year, is set to run for ten months.

Officials from the Medical Health Department announced on Saturday that funds spent on cancer treatments through the Dr. NTR Medical Service have increased from Rs. 217 crores in 2019-20 to Rs. 624 crores in 2023-24. To address this growing concern, the government has decided to conduct cancer screenings across the state for all residents.

BJP growing in AP with new entrants, says Purandeswari

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



MP Andhra Pradesh State President and MP Daggubati Purandeswari stated that the growing support for the party reflects the public's approval of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development and welfare agenda, which is drawing more people to join the BJP and further strengthening it in the state.

Purandeswari, along with the Health Minister, warmly welcomed Ravichandra Reddy from Nellore District into the party at a programme held in Vijayawada on Saturday. She highlighted the increasing popularity of the BJP in Andhra Pradesh, attributing it to the effective governance of Prime Minister Modi and the central government's assistance to the state.

Purandeswari expressed confidence that Reddy would work tirelessly to strengthen the party and contribute meaningfully to its growth. She noted that his decision to join BJP was a clear indication of the public's support for the party and its vision for a better future. She reaffirmed that the Modi government remains committed to equitable development for all sec-

tions of society, with a clear focus on a progressive tomorrow.

Ravichandra Reddy shared his sentiments, saying, "I feel fortunate to resign from the YSR Congress and join the BJP. I sincerely thank MP Purandeswari and Minister Yadav for their warm welcome. I am committed to promoting the values of the BJP and working for the nation and dharm."

Reddy also praised the influx of funds into Andhra Pradesh and expressed his admiration for significant national policies, such as the abrogation of Article 370 and the implementation of the Common Civil Code. He pledged to work closely with state BJP leaders and activists to advance the party's agenda and serve the people.

Cleanliness...

Continued from Page 1

He called for collaboration among public representatives, officials, and citizens to ensure the success of the programme and urged government employees to lead by example by maintaining clean surroundings and raising awareness.

He also elaborated on the government's initiatives for waste management, including recycling plastic waste and implementing ten different programmes to tackle waste effectively.

District Collector D.K. Balaji stated that measures are being taken to implement the Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas programme across the district, promoting awareness from the grassroots level in villages to urban areas. Penamaluru MLA Bode Prasad stressed the collective responsibility of preserving the environment, emphasising the value of passing on a clean and healthy environment to future generations.

He assured that the necessary equipment for managing wet and dry waste would be provided under the Swachh Andhra Mission.

Other officials present included ZP CEO Kannamanayudu, DPO J. Aruna, DWAMA PD K.V. Sivaprasad, MPDO Seshagiri Rao, Tehsildar Suresh Kumar, and Village Sarpanch Kodali Asha Jyothi.

VSP ready to shine, says Vizag MP Sribharat

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



MP Sribharat has welcomed the Rs 11,440 crore revival package for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP), calling it a golden opportunity for the plant to prove its worth to the nation. Speaking to the media on Saturday, he urged employees and workers to make the best use of the package, which includes equity infusion, working capital support, and approval for issuing preference shares. He expressed confidence that this investment would yield massive returns for the country.

Sribharat described VSP as a symbol of Andhra Pradesh's united struggle during the state's formation, earned through the collective efforts of its people. He recalled the contributions of leaders like Chandrababu Naidu and Kinjarapu Yerran Naidu in saving the plant during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure.

The MP credited the success of the revival package to the

combined efforts of leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and former Karnataka Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy. He also thanked the state government for supporting the plant with power and water subsidies. "Achieving this package within seven months is a significant milestone," he said.

Sribharat announced that two blast furnaces at the plant would soon restart, with the third becoming operational by August. He mentioned discussions with NMDC for securing raw materials and highlighted plans to strengthen ancillary

units. The MP stressed the importance of comprehensive reforms and assured that he would work closely with the Ministry of Steel to ensure the plant's sustainable operations.

Criticising the YSRCP government for alleged inaction over the last five years, Sribharat said the negligence had severely impacted VSP. He reaffirmed his promise to prevent privatisation of the plant, a key commitment from his election manifesto. "Since taking my oath, I have been actively engaging with central leaders to resolve the plant's challenges and assure workers about their future," he said.

The MP expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, and Nara Lokesh for their relentless efforts in securing the package. He said the revival of VSP is not just a win for Andhra Pradesh but a major boost for the country's economy.

'India will be No 1 or 2 under Modi by...

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He further stated that, though the Telugu Desam Party, with one crore members, is a national outfit, it has always worked with a regional outlook. "We also worked with the NDA earlier, between 2014 and 2019. I do not doubt that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India will become the number one or two economy by 2047, and my ambition is to see Telugu people in the number one position globally," he said.

Naidu further remarked that development can be ensured only with "double-engine Sarkars" at both the state and central levels, which would lead to double-digit growth. He stated that the Centre has been extending a helping hand for several projects,

including the Polavaram irrigation project, and has announced a package for the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. "We assure you that the Polavaram irrigation project will be completed in the next two years. The central government has already allocated Rs 12,200 crore for Phase 1 of the project. Construction of the diaphragm wall has begun," he said.

Stressing the necessity of interlinking rivers, the CM said that the Godavari and Krishna rivers have already been interlinked, and the state government is now aiming to link the Godavari and Penna rivers. Recalling TDP founder and former CM NT Rama Rao, Naidu said that some of the former leader's initiatives, such as reservations for women and backward communities in local body elections, have become a role model for the nation.

New diaphragm wall work begins...

Continued from Page 1

He acknowledged the pivotal contributions of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu in facilitating the resumption of the project. Their collective efforts were instrumental in overcoming the challenges

that had delayed its progress in recent years.

The construction of the new diaphragm wall is a response to the earlier wall built during the tenure of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government. Under the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government, the earlier structure was declared "damaged," halting the project for nearly three years. The

new wall is being constructed 6 metres upstream of the old one, ensuring greater resilience and efficiency in the project's design.

The design for the new diaphragm wall received approval from the Central Water Commission on January 13, 2025, marking a crucial regulatory step. Permissions for the T5 Mix, a key construction material, were granted on January 16, clearing the way for the work to move forward.

Telugu actor's fans arrested for sacrificing 'ram' before screening of his movie

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Andhra Pradesh police arrested five persons for allegedly decapitating a ram (male sheep) at a movie theatre here before the screening of the 'Daaku Maharaj' movie on January 12, said an official on Saturday.

Acting on a complaint from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), sent by email, police arrested Shankaraiiah, Ramesh, Suresh Reddy, Prasad and Mukesh Babu for behead-

ing the ram and smearing its blood on the wall poster of actor N Balakrishna, who did the lead role in the movie.

A popular Tollywood actor and Hindupur MLA Balakrishna is the brother-in-law of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

"An email came from PETA. They complained about email to the SP. On that day (January 16) we conducted an enquiry and registered a case in Tirupati east police station," Tirupati East sub-

divisional police officer Venkat Narayana said.

Narayana said police are also on the lookout for other people who are suspected to have been a part of this animal sacrifice.

A video of the decapitation went viral in which hundreds of onlookers and moviegoers were seen cheering and capturing the act on their cell phones as one of the accused persons heaved a sickle to behead the animal.

According to police, the ram was sacrificed around 3

am on January 12 when the Balakrishna-starrer movie was released to coincide with the Sankranti festival.

A case was registered against the five under Sections 4 & 5 read with 6 and 8 of Andhra Pradesh Animal and Bird Sacrifices Provision Act, 1950, Section 3, Section 11 (1) A and Section 11 (1) clause 2 of the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals Act, 1960 and Sections 325 and 270 of BNS Act. However, all the five were given bail immediately, Narayana added.

YSRCP slams Naidu for 'anti-poor' policies

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA TJ Sudhakar Babu strongly condemned Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for targeting welfare schemes that benefitted the poor during the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government. He accused Chandrababu of attempting to revoke housing plots allocated to the underprivileged and of favouring his political allies instead.

Sudhakar Babu recalled the legacy of YS Rajasekhara Reddy, who distributed land to 3 lakh families, and highlighted Jagan's achievement of providing housing pattas to an additional 33 lakh families. He noted that under the previous government, 30.6 lakh house site pattas were registered to women beneficiaries for just Rs 1, generating wealth worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore.

CM vows to build...

Continued from Page 1

He laid the foundation for welfare and development, showing the nation what progress truly means."

The Chief Minister credited NTR for pioneering initiatives such as pucca houses for the poor, inviting educated individuals into politics, and promoting Backward Classes (BC) leaders. He noted that MLA Putta Sudhakar Yadav's victory in the Mydukur Assembly segment was a result of NTR's inclusive vision.

NTR also championed women's rights, introducing legislation for equal property rights and reservations for women in local bodies to encourage their political participation, Chandrababu Naidu pointed out. He further lauded NTR's contributions to addressing water scarcity in Rayalaseema through landmark projects like Telugu Ganga, Handri-Neeva, and Galeru-Nagari, which paved the way for initiatives like the Gandikota project in Kadapa district.

Criticising the opposition, Chandrababu Naidu said, "While YSRCP leaders in Kadapa narrated stories, they failed to deliver for the people. It is the TDP that has

driven meaningful development in this region, transforming Kadapa into a horticultural hub."

He expressed regret over the withdrawal of a 90% subsidy for micro-irrigation by the previous government, stating that the TDP has since reinstated drip irrigation with subsidies. He also highlighted the elimination of factionalism in Kadapa under the TDP's governance and announced the construction of a tunnel costing 7250 crore for Kadapa Airport, which will soon enable connectivity to major destinations.

Chandrababu Naidu hailed the TDP's milestone of one crore members and praised Nara Lokesh, Minister for Education and TDP National General Secretary, for prioritising the welfare of party activists. "We are investing 7130 crore in insurance and welfare for party cadres and will continue to support you economically," he assured.

The Chief Minister concluded by announcing that the Swarna Andhra-Swachh Andhra programme would be launched in Mydukur, urging the people to unite for a clean and prosperous Andhra Pradesh.

Naidu to...

Continued from Page 1

The CM will then head to Davos, where he will attend a dinner meeting with industrialists and hold a special meeting with AcelorMittal's Lakshmi Mittal.

On Day 2, the CM will participate in sessions on Green Hydrogen and meet CEOs from companies like Coca-Cola, LG, and Cisco. He will also engage with UAE Economy Minister Abdulla Bin Zayed and join discussions on "Energy Transition" and "The Blue Economy." The CM will also participate in media discussions with national and international outlets, including Bloomberg, to explain AP's policies.

Throughout the visit, the CM will meet more business leaders and attend numerous high-level meetings. On the fourth day, he will return to Zurich and then head back to India.

With the support of officials such as Industries Minister TG Bharat and IT Minister Nara Lokesh, the CM's visit aims to further promote Brand AP, attract significant investments, and create job opportunities for the state's youth. The government believes this visit will be a key step in achieving its economic objectives.

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'Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas' programmes held in NTR dist

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In response to the State government's call to maintain cleanliness across villages, towns, and cities, Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas programmes were conducted across the NTR district on Saturday. The state government has designated this initiative every third Saturday. As part of the programme, the NTR district administration organised an event at Gollapudi village in Vijayawada Rural Mandal.



MP Sivanath flagged off the Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas rally, accompanied by Mylavaram MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad, NTR District Collector Dr G. Lakshminsha, and other officials. They actively participated in both the rally and the cleanliness drive. During the event, Dr Lakshminsha administered a cleanliness oath.

Addressing the gathering, MP Sivanath emphasised the need for collective efforts to make the district a model for implementing Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas. He urged the public to strive for a plastic-free district, highlighting the harmful effects of plastic on health and the environment. He

advised people to switch to eco-friendly alternatives like cloth or jute bags and to use copper or steel bottles for drinking water. He also encouraged the use of glass and steel materials in hotels to minimise plastic usage. The MP appealed to officials

and public representatives to create awareness about the importance of not dumping garbage in public spaces or along roadsides. He stressed that the state government is ensuring mass participation in cleanliness drives to clear garbage and unwanted vegetation.

Dr G. Lakshminsha, the NTR District Collector, reiterated the significance of cleanliness for better health. He warned against dumping waste in drains and public places, which often leads to the spread of diseases. He instructed officials at village, mandal, and district levels to ensure proper disposal of waste at designated dumping yards.

The Collector also urged officials to procure vehicles with donor support for transporting garbage. He later inspected unauthorised garbage dumping spots along the Gollapudi - Jakkampudi Road and directed officials to

remove them, warning of strict action against violators.

Prominent attendees included NTR District Panchayat Officer (DPO) Lavanya Kumari, DLPO GSL Raghavan, DRDA PD K. Srinivasa Rao, Tahsildar B. Suguna Kumari, MPDO B. Vigniss, Panchayat Secretary M. Swaroopa Rani, and Panchayat Special Officer M. Prasad.

Separately, the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) organised Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas programmes across all 64 divisions in the city. VMC Mayor Rayana Bhagya Lakshmi, Vijayawada Central MLA and Government Whip Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, East MLA Gadde Rama Mohana Rao, West MLA Yalamanchili Satyanarayana Chowdary (Sujana Chowdary), VMC In-Charge Commissioner Chandrasekar, and several other corporators participated in the events.

'Timely justice is judiciary's foremost duty'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra Pradesh High Court Chief Justice, Dhiraj Singh Thakur, underscored the judiciary's duty to deliver timely justice, ensuring a fair and equitable legal system for all citizens. Addressing the inaugural session of the South Zone II Regional Judicial Conference on "Court Dockets: Explosion and Exclusion," he highlighted that swift justice is the cornerstone of a functioning judiciary.

The two-day conference, organized by the National Judicial Academy in collaboration with the High Court of Andhra Pradesh and the A.P. Judicial Academy, commenced on Saturday. Focusing on tackling the rising case backlog in Indian courts, the event brought together judicial officers, including Jharkhand High Court Chief Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao and Uttarakhand High Court Chief Justice G. Narendar, along with district judges and legal experts. Justice Thakur acknowl-



Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur, Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court, delivers the welcome address at the South Zone II Regional Judicial Conference on "Court Dockets: Explosion and Exclusion."

edged the challenges hindering timely justice, such as procedural delays, administrative bottlenecks, and the sheer volume of pending cases. He assured attendees of the judiciary's commitment to overcoming these challenges through innovative approaches and the strategic use of AI-powered technologies.

Former Supreme Court Judge Justice Aniruddha Bose said that India faces an overwhelming backlog of over 45 crore cases, with 37 lakh new cases registered last year, despite courts resolving 38

lakh cases during the same period. Justice Bose emphasised the critical role of modern technology in streamlining judicial processes and enhancing efficiency.

Supreme Court Justice PS Narasimha highlighted the urgent need for systemic reforms to address persistent delays in the judicial process. He cited concerning examples, such as an Aadhaar-related case filed in 2011 that is not expected to be resolved until 2024, and property disputes that have lingered in courts for decades.



GITAM University and DST launch CRRCs to empower vulnerable communities

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GITAM Deemed to be University, in collaboration with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the SEED-CRRC Project, has launched a pioneering initiative to establish Community Resilience Resource Centres (CRRCs) across Andhra Pradesh. These centres are strategically designed to empower vulnerable communities with Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) capabilities, enabling them to effectively mitigate health and livelihood uncertainties.

Under the project titled "Establishment of Four CRRCs in Anakapalli and Alluri Sitarama Raju Districts," GITAM, in partnership with GIMSR, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), and Arohan Tribal

Society (ArTS), recently hosted a Community Medical Camp and Awareness Programme on 18th January 2025 at Gadaburu and Ramachandrapuram in V. Madugula Mandal, Anakapalli District.

The CRRCs will play a crucial role in improving access to essential services such as clean drinking water, sanitation, and healthcare. Simultaneously, these centres will foster community resilience by promoting livelihood enhancement, income generation activities, and capacity-building programs aimed at achieving self-reliance. At the recent event, over 450 beneficiaries from the Gadaba Tribal community actively participated in informative sessions covering topics like drinking water purification, hygiene, nutrition, and health.

CPI for retention of 'Grameena Bank' hqs in Kadapa

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna has appealed to the State government to retain the headquarters of Andhra Pragathi Grameena Bank (APGB) in Kadapa, urging against its relocation. He expressed concerns over reports suggesting the government is considering moving the headquarters for administrative convenience.

In a letter addressed to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday, Ramakrishna stressed the importance of keeping the APGB headquarters in Kadapa, highlighting its unique position as the only bank headquarters in the Rayalaseema region.

Ramakrishna underscored the bank's crucial role in promoting financial and social development in Rayalaseema. He noted that APGB has been instrumental in providing employment opportunities for the region's unemployed youth. He called upon the government to take necessary measures to ensure the headquarters remains in Kadapa, emphasising its significance for the region's progress.

Tributes paid to NTR on his 29th death anniversary

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 29th death anniversary of the late Chief Minister and founder of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Dr. Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR), was observed on Saturday with reverence across the NTR district.

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni), accompanied by MLAs Gadde Rama Mohana Rao, Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, Vasantha Krishna Prasad, and Yarlagadda Venkata Rao, paid homage to Dr NTR through various programs. Marking the occasion, Gannavaram MLA and Government Whip Yarlagadda Venkata Rao unveiled a statue of Dr NTR at Nunna in Vijayawada Rural Mandal.



TDP, formed the government shortly thereafter, and set a historic record by becoming the first Chief Minister in the country to introduce the scheme of providing rice to the poor at just ₹1 per kg. MP Chinni noted, "He added that Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu is working diligently to fulfil the aspirations of Dr. NTR for the state. Former Mayor Koneru Sridhar, Corporators Jasti Sambasiva Rao and Chennupati Usha Rani, TDP State Organising Secretary MS Baig, and other prominent leaders were also present at the event. In the Gannavaram Assembly Constituency, MLA Yarlagadda

Venkata Rao led the death anniversary observances. He unveiled a statue of Dr. NTR near ZP High School in Nunna, Vijayawada Rural Mandal. He also laid the foundation stone for a new library at the school, which will be constructed at a cost of ₹23 lakh. Additionally, he launched ground levelling works worth ₹5 lakh and inaugurated two roads built under the Palle Panduga scheme at a total cost of Rs 65 lakh.

Nunna Sarpanch Katuri Sarala, MPDO Vigniss, SSA DEE Balaji, and High School Headmaster Vazrala Bhupal Reddy were among those who participated in the ceremonies.

High command set to take action against Kolikapudi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is preparing to take disciplinary action against Tiruvuru MLA Kolikapudi Srinivas following allegations of assaulting a woman. The TDP's disciplinary committee has directed Kolikapudi to appear before them on Monday in connection with the incident.



On January 11, Kolikapudi was accused of assaulting a Scheduled Tribe woman from Gopalapuram village, located in A Konduru mandal of NTR district. The TDP high command has taken the matter seriously, issuing orders for Kolikapudi to explain the reasons behind the alleged assault. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had previously expressed strong dissatisfaction with Kolikapudi's actions, including his involvement in the Tiruvuru incident. The latest round of serious criticism following the woman's assault has prompted the TDP leadership to initiate an inquiry into the matter. The explanation provided by Kolikapudi will be reviewed by the TDP high command, and based on the disciplinary committee's report, further action

is expected to be taken against the MLA. On January 11, Kolikapudi attended a private event in Gopalapuram village. Later, he visited a local household to resolve a land dispute between two brothers. However, instead of settling the matter peacefully, he allegedly used abusive language and assaulted a woman from the area. The woman reportedly consumed poison, alleging that she had been attacked by Kolikapudi and his family members. She was promptly rushed to the hospital.

Kolikapudi Srinivas has previously sparked controversy with remarks such as claiming to have used his personal funds to clear debris from irrigation canals and stating that "dogs might have faith, but not farmers."

Tribal village's plea for road connectivity goes unanswered

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

Velam Bheemareddy, a 62-year-old tribal resident of Chalingam, a remote hilltop village in the Cheemalapadu panchayat, faced a distressing ordeal when his family had to carry him on a makeshift stretcher (doli) for 3 km after he fell ill while returning from a charity event in CK Padu village. With no road access to their village, his family was left with no option but to navigate the challenging terrain on foot, underscoring the dire need for basic infrastructure.

Chalingam, home to 403 ST Bagata tribals, has been deprived of essential facilities for 77 years. Despite repeated assurances and the allocation of ₹2.66 crore in 2023-24 for road construction, the project remains stalled due to delays in obtaining clearances from the forest department. The absence of road connectivity severely affects the villagers' daily lives, making access to healthcare, markets, and education hazardous and difficult. Tasks that are routine for others turn into perilous journeys for the residents, often undertaken on foot or horseback. This isolation has trapped the community in a cycle of poverty and limited development, even though the village has an MPP school, an Anganwadi centre, and ration depots.

Tribal leaders, including Andhra Pradesh Girijana Sangam Fifth Schedule Sadhana Committee district honorary president K. Govinda Rao, have petitioned the Anakapalli District Collector to address the issue and expedite the necessary approvals. "Our village desperately needs road connectivity. The delay in forest clearances has left us in continued hardship," stated K. Govinda Rao.

Rushikonda Blue Flag Beach declared no-plastic zone

District Collector announces plastic ban, emphasizing eco-friendly practices and protection of marine life at Rushikonda Beach; stakeholders unite for a plastic-free environment initiative.



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Rushikonda's renowned Blue Flag Beach has been officially declared a 'No Plastic Zone' by District Collector M.N. Harendhira Prasad, who also chairs the Beach Management Committee (BMC). The declaration was made during an

awareness program held at the beach on Saturday, emphasizing the importance of a plastic-free and eco-friendly environment.

Spearheaded by the District Tourism Officer (DTO) K. Gnanaveni, the initiative aims to promote ecotourism and safeguard the environment by

strictly implementing a plastic ban at the Blue Flag Beach. Highlighting the dangers of plastic waste, DTO Gnanaveni explained that the toxic gases produced by plastic severely damage ecosystems, particularly affecting marine life, including turtles and fish. Under the new rules, shop-

keepers at the beach must comply with the ban, and individuals found using plastic bags, plates, spoons, or glasses will face a fine of Rs 50. The DTO urged both domestic and international tourists to adhere to the ecotourism guidelines, ensuring a clean and sustainable environment for all visi-

tors. Dr. Bami Reddy, Director of Fisheries Survey of India, reinforced the urgency of tackling plastic pollution, citing its devastating effects on marine ecosystems. He called for collective responsibility and a total plastic ban to protect marine life. GVMC Swachhata

Promotion Officer Srinivas encouraged the use of dustbins by tourists and vendors while announcing an upcoming training program for shopkeepers to educate them on reducing and reusing plastic.

To promote eco-friendly practices, the Coromandel team distributed cloth bags, while Seshagiri from the "Go Green" NGO handed out jute bags to participants, emphasizing the use of sustainable alternatives. Representatives of Divis, NGOs 'Go Green' and Youth Club of India also participated. This new initiative at Rushikonda Blue Flag Beach stands as a model for sustainable tourism, showcasing the community's commitment to environmental preservation. The program reflects a shared vision of protecting marine ecosystems and ensuring a pleasant experience for future generations of visitors.



Collector asks youth to avail 'PM Internship Scheme' benefits

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

East Godavari District Collector P Prashanthi has urged unemployed youths to take advantage of the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme, which aims to provide employment opportunities and skill development.

Accompanied by District Industries Officer Raman, AD Pradip Kumar, and District Skill Development Officer M. Perumalla Rao, the Collector unveiled a wall poster to raise awareness about the scheme among jobless youth.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Prashanthi emphasized that the PM Internship Scheme is designed to offer skilled job opportunities to one crore youth in India over



the next five years by placing them in the top 500 companies across the country. She encouraged the youth to make the most of this opportunity.

Reiterating the Central Government's commitment to creating employment for the youth, the Collector explained that the scheme would provide

BBA, B.Pharm, or B.Tech. Students enrolled in online or distance learning programs are also eligible," she clarified.

Aspirants can register for the PM Internship Scheme using their Aadhaar and biodata on the official website, <https://pminternship.mca.gov.in>. Selected candidates will receive a monthly scholarship of ₹25,000 for 12 months, along with a one-time grant of ₹6,000.

The PM Internship Scheme commenced on January 10th, with the last date for registration being January 21st. Only candidates aged 21 to 24 years are eligible for the scheme. Collector Prashanthi urged the youth of East Godavari district to seize this valuable opportunity.

Clean environs key for healthy living: I&PR Minister

PNS ■ ELURU

Minister for Housing and I&PR, K Parthasarathy, highlighted the importance of maintaining a hygienic environment for a healthy life and urged public support for the success of the 'Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas' programme.

The Minister, accompanied by officials, participated in the programme held at Tukkuluru village in Nuzvid Mandal on Saturday. Addressing the gathering, Minister Parthasarathy emphasised that cleanliness must become a way of life. "The Swachh Andhra - Swachh Diwas programme, initiated by the Andhra Pradesh Government, is con-

However, with the increasing population, garbage levels have risen, adversely affecting public health. He urged residents to maintain environmental hygiene and ensure cleanliness in their surroundings to safeguard their health.

ducted on the third Saturday of every month across the State. The success of this initiative depends on the active cooperation and participation of the public," he stated.

Reflecting on the past, the Minister remarked that villages had a cleaner atmosphere during the previous YSRCP regime. However, with the increasing population, garbage levels have risen, adversely affecting pub-

lic health. He urged residents to maintain environmental hygiene and ensure cleanliness in their surroundings to safeguard their health.

Criticising the previous YSRCP government, Minister Parthasarathy alleged that negligence under their administration had resulted in the accumulation of 85 lakh metric tonnes of garbage across the State. "Under the leadership of

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, a massive programme has been launched to clear this garbage and maintain hygiene throughout the State. Public participation and support are crucial for this mission's success," he asserted.

The Minister also instructed officials to promptly address sanitation-related issues in municipalities and village panchayats.

Later, he administered an oath to participants, pledging to uphold hygiene and cleanliness in their surroundings. Among those present at the event were ZP CEO K. Subba Rao, DLPL M.P.L. Sundari, DLD Venkata Rao, and other officials.

'Free power to ryots will continue, no smart meters'

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar has reiterated that the free power supply to farmers will continue, dismissing any plans to install smart meters.

Participating in the 29th death anniversary of TDP founder and former Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao at Addanki on Saturday, the Minister paid tributes by garlanding NTR's statue at Singarakonda village in Addanki mandal. Addressing the gathering, Gottipati assured farmers of nine hours of free power and ruled out the instal-



lation of smart meters.

Later, the Minister inaugurated the NTR Sujala Rakshitha Shuddhi Kendra

and CC roads built using NREGS funds. He instructed officials to address public complaints promptly.

Gottipati refuted a report published in Sakshi daily, which claimed the free power scheme for farmers would be revoked. He accused YSRCP leaders of spreading misinformation through media and warned of action against such false reports.

Highlighting TDP's achievements, the Minister noted that the party had enrolled one crore activists, solidifying its position as a strong regional force. He expressed confidence that people could see the difference between the YSRCP administration and the current coalition government.

ENC hosts maiden Veterans' Day Parade at RK Beach

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Eastern Naval Command (ENC) organized the Veterans' Day Parade at RK Beach, Visakhapatnam, in celebration of the 9th Armed Forces Veterans Day on Saturday. The momentous event saw over 500 veterans, Veernaris, and their dependents come together to pay tribute to the brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to serving the nation.

The parade was flagged off by Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, who graced the event as the Chief Guest. Joining him were esteemed guests, including Vice Admiral VK Namballa (Retd), President of the Navy Foundation, and Dr. Chandra Shekar P. Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (Retd).

The parade commenced at Vishwa Priya Hall on RK Beach Road and concluded at the Naval Coastal Battery, where attendees gathered for a commemorative breakfast and interactive session. The event featured prominent participation from Flag officers, ENC personnel, senior civil



dignitaries, the National Cadet Corps (NCC), Sea Cadet Corps, and students from Sainik School Korukonda, symbolizing a collective expression of gratitude.

The parade celebrated the resilience and sacrifices of veterans, reaffirming the nation's commitment to honoring their legacy. Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar expressed profound appreciation for the veterans' dedication and reassured them of the Navy's continued focus on their welfare.

As part of the event, specialized help desks were set up by all three services to provide updates on policies and address service-related concerns. Representatives from SPARSH, ECHS, and major banks assisted veterans in resolving pending matters.



Govt committed to promoting tourism in Pulicat Lake area

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Tourism, Kandula Durgesh, has reiterated his commitment to promoting tourism in the Pulicat Lake area and ensuring that tourists are provided with all necessary facilities.

The Minister, accompanied by MLA Nelavala Vijayasri, Collector S. Venkateswar, and Joint Collector S. Bansal, formally inaugurated the three-day Flamingo Festival in Sullurpet on Saturday.

On the occasion, he flagged off a rally from Holy Cross Circle to the Junior College and also launched air balloons. The Flamingo Festival, which began on January 18, will run through January 20.

While addressing the gathering, the Tourism Minister spoke about the Government's efforts to develop the state through the P4 concept—Public, Private, and People's Partnership—along with the PPP model. He assured that steps would be taken to enhance boating facilities at BV Palem to attract more tourists.

The Minister praised the Tirupati district administration and public representatives for organizing the Flamingo Festival on such a grand scale, which has drawn visitors, nature enthusiasts, and bird watchers not only from across the state but also from other parts of the country.

"Despite the financial challenges faced by the State, the Flamingo Festival is being cel-

ebrated on a grand scale. We will take steps to identify and resolve the issues faced by the Pulicat area. Efforts will be made to develop the Pulicat Lake region as a major tourist attraction. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is keen on developing the tourism sector through the Public, Private, and People's Participation concept," the Minister affirmed.

Tourism Minister Durgesh also praised the audiovisual presentation at the start of the program, describing it as a visual treat. He noted that it was a wonderful experience to see the flamingos, the Nelapattu area, and the Pulicat Lake, which is ranked second in terms of bird watching a truly remarkable sight.

The Minister commended the district Collector and tourism officials for successfully organizing the event. MLA Vijayasri highlighted that the Flamingo Festival had resumed after a gap of five years. Collector Venkateswar pointed out that the catchment area for the tourist destinations is vast, attracting visitors not only from Tamil Nadu but also from the districts of Tirupati, Chittoor, and Nellore. He assured that all necessary facilities for tourists had been arranged.

Among those who attended the event were Municipal Chairman Srimant Reddy, former MP N. Subramanyam, former Minister P. Ratnam, former MLC V. Narayana Reddy, and RDO Kiranmai.

TDP to announce its plans in Telangana soon: Nara Lokesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's son and TDP Minister Nara Lokesh said the party is discussing restructuring of its unit in Telangana.

He said that it is great that without having a single MLA in Telangana the party's membership is 1.60 lakh. Earlier, the TDP had a membership of four lakhs even though the party had 23 MLAs then. People are taking TDP membership in Telangana voluntarily even though the party has no MLAs. This proves that the people of Telangana like the TDP, he said.

admiration for the party in Telangana. He said that 1.60 lakh people have taken the TDP's active membership in Telangana.

He said that it is great that without having a single MLA in Telangana the party's membership is 1.60 lakh. Earlier, the TDP had a membership of four lakhs even though the party had 23 MLAs then. People are taking TDP membership in Telangana voluntarily even though the party has no MLAs. This proves that the people of Telangana like the TDP, he said.

Shah to take part in NDRF event at Gannavaram

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation, Amit Shah, will attend the 20th Foundation Day celebrations of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as the chief guest on Sunday, near Gannavaram in Krishna district. During the event, he will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for projects worth approximately Rs 220 crores.

Amit Shah will inaugurate three key centres on Sunday, including the Southern Campus of the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), the

10th Battalion of the NDRF, and the Regional Response Centre (RRC) in Supaul (9th Battalion). While the NDRF leads disaster response efforts, the NIDM plays a crucial role in human resource development, capacity building, training, research, documentation, and policy formulation.

In addition, the Union Home Minister will lay the foundation stone for a new 'Integrated Indoor Shooting Range' at the National Police Academy (NPA) in Hyderabad. The facility will be used to train IPS probationary officers in shooting skills. The 50-metre

long shooting range will have 10 lanes, enabling ten individuals to practice shooting at the same time. Fully automated and operational in all weather conditions, the range is being constructed at a cost of Rs 27 crore and will feature state-of-the-art technology, meeting international standards. It will be a unique facility among police organizations across the country.

Piyush Anand, Director General of NDRF, highlighted the exceptional work of the 10th Battalion, which has participated in over 800 missions since its inception. The battalion has been credited with



saving more than 15,000 lives and evacuating over one lakh citizens to safety.

Rajendra Ratnoo, Executive Director of NIDM, spoke about the crucial role that NIDM and NDRF will play in making India disaster-resistant under the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Vision@2047. Ratnoo emphasized that while the NDRF leads in disaster response, NIDM's contributions are vital in human resource development and policy formulation.

Mayor highlights cleanliness as catalyst for societal development

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Mayor Golagani Hari Venkat Kumari underscored the pivotal role of cleanliness in fostering a healthy community and advancing societal development at the "Swarna Andhra-Swachh Andhra" program held at Shivaji Park on Saturday evening. The government-led initiative aims to promote sustainability and enhance cleanliness across the city.

During her address, the Mayor emphasized a comprehensive park cleanliness drive conducted across all 98 wards under the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC). Stressing the importance of public participation, she urged citizens to reduce single-use plastics and adopt sustainable practices such as tree planting, terrace gardening, and using public transport. "Our collective efforts in maintaining cleanliness will not only improve our quality of life but also elevate Visakhapatnam's cleanliness rankings," she stated.



ed, appealing to citizens to join hands in this transformative journey.

District Collector MN Harendira Prasad aligned the program with Andhra Pradesh's vision of becoming "Swarnandhra" by 2047. He announced a series of thematic monthly initiatives starting with "New Year, A Good Start," which will focus on cleaning public spaces, maintaining drains and toilets, segregating waste, and promoting cleanliness awareness. As a motivational gesture, the cleanest ward will be awarded Rs 5 lakh for further development.

"Cleanliness is a cornerstone for attracting investments and tourists while creating a healthy urban environment," remarked the Collector, highlighting its economic and social benefits.

GVMC Commissioner P. Sampath Kumar drew inspiration from Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's Shramdaan initiative, emphasizing community-driven approaches. He encouraged citizens to take personal responsibility for maintaining cleanliness in homes and businesses while adopting environmentally friendly habits.

"People should ensure that their surroundings are as clean as their homes. Clean surroundings contribute significantly to maintaining good health"

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Chadavalava Nagarani has underscored the importance of public participation for the successful implementation of the 'Swachh Andhra-Swachh Diwas' programme in the district.

The Collector took part in the programme organised at Adarshanagar Park on Saturday, where she was accompanied by MLA Pulaparthi Ramanjaneyulu. As part of the event, Collector Nagarani officially launched the initiative by removing garbage from the park, setting

People's participation vital for success of 'Swachh Andhra'



an example for others.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector emphasised the need to raise awareness about maintaining hygiene and

reducing the use of plastic items. "People should ensure that their surroundings are as clean as their homes. Clean surroundings contribute signif-

icantly to maintaining good health," she said.

She pointed out that disposable items are commonly used during weddings and other

events, which contributes to environmental degradation. To address this, she encouraged the use of eco-friendly alternatives like plantain leaves and hand-stitched leaf plates.

Highlighting the role of individuals in the mission, the Collector stated that keeping public spaces clean should not be left entirely to sanitary workers. "It is a shared social responsibility, and everyone must contribute to maintaining cleanliness in their surroundings," she added. MLA Pulaparthi Ramanjaneyulu called on the public to actively participate in the Swachh Andhra-Swachh Diwas programme and extend their full cooperation to make it a success. He also administered an oath with the participants, pledging their commitment to maintaining hygiene.

Municipal Commissioner K. Ramachandra Reddy and other officials were present at the event.

ACROSS THE STATES



Himachal IG convicted in custodial death case

A Special CBI court here on Saturday convicted the Himachal Pradesh Inspector General of Police and seven other policemen in the custodial death of an accused in the gang rape and murder of a minor girl in Himachal Pradesh's Kotkhai in 2017. The court of special judge Alka Malik will pronounce the quantum of punishment on January 27. The CBI court convicted IG Zahur Haider Zaidi, the then deputy superintendent of police Manoj Joshi, then Sub-Inspector Rajinder Singh, then Assistant SI Deep Chand Sharma, then head constable Mohan Lal, Surat Singh, Rafee Mohammad and then constable Ranjit Sateta. The court acquitted the then Superintendent of Police DW Negi, his counsel Rabintra Pandit said. The accused have been convicted under various sections, including 302 (murder) read with 120-B, 330 (voluntarily causing hurt to extort confession), 348 (wrongful confinement to extract confession) and 195 (giving false evidence) of the Indian Penal Code, said CBI public prosecutor Amit Jindal.



Man poisons wife and son to death, survives suicide bid

A 45-year-old man on Saturday poisoned his wife and minor son to death before attempting suicide in Maharashtra's Pune district due to alleged harassment by moneylenders, an official said. While the man, Vaibhav Hande from the Chikhali area, is being treated in a hospital, police have booked four persons, identified as Santosh Kadam, Surekha Kadam, Santosh Pawar and Javed Khan, in connection with the deaths, the official said. In his complaint, Vaibhav said he gave sleeping pills to his wife Shubhangi Hande, 36, and their 9-year-old son Dhanraj in the morning, resulting in their death. Vaibhav then tried to hang himself from a ceiling fan in their flat. On Friday night, Vaibhav had sent a note on the mobile phone of his 14-year-old son, whom he had sent to his relative's place in Mumbai, detailing his plan.



Curbs on flight operations at Delhi airport

Delhi airport operator DIAL on Saturday said there will be no flight arrivals and departures between 10.20 am and 12.45 pm for the next eight days till January 26 in view of the Republic Day week. Indra Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) is the country's busiest airport and handles around 1,300 flight movements daily. Details about the impact of the curbs on the earlier scheduled flights of various airlines could not be immediately ascertained. "As per the NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) issued for Republic Day week from 19th to 26th Jan 2025, no flights would be arriving or departing from Delhi Airport between 10:20 AM to 12:45 PM IST," DIAL said in a post on X. Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) also advised passengers to check with the airlines concerned for the updated flight information.

'Will bolster economic activities'

PM distributes over 65 lakh SVAMITVA property cards



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday distributed more than 65 lakh property cards under the SVAMITVA scheme, and said it will bolster economic activities and help in poverty alleviation. The prime minister virtually addressed the event and also interacted with some beneficiaries. He also said rural land digitisation is "furthering rural empowerment by leveraging the power of technology and good governance". The property cards are being

distributed to beneficiaries across more than 50,000 villages in 10 states -- Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and two Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. Modi said the scheme will help people get loans and benefits of other government schemes. "Around 2.24 crore beneficiaries in villages will now have SVAMITVA property cards after 65 lakh cards are



distributed today," the prime minister said. "Property rights are a major challenge across the world. Years ago, the United Nations had held a study, which revealed people did not have legal documents for property rights in several countries. The UN has said property rights are important for poverty alleviation," he said. Modi said an eminent economist had opined that property in villages is a "dead capital" because people cannot do anything with it, and it can't help increase their income. "India was also impacted by

this challenge. People in villages have property worth lakhs of crores (of rupees), but they did not have papers for it. There were disputes, properties were snatched, and even banks did not provide loans over it," he said. "The prime minister emphasized that no sensitive government could leave its villagers in such distress. "Previous governments should have taken steps to do something about it but nothing much was done," he said. Modi said Dalits, backward classes and tribals were the worst affected by this.

CYBERCRIME INVESTIGATIONS

India, US seal pact to enhance cooperation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days before it hands over power to President-elect Donald Trump, the Biden administration signed a pact with New Delhi that provides for boosting cooperation in combating cybercrime and related challenges such as terror financing and violent extremism. The agreement on cybercrime investigations, signed in Washington on Friday, allows the agencies concerned of the two countries to step up the level of cooperation with respect to cyber threat intelligence and digital forensics, according to an Indian readout. It is the second such move in the last few days by the outgoing Biden administration that reflected the overall upward trajectory of relations between the two nations. The US on Wednesday removed restrictions on three Indian nuclear entities --

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Indra Gandhi Atomic Research Centre (IGCAR) and the Indian Rare Earths (IRE). The lifting of the restrictions



is aimed at implementation of the historic India-US civil nuclear deal sealed around 16 years ago. The Memorandum of Understanding or MoU on cybercrime investigations was signed by Indian Ambassador Vinay Kwatra and Acting US Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Kristie Canegallo. "Cybercrime has intricate linkages with the common security challenges faced by

India and the US such as terrorism and violent extremism, terror financing, drug trafficking, organised crime, human trafficking, illegal migration, money laundering and transportation security," the MEA said in the readout. "The MoU on cybercrime investigations will enable further strengthening of India-US security cooperation, as part of our comprehensive and global strategic partnership," it said. From New Delhi, the Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) of the Union Home Ministry will be responsible for execution of the MoU, the MEA said. From the US side, it will be the Department of Homeland Security, and its constituent agencies -- the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Homeland Security Investigations Cyber Crimes Center (C3) which are tasked to execute the pact.

ATTACK ON SAIF ALI KHAN
Suspect detained at Durg railway station in Chhattisgarh



PNS ■ DURG

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) detained a suspect in the case of knife attack on actor Saif Ali Khan from a train at Durg railway station in Chhattisgarh on Saturday afternoon, an official said. The man, identified as Aakash Kailash Kannoja (31), was traveling by Jnaneshwari Express which runs between Mumbai Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT) to Kolkata Shalimar, the RPF official said.

45% of population covered under Ayushman Bharat: Nadda

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

'Ayushman Bharat' has brought 6 crore citizens aged 70 and above under it, and the Centre's flagship health insurance programme now covers over 45 per cent of India's population, Union Health Minister JP Nadda said here Saturday. The Union Cabinet in October last year approved health coverage to all citizens aged 70 years and above irrespective of income under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY). "Under Modi 3.0, we have added 6 crore people above 70 under Ayushman Bharat. Now,

more than 62 crore people, or over 45 per cent of India's population, are covered, not in health insurance but under a 'health assurance' scheme with an annual coverage of Rs 5 lakh," he said. Speaking at the 'IIMA Healthcare Summit 2025' organised at the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, he called the scheme a game changer and said it has benefited more than 4.2 crore citizens. "These are poor people -- rickshaw pullers, street vendors, bus drivers, conductors, lift men, security guards, barbers, shoemakers -- who perhaps would never have thought about caring for their health," Nadda said.

Modi wanted to throw away Constitution, but ended up bowing before it: Rahul

PNS ■ PATNA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had harboured a wish to "throw away" the Constitution, but ended up bowing before it after the BJP's below-expectation performance in the Lok Sabha polls. The Leader of the Opposition made the charge at a 'Samvidhan Suraksha Sammelan' here while mimicking the PM, evoking peals of laughter from the crowds. Holding a copy of the Constitution close to his head, Gandhi said, "When Modiji entered Parliament after winning a third term, he did like

this. He wanted to throw the Constitution away. But our concerted fight made him give up his boast of a 400-plus seat win for the BJP." Notably, remarks by a few BJP leaders that the



Constitution might be "changed" if the party won more than 400 seats in the 543-strong Lok Sabha were latched on by the opposition INDIA bloc, led by Congress, in last year's general elections.



Congress's new HQ narrates tale of 139-yr history

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior leaders who left the Congress and even mounted stinging attacks on it find a place in the pictorial representation of the party's history spread across the five storeys of its new 9A Kotla Road office. Ahead of a media tour of the office, Congress treasurer Ajay Maken Saturday told reporters at the first press conference at the Indra Gandhi Bhawan that the building was built at an estimated cost of Rs 200-225 crore with some dues still left to be paid to Larsen and Toubro (L&T) construction company. The Congress headquarters was inaugurated on Wednesday, as the grand old party turned a page in its history after operating from its iconic 24, Akbar Road premises for the last 47 years. Congress parliamentary party chief Sonia Gandhi inaugurated the plush building in the presence of party president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, and general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Jairam Ramesh and K C Venugopal, among other

of the party's 139-year-old history with its walls adorning pictures from the freedom struggle to the party's governance achievements. From VP Singh to Ghulam Nabi Azad and from Suresh Pachouri to Rita Bahuguna Joshi, many leaders who left the party, including some who joined the BJP, and made stinging attacks on the party, find a place in the slew of photographs and pictorial representation of the party's history adorning the walls of the new office. As one enters the building, the wall in front adorns the pictures of the party's first president W C Benerjee and current chief Kharge. A striking picture on the ground floor is that of Sonia Gandhi leading a march with the likes of Pachouri, Joshi and P Sudhakar Reddy, all now in the BJP, accompanying her. Also there in the photograph is Ashok Tanwar, who left the Congress for the BJP, but returned to the party fold last year. In another epic picture, Rajiv Gandhi, when he was prime minister, is seen flanked Gandhi is flanked by

The Congress headquarters was inaugurated on Wednesday, as the grand old party turned a page in its history after operating from its iconic 24, Akbar Road premises for the last 47 years

senior leaders. "Today we will introduce you to a temple of democracy - Indra Bhawan, the headquarters of the largest opposition party of the country at present," Maken told the press conference along with AICC general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh and party's media and publicity department head Pawan Khera. "The government of India allotted this land to us on November 19, 2007. Its foundation stone was laid in 2009 and finally we received the 'completion cum occupancy certificate' on January 14, 2025, while it was inaugurated on January 15," he said. Indra Gandhi Bhawan, designed by Hafeez Contractor, narrates the tale

Manmohan Singh, PV Narasimha Rao and VP Singh (who all became prime ministers) and K R Narayanan (who became president later). On the fourth floor, which showcases the party's history from 2014-2023, a picture from 2019 adorns the wall in which Azad is seen standing with Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Manmohan Singh, taken at Rajghat during a protest against CAA and NRC. Another interesting photo that adorns the walls on the fourth floor is of Sonia Gandhi and then president Sitaram Kesari during a campaign rally in Rohtak in January 1998. A few months later Kesari was forced out and Gandhi took over as party chief.



Clash of farmers on India-Bangla border resolved

Situation under control, says BSF

PNS ■ MALDA (WB)

Tension erupted on the India-Bangladesh border on Saturday morning near a BSF border outpost after an altercation between farmers from both countries escalated into a brief clash, the paramilitary force said. However, prompt intervention by the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) ensured that the situation was swiftly brought under control, a BSF statement said. According to the BSF, the incident occurred around 11:45 am when Indian farmers working near the international border accused Bangladeshi farmers of stealing crops.



The verbal argument quickly spiraled, with farmers from both sides gathering in large numbers, hurling abuses, and pelting stones at one another. In a statement, the BSF said, "The situation was immediately brought under control following timely intervention by BSF and BGB personnel. Farmers from both sides were dispersed and sent back to their respective territories. There have been no reports of injuries in the incident." The BSF further emphasized

the importance of avoiding such disputes and advised Indian farmers to report any farming-related issues along the border directly to BSF personnel. "We have requested Indian farmers to maintain calm and refrain from getting involved in border disputes. Necessary measures will be taken in case of any grievances," the statement added. The BGB also played a crucial role in managing the situation on their side of the border. By late afternoon, some Bangladeshi nationals were seen within 50-75 metres of the international boundary, but they were reportedly dissuaded by BGB personnel, preventing further escalation.

India joins mega naval wargame La Perouse

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy is participating in a mega wargame along with naval forces from eight nations including the US and France against the backdrop of increasingly fractious geopolitical environment and China's military muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific. The naval exercise 'La Perouse' is underway in the straits between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean as well as Malacca, Sunda and Lombok. These straits are largely considered as very crucial for global maritime trade. The nine-day exercise that began on January 16 aims to enhance cooperation among the participating nations in areas of maritime surveillance, interdiction operations, air operations and information sharing. French Carrier Strike Group (CSG), led

by nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle, is the mainstay of the mega exercise. India's indigenously designed and built



guided missile destroyer INS Mumbai is part of the exercise, according to the Indian Navy. Besides, India, the US and France, naval

forces from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Canada and the UK are participating in the exercise. "The exercise provides an opportunity for like-minded navies to develop closer links in planning, coordination and information sharing for enhanced tactical interoperability," the Indian Navy said on Saturday. "The exercise will witness complex and advanced multi-domain exercises including surface warfare, anti-air warfare, air-defence, cross deck landings and tactical manoeuvres, as also the constabulary missions such as VBSS (Visit, Board, Search and Seizure) operations," it said in a statement. The Indian Navy's participation in the exercise showcases the high levels of synergy, coordination and interoperability between the like-minded navies and their commitment to a rules-based international order in the maritime domain, it added.



In Sandburgs you will find yourself immersed in an ambiance that feels straight out of America when they serve. The menu is crafted to teleport you to the street style of USA with their presentation, writes **TEAM AGENDA**



SLICE OF AMERICA ON YOUR PLATE

When you step into Sandburgs, you're instantly transported to the bustling streets of America usually you might have seen in the web series. From the rustic interiors to the vibrant menu, every corner exudes classic American charm. And the food? It's a culinary celebration of comfort and indulgence. Here's a deep dive into the unforgettable experience that Sandburgs offers.



lovers. This unique offering combines marinated cottage cheese with fresh veggies like onion, tomato, and capsicum. The *SB special mint mayo* and *tandoori sauce* elevate the flavours, creating a blend of smoky, tangy, and herby notes in every bite. The warm, crisp bread completes the sandwich, making it a satisfying meal on its own. Other options you could explore in the Sandwiches category are *Peri Peri Cottage press Sandwich*, *Classic Pollo press Sandwich*, *North Pollo Press Sandwich* which are like awesome for the fast food lovers.

BURGERS THAT SPEAK TO YOUR SOUL: The *Garden Dreams Burger* is a masterpiece that deserves a standing ovation. The handmade veggie patty is perfectly crisp on the outside and tender within, paired with fresh lettuce, juicy tomato, and a generous dollop of homemade harissa mayo that gives the burger a delightful kick. The caramelised onions and melted cheddar cheese add layers of sweet and savoury goodness, all nestled in a soft, freshly toasted bun.

SANDWICHES THAT STEAL THE SHOW: The *Tandoori Cottage Press Sandwich* is a revelation for sandwich

CHEESINESS YOU CAN'T SAY NO TO: Cheese lovers, unite! The *Grilled Cheese* is a triple-threat of mozzarella, parmesan, and cheddar cheeses melted



to perfection. The caramelised onions tucked inside add a hint of sweetness that balances the richness of the cheeses. Toasted in freshly baked milk bread, it's a nostalgic nod to classic American comfort food, oozing with gooey goodness. You could also satisfy your taste buds by ordering *Shroom & Cheese* with assorted mushroom ragu with caramelised onion, mozzarella and parmesan cheese toasted in a freshly baked milk bread, *Ham & cheese* with premium pork ham with sharp cheddar cheese and golden fried egg toasted in a freshly baked milk bread.

SIDES THAT COMPLEMENT THE FEAST: What's an American-style meal without crispy potato fries? Sandburgs' fries are golden perfection, crispy on the outside and fluffy on the inside. The variety of dips, including the *Cheese Garlic Dip* and the *tangy BBQ Dip*, allow you to customise your experience. The *Spicy Dip* is a personal favourite, adding just the right amount of heat to the crispy fries.

COOL DRINKS AND COFFEE: The

beverages menu is equally impressive. The *Hazelnut Iced Latte* offers a smooth blend of nutty and creamy flavours, served over ice, making it a refreshing pick-me-up. The *Lemon Iced Tea* is a zesty and revitalising drink, perfect for pairing with the heavy-duty burgers and sandwiches. You could also try *Sundaes - Hot Chocolate Sundae* and *Salted Caramel Sundae* if you are an ice cream fan.

DESSERTS AND BEYOND: Although I didn't try the sundaes this time, their presence on the menu promises a classic American diner experience. The range of beverages, from *Coffee on the Rocks* to *Nice and Warm drinks*, ensures there's something for every palate. Sandburgs deliver taste but on the promise of a true American-style dining experience. The presentation, flavours, and overall vibe make it a must-visit for anyone craving hearty comfort food. From the meticulous plating to the authentic taste, Sandburgs takes you on a culinary journey straight to the heart of America, one delicious bite at a time.



FACT SHEET
Restaurant Name: Sandburgs
Place: Unit 4/E-14, Upper Ground Floor, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi (outlets in Gurgaon as well)
Price for 1: ₹700 approx

Revolutionising Dining Experiences

Japonico: Discover the joy of great food and creative flavours



Pawan Soni
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards



In a culinary world where new menus often blur into monotony, Japonico on Golf Course Road stands out as a beacon of creativity and authenticity. This is a place where innovation meets artistry, delivering a dining experience that surprises and delights even the most seasoned food enthusiasts. With a view of the bustling metro line on the golf course road, Japonico's interiors are a visual treat. The layout is thoughtfully divided: one side features a live wood Robata grill and family-style seating, while the other, overlooking the bar, offers a more high-energy vibe. Striking design elements, live projections on flowing water and giant pots, create a serene yet vibrant ambience. Subtle lighting is balanced by strategically placed spotlights, ensuring that every dish's presentation shines as brightly as its flavours.

A COCKTAIL JOURNEY LIKE NO OTHER: The experience begins with the drinks. *The Legacy*, a gin- and vodka-based martini, exemplifies the bar's mastery. Served with tobiko caviar, pickled radish, and an olive, each element adds depth: the tobiko bursts with wasabi and truffle notes, the radish enhances passion fruit flavours, and the olive ties it back to the martini's classic essence. Japonico's mixology programme promises a standard that few can match. **CULINARY HIGHLIGHTS:** The meal starts strong with the *Mushroom Salad*, a delightful medley of textures and flavours. Crisp and dehydrated shitake mushrooms pair beautifully with iceberg lettuce, red cabbage, mizuna, cucumber and avocado, all elevated by a gomae dressing. The *Rocky Shrimp Tempura*, spiced with togarashi and creamy mayo, may not break new ground, but its flawless execution ensures it's devoured in no time. The dim sum, crafted with precision, leaves no room for leftovers. The star of the meal, however, is the *Atlantic Crab and Aji Chili Taco*. The sweetness of crab meat meets the heat of chilli and the crunch of a

perfectly crisp taco shell, all brightened by a hint of lemon. It's so irresistibly good, you might not want to share. If you're a crab lover, this dish alone is worth the visit.

From the Robata grill comes another standout: the Australian Lamb Cutlet, marinated in gochujang sauce for 24 hours. The result is tender, flavourful meat that melts in your mouth, delivering smoky richness with every bite.

THE TEAM BEHIND THE MAGIC: Great food and drinks require a great team, and Japonico is no exception. Restaurateur Sahil Sambhi, who I awarded the Best Restaurateur title in the 11th season of The Big F Awards, has honed his craft over the years, evolving from a nightlife innovator to a culinary trailblazer. Known for award-winning ventures like *Bawri* and *VietNom*, Sambhi's passion for innovation and excellence shines through in Japonico. At his side are talented mixologists Chirag Pal and Jeet Rana, and Chef Roberto Blondi, who brings Michelin-starred expertise to the table. Together, they've crafted a restaurant that's as much about the experience as it is about the cuisine.

SETTING A NEW STANDARD: As the first major restaurant launch of 2025, Japonico has raised the bar for the industry. It's not just a place to eat; it's a statement of what dining should aspire to be. Judging by the weekday crowd, diners agree, this is a benchmark that will be hard to beat.

FACT SHEET

RATINGS (Out of 5)
Food: 4.75 | Drinks: 4.75 | Ambience: 5.0 | Service: 4.5 | Overall: 4.75
Address: Japonico, 2nd Floor, Tower D, Vipul Tech Square, Golf Course Rd, near Sector 42-43, Sector 43, Gurugram
Phone: 9948000039

From Mangalore to Delhi's Table

By **TEAM AGENDA**

Food has an uncanny way of transporting us. A single bite can take us to a vibrant street, a quiet kitchen or even the shores of a distant coast. At *Chor Bizarre Chef Shriya Shetty's* Mangalorean pop-up did exactly that, bringing the soothing flavours of Mangalore to the heart of Delhi.

The vegetarian journey began with *THINDI*, the *Jowar Tartlet* filled with *red amaranth* cooked in *coconut milk* and topped with *bajeel* (tempered beaten rice). This delicate appetiser was a celebration of earthy, creamy flavours and contrasting textures.

KUNDAPUR featured the *7-Hour Mushroom Ghee Roast*, served in *Bombay pao* with *ridge gourd tzatziki*, *pomegranate* and *cilantro*. The slow-cooked mushrooms were rich and spiced, beautifully balanced by the refreshing tzatziki.

The BAFAT offering, *Mangalorean Sweet Potato Bafath*, came with *sannas* and *tamarind reduction*. This dish delivered a balance of sweetness and tanginess, made complete by the softness of the sannas.

The vegetarian MAINS, served *thali-style*, included *Kori Roti*, *Peas and Potato Gassi*, *Red Amaranth Raita*, *Ridge Gourd Chutney*, *Raw Banana* and *Carrot*



Sukha, *Ghee Rice* and accompaniments like *yoghurt* and *pickle*. The comforting *gassi* and *crispy kori roti* were the highlights, offering a fulfilling and balanced experience.

For non-vegetarian diners, the *7-Hour Chicken Ghee Roast* from *KUNDAPUR* packed a flavourful punch, while the *Mangalorean Pork Bafath* from *BAFAT* delivered tangy notes with the *sannas* and *tamarind reduction*. The MAINS featured the *classic Chicken Gassi*, *Chicken Sukha* and *Ghee Rice*, completing the hearty thali.

The meal ended on a sweet note with the *DESSERT*, a warm, *buttery Ghee Cake* paired with luscious *Banana Mousse*,

cacao nibs and a *tangy pickle drizzle*. Chef Shriya Shetty's pop-up offered a delightful way to explore Mangalorean culture through its comforting curries, distinct spices and unique pairings. Whether you choose the vegetarian spread or the meatier options, each dish brought the flavours of Mangalore alive in every bite.



FACT SHEET
Date & Time: January 19th, 2025
Lunch: 12pm & 2pm
Dinner: 7pm & 9:30pm
Price: Veg ₹1,300 (All Inclusive), Non veg ₹1,600 (All Inclusive)
Address: Broadway, 4/15 A, Asaf Ali Road, New Delhi, 110012

ESSENCE OF



The Brahmaputra Carnival celebrates the Assamese heritage, and culinary delights, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**



Northeast India, a treasure of cultural diversity and natural beauty, is a region where traditions and modernity coexist in harmony. Among its enchanting states, Assam stands out with its lush tea gardens, lively festivals, and the mighty Brahmaputra River. Assam is all alive with the *Brahmaputra Carnival*, a grand celebration that promises to showcase the region's rich heritage, arts, and cuisine. Set against the stunning backdrop of the majestic river, the carnival features cultural performances, adventure sports, food festivals, and more. It's a unique opportunity to experience the soul of Assam like never before.

A fun carnival that looks like a colourful masterpiece made from Assamese soul, river breezes, and sunshine. On the banks of the majestic Brahmaputra River, Assam culture is celebrated at the *Brahmaputra Carnival*. The river itself is serving as the stage for this festival, which is organised by the Assam Government and is a symphony of culture, adventure, and unadulterated delight.

To make your experience even more fun and adventurous is *The Lachit Ghat* is the site of the *Brahmaputra Carnival*, and *Sandbar Island* serves as the *Tent City* during the event. It takes 15 to 20 minutes by speed boat from the *Lachit Ghat* to *Sandbar Island*, and the journey is visually stunning. If you're considering a trip to the northeast, the sunny and windy weather is ideal for a getaway.

A RETREAT ON THE RIVER: Currently being held on the *Lachit Ghat*,



the carnival pulsates with energy, yet maintains a serene undercurrent. The *Brahmaputra*, ever unpredictable, adds a touch of wildness to the festivities, reminding us of the raw power of nature. It's a retreat for the soul, where the peace of the river's embrace melds perfectly with the excitement of adventure.

GLAMPING IN STYLE: The festival provides a luxurious glamping experience with three categories of tents

namely the *Royal Tents*, *Premium Tents*, and *Deluxe Tents*. All of the three options offer you a comfortable and stylish retreat, complete with modern amenities and breathtaking river views that would blow away your mind. Also, one would enjoy the foggy views as soon as you get up and look outside of your tents. The foggy layers engulfing the *Brahmaputra River* will want you to have a cup of tea or coffee with those views and chills. You would also experience the open-air cinema magic



at *Brahmaputra Carnival Tent City*. Movies, fresh air, and unforgettable moments await you. The main part of the stay is the hospitality provided at your new home. The hospitality by *Gias* and his team of boys at the *Tent City* would truly make you comfortable and at home providing everything handy and in need.

ADVENTURES ON THE BRAHMAPUTRA: For the adrenaline junkies, the *Brahmaputra* is



an irresistible playground. At the *Sandbar Island* you would experience the speedboat rides cut through the water like a knife, while kayaking and jet skiing offer a more intimate encounter with the river's currents with your own rapid and water fun. For those seeking a true test of courage, bungee jumping provides an exhilarating leap of faith. And let's not forget the thrill of *ATV rides* and the exhilarating descent on the river rapids during a white-water rafting expedition. This is not the end. You could also experience the *hot air balloon* rides up into the sky for beautiful views, *beach volleyball*, *beach cricket*, *archery*, *river rafting* and *water roller*. These adventures offer a unique perspective on the Brahmaputra, allowing you to experience its power and beauty firsthand.

At the *Lachit Ghat*, you would experience *Archery*, *River Rafting*, *Water Roller*, *Speed boat*, *Kayaking*, *ATV*, *Bungee Ejection*, *Mechanical Bull Ride*, *Bungee Trampoline*, *Air Gun Shooting*, *Zip Line*, *Rope Course* and *Zorbing*. All this will keep you hooked to the carnival and not wanting to leave it. Take note that the water activities do not take place after the dark due to safety reasons.

A CULTURAL VIBE: Beyond the thrills, the *Brahmaputra Carnival* is a celebration of Assamese culture. You would see vibrant performances of traditional dances like *Bihu*, *Satriya Nritya*, *Bagurumba*, *Bhortal*, and *Ojapali* showcasing the region's rich heritage. Apart from the dance culture you could get stalls at the *Lachit Ghat* to buy the Assam specialties like the printed *Gamucha*, *Mekhela Chador* for women and the *Dhoti-gamosa* for men.



The Brahmaputra Carnival also takes you through the musical ears of Assam as bands perform in the concerts in the evening at the *Lachit Ghat*. On the 31st January the *Carnival* will be graced by the melodic singing of the famous singer *Papon*, on 19th February it will be *Rupam Buyan* and 19 January will be rocked by *Kanawz & Company*.

THE TRADITIONAL TASTE: At the *Brahmaputra Carnival* you can indulge in local delicacies that savour the flavours of authentic Assamese cuisine. The carnival has food stalls with authentic Assamese touch. You would see *chicken momos*, *chicken vodka momos*, *prawns*, *silkworms* and so much more that would satisfy your mouth watery taste buds.

A JOURNEY TO REMEMBER: The *Brahmaputra Carnival* is more than just a festival; it's an invitation to experience the soul of Assam. It's a chance to connect with nature, have some adventure, and discover the magic of a land where the river dictates the rhythm of life. So, pack your bags guys, and prepare to be swept away by the essence of the *Brahmaputra Carnival*.



IN BRIEF



Cummins Group launches HELM engine platform

Power Solution Technology provider Cummins on Saturday launched its next-generation HELM engine platforms at Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. HELM (Higher Efficiency, Lower emissions, Multiple fuels) platforms deliver advanced internal combustion engine technology with fuel-type flexibility, enabling customers to choose from advanced diesel, natural gas or hydrogen variants to meet their diverse operational needs and sustainability goals, the company said. It "represents the company's forward-thinking approach to engine technology, prioritising performance, efficiency, and sustainability," said Cummins Group in India. Besides, it also unveiled a BSVI-ready L10 engine, part of Cummins' 10-litre HELM platform and the base for future BSVII and Euro 7 capable products. The company also introduced the B6.7N natural gas engine, enabling the transition of heavy-duty vehicles to CNG/LNG.



Man Industries India board approves plan to raise Rs 300 cr

Man Industries India on Saturday said its board has approved a plan to raise Rs 300 crore and appointed Sandeep Kumar as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The company plans to raise up to Rs 300 crore through issuance of equity shares, convertible shares warrants through preferential issue, qualified institution placement (QIP), rights issue or a combination thereof, Man Industries India said in an exchange filing. The board, at its meeting on Saturday, also approved the appointment of Sandeep Kumar as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Key Managerial Personnel with effect from January 18, 2025. In his earlier stints, Kumar has worked with Welspun Global Brands Limited and Raymond Group in the capacity of Chief Financial Officer and Director (Finance), respectively, and others. MAN Industries (India) is one of the largest players in LSAW (longitudinal submerged arc welded) pipes, spirally welded pipes and coating systems.



RBL net profit plummets on reverses from MFI loans

RBL Bank's net profit plummeted to Rs 47 crore in the December quarter of 2024-25 from Rs 245 crore in the year-ago period as the microloan portfolio came to bite. The city-based private sector lender, which has had difficult few quarters due to higher credit costs, reported a net profit of Rs 231 crore in the preceding September quarter. Its core net interest income grew by 3 per cent to Rs 1,585 crore, while the other income grew 38 per cent to Rs 1,073 crore aided by a stake sale in the NBFC DAM Capital. The bank's chief executive and managing director R Subramaniam said the net interest margin declined to 4.90 per cent from 5.52 per cent in the year-ago period, and 0.40 per cent of the impact came from the microfinance exposures. The slippages on the MFI book zoomed to Rs 535 crore as against the usual Rs 125-150 crore range due to a host of issues in the history including over-leverage of borrowers.

'India emerging as major pole in world economy'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Asserting that India is emerging as a major pole in world economy, Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam on Saturday said his country was trying to contribute to the semiconductor ecosystem and the air connectivity sector. "India aspires to be a pole in its own right, in a multipolar world that is true geopolitically, but it is also true economically. India is emerging as a major pole of the global economy. India is a nation with which we would like to collaborate," he said, while briefing the media at the end of his two-day tour to Odisha. "Because of its demographics, its own development processes, and significant potential in its export economy, India is a nation that Singapore would likely collaborate with," he added. Stating that "India's priorities and Singapore's priorities are also very similar," the President added, "According to the priorities established under the India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable, the two governments are working together to develop the semiconductor ecosystem in India. Singapore



sees how it can contribute to the ecosystem and is also looking at new generation industrial parks, particularly Sembcorp is very actively exploring possible sites for development of new industrial parks." Shanmugaratnam said both countries are also working very hard on skilling, which is a major factor to secure the future for India. "As Singapore has some experience in the field, it intended to be a player in developing India's skill ecosystem," he said. "Sustainability is a major priority for both countries. India is fortunate with solar

and wind energy, and it is going to be a significant green ammonia producer. So, Singapore is keen to engage with India in the development of these sectors and also the green corridor leading to Southeast Asia, which may take more time but is a very important aspiration," the President said. Stating that "connectivity is the key," he said, "During my meetings with the leadership in India, we shared our keenness to expand the air service agreement, which was revised for the last time about 10 years ago." Expansion of the air service

Hrithik rents out office space for Rs 5.62 lakh per month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bollywood actor Hrithik Roshan has rented out his premium commercial property at Rs 5.62 lakh per month, real estate consultant Square Yards said. In a statement on Saturday, Square Yards said it has reviewed the property registration documents. "Hrithik Roshan has given on rent his premium commercial property, securing a monthly rental income of Rs 5,62,000," the consultant said. The commercial property is located in Lotus Corporate Park project developed by Lotus Developers at Goregaon, Mumbai. Spanning 27.55 acres, this ready-to-move-in project offers modern office spaces. As per the IGR registration documents, the commercial space given on rent by the actor measures 2,727 square feet. The transaction includes a stamp duty payment of Rs 88,000 and a registration fee of Rs 1,000, the statement said.

Automobile industry will be number one in world in next 5 years: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's automobile industry will be number one in the world in the next five years, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Saturday, highlighting that the industry has created 4.5 crore jobs till now, the highest in the country. Addressing a Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA) event, the road transport and highways minister further said demand of Indian automobile products is very high globally. "The size of Indian automobile industry is now Rs 22 lakh crore. I am confident that within five years, the Indian automobile industry will be number one in the world," he said. Presently, size of the US automobile industry is Rs 78 lakh crore, followed by China (Rs 47 lakh crore) and India

(Rs 22 lakh crore). Gadkari further said when he took charge of the transport ministry in 2014, the size of the automobile industry was Rs 7.5 lakh crore and today its size is Rs 22 lakh crore. According to the minister, the automobile industry has



created 4.5 crore jobs till now -- the highest in the country. "This is the automobile industry, which is giving maximum revenue as a part of GST to the state government and Bharat Sarkar," he added. The minister pointed out that out of all two-wheelers motorcycles manufactured in India, 50 per cent are exported.

SML Isuzu bullish on govt schemes for biz growth

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commercial vehicle maker SML Isuzu has forayed into the electric vehicle business with the launch of Hiro.ev platform for commercial buses that are expected to be rolled out in the April-June quarter this year, a senior company official said. While admitting the continuing dominance of diesel, petrol, CNG-based vehicles, the company expects the government's sustainability targets and programmes to push demand for EV buses and bring down cost of production with large volumes. "As we introduced our first ever EV bus, I think technology is available and we are ready for implementation. We think this is the right time to roll out EVs. "India is one of the most

promising markets in the world. Indian government plans for 30 per cent EV penetration in total sales by 2030 will provide us strong support for growth in EV buses," SML Isuzu, MD and CEO, Junya Yamanishi said at Bharat Mobility Global Expo. The company's Hiro.ev bus platform has been designed for intra and inter-city transportation. However, the company will initially target intra-city projects. "We are mainly looking for government procurement for EV buses, especially for intra-city projects. Hiro.ev buses can be charged within 2-3 hours and they can run for around 200 kilometres on a single charge," SML Isuzu, Chief General Manager for marketing, Prashant Kumar said.



Power availability improved in rural areas, says Manohar Lal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power supply to rural areas has improved significantly by 9 hours and in urban areas by 1.4 hours over the last decade, Union Power Minister Manohar Lal has said. The minister at a meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Members of Parliament for the Ministry of Power on Thursday discussed the implementation of revamped distribution sector scheme (RDSS), an official release said. In the meeting, the minister pointed out that over the past decade, power availability in the urban areas has improved from 22 hours to 23.4 hours, while in rural areas, it has increased significantly from 12.5 hours to 22.4 hours, the Power Ministry said in the release. On RDSS Scheme, the Minister said that smart meters benefit both consumers and distribution companies by reducing billing errors, enhancing energy efficiency, and providing greater convenience for users. The ministry, in coordination with the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, has also undertaken several measures to alleviate the difficulties consumers faced while



installing roof top systems (RTS) under PM Surya Ghar, Lal said. "These measures include waiving the requirement for Technical Feasibility Study for connections up to 10 kW, implementing deemed load enhancement for RTS installations up to 10 kW, etc," he said. As per official data, around 7.3 million smart prepaid meters have been installed till November 29 in various states under the RDSS scheme. It also showed that there were 'nil' installations in 11 states and two Union Territories.

Around 25 crore smart prepaid metres are to be installed by March 2025 under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS), launched in July 2021, at an outlay of Rs 3.3 lakh crore. So far, works worth Rs 1.12 lakh cr have been awarded which are under different stages of implementation. Till date about 11.5 cr Smart Consumer meters, 45 lakh DT meters or Distribution Transformer meter and 1.70 lakh feeder meters have been awarded and are under installation.

EPFO SIMPLIFIES NORMS

Members can change personal details, transfer EPF online

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 7.6 crore members of retirement fund body EPFO can now change personal details like name and date of birth online without any verification by the employer or approval by EPFO with the rollout of a new facility on Saturday. Besides, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) members with e-KYC EPF accounts (Aadhaar seeded) can file their EPF transfer claims online with Aadhaar OTP (one time password) directly without any need for intervention of the employer. Union Labour & Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya introduced the two new services on Saturday. The minister said around 27 per cent of grievances filed by members are related to member profile/KYC issues



and that would see a significant drop after the rollout of the facility. He also stated that large employers having a huge workload of such requests will also benefit. The minister stated that the EPFO has simplified the process of joint declaration on the EPFO portal by allowing employees to self-correct most common errors in personal details like name, date of

birth, gender, nationality, father/ mother's name, marital status, spouse name, date of joining and date of leaving, without any verification by employer or approval by EPFO. This facility will be available for members, whose UAN (universal account number) was issued after October 1, 2017 (when Aadhaar matching was made mandatory). No supporting document is required in such cases, the minister informed. If the UAN was issued prior to October 1, 2017, the employer can correct details without the EPFO's approval. Requirement of supporting document has also been simplified for such cases. Only where UAN is not linked with Aadhaar, any correction would have to be submitted physically to employer and after verification forwarded to EPFO for approval, he explained. UAN registration is done by employer for the employee at the time of joining. For many employees, mistakes were committed by employers in recording father/spouse name, marital status, nationality and service details during the registration process or later. In order to correct these errors, the employee had to make a request online with supporting documents.

MARITIME INDIA CONFERENCE

Stakeholders to discuss biz opportunities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Around 7,500 stakeholders from 11 countries such as the US, the UAE, Singapore and Norway will participate in the Maritime India Conference next week to discuss business opportunities in the domestic ports and shipping sector. Union Minister for Ports, Shipping & Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal will address the event, organiser FICCI said in a statement. Participants from countries like the US, the UAE, Norway, Singapore, South Korea and Sweden will take part in the three-day summit, FICCI said. Besides, delegates from the Netherlands, Argentina, Belgium, Denmark and Italy will also share views at the conference which begins on January 22 in Mumbai. "The conference will address six strategic themes critical to India's maritime future. Central to the agenda is the transformation of ports through smart technologies and sustainable practices, complemented by initiatives to accelerate the maritime sector's decarbonisation," the statement said.

Industry experts will examine shifts in maritime logistics while engaging in focused discussions on India's growing cruise industry and innovations in shipbuilding and repair capabilities. Innovation and emerging technologies in the maritime sector form a cross-cutting theme throughout the programme, it said. The conference will also share platform for policymakers and industry stakeholders, for dialogue on regulatory priorities and sector reforms. Investment discussions will span port modernisation, shipping infrastructure, and logistics capabilities, with a special focus on international collaboration and funding opportunities. These initiatives align with India's maritime infrastructure vision for 2047, the country's centenary year of independence. "This flagship maritime initiative aligns with Maritime India Vision 2030, supporting over 300 initiatives for transforming India's maritime landscape," said Dhruv Kotak, Chairman of FICCI Committee on Transport Infrastructure and Managing Director of JM Baxi Group.



'Sales of homes decline 14 pc to 38,626 units in 7 cities'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sales of apartments, costing less than Rs 50 lakh each, fell 14 per cent to 38,626 units in 2024 across seven major cities on lesser launches of affordable housing projects and rising prices, according to JLL India. Real estate consultant JLL India data showed that sales of apartments across seven major cities during 2024 witnessed sustained growth, reaching a record-high volume of 3,02,867 units, up 11 per cent from 2,71,818 units in the preceding year. The seven cities are Mumbai (including Mumbai

city, Mumbai suburbs, Thane city, and Navi Mumbai), Delhi-NCR (including Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad and Sohna), Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata. The data includes only apartments. Rowhouses, villas, and plotted developments are excluded from the JLL India analysis. Among different price categories, sales of apartments costing less than Rs 50 lakh each fell to 38,626 units from 45,160 units. In the Rs 50 lakh-1 crore price category, the sales of apartments were almost flat



The seven cities are Mumbai (including Mumbai city, Mumbai suburbs, Thane city, and Navi Mumbai), Delhi-NCR (including Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad and Sohna), Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata

at 1,02,886 units last year against 1,02,685 units in the preceding year. The demand for apart-

ments priced Rs 1 crore and above remained strong last year. In the Rs 1-3 crore category,

the sales of apartments rose 18 per cent to 1,19,990 units from 1,01,451 units. JLL data showed that sales

in the Rs 3-5 crore category surged 86 per cent to 25,833 units from 13,881 units. In the above Rs 5 crore category, the sales shot up 80 per cent to 15,532 units during 2024 from 8,641 units in the preceding year. On the outlook for the current year, JLL said the housing market is expected to exhibit a strong performance amid rising urbanisation levels, infrastructure developments and rising demand for premium homes driven by changing lifestyle preferences of consumers and higher disposable income levels.

UNBRIDLED EMOTIONS; AZAAD GALLOPS INTO HEARTS

TEJAL SINHA
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Plot

Azaad follows the inspiring journey of a young boy and his unbreakable bond with a spirited horse named Azaad. Set against the backdrop of rebellion and personal struggles, the film explores themes of freedom, courage, and emotional resilience. The story intricately weaves moments of heart-break, adventure, and familial love as the characters navigate through challenges to find redemption and purpose.

Analysis

Director Abhishek Kapoor delivers an emotionally resonant narrative that balances drama with exhilarating action. The film's central theme of liberation—both personal and societal—is compelling, though the storytelling occasionally relies on familiar tropes. The deep emotional connection between the protagonist and Azaad forms the heart of the movie, leaving a lasting impression.

Highlights

The emotional core of Azaad lies in the powerful bond between the young protagonist and his horse, Azaad. This heartfelt relationship drives the narrative, creating moments that deeply resonate with the audience. The film skillfully blends an engaging storyline with gripping moments of adventure and heartfelt drama. The compelling themes of resilience, freedom, and self-discovery give the film a universal appeal, making it an impactful and memorable watch. These emotional layers ensure Azaad leaves a lasting impression on viewers.

Drawbacks

While Azaad delivers an emotionally gripping story, it isn't without its flaws. The screenplay, at times, falls into predictable pat-



REVIEW

DIRECTOR: Abhishek Kapoor

PRODUCER: Pragya Yadav and Ronnie Screwvala

CAST: Ajay Devgn, Diana Penty, Aman Devgan, Rasha Thadani, Mohit Malik, Piyush Mishra

RATING: 4/5

terns, making certain plot points feel familiar and less impactful. Some subplots are underdeveloped, leaving a few character arcs and themes unexplored, which might leave viewers wanting more depth. Additionally, the pacing of the narrative occasionally feels uneven, with moments of emotional intensity interrupted by slower segments that could have been tightened. These elements slightly detract from the overall immersive experience, though they don't overshadow the film's strengths.

Performances

Ajay Devgn delivers a powerful and nuanced performance, anchoring the film with his commanding presence and emotional depth. His portrayal adds gravitas to the story, especially in pivotal moments. Rasha Thadani and Aman Devgan, in their debut roles, showcase remarkable sincerity and charm, effectively bringing their characters to life with natural emotional resonance. Their performances add warmth and authenticity to the narrative, making their journey believable and engaging. Diana Penty offers a measured and grounded performance, bringing emotional stability to the ensemble, complementing the film's overall tone.

Technical Aspects

The film excels technically, with breathtaking cinematography and well-executed action sequences. The sound design and music score amplify the emotional resonance, creating an immersive experience. Abhishek Kapoor's direction is solid, though tighter editing could have improved the pacing.

Verdict

Azaad is an emotionally charged and visually captivating film that resonates with themes of freedom, love, and courage. Despite minor flaws, the heartfelt performances and engaging narrative make it a rewarding cinematic experience for audiences of all ages.

KIKO MILANO INTRODUCES NEW BROW ESSENTIALS

Elevate your brow game with the latest launches from Kiko Milano introducing the eyebrow coloured fibers mascara, a multitasking marvel that adds volume, tames and sets your brows in place with a natural long-lasting finish. Pair it with the eyebrow sculpt automatic pencil, designed for precision shaping and effortless definition now available in a range of universally flattering shades. Together, they deliver perfectly groomed, expressive brows for every look from soft and subtle to bold and dramatic.

WHAT'S NEW

TRANSFORM YOUR LIVING SPACE WITH HANDCRAFTED FURNITURE THIS NEW SEASON!

As we step into the new year, it's time to give our homes a makeover that it truly deserves. At Wootique, they have handpicked statement pieces designed to breathe life into your home. Let this be the year your home tells a story of comfort, uniqueness and luxury.

Price: On request



CELEBRATION OF TECHNICOLOUR ELEGANCE

Kumari Fine Jewellery is thrilled to announce the launch of its latest collection, Hues That Glow, a vibrant tribute to individuality and artistic expression. Inspired by the mantra to "colour outside the box," the collection blends timeless diamonds with bold hues to embody the technicolor beauty of life. Each piece reflects the multifaceted spirit of the modern woman, celebrating her boldness, creativity and elegance.



FOR A GLOWY-HYDRATING SKIN

Birla Ayurveda Kumkumadi Oil is a luxurious Ayurvedic facial oil formulated with a blend of natural herbs and oils designed to enhance skin health and radiance. Inspired by ancient Ayurvedic wisdom, this oil is particularly renowned for its ability to improve complexion, reduce blemishes, and impart a healthy glow.



FIXDERMA LAUNCHES ADVANCED LIP CARE SOLUTIONS

After the remarkable success of shadow lip shield, Fixderma recognised the growing need for concern based formulations along with advanced SPF 50 protection & hydration for lips. To cater to this trend, it announced the expansion of its lip balms category with two exciting new launches – Fixderma Brightening Lip Balm SPF 50+ & Fixderma Tinted Lip Balm SPF 50+ to deliver not only superior hydration & sun protection but delivering the wow factor in the form of lip care. To top it, they come in delicious strawberry & coconut flavours.



STARRY NIGHT

House Of Makeup announced the launch of its highly anticipated new highlighter "Starry Night." This liquid highlighter has a unique formula: it's made with luminescent pearls and easy-glide technology that impart a radiant finish. It is designed to complement a wide range of Indian skin tones and is priced at Rs. 799 only.



HOROSCOPE



ARIES

There will be challenges, humour, and enthusiasm. Stay patient and hopeful as success and appreciation await. Avoid loose talks; trust your ethics and embrace new opportunities.



TAURUS

Face challenges calmly and rely on trusted support. Introspect to bring joy amid stress. Open communication will resolve the conflicts. Your hard work and care will bring victory and solace.



GEMINI

Embrace joy and introspection while treading carefully with changes. Patience and innovation will help you thrive. Consult loved ones before making key decisions. Success will find you.



CANCER

Stay strong through setbacks; success is near. Support from siblings and their love will bring you joy. Seek guidance for clarity. Fulfill your family's needs and trust your inner voice.



LEO

Focus on relationships and career growth with patience and loyalty. Avoid ego clashes, embrace forgiveness, and maintain optimism. Your persistence will lead to eventual success.



VRIGO

Exciting partnerships and projects await. Balance relationships with patience and avoid excessive criticism. Focus on personal growth and family, and seek motivation for greater fulfillment.



LIBRA

Stay resilient despite setbacks. Strengthen family bonds and protect loved ones. Trust your ethics, and unexpected love brings joy. Sharp reasoning aids business success.



SCORPIO

Stay persistent in relationships. Manage stress gently and remain optimistic. Family support brings strength; forgive others to earn respect. Business trips and new job opportunities await.



SAGITTARIUS

Embrace unexpected connections and seek family bonding. Avoid criticism and impulsiveness. Your loyalty and good nature will help you overcome challenges and build stronger bonds.



CAPRICORN

Stay generous and committed to family. Overcome confidence setbacks and illusions. Trust your ethics and partner for lasting joy. Recognition for your efforts will bring rewards and joy.



AQUARIUS

Face challenges with care. Embrace change. Avoid emotional blowups and seek innovation. There will be joy and growth, overcoming stress and separation with newfound confidence.



PISCES

Stay calm and thoughtful to avoid mistakes. Patience and commitment will help overcome challenges. Postpone changes, support family, and enjoy success. New experiences await.

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams"
— Eleanor Roosevelt



A real-life action hero

From Bollywood star to philanthropic icon, Sonu Sood's journey in Bollywood is a classic example of perseverance and resilience, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

@SonuSood who plays Villain in South and Bollywood, but he did such a thing in this tragedy that he is the biggest hero in my eyes. On a social platform like Twitter, by taking the details of the workers, they are arranging buses and transporting them to the own village.: Md Shah Nawaz Alam @alamktr00

Md Shah Nawaz Alam was not the only person praising Sonu Sood for helping migrants reach their homes during Covid when lockdown was suddenly announced and people were stuck across the country. It was crazy time. No one knew what was in store and how pandemic would unfold. It was particularly hard on migrant workers with meagre resources walked endless journey to their hometowns. In this situation *Sonu Sood*, a known name in Bollywood for playing mean villain came forward to help people and making arrangements for traveling to these workers. The twitter was abuzz with people asking 'Sonu bhaiya' help and getting it. His twitter handle became a virtual helpline. Tweets like these flooded his social media handle. And he ready came for help. Genuinely. It was a gesture people reciprocated with warmth and *Sonu Sood* became a household name. It was indeed a turning point in the life and career of the star. And since then he did not look back.

Sonu Sood's journey in Bollywood is a testament to resilience, hard work, and the power of perseverance. From humble beginnings to becoming a household name, *Sonu's* story is not just about acting but also about his extraordinary contributions to society through his philanthropic efforts. His rise to fame and his journey of selfless giving have made him one of the most admired figures in India, both on and off the screen.

Born on July 30, 1973, in Moga, Punjab, *Sonu Sood* was not always destined for the glitz and glamour of Bollywood. Growing up in a middle-class family, *Sonu's* early life was filled with academic aspirations. He completed his engineering degree from the Yeshwantrao Chavan College of Engineering in Nagpur. However, despite his technical background, his heart was always inclined towards acting.

Sonu moved to Mumbai with dreams of making it in Bollywood. Like many aspiring actors, his journey was not without struggle. He started his career with small roles and often faced rejection. His initial years in the industry were difficult, and he struggled to find a breakthrough. He appeared in a variety of roles, including in films like *Kahan Hai Tu* (1999) and *Shaheed-E-Azam* (2002). These films, although not major hits, helped *Sonu* gain experience and sharpen his acting skills.

Sonu Sood's breakthrough came with the film *Yuva* (2004), directed by Mani Ratnam. Playing the character of a strong-willed, determined man, *Sonu's* performance was well-received. This marked the beginning of his rise in the industry. His portrayal of negative roles in films like *Aashiq Banaya Aapne* (2005) and *Dabangg* (2010) further solidified his presence in Bollywood. In *Dabangg*,

his character, Chhedi Singh, was menacing, and his performance opposite Salman Khan earned him widespread acclaim.

The turning point in his career came when *Sonu Sood* was offered roles that showcased his versatility. Whether as the villain or a complex character with shades of Gray, *Sonu's* consistent hard work and dedication to his craft saw him rise through the ranks of Bollywood's A-list stars. His powerful performances in films like *Jodha Akbar* (2008), *Simmba* (2018), and *Raju Chacha* (2000) earned him several awards and nominations.

What sets *Sonu* apart is his ability to evolve with the changing dynamics of the film industry. He has played a range of characters, from a villain to a hero, from action-packed roles to romantic parts. His commitment to delivering quality performances, regardless of the scale of the film, has made him a dependable actor in Bollywood. While *Sonu Sood's* acting career has been remarkable, his philanthropic work during the COVID-19 pandemic made him a true hero in the eyes of millions. When the pandemic caused widespread suffering across the globe, *Sonu* didn't just stay confined to his home; he became the guiding light for thousands of people in need.

Sonu's philanthropic efforts began when he started helping migrant workers stuck in different parts of India due to the lockdown. With his own funds and resources, *Sonu* arranged transportation for thousands of migrant workers to return to their homes, despite facing logistical hurdles and government restrictions. His initiative gained massive media attention, with people praising him for his quick and effective response to the crisis. In addition to helping migrant workers, *Sonu Sood* extended his support to the medical sector by arranging hospital beds, oxygen supplies, and treatment for those suffering from COVID-19. He provided financial aid to families who had lost their loved ones during the pandemic and launched multiple campaigns to help students, farmers, and the underprivileged access education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Through his organisation, the Sood Charity Foundation, *Sonu* has continued his philanthropic efforts, focusing on education, healthcare, and helping the underprivileged. He believes in the power of education and aims to provide quality education to children who do not have access to it. His efforts have not gone unnoticed, and he has received numerous accolades, including the prestigious International Humanitarian Award in recognition of his selfless work.

Sonu Sood's success in Bollywood is a result of his unwavering dedication and hard work. He didn't come from a film family and had no Godfather when he reached Mumbai from his hometown Moga with just Rs 5000 in his pocket. He worked his way up to build his career from the ground up. His perseverance is a reflection of his commitment to his craft and his belief that success comes with consistent effort. What sets *Sonu* apart from many others in the industry is his work ethic and focus. He has worked in several regional film industries, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Hindi cinema, which allowed him to understand the nuances of different audiences and cultures. This versatility has been key to his success, as he is equally comfortable playing a hero or villain in different languages and genres.

In an industry where many actors rely on luck or industry connections to secure their place, *Sonu* has demonstrated that talent, dedication, and hard work are the true pillars of success. His journey is an inspiration to aspiring actors and those who believe in the power of perseverance.

Sonu Sood has not only made a place for himself in Bollywood but has also become a hero for countless people across the country. His legacy, both as an actor and philanthropist, will continue to inspire generations to come.



ACTING COMES NATURALLY TO ME: SONU SOOD

Sonu Sood's journey in Bollywood is an incredible narrative of success, struggle and humanity. From a young man with dreams of becoming an actor to a respected figure in the Indian film industry, *Sonu's* dedication to his craft and his selfless philanthropic work makes him an iconic figure in India today. He was in Delhi at the premier of his latest offering '*Fateh*' an action-packed film dealing with cybercrime. *Sonu Sood* talked to Gyaneshwar Dayal, about his acting, social responsibilities and future plans.

Could you tell us what scripts draw your attention?

I like to do the films which are close to common man, about his life and problems. Recently I did *Fateh* which deals with the cybercrimes which has become a menace in the country and people should know about it. So I thought why not make a film which would indeed not only entertain but also inform people about the dangers lurking in the digital domain. So I prefer films which are entertaining but also create awareness and talk about people's issues

You are known for action. Do you like action roles?

Yes of course. In my films people get to see a lot of action sequences which are world class and are at par with Hollywood films. We can say that we make action sequences which are world class and perfectly choreographed. *Fateh* is case in point.

How do you prepare for a role in a film?

Well acting comes naturally to me. I have always loved acting and so when I hear a character in the film I get the idea how to go about it. I can switch on and off between the roles and that is really important because Bollywood works like that. Yes, understanding of the role must be there so that you can do justice to it.

You do a lot of philanthropic work. So what you prefer action for the people in their dire times or action on the screen?

See, life is more than just lights camera action. When there are no lights or camera action continues in the real life. It is a great feeling when you can help someone in need when there is no light no camera. It is important to be sympathetic and have empathy, because cinema is one aspect of life not the other way round.

You have portrayed a range of roles, both positive and negative. Which type do you prefer, and why?

That's correct I accept all types of roles I think I can do justice to. But now on I want to do positive roles. I love playing positive roles and that is the kind roles I would be doing now on.



'THE TRUE ESSENCE OF SA RE GA MA PA IS ABOUT MUSIC, NOT DRAMA'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

SP Sailaja, a name synonymous with soul-stirring melodies and unparalleled versatility, has long been a fixture in the Indian music industry. With an impressive career spanning decades, she has captured the hearts of millions with her seamless ability to traverse diverse musical genres, from classical to contemporary. As a judge in the 16th edition of Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Telugu, she nurtured budding talent, imparting wisdom drawn from her extensive experience. Her profound understanding of music, coupled with her nurturing spirit, positions her as a guiding force for the future of the Indian music industry.

EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEW:

You have been an integral part of the Sa Re Ga Ma Pa journey for 16 seasons. How do you perceive your role in shaping not just the contestants' journey, but also the legacy of the show?

SP Sailaja: It's truly been a mutual experience for me. Over the years, I've learned a lot, and I see the quality of the show improving with each season. The enthusiasm of the contestants keeps growing, and it's beautiful to witness their passion. Though the show is demanding, it's a celebration of music, and it serves as a great platform for aspiring singers. Every season is a new chapter, full of emotions, drama, and, most importantly, music.

With contestants divided into Village Vocals, City Classics, and Metro Melodies, how do you approach assessing such diverse musical styles?

SP Sailaja: These categories are merely names. We don't



restrict the contestants to specific genres. Village contestants may sing fast songs, and city contestants may perform folk songs. Ultimately, the goal is to allow everyone to showcase their abilities across different styles. We judge their versatility based on their performance, regardless of the category.

Over the years, you've witnessed the evolution of Indian music. What differences do you see in the aspirations and preparations of today's contestants compared to previous generations?

SP Sailaja: The potential of singers remains the same, but times have changed. In the past, classical songs were the way to display one's talent. Today, there's more flexibility; contestants often perform modern songs due to the changing trends in media. While classical and folk songs are still essential, the current generation leans towards contemporary styles, which has its advantages and challenges. It's difficult to find contestants who can balance both old and new, but it's crucial for their growth.

Music is rooted in tradition while embracing contemporary elements. How do you encourage contestants to honor their roots while pushing them to innovate?

SP Sailaja: I always tell contestants to practice all forms of music—classical, folk, semi-classical, and modern. You must be prepared for any challenge that comes your way, whether it's a classical song or a new-age number. The stage is just the beginning, and they must keep learning and evolving. I emphasize that this is not the end of their journey; it's a stepping stone to greater opportunities. I encourage them to keep working hard and to never give up.

As a judge, how do you ensure your feedback aligns with the contestants' individuality and potential to succeed in the broader music industry?

SP Sailaja: We come from a time when platforms like this didn't exist, so the opportunities today are remarkable. Contestants get exposure not just in films, but also through concerts and bands. I remind them to enjoy the process, as this stage is a great chance to showcase their talent.

My advice is always to give their best and stay true to themselves. I believe that a positive attitude and hard work will take them far.

You're known for your versatility as a singer. How do you handle providing constructive feedback that resonates with budding talent?

SP Sailaja: The early stages are challenging. The key is listening carefully and offering detailed feedback. I encourage contestants to pay attention to nuances in songs—expressions and emotions are vital. I often ask them to immerse themselves in the mood of the song to convey the right emotions. Versatility comes naturally when you understand the essence of the song and express it authentically.

In today's digital era, where music is consumed globally, how do shows like Sa Re Ga Ma Pa prepare contestants for international stages?

SP Sailaja: Many contestants are now working with their own bands, producing albums, and getting opportunities at an international level. It's an exciting time for the music industry. While global recognition takes hard work, shows like Sa Re Ga Ma Pa provide a platform for singers to hone their craft. With the right preparation and exposure, they are equipped to make an impact on the international stage.

Reality TV is often criticized for prioritizing drama over talent. How does Sa Re Ga Ma Pa stay focused on nurturing raw talent?

SP Sailaja: Initially, the show was purely about music, with little drama. Over time, the audience's appetite for drama has grown, but we always try to keep the focus on the music. Of course, emotions are part of the journey, but drama shouldn't overshadow the talent. The true aim is to celebrate the singers' abilities while keeping the atmosphere enjoyable and positive.

Music competitions can be life-changing. Can you share a memorable moment from your own musical journey that influences how you guide and evaluate budding talent?

SP Sailaja: There have been many moments that stand out. One that comes to mind is a contestant from the USA who initially doubted his ability to fit in. But over the course of a few episodes, he gained confidence, and it was amazing to watch his transformation. Another memorable contestant, he was an introverted boy who struggled with personal issues. We encouraged him, and he gradually began to come out of his shell. It's these kinds of moments that remind me how powerful music can be in shaping lives.

WHILE CLASSICAL AND FOLK SONGS ARE STILL ESSENTIAL, THE CURRENT GENERATION LEANS TOWARDS CONTEMPORARY STYLES, WHICH HAS ITS ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES. IT'S DIFFICULT TO FIND CONTESTANTS WHO CAN BALANCE BOTH OLD AND NEW, BUT IT'S CRUCIAL FOR THEIR GROWTH.

TRENDING

PERSON

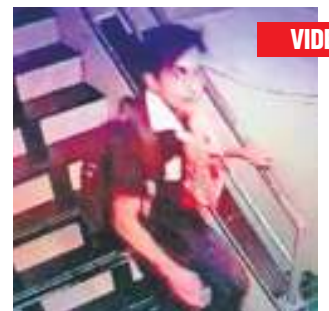
SAIF ALI KHAN



In a shocking incident that took place in the early hours of January 16, Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was stabbed multiple times by an intruder who barged into his Mumbai residence. The attack occurred at around 2:30 AM, when the assailant, whose identity remains unknown, reportedly entered the actor's home.

ACCUSED CAPTURED IN CCTV

The video footage of the accused, who stabbed actor Saif Ali Khan, shows the suspect, a man in his late 30s or early 40s, fleeing the building around 2:33 AM. The man, dressed in a brown collared T-shirt and red scarf.



VIDEO

MOVIE

PAATAL LOK SEASON 2



Paatal Lok Season 2 premiered on Amazon Prime Video on January 17, 2025, continuing the gripping crime thriller with Inspector Hathiram Chaudhary, portrayed by Jaideep Ahlawat, as he delves into a complex murder investigation in Nagaland.

HOOKSTEP HOOKAH BAR

SONG



Sunny Leone's collaboration with ace choreographer and film director Prabhudeva, has left fans eagerly awaiting the release, making it one of the most talked-about tracks of the year. Get ready to witness this dynamic duo as they redefine screen magic with their irresistible dance moves and electrifying presence.

NASA SHARES PHOTO OF BIRD STARING AT CAMERA



PICTURE

NASA shared a post which featured a stunning close-up of a sandhill crane staring at the camera with its wide open eyes.

Brain's immune defense system may hold clues to Schizophrenia

A team of Singaporean researchers have identified that changes in the immune system are linked to schizophrenia and potential resistance to treatments. The reasons behind schizophrenia -- a psychotic disorder affecting around 24 million people worldwide and 1 in 116 individuals in Singapore -- continue to be unknown.

The study, published in the journal Brain, Behaviour and Immunity, adds to a growing body of research suggesting that immune system dysregulation may be behind the development of the mental disorder.

Moreover, not all patients with schizophrenia respond to standard antipsychotic drugs. Around one in three individuals worldwide diagnosed with schizophrenia are treatment-resistant.

This means they do not achieve remission of symptoms, such as hallucinations and delusions, despite treatment.

Using changes in immune cell populations the team from Singapore's National Healthcare Group (NHG) and Agency for Science, Technology, and Research (A*STAR) predicted potential treatment resistance to help initiate the most appropriate treatment sooner.

"Our goal was to identify immune cell changes that could potentially be used to predict treatment resistance, allowing for earlier and more targeted interventions such as initiating clozapine treatment sooner for better clinical outcomes," said Dr. Li Yanhui, lead author, NHG Psychiatry Resident at NHG. Clozapine is currently the only psychiatric medicine indicated for treating treatment-resistant schizophrenia.

For the study, the team analysed blood samples of 196 healthy participants and individuals with schizophrenia with varying degrees of treatment resistance. They identified and compared 66 immune cell populations in the blood of 147 people with schizophrenia and 49 healthy individ-

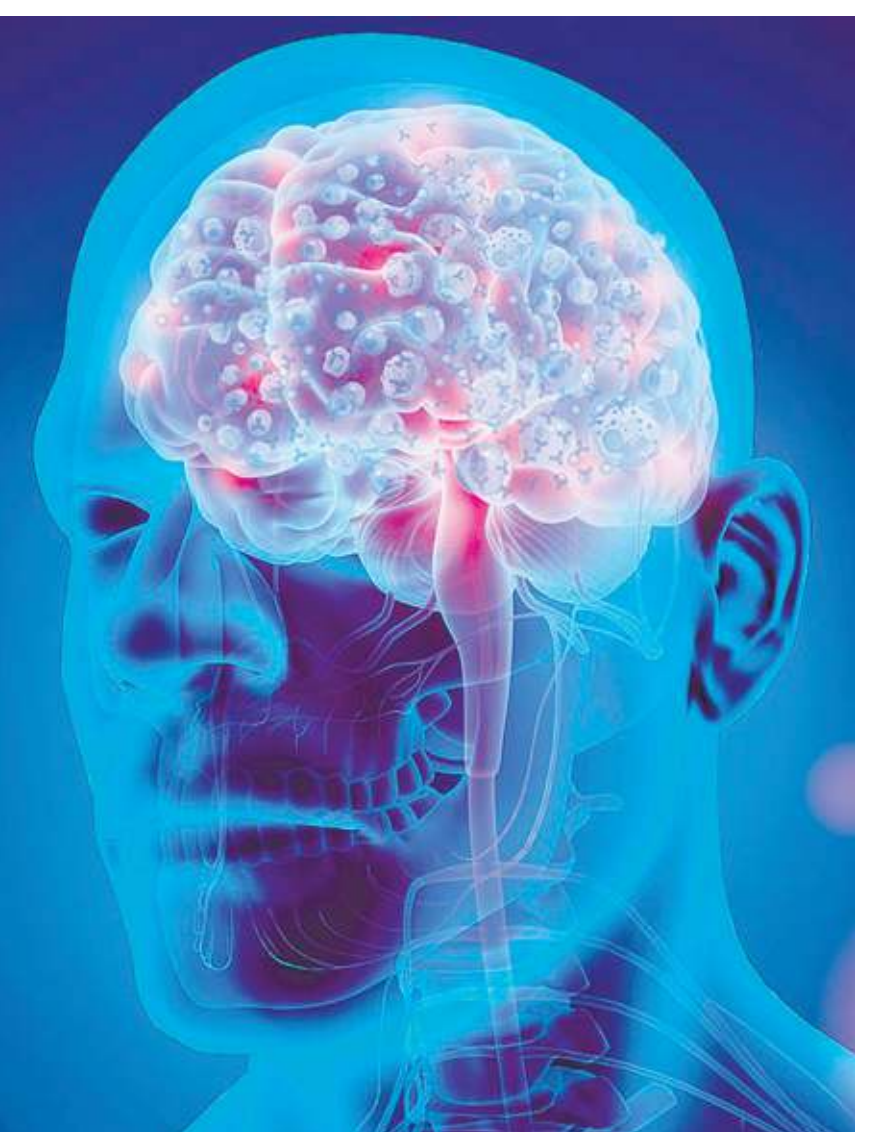
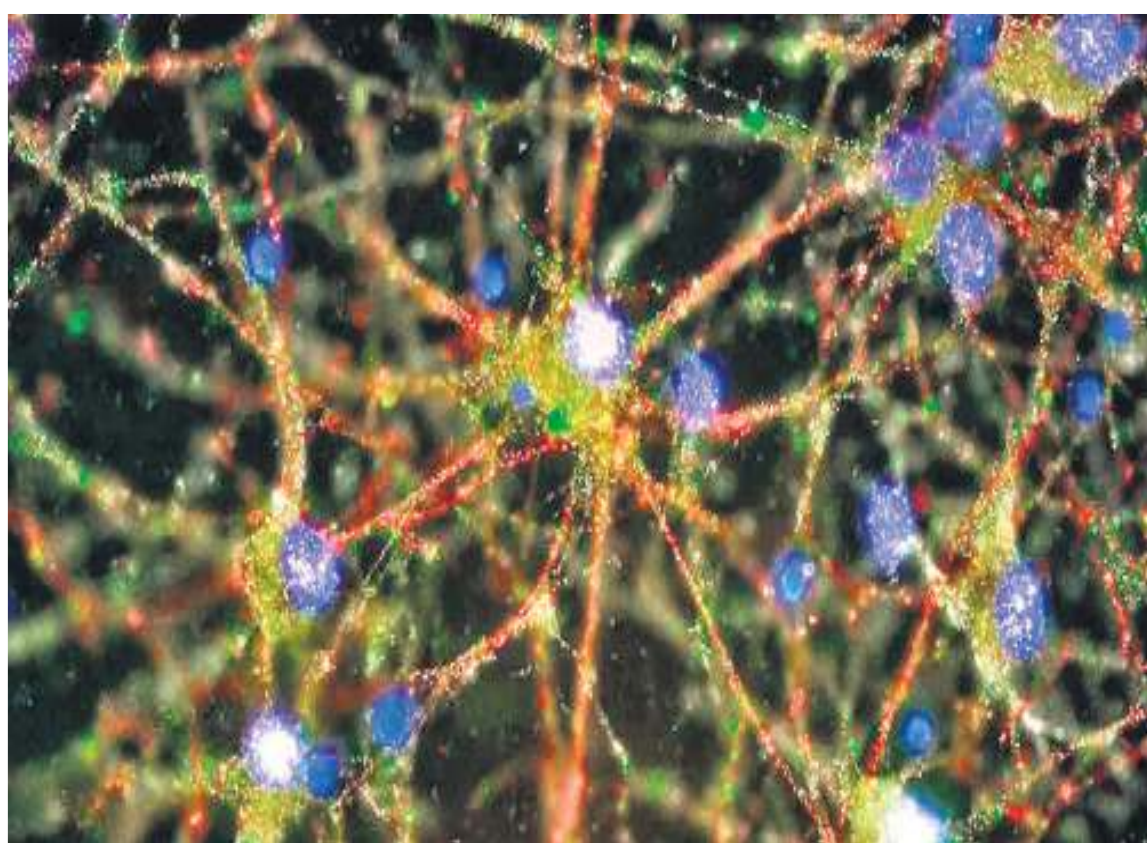
uals to explore the immune cell populations associated with the disorder and treatment resistance.

The results showed significant differences in certain immune cell populations between healthy individuals and people with schizophrenia.

Further, those changes in immune cell

populations also correlate with how resistant a patient with schizophrenia might be to treatment.

The findings offer hope for early identification of patients likely to be treatment-resistant. It will also enable clinicians to select more effective treatment strategies to achieve better outcomes.





CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

I was the younger one in my family. So, I was pampered a lot. I studied at Taluka School, Tenali, till Class XII. Krishna and Hanumantha Rao, my elder brothers, also studied there. I was a calm person from my younger days and I was interested in sports. I used to play Volleyball and Basketball at school. Cricket was not very popular at that time, so I was interested in athletics. After I completed my school in Tenali, I shifted to Madras for my Degree. As my brother Krishna was already in films there, I used to stay with him and completed my degree. Our native village is Burripalem. Doctor Vasireddy Ramesh, Kothagudem, is my classmate and is still in touch with me.



BONDING OF GHATTAMANENI BROTHERS

The trio that struck gold in Tollywood

They are the three men army for Tollywood, taking it to newer heights with every turn of its prolonged journey. Before the advent of Ghattamaneni brothers, NTR brothers were known for the knack of film-making and taking the industry forward on a disciplined path and enriching it. And come seventies started Ghattamaneni era. The brothers trio took the industry by storm and took it to hitherto unforeseen heights. The successful trio includes superstar Krishna and producers G Hanumantha Rao and our man of the day now, the only surviving of the brothers **G Adishesahagiri Rao**, who narrates the trio's success story to **Suresh Kavirayani** of *The Pioneer*.

Adishesahagiri Rao is the younger brother of Superstar Krishna and at a very young age entered into the film industry as a producer. After Krishna achieved stardom, he started the production house Padmalaya Movies, where his two younger brothers Adishesahagiri Rao and Hanumantha Rao, supported him. These two brothers were the main pillars for Krishna in his long journey as an actor, producer and director. They produced some of the sensational films like the first cowboy film in India, 'Mosagallaki Mosagadu', historical one 'Alluri Seetharamaraju', also produced blockbuster Hindi films. Here Seshagiri Rao recalls his association with his brother Krishna, first film producer, and shares many of his thoughts.



ALLU ARAVIND, MY COLLEGE MATE

I completed my degree from Govt Arts College, Chennai. Producer Allu Aravind was my college mate in Chennai. When I was in college, my brother became a star after his second film 'Gudachari 116'. Though I was studying in college, I observed my brother as an actor and also meeting film people at that time. I also used to manage the house and financial issues.



FIRST FILM AS PRODUCER

My brother Krishna established himself as a star within a short time. At that time NT Rama Rao and Akkineni Nageswara Rao made films and my brother wanted to make a film with high budget, high technical values and also in colour. My brother started the Padmalaya Movies, and our first film was 'Agni Pariksha' (1970). At that time I was hardly 20 years old when I was turned a producer for that film. Varaprasada Rao was the director for this film. It was not a big commercial success, but I learnt a lot from the director like script-writing, story, budget, sets, combination scenes and many other things related to films. My other brother Hanumantha Rao was a government employee. So he joined us only from the second film.



MEMORABLE MULTI-STARRER WITH NTR

Krishna wanted to make a film with NTR. NTR openly announced his next film was with Krishna and that's how 'Devudu Chesina Manushulu' got off. Hanumantha Rao provided the story and we shot the film in Bengaluru, Mysore and the climax in Machilipatnam. We planned with a natural crowd and also roped in people from Vijayawada, who were popular for dappu music, especially for Dasara festival. NTR advised us that it is not possible with huge crowds, so suggested shooting in a studio, but Hanumantha Rao said it is possible. Seven days shoot was done in Machilipatnam and I asked Rama Rao where to accommodate him. He then told me, 'You are all coming to my native place and you are asking for my accommodation. No, you tell me the shooting place and time, I will be there'. He stayed in his own village Nimmakuru all the days of shooting. While shooting, we planned his birthday in a big way. But Rama Rao did not agree to it and asked all the units to come to his native place for lunch and celebrate there. He arranged great hospitality to every unit member and it's one of the memorable ones for us. The film was completed and released on August 9, 1973. It was another blockbuster from our production house.

NICKNAME, MARRIAGE AND STUDIO

My brother Krishna used to call me Bangari. Wherever I was, Annayya called me by the nickname and some close people also called me by the same name.

I married a girl who is a relative of our family. She is from our village only. Even Hanumantha Rao's wife is also from the same village. Krishna's wife Indira Devi was from a nearby village. My marriage was in 1972 before the release of 'Pandanti Kapuram'. I have a son Raghav who settled in real estate. Hanumantha Rao's sons are making TV serials. Mahesh Babu is continuing Krishna's legacy and he is now the super-star of Telugu cinema. Initially, we wanted to plan a studio near Vijayawada and even the government allotted land to us. But the industry is developing in Hyderabad with NTR and ANR building studios there. So we built Padmalaya studio in Hyderabad in 1984. The first film shot in the studio was Hindi film 'Shakti'.



HISTORIC ALLURI SEETHARAMARAJU

After that we wanted to produce a landmark film for our brother's 100th film. Then we thought of the story of Alluri Seetharamaraju and we started work on it. We wanted to take the characterization of Alluri and added a few cinematic scenes. Actually, Seetha's character is not there in the original life, but we added it for the film. We started searching for his stories from Nazar's Burrakatha, historical background, books, facts and fiction. We prepared a story. NTR advises us not to make the film as he wanted to do it. My brother told him that if he is ready to make a film on Alluri, we will drop it. But he didn't want to do it immediately, so we proceeded with our film. Nearly 300 artistes camped at Chintapalli. My mother was hospitalised, after the opening shot director Ramachandra Rao fell sick, my brother Hanumantha Rao was also hospitalised and he needed a surgery. So we stopped for one day and the entire unit asked Krishna to direct the film. But on the cards we kept V Ramachandra Rao's name as director. KSR Das worked as second unit director as he composed the action scenes. SV Ranga Rao was not well, so we roped in Balayya. Satyanarayana didn't act as he felt that NTR may get angry. Prabhakar Reddy was roped in his place. There are many actors in that film including Manjula, Jayanthi, Rajasree, Kantha Rao, Balayya, Prabhakar Reddy, Gummadi, Rajababu, Jaggaiah, KV Chalam and many others. After release, it was a sensational success.



FIRST SILVER JUBILEE FILM, FAMILY DRAMA

With 'Mosagallaki Mosagadu' we missed the family audience. So we decided to do a film with that genre. My brother Hanumantha Rao, resigned from his government job and joined our film production. He was very good at stories and screenplay and that's how we started 'Pandanti Kapuram' (1972). His name also appeared for the first time as a producer with that film. The inspiration for this family drama was the Hollywood film 'The Visit' and the Hindi film 'Do Raaste'. It had a big star cast like SV Ranga Rao, Prabhakar Reddy, Gummadi, Devika, B Saroja Devi with Krishna and Vijaya Nirmala as lead pair. Jamuna played an important role in it. Initially, we wanted to cast Bhanumanthi, but somehow she didn't do it. Jamuna was a very popular lead actress at that time, but there was a negative shade too, but she accepted it and got a very good name. There was a big talk at that time that Bhanumanthi is making a film with the same story, so we completed it within a month. This film was a silver jubilee hit. NT Rama Rao the chief guest for the 100 days function.



SIMHASANAM, INSPIRATION FROM GONA GANNAREDDY

Krishna wanted to direct a film. So we planned a huge film 'Simhasanam'. He played dual roles in it and it was a big budget film. The story was inspired by Gona Gannareddy of Kakatiya dynasty. We made sets inspired from Hollywood films based on Roman stories. Mandakani was introduced to Telugu as the female lead and also Amjad Khan. Ajay Devgan's father Veeru Devgan worked as action choreographer. At that time the film screened six shows a day. The 100 days function was held at Chennai and the city was filled with Krishna's fans who came on hundreds of buses from Andhra Pradesh.

The present trend is completely different and the producer is a mere cashier. So, I stopped making films. I am in touch with many people and even younger generation people come and take my advice. Aswini Dutt, Allu Aravind, Suresh Babu and Nagarajuna are also in touch with me. I update myself with the latest technology in cinema.



THE FIRST COWBOY FILM IN INDIA

The idea of 'Mosagallaki Mosagadu' came from my brother Krishna. My brother became popular with James Bond films like 'Goodachari 116' and 'James Bond 777' and others. In Chennai, Hollywood films like 'Meekanna's Gold', 'Good Bad and Ugly' were screened successfully. With those films as inspiration, my brother decided to make an action film with cowboy backdrop. I went to scout the location at Bikaner. We couldn't put a lot of money at that time, because there was a constraint on budget. We planned in a big way with colour and shooting outdoors. The distributors gave only half of the money for this film.

For 'Mosagallaki Mosagadu' my other brother Hanumantha Rao took leave and joined the production. Popular producer Chakrapani was my father's friend and he encouraged my brother Krishna. Every day he used to come to our sets and after seeing the costumes, he commented, 'who will watch this film?' Immediately, my brother Hanumantha Rao replied, the way you are coming for the last few days, the audience will also come to theatres. Andra was the writer and KSR Das directed the film which was shot in Bikaner and Shimla and because of the budget constraints, only Krishna, Vijaya Nirmala, Nagabhushanam and Jyothi Lakshmi travelled on flight and all the other actors travelled by train. Today, the producer is like a cashier, but at that time producer's involvement was a lot in filmmaking. We needed a desert so we went to Rajasthan and used the local forts and other locations for the film with Rs 7 lakh and it was a huge success. We completed the film in 35 days. The film screened for film people in Chennai, but many gave negative reviews. NT Rama Rao also watched the film and told Krishna that family audiences may not watch this film. But the film was a big hit and it was the first cowboy film in India. The film was dubbed into many other Indian languages. We approached the Russian Embassy and got people's help to dub the film into Russian and likewise the British Embassy to dub it into English. The film was a big hit in Hindi, Tamil, Bengali and other languages too.

