



THE Hans India



WOMENIA
Love after 40: Not just romance, a practical support system for child's life's pressures
Love after 40 isn't about chasing sparks—it's about building stability, understanding, and shared strength. For single parents and those starting over.
P8

EDIT
Can CBI contain cybercrime effectively?
Investigating cybercrimes is very difficult. Even though the SC has directed the CBI to take a direct role in probing these offences, the agency is bogged down with many different investigations, especially politically sensitive cases.
P6

ODISHA
Odisha aims to become hub for medical devices
The objective of the new policy is to fast-track Odisha as the eastern hub for pharmaceuticals and medical devices through investment, jobs, innovation and green manufacturing, he said.
P5

P4
Integrated township by TTD for devotees to come up near Alipiri
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Trust Board has taken an important decision to improve facilities for devotees by approving the construction of an integrated township near Alipiri in Tirupati.

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Re hits fresh record low of Rs 91.14 against dollar

MUMBAI: The rupee slumped to a fresh record low of 91.14 against the US dollar on Tuesday, after weakening by 36 paise in afternoon trade. Pressured by sustained foreign institutional investor outflows and lingering uncertainty over a potential India-US trade deal, this marked the fourth consecutive session in which the rupee has touched a new all-time low. The currency has now depreciated about 1% over the past five trading sessions alone. In afternoon dealings, the rupee was quoted at 91.14 per dollar, extending its losses from the previous close amid continued pressure from global and domestic factors.

FOG-LINKED ACCIDENTS 25 killed in road crashes across UP



LUCKNOW: At least 25 people were killed and 59 injured in a series of fog-linked road accidents across Uttar Pradesh, with the worst tragedy unfolding on the Yamuna Expressway in Mathura, where a multi-vehicle pile-up turned into an inferno, police said on Tuesday. The maximum number of 13 fatalities was reported from Mathura, while four people each were killed in Basti and Unnao and two each in Meerut and Barabanki. According to officials, all the incidents were linked to poor visibility. The Mathura accident occurred around 4:30 am on the Agra-to-Noida carriageway within the Baldev police station limits. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shlok Kumar said eight buses and three smaller vehicles were involved in the pile-up due to poor visibility.



58 lakh names deleted in West Bengal draft SIR

REPORT: P7



IRREGULAR by MANJUL
Ours is a democratic party, and he is a powerful president. No, not elected, but selected by the supreme leader

YCP misleading Centre on PPP medical colleges: CM

- ▶ Says PPP model is a globally accepted mechanism
- ▶ Welcomes HC's suggestion on AI use in TTD's Parakamani
- ▶ List of TDP district chiefs will be announced in 2 days

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday accused the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) of attempting to mislead the Union government over the establishment of medical colleges under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model amid the Opposition party's intensified protests against the policy.

Speaking informally to media persons at the NTR Bhavan, the Chief Minister said YSRCP Members of Parliament had taken their objections to Parliament and had even sought to project the PPP model in 'distorted manner' before Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. According to Naidu, the Union Minister firmly rejected what he described as an attempt to misrepresent the policy framework.

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Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reviewing the implementation of healthcare initiatives in the Secretariat on Tuesday

Statewide rollout of digital health records in a year: Naidu

- ▶ The rollout will be done under Sanjeevani project
- ▶ Gates Foundation takes up pilot project in Kuppam
- ▶ Govt committed to 'healthy, wealthy and happy AP'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday announced that digital health records being developed under the Sanjeevani project in Kuppam, Chittoor district, will be extended across Andhra Pradesh within a year, marking

a major push towards technology-driven preventive healthcare. Reviewing the implementation of healthcare initiatives at the state Secretariat, the Chief Minister said the pilot project, being executed with the cooperation of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, would soon cover the entire population.

Continued on Page 7



Trump sues BBC for \$10bn

Accuses it of defamation over Jan 6 edited speech

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump filed a lawsuit pm Monday seeking USD 10 billion in damages from the BBC, accusing the British broadcaster of defamation as well as deceptive and unfair trade practices.

The 33-page lawsuit accuses the BBC of broadcasting a "false, defamatory, deceptive, disparaging, inflammatory, and malicious depiction of President Trump," calling it "a brazen attempt to interfere in and influence" the 2024 US presidential election.

It accused the BBC of "splicing together two entirely separate parts of President Trump's speech on January 6, 2021" in order to "intentionally misrepresent the meaning of what President Trump said." The lawsuit, filed in a Florida court, seeks USD 5 billion in damages for defamation and USD 5 billion for unfair trade practices. The BBC did not immediately respond to a request for comment from The Associated Press. The broadcaster apologised last month to Trump over the edit of the Jan. 6 speech. Continued on Page 7

G RAM G Bill introduced in LS amid Oppn uproar

- DMK ACCUSES NDA GOVT OF RIDICULING 'FATHER OF THE NATION'
- MAHATMA GANDHI IS FROM EVERY FAMILY IN COUNTRY: PRIYANKA

NEW DELHI

A Bill that seeks to guarantee rural jobs for 125 days every year and replace the 20-year-old MNREGA was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday amid strong objections by the Opposition to the "removal" of Mahatma Gandhi's name from it.

Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, while introducing the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, 2025, said the government not only believes in Mahatma Gandhi but also follows his principles.



"The (Narendra) Modi govt has done more for rural development than previous governments," he said.

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A 'north-south divide' over Hindi names for new laws



Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Samajwadi Party MP Akhilesh Yadav, DMK MP TR Baalu and other Opposition MPs stage a protest near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi against the G RAM G Bill in New Delhi on Tuesday

Cong plans nationwide protest today

NEW DELHI: The Congress will hold protests across the country on Wednesday against the Centre's rural employment bill VB-G RAM G that seeks to replace MGNREGA, claiming it was a "BJP-RSS conspiracy" to dismantle a rights-based welfare scheme and attack Mahatma Gandhi's legacy, workers' rights and federal responsibility.

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Dekho o deewano ye kaam na karo, Ram ka naam badnaam na karo



Global aviation workforce should have 25% Telugus: Lokesh

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

IT & HRD Minister Nara Lokesh emphasised that Andhra Pradesh's vision was to ensure that the global civil aviation workforce should have at least 25 per cent Telugu people.

Speaking at the launch of the country's first integrated GMR-MANSAS Aviation EduCity here on Tuesday, the Minister termed the integrated Aviation, Aerospace and Defence (AAD) EduCity as a historic achievement aligned in tune with India's ever-emerging civil aviation and aerospace ecosystem. Lokesh said that the AAD

Launches country's maiden Aviation, Aerospace, Defence EduCity in Vizag



MoU documents exchanged by Governor of Goa and MANSAS Trust Chairman P Ashok Gajapathi Raju with GMR Group representatives in the presence of HRD and IT Minister Nara Lokesh for the AAD EduCity in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

EduCity which would be developed by GMR Group in 130-acre of site provided by the MANSAS Trust, would serve as a national capability platform to address the acute global and domestic shortage of aviation professionals, place India as a leading supplier of aviation talent and build the country's next-generation aviation workforce.

Presiding over the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the GMR Group and the MANSAS Trust in Visakhapatnam, Lokesh asserted that the initiative addresses the most pressing constraint of 'human capital' faced by the aviation sector now. Continued on Page 7

Modi's Jordan visit strengthens bilateral ties, 5 MoUs signed

AMMAN/NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jordan has paved the way for deepening bilateral ties between India and the West Asian country with the signing of five MoUs in the areas of renewable energy, water resource management, cultural exchange, digital solution and twinning between Petra and Ellora.

PM Modi held extensive discussions with King Abdullah II of Jordan on ways to



PM Narendra Modi being driven by Jordan's Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II to the Jordan Museum in Amman

further deepen bilateral engagement in the fields of trade and investment; defense and security; renewable energy.

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MODI ARRIVES IN ETHIOPIA

ADDIS ABABA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Ethiopia on Tuesday on the second leg of his three-nation tour, aimed at strengthening ties between the two countries. Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali received PM Modi at the Addis Ababa International Airport.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



@MANJULTOONS

IPL AUCTION Uncapped players strike gold!

ABU DHABI

KOLKATA Knight Riders (KKR) splurged a record-breaking Rs 25.20 crore to land top Australian all-rounder Cameron Green and Rs 18 crore to acquire the services of Sri Lankan pacer Matheesha Pathirana in the Indian Premier League players' auction here on Tuesday.

Uncapped Indian players were also a big hit with Uttar Pradesh's 20-year-old left-arm spinner Prashant Vee going to Chennai Super Kings for Rs 14.20 crore. He became the highest paid uncapped player in the history of IPL auction after coming in at a base price of Rs 30 lakh. Jammu and

Kashmir pacer Auqib Nabi Dar also attracted a hefty sum of Rs 8.40 crore from Delhi Capitals to be among the top gainers in the mini auction. Dar's base price was also Rs 30 lakh. Indian stars Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan, however, went unsold in the auction despite their good run of form with the bat.

Green surpassed compatriot Mitchell Starc (Rs 24.75 crore) to become the most expensive overseas player at an IPL auction. This was after Kolkata Knight Riders and Chennai Super Kings were involved in an intense bidding



war for him before the latter emerged winner.

KKR also went after Venkatesh Iyer before pulling out of the race against Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who

lowering an intense bidding war between the two franchises.

Entering the auction at a base price of Rs 2 crore, Pathirana became the most expensive Sri Lankan sold in an IPL auction. As far as Green is concerned, his salary for the season would still be Rs 18 crore (USD 1.9 million) as the rest of the amount will go towards the BCCI's player development programme as per the rules of the auction for foreign players.

Pathirana will get the full amount as it falls within the salary cap. Green, who previously turned up for

Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, has so far played 29 matches in the IPL to aggregate 707 runs and take 16 wickets. Shaw, however, went unsold despite his fine run of form in the domestic circuit lately, and so was the case with Sarfaraz, who smashed a 22-ball 73 in a Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy match for Mumbai on Tuesday. Big-hitting South African batter David Miller was bought by Delhi Capitals for his base price of Rs 2 crore, but New Zealand swashbuckler Devon Conway, whose base price was also Rs 2 crore, went unsold in the auction.

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INDIA@DAVOS

Four Union ministers, Revanth, Naidu to attend WEF annual meet

NEW DELHI: India is set for a power-packed presence at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Swiss ski resort town of Davos next month with four Union ministers, including Ashwini Vaishnaw and Shivraj Singh Chouhan, set to join five CMs and over 100 CEOs from the country. Minister for Civil Aviation K Ram Mohan Naidu and Minister for New & Renewable Energy, Consumer Affairs, and Food & Public Distribution Pralhad Joshi will also be part of the Indian delegation at the 5-day annual meeting from January 18. The Chief Ministers include Devendra Fadnis of Maharashtra, N Chandrababu Naidu of Andhra Pradesh, Assam's Himanta Biswa Sarma, Madhya Pradesh's Mohan Yadav and Telangana's A Revanth Reddy. While Reddy is from Congress and Naidu is from Telugu Desam Party (an ally of BJP), the other three CMs are from BJP. Among the Union ministers, Ram Mohan Naidu is from TDP while other four are from BJP.

Re-survey and mutation process via video conference reviewed

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

JOINT Collector Noorul Qamar has directed the revenue machinery to complete the ongoing re-survey process in the district within the stipulated timeframe without any errors, while also ensuring that land mutation applications are disposed of promptly without pendency.

Emphasising the importance of accuracy and timeliness, he instructed officials to treat the re-survey as a priority

task, given its direct impact on citizens' land rights.

The Joint Collector conducted a comprehensive review of the re-survey, mutation and related issues through a video conference from the Collectorate's Video Conference Hall, interacting with Revenue Divisional Officers (RDOs) and Tahsildars.

During the review, he assessed the progress made at various stages and issued clear directions to strengthen monitoring at the field level to avoid delays and discrepancies.

- Court stresses need to minimise human intervention, adopt AI-based systems in Parakamani counting
- Observes theft of offerings hurts faith of millions; manual methods no longer acceptable
- Volunteers must not face humiliating checks; outsourcing staff barred from sensitive treasury tasks

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday underscored the need to modernise the process of counting offerings at the Tirumala Sri Vari Parakamani (treasury), suggesting that the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) substantially reduce human intervention and

HC calls for tech-driven reforms in Tirumala Parakamani

adopt machine-based and artificial intelligence-driven systems.

Hearing the Parakamani theft case, the High Court observed that incidents involving the alleged theft of offerings at Tirumala cannot be treated as ordinary offences. The court noted that the funds deposited in the Parakamani represent the faith and devotion of millions of devotees across the world, and any misappropriation of such offerings directly hurts religious sentiments.

During the course of arguments advanced by counsel from both sides, the court remarked that continuing



with traditional, manual methods of counting offerings despite repeated theft allegations was neither prudent nor acceptable.

It emphasised that modern technology must be

leveraged to ensure transparency, accountability and security in the handling of temple funds.

The High Court also expressed concern over the practice of subjecting volunteers and personnel involved in the counting process to searches that resemble criminal scrutiny. It observed that individuals who come forward with a spirit of service should not be treated with suspicion or humiliation.

Such measures, the court said, undermine the dignity of devotees and erode trust in temple administration.

Further, the court made it clear that outsourcing employees should not be entrusted with the sensitive task of counting offerings.

It advised the TTD to reconsider its existing procedures and evolve a foolproof mechanism that minimises

human handling and the scope for irregularities.

The bench directed the counsel appearing for the TTD and other parties to place before the court concrete proposals and expert-backed suggestions on modernising the Parakamani counting system. The court indicated that it expects a comprehensive approach that balances technological efficiency with the sanctity of religious practices.

The matter was posted for further hearing, with the High Court signalling that systemic reforms, rather than ad hoc measures, were necessary to safeguard the integrity of Tirumala's treasury.

केन्द्रीय कर आयुक्त का कार्यालय
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF CENTRAL TAX,
GUNTUR COMMISSIONERATE :: गुंटूर आयुक्तालय
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GST BHAVAN, KANNAVARI THOTA, GUNTUR - 522004
Email: caohq-cgstguntur@gov.in

पेंशन अदालत के लिए सार्वजनिक सूचना /
PUBLIC NOTICE FOR PENSION ADALAT

Pension Adalat will be held by the Commissioner of Central Tax, Guntur CGST Commissionerate on 22.12.2025 at 11:15 AM at the Office of the Commissioner of Central Tax, 1st Floor, Conference Hall, C.R.Buildings, Kannavarithota, Guntur to redress grievances of all Pensioners retired from Guntur CGST Commissionerate. Pensioners may submit their grievances to the Nodal Officer as detailed below:-

Joint Commissioner of Central Tax, Hqrs. Office,
Guntur CGST Commissionerate, C.R.Buildings, Kannavarithota,
Guntur-522004. Email: caohq-cgstguntur@gov.in

The last date for submission of grievances by the pensioners is 17.12.2025. Issues like compassionate appointment, pay anomaly, legal cases, and policy issues will not come under purview of PENSION ADALAT. For any difficulty, you may visit our office personally/email us at the above-mentioned address.

-SD-
संयुक्त आयुक्त / JOINT COMMISSIONER

VAJPAYEE'S ROLE IN INFRA DEVELOPMENT DRAWS PRAISE

- Energy minister Ravi Kumar says Atal Bihari Vajpayee was respected across party lines and upheld democratic values with dignity, even in defeat
- Ministers and BJP leaders unveil former PM's bronze statue as the Atal Sandesh-Modi Suparipalana Yatra reaches Bapatla



Energy minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar speaking at Atal Sandesh-Modi Suparipalana Yatra in Bapatla on Tuesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BAPATLA

ENERGY minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar said that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee earned the rare distinction of being an 'Ajata Shatru' (Man without enemies) in Indian politics, respected across party lines. He was speaking on Tuesday when the Atal Sandesh-Modi Suparipalana Yatra reached Bapatla.

The minister, along with ministers Anagani Sathya Prasad and Kolusu Parthasarathy and BJP state president P V N Madhav, unveiled the bronze statue of Vajpayee.

Addressing the gathering, Ravi Kumar described Vajpayee as a beloved son of Bharat Mata who rendered unparalleled service to the nation. He recalled that Vajpayee was elected nine

times to the Lok Sabha and twice to the Rajya Sabha and served as Prime Minister on three occasions.

Even after losing the Prime Minister's post by a single vote, Vajpayee stepped down with dignity, setting a high benchmark for democratic values and winning the hearts of millions of Indians.

Ravi Kumar said Vajpayee firmly believed strong infrastructure was the key to rapid national development. With this vision, he launched the Golden Quadrilateral Project, transforming road connectivity across the country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. He noted that nearly eight lakh km of rural roads and about 5,000 km of national highways were developed during that period, laying a strong foundation for India's growth. Vajpayee, he

said, always placed national interest above political considerations and also united 23 political parties, besides playing a key role in making Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam the President of India.

The minister said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, inspired by Vajpayee's ideals and vision, is carrying forward the journey of national development with renewed momentum.

He pointed out that initiatives such as Vande Bharat trains reflect this commitment, especially in modernising the railway sector.

Ravi Kumar expressed happiness that participating in the unveiling of Vajpayee's bronze statue was a proud and unforgettable moment in his life. Leaders of alliance parties and other dignitaries attended the programme.

Road repairs to be fast-tracked in state

- ▶ R&B minister Janardhan Reddy says his department has stepped up measures to fast-track road repairs and development
- ▶ Single bids to be accepted in road tenders to avoid delays
- ▶ Explains move is aimed at speedy execution of road projects without procedural hurdles

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

STATE roads and buildings, investments and infrastructure minister B C Janardhan Reddy on Tuesday said that the coalition government is undertaking road repair works across the state on a war footing to provide better infrastructure to the public.

In a statement on Tuesday, the minister said that under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the government's primary objective is to complete road development works expeditiously and ensure smooth vehicular movement.

As part of this effort, the roads and buildings (R&B) department has taken a key policy decision to accelerate the execution of road works and eliminate avoidable procedural delays. The minister explained that during the tendering process for road development contracts, it is common for only a single bid to be received. Until now, such tenders were routinely recalled, leading to repeated invitations, submission of fresh bids, evaluation, finalisation and execution of agreements—a process that often consumed more than 45 days.

Due to these delays, road works failed to commence on time, forcing people to endure damaged and unsafe



roads for extended periods. To address this issue and prioritise public convenience, the R&B department has decided to accept and process tenders even if only a single bid is received at the first instance, without recalling the tender.

The minister said this is the first such decision taken by the department with the clear aim of speeding up road repairs and development works. By finalising tenders without unnecessary repetition, works can begin immediately, preventing avoidable delays and ensuring timely completion of projects.

He added that the decision would help deliver better-quality roads to the public within a shorter time frame, improve road safety and facilitate smoother travel across the state. The coalition government, he reiterated, is committed to providing pothole-free roads and strengthening infrastructure to support overall development.

CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED
Corporate Office : Chola Crest, Super B, C54 & C55, 4, Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600 032, T.N.

DEMAND NOTICE

UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("THE ACT") AND THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("THE RULES")

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd. (the Secured Creditor) under the Act and in exercise of the powers conferred under Sec. 13(12) of the Act read with Rule 3 issued Demand Notice(s) under Sec. 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is / are avoiding the service of the Demand Notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being affected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of Demand Notice(s) are extracted herein below :-

Sr. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower/s & Co-Borrower/s	Loan Amt.	Dt. of Demand Notice & U/s. Amt.	Description of the Property / Secured Asset
1	Loan A/C. No(S). JHL25SR000145748 1. Mr/Mrs. Varanasi Tirumala Rao 2. Mr/Mrs. Varanasi Ramadevi Add For Sr. No. 1 & 2 :- D. No.4-4-3, Dolapeta, Rajam, Vizianagaram, Opposite Hanuman Temple, Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh - 532127 Add For Sr. No. 1 & 2 : Plot No.5,6,7, Near D.no.1-208, S.no. 89-1, Degree College Area, Balakavilasa Road, Rajam Village, Rajam Municipality, Vizianagaram District, Gmr College, Andhra Pradesh, 532127	Rs. 20,00,000/-	09.12.2025 Rs. 21,26,781/- (Rupees Twenty One Lakhs Twenty Six Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty One Only) as on 09.12.2025	The Vacant site is covered in Sy. No.89-1 part, Plots Nos. 5,6,7 nearest Dr.No. 1-208, of Rajam Sub Division, of Vizianagaram District, Rajam Mandalam, Rajam Nagara Panchayathi, Eastern side of Road leads from Rajam to Balakavilasa Village of Degree Collage of Vacant site Measuring East-West-40 feet or 12.2 mtrs., North-South 55 feet or 15.77 mtrs road To an extent of 244.44 Sq.yards of vacant site in which Western part of Vacant site Measuring, East-West 20 feet or 6.05 mtrs. North South 55 feet or 15.77 mtrs To an extent of 122.22 Sq.yards in which to an extent of 15.55 Sq.yards for proposed Road winding, so, the schedule property is to an extent of 106.67 Sq.yards is Having following boundaries Boundaries: East-Eastern part Vacant Site of Plot Nos. 5,6,7 (20x55 feet), South-Vacant site of Kanchirra Kalavathi, West-Plot No.4 in which Constructed Stabbed House of Nadiakoppala Varalakshmi, North-16 feet Joint Road.

The borrower(s) are hereby advised to comply with the Demand Notice(s) and to pay the demand amount mentioned therein and hereinabove within 60 days from the date of this publication together with applicable interest, additional interest, bounce charges, cost and expenses till the date of realization of payment. The borrower(s) may note that Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd. is a secured creditor and the loan facility available by the Borrower(s) is a secured debt against the immovable property / properties being the secured asset(s) mortgaged by the borrower(s). In the event borrower(s) are failed to discharge their liabilities in full within the stipulated time, The Secured Creditor shall be entitled to exercise all the rights U/s. 13(4) of the Act to take possession of the secured asset(s) including but not limited to transfer the same by way of sale or by invoking any other remedy available under the Act and the Rules thereunder and realize payment. The Secured Creditor is also empowered to ATTACH AND / OR SEAL the secured asset(s) before enforcing the right to sale or transfer. Subsequent to the Sale of the secured asset(s), the Secured Creditor also has a right to initiate separate legal proceedings to recover the balance dues, in case the value of the mortgaged properties is insufficient to cover the dues payable to the Secured Creditor. This remedy is in addition and independent of all the other remedies available to the Secured Creditor under any other law.

The attention of the borrower(s) is invited to Section 13(8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets and further to Section 13(13) of the Act, whereby the borrower(s) are restrained / prohibited from disposing of or dealing with the secured asset(s) or transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise (other than in the ordinary course of business) any of the secured asset(s), without prior written consent of the Secured Creditor and non-compliance with the above is an offence punishable under Section 29 of the said Act. The copy of the Demand Notice is available with the undersigned and the borrower(s) may, if they so desire, can collect the same from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.

Sd/-
Authorized Officer
For Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited

ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL LIMITED
Registered Office:Indian Rayon Compound, Veraval, Gujarat-362266.
Branch Office :12th Floor, R Teck Park, Nirlon Complex, Nr. Hub Mall, Goregaon (E), Mumbai-400 063, MH.

DEMAND NOTICE

UNDER SEC 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("THE ACT") READ WITH RULE 3 OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("THE RULES")

On account of the amalgamation between Aditya Birla Finance Ltd. and Aditya Birla Capital Ltd. vide the Scheme of Amalgamation dated 11.03.2024 duly recorded in the Order passed by the National Company Law Tribunal - Ahmedabad on 24.03.2025, all SARFAESI actions initiated by Aditya Birla Finance Ltd. in relation to the mortgaged apterity mentioned, stands transferred to Aditya Birla Capital Ltd., the amalgamated company.

Accordingly the undersigned being the Authorized officer of Aditya Birla Capital Limited (ABCL) under the Act and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the Act read with the Rule 3, issued Demand Notice(s) under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is / are avoiding the service of the demand notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being effected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of demand notice(s) are extracted herein below:-

In connection with the above, Notice is hereby given, once again, to the said Borrower's / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) to pay to ABCL, within 60 days from the date of the respective Notice(s), the amount indicated herein below against their respective names, together with further interest as detailed below from the respective dates mentioned below in column (d) till the date of payment and / or realisation, read with the loan agreement and other documents / writings, if any, executed by the said Borrower's. As security for due repayment of the loan, the following Secured Asset(s) have been mortgaged to ABCL by the said Borrower's respectively.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)	Demand Notice Date & NPA Date	Description of Immovable Property
1.	M/s. Kusum Creations, Through its Proprietor Raj Kishore Biyani, Door No. 50-121-29/2/5, F2/2, 50-121-29/2/4, F2/1, Unit No. F3, Unit No. F2, First Floor, Harmony Apartment, Balayasa Sastry Layout, Seethammadhara, Visakhapatnam Pin- 530013.	08.12.2025 & 04.12.2025	An Undivided And Unspecified Share Of An Extent Of 30 Sq.yards Or 25.063 Sq.mtrs Out Of The Total Extent Of 280 Sq.yards Or 234.116sqmths With Semi Furnished Unit Together With Flat No. F-3 In 1 Floor Measuring With A Plinth Area Of 875 Sft., (Including Common Areas) Of Harmony, Being In Plot No. 24 part Of Balayasastry Layout, Covered By T.S. No. 2, Ward No. 26 Of Allipuram Extension Ward, Within The Gmc Limits Visakhapatnam And Dwarakanagar Bounded By Following Boundaries:- Site Boundaries:- East: Remaining Part Belonging To Vendor, South: 40 Feet Wide Road, West: Plot No. 23, North: Plot No. 22. Measurement Of The Total Site:- East- 60.00 Feet Or 18.28 Meters, South- 42.00 Feet Or 12.80meters, West- 60.00 Feet Or 18.28 Meters, North- 42.00 Feet Or 12.80meters, Flat Boundaries, Unit No F3 In First Floor:- East: Open Setback Space, South: Open Setback Spaces, West: Flat No. F-2, North: Common Corridor And Staircase. Details Of The Property 2:- An Undivided And Unspecified Share Of An Extent Of 30 Sq.yards Or 25.083 Sq.mtrs Out Of The Total Extent Of 280 Sq.yards, Together With Flat No.1-2 In 1 st Floor Measuring With A Plinth Area Of 875 Sft., (Including Common Areas) And 100 Sft., Of Car Parking In Stilt Floor Of Harmony, Being In Plot No.24part Of Balayasastry Layout, Covered By T.s.no.2, Ward No.26 Of Allipuram Extension Ward, Within The Gmc Limits Visakhapatnam Bounded By Following Boundaries:- Site Boundaries:- East: Remaining Part Belonging To Vendor, South: 40 Feet Wide Road, West: Plot No. 23, North: Plot No. 22, Flat Boundaries: East: Residential Unit Flat No. F-3, South: Open Setback Space West : Open Setback Space, North: Common Corridor And Staircase
2.	Mr. Raj Kishore Biyani, S/o. Liladhar Biyani, Door No. 50-121-29/2/5, F2/2, 50-121-29/2/4, F2/1, Unit No. F3, Unit No. F2, First Floor, Harmony Apartment, Balayasa Sastry Layout, Seethammadhara Visakhapatnam Pin- 530013.		
3.	Kusum Biyani, W/o. Raj Kishore Biyani, 50-121-29/2/5, F2/2, 50-121-29/2/4, F2/1, Unit No. F3, Unit No. F2, First Floor, Harmony Apartment, Balayasa Sastry Layout, Seethammadhara Visakhapatnam Pin- 530013.		
6.	Loan Ac.No.ABVPTST5000005066021 & ABVPTST5000000772362	RS. 73,69,949.5/- as on 08.12.2025	

With further interest, additional interest at the rate as more particularly stated in respective Demand Notices dated mentioned above, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc incurred till the date of payment and / or realization. If the said Borrower's shall fail to make payment to ABCL as aforesaid, then ABCL shall proceed against the above Secured Asset(s) / Immovable Property (ies) under Section 13(4) of the said Act and the applicable Rules entirely at the risk of the said Borrower's / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) as to the costs and consequences.

The said Borrower's / Legal Heir(s) / Legal Representative(s) are prohibited under the said Act to transfer the aforesaid Secured Asset(s) / Immoveable Property(ies), whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of ABCL. That please note that this is a final notice under Sec. 13(2) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002). Needless to say, that ABCL shall be within its right to exercise any or all of the rights referred to above against the borrower(s) entirely at their risk, responsibility & costs.

Sd/-
Authorized Officer, ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL LIMITED

AP Soft Tennis players shine at national school games

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh Soft Tennis players brought laurels to the State with their impressive performance at the 69th National School Games Soft Tennis Championship held at Dewas in Madhya Pradesh from December 11 to 14.

Congratulating the young achievers, Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) Chairman Animiri Ravi Naidu felicitated the medal winners at a programme held at the SAAP headquarters in Vijayawada on Tuesday. In the Under-14 girls' individual singles category, AS Vaishali won the silver medal, while BMNV Karthik secured the bronze medal in the Under-17 boys' individual singles event. Notably, both players represented Andhra Pradesh from the erstwhile Krishna district, making their achievement a matter of pride for the State.

Addressing the gathering, Ravi Naidu lauded the dedication, hard work and discipline of the players, stating that such qualities were key to their success at the national level. He encouraged them to aim higher and deliver even better performances in forthcoming national and international competitions. Assuring continued support, he said SAAP would always stand by young sportspersons to nurture talent.

Re-survey and mutation process via video conference reviewed

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

JOINT Collector Noorul Qamar has directed the revenue machinery to complete the ongoing re-survey process in the district within the stipulated timeframe without any errors, while also ensuring that land mutation applications are disposed of promptly without pendency.

Emphasising the importance of accuracy and timeliness, he instructed officials to treat the re-survey as a priority task, given its direct impact on citizens' land rights.

The Joint Collector conducted a comprehensive review of the re-survey, mutation and related issues through a video conference from the Collectorate's Video Conference Hall, interacting with Revenue Divisional Officers (RDOs) and Tahsildars.

During the review, he assessed the progress made at various stages and issued clear directions to strengthen monitoring at the field level to avoid delays and discrepancies.

Referring to the first phase of the re-survey pilot project, Joint Collector Noorul Qamar stated that clerical corrections in the 25 selected villages must be completed within the prescribed period, ensuring there is no scope for mistakes.



JC Noorul Qamar reviewing of the re-survey, mutation and related issues through a video conference from the Collectorate's Video Conference Hall on Tuesday

In the second phase, covering 24 villages identified under the pilot project, he instructed officials to complete the mutation process in all cases and take steps to issue the final notification.

He stressed that every mutation application should be examined thoroughly and final orders issued without leaving any cases pending.

In the third phase, covering 32 villages where the re-survey has commenced, the Joint Collector directed officials to complete ground truthing (GT) and other related processes within the government-

mandated deadline.

He cautioned that negligence, undue delay or errors at any stage would invite strict action. Highlighting that the re-survey process is crucial for safeguarding land ownership rights, he urged all concerned officers to work in close coordination and ensure successful completion of the exercise.

District Revenue Officer C Venkata Narayanamma, Adoni Sub-Collector (In-charge) Ajay Kumar, Special Deputy Collector Naga Prasanna Lakshmi and other officials participated in the review meeting.

‘Dhanurmasotsavam’ begins with grandeur at Simhachalam

- Annually, the ‘Nelaganta’ period commences exactly a month before the Sankranti festival
- The ceremonial ringing of the bell in the temple premises symbolically heralded the arrival of Dhanurmasam
- This ritual traditionally marks an auspicious commencement for a series of special sevas, daily pujas, and devotional observances

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

MARKING the beginning of an auspicious period comprising special rituals and devotional observances, the sacred Dhanurmasotsavam’ started in a grand manner on Tuesday at the Sri



Devasthanam officials and priests carrying out ‘Nelaganta’ ritual at Simhachalam Devasthanam in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Devasthanam. As per the instructions of the Devasthanam Executive Officer N Sujatha, the temple priests carried out the traditional ‘Nelaganta’ ceremony in strict adherence to

scriptural customs under the supervision of assistant executive officer K Tirumaleswara Rao. Annually, the ‘Nelaganta’ period commences exactly a month before the Sankranti festival. At the auspicious time

of 1:00 pm, chief priests G Srinivasacharyulu and K Seetharamacharyulu, along with other priests and Vedic scholars, performed the ritual amid the recitation of Vedic chants. The ceremonial ringing of the bell at the temple

premises symbolically heralded the arrival of Dhanurmasam, a sacred month of immense spiritual significance in the Hindu calendar.

This ritual traditionally marks an auspicious commencement for a series of special sevas, daily pujas, and devotional observances followed throughout the month.

The event witnessed the participation of Special Deputy Collector Geetanjali, temple supervising officer K Venkateswara Rao, public relations officer Naidu and a large gathering of devotees.

With the ceremonial beginning of Dhanurmasam, the temple is set to host a month-long schedule of religious activities, drawing devotees from far and wide to seek divine blessings and partake in the celebrations.

Chief of Naval Staff concludes visit to Brazil

- During the official visit, the CNS held high level engagements with senior Brazilian officials
- Apart from the defence industry collaboration, the discussions focused on bilateral cooperation
- The engagements underscored the mutual commitment to deepen maritime cooperation between India and Brazil

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

CHIEF of the Naval Staff (CNS) of the Indian Navy Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi’s visit to Brazil aimed at strengthening the maritime partnership between the two nations.

During the recent official visit, the CNS held high level engagements with senior Brazilian officials, including the Defence Minister, the



MoU documents exchanged between the Indian Navy and the Brazilian Navy in the presence of Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) of the Indian Navy Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi

Chief of the Joint Staff of the Brazilian Armed Forces, and the Commander of the Brazilian Navy.

Apart from the defence industry collaboration, their discussions focused on bilateral cooperation.

A key development was the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on exchanging information on maintenance of

Scorpene-class submarines and other naval vessels, between the Indian Navy, the Brazilian Navy, and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited

(MDL).

The CNS visited various Brazilian Navy facilities, including the Itaguai Naval Complex and the amphibious helicopter carrier, NAM Atlantico (A140). CNS also attended the passing out parade of 140 midshipmen at the Brazilian Navy’s Naval Academy at Rio de Janeiro.

These engagements underscored the mutual commitment to deepen maritime cooperation between India and Brazil, advancing shared security goals, and training cooperation.

Cake-mixing, grape stomping ceremony adds to X’mas fervour



Ahead of Christmas, Sun International Institute of Tourism and Management organises a cake-mixing and grape stomping ceremony in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

ENGAGING students in a fun-filled event, Sun International Institute of Tourism and Management organised a cake mixing and grape stomping ceremony in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

Executive Director of the institution Asha Jasti encouraged the students to take part in the ceremony aimed to unite communities and spread cheer among people.

As part of the celebrations, stalls such as ‘feed the Santa’, X-Mas goodies, pick your décor and X-Mas accessories were set up at the venue.

Following a dress code of red and white, the event saw participation of several students.

Assorted dry fruits were mixed with bottles of liquor to make a 50-kg cake.

Highlighting the significance of Christmas celebrations that unite communities across the city, Executive Director of the institution Asha Jasti

informed that the cake made from the soaked dry fruits will be distributed free of cost to orphanages and old age homes across the city on the eve of Christmas.

Bheemunipatnam MLA Ganta Srinivasa Rao’s wife Ganta Sharada participated in the event.

Radisson Blu GM Abhishek Pani, HR Ratnakar, Executive Chef Ramesh, Raj Kiran, Novotel HR Nisha Batwani, executive chef Saurabh Chaudhary, among others were present.

VIPT bags 1st prize at Smart India Hackathon 2025

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

STUDENTS from Vignan Institute of Pharmaceutical Technology (VIPT), Duvvada, Visakhapatnam, bagged the first prize at the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2025, hardware edition, grand finale held at the nodal centre, Chennai Institute of Technology (CIT), Chennai.

Organised by the Ministry of Education, AICTE, and the Innovation Cell of the Ministry of Education, ‘SIH 2025’ recorded large-scale participation from across the country, with over 72,000 ideas submitted by nearly 69,000 teams. From these entries, 1,360 teams were selected for the national finale, conducted at 60 centres nationwide. Team Ecocure emerged



Students from VIPT bagged the first prize at the ‘Smart India Hackathon 2025’

as a joint winner for the problem statement SIH25218: ‘Screening Tool for Early Detection of Neurological Conditions’ and received a cash prize of Rs.1.5 lakh. It was shared with another winning

team as part of the joint award. Congratulating the students, chairman of the institution Lavu Rathaiah and Principal Y Srinivasa Rao mentioned that the achievement reflects VIPT’s strong emphasis

on innovation, practical learning and problem-solving approach.

He appreciated both the team and mentors for securing national recognition at a premier innovation platform.

Fishermen community youth cricket tourney from today

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

THE coastal security Police in Visakhapatnam is organising a Fishermen Community Youth

Cricket Tournament from December 17.

The four-day-long tournament will continue at the AR Ground, Kailasagiri till December 20. Organisers of the

event mentioned that the objective of the tournament is to promote sportsmanship, discipline and community bonding among the fishing community youth.

Several teams from various coastal areas are expected to participate to make the event competitive and engaging.

This initiative also aims to encourage youth participation in constructive activities and strengthen the relationship between the Coastal Security police and the local fishing community.

YSRCP spreading false propaganda: Minister

GUNTUR: Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad said that YSRCP leaders are spreading false propaganda against the construction of medical colleges on PPP mode.

He participated in the locally arranged programmes in Repalle town of Bapatla district on Tuesday and distributed the financial assistance from the CMRF to 41 beneficiaries.

Speaking on the occasion, he said, “If the YSRCP government had constructed the medical colleges under PPP mode, it would have taken 25 years. The YSRCP government had failed to construct at least five medical colleges at a cost of Rs 500 crore. The coalition government in the state completed construction of medical colleges within two years.

The medical colleges will get free seats and NRI seats also. YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has failed to construct a medical college in Pulivendula also.

He gave priority to the construction of a palace at Rushikonda rather than construction of medical colleges. “So far, we have distributed Rs 12 crore financial assistance from the CMRF in Repalle Assembly Constituency.”

ACA all set to host India–Sri Lanka women’s T20 Series

- Officials chair key meeting to discuss over several aspects related to the matches
- The discussions reflect a strong spirit of coordination and shared responsibility
- Top cop outlines comprehensive security and crowd-management measures to ensure the safety of players, officials, and spectators

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

ANDHRA Cricket Association is making necessary arrangements for upcoming India–Sri Lanka Women’s T20 International matches.

Ensuring flawless conduct of the upcoming T20 International matches, a preparedness meeting was held at the ACA-VDCA International Cricket Stadium here on Tuesday. City Police



A view of ACA-VDCA International Cricket Stadium in Visakhapatnam

Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi, DCPs Mary Prashanti and Manikanta, GVMC Zonal Commissioner Ayyappa Naidu, and ACA chief operating officer Girish Dongre, along with other key stakeholders discussed various aspects.

The discussions reflected a strong spirit of coordination and shared

responsibility, underscoring the administration’s commitment to delivering a world-class sporting experience.

Addressing the meeting, the Police Commissioner outlined comprehensive security and crowd-management measures to ensure the safety of players, officials, and spectators. Multiple ticketing options

including M-tickets, e-tickets, and physical tickets have been arranged for public convenience, while enhanced security deployment at ticket counters and strategic locations around the stadium will be in place.

To further strengthen safety, CCTV surveillance will be installed in parking areas, supported by an

upgraded centralised public address system for real-time communication.

As part of stadium safety protocols, water bottles will not be permitted inside the venue, while women police personnel will be deployed to ensure the security of all visiting teams.

Briefing the gathering, ACA COO Girish Dongre

informed that both teams will arrive on 17 December, with the Indian women’s team staying at Novotel Hotel and the Sri Lankan women’s team accommodated at Four Points Hotel.

He informed that BCCI officials were also present during the meeting in view of the matches,

reflecting the importance of seamless coordination between national and local stakeholders.

The highly anticipated matches will be played at the Andhra Cricket Association–Visakhapatnam District Cricket Association (ACA-VDCA) International Cricket Stadium on

December 21 and December 23.

To enhance spectator comfort, complimentary drinking water facilities will be provided inside the stadium. Tickets for both T20I encounters went on sale on Monday at 7 pm and are available exclusively through the District by Zomato app.

In a move aimed at encouraging maximum fan participation, ticket prices have been kept affordable, starting at Rs.200, with additional categories priced at Rs.300, Rs.350 and Rs.400, ensuring accessibility for cricket lovers across all sections.

The bilateral series promises high-octane action and thrilling competition, as the Indian women’s team takes on Sri Lanka before a passionate home crowd. With Visakhapatnam known for its enthusiastic cricket fans, strong turnout is expected for both matches. Cricket enthusiasts are advised to book early, as tickets are likely to sell out quickly.

Integrated township by TTD for devotees to come up near Alipiri



TTD chairman B R Naidu speaking to the media in Tirumala on Tuesday. EO Anil Kumar Singhal and Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary are seen.



TTD chairman B R Naidu and EO Anil Kumar Singhal at the trust board meeting in Tirumala on Tuesday

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

TIRUMALA Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Trust Board has taken an important decision to improve facilities for devotees by approving the construction of an integrated township near Alipiri in Tirupati. The project will come up on 20 acres and will serve as a base camp to meet the growing accommodation needs of devotees.

The decision was taken at the TTD Board meeting held in Tirumala on Tuesday under the chairmanship of B R Naidu. The board approved town planning proposals and the appointment of an architect. Executive Officer AK Singhal, Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, JEO V Veerabrahmam and other members attended the meeting.

The township will be developed at the TTD-run SV

- TTD trust board approves the new facility in 20 acre to meet growing accommodation needs
- Sri Venkateswara temple to be constructed at Bandra in Mumbai with Rs 14.4 cr
- TTD junior colleges will have midday meal for day scholars
- Sri Padmavathi children's heart centre to get state-of-the-art facilities with Rs 48 cr granta

Institute of Traditional Sculpture and Architecture, which has about 35 acre land. As part of the plan, transport facilities will be arranged from the township using RTC buses and other modes. Since the site is very close to the Alipiri footpath, it will be convenient for devotees who wish to trek to Tirumala. However, the Institute of Sculpture may be shifted to another location.

TTD chairman B R Naidu said the board approved the construction of a Sri Venkateswara temple at Bandra in Mumbai at an estimated cost of Rs 14.40 crore. It was also decided to rename roads and

major junctions in Tirumala after figures associated with Lord Venkateswara, Vaishnava traditions, the Alwars and Annamacharya.

An expert committee has been formed to finalise the names. A separate wing will be created for the protection and conservation of ancient and heritage structures in Tirumala and along the footpaths, with experienced officers to oversee the work.

The board cleared a plan to grow sacred and divine trees over 100 acres at Palamaner to supply wood for temple chariots and flagpoles. An additional Rs 48 crore was

sanctioned to strengthen advanced medical facilities at the Sri Padmavathi Children's Heart Centre in Tirupati.

Based on recommendations of the Education Sub-Committee, the board approved the introduction of digital classrooms, CCTV cameras, computers, software and staff in 31 TTD-run educational institutions. A new comprehensive policy for the construction and management of donor cottages will also be introduced.

For Sri Siddheswara Swamy temple at Talakona, Rs 14.10 crore was sanctioned for the second phase of renovation works, in addition to Rs 4 crore approved earlier. Hostel accommodation at Sri Padmavathi Women's Degree College in Tirupati will be expanded by adding 270 seats to the existing strength of 2,100.

The board decided to continue TTD's responsibility for road maintenance,

repairs and street lighting in Tirupati. It also resolved to seek government approval to create 18 new Potu Supervisor posts at Srivari Potu. As a welfare measure, the board approved providing midday meals to day scholars of SV Junior College and SPW Junior College, on the lines of the state government's scheme. It also cleared the construction of a pilgrim accommodation complex at the Sri Veer-anjaneya Swamy temple in Kondagattu, Jagtial district.

In another major decision, the board approved salary hikes for 62 archakas, parisharakas, potu workers and prasadam distributors working in TTD-associated temples. Archakas' salaries will be increased from Rs 25,000 to Rs 45,000, parisharakas from Rs 23,140 to Rs 30,000, potu workers from Rs 24,279 to Rs 30,000, and prasadam distributors from Rs 23,640 to Rs 30,000.

Minister vows support to beleaguered aquaculture

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

STATING that the aquaculture sector has become a key pillar of Andhra Pradesh's economy, minister for agriculture and fisheries K Atchannaidu said the coalition government is extending full support for the development of aquaculture with the prime objective of increasing farmers' income.

The minister was the chief guest at the oath-taking ceremony of the governing body members of the Andhra Pradesh State Aquaculture Development Authority, held at the fisheries department office at Penamaluru near here on Tuesday.

Addressing the gathering, Atchannaidu said the prevailing conditions in the global market and the tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump have impacted aquaculture farmers. He added that the state government is taking measures in coordination with the Central government to overcome these challenges.

He stressed the need for extensive promotion of the quality and credibility of Andhra Pradesh shrimp across the country and globally. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, he said, is continuously striving to explore new markets, boost exports and ensure remunerative prices for farmers. Emphasising quality consciousness, the Minister said farmers would receive better prices only by maintaining high standards.

Atchannaidu noted that Andhra Pradesh contributes 29 per cent to the country's



Minister for agriculture and fisheries K Atchannaidu attends swearing-in ceremony of governing body members of the AP State Aquaculture Development Authority at the fisheries department office at Penamaluru in Vijayawada on Tuesday

- Noting that US tariffs and international conditions have hit the sector, Atchannaidu says CM Chandrababu Naidu is focusing on new markets, exports and mandatory registration with geo-tagging of ponds; 48% already registered
- Electricity subsidy for aquaculture farmers raised from Rs 800 cr to Rs 1,200 cr, applicable only to registered farmers

fisheries sector. He said the Chief Minister has directed that registration of fish and shrimp ponds based on survey numbers be made mandatory, and so far, 48 per cent of ponds across the state have been registered. The government has removed difficulties earlier faced by farmers in pond registration and has also introduced geo-tagging of ponds.

The minister further stated that aquaculture farmers have been provided with electricity subsidy worth Rs 800 crore so far, which will be increased to Rs 1,200 crore. He clarified that the subsidy will be applicable only to registered farmers.

Atchannaidu asserted that the development of backward and weaker sections is possible only under the coa-

lition government. He was speaking after participating as chief guest, along with BC welfare minister S Savitha, at the oath-taking ceremony of the chairman and directors of the Andhra Pradesh State Kalinga Vaishya Development Corporation in Vijayawada. The oath was administered to corporation chairman Boyina Govindarajulu and other directors.

He recalled that during the previous TDP government, BCs had received the highest number of jobs and medical seats. On the issue of including Vaishyas in the OBC category, he said discussions are underway with the Central government, adding that Union minister K Ram Mohan Naidu had also taken up the matter with the Prime Minister.

AGE LIMIT FOR CHILD CARE LEAVE FOR GOVT EMPLOYEES REMOVED

- State govt issues orders doing away with upper age limit for children, allowing eligible employees to use CCL at any stage of service up to retirement
- Benefit extended to women employees and single male employees, including unmarried, widower and divorcee staff and covers children with disabilities
- Total eligible CCL of 180 days can now be availed in up to 10 spells during entire service, subject to existing conditions

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE state government on Tuesday issued orders removing the upper age limit for children for availing Child Care Leave (CCL) by government employees, permitting eligible employees to utilise the leave facility at any time during their service up to retirement.

The finance department issued the orders with immediate effect, extending the benefit to women employees as well as single male employees, including unmarried, widower and divorcee employees, subject to existing eligibility conditions. The revised policy also covers children with disabilities.

As per the orders, Child Care Leave may be availed for child rearing, attending

to children's health needs, or caring for them during school or college examinations, illness and other related requirements.

The government recalled that it had initially permitted women employees to avail Child Care Leave for a maximum period of 60 days during their entire service. This entitlement was later enhanced to 180 days, to be availed in a maximum of three spells. Subsequently, the facility was extended to single male employees on similar terms.

In a further revision, the government increased the permissible number of spells for availing the eligible 180 days of Child Care Leave from three to 10 spells during the entire service period.

Employees who had already availed 60 days or part thereof were allowed to

AP JAC welcomes the decision

VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh Joint Action Committee (AP JAC) Amaravati has welcomed the state government's decision to remove the 18-year age ceiling on Child Care Leave (CCL) and thanked Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for fulfilling his promise to women employees.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, AP JAC leaders said the new Government Order allows women employees to avail CCL at any time during their service, regardless of their

children's age, as per rules. They noted that over 60 per cent of the state's workforce would benefit, enhancing the dignity and welfare of working mothers.

Welcoming the decision, AP JAC Amaravati women's wing chairperson Pare Lakshmi, general secretary Ponnuru Vijayalakshmi, associate chairperson Saikam Siva Kumar Reddy and treasurer Dr Sailakshmi said AP has become the first state in the country to remove the age restriction on Child Care Leave.

operational guidelines.

The government has now formally extended the removal of the upper age limit to both women employees and single male employees, including in cases involving differently-abled children. All other conditions stipulated in the earlier government orders will continue to apply.

utilise the extended period within the revised limit of 10 spells, excluding the spells already availed.

Earlier, the government had removed the upper age limit for women employees and permitted them to avail Child Care Leave at any stage of service before retirement, while directing the finance department to issue detailed

- Collector calls for micro plan for the event focusing on programmes, tourism facilities and logistics
- It has become a major attraction for bird lovers and nature enthusiasts as over 10000 migratory birds visit the area every winter

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

GOOD news for bird lovers and tourists. The much-anticipated Flamingo Festival will be held at Pulicat Lake in the Sullurpet constituency of Tirupati district for two days on January 10 and 11, 2026, the district administration has announced.

District collector Dr S Venkateswar has directed officials to begin preparations immediately to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the festival. A review meeting in this regard was held on Tuesday at the local Collectorate with conservator of forests and zoo curator C Selvam and regional director of tourism Dr R Ramana Prasad.

Addressing the meeting, the collector said thousands of flamingos migrate to the Pulicat Lake region every year, making it essential to organise the festival in a scientific and well-planned manner. He instructed officials to prepare a detailed

Flamingo Fest to light up Pulicat on Jan 10-11



District collector Dr S Venkateswar speaking at a review meeting on the Flamingo Festival in Tirupati on Tuesday. Conservator of forests C Selvam, tourism RD R Ramana Prasad and others are also seen.

micro plan covering event programmes, tourism facilities, stage arrangements and overall logistics.

Special attention will be given to arrangements at key locations including Pulicat-Nellapattu, BV Palem, Atakanithippa, Irakkam Island, Ubbalamadugu and Periyapalayam. The Collector stressed that the Flamingo Festival should be developed into one of the major tourism events of the state, with all departments working in close coordination.

He also called for wide publicity at the state and national levels to attract more tourists. Plans are to be drawn up for extensive promotion through posters, logos, banners, publicity material and digital display boards. All departments were asked to submit their action plans at the earliest.

District tourism and culture officer M Janardhan Reddy, APTDC EE Subramanyam, tourism officials and event organisers attended the meeting.

It may be recalled that Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary, one of the largest pelicanries in the region, serves as an important breeding and roosting site for both long-distance and local migratory birds. The Flamingo Festival, which began in 2001 as a tourism revenue initiative, has grown into a major attraction. Each winter, around 10,000 to 12,000 migratory birds from nearly 80 species visit Pulicat, making it a haven for birdwatchers and nature lovers.

VB-GRAMIN Bill raises fears among rural workers

NARESH NANDAM
ONGOLE

THE Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (VK-GRAMIN) VB-G RAM G Bill which was introduced in Parliament on Monday to replace the two-decade-old Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), promises increase in workdays from 100 to 125, but masks fundamental changes that could leave rural workers worse off. Experts estimate that states like Andhra Pradesh could lose up to Rs 5,000 crore in Central funding, likely forcing

- Bill promises 125 workdays but replaces the legal right to employment with budget-based allocations, risking funding cuts of up to Rs 5,000 crore for states like Andhra Pradesh
- Cost burden shifts to states, which must fund 40% of expenses and bear any excess spending, while a clause allows suspension of work for 60 days during peak farm seasons.
- Mandatory tech-heavy systems and Centrally approved plans may exclude vulnerable workers and weaken scheme's role as a flexible safety net during rural distress

them to cap work even when villagers need it.

The most significant shift transforms employment from a legal right into a budget-controlled programme. Un-

der MGNREGA, households could demand work and the government was legally bound to provide it within 15 days or pay unemployment allowance.



The new law replaces this with 'normative allocation' based on fixed budgets decided by the Central government for each state. Work will now depend on budget ceilings rather than worker demand.

Financial burden shifts dramatically to states, which must now contribute 40 per cent of costs (10 per cent for northeastern states).

Any spending beyond the allocated ceiling is borne en-

tirely by state budgets. A controversial provision allows states to suspend all scheme work for 60 days during peak agricultural seasons.

For landless labourers who depend on the programme when farm work is scarce or exploitative, this legally closes a crucial safety net precisely when income is most needed.

Technology requirements compound access barriers. Mandatory biometric attendance, GPS tracking and app-based systems may exclude elderly workers, those with poor connectivity or worn fingerprints, and people lacking proper documentation.

All work must now come

from pre-approved Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans integrated with national infrastructure systems. This removes MGNREGA's flexibility for urgent, simple employment during distress, favouring large infrastructure projects requiring multi-scheme coordination.

Chakradhar Buddha, coordinator for LibTech India, an NGO, observed that many provisions of the VB-GRAMIN Act are unfair. He said that the employment system shifts from a demand-driven legal entitlement with relatively simple ground-level processes to a Centrally-controlled, technology-heavy

scheme, where budget constraints and digital compliance may override workers' survival needs. He said that Andhra Pradesh used to receive feedback and suggestions on best practices for the MGNREGA through APNA (Andhra Pradesh NGOs Alliance).

He advised the state, which played a key role in the design and implementation of the MGNREGA, to retake the lead and restart consultations with stakeholders and the NGOs network to propose actionable changes that help workers from all regions receive work when they really need it and wages on time.

Odisha aims to become hub for medical devices

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha government on Tuesday unveiled Pharmaceutical and Medical Devices Policy-2025, aiming to attract investment of Rs 25,000 crore and create 1 lakh jobs by 2030. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi launched the new policy here at Odisha Pharma Summit-2025 in the presence of Industries Minister Sampad Chandra Swain and senior government officers.

Speaking on the occasion, Industries Department's Additional Chief Secretary Hemant Sharma said India imports about 85 per cent of medical devices from other countries, and there is a huge opportunity for this sector. As a lot of units of pharmaceutical and medical devices are expected to come up in the next five years, Odisha must make an



attempt to become a part of this endeavour, Sharma said.

Under the policy, the State offers a 50 per cent subsidy on concessional land cost for units employing more than 200 Odisha-domiciled skilled staff. The government also offered 30 per cent capital subsidy on eligible plant and machinery (disbursed up to 6 per cent per annum for 5 years), without any upper cap,

while a 25 per cent subsidy (capped at Rs 1 crore) will be given for dedicated power infrastructure, another official said.

The objective of the new policy is to fast-track Odisha as the eastern hub for pharmaceuticals and medical devices through investment, jobs, innovation and green manufacturing, he said. "The policy is expected to bring an investment of Rs

25,000 crore and generate direct and indirect employment for 1 lakh individuals by 2030," he said. MoUs worth Rs 5,000 crore have been signed on Tuesday itself, the official said.

The policy also aims to attract investment and catalyse local entrepreneurship and MSME growth, while generating employment across skilled and semi-skilled segments. Anchored in the State's Industrial Policy Resolution (IPR) — 2022, which identifies pharmaceuticals, bulk drugs and medical devices as a thrust sector, the policy promotes infrastructure readiness, research excellence, industry-academia collaboration for skilling and a facilitative regulatory environment to enable inclusive and sustainable industrial development, another official said.

The State will set up an Odisha Pharma Park and an Odisha MedTech Park (over

200 acres each) as integrated, good manufacturing practices (GMP)-ready clusters, he said. The policy combines land, finance, skilled workforce, regulatory facilitation and R&D support to attract anchor investments across active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), formulations, vaccines, diagnostics, imaging, implants and wearables — positioning Odisha as a competitive, sustainable manufacturing and innovation destination.

It covers pharmaceuticals — APIs, bulk drugs, formulations, vaccines, biologicals and biosimilars, veterinary drugs and animal vaccines, nutraceuticals, and cosmetics classified as drugs; and Medical Devices — in-vitro diagnostics (IVD), implants, surgical consumables, instruments and apparatus, medical wearables, digital health devices and device software, the official added.



PADDY PROCUREMENT

Farmers threaten Sambalpur bandh on Dec 19

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SAMBALPUR

ALLEGING severe irregularities in the paddy procurement process, a farmers' outfit on Monday threatened a shutdown in Sambalpur district on December 19. Paschim Odisha Krushak Sangathan Samanwaya Samiti (POKSSS) accused the administration of indifference towards "mounting losses of farmers" during the kharif procurement process.

It alleged that lapses in token generation have left vehicles loaded with paddy stranded for days near 'mandis,' leading to quality deterioration and rising transport expenses. Around 65,143 farmers have registered for the procurement in Sambalpur this season.

The POKSSS said about 40,000 farmers were issued only one token each, which is grossly inadequate to dispose of their harvested paddy, while the rest are yet to receive even one token. "One token is issued for the procurement of 75 quintals of paddy. Farmers across western Odisha have been denied second procurement tokens. Never before has kharif procurement happened at such a sluggish pace," POKSSS convenor Ashok Pradhan claimed. The crisis can be resolved only if the government intervenes and directs the administration to expedite the process, he said.

On December 12, members of POKSSS and Zilla Krushak Surakhya Sangathan protested across the

district, disrupting vehicular movement on the highways. "We will be continuing our symbolic protest till December 19, and wait for the government to take steps. If they fail, we will launch another massive protest without a second thought," Pradhan said.

Food Supplies Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said a meeting was held on Sunday on the issues faced by the farmers. "We will issue tokens to all registered farmers to procure paddy. We procure paddy at 17 quintals per acre in non-irrigated land and 19 quintals per acre in irrigated areas," he said. The farmers can sell their surplus paddy after token allocation in the open market or keep it at home for their own consumption, he added.



Couple nabbed for duping investors of Rs 20 cr

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police arrested a Chartered Accountant and his wife from Noida in Uttar Pradesh in connection with Rs 20 crore fraud case. The accused couple have been identified as Chandra Sekhar Sahoo and Jharana Sahoo of Anandapur in Keonjhar district. The duo was arrested on December 12 after a case was registered on December 8 on the basis of a complaint lodged by Jayant Mishra, an employee with Mahanadi Coalfields Limited, Balanda, Talcher.

During the course of the investigation, police found that Chandra Sekhar Sahoo, who earlier worked as a Chartered Accountant with MCL, Talcher, later resigned from the job and opened a company, M/s Evoreach Ventures Pvt. Ltd., in 2021. Chandra Sekhar was the Managing Director, while his wife Jharana was one of the Directors of the company. "Subsequently, he converted the company from Private Limited to Public Limited and floated different unregulated deposit schemes illegally promising high returns to the investors. He was mainly inducing the investors to double the invested amount in 30 months by paying 30 equal returns every month,"

informed EOW sources.

The complainant Jayant Mishra also claimed that, being induced by the accused duo, he and his wife had invested more than Rs 1.05 crore in various schemes of M/s Evoreach Ventures Pvt. Ltd. between February 2022 and February 2024. Chandra Sekhar also collected different amounts from various persons, not only for investment in his company but also for share trading with Octa FX and many other trading companies.

He mentioned to investors that the collected amounts were being reinvested in real estate, retail mart, pearl culture, fish farming and hotel business, among others. However, the investors' money was being deposited both in the account of M/s Evoreach Ventures Pvt. Ltd. as well as in the personal accounts of the Directors.

After paying the promised returns initially for a few months to some investors, the accused Directors closed the company offices at Handidhwa in Talcher and Patia in Bhubaneswar, and subsequently absconded. "Believing in the accused Directors, a large number of investors, not only from Odisha but also from Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, etc., invested huge amounts through the schemes floated by the company," EOW sources said.

Engineer held for misusing govt funds

BHUBANESWAR: Odisha Vigilance on Tuesday arrested Junior Engineer Ratnesh Kumar Pandey for allegedly misappropriating government funds without executing the assigned developmental works. Pandey is accused of misusing funds allocated for "Electrification Project of Street Lights" in Pattamundai block of Kendrapara district during the 2023-24 financial year. Vigilance sources said



Pandey misused Gram Panchayat Developmental Funds and transferred the amount to his personal bank account maintained at Pipili. So far, investigators have gathered evidence indicating that Rs

9.70 lakh was transferred to his personal accounts. The investigation is continuing to ascertain whether additional funds were misappropriated. Odisha Vigilance registered a case against Pandey under different sections of Indian Penal Code.

At the time of his arrest, Pandey was serving as a Junior Engineer in Pattamundai block. He will be forwarded to the Court of Special Judge, Vigilance, Cuttack.

Gangster injured in shootout

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHADRAK

A gangster, wanted in at least 15 criminal cases, was injured in a shootout with the police in Bhadrak district in the early hours of Tuesday. Acting on a tip-off, a six-member police team went to Malgodown area to nab Kamalakant Das alias Budhia, who was on a motorcycle along with his associates. SP Manoj Rout said as the police tried to intercept Budhia, he

allegedly opened fire. "The police personnel retaliated, and Budhia was shot in the right leg. His associate managed to flee the scene on the motorcycle that did not have a registration plate," he said. Budhia, a history sheeter, was taken into custody and admitted to the district hospital. Later, he was shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. A country-made firearm and ammunition were seized from him. Budhia, a resident of



Tudigadia village in Balasore district, is allegedly involved

in several serious offences, including robbery.

Two arrested for sexual assault of minor

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Commissionerate Police on Monday arrested two persons on charges of sexually abusing a minor girl on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. According to a statement issued by the police, a complaint was received from the 17-year-old victim's mother, a resident of Khurda, alleging that her minor daughter and her friend were assaulted and robbed by two youths near Lingipur village while returning from the prominent tourist spot,

Dhauri, on the evening of December 10.

She reported that the miscreants stole a 20-gram gold chain and a 5-gram silver item from the duo. However, she later returned to the Dhauri police station along with her daughter and lodged another complaint alleging that the two persons had also sexually assaulted the minor victim.

Acting on the complaint, the police, along with a scientific team, visited the crime scene and collected evidence. The police later arrested the two accused

and produced them before a court on Monday.

Notably, 188 rape cases have been registered in Bhubaneswar Urban Police District between June 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025. A total of 78 cases involving the rape of minors have been reported in Bhubaneswar during the same period. Three gang-rape cases have also been registered in the city between June 2024 and September 2025.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi recently informed the Odisha Assembly that the

Mahila police station in Bhubaneswar alone recorded 213 cases of atrocities against women in 2024. Similarly, 3,861 rape cases were recorded at various police stations across the State between April 1, 2024, and September 30, 2025, while the police arrested 3,239 persons for their involvement in these cases. The BJP-led State government has been under fire from the Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress over the alleged spike in crimes against women, including gang-rape, rape, and other forms of abuse.



Normalcy returns to Malkangiri

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MALKANGIRI

NORMALCY returned to Malkangiri district on Monday, nearly a week after around 200 villages were damaged in violent clashes in a village, with the district administration fully restoring internet services. Additional District Magistrate Bedabar Pradhan said internet services, suspended across the district on December 8 to curb the spread of rumours and misinformation following the clashes, were restored after the situation improved. The suspension had been extended in phases till 12 noon on Monday.

The administration also withdrew prohibitory orders imposed under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita within a 10-km radius of MV-26 village, where arson incidents were reported on December 7 and December

8. Though the violence was confined to two villages, tension had gripped the entire district, as the incident took the form of a clash between local tribals and Bengali settlers following the recovery of a headless body of a woman on December 4, officials said.

The violence broke out after residents of Rakhelguda village allegedly set ablaze several houses belonging to Bengali residents, forcing hundreds to flee. The headless body of Lake Podiami (51), a woman from the Koya tribe, was recovered from the banks of the Poteru river on December 4, while her head was found six days later at a location about 15 km away.

Officials said the district administration held several rounds of discussions with representatives of the tribal and Bengali communities, following which both sides agreed to maintain peace.

Four held for attack on BJD leader's farmhouse

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha Police in Jajpur district on Monday arrested four persons for their alleged involvement in the attack on the farmhouse of BJD leader Pranab Balabantary on December 14, an officer said. At least 15 persons were injured, five of them seriously, when the supporters of BJP-backed Independent MLA Himanshu Sekhar Sahoo allegedly attacked Balabantary's farmhouse in Jajpur

where they were holding a meeting. Several vehicles, including bikes and cars, were vandalised in the clash, police said.

Protesting over the attack and demanding action against Sahoo's supporters, the BJD leaders staged a dharna near the DGP's camp office here, which began on Sunday evening.

Jajpur SDPO Laxmidhar Swain said the police arrested four persons for their alleged involvement in the attack. Both Sahoo and Balabantary's supporters

have lodged FIRs and counter FIRs at Jenapur police station.

Meanwhile, Sahoo's supporters, who were sitting on a dharna near Jenapur police station, demanding action against Balabantary's supporters, withdrew their agitation, police said.

Odisha's Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan alleged that BJD was politicising the matter. "Our government has ensured action against persons who break laws. The Chief Minister has given clear-cut instructions

to the Police department in this regard." The police are free to take action independently against the accused persons, the minister said, adding: "Some people are engaging in politics over the incident to assert their existence."

Balabantary claimed that this was the fifth such attack on him and his supporters by the supporters of Dharmasala MLA Sahoo in a span of 18 months. "I have no trust in the police in Jajpur district. Therefore, the BJD leaders are sitting

on a dharna in front of DGP camp office here. We demand action against Sahoo's supporters who repeatedly target me and my people," Balabantary told reporters.

Sahoo, on the other hand, alleged that his supporters were attacked by BJD supporters. "BJD has become intolerant after its defeat in the 2024 elections and therefore creating law and order situation. They are making wild allegations through social media posts. The law will take its course," he said.



Employment guarantee scheme must be free from political interferences

Revamping welfare schemes is a good idea, so changes in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, per se, are not objectionable. However, the way it is being done smacks of a desire to score political points. It begins with the name. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is proposed to be replaced with the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Grameen), or VB G RAM Priyanka Gandhi Vadra reacted with “Why are they removing Mahatma Gandhi’s name? He is considered the biggest Indian leader. Whenever such a name changes, a lot of expenditure happens in stationery and

paperwork.” More than that it makes the government a target for its detractors, which is increasingly coming under the influence of Gandhi haters. This does no good to the government under the Sangh Parivar, many of whose members have expressed admiration for Nathuram Godse. Enacted by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2005, the MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of work in villages. The Act has a provision for an unemployment allowance. “MGNREGA is bottom-up, people-centred, demand-driven, self-selecting and rights-based programme. It provides a legal guarantee for wage employment by providing allowances and compensation both in

cases of failure to provide work on demand and delays in payment of wages for work undertaken,” an official document says. The new Bill proposes several changes. It raises the 100-day guarantee to 125. Also, the scheme will no longer be demand-driven. Further, states will bear the financial burden partially. At present, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is entirely a Centrally-sponsored scheme—that is, the Centre provides 100 per cent of wages, while states take care of a small part of the expenses in hiring skilled labour and arranging materials. Under G Ram G, the Centre’s contribution will be limited to 60 per cent, whereas most states will have to spend 40 per cent. For

Northeastern and Himalayan states, this ratio will be 90:10. The new legislation proposes that work under the revamped scheme will not be available during the peak agricultural season. The government will rely on biometrics and geo-tagging for transparency. Non-availability of work during the peak agricultural season will be vehemently protested by the Left and civil society organisations. Communist leaders are no longer as powerful or influential as they were when the MNREGA came into being but Left-leaning NGOs and public intellectuals are still a force to reckon with.

The government will have a tough time tackling their resistance. At any rate, this provision privileges the interests of farmers over labour-

ers; it will be interesting to see how the BJP will face the criticism of being anti-poor. Besides, states, especially those under non-BJP parties, will be loath to share the burden of the rural employment guarantee scheme.

There are also states like Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Punjab, which face tremendous fiscal challenges, and it will be extremely difficult for them to finance the revamped scheme. Therefore, all stakeholders must try to sort out the matter in a spirit of cooperative federalism. The Centre should be willing to accept reasonable amendments to the proposed legislation, and states should rise above party and parochial interests to make the scheme better.

LETTERS

Use AI for maintaining peace

THIS has reference to your editorial ‘AI and militancy make a potent combination’ (Dec 16). It has aptly described about AI having become what it is today, which is comparable to the prevailing gun culture in the US and bullets fired by terrorists. People remain clueless about impending strikes at them. This free for all ready to use technology is fast becoming a peril to the peace-loving society due to phishing and cyberattacks. AI must be used in places where human involvement and vigil against the enemy are needed 24x7 throughout the year.

S Lakshmi, Hyderabad

Manekshaw was one of a kind

The opinion piece on Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw ‘Surrender or get wiped out’, Manekshaw’s ultimatum to Pak is a standout battle cry’ (THI Dec 16) rightly evokes a military mind where wit reinforced, rather than diluted, authority. Manekshaw’s genius lay in combining strategic patience with an unshakeable moral confidence. His famous “I’m always ready, sweetie” was not banter but a declaration rooted in preparedness. Equally prescient was his warning that premature political orders, if issued, “may never be received,” a rare assertion of professional integrity in civil and military relations. His humour, often quoted, was forged in far harsher circumstances. The surrender of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers was not merely a battlefield triumph but an unprecedented strategic leverage. That such leverage failed to deliver a final settlement on Kashmir remains one of India’s costliest diplomatic omissions. Against this legacy, Pakistan’s present attempts to elevate General Munir to Manekshaw’s stature appear aspirational at best. After all, history, not rank or rhetoric, confers stature.

Harsh Pawaria, Rohtak

Name change or a game changer?

THE decision of the Union Government to increase the guaranteed work to 125 days per rural household and focus on four areas like increasing rural connectivity, climate resilience, rural livelihood infrastructure and water security under the newly named rural employment guaranteed Act is a welcome move. But changing the name of the scheme introduced in 2005 by the UPA regime should have been avoided. The NDA government has been gradually reducing its budgetary allocation stating that the scheme had some loopholes. Although an increase to 125 days per household is good, it still falls short of the demand for 200 days work a year. The government should increase the wages and make the ratio of Union and States’ contribution to 9:1 instead of 6:4 as the financial status of most of the States are not good.

A G Rajmohan, Anantapur-515004

‘G RAM G’ brings no cheer

The proposed revised form of MGNREGA, which will be renamed as VB G RAM G Bill, has come up with unlimited promise, but limited guarantee. The nature of supply driven job provision instead of the erstwhile demand will result in cutting the size of resources to the needy people. The proposed ban on the works under the scheme during peak agricultural season would put job seekers at a disadvantageous position regarding their negotiations of daily wages. The minimising of central share from ninety percent to sixty percent for the scheme would burden cash strapped states further. Instead of strengthening the scheme, the Centre has come up with a weakened version when it is aiming for Viksit Bharath.

Dr D V G Sankara Rao, Srikulam

Name spree continues with G RAM G

THE Narendra Modi-led Union Government has decided to replace the world’s largest rural jobs programme MGNAREGA with Viksit Bharat Gurantee Rojgar Ajeevika Machine Gramin (VB- G RAM G) after earlier renaming Raj Bhavan and the PMO, among others. Though the renamed rural jobs programme is aimed at increasing the number days to 125 from 100, it has a paused provision for 60 days in a year. Further it changed the Centre and state ratio of financial commit from 90:10 to 60:40 and capped budget support. This implies that some States must shell from their coffers if they spend more than what is allotted to them. However, app-based attendance, Aadhar linked payments and geotagging workites are welcome as these become part of the law and can enhance transparency and accountability.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru (AP)

thehansreader@gmail.com

BENGALURU ONLINE

Congress will return to power in 2028 as well: CM

BELAGAVI: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday asserted that the Congress will return to power in Karnataka in 2028 with the people’s mandate, just as it did in 2023, and said the BJP would continue to remain in the Opposition.

Speaking in the Legislative Assembly at Suvarna Soukha while responding to questions raised by the Opposition, the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the Congress government enjoys the support of 140 MLAs and that there was no need for the Opposition to create unnecessary speculation.

Referring to a popular proverb, Siddaramaiah remarked that the role of the Opposition seemed to be adding salt to a burning wound. He said that despite repeated provocations, none of the ruling party legislators would be swayed. “The people have blessed me to serve as Chief Minister for five years. We have the strength of 140 MLAs, and the Opposition need not indulge in sour commentary,” he said. The Chief Minister said the Congress government clearly understands the pulse of the people. “Just as the people blessed us in 2023, they will do so again in 2028. The people of Karnataka will never bring the BJP to power,” he asserted.

Siddaramaiah alleged that although the BJP has ruled the state twice, it never came to power with a clear popular mandate.

Read more at <https://epaper.thehansindia.com>

Can CBI contain cybercrime effectively?



RAVULAPATI SEETARAMARAO

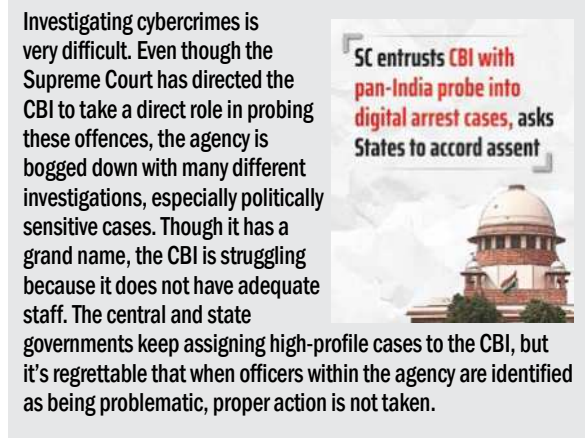
THE Supreme Court’s decision comes as a whiff of fresh air to the countless victims of cyber frauds. It is heartening that courts, when necessary, take responsible and appropriate decisions on key public issues — decisions that governments and police should be making — and even provide guidelines for their implementation. This is a wake-up call for those who uphold democracy and the separation of powers of the duty.

With “digital arrest scams” proliferating across the country, the Supreme Court’s directions to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for carrying out a comprehensive probe into such crimes and criminals — including seeking Interpol’s cooperation and tracing the origins — should be seen as a positive development in criminal justice prudence. The

Court also issued notices to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), directing it to use artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to investigate deep-rooted patterns of funds being moved through various banks in these crimes, so that proper inquiries can be conducted and perpetrators cannot escape. Referring to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, the Supreme Court ordered online intermediaries to cooperate with the CBI and asked them to collect and hand over data and information related to digital arrests to investigative agencies.

The court suggested that states and Union Territories not only set up coordination centers to thoroughly investigate cybercrime but also adopt plans to proactively prevent such offenses. The apex court also directed that the cyber-crime coordination centres be linked with law enforcement agencies so that cybercrimes can be taken up for investigation.

A few days ago, under the leadership of Chief Justice Suryakant, the Supreme Court gave the CBI detailed guidelines on cybercrime—particularly digital arrests—sending a strong signal that tackling



these crimes is being treated as a high priority. The court identified three types of cyber scams. One involves online “digital arrests” where perpetrators, often targeting retired officers, pose as investigative agencies and extort their hard earned money and cause severe psychological distress. Although media reports show these offences are occurring across the country, they have not stopped and gullible people continue to fall prey. The Supreme Court specifically entrusted the CBI with the responsibility of apprehending those who run such scams and carrying out investigations.

Scammers are running another kind of cybercrime: luring victims with attractive-sounding investments, getting

them to deposit large sums, and defrauding them under the guise of “advance tax” or other pretexts. Another widespread cyber-scam involves flooding WhatsApp with ads for supposed part-time jobs, using YouTube to offer “free tasks” for small payments to gain trust, then convincing victims to pay large amounts for “premium” tasks. Many people have encountered these scams. Victims often suffer in silence, not reporting to the police, and some become so distressed that they end their lives. The central government informed the Supreme Court in a note that cybercriminals have already swindled nearly Rs 30 billion. These fraudsters, posing as digital authorities, are extorting hard-earned

money, especially from the elderly. While we celebrate technological progress, fraud enabled by that same progress is increasing day by day. Many victims are left humiliated and ashamed, unable even to confide in family or close ones, and some have been driven to suicide. Investigating cyber-crimes is very difficult. Even though the Supreme Court has directed the CBI to take a direct role in probing these offences, the agency is bogged down with many different investigations, especially politically sensitive cases. Though it has a grand name, the CBI is struggling because it does not have adequate staff. The central and state governments keep assigning high-profile cases to the CBI, but it’s regrettable that when officers within the agency are identified as being problematic, proper action is not taken. Although the CBI is supposed to be an independent agency, it has no control over the recruitment of its personnel, and the central government does not seem concerned about that. The CBI takes officers on deputation from state police departments at various ranks. It appears the agency is even recruiting at the sub-inspector level for its work. But for higher-ranking positions, it inevitably relies on officers from

state and other police departments. Whatever importance an offence may have, handing over cases to the CBI has become routine for both state and central governments. The days when a CBI inquiry was regarded with respect are gone. In the past, CBI cases more often led to convictions; even if investigations were slow, they were conducted methodically.

Ironically, in the US, even the government fears the FBI. Here, however, the widespread charge is that the CBI has become a puppet of the ruling party at the Centre. Previously, despite delays, CBI results were something to be proud of. Now delays have increased, and the perception is that convictions are rare or merely symbolic.

Only if the CBI is truly independent and restructured across fronts can we expect it to solve modern crimes effectively. It is only when training and skills are provided to the agency that the Supreme Court orders can be implemented meaningfully. In this modern age we need systems that plan measures to produce decisive, visible results—not token actions. The CBI must be at the forefront of that effort.

(The writer is a retired IPS officer, who has served as an Additional DGP of Andhra Pradesh)

Saluting VNVK Sastry, a selfless supporter of adivasis



DR MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR

LITTLE boys and girls of a primary school in Nalgonda district once cried inconsolably when their beloved teacher, V N V K Sastry, was transferred. Refusing to accept the loss quietly, they walked nearly ten kilometres to the national highway and staged a protest until their voices were heard. Blessed indeed is the teacher who wins such young hearts.

That instinctive affection followed Dr Sastry wherever he went. A retired senior officer, social anthropologist, and lifelong fieldworker, he habitually won hearts through devotion to duty and an unshakeable concern for the people he served. Recalling their nearly five-decade-long association around 2020, senior journalist and former editor of The Hindu (Hyderabad), Dasu Keshav Rao, summed him up in simple terms: a man who never worked for files alone, but for people.

A full moon night in Srisaalam:

One incident narrated by Keshav Rao captures the essence of Dr Sastry’s life. On a full-moon night in December 1988, when he was heading the Chenchu Project, they were in the core area of the Srisaalam Tiger Sanctuary, where they were treated to welcome festivities that were organised by the Chenchu community. Earlier that day, they had visited

an ashram school where conditions were appalling. The warden was absent, as usual; children were being served rotten rice and tamarind water in the name of sambar. The fine rice meant for the children never reached the school.

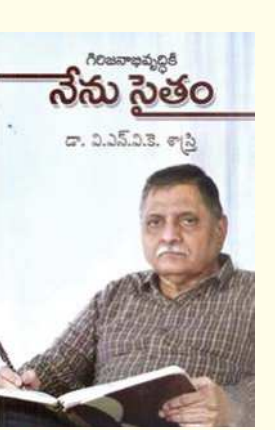
Dr Sastry suspended the absentee warden on the spot and immediately arranged a proper meal—rice, curries, sambar and milk—something the children rarely got to toast. The following morning, as they were driving away, a group of men suddenly intercepted their vehicle, running and panting from a distant hamlet located beyond a hill.

Alarmed, they asked if something was wrong.

“Pani emi ledu saar. Meeru maa penta vacchaaru. Memu adiviki poyaamu. Choodaadaniki vacchaamu. Anthe saar.”

Nothing was wrong, they explained. They had only come to see and thank the officer who had visited their village.

Friends and former colleagues remember him as a gentle intellectual, a disciplined researcher, and an unwavering advocate of Adivasi dignity. He combined rigorous empirical fieldwork with rare human warmth, ensuring that tribal voices found space in policy, scholarship, and public discourse.



A Adilabad specialist:

Reverentially hailed as an Adilabad specialist, the district’s history, culture, and struggles were etched deeply into his scholarship and memory. It is now 44 years since the police firing at Indrevelli, where several Gond tribals were martyred. His work stands as a tribute not only to the Gonds, but also to the people of the district and their rich cultural diversity.

The mighty Godavari, Pranahitha, Penganga, Kaddem, and numerous rivulets flow through dense forests that account for nearly half of the district’s geographical area.

Adilabad also houses a significant tribal population. Here, diversity is strikingly evident: Gonds, Kolams, Nairkods, Lambadas, Pardhans, and Thotis live in a complex and symbiotic relationship with nature.

Images from those years flicker vividly: the Indrevelli firing on the Gonds; police-Naxal encounters in the Aalampally forests; the Tamil Nadu Express accident near Sirpur; the Dakshin Express derailment at Mancherla; and the tireless efforts of committed officers such as VPC. Sastry, CVSK Sarma, KR Kishore, Subrahmanyam, Manohar Prasad, GN Phani Kumar, and VNVK Sastry to improve the

lives of tribal communities. Equally vivid are memories of Prof Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf’s visit to Marlawai to perform the last rites of his wife, Betty, and the vibrant Kelsapur Jatra.

Indrevelli killings:

Three officers from Hyderabad were among the first to reach Indrevelli, where police had opened fire on protesting Gonds the previous evening, killing many and injuring several others. The administration was dazed and uncertain about the actual casualty figures. The three officers trekked through forests and hill-top habitations, braving scorching summer heat and humidity, to meet the injured and the families of the deceased.

Later, when the Collector, AK Goel, informed forest officials at Mancherla that the Indrevelli toll was far higher than the officially stated figure—he did mention the actual number to Keshav Rao—it became clear how deeply the truth had been suppressed.

A pioneering anthropologist

Dr Sastry’s scholarliness traversed anthropology, ecology, tribal history, and literature. His works, published in academic journals and government reports, and available on public platforms, remain foundational texts for students, administrators, and young researchers.

His notable publications are: Andhra Pradesh Tribal Women and Children – An Overview, Changing Patterns in Tribal Societies, Komaram Bheem (Telugu), Sanchara Sravanthi (Telugu), Reports for the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and Training manuals and textbooks, including contributions to undergraduate curricula

Mentor, adviser and advocate:

Even after retirement, Dr Sastry remained intellectually active and socially committed. For nearly two decades, he served as a freelance consultant and guest faculty, Institute of Tribal Development Studies, Hyderabad; contributed to NALSA Tribal Rights training modules for legal services authorities; expert investigator, Centre for Good Governance (World Bank land governance project); Course editor, PG Diploma in Tribal Development Management, NIRD; Member, National Expert Committees on Bauxite Mining (A.P) and Kolleru Lake Sanctuary; senior consultant, APARD and adviser for Andhra Pradesh Community Forest Management Project (World Bank).

His deep understanding of forest rights, land governance, and community institutions made him a sought-after expert across government agencies and academic institutions.

Friends and former colleagues remember him as a gentle intellectual, a disciplined researcher, and an unwavering advocate of Adivasi dignity. He combined rigorous empirical fieldwork with rare human warmth, ensuring that tribal voices found space in policy, scholarship, and public discourse.

His passing away leaves a profound void in anthropology, tribal welfare administration, and development studies. Yet his writings, training programmes, institutions, students, and the countless tribal families, whose lives he touched, stand as his enduring legacy.

(The writer is a former Central Information Commissioner, and presently Professor, School of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad)

POLITICAL ROWDIES HAVE NO PLACE IN AP: NAIDU

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday issued a stern warning against what he described as the rise of "political rowdysim" in the state, declaring that those who commit crimes under the guise of politics have no right to remain in the state. He asserted that his government would show no leniency towards criminal elements, regardless of political affiliation.

Addressing a gathering at the appointment letter distribution ceremony for newly selected 5,757 police constables at the Andhra Pradesh Special Police (APSP) Battalion parade ground in Mangalagiri, the Chief Minister reiterated his resolve to maintain strict law and order. "Those who indulge in rowdysim in this State have no right to be here. I still stand by that statement," he said. At the outset, Naidu announced a significant hike in the stipend for constables undergoing training, increasing it from Rs 4,500 to Rs 12,500



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan distributing appointment orders to a police constable at APSF 6th Battalion Mangalagiri on Tuesday. Home minister V Anitha and DGP Harish Kumar Gupta are also seen.

in a single step. He described the decision as part of the government's commitment to strengthening the police force and boosting morale among new recruits. Reflecting on past incidents, the Chief Minister referred to the murder of former minister Y S Vivekananda Reddy during the 2019 elections, stating that the crime had initially been projected as a natural death. He alleged that crucial

evidence was tampered with and that political opponents sought to shift blame onto him. "If that crime had been detected properly at the time, history would have been different," he remarked, adding that he had since become more vigilant and determined. Naidu said crime rates had come down significantly after the formation of the NDA coalition government and warned of uncompromising action against offences in-

volving women and drugs. He described the ganja menace as a blot on the state's image and said a special task force had been constituted to suppress it "with an iron hand". The Chief Minister also noted that the nature of crime was changing and called upon the police to adopt proactive methods, including extensive use of CCTV surveillance and swift investigation. Stressing the principle of "visible policing and invisible

police," Naidu said technology-driven and professional policing was the need of the hour. He cautioned that some criminals were becoming emboldened due to political patronage and made it clear that the government would not hesitate to act even against its own party members if required. Highlighting employment generation, the Chief Minister said his government had fulfilled its promise of providing jobs by conducting the Mega DSC and police recruitments with transparency. He said a total of 23,676 police jobs had been provided during his tenure, including 5,757 constable appointments in the current phase, and asserted that examinations were conducted without corruption, using digital technology. Naidu said peace and order were prerequisites for attracting investments and development. Deputy chief minister Pawan Kalyan, home minister Vangalapudi Anitha and director general of police Harish Kumar Gupta were present at the event.

A 'north-south divide' over Hindi names for new laws

NEW DELHI

THE row over the renaming of MNREGA has highlighted the Centre's new practice of naming Bills in Hindi, deviating from the tradition of providing a Hindi and an English name for each Bill. A slew of Bills in recent months have come with just Hindi names -- packing in an acronym -- which many have claimed is another attempt at homogenization through language. The practice has resonated especially in the south, where leaders have equated it with another attempt at Hindi imposition. The Congress is already seeing red over naming MNREGA -- a homage to Mahatma Gandhi -- after Lord Ram. While the BJP is jeering that it is another evidence of the party's aversion to Hindu religion and ethos, the use of Hindi names appears to be about to widen the north-south divide. Many MPs and political leaders, meanwhile, have contended that the names in Hindi are difficult to understand. On Monday, as Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan presented

Hindi names so far

THE G Ram G -- which could replace the MNREGA, stands for Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Employment and Livelihood Mission (Rural) Bill. A Bill for reforms in higher education is called Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill. There is also Sabka Bima, Sabki Raksha Bill to amend insurance laws. A Bill for allowing the entry of private sector into the field of atomic energy flips the system -- an English name that produces

a Hindi acronym. The "Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India" has the short name of SHANTI, meaning peace. Earlier, the laws that replaced the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act were called Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Bill. The Bhartiya Vayuyan Vidheyak law has replaced the Aircraft Act of 1934.

the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill in the Lok Sabha, RSP(A) leader NK Premachandran said it was difficult for him to pronounce the name. He contended that this practice of using Hindi names violates Article 348(B) of the Constitution, which says new laws should have names in English. Congress member Jothimani and DMK member T M Selvaganapathi also made their reservations clear. "I see this as an imposition of

Hindi. Already, Tamil Nadu has been deprived of SSA funds just because we have opposed the three-language policy in the National Education Policy-2020," Jothimani said. DMK leader T R Baalu also spoke against "imposition" of Hindi on southern states. Congress's P Chidambaram said the change "is an affront to non-Hindi speaking people and states that have an official language other than Hindi".

Sonia lauds Revanth's efforts to develop TG

Continued from P1

Sonia Gandhi extended her best wishes to Revanth Reddy, expressing her hope that the state will be taken forward on the path of development in line with the Telangana Rising-2047 Vision document. She made these comments when Revanth Reddy met her in Delhi on Tuesday and handed over the Telangana Rising-2047 Vision document. The Chief Minister briefed Sonia Gandhi on the details of the Telangana Rising Global Summit-2025, which was held for two days on December 8, 9 in Telangana. The CM also explained to Sonia Gandhi the welfare schemes being implemented by the state government for the past two years, the measures being taken for the state's development, and future plans.

G RAM G Bill introduced in LS amid Oppn uproar

Continued from P1

Opposition members strongly opposed the proposed legislation at the introduction stage and pressed for sending the Bill to a Parliamentary panel for greater scrutiny. The MPs, including Priyanka Gandhi of the Congress, strongly objected to the "removal" of Mahatma Gandhi's name. Opposing the Bill at the introduction stage, T R Baalu of DMK said Mahatma Gandhi lived in villages and worked for the welfare of the poor there. He said then prime minister Manmohan Singh brought the "noble bill" (MNREGA),

which helped the poorest of the poor get 100 days of employment. The Father of the Nation is being "ridiculed" by the present government, he charged. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra registered her "strong objection" to the draft law, saying MNREGA was a revolutionary Act which was supported by all members of the House when it was passed. "Under this, the poorest of the poor get 100 days of employment. This (present) Bill is weakening the employment rights of the poor. It is against the Constitution," she claimed. The MP from Kerala's Wayanad said the MGNREG Act

has ensured the Centre provides 90 per cent of the funds for the works undertaken under the law. "It will be reduced to 60 per cent now. This will hit the finances of the state governments, especially those waiting for GST compensation, she pointed out. "Under this bill, the Centre's control over the scheme will increase, but its responsibility will come down." Responding to certain remarks by some ruling party MPs, Priyanka said Mahatma Gandhi was not from her family, but he was from every family in the country. She proposed sending the Bill to a Parliamentary panel.

TRUMP SUES BBC FOR \$10BN

Continued from P1

But the publicly funded BBC rejected claims it had defamed him, after Trump threatened legal action. BBC chairman Samir Shah had called it an "error of judgment," which triggered the resignations of the BBC's top executive and its head of news. The speech took place before some of Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol as Congress was poised to certify President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election that Trump falsely alleged was stolen from him. The BBC had broadcast the hourlong documentary -- titled "Trump: A Second Chance?" -- days before the 2024 US presidential election.

Modi's Jordan visit strengthens bilateral ties, 5 MoUs signed

Continued from P1

He also discussed the issues of fertilizer and agriculture; innovation, IT and digital technologies; critical minerals; infrastructure; health and pharma; education and capacity; tourism and heritage; and culture and people-to-people ties. The Prime Minister proposed that the two countries should aim to enhance bilateral trade to \$5 billion over the next 5 years. He also called for collaboration between Jordan's digital payment system and India's United Payments Interface (UPI). Jordan is an important supplier of fertiliser to India, and companies on both sides are in discussions for further substantive invest-

ment in Jordan to meet growing demand for phosphatic fertilizer in India. PM Modi's first full-fledged visit to Jordan marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. India is Jordan's third largest trading partner. Jordan is also a leading supplier of phosphates and potash fertilizers for India. Around 17,500 Indian nationals currently live in Jordan, mostly working in textiles, construction, manufacturing and healthcare. While India exports cereals, frozen meat, petroleum products, animal fodder etc. to Jordan, fertilisers, especially phosphates and potash are imported.

CONG PLANS COUNTRYWIDE PROTEST TODAY

Continued from P1

Congress general secretary K C Venugopal, in a letter to all state Congress presidents, urged them to organise protests at all district headquarters. These protests must be held with portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, symbolising resistance to the erasure of his name and values, and highlight how the proposed law will impact the crores of beneficiaries of MGNREGA, he said in the letter. "The combined attack on Gandhi's legacy, workers' rights and federal responsibility exposes a larger BJP-RSS conspiracy to dismantle rights-based welfare and replace it with charity controlled from the Centre," Venugopal said.

58 lakh names deleted in West Bengal draft SIR 24 LAKH DEAD, 12 LAKH MISSING

NEW DELHI

IN a development likely to raise a political storm in poll-bound West Bengal, a total of 58 lakh names has been deleted from the state's draft voter list after the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) to weed out duplication and errors. Out of these 58 lakh names, 24 lakh have been marked as "dead", 19 lakh as "relocated", 12 lakh as "missing", and 1.3 lakh as "duplicate". The publication of the draft list marks the end of the first phase of the Special Intensive Revision. Those whose names

have been incorrectly excluded from the draft list can now raise objections and request corrections. After addressing these objections, the final list will be published in February next year. The announcement of the Assembly polls in Bengal is expected after the publication of the final list. SIR was last conducted in Bengal in 2002. Trinamool MP Saugata Roy termed the deletion of 58 lakh names "injustice". "This is the BJP's conspiracy to remove legitimate voters

from Bengal's list. We have set up voter assistance booths and we will help them submit forms to include their names in the voter list," he said. The publication of the draft list is likely to intensify the political uproar in Bengal over SIR. Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee has opposed the exercise and accused the Centre and the Election Commission of using SIR to delete the names of lakhs of eligible voters ahead of the election.

Sydney attacker had Hyd roots: TG police

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

SAJID Akram, one of the two terrorists who killed 15 people in a gruesome mass shooting at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, recently, hailed from Hyderabad, the Telangana police said on Tuesday. Director General of Police (DGP) B Shivadhar Reddy said in a statement that the attackers were identified as Sajid Akram (50) and his son Naveed Akram (24). Further investigation in this regard

▶▶ SAJID AKRAM MIGRATED TO AUSTRALIA 27 YEARS AGO
▶▶ HE WAS SHOT DEAD BY OZ POLICE DURING THE BEACH ATTACK



is being carried out by Australian investigators who described the attack as a terrorist act inspired by the Islamic State group. Sajid Akram was

The DGP said that Sajid Akram is originally from Hyderabad. He completed his B Com degree in Hyderabad and migrated to Australia in search of employment, approximately 27 years ago, in November 1998. He subsequently married Venera Grosso, a European origin woman before settling permanently in Australia. They have one son, Naveed (one of the two attackers) and one daughter. Akram carries an Indian passport as on date and his son Naveed and

daughter were born in Australia and are Australian citizens. As per information available from his relatives in India, Sajid Akram had limited contact with his family in Hyderabad over the past 27 years. He visited India on six occasions after migrating to Australia, primarily for family-related reasons such as property matters and visits to his elderly parents. It is understood that he did not travel to India even at the time of his father's demise.

Global aviation workforce should have 25% Telugus: Lokesh

Continued from P1

"The real bottleneck for the rapid growth of the aviation sector is inadequate skilled manpower. The EduCity is our response to that challenge as it creates a world-class ecosystem that integrates education, research, industry, and on-the-job training," he explained. Elaborating on the AAD EduCity further, Lokesh said: "This is not about creating another university. It is about building an ecosystem that supplies job-ready professionals, cutting-edge research and globally benchmarked skills." The Andhra Pradesh government has committed to developing the core EduCity infrastructure within 12 months with phased onboarding of global academic and industry partners thereafter. "With aviation demand exploding globally, countries that invest early in talent ecosystems will lead the next phase of growth. Through the EduCity, AP

positions India not just as a large aviation market, but as a global supplier of aviation talent and innovation," the Minister stressed. In alignment with its massive philanthropic support for public education infrastructure, the MANSAS Trust provided the land for EduCity. Acknowledging the significant contribution of Governor of Goa and MANSAS Trust Chairman P Ashok Gajapathi Raju and Vizianagaram MLA Aditi Gajapathi Raju, Lokesh emphasised that it would serve as a major endeavour that shapes India's aviation future for decades. The AAD EduCity project draws inspiration from global benchmarks such as Aéro Montréal (Canada), Washington-Seattle Aerospace Cluster (USA) and Aerospace Valley (France), where integrated ecosystems have translated talent and research into global competitiveness, according to a release.

IPL auction : Uncapped players strike gold!

Continued from P1

Seasoned South African opener Quinton de Kock returned to his old base Mumbai Indians for a base price of Rs 1 crore. Spencer Johnson remained unsold, while Anrich Nortje, who came with a base price of Rs 2 crore,

was enlisted by LSG, who opened the bidding for the South Africa pacer. A total of 359 players -- 246 Indians and 113 overseas players -- are part of the mini auction pool with the 10 franchises bidding to fill up a maximum of 77 slots, including 31 reserved for foreign players.

YCP misleading Centre on PPP medical colleges: CM

Continued from P1

The Chief Minister asserted that the PPP model is a globally accepted mechanism that is being implemented across sectors, including healthcare, to expand capacity and improve service delivery. He said the model would help increase the number of medical seats while ensuring access to corporate-level healthcare for economically weaker sections. Naidu also launched a sharp personal attack on former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, alleging the latter's disregard for judicial processes. He said Jagan Mohan Reddy frequently skipped court appearances in cases related to alleged illegal assets and raised objections even when Supreme Court directions were being implemented. Such conduct, he remarked, reflected a lack of respect for constitutional institutions. Referring to the TTD Parakamani theft case, the Chief Minister recalled that the High Court had expressed concern over attempts to treat it as an ordinary offence. He said offerings made by devotees carry deep religious sentiment and welcomed the court's suggestion to adopt artificial intelligence-based systems for the counting and management of temple donations. On governance and administration, Naidu said the government's practice

of issuing appointment letters to newly selected candidates in the presence of their family members was intended to instill a sense of pride and responsibility. He noted that this approach, earlier followed during DSC recruitments, is now being adopted for police constable appointments under the 'Yuvagalam' programme. Turning to party affairs, the Chief Minister said he had held discussions with three-member committees on district-level organisational matters. He indicated that objections related to district party president appointments would be reviewed and resolved shortly. He also underlined the need to strengthen women's representation in party leadership, stating that the current 28.4 per cent representation should be increased to 30 per cent in view of possible future reservations. Naidu said the list of district party presidents would be announced within two days, followed by the declaration of the state committee before the end of the month. He added that organisational performance would be reviewed every three months and warned that non-performing office-bearers would be replaced, stressing the need for strict adherence to the party calendar from January onwards.

Continued from P1

A 10-member national and international expert advisory team on public health participated in the meeting virtually. Naidu said the government would focus on preventive healthcare by leveraging digital tools and artificial intelligence, rather than merely treating diseases after they occur. He said digitalisation of health records would help identify and analyse the top ten diseases affecting the population and significantly reduce medical expenses. The Chief Minister asked the expert panel to help showcase Andhra Pradesh's digital healthcare initiatives at the upcoming Global AI Convention in Mumbai. Referring to the success of the Mustabu programme aimed at improving personal hygiene among tribal students, the Chief Minister said the NDA government was committed to building a "healthy, wealthy and happy Andhra Pradesh". He stressed that effective implementation

at the grassroots level was critical to the success of any policy. Interacting with the expert panel, former WHO chief scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan underlined the importance of nutrition, availability of doctors and nurses, and the impact of pollution on public health. UNAIDS founding Executive Director Peter Piot said public health should not be viewed purely as a medical issue, as it was influenced by multiple social and environmental factors. Former Union secretary Aarti Ahuja highlighted the need for root-cause analysis of diseases and expressed concern over the rising number of dialysis cases among youth due to pollution. Prof Yik-Ying Teo of the National University of Singapore said AI and digital health records could help deliver more efficient healthcare services. Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health's Margaret Elizabeth Kruk noted Andhra Pradesh's effective utilisation

of the Hepatitis vaccine. Khosla Labs founder Srikanth Nadhamuni said AI-enabled health services were becoming central to public healthcare delivery, while NABH Chairperson Dr Rizwan Koita observed that Andhra Pradesh was emerging as a hub for digital healthcare. AIIMS Delhi's Dr Nikhil Tandon stressed early diagnosis and risk assessment, and AIG Hospitals Chairman Dr D Nageweswara Reddy said health education from a young age was essential. Gates Foundation India Country Director Archana Vyas said an action plan would be prepared based on expert recommendations, including the formation of a health secretariat to monitor public health outcomes. Health Minister Satyakumar Yadav said the expert inputs would guide the state's healthcare reforms. The Chief Minister directed officials to hold such expert consultations every six months.

PARENTING

Love after 40: Not just romance, a practical support system for child's life pressures



ASKARI JAFFER

In your 20s, love is all about taking chances just because the moment felt right and the luxury to make mistakes. But, dating

in 40s is a different energy. It is more stable, calm, and grounded in life experience. By this age, people have lived enough to know what truly matters and what's merely noise. Young people imagine

love is like two pieces of a puzzle that complete each other. But mature daters know better; it is two complete individuals choosing to support and help each other grow.

In the last few years, love has taken on a whole new meaning for divorced, separated, and widowed singles with kids. It is not only about romance; it has become a real source of support. When life is a full

Love after 40 isn't about chasing sparks—it's about building stability, understanding, and shared strength. For single parents and those starting over, companionship becomes a support system, not just a romance. In this phase of life, love means choosing a partner who stands with you through real-world pressures, every day

plate, with kids to care for, aging parents, financial responsibilities, and society's prying eyes, having a companion who is there by your side through the thick and thin brings more than just joy; it brings the kind of strength everyone deserves. Carry-

ing all that burden alone is not easy; the right partner is not just a date or a romantic presence. They are the teammate who understands and shares that weight.

The dating journey after 40, one that is often seeking a second chance, brings a different kind of magic.

What was once viewed with suspicion is now beginning to be socially accepted, to the extent that specific apps have been built for people seeking love at a more mature age. Standard dating apps fall short for people over 40. At this stage, especially for single parents, dating can be very different. It is not just swiping for fun and sparks; the checklist is rewritten, priorities shift, and what truly matters is finding a person who understands that life can throw a curveball at any point; they want maturity, reliability, and compatibility. 38% of daters beyond 40

look for emotional stability over the thrill alone; someone who will patiently listen without rushing to "fix" things, because sometimes you just need to be heard. A partner who doesn't judge their past or understands that, on most days, their child will come before everything. By the time you're 40, romance isn't about big declarations anymore; it's found in small, steady efforts.

Rebound's Founder and CEO, Ravi Mittal, added, "Love for single parents, or daters above 40, is definitely more than just romance. It's an ecosystem of support. Surveys show single parents are often looking for a match who understands that their plans depend on their kids' school schedule and even mood, and they might be extremely thorough during interactions because introducing someone new to a child's life comes with a lot of hope and fear." 3 in 5 daters with kids claim that finding a suitable partner who values maturity and respects their responsibilities is much easier through dating apps for second chances because these platforms tackle the realities of taking a second attempt at love, instead of brushing them under the rug.



Tamannaah Bhatia shares her desi-style of enjoying tea in private

Actress Tamannaah Bhatia, on Tuesday, gave a glimpse into her personal moments by sharing how she enjoys her tea in true desi style.

Taking to her Instagram handle, the 'Baahubali' actress posted a candid video of herself, where she is seen enjoying tea in desi style—served in a plate. The post highlights how the actress takes a mindful pause at the start of her week, savouring her tea and embracing a calm, unhurried start to the day. The text on the clip read, "I didn't rush my Monday. I eased into it. These minutes are private until now. Just me and tea. And time." The clip features Tamannaah at her candid best, wearing a white night suit and eating soaked nuts before enjoying her tea. She added the trending track "Tame Impala" from Dracula as the background score.

Tamannaah Bhatia often shares updates about both her personal life and professional projects on social media. Recently, she opened up about portraying yesteryear actress Jayashree in V Shantaram's upcoming biopic. In her latest Instagram

post, Tamannaah reflected on how the experience taught her far more than she had anticipated. She described stepping into the shoes of the iconic star as a deeply enriching journey.

Sharing a series of behind-the-scenes videos of her transformation into Jayashree, the 'Lust Stories 2' actress wrote, "Every bit of love that we have received on the poster of Jayashree ji for V Shantaram, is an ode to her. Ode to her grace, and her legacy. Thank you." "Stepping into this world has already been intimate and deeply meaningful, even on the early days. V Shantaram's vision reshaped cinema long before its time. Becoming Jayashree has taught me more than I had imagined, and I look forward to everything this journey will continue to bring."

Tamannaah Bhatia will be seen alongside actor Siddhant Chaturvedi in the upcoming biopic. Directed by Abhijeet Shirish Deshpande, the film titled V Shantaram is a historical biographical drama that celebrates the life, legacy, and cinematic revolution sparked by one of India's most visionary storytellers.

Here's how Alia Bhatt brings weekend vibes to a weekday

Actress Alia Bhatt showed how to keep things effortlessly stylish by bringing weekend vibes to an otherwise ordinary weekday.

Taking to her Instagram handle, the 'Raazi' actress, on Tuesday, posted a series of her stylish photos and videos from a recent award function. She simply captioned the post, "weekend wali vibe weekday pe." In the images, Alia, dressed in a black dress, can be seen striking different poses for the camera. The first close-up shot gives a glimpse of the actress's subtle makeup, while in the others she is seen posing sensuously for the lens.

December 15, Alia Bhatt made a

glamorous appearance at the star-studded Filmfare OTT Awards 2025, held in Mumbai. The 'Student of the Year' actress turned heads in a striking all-black Hervé Léger dress from 1993. Alia's black gown stands out with a plunging sweetheart neckline and wide halter-style straps.

Alia's stunning appearance at the Filmfare OTT Awards 2025 followed another major milestone in her career. The actress was recently honoured with the Golden Globes Horizon Award at the fifth edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

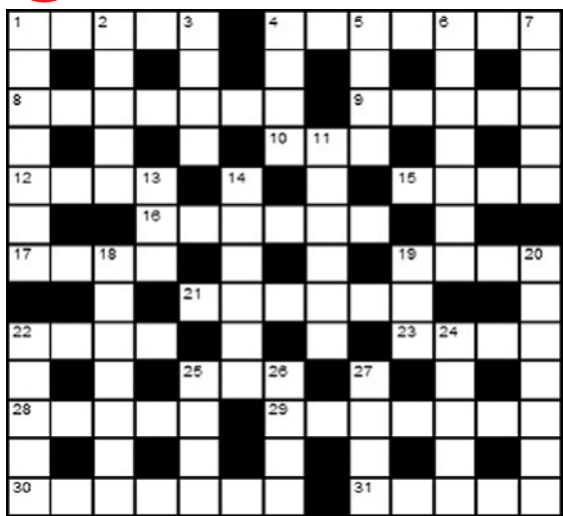
Speaking about receiving the

honour, she said, "The Golden Globes are an iconic part of the global awards universe and I am delighted to be part of it and look forward to continuing my career in telling more stories of powerful and deserving women."

On the professional front, Alia Bhatt is set to star in the upcoming film "Alpha," the seventh installment in the Yash Raj Films Universe. Helmed by director Shiv Rawail, the movie also features Sharvari and Bobby Deol. Produced under the Yash Raj Films banner, "Alpha" is scheduled for release on April 17, 2026, and is anticipated to be a landmark in India's female-led action cinema.



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Damp (5)
- Ennui (7)
- Splash a liquid (7)
- Surpass (5)
- Sarovar : bird sanctuary in Gujarat ? (3)
- Sporting side (4)
- Very small (4)
- Tear away forcibly (6)
- One pound sterling (4)
- Vice president, in short (4)
- One of the Fates (6)
- Polish (4)
- Ex-India all-rounder Ali (4)
- Fifty two in Roman numerals (3)
- Location of ancient Samos (5)
- Ex-P.M. Lal Bahadur (7)
- Scott's famous novel (7)
- It may develop when things don't seem to be going smoothly (1,4)

DOWN

- Saqlain : Former Pakistan off-spinner (7)
- Ex-Mrs. Trump (5)
- Ballet skirt (4)
- Farm building (4)
- Monetary unit of Cambodia (4)
- Deterioration (7)
- Lactate (5)
- Possessions and resources (6)
- Insane (3)
- Centres of atoms (6)
- Spanish princess (7)
- Voice of America, in short (3)
- It's proof is in the eating (7)
- Small yeast-raised pancake (5)
- The conductor's wand (5)
- Plaster base (4)
- Words of comprehension (1,3)
- Japan's first capital (4)



Solution to December 16

SUDOKU



Solution to December 16

Sameera Reddy shares her go-to nature's real electrolyte drink for gut detoxification

Actress Sameera Reddy shared her go-to natural electrolyte drink, praising its detoxifying and gut-friendly properties.

Describing it as "refreshing, detoxifying, and gut-friendly," she highlighted how banana stem water can help flush out toxins, reduce bloating, and support healthy digestion—all without any complicated steps. Sameera explained that packed with high fiber, this natural drink not only aids digestion and weight management but also helps maintain blood sugar balance, healthy cholesterol levels, and kidney health. The 'De Dana Dan' actress also shared a method to prepare this gut-friendly detox drink. She recommends starting with fresh banana stem and cumin seeds. Reddy then advises blending the chopped stem and seeds together, then straining the mixture to extract the juice. She revealed that the drink is best consumed fresh in the morning on an empty stomach, allowing its cleansing and digestive benefits to kick in naturally. Sharing the video on Instagram, she wrote, "Refreshing, detoxifying, and gut-friendly! This simple banana stem water helps flush toxins, reduce bloating, and keep digestion happy—without any fuss. Comment 'DETOX' for more mindful recipes from our inner circle wellness community Benefits: High-fiber detox drink that aids digestion & weight management Supports blood sugar balance & healthy cholesterol Natural diuretic—great for kidney health & BP control. Drink fresh, preferably in the morning on an empty stomach. Light, cleansing,



and naturally healing—perfect for daily gut reset." Sameera Reddy often shares recipes for natural and wholesome treats on social media. Earlier, she had revealed the recipe for her healthy, chocolatey, and guilt-free cookies. She has also been sharing recipes using coconut. In terms of work, Sameera is gearing up for the release of her upcoming horror-thriller 'Chimni,' where she plays in the role of Kali. The film follows a grieving mother living in the haunted Chanderi palace, where a malevolent spirit has taken hold of her daughter.



In line with the national vision of 'Sahakar se Samridhhi' to deepen and expand the cooperative movement, Ladakh has adopted the Model Bye-Laws for PACS, enabling them to undertake over 25 diversified business activities while enhancing transparency, accountability, and governance -**Amit Shah**, Union Cooperation Minister

BIZ BRIEFS

Film event in Hyderabad

The Niri9 International Film Festival is set to return with its third edition in Hyderabad on January 10 and 11, a moment of cultural convergence between the North Eastern region and Telangana. This year, the festival received 176 film entries across categories, including 40 feature films, 65 short films, 56 shorter films, and 15 documentaries. Dr Junmoni Devi Khaund, Festival Director, said: "This event is not just a festival; it's a movement of stories, cultures, and connections."

Volvo Car's initiative

Volvo Car India announced an expansion of its sustainability-driven Reverse Project with the launch of a new plantation initiative at Matri Van along the Gurugram - Faridabad Highway. Under its CSR initiative for, the company will support the plantation of over 20,000 native trees over 20 acres of Aravalli land, as part of the Community Barren Land Transformation Project, led by SankalpTaru Foundation in partnership with the Haryana Forest Department.

ETS hosts event in Hyd

ETS, the global leader in educational assessment and creator of the TOEFL iBT test, hosted a TOEFL Experience Days event in Hyderabad on December 16. The event offered a look at the enhanced TOEFL iBT launching on January 21. Sidnei Rodrigues de Souza, Executive Director, said: "TOEFL is evolving to better reflect how students communicate in real academic settings. We are updating the test content and structure, introducing AI-powered scoring for greater precision."

Ujjivan SFB's Ivory program

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank launched Ivory, a program designed for India's mass affluent segment. The offering integrates digital banking with curated experiences, including, entertainment, and dining benefits. Hitendra Jha, Head-Retail Liabilities, Ujjivan SFB, said: "Today's emerging mass affluent segment continues to face barriers in accessing quality banking services. Many encounter high balance requirements, inconsistent service delivery, and generic reward programs that do not align with their lifestyles."

NSE partners with HCLTech

NSE Academy Ltd., (NAL), a subsidiary of the National Stock Exchange of India Ltd., has partnered with HCLTech, to deliver a series of joint certificate programs in technology and finance, aimed at equipping students and professionals with future-ready skills in BFSI and fintech across India and the Middle East and South Asia (MESA) region. This partnership will enable organizations and universities to nurture a future-ready workforce by providing access to industry-leading, ready-to-deploy programs.

Rupee falls 23 paise to settle at fresh record low of 91.01/\$

The rupee has fallen from 90 a dollar to 91 in the last 10 trading sessions

MUMBAI

THE rupee fell 23 paise against the greenback to settle at a new all-time low of 91.01 (provisional) on Tuesday, as the government in the Rajya Sabha attributed the sliding value of domestic currency to widening trade deficit and the ongoing developments related to the India-US trade agreement.

During the session, the local unit lost 36 paise from its previous close against the greenback to hit its lowest-ever level of 91.14, but regained some ground later in the day. Even a weaker greenback and a sharp decline in global crude oil prices could not prevent the slide in the local unit, forex traders said.

The rupee has fallen from 90 a dollar to 91 in the last 10 trading sessions. The unit has slipped 1 per cent against the greenback in the past five sessions alone.

The issue was brought up in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, and Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said, "During the current



financial year, the depreciation of the Rupee has been influenced by the increase in trade deficit and likely prospects arising from the ongoing developments in India's trade agreement with the US, amid relatively weak support from the capital account."

"The depreciation of currency is likely to enhance export competitiveness, which in turn impacts the economy positively. On the other hand, depreciation may raise the prices of imported goods. However, the overall impact of exchange rate depreciation on domestic prices depends on the extent of the pass-through of international

commodity prices to the domestic market," he said.

Citing data, Chaudhary said that this year the rupee opened at 90.87 against the greenback and traded in the range of 90.76 to 91.14 before settling at 91.01 (provisional), down 23 paise from its previous close.

On Monday, the local unit settled at 90.78 against the US dollar, registering a loss of 29 paise from its previous close. "Rupee made a new lifetime low as dollar buying continued with news that (US President) Donald Trump has not agreed to the new trade proposals from India.

"The value of the INR is market-determined, with no target or specific level or band. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regularly monitors the foreign exchange market and intervenes in situations of excess volatility. Further, the RBI monitors key developments across the globe which may have an impact on USD-rupee exchange rate," the minister said.

According to forex traders, the rupee might even cross the 92 per dollar-mark this month. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.87 against the greenback and traded in the range of 90.76 to 91.14 before settling at 91.01 (provisional), down 23 paise from its previous close.

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Gold snaps 4-day record rally, drops ₹1,700

NEW DELHI: Snapping the four-day record rally, gold prices declined by Rs 1,700 to Rs 1,35,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday as investors booked profits amid weak global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had surged by Rs 4,000 to touch an all-time high of Rs 1,37,600 per 10 grams on Monday. The metal rose by Rs 6,000 over the previous four days, trading at record highs. "Gold prices witnessed profit booking and remained volatile, with the yellow metal slipping towards the \$ 4,275 level in global markets and staying under pressure," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said. Echoing sentiments, Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said, "Domestic gold prices also softened, curtailing a four-day advance. These losses were, however, notably mitigated by the persistent weakness in the Indian Rupee which quoted at a record low level".

In the local bullion markets, silver prices also depreciated by Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,98,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes).

Better regulatory oversight, ease of compliance via reforms: FM

Says FDI limit in insurance sector was increased from 26% to 49% in 2015, 74% in 2021 and now to 100%

NEW DELHI: FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the insurance reforms brought in through a bill in Parliament will grant greater access to insurance for the people, have better regulatory oversight and ensure ease of compliance. Moving the "The Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025" for consideration of the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman said the draft legislation was aimed at bringing transparency, ease of compliance mandates and increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector.

The minister said that the FDI limit in the insurance sector was increased from 26 per cent to 49 per cent in 2015, 74 per cent in 2021 and now proposed to 100 per cent.

"These have brought in a greater push for the insurance sector. The number of insurers has risen from 53 in 2014 to 74 now," Sitharaman said. She said insurance penetration has improved from 3.3 per cent in 2014-15 to 3.8 per cent now and insurance density or the average insurance premium paid per



person in a year has jumped from \$55 in 2014 to \$97 now.

The minister said the total insurance premium paid has risen from Rs 4.15 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 11.93 lakh crore and assets under management increased from Rs 24.2 lakh crore to Rs 74.4 lakh crore. "We are now looking for greater penetration, better regulatory oversight, easier compliance and more FDI," Sitharaman said. The minister said over the year, an ecosystem has developed in the country for providing greater access for people to insurance.

Sitharaman said that various government schemes such as the PM Fasal Bima Yojana and the Jana Arogya Yojana have brought poor people under the insurance umbrella, a move that has helped immensely during the Covid pandemic.

Vivo's unveils Switch-off campaign

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

VIVO India has launched the seventh edition of its #SwitchOff campaign, it also unveiled a Digital Video Commercial which aims to bring the message to the emotional centre of every Indian home- the dining table. According to the 2025 Switch Off Study, dinner is the strongest daily bonding moment, with 72 per cent of children spending the most time with parents at dinner and 91 per cent saying conversations improve when phones are set aside.

GeetajChannana, Head-Corporate Strategy, Vivo India, said: "Every family remembers a time when dinner was the happiest pause in the day, a moment where conversations flowed without interruption and everyone felt heard. Today, those moments disappear quietly, not because we don't care, but because our attention is constantly pulled away."

Channanaadded: "The Switch Off campaign was created to remind people that meaningful relationships deserve undivided attention."

GDP growth set to accelerate to 7.5% in FY27: Report

MUMBAI

INDIA'S economic growth is expected to pick up pace and remain strong in the coming years, with GDP likely to expand at 7.5 per cent in FY27, even as inflation stays under control, according to Axis Bank's Economic Outlook 2026 on Tuesday.

The report, authored by Neelkanth Mishra, Chief Economist at Axis Bank and Head of Global Research at Axis Capital, says India can grow faster than its long-term trend without triggering inflationary pressures.

This is because the economy still has enough unused capacity, or slack, which allows growth to rise smoothly. Axis Bank expects India to grow faster than most global peers and even above market expectations, making it the world's fastest-growing large economy.

The strong outlook is supported by easing pressure from government finances, lower borrowing costs, and supportive monetary policy.

The report also highlights that ongoing structural reforms and regulatory easing will help sustain growth over



the medium term.

A key driver of this growth will be a fresh rise in investment activity. With company balance sheets in better shape, the cost of capital remaining low, and factories running at high capacity, businesses are likely to increase capital expenditure in FY27. This new investment cycle is expected to further strengthen economic momentum.

The bank's economists also see steady gains in productivity and a revival in capital formation, which together support a long-term trend growth rate of around 7 per cent.

Even with growth moving above this trend, inflation is expected to remain well behaved.

Axis Bank forecasts headline inflation at around 4 per cent in FY27. While food prices may see some rebound, underlying price pressures remain muted.

Quintrans garners \$750K in pre-seed funding round

NEW DELHI

CAPITAL-A, a specialist venture capital fund for manufacturing and deep tech, has led a \$750,000 'pre-seed' round in a deep tech engineering startup, Quintrans. The round also saw participation from Sumeet Kabra of RR Global, SanchiConnect, AIC-Pinnacle and other strategic partners, alongside ecosystem support from existing partner IIMA Ventures. "Capital-A, India's specialist venture capital fund for manufacturing and deep tech, has led a \$750,000 pre-seed round in Quintrans, a deep tech engineering startup developing India-built direct-drive linear motion systems for industrial automation, robotics and equipment manufacturing," according to a release. An industry terminology used by founders, investors and venture capitalists (VCs), pre-seed typically refers to funding stage before the seed round, when a company is focused on the prototype, and Proof of Concept (PoC).

SkyWalker ortho robotic system launched at Arete Hospitals

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

ARETE Hospitals, Hyderabad, has become the first medical institution in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to introduce the SkyWalker Orthopedic Robotic System in collaboration with US headquartered MicroPort Orthopedics Inc., for knee replacement surgery, marking a significant milestone in the region's healthcare landscape.

"Arete Hospitals has always been committed to integrating innovations that make a real difference for our patients," said Dr Pavan Kumar Reddy, Medical Director & HOD- Critical Care, Arete Hospitals. "The launch of this system is another milestone in our pursuit of clinical excellence at Arete Hospitals, and we are proud to be the first to bring this technology to the twin states. Arete Hospitals is built on the premise of positivity, efficiency & proficiency and advanced medical technology adoption is at our core" added Dr Reddy.

Dr Prabhat Reddy Lakireddi, Director - Orthopaedics Arthroscopy, Sports

Injuries, Robotic & Joint Replacement Surgery, Arete Hospitals, Hyderabad, said, "The system gives us real-time data for joint line reconstruction and ligament balancing, while the NitrX Evolution implant provides remarkable stability and function. We've seen smoother recoveries, better range of motion, and excellent functional outcomes in our initial cases with SkyWalker".

The system is designed to work with the NitrX Evolution implant, enabling accuracy and sub-millimeter precision in knee joint alignment. This combination provides personalised outcomes, faster recovery, and longevity. Dr Mukesh Parmar, Senior Director and General Manager, South Asia, MicroPort Orthopedics, said, "The choice of implant is as critical as the robotic platform itself, because it stays with the patient for life. The new implant has shown excellent clinical outcomes, and when paired with the system, it creates a powerful combination that empowers surgeons and delivers customised and consistently favourable patient outcomes."

ITC gets nod to acquire Birla's Century pulp paper biz

NEW DELHI: Fair trade regulator CCI on Tuesday cleared conglomerate ITC Ltd's proposal to acquire the pulp and paper business of Aditya Birla Real Estate Ltd (ABREL) for Rs 3,498 crore. The development came after ABREL in March this year announced that its board has approved the execution of the business transfer agreement for the divestment of the pulp and paper undertaking situated in Lalkuan, Uttarakhand, by way of a slump sale to ITC. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) said it has approved the proposed deal. "Commission approves acquisition of paper and pulp manufacturing business of Aditya Birla Real Estate Limited by ITC Limited," the regulator said in a post on X.

Established in 1984 at Lalkuan (Nainital, Uttarakhand), pulp and paper undertaking Century Pulp and Paper (CPP) of ABREL is a well-established player in the Indian paper industry with an installed capacity of 4.8 lakh metric tonnes per annum. In March, ABREL said, "The transfer of the business will be for a lump-sum cash consideration of Rs 3,498 crore, to be paid by ITC to ABREL."

India's long-term outlook remains positive, indices to remain near all-time high in 2025

Valuations are stretched across large parts of the market, smaller stocks are under pressure, and investors are becoming increasingly selective about where they deploy capital

NEW DELHI: India's long-term outlook remains firmly positive, underpinned by favourable demographics, policy continuity, rapid urbanisation and sustained productivity gains, a report said on Tuesday. As 2025 draws to a close, Indian equity markets are sending mixed signals. Benchmark indices remain close to record highs, but beneath the surface, the picture is far more nuanced.

Smallcase Managers, in its report, said that valuations are stretched across large parts of the market, smaller stocks are under pressure, and investors are becoming increasingly selective about where they deploy capital. The managers noted that as US growth moderates and the Federal Reserve eventually pivots, interest-rate differentials should increasingly favour Emerging Markets, with India standing out as the most attractive destination.

Dhiren Shah, smallcase manager, Co-Founder, Kamayakya, said: "We re-



main bullish on Indian equities in 2026, with a clear focus on stock selection rather than index levels. While public capex has driven growth so far, the next phase will come from a revival in private capex as corporate balance sheets strengthen and capacity utilisation rises, setting up the next leg of India's structural growth."

India's macro backdrop remains constructive, aided by moderating inflation, the beginning of a rate-cut cycle and continued policy focus on manufacturing, infrastructure and exports. The report expects the economy to

grow at a steady 6-7 per cent in real terms, with inflation anchored closer to 4 per cent, implying a phase of more stable, though slightly lower, nominal growth compared to the previous decade.

"Tariff-related noise from the US, particularly around a potential Trump return, is more of a sentiment and liquidity risk for India than a structural one. It can tighten global liquidity, lift volatility and lead to temporary FII outflows, but it does not change India's core growth story," said Vivek Sharma, smallcase manager, Investment Head, Estee Advisors.

Markets remain in red amid weak cues

Persistent foreign fund outflows, a weak rupee and sluggish global market trends dented investor sentiment

NEGATIVE MOMENTUM

- BSE Sensex fell 533.50pts (-0.63%) to 84,679.86
- NSE Nifty dropped 167.20pts (-0.64%) to 25,860.10
- FII's offloaded ₹1,468.32 cr; DII's bought ₹1,792.25 cr



MUMBAI: Benchmark Sensex tumbled 533.50 points and the broader Nifty declined to the 25,860 level on Tuesday as persistent foreign fund outflows, a weak rupee and sluggish global market trends dented investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 533.50 points or 0.63 per cent to settle at 84,679.86. During the day, it dived 592.75 points or 0.69 per cent to 84,620.61. The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 167.20 points or 0.64 per cent to a week's low of 25,860.10.

Among Sensex firms, Axis Bank tanked the most by 5.03 per cent. Eternal, HCL Tech, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement and Bajaj Finance were also among the laggards. However, Titan, Bharti Airtel, Mahindra & Mahindra and Asian Paints were among the gainers.

"Continued INR weakness to fresh record lows, driven by persistent FII outflows and subdued global sentiments, dragged domestic markets into negative territory," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments

Limited, said.

The rupee breached the record low level of 91 against the US dollar and hit 91.14 in intra-day trade due to foreign fund outflows on Tuesday. The BSE midcap gauge dropped 0.78 per cent, and the smallcap index dipped 0.69 per cent. Among sectoral indices, realty tanked 1.36 per cent, followed by bankex (1.03 per cent), commodities (0.91 per cent), IT (0.90 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.86 per cent), financial services (0.83 per cent) and metal (0.82 per cent). Telecommu-

nication and consumer durables were the only gainers. A total of 2,519 stocks declined while 1,651 advanced and 158 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"A risk-averse mood dominated trading as the rupee's breach of the 91 level against the US dollar raised macro concerns, while weakness across Asian markets added to global uncertainty. This combination prompted investors to reduce risk, triggering broad-based profit-booking, particularly across realty, financial services, metal and IT names," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,468.32 crore on Monday, while domestic institutional investors (DII's) bought stocks worth Rs 1,792.25 crore, according to exchange data. On Monday, the Sensex dipped 54.30 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at 85,213.36. The Nifty edged lower by 19.65 points or 0.08 per cent to 26,027.30.

Launching the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 Trophy Tour with DP World above the Ram Setu, a site steeped in history, symbolism, and shared cultural identity, sets an inspiring tone as we build towards this landmark event

-Jay Shah, ICC Chairman

U-19 Asia Cup

India maul Malaysia by 315 runs

Abhigyan Kundo's historic unbeaten double ton and Deepesh Devendran's 5/22 set up massive win

DUBAI

ABHIGYAN Kundo's record 209 not out and an excellent return of 5/22 from Deepesh Devendran set up a massive 315-run victory for India against Malaysia in their U-19 Asia Cup match here on Tuesday.

India's margin of win is now their second biggest in terms of runs in Youth ODIs, after a 326-run triumph over Uganda in 2022.

Kundo etched his name in record books with a first-ever double century for any Indian in Youth ODIs, scoring his runs off 125 balls with 17 fours and nine sixes to fire India to a mammoth 408 for seven.

In reply, right-arm medium pacer Devendran ran through the Malaysian middle-order after Kishan Singh and Udhav Mohan struck once each to rock the opposition, and despite a late resistance from Hamzah Panggi (35), Malaysia were bowled out for 93 in 32.1 overs.

It was a perfect outing for the Indian colts who put together a robust batting show, in which the tone was set by Vaibhav Sooryavanshi who notched up a quickfire 50 off 26 balls (5 fours



and 3 sixes). While Sooryavanshi could not convert his start into another big score, having scored 171 a few days ago against UAE, India were unperturbed even as they lost Vihaan Malhotra (7) and Ayush Mhatre (14) cheaply.

No 4. Vedant Trivedi teamed up with Kundo as the two added 209 runs for the fourth wicket to consolidate, in which the latter was the dominant of the two with his aggressive stroke play particularly on the leg side.

The 17-year-old Kundo's rotation of the strike was top notch as he collected 55 singles during his innings while hitting 17 fours and nine sixes in his superlative knock.

Kundo's double ton is also only the second instance of a batter at U-19 level crossing

the 200-run mark, with South Africa's Jorich Van Schalkwyk's 215 against Zimbabwe earlier this year being the first.

The 18-year-old Trivedi looked set for a triple-figure score but ended up giving a return catch to Jaashwin Krishnamurthy, walking back for 90 of 106 balls (7 fours). Kundo was the aggressor in his 87-run stand for the fifth wicket with Kanishk Chouhan while he brought up his double hundred.

BRIEF SCORES:

India U-19 408/7 in 50 overs (Vaibhav Sooryavanshi 50, Vedant Trivedi 90, Abhigyan Kundo 209 not out; Muhammad Akram 5/89) beat Malaysia 93 in 32.1 overs (Hamzah Panggi 35; Deepesh Devendran 5/22, Udhav Mohan 2/24) by 315 runs.

Asian Youth Para Games: Indian shuttlers win 8 gold

NEW DELHI

INDIAN youngsters delivered a remarkable performance at the Dubai 2025 Asian Youth Para Games, winning 8 gold medals in the Para badminton events. The Indian team proved to be a formidable force, securing an impressive 17 medals – 8 gold, 3 silver, and 6 bronze.

At the core of India's success was Jatin Azad, whose composed and confident performances defined the team's spirit. Azad achieved double gold in the SU5 category; first capturing the men's singles title before returning to the court with Shivam Yadav to win gold in men's doubles. Their partnership, founded on trust and communication, remained strong under the pressure of finals day.

Speaking after his victories, Azad looked beyond Dubai with quiet determination, as he said, "I want to play in all championships, gain more experience and exposure. With more exposure, I will achieve more – and I know I will be selected for the LA28 Paralympics," he said.

India's successful streak was also driven by mental toughness. Harshit Choudhary, another gold medalist, emphasised the mindset that helped the team navigate the most challenging moments of the

IPL 2026 to be held from March 26 to May 31

MUMBAI: The 19th Indian Premier League will be held from March 26 to May 31 but it remains to be seen if defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru's home base gets a game after a deadly stampede halted all big-ticket cricket at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium. As per established norms, the Chinnaswamy should host the tournament opener given the home side, RCB, won the IPL 2025 title but that is unlikely to be clear till the time BCCI comes out

with the full-scale schedule.

The venue was witness to chaos and a stampede, which left 11 dead, after RCB's trophy celebrations drew lakhs on the streets, that was well over the state machinery's capacity to handle at a short notice in June this year.

While the venue has received conditional clearance from the Karnataka government, it also needs to meet the necessary safety and security standards following the deaths.

Spotlight on SKY as India eye series win over SA

LUCKNOW: Shubman Gill's lean patch has been the talking point but an equally "out of runs" skipper Suryakumar Yadav is also under intense scrutiny as India look to find the right balance and seal the five-match series against South Africa in the fourth T20I here on Wednesday.

The third game was an ideal

opportunity for Suryakumar to rediscover his touch while India chased a modest 118-run target, but the ease that once made him the top ranked batter in the world was noticeably missing.

Shots that defined his dominance have been producing erratic results and the match in Dharamsala was no different as he fell to his trademark pick-up



stroke, highlighting a continued struggle.

But he was defiant when it

came to self-assessment. "The thing is, I've been batting beautifully in the nets. I'm trying everything that's in my control. When the runs have to come, they'll definitely come. I'm not out of form, but definitely out of runs," Suryakumar confidently said at the post-match presentation ceremony after India's win in Dharamsala on Sunday.

However, the numbers tell a worrying story. The Indian captain has been searching for fluency for over a year, averaging under 15 in the format this season. Additionally, he's still without a half-century in 2025, the longest such phase of his career.

Only twice during this period has he managed to bat beyond 20 balls.

Modi govt's illegality exposed: Cong on relief to Gandhis

NEW DELHI

THE Congress on Tuesday claimed the "illegality" of the Narendra Modi government and its "politically motivated prosecution stands fully exposed" after a court here refused to take cognisance of the Enforcement Directorate's National Herald money laundering case against Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi and others.

In a statement, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said the ED's proceedings against Congress leadership -- Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi -- in the case have been found to be "completely illegal and mala fide" by the court.

"The mala fide and illegality of the Modi government stands fully exposed. The court has ruled that the ED case is without jurisdiction;



it has no FIR, without which there is no case. This politically motivated prosecution by the Modi government over the last decade of the principal opposition party stands exposed before the people of India," she said.

"No case of money laundering, no proceeds of crime and no movement of property; all baseless charges that have been a part of a politi-

cal witch hunt, propaganda, reputation assassination and campaign which stands defeated today," Shrinete said.

She said the Congress party and its leadership are committed to fighting for the truth and for the rights of every Indian. "We cannot, and will not ever be intimidated, because we fight for the truth," she added.

Party general secretary K

C Venugopal said, "Through this judgment, the court has exposed the illegal and mala fide political targeting by the Narendra Modi government."

"From day one, the opposition, especially Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, has been targeted without any legal basis or wrongdoing. This judgment clearly vindicates our stand," he added.

Refusing to take cognisance of the federal probe agency's money laundering charge against Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, and five others in the National Herald case, the court noted that the chargesheet filed is based on a probe into a complaint by a private person and not on an FIR of a predicate offence.

Its cognisance is impermissible in law, the judge said. (PTI)

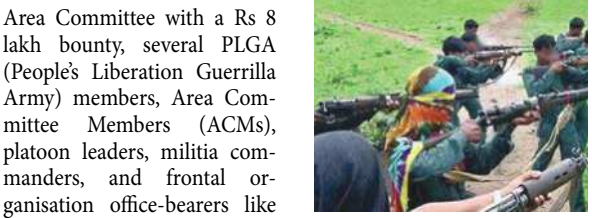
34 Maoist cadres surrender in Bijapur

RAIPUR/BIJAPUR (CHHATTISGARH)

IN a significant victory for anti-Naxal operations, 34 Maoist cadres, including 7 women, surrendered before senior police and CRPF officials in Bijapur district on Tuesday, carrying a combined bounty of Rs 84 lakh.

The surrendered cadres, primarily from the South Sub-Zonal Bureau, also include members linked to the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC), Telangana State Committee, and Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) Division.

Key figures include a Divisional Committee Member (DVCM) from the Keralapal



Area Committee with a Rs 8 lakh bounty, several PLGA (People's Liberation Guerrilla Army) members, Area Committee Members (ACMs), platoon leaders, militia commanders, and frontal organisation office-bearers like DAKMS and CNM presidents.

Disillusioned with Maoist ideology, they pledged allegiance to the Indian Constitution, vowing a peaceful life. Each received Rs 50,000 immediate incentive under the state's rehabilitation policy, Police officials said.

The surrender occurred amid joint efforts by District Reserve Guard (DRG), Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force (STF), CoBRA, and CRPF battalions, influenced by the



Chhattisgarh government's "Puna Margam: Rehabilitation to Rejuvenation" campaign—a reintegration drive—and the "Niyad Nellanar" scheme delivering development to remote villages.

Police Superintendent of Bijapur Jitendra Kumar Yadav appealed to the remaining Maoists, "abandon violence without fear. The government's policies ensure a secure, respectable future."

He highlighted family de-

sires for normal lives.

Since January 2024, Bijapur has seen over 824 surrenders (per local claims, aligning with reports of 790+ by late 2025), alongside arrests and encounters, reflecting intensified operations.

Statewide, thousands have surrendered in 2025, weakening Maoist structures in Bastar. Officials credit proactive security, trust-building, and welfare initiatives for transforming fear into dialogue and development in South Bastar.

Rehabilitation processes, including legal formalities and reintegration support, are underway. This marks another step toward Chhattisgarh's goal of lasting peace in Naxal-affected regions.

Goa nightclub fire case

Luthra brothers deported, taken into police custody

NEW DELHI

GAURAV Luthra and Saurabh Luthra, co-owners of the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Goa where a massive fire killed 25 people, were deported from Thailand on Tuesday and taken into custody by Delhi and Goa police as soon as they landed in Delhi. The brothers arrived in the Indian capital in an Indigo flight and were immediately handed over to authorities for further legal proceedings, 10 days after a blaze tore through the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Arpora in North Goa.

Gaurav, 44 and Saurabh, 40, will be produced before a Delhi court where the Goa police will seek their transit remand.

A TV reporter tracking the brothers from Bangkok attempted to shoot inside the aircraft, prompting the airlines and accompanying security officials to summon additional force to whisk away the two



men.

The Luthra brothers are facing a case of culpable homicide and negligence following the December 6 tragedy, which investigators allege was compounded by the nightclub operating in violation of mandatory fire safety norms. The incident raised serious questions over alleged fire safety violations and lapses by the management. Gaurav and Saurabh fled to Phuket in the early hours of December 7, hours after the fire at their nightclub, prompting the authorities to issue an Interpol

Blue Corner Notice and cancel their passports.

The duo was detained by Thai authorities at Phuket on December 11 following a request from the Indian government which later coordinated with officials in Thailand to deport them under legal treaties between the two nations.

On December 11, a Delhi court rejected the transit anticipatory bail pleas. Additional Sessions Judge Vandana termed the allegations against the brothers "prima facie grave and serious" and severely criticised their "conduct."

The court took note of the police investigation that the brothers had booked tickets to Phuket one hour after the fire, a fact their counsel had initially "concealed" while seeking protection from immediate arrest.

The judge said that leaving immediately after the tragedy was a clear attempt to "evade the legal process".



Security forces hunt for terrorists holed up in Udampur village

JAMMU: Security forces searched for terrorists in Udampur on Tuesday, a day after a policeman was killed in a gunfight there, a police officer said.

During the encounter on Monday, one terrorist was believed to have been injured, while two policemen suffered minor bullet wounds.

"The operation has been resumed in the area to track down the holed-up terrorists. The cordon has been further strengthened," the officer told PTI.

A joint team of the Special Operations Group (SOG) of police, along with the army and the CRPF, is on the job with sniffer dogs, the officer said.

On Monday, forces got locked in a gunfight with terrorists in Soan village of the Majalta area in Udampur.

The village was raided by the police on a tip-off about the presence of three terrorists, believed to be affiliated with the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit.

The encounter took place in the besieged village around 6 pm and continued for some time, resulting in injuries to one SOG jawan, Amjad Pathan, son of Bashrat Khan.

Pathan, a resident of Salva, Mendhar in Poonch district, later succumbed.

"A very small SOG team engaged the terrorists. Combing of the forest has been impeded due to darkness and treacherous terrain," IGP Jammu Bhim Sen Tutti said in a social media post.

Hyderabad Open Golf to be held in Feb 2026

Tournament poster unveiled at Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD



THE Hyderabad Open Golf Tournament, an initiative of the TGolf Foundation, was officially announced with a poster launch at the Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club here on Monday. Regarded as India's premier amateur golf championship, the tournament will be held from February 18 to 21, 2026, and is expected to bring together top amateur golfers from across the country.

The poster was unveiled in the presence of Madhusudhan Rao, Head of Business – Emaar India; NRN Reddy, Founder of TGolf Foundation; Papi Reddy, General Manager, Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club; and Prashanth Reddy, along with

other dignitaries and golf enthusiasts.

Speaking on the occasion, the organisers said the Hyderabad Open has been envisioned as a flagship amateur golf event in India. The tournament aims to offer participants a professional-level tournament experience, world-class playing conditions, and a highly competitive platform for both emerging and established amateur golfers.

Registrations for the championship are now open, and interested players can register by scanning the QR code available on the official tournament poster.

Hosted at the iconic Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club, known for its challenging layout and scenic beauty, the Hyderabad Open is expected to further strengthen Hyderabad's reputation as a major golfing destination in the country.

Telangana's Shivani bags 3rd medal at SGFi Nationals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

TELANGANA swimmer Shivani Karra continued her impressive run at the 69th SGFi National Swimming Championship for Girls 2025–26, winning a silver medal in the U-14 girls' 100m backstroke on Day 5 at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Swimming Stadium here on Tuesday.

Shivani clocked 1:09.97 to finish second, narrowly behind CISCE's Shreya Binil, who took gold with a timing of 1:09.14. This silver marked Shivani's third medal of the championship, adding to her earlier gold in the 200m backstroke and silver in the 50m backstroke, underlining her dominance in backstroke events.

In another notable performance for Telangana, Sudhiksha Krishna secured the bronze



medal in the U-19 girls' 50m freestyle, clocking 28.24 seconds. Karnataka's Shalini R. Dixit won the gold with a timing of 27.75 seconds, while

Shubhnoor Kaur of Chandigarh claimed silver in 28.01 seconds.

The championship is being held from December 12 to 17 in New Delhi.



Training young minds for India’s space future

FROM CHANDRAYAAN TO GAGANYAAN, THE NEXT LEAP DEPENDS ON TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SPACE INNOVATORS

- Youth as a strategic asset: India’s demographic advantage can drive long-term leadership in space science and technology.
- Expanding access to space education: Outreach programmes, early education and regional-language content can democratise learning.
- Academia–industry collaboration:: Partnerships with startups and private players are enabling hands-on training and innovation.
- Bridging gaps for sustainability: Addressing rural access, faculty shortages and industry alignment is vital for future missions

Dr PRIYANK KUMAR

India has made remarkable achievements in space exploration in the last two decades, carving a distinctive position among space powers. From launching satellites for global clients to accomplishing the unprecedented mission of Chandrayaan-3 and gearing up for Gaganyaan human space flight, ISRO has set new benchmarks in the segment.

However, these achievements are just the beginning, as India’s most valuable asset, its youth, will keep the momentum going and growing. Hence, investing in training young minds will lead to a strong, innovative, and self-reliant space ecosystem.

Today, space education is no longer confined to elite institutions or specialized research centres. It is becoming a national priority, especially as space technology

increasingly merges with artificial intelligence, robotics , climate science, and life sciences. As one of the youngest nations on the planet, India has a demographic advantage that can be leveraged to fuel its space future.

By introducing space science early in education and creating pathways for hands-on learning, India can cultivate a generation of thinkers, builders, and explorers who will shape the next era of space innovation.

To support this vision, several outreach programs have been launched for students at various levels. For instance, ISRO’s Yuvika programme, also termed the Young Scientist Programme, inspires young students with comprehensive knowledge on Space Technology, Space Science, and Space Applications.

Such meticulously designed programmes motivate students to pursue



higher studies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and contribute to the nation’s scientific growth.

In addition to these initiatives, prominent educational institutions like BIT Mesra are offering specialized programs in aerospace engineering and =rocket technology. These institutions are fostering interdisciplinary learning, encouraging students to explore the connections between space and other promising fields such as data science, environmental studies, and automation.

It is also important to mention the increasing role of the private sector in space education and innovation, as

cutting-edge startups and tech organisations are collaborating with academic institutions to offer internships, workshops, and mentorship programs. These partnerships are fostering a vibrant ecosystem where students can work on live projects, develop prototypes, and even launch small satellites. The rise of space-tech incubators and accelerators is further driving entrepreneurial interest among young innovators.

However, despite the growing momentum, India’s space education landscape faces several challenges that must be addressed to sustain long-term progress. In this regard, uneven access to

classrooms, and regional language content can help democratize access to space knowledge. This inclusive approach ensures that talent from every corner of the country can contribute to India’s space journey.

Looking ahead, India’s space ambitions are set to rival those of established space powers like the United States, Russia, and China. Missions to study the Sun (Aditya-L1), Venus, interplanetary exploration and setting up our own Bhartiya Antariksha Station are advancing, and to support them, a highly skilled workforce with expertise in astrophysics, planetary science, and advanced propulsion systems will be essential. This makes it even more crucial to create a strong educational foundation today.

India’s rising prowess in space is a testament to its scientific expertise and visionary leadership. But the true potential lies in empowering the next generation of space scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs. By investing in education, fostering innovation, and forging inclusive opportunities, India will not just prepare for future missions but will shape the future of space itself.

(The author is Head of Space Engineering & Rocketry at BIT Mesra)



Seerat-un-Nabi educational initiative identifies ‘100 Gems’ for advanced training programmes

HYDERABAD: A large-scale Seerat-un-Nabi competition concluded at Shahi Masjid Bagh-e-Aam, drawing a gathering of more than 2,000 participants here on Tuesday. The concluding ceremony was addressed by international motivational speaker Munawar Zama, who highlighted the importance of structured learning and character development.

The faith-based educational initiative was organized under the supervision of the mosque’s Imam, Maulana Ahsan Al Hamoomi, with the objective of promoting systematic study of the life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Participants from diverse backgrounds—including students, working professionals, and senior citizens—took part in the program. According to the organizers, around 1,200 candidates appeared for written examinations conducted in two sessions after a three-month preparation period. Study materials were made available in multiple languages to ensure wider participation.

Addressing the gathering, Munawar Zama, Founder and CEO of English House Academy, announced the selection of 100 top-performing participants, referred to as the “100 Gems,” who will be enrolled in advanced development programs.

These programs will focus on communication skills, debating, and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence. He also announced a 50 percent fee concession for deserving candidates and full scholarships for orphaned students. Maulana Ahsan Al Hamoomi proposed the introduction of annual leadership camps for the selected participants to further enhance their sense of social responsibility and community engagement.

The event witnessed several moving moments, including senior citizens returning to examination halls after several decades. Organizers announced plans to make the Seerat-un-Nabi competition an annual event, with possibilities of expanding it to other parts of India.

Today is National Say It Now Day

EXPRESSING THANKS: A GIFT THAT BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS

In today’s fast-paced world, youngsters often move from one goal to another without pausing to reflect on the people who support them along the way. Friends who listen, family members who sacrifice, and loved ones who encourage us quietly shape our lives every day. Learning to express gratitude and appreciation to these people is not only a kind gesture but also a powerful habit that can transform relationships and personal well-being.

Gratitude is more than simply saying “thank you” out of politeness. It is about acknowledging how someone’s presence, words, or actions have made a meaningful difference in our lives.

When youngsters take the time to tell a friend, “You helped me believe in myself,” or tell a parent, “Your support gave me strength,” they create moments of deep emotional connection. These honest expressions remind others that their efforts matter and are noticed.

Encouraging youngsters to express appreciation also helps them develop empathy and emotional intelligence. By reflecting on how others have influenced them, young people learn to see beyond themselves. They begin to understand that success, happiness, and growth are rarely achieved alone. This awareness fosters humility and strengthens bonds built on respect and understand-

ing. Expressing gratitude can also have a positive impact on mental health. Studies and everyday experiences show that people who practice gratitude feel happier, less stressed, and more optimistic. For youngsters facing academic pressure, social challenges, or uncertainty about the future, focusing on appreciation can shift their mindset from what is lacking to what is meaningful. Sharing gratitude out loud amplifies this effect, creating a cycle of positivity between individuals.

Moreover, telling loved ones how they have made a difference can leave a lasting impression. Words of appreciation are often remembered long after gifts or

achievements fade. A simple message, letter, or heartfelt conversation can strengthen relationships and even heal misunderstandings. For some, hearing appreciation at the right moment can provide motivation, comfort, or hope.

In conclusion, encouraging youngsters to express gratitude and appreciation is an investment in stronger relationships and healthier communities. By openly telling friends, family, and loved ones how they have shaped their lives, young people learn the value of kindness, connection, and emotional honesty. A few sincere words can make a lifetime of difference—for both the speaker and the listener.



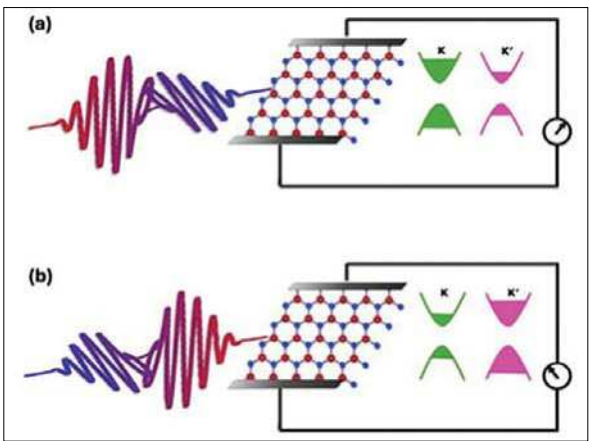
Single light pulse can control quantum states in 2D materials: IIT Bombay

Scientists at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay announced that they have discovered a simple new way to use light to control quantum states inside ultra-thin materials, a breakthrough that could lead to computers that are far faster and more energy-efficient than today’s electronic devices.

The research focuses on two-dimensional semiconductors, materials that are only one atom thick and thousands of times thinner than a human hair. Inside these materials, electrons can exist in two distinct quantum states known as valleys, labelled K and K’.

These two states can be compared to the 0 and 1 used in digital computing, forming the basis of a growing research area called valleytronics.

Until now, controlling these valley states has been



difficult. Earlier techniques required complex laser setups using circularly polarised light and multiple laser pulses, and even then, the control was often incomplete or hard to measure.

As a result, reliable and reversible switching between the two valley states remained a major challenge.

The IIT Bombay team has now shown that this com-

plex setup is not necessary. In a study published in the journal ‘Advanced Optical Materials’, the researchers demonstrated that a single linearly polarised laser pulse can both control and read the valley state of electrons.

The key lies in introducing a small, controlled skew in the laser pulse’s polarisation. According to Prof. Gopal Dixit from IIT Bombay, this

slight asymmetry in the laser pulse is enough to push electrons into either the K or K’ valley.

By reversing the skew in the pulse, the electrons can be switched back to the other valley. This makes the process fully reversible, with the two valley states effectively acting as quantum versions of 0 and 1.

What makes the discovery even more significant is that the same laser pulse also generates a tiny electric current.

This current acts as a built-in signal that reveals which valley state the electrons have moved into. In simple terms, the system can be controlled and read at the same time, without the need for extra lasers or measuring devices.

The researchers also found that the method works across a wide range of laser wavelengths and does not need to be finely tuned to the material’s energy levels.

Sir CV Raman National Olympiad Talent exam held

Suchirindia conducted the prestigious Sir CV Raman National Olympiad Talent Exam for students from Classes 1 to 10. The examination witnessed enthusiastic participation from around 90,000 students across 730 centres nationwide. Young participants displayed strong competitive spirit. Toppers will be honoured with scholarships, medals, and Young Genius Awards at a grand ceremony scheduled on February 3, 2026, at Ravindra Bharathi, Nampally, Hyderabad

Photo: Adula Krishna





'Chikiri Chikiri' sets the internet ablaze, crosses a century in Telugu alone

150 million+ views across 5 languages

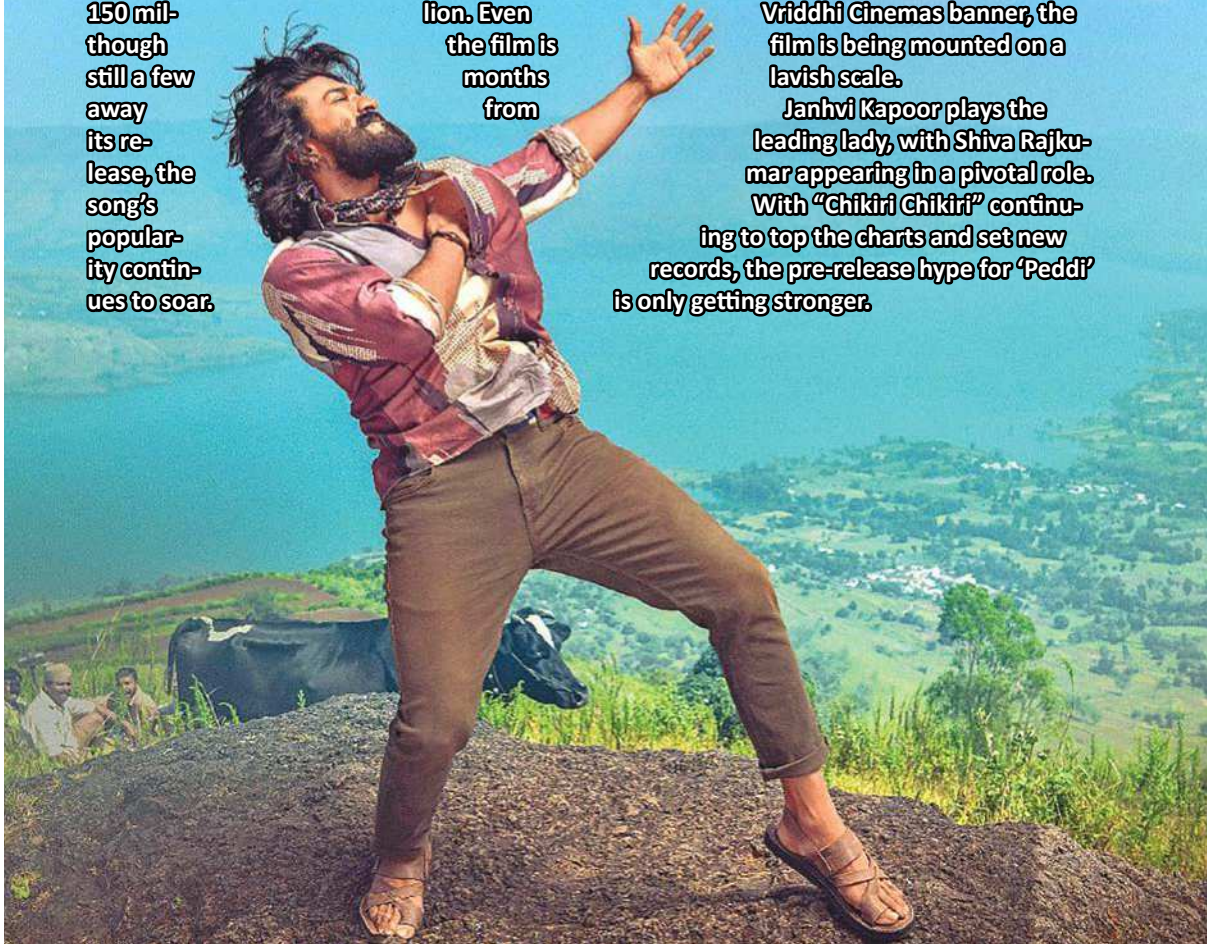
Mega Power Star Ram Charan has once again showcased his immense star power. The first song from his upcoming film, 'Peddli', titled "Chikiri Chikiri", is creating waves online. What began as a high-energy launch has now turned into a massive worldwide sensation.

Within just a month of its release, the Telugu version alone has crossed 100 million views, while the combined views across five languages have surpassed 150 million. Even though still a few away from its release, the song's popularity continues to soar.

Composed by A.R. Rahman, the song's powerful beats and catchy rhythm have impressed audiences everywhere. Ram Charan's energetic dance moves and commanding screen presence have become a hot topic on social media, inspiring countless reels and fan edits.

Director Buchi Babu Sana's stylish visuals and keen attention to detail make the song look grand and exciting, further amplifying the buzz around 'Peddli'. Produced by Venkata Satish Kilaru under the Vridhhi Cinemas banner, the film is being mounted on a lavish scale.

Janhvi Kapoor plays the leading lady, with Shiva Rajkumar appearing in a pivotal role. With "Chikiri Chikiri" continuing to top the charts and set new records, the pre-release hype for 'Peddli' is only getting stronger.



Producer Raj Kandukuri wishes for success of 'Jinn', releasing on Dec 19

Produced by Nikhil M. Gowda under the banners of Sadalamma Film Productions and Bilva Studios, 'Jinn' is directed by Chinmay Ram. The film features Amit Rao, Parvez Simba, Prakash Tuminad, Ravi Bhat, and Sangeetha in key roles. The movie is set for a grand release on December 19. Ahead of its release, a trailer launch event was held on Monday, attended by chief guests Raj Kandukuri, Veerabhadra Chowdary, and Sohel.

The trailer raises intriguing questions: What is the mystery behind the haunted lake? What is the secret hidden inside the college? It depicts four youngsters trapped by spirits, unable to escape from a college building, with the entry of a Jinn adding to the suspense. The makers manage to scare the audience right from the trailer itself. The visuals and background score are highly engaging and captivating. After the trailer launch, the speakers shared their thoughts:

Raj Kandukuri said:

"Jinn" is a very interesting title. There are two kinds of Jinn—good Jinn and bad Jinn. I feel horror films carry comparatively less risk. If fear is presented effectively, audiences always support horror films."

Veerabhadram Chowdary said:

"I really liked the trailer of 'Jinn'. Horror films are tasting

success these days. Director Chinmay Ram has made this film very well. 'Jinn' will surely achieve good success."

Sohel said:

"Telugu audiences encourage films from all languages and technicians from all regions. I really liked the trailer of 'Jinn'. The tagline 'Spooky World' is impressive. I wish the director and producer great success."

Director Chinmay Ram said:

"Thank you to everyone who attended our film 'Jinn'. Special thanks to producer Nikhil garu for investing in and supporting us."

Amit Rao said:

"Thanks to everyone who came to the 'Jinn' trailer launch event. Many people don't know what 'Jinn' means. In Islam, spirits and supernatural beings are referred to as Jinn."

Parvez Simba said:

"We took an idea that struck us and brought it this far. We did extensive research on Jinns. With this movie, we are presenting a completely new world."

Marella Manikantha said:

"Thanks to everyone who attended our 'Jinn' event. This is a film audience have never seen before. Producer Nikhil garu made it on a grand scale, and director Chinmay Ram has executed it brilliantly."



'Dhandoraa' Is a Wonderful Film That Combines All Kinds of Commercial Elements - Actor Sivaji

The film 'Dhandoraa' stars the iconic actor Sivaji in the lead role. Ravindra Banerjee Muppaneni, head of Loukya Entertainment— who has garnered attention for producing acclaimed films like 'Color Photo' and 'Bedurulanka 2012'—has produced 'Dhandoraa'. Along with Sivaji, actors Navadeep, Nandu, Ravi Krishna, Manika Chikkala, Mounika Reddy, Bindu Madhavi, Radhya, Aditi Bhavaraju, and others play important roles in the film. Directed by Muralikanth, the movie is set for a grand release on December 25. As part of the promotions, actor Sivaji interacted with the media. Here are some key excerpts from his interaction:

Have you heard the story of 'Dhandoraa' before 'Court'?

I first heard the story of 'Dhandoraa'. My role in it is very new. The makers of 'Dhandoraa' had given an advance earlier, but there was a delay in production. So 'Court' was released first.

What is your role going to be like in 'Dhandoraa'?

My role in 'Dhandoraa' will be different. Whether it is good or bad is something the audience will decide. They may not fully understand it immediately; after watching the film, the audience will have to tell me about my role.

Can 'Dhandoraa' be considered a completely message-based film?

'Dhandoraa' is not a completely message-oriented film. It is a film made by combining all kinds of commercial elements.

Since it comes after 'Court', there are expectations on 'Dhandoraa'. Will your role



live up to them?

The response to my role as Mangapati in 'Court' is similar to the response I expect for my role in 'Dhandoraa'. Such roles come only if you are very lucky as an actor. I got a character with many different shades in this film.

Prostitutes were portrayed in films like 'Vedam' and 'Kancheepuramlo'. How are they portrayed in this film?

Bindu Madhavi's character in 'Dhandoraa' has been portrayed in a very classy manner. Everyone will connect with the film and its characters.

Do you feel new directors are using you more?

I mostly work with new directors. Our filmmakers are very calculative. Even though we have a lot of potential actors, they often bring actors from other languages.

Did you enjoy films like 'Missamma'? Do you enjoy films like 'Court' and 'Dhandoraa'?

I enjoyed all kinds of films such as 'Missamma', 'Shailaja Krishnamurthy', and 'Adirindayya Chandram'. I have always had confidence in myself as an actor. I can play all kinds of roles, from comedy to negative shades. Now, I feel the time has come for me.

TRAILER OF '45: THE MOVIE' UNVEILED

Popular music director Arjun Janya takes the director's chair for the first time with the much-awaited flick '45: The Movie', a project that promises scale, substance, and star power in equal measure. The film unites three formidable forces of Kannada cinema—Karunada Chakravarthy Shiva Rajkumar, Real Star Upendra, and the versatile Raj B Shetty—setting the stage for a cinematic collision unlike any other. Produced by Uma Ramesh Reddy and M. Ramesh Reddy under the Suraj Productions banner, '45: The Movie' has been crafted with a clear ambition to stand apart. From its striking promotional material to the intriguing snippets unveiled so far, the film has steadily built an air of mystery that has kept audiences talking. With anticipation peaking, the makers have now unveiled the theatrical trailer.

The opening frames introduce a powerful visual idea—a date of birth, a date of death, and the fleeting stretch between them. This stark imagery becomes the film's thematic backbone, suggesting that existence is not just about living, but about being accountable for every choice made within that narrow window of time. The trailer hints at a belief



system where moral reckoning does not stop with death, giving the film an almost metaphysical undertone.

Bringing together Shiva Rajkumar, Upendra, and Raj B Shetty, '45: The Movie' blends contrasting personas into this moral framework. Upendra's resonant voiceover lends philosophical gravity, framing the narrative as a reflection on cause and consequence. Raj B Shetty appears rooted

and vulnerable, representing the ordinary individual caught in forces larger than himself. Shiva Rajkumar's presence, particularly his unexpected appearance in a red Bharatanatyam costume, introduces a striking sense of duality and transformation.

The cinematography by Satya Hegde stands out, while Arjun Janya's pulsating score amplifies the experience. The production values are exceptional, and the

film features high-intensity action sequences choreographed by leading stunt masters Dr K Ravi Verma, Jolly Bastian, and Differnet Danny Chetan D'Souza. Dialogues are written by Anil Kumar, and editing is handled by K M Prakash.

With the trailer setting the bar high, '45: The Movie' is gearing up for a grand release in five languages on January 1, ushering in the New Year with a bang.

Geetha distributors to release Mohanlal's 'Vrusshabha' in Telugu on Dec 25

The prestigious Geetha Film Distributors, known for releasing blockbuster films like 'Kantara', 'Viduthalai', 'Chaava', and 'Mahavatar Narasimha', along with many other Telugu super hits, is now bringing the highly anticipated film 'Vrusshabha', starring the complete actor Mohanlal, to Telugu audiences. With the involvement of this leading distribution house, anticipation around the film has reached new heights. This period film promises audiences a cinematic spectacle like never before.

Written and directed by Nanda Kishore, 'Vrusshabha' is a sweeping saga of love, destiny, and vengeance, exploring the unbreakable bond between a father and son. Announcing this exciting development, the makers unveiled a powerful poster featuring Mohanlal in two different looks. Geetha Film Distributors is planning a grand release for the film. Shot simultaneously in Malayalam and Telugu, with releases planned in Hindi and Kannada as well, 'Vrusshabha' is set to be one of the most memorable cinematic events of 2025. Worldwide Release: December 25, 2025. The previously unveiled teaser introduced audiences to Mohanlal in a commanding avatar as a warrior king,

carrying the powerful message, "When Destiny Calls, Blood Must Answer." With the evocative tagline "Reborn Love – A Love So Strong, It Defies Death," the teaser impressed cinema lovers nationwide, ending with a dramatic transition between the past and present that left audiences intrigued by the story's dual worlds.

Starring Mohanlal alongside Samarjit Lankesh, Ragini Dwivedi, and Nayan Sarika, 'Vrusshabha' also features a strong ensemble cast, with more names to be announced. The film features music by Sam CS, sound design by Resul Pookutty, dialogues by SRK, Janardhan Maharshi, and Karthik, and high-octane action sequences choreographed by Peter Hein, Stunt Silva, and Nikhil.

Presented by Connekt Media and Balaji Telefilms Ltd in association with Abishek S. Vyas Studios, and produced by Shobha Kapoor, Ektaa R. Kapoor, C.K. Padma Kumar, Varun Mathur, Saurabh Mishra, Abishek S. Vyas, Praveer Singh, Vishal Gurnani, and Juhi Parekh Mehta, 'Vrusshabha' is an epic action cinematic journey that explores the emotional bond between a father and son. The film blends action, drama, and visual spectacle with deeply moving storytelling.



'Missterious' climax will be memorable - Director Mahi Komati Reddy

The movie 'Missterious' stars Rohit as the hero and Abid Bhushan in a police role, alongside actresses Riya Kapoor and Meghna Rajputh. Directed by Mahi Komati Reddy and produced by Jay Vallandas under the Ashlee Creations banner, the film is gearing up for a grand worldwide theatrical release on the 19th of this month. On this occasion, director Mahi Komati Reddy shared several key highlights of the movie in an interview today.

Director Mahi Komati Reddy said in the interview:

"Our film, 'Missterious', is not a regular-format movie like others; we have crafted it around a distinct point. The film includes elements of crime, love, and crush, along with strong thrilling aspects. The audience will definitely be entertained, as such thrilling elements have not been shown in any film so far. The suspense surrounding who the killer is will continue until the very end of the film. The climax episode will be a blend of suspense and thrill, featuring an unexpected twist that no one can predict. After the movie ends, everyone will surely be talking about that climax."

When it comes to thriller movies, songs are not usually highly expected. However, we have included three songs based on the story's requirements, and all of them fit perfectly. They add a good kick and ensure the audience does not feel like they are only watching a crime film. Our music director, M.L. Raja, has provided chartbuster music for these songs.

Overall, 'Missterious' is a mix of crime, crush, love, thrill, suspense, songs, and fight scenes. The audience will come to the theatre, enjoy all these elements, and leave entertained. Especially, the climax episode will be unforgettable.

So far, the promotional content for 'Missterious' has received very good feedback. We produced the film wonderfully with the support of our friend and producer, Jay Vallandas. Initially, we planned to release the movie on the 12th of this month, but due to the release of Akhanda 2, we decided to bring it to audiences a week later, on the 19th."