



THE Hans India



Payal Rajput: I may fail, but I won't give up!
It may be recalled that last year, the actress had penned a post, expressing concerns about favoritism and nepotism overshadowing talent in the film industry.

P8 EDITORIAL

Prioritise rejuvenation of 'Buckingham Canal'

This historic canal, which used to be bustling with activity, is now ravaged with multiple problems like emitting untreated wastes by the industries and urban populations, encroachment of the canal land, siltation, and damage caused by natural disasters like floods.

P6

OPINION

Prez urges students to help those left behind
The President paid tributes to 'Vyasakabi' Fakir Mohan Senapati and said that during her student days, she was deeply influenced by his timeless story, 'Rebati' and that influence remains indelible.

US tariff cut brings cheer to aqua sector: Atchchanna
Welcoming the decision, taken under the India-US trade agreement, the minister said the tariff cut would significantly ease the burden on seafood exporters, particularly those engaged in aquaculture.

P4

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WINDOWS



NASA Artemis II launch put off to March

WASHINGTON: NASA has pushed back the Artemis II mission launch from February to March following technical hurdles during a critical wet dress rehearsal (WDR) of its Space Launch System (SLS) rocket, Administrator Jared Isaacman announced on Tuesday. "With the conclusion of the wet dress rehearsal on Tuesday, we are moving off the February launch window and targeting March for the earliest possible launch of Artemis II," he posted on X. With the conclusion of the wet dress rehearsal today, we are moving off the February launch window and targeting March for the earliest possible launch of Artemis II. The test, conducted at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, successfully filled the core stage and interim cryogenic propulsion stage tanks with liquid hydrogen and oxygen. However, teams paused operations multiple times to address a liquid hydrogen leak at a core stage interface, requiring hardware warming and propellant flow adjustments.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

- Goyal hails trade pact with US
- Credits Modi for landmark deal
- Blasts Rahul for baseless talk



Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal addressing the media on the progress of the India-US trade deal in New Delhi on Tuesday

...in final stages: Goyal Sheds few details on India-US pact amid unanswered questions

NEW DELHI: Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal appeared on TV on Tuesday evening, purportedly to share some details and clear the air around the India-US trade deal but mainly heaped praises on the agreement. And then he said the final bits are still being worked out. The

deal will be formally inked thereafter. "Today, 140 crore Indians are celebrating a trade deal which is under final stages of detailing between the negotiating teams of both countries," Goyal said, hailing the "friendship" between PM Modi and US President Trump. **Continued on Page 7**



India-US trade deal is a big decision: PM

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the India-US trade deal is a "big decision" that will benefit everyone in the country and asserted that his government always works in favour of the nation. The Prime Minister made these remarks at the meeting of the NDA Parliamentary Party, coalition MPs present at the meeting said. NDA coalition members congratulated Modi for the trade deals with the EU and the US. India and the US have agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from a total 50 per cent.

Naidu calls US trade pact historic

HAILS PM MODI FOR VISIONARY APPROACH

HANS NEWS SERVICE

AMARAVATI: Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday described the trade agreement between India and the United States as a historic milestone for global economic stability and growth.

In a post on X, the Chief Minister congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on signing the landmark agreement with the United States. He said the deal reflected India's growing stature in the global economic arena under Modi's leadership.

Naidu stated that the decision to reduce tariffs to 18 percent would further strengthen ties between the world's two largest democracies. He noted that the move would deepen economic cooperation and promote long-term mutual prosperity.

Calling the agreement a visionary step, the Chief Minister said it was aimed at ensuring sustained global growth and enhancing India's competitiveness in international markets.

Continued on Page 7



Markets rally on US trade deal

Sensex up 2,073, rupee soars

MUMBAI: Indian equity markets ended sharply higher on Tuesday as investors welcomed the finalisation of the long-awaited India-US trade deal, triggering broad-based buying across sectors and lifting the rupee to its strongest single-day gain in more than six years. The benchmark BSE Sensex surged 2,072.67 points, or 2.54 per cent, to close at 83,739.13, while the Nifty 50 climbed 639.15 points, or 2.55 per cent, to settle at 25,727.55.

► Ministers express concern over investigation's failure to fix responsibility

while the SIT had named some individuals, several serious omissions were found in its final findings. Ministers expressed concern that the investigation failed to clearly fix responsibility and bring the main culprits to justice.

Continued on Page 7

Cabinet nod for panel to probe TTD laddu issue

Inquiry aims to bring out truth, ensure strict action against guilty: CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE state Cabinet on Tuesday decided to entrust the alleged chemical and animal fat adulteration in the ghee used for Tirumala Srivari Laddu Prasadam to a Commission of Inquiry to rectify lapses in the Special Investigation Team (SIT) report and identify the real masterminds behind the scam.

The Cabinet noted that

New baggage rules come into effect

Duty-free limit hiked

NEW DELHI



returning residents is 40 grams for female passengers and 20 grams for others. Jewellery, for the purpose of this rule, means articles of adornment ordinarily worn by a person, made of gold, silver, platinum or such other precious metals, whether studded or not.

Continued on Page 7

Oppn stages walkout demanding debate on deal

NEW DELHI: Members of several Opposition parties on Tuesday staged a walkout from the Rajya Sabha while raising the issue of the Indo-US trade deal and demanding a discussion on it.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh raised the issue of the Indo-US trade deal soon after the zero-hour ended and alleged that the information about the deal was being received from Washington instead.

Continued on Page 7

PM buckled under pressure to sell out farmers' blood: Rahul

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi buckled under US pressure to finalise a trade deal and "sold out" the hard work of the Indian farmers through the agreement.

Continued on Page 7

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Turkey ready to host high-stakes US-Iran talks

ISTANBUL: Turkey is preparing to host high-level talks between the United States and Iran in Istanbul this Friday, marking a significant diplomatic effort to ease escalating tensions between the two powers. The discussions are expected to be led by US special envoy Steve Witkoff and Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, with Turkey playing a central mediating role Bloomberg reported. According to Turkish officials, the priority of the planned Istanbul meetings is to de-escalate tensions and avoid conflict, as relations between Washington and Tehran have deteriorated in recent months. Several nations, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates, have been invited to participate, possibly at the foreign minister level, underlining the broader regional effort to stabilise the situation.

Continued on Page 7

'FATHER OF ALL DEALS'

P7

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



You can't play with right to privacy of this country: SC

Tells WhatsApp, Meta to 'exit India if you can't abide by the rule of the land'

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday told WhatsApp's parent company Meta that it should leave India if it cannot follow the Constitution and protect users' data privacy.

The court was hearing Meta's plea against a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order that imposed a penalty of Rs 213.14 crore over WhatsApp's privacy policy. A Bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya



Bagchi and Vipul Pancholi made it clear that "not a single digit" of user data should be shared if it goes against the public interest. According to a report by Bar and Bench, the top court also questioned the lack of a clear option for users to opt out of WhatsApp's privacy policy. "Where is the question of opting out? Show me on your mobile. This is a decent way of committing theft of private information! You know your commercial interest, and you also know how you have made

consumers addicted to the app," it said. "Everybody uses it. If the user has a right to opt-out, how will the users know this right exists? Let us see the option and the situation with the user. When it comes to opting out, the information is in a newspaper. How will a person know?" The Chief Justice asked the

Meta representative. CJI Kant said, "You can't play with the right of privacy of this country, in the name of data sharing. You are making a mockery of the constitutionalism of this country. How can you play with the right to privacy of people like this? People pay you for this. Consumer has no choice you have created a monopoly!"

The Bench suggested that WhatsApp file an affidavit explaining its privacy policy and how data sharing works under it. The court

adjourned the hearing till February 9 and added the Central government as a party to the case.

"For the purpose of issuing interim directions, post the matter for next Monday. On the joint request made by senior counsel, the Union of India is impleaded as a respondent. Union may also file its counter affidavit," the court said. In January 2021, WhatsApp announced updates to its terms of service and privacy policy, to be effective from February 8, 2021. Users were told they

must accept the new terms to continue using the app.

Earlier, WhatsApp's 2016 privacy policy allowed users to opt out of data sharing with Facebook. The 2021 update made data sharing with Meta mandatory.

The CCI investigated the matter and in November 2024 ruled that WhatsApp had abused its dominant position under the Competition Act, 2002. It ordered WhatsApp to stop sharing user data with Meta and its products for five years and imposed the fine.

'TTD HIGH SCHOOLS SHOULD ACHIEVE OUTSTANDING RESULTS'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

TTD Joint Executive Officer (Health & Education)

Dr A Sarat instructed officials to take comprehensive measures to ensure that students of TTD-run High Schools achieve outstanding results at the State and District levels. He inspected Sri Govindaraja Swamy High School in Tirupati on Tuesday along with officials.

On the occasion, he

reviewed the academic standards, teaching methods, and overall progress of the students. Addressing the staff, the JEO stated that as examinations are approaching, teachers should prepare students with greater care and focus towards goal-oriented performance.

He emphasized that teaching should be imparted with a clear objective of securing top ranks at the State and District levels.

He directed that students who are lagging behind in various subjects should be identified and given special coaching through simple and effective methods to improve their understanding.

He noted that quality facilities are available in TTD educational institutions and asked teachers to deliver instruction with dedication and the highest standards.

Decision on Nandi awards, theatre fest soon

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA



Cinematography minister Kandula Durgesh with the award winners of short films in Vijayawada on Tuesday

- Cinematography minister Durgesh says a formal decision on reviving the Nandi Awards and Nandi Theatre Festival will be taken soon
- Reiterates the govt's goal to develop Amaravati as a major film hub on par with Hyderabad, with full support to cinema and creative industries
- At the AP Short Film Festival-2026 felicitation, 'Mahaviksham' won first prize among 203 entries, highlighting strong grassroots talent across the state

kolu bagged the third prize. Cash awards of Rs 1 lakh were presented to the top three winners. Special awards were also presented to Sujitha (Best Actress-Manam), Sai Prakarsh (Best Character Actress-Abaddam vs Nijam), Pawan Sarma (Mannu-Minnu), child artist Harshathunisa, young talent Rithvik Reddy (Astra), debut director Trivikram, villain Meesala Bhaskar, and Telugu script reviewers Manjuluri Lakshmapathi Master and Jagadish, among others.

Speaking on the occasion, director Dilip Raja said government encouragement would enable Andhra Pradesh youth to achieve remarkable success and noted that the Short Film Festival had infused new confidence and determination among aspiring filmmakers.

without charging any entry fee. He said such initiatives play a key role in nurturing grassroots talent and strengthening the film ecosystem in the State.

Durgesh appreciated the efforts of the festival organiser, Maa-AP founder and film director Dilip Raja, for successfully conducting the state-level festival on January 11 at Tenali

ema and creative industries in Andhra Pradesh.

As many as 203 short films were received from across the state for the festival, with nearly 2,000 actors participating.

The first prize was won by 'Mahaviksham' directed by Chandrasekhar Sakunlas from Visakhapatnam, while 'Simhadri Appanna' by Srinivasa Rao from Srikrishnam secured second place and 'Abaddam vs Nijam' by Naveen Kumar from Palan

CPM demands immediate increase in RTC buses

Party's two-day state committee meet flags overcrowding, commuter hardships after Stree Shakti scheme implementation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA



frequently breaking down due to poor maintenance and ageing fleets, he commented.

Further, he said the two-day state committee meeting expressed its concern over harassment faced by women passengers and the difficulties encountered by students who are unable to reach schools and colleges on time.

The party also pointed out that RTC staff are under heavy pressure, with workload rising by over 30 per cent, leading to an increase in in-service deaths, he said. Despite the corporation seeking permission to recruit 11,000 staff, the government has not responded, he noted.

Meanwhile, he said his party urged the government to ensure RTC services in villages still lacking bus connectivity, strictly regulate private buses, allow digital Aadhaar verification for women passengers, and immediately strengthen the public transport system to safeguard the Stree Shakti scheme and commuter safety.

Jagan to console Ambati's family today

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GUNTUR

YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will visit Guntur city on Wednesday to console the family members of former minister Ambati Ramababu, who is in judicial custody in Rajahmundry Central Jail in connection with a case for his derogatory remarks against Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. TDP activists attacked his house and office at Navabharat Nagar and damaged his office furniture. YSRCP leaders condemned his arrest. Jagan will console his family members and extend his support. He already enquired about Rambabu's arrest. YSRCP state general secretary Sajjala Rama Krishna Reddy, former MP Modugula Venugopal Reddy visited Rambabu's house and consoled his family members.

Meanwhile, the police registered the case against the TDP activists who attacked Rambabu's house and party office and burnt his car. Responding to the complaint lodged by Rambabu, the police registered the case.

Five Eagle teams to curb drug menace in EG dist

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAHMENDRAVARAM

EAST Godavari district Superintendent of Police D Narasimha Kishore on Tuesday said that five special Eagle (Elite Anti-Ganja Law Enforcement) teams have been constituted in the district to intensify surveillance against narcotics.

Addressing a meeting held to brief the newly formed teams, Narasimha Kishore said the Eagle personnel would move in plain clothes, mingling with the general public, while maintaining constant watch on drug trafficking, sale, and consumption. The teams have been provided with



SP D Narasimha Kishore addressing newly formed teams in Rajahmendravaram on Tuesday

ENDOWMENTS DEPARTMENT
Sri Kodandara Rama Swamy Temple
Gundupupula (V), Dornipadu (M), Nandyala District.
e-Procurement Tender
NIT No. P/COE/95/2026 Dt: 28.12.2025
e-Tenders are invited through the e-Procurement portal for Re-Construction of Temple. Interested bidders may visit the official website www.approcurement.gov.in for detailed information, eligibility criteria, and submission guidelines. Trustee

VISAKHAPATNAM METROPOLITAN REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
"e"-Procurement Tender Notice
VMRDA invites the following tenders on "e" Procurement Platform
S.No. Tender Notice No. ECV in Rs. Last Date & Time
1. 19/2025-26/CE/SE/I-EE-IX/VMRDA, DL27.01.2026 Rs.2,78,15,221/- 11-02-2026 - 3:30 PM
2. 54/2025-26/EE-IX/VMRDA, DL.02.02.2026 Rs.24,95,750/- 09-02-2026 - 3:30 PM
For details logon to www.approcurement.gov.in
Sd/- Metropolitan Commissioner, VMRDA

KAKINADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTIFICATION
Roc No. 9159/2026/EZ, Dated: 02.02.2026
Tenders invited through e-procurement platform for 22 works with an estimated cost value of Rs. 6,59,07,000/- from the eligible contractors, and 1 work RFP. Last date and time for downloading for 22 Works: Dt: 23-02-2026 upto 10:00 AM Implementation of Drones and AI-Based Smart Mosquito surveillance system in Kakinada Municipal Corporation. Last date and time for downloading for 1 RFP Dt:23-02-2026 upto 10:00 AM
Tender Inviting Authority: Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Kakinada
Mail: kkd_mplcorp@yahoo.com, Call Centre Phone: 0884-2357722
Further details can be seen at 'e' procurement market place at www.approcurement.gov.in
Sd/- N.V.V. Kanayaram, Commissioner (FAC), Municipal Corporation, Kakinada

ELURU URBAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Rukmini Nivas, Chandragupta Colony, D.No.16B-16-34, Eluru-534002
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No: 8-15/ ELUDA-General Work/2025-26, DATED: 02.02.2026.
The Vice Chairman, Eluru Urban Development Authority, Eluru invites tenders from interested, eligible bidders for "Construction of RCC Outfall/ Storm water Drains at various places in Eluru City." Total No of works is 8 with an amount of Rs.516.95 Lakhs. Tender schedules are available on e-procurement market place from 04.02.2026. Last date of receipt of tenders is 18.02.2026. Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place at www.approcurement.gov.in or contact Assistant Engineer, Eluru Urban Development Authority, Eluru District (Phone: 8978999933).
Sd/- Executive Engineer (FAC), Eluru Urban Development Authority, Eluru

ANDHRA PRADESH INDUSTRIAL INFRASTRUCTURE CORPORATION LIMITED
(An undertaking of A.P. Govt.)
O/o, Chief Engineer (North), APIIC Ltd., 9th floor, APIIC Tower-1, Autonagar, IT Park, Mangalagiri, Guntur Dist-522503 web:www.apic.in
e-Procurement Notice
IOM NO.CE(N)/APIIC/e-PROCUREMENT/2021-22 Dt:02.02.2026
Sub: APIIC - H-O-EV-CE(N)-Tenders -Invitation of Tenders on "e-Procurement" platform - Reg.
Ref: Tender Notice No.113/CE(N)/APIIC/2025-26, Dated: 02.02.2026
Tender Notice No.113: Repairs & Strengthening of existing road No.3 & 11 at IP, Vakalapudi, Kakinada District with IALA Funds. Bid Download starts from 02.02.2026 at 08:00 PM and last date for submission of bids, Dated:17.02.2026 at 3:00PM. Tender documents download starts from: 02.02.2026 at 08:00 PM. Last date for submission of Tender: 17.02.2026 upto 3:00PM. Technical bid opening: 17.02.2026 at 3:30PM. The details of short tender notice and bid documents can be downloaded from www.approcurement.gov.in or https://tender.approcurement.gov.in
Sd/- CHIEF ENGINEER (North), APIIC Ltd., MANGALAGIRI
DIPR R.O.No.4794PP/CL/ADVT/1/1/2021-22 Dt: 03/02/26

ANDHRA PRADESH CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Project Office, Rayapudi(V), Thullur (M) Amaravati - 522237
MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
(ANDHRA PRADESH CAPITAL REGION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY)
FILE NO.: MAU61-PLGOCMP/38/2025-PLG
NOTIFICATION: Certain amendments to the Zoning Regulations (ZR) of the Capital City.
GAZETTE NOTIFICATION NO:41 AMARAVATI, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2026 G.1037
Public Notice
(Section -39 & 41 of APCRDA Act, 2014)
In exercise of the powers conferred under section 39(1) and 41(3) of APCRDA Act, 2014 the APCRDA, Vijayawada here by proposes certain amendments to the Zoning Regulations (ZR) for the Capital City.
Any person/organization having any objection/suggestion with respect to said notification may send in writing to the Commissioner, APCRDA, Project Office, Rayapudi, Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh-522237 with in a period of 30 days from the date of publication of this public notice. The person making the objections or suggestions shall also give his/her name and address, telephone/fax, e-mail address. Without contact details, the objection/suggestions shall not be entertained.

SCHEDULE

S. No	Description	As per Amaravati Zoning Regulation (ZR)	Proposed Amendment to Amaravati Capital City Zoning Regulations
1	Parking norms for Hotels in Capital city Zoning regulation as 1 stall for 100 sqm with Amaravati Government complex (AGC)	The Appendix-II of the Amaravati Capital City Zoning Regulations-1 stall for 50 sqm gross floor area.	Resolved that the Authority hereby authorizes to take up process for Amendment to parking norms for hotels in Amaravati Capital city zoning regulations on par with Amaravati Government complex area. Resolved further that the Authority hereby authorizes Commissioner, APCRDA to take necessary action to implement this Amendment. Authority further directed Commissioner, APCRDA to ensure double stacked parking to accommodate future parking demand.
2	Revision of allowable built-up area within P1-Passive recreational zone in Capital City.	Development shall be allowable in only 10% of the plot area (50 m2 to 500 m2 (whichever is smaller))	Resolved: That the Authority do and hereby approve that revision for development in P1-Passive recreational Zone stands Modified as 'Development shall be allowable in only 10% of the plot area' and any such development in P1 require approval by the review panel.
3	Increasing permissible height of the building to be considered excluding parking floor height for the buildings of an extent 300 Sq.m and above.	The Appendix-II of the Amaravati Capital City Zoning Regulations under Building type, the Maximum Building Height (m) in Residential use excludes height of parking floors in plots having extent of 300 Sq. mts and above. Height of parking floor shall not be less than 2.5m. In case of parking floors where mechanical system and lift are provided, height of such parking floor shall not be less than 4.5 m. Parking floors in high rise buildings are also excluded from calculation of height of building.	Resolved: That the Authority do and hereby approve following amendment to Amaravati Capital city zoning regulations: The Appendix-II of the Amaravati Capital City Zoning Regulations under Building type, the Maximum Building Height (m) in Residential use excludes height of parking floors in plots having extent of 300 Sq. mts and above. Height of parking floor shall not be less than 2.5m. In case of parking floors where mechanical system and lift are provided, height of such parking floor shall not be less than 4.5 m. Parking floors in high rise buildings are also excluded from calculation of height of building.
4	Amendment to Zoning Regulations with respect to P2 zone in Amaravati City.	The Appendix-I & II of the Amaravati Capital City Zoning Regulations.	RESOLVED That Zoning Regulations with respect to P2 zone are amended at chapter viii Appendix I (use matrix) of Zoning Regulations and chapter ix appendix II of zoning regulations matrix of Zoning Regulations to allow low density housing units (G Plus 2 floors) and group development with an FSI of 1:1 leaving most of the area as greenery subject to the conditions that the coverage shall be 50% maximum, the maximum FSI shall be 1:1 minimum plot area shall be 300 sq yards, minimum setback shall be 2.5m, and maximum height of the building shall be 10m and essential commercial area in APCRDA land nearby and community facilities within the scheme area are permitted.

Sd/- Commissioner, APCRDA.

VISAKHAPATNAM PORT SETS AMBITIOUS CARGO TARGET

- Some of the cargo is getting shifted to Mulapeta Port to decongest Visakhapatnam Port
- VPA achieves 74.6 MMT cargo till date for the financial year against 90 MMT target
- With improved efficiency and increased volumes, it is set to reach the target soon



A view of Visakhapatnam Port



Deputy Chairperson of VPA Roshni Aparanji Korati

RANI DEVALLA
VISAKHAPATNAM

FROM the current target of 90-MMT, Visakhapatnam Port Authority (VPA) has set an ambitious target of 100-MMT for the 2026-27 financial year which is pretty much close to the port's capacity of 130-MMT. Even as infrastructure enhancement, AI-driven surveillance plus green port initiatives are focused on to boost the capacity and narrow-down turnaround time to accelerate cargo handling, the port is well-placed to surpass the annual cargo handling targets for 2025-26 financial year.

As the berth operators vie to bring in business

volumes, cargo evacuation and berth-handling draws larger attention as well. "With plans in place to shift parts of cargo business strategically to Mulapeta Port soon, the focus is also on raising the targets and enhancing the efficiency," shared Roshni Aparanji Korati, Deputy Chairperson of VPA. When asked whether parts of cargo getting shifted to Mulapeta Port mean revenue getting sliced, the Deputy Chairperson assured that some of the cargo from Mulapeta Port too will be handled by the VPA. "We will also be operating some of the cargo volume here, especially operations and maintenance part

and hence the question of loss of revenue will not arise," informed the Deputy Chairperson. With an initial target of 2 MMT-3 MMT cargo set for Mulapeta Port initially, the cargo volume is set to increase in later years.

Setting ambitious targets, enhancing sustainable operations and reducing carbon emissions, Visakhapatnam Port is marching towards becoming a landlord port by 2030. With the port achieving 74.6 MMT cargo throughput so far for the financial year, the officials exude confidence that another 15.4 MMT is certain to be achieved in a little over 50 days to reach the 90 MMT target.



Rail robocop 'ASC Arjun' aids in nabbing two habitual offenders in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

'Offenders cannot escape 'ASC Arjun' surveillance'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

- ASC Arjun deployed for surveillance and patrolling in railway station
- The robocop aided in nabbing two habitual offenders roaming in station
- A joint interrogation was launched by RPF, GRP and their teams

THE rail robocop 'ASC Arjun' garners appreciation from various quarters while it's on duty.

Deployed for surveillance and patrolling, ASC Arjun not only detected two suspects at Visakhapatnam railway station, matching their facial recognition with the preloaded data base of criminals, but also alerted the Railway Protection Force (RPF). Soon after Arjun detected two suspects, he alerted the RPF CCTV control room in Visakhapatnam with immediate effect.

Upon receiving the alert, the CCTV staff head constable BS Narayana analysed the live feed and promptly informed the Sub Inspector V.Keerthi Reddy along with the Crime Prevention Detention Squad (CPDS) team of Waltair Division.

The team conducted a co-ordinated check and apprehended a habitual offender, Hadapa Shiva (39) and his associate G Bhangaru. Both

failed to produce any valid journey tickets and were brought to the RPF for further action.

Further interrogation and verification indicated that both of them are offenders with criminal history registered at Rayagada police station, involving multiple serious offences such as theft, robbery, dacoity, assault, and arms-related cases for over several years.

The apprehension was later informed to GRP Visakhapatnam, and further joint interrogation was conducted by RPF, GRP and

their teams. After detailed enquiry, it was concluded that the suspects had entered the station area without valid authority and were detected at the entry stage itself by the AI-enabled Facial Recognition System of Rail Robocop.

As both offenders were found travelling without tickets, they were dealt with under the provisions of the Indian Railways Act, 1989 (Amended 2003).

The matter was also intimated to Rayagada police for further action. Appreciating the good work of ASC Arjun, Divisional Railway Manager Lalit Bohra mentioned that the incident indicates the outcome of real-time surveillance, especially in a crowded area such as Visakhapatnam railway station that aided in apprehending habitual offenders.

According to police, both Shiva and Bhangaru came to Vizag to get treated at King George Hospital. During investigation, they mentioned that they gave up crime and are now into fruit business.

TIGER MOVEMENT TRIGGERS ANXIETY IN EG VILLAGES

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAHMENDRAVARAM

FEAR continues to prevail among residents of several villages in Seethanagaram, Rajanagaram and Rajahmendravaram Rural mandals following the confirmed movement of a tiger in the region. Though forest officials have verified the animal's presence through pugmarks, its exact location remains unknown, leaving both villagers and officials on edge.

The tiger was initially believed to have taken shelter in a banana plantation at Thorredu, which was declared the first shelter zone. However, officials were unable to determine when and how the animal moved out of the area. Despite deploying trap cameras and drone surveillance, forest staff are yet to ascertain the tiger's direction of movement or current hiding place.

Explaining the animal's behaviour, Forest Range Officer N David Raju said tigers are generally solitary and establish their own habitats, largely confining themselves to a defined territory. The tiger currently moving through



Forest staff inspecting tiger's pugmarks in Seethanagaram mandal

the region is estimated to be travelling more than 15 km a day. He said that the predominance of horticulture plantations rather than dense forests in the area may be causing some disorientation for the animal.

According to officials, the tiger's movement is suspected to be towards Venkatanagaram, with the possibility of it crossing the Godavari river to the other side. Tigers, after reaching the age of two or three years, usually separate from their mothers and

venture out to establish their own territory through marking, which can range between 2,000 and 5,000 hectares. They typically rest during the day and prefer to move during the night.

Forest officials said there was a strong possibility that the tiger may return on its own if left undisturbed. They advised people to remain alert in areas where the animal has been sighted but cautioned against creating panic or disturbances.

The tiger is believed to

have moved from Chhattisgarh into the Koyyalagudem area of Eluru district on January 20 and crossed the Godavari River near the Pattiseema project on January 30 to enter East Godavari district. Forest officials installed trap cameras and cages near Chinakondapudi in Seethanagaram mandal to track it. From there, the animal reportedly travelled nearly 15 kms to reach Thorredu, with pugmarks later found up to Venkatanagaram. Beyond a canal

in that area, its trail went cold. Officials said that despite installing six trap cameras and deploying drones on Monday, no fresh clues were obtained. Around 30 forest personnel and 10 police personnel are currently engaged in search operations. Reports that the tiger had returned to Kolamuru and Gadala areas on Tuesday were dismissed by officials as rumours.

Forest authorities have advised residents of Thorredu and Venkatanagaram and surrounding villages not to venture into fields during early morning and evening hours. They have also urged people to install bright lights around cattle sheds at night and avoid moving alone.

Meanwhile, District Forest Officer V Prabhakar Rao said on Tuesday that the tiger's movement was confirmed in the agricultural fields of Kondapudi village in Seethanagaram mandal. He said continuous patrolling was underway and that pugmarks had been verified. Officials believe the tiger may eventually move towards the Rampachodavaram forest region.

Collector stresses on rendering service without any delay

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

DISTRICT collector MN Harendhira Prasad conducted a surprise inspection at the Super Bazaar Sub-Registrar's office here on Tuesday. After thoroughly examining the registration processes, document verification and stamp duty collection procedures, the collector enquired about the services being provided to the public.

Also, the district collector

checked the procedures, methods and regulations followed in the registration process of government and private lands. He instructed the officials to ensure that services are provided in a transparent manner and without any delay.

Further, Harendhira Prasad directed the officials to work adhering to rules without the involvement of mediators and ensure that every applicant receives equal service.

He ordered that any deficiencies in record keeping should be rectified immediately and instructed the officials to pay special attention to the attendance and performance of the staff.

During the visit, the collector interacted with the persons waiting at the office and sought their opinions on the services rendered. District Registrar Upendra, Sub-Registrar Kanakaratnam and other officials were present during the inspection.

'YSRCP resorting to diversion politics'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

SLAMMING YSRCP for indulging in diversion tactics, Andhra Pradesh BJP president PVN Madhav pointed out that it is highly unacceptable on the part of the Opposition for using 'unparliamentary' language.

After giving a digital presentation under the banner 'Andhra Pradesh rising' on how various sectors derive benefits from the 'Union Budget 2026' and how it is focused on driving growth, Madhav highlighted that the budget is very much in alignment with Andhra Pradesh's progress



Andhra Pradesh
BJP president
PVN Madhav
speaking about
the budget in
Visakhapatnam
on Tuesday

path. "People are viewing politics as cheap and lenient and they look down upon YSRCP because of their abusive language and attitude," Madhav stated.

The Andhra Pradesh BJP

president said that the YSRCP leaders are behaving in an unruly manner because they could not stand the progress of the NDA government. "Even as the

YSRCP provokes, the party

leaders have to maintain the decorum," he underlined.

Talking about the Union Budget, Madhav termed it as a 'powerhouse for AP'. "After the formation of the NDA government in the

state, industrial growth has become faster. Allocations are made for major projects such as Polavaram with Rs 3,320 crore and Amaravati development with Rs 1,128 crore," he said.

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US tariff cut brings cheer to aqua sector: Atchchanna

- Minister says tariff on Indian seafood exports to US reduced from 25% to 18%, easing burden on aquaculture sector.
- Export volumes expected to rebound by 10-15% with profit margins recovering to 7-8%
- Andhra Pradesh set to benefit with higher farmer incomes, employment and sectoral growth

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE reduction of the United States tariff on Indian seafood exports from 25 per cent to 18 per cent has come as a major relief to exporters and the aquaculture sector in Andhra Pradesh, said minister for agriculture, cooperation, marketing, animal husbandry, dairy development and fisheries K Atchannaidu said on Monday.

Welcoming the decision, taken under the India-US trade agreement, the minister said the tariff cut would significantly ease the burden on seafood exporters,



particularly those engaged in aquaculture. He recalled that earlier, Indian seafood exports to the US were subjected not only to a 25 per cent tariff but also additional punitive duties, pushing the total tariff burden to 50-58 per cent.

As a result, between April and November 2025, India's seafood exports to the US fell by about 15 per cent in volume to 2.01 lakh metric tonnes, while export value declined by 6.3 per cent to 1.72 billion dollars.

Frozen shrimp, India's principal seafood export to the US, was the worst hit during this period, the minister noted. With the

tariff now reduced to 18 per cent, the competitiveness of Indian seafood products in the US market has improved considerably. Stalled export orders are being revived, and favourable conditions have emerged for releasing consignments held up in bonded warehouses.

Atchannaidu said seafood exports to the US are expected to grow by 10-15 per cent in the coming months, with export volumes likely to return to pre-tariff levels by the second half of 2025-26.

Profit margins in the seafood processing sector, which had shrunk to 5-5.5 per cent during the high-tariff phase, are also expected to recover to 7-8 per cent following the tariff reduction. Duty concessions on key inputs announced in the Union Budget 2026 would provide additional support to the sector, he added.

While the US market

shows signs of revival, exports to non-US markets such as the European Union, China, Vietnam, Russia and the United Kingdom have remained stable. In early 2025-26, non-US markets accounted for around 57 per cent of shrimp exports, reflecting effective market diversification.

For Andhra Pradesh, the country's leading seafood-producing state, the tariff cut is a boon, the minister said. The recovery in exports will enhance income stability for farmers and fishermen, create more employment opportunities, and improve gross value addition (GVA) in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors. Citing MPEDA estimates, he said India's total seafood exports are likely to reach 14-15 lakh metric tonnes in 2025-26, underlining the significance of the US tariff reduction for the sustainable growth of the sector.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

DEPUTY Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Tuesday directed the excise officials to maintain continuous surveillance on liquor shops and take action against those selling booze at inflated prices.

The Deputy Chief Minister received complaints that liquor is being sold at prices higher than the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) across the state. He asked liquor shops not to bring a bad name to the government by selling liquor at higher prices.

According to a statement from the Deputy Chief Minister, complaints are coming in from Kakinada district and other parts of the state. After examining the complaints, he stated that selling liquor at inflated prices is against the rules. It also brings a bad name to the government.

The Jana Sena leader said shopkeepers must strictly adhere to the regulations regarding liquor sales.

Opposition YSRCP has been targeting the coalition



- Orders strict surveillance and action against liquor outlets selling above MRP, citing complaints from Kakinada and elsewhere
- Says overpricing violates rules and tarnishes the government's image; directs shopkeepers to strictly follow excise norms
- Directions come amid YSRCP allegations of rampant illegal liquor sales, even as the Cabinet's recent Rs 10 per bottle hike aims to boost state revenue

government over illegal liquor sales. Its leaders alleged that the government is allowing rampant violations.

According to YSRCP leaders, the shopkeepers are selling liquor at inflated prices.

The state Cabinet in January decided to increase the maximum retail price of all sizes of India-Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) brands and foreign liquor by Rs 10 per bottle, while withdrawing additional retail excise tax imposed on bars.

It was announced that the increase of Rs 10 per bottle will not be applicable to

cheaper liquor (180 ml bottle costing Rs 99), beer, wine and ready-to-drink (RTD) varieties.

The Cabinet also decided to increase the retailer margin by approximately 1 per cent of the MRP on IMFL and FL, including 180 ml IMFL bottles, beer, wine and RTDs. The price hike is expected to generate approximately Rs 1,391 crore in additional annual revenue for the state. At the same time, the withdrawal of additional retail excise tax will reduce the financial burden on bars by about Rs 340 crore a year.

Home minister slams Jagan, stresses TDP's discipline

- Anitha says Naidu's governance is incomparable to Jagan's, highlighting restraint among TDP cadres
- Accuses YSRCP chief of inciting violence and abusive language, contrasting it with TDP's focus on development
- Warns of strict police action against YSRCP attempts to create unrest, promising a tough stance on political rowdies

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA



Mohan Babu, Vishnu booked for SFI leaders abduction

- Tension prevails after SFI leaders Akbar and Vinod were attacked and abducted while heading for a protest against Mohan Babu University
- Police rescue the two student leaders within an hour and take the accused and vehicles used into custody

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI



CPM leaders protesting before Tiruchanur police station on Tuesday

TIRUPATI witnessed tension on Tuesday after two student leaders were allegedly attacked and abducted while they were on their way to the Collectorate to stage a protest against alleged irregularities at Mohan Babu University (MBU). About 30 persons reportedly attacked SFI district general secretary Akbar and SFI SV University leader Vinod and took them away in vehicles. The incident led to the filing of cases against Cine action Manchu Mohan Babu and Manchu Vishnu along with others.

The sudden incident shocked SFI students. CITU state vice president Kandarpa Murali immediately brought the matter to the notice of district SP L Subba Rayudu and ASP Ravi Manoharachari.

Murali warned that any threat to student leaders would lead to serious consequences and demanded strict action from the police and the state government. He questioned whether violence was the answer when students were only seeking correction of alleged wrongdoings.

Police acted swiftly and rescued the two SFI leaders

within an hour of the incident. The accused were taken into custody and the vehicles used for the abduction were seized. SP Subba Rayudu said criminal cases would be registered not only against those who carried out the abduction but also against those who planned it. He assured a comprehensive investigation and stated that no one would be spared for taking the law into their own hands.

Meanwhile, Tiruchanur police have registered a case against those involved in the abduction of SFI student leaders Akbar and Vinod. The case has been booked as Crime No 23/2026 under Sections 191(2), 115(2), 140(1), 126(2), 351(2) R/w 190 and 61(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS) at Tiruchanur police station.

CPI state secretary V Srinivasa Rao demanded stringent punishment for those involved in the attack and abduction. He recalled that the higher education de-

The accused named in the case include A1 Satheesh, A2 Mohan Babu and A3 Manchu Vishnu Babu. In addition to them, cases have also been registered against around 20 other persons in connection with the incident.

Student organisations have been raising concerns for the past several months over alleged irregularities at Mohan Babu University, particularly regarding fee collections. They had submitted several representations to the state government seeking an inquiry and justice for students.

CPI Tirupati city secretary J Viswanath also demanded immediate action and warned that protests against the alleged irregularities would continue.

AP Parents Association state president S Narahari condemned the attack and urged the Chief Minister to intervene. He demanded implementation of APHERMC inquiry committee recommendations, cancellation of university permissions, refund of Rs 26,17 crore allegedly collected illegally from students, enforcement of the Rs 15 lakh penalty, and withdrawal of false cases against parents and students.



NTRUHS to launch India's first AI-based medical edu system

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

- AI-enabled platform to strengthen competency-based medical training

NTR University of Health Sciences (NTRUHS) will soon introduce India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME) system, marking a major step towards modernising medical education in Andhra Pradesh, vice-chancellor Dr P Chandrasekhar said on Tuesday.

Addressing a WebEx meeting with principals, vice-principals, professors and students from 38 medical colleges across the state, Chandrasekhar said the initiative would provide world-class, technology-enabled learning infrastructure for medical students.

Speaking during the webinar, Dr Chandrasekhar Bondugula, creator of EdMedAI and Chairman of the Graduate Medical Education Committee in the United States, said he was committed to contributing to India's medical education system. He said the AI-powered application was designed to prepare future-ready and highly competent doctors capable of meeting global healthcare standards.

Principal secretary for health department Saurabh Gaur said the State government was keen on promoting Artificial Intelligence in healthcare and education. He stated that AI-based services could significantly improve knowledge acquisition and precision in medical training and added that the government would soon frame comprehensive policies and guidelines in this regard.

NTRUHS registrar Dr Sai Sudheer, director (R&D) Dr Srilakshmi Suryapraba, director (publications) Dr K Sudha, medical education advisor Dr Lokesh Idara and AI team members from SHC Technologies Private Limited.

JSP's Bolisetty quits party role over environmental PIL

VASU POTNURU
VIJAYAWADA

- Steps down from all party responsibilities citing conflict of interest with ongoing pollution-related PIL in AP High Court
- Notes that Pawan Kalyan, now holding the environment portfolio, is a prime respondent in the case
- Says the move ensures impartiality in judicial proceedings and keeps the environmental cause free from political complexity



Jana Sena Party senior leader and national convenor of Jal Bidarai Bolisetty Satyanarayana

IN a move to ensure that political commitments should not come in the way of fighting for the people and society, general secretary (environment) of the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and national convenor of Jal Bidarai, Bolisetty Satyanarayana decided to step down from all party-affiliated responsibilities with immediate effect.

Citing ethical and legal considerations linked to ongoing environmental public interest litigation, the announcement was made in this regard.

In a letter addressed to the JSP high command,

that the PIL, filed in 2020, concerns critical pollution issues, including untreated sewage, pharmaceutical effluents and industrial contamination in north coastal Andhra Pradesh.

He noted that while the petition was initiated during the previous YSRCP's regime, the present political context has changed with the formation of the NDA

government and Jana Sena as a key alliance partner.

Satyanarayana pointed out that the state government and the ministry of environment are prime respondents in the case, and that the party president, Pawan Kalyan, now holds the environment portfolio.

Further, Satyanarayana stated that continuing in a high-ranking party position while pursuing litigation against the state government could lead to a perceived conflict of interest, potentially compromise the impartiality of judicial proceedings.

Being associated with the political party, he added that such circumstances could di-

vert attention from the core objective of environmental protection.

Emphasising his commitment towards political ethics, Satyanarayana said he had chosen to step aside from the political responsibilities to ensure that the 'cause of the environment' remained free from political complexity. However, he clarified that the move was temporarily intended to remain in force until the final judicial purpose of the PIL.

While extending his support to the ideology of JSP, Satyanarayana said that his responsibilities as a petitioner and as national convenor of Jal Bidarai required him to maintain a distance from formal party roles to ensure that justice was served without prejudice. He expressed confidence in the present government and in Pawan Kalyan's leadership that it would deliver positive environmental outcomes.

Satyanarayana expressed gratitude to the party leadership's continued support for environmental causes and confirmed that the non-political initiative 'Manu Nudi Mana Nadi' would continue.

He added that his decision would enable him to engage with the public and the media on constitutional issues freely, including environmental degradation and human rights without political constraints.

PREZ URGES STUDENTS TO HELP THOSE LEFT BEHIND

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BALASORE

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday urged students of Fakir Mohan University to help those left behind in the developmental journey. Addressing the convocation ceremony of the institute in Balasore, she said that a society's growth lies in the progress of everyone. She said that the key to success in every endeavour is dedication.

The President paid tributes to 'Vyasakabi' Fakir Mohan Senapati and said that during her student days, she was deeply influenced by his timeless story, 'Rebatu' and that influence remains indelible. She underlined that the National Education Policy-2020 emphasises the importance of mother tongue and guides students to stay connected to their culture.

"India has a rich knowledge tradition. Our scriptures and manuscripts are full of knowledge and wisdom," Murmu said. Apart from poetry and literature, they are also a source of knowledge in areas including science, medicine, astronomy and architecture, she said.

By understanding the past and comprehending the present, the students can shape their own future as well as that of the country, the President said. She congratulated the graduating students and said that through knowledge, passion and commitment, they can achieve respect and recognition in society. Noting that successful and meaningful lives are not the same, Murmu said that while the former is good, the latter is even better.

She said it is important to achieve fame, gain prestige and become financially secure, but one should also do something for others. The President was happy to note that Fakir Mohan University gives importance to research and outreach programmes in addition to academic stud-



MURMU PERFORMS 'PINDA DAAN'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
JAIPUR

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu visited Biraja temple in Jajpur district on Tuesday morning to perform the pinda daan ritual. Elaborate security arrangements were made at the temple, with about 600 security personnel deployed for the presidential visit.

Murmu performed the pinda daan ritual at 'Navi Gaya', a sacred pool on the temple premises, for the

salvation of the souls of her ancestors. According to mythology, after demon Gayasura was killed by Lord Vishnu, his body was divided into three parts. His head fell at Gaya in Bihar, his feet at Pithapuram

growth, innovation and social transformation, she said. "By nurturing critical thinking, ethical leadership and research that responds to local and global challenges, institutions of higher learning can shape a future that is sustainable, equitable and rooted in human values," Murmu added.

She expressed confidence that Fakir Mohan University,



through its academic vision and community engagement, will play a transformative role in this direction. A total of 1,831 undergraduate and postgraduate students were awarded degrees and medals during the convocation ceremony. Over the last three years, the university has given 110 gold medals, and 89 research scholars have been awarded the Doc-

tor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, officials said.

On the occasion, honorary doctorate degrees were conferred upon three eminent personalities for their outstanding contributions in their respective fields -- Anuradha Biswas (sports), Santanu Kumar Acharya (literature) and Guru Gopal Chandra Panda (Odissi music).

All schools in Jajpur town and its nearby areas were shut in view of the President's visit.

The historic occasion was graced by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, ministers Bibhuti Bhusan Jena and Gokulananda Mallick, nearly all MLAs of Ganjam, senior district officials and the families of the newlyweds, who together became witnesses to a celebration that went beyond ritual. One that restored dignity and hope to hundreds of households.

Performing the sacred 'kanyadan,' the Chief Minister Majhi spoke with emotion, declaring that he stood there not as the head of the government but as a father and brother to

CM blesses 201 couples as govt launches mass wedding scheme



SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK
BERHAMPUR

UNDER the benevolent gaze of Maa Taratarini, where faith meets destiny atop the sacred Shakti Pitha in Purushottampur block of Ganjam district, 201 young couples from economically weaker families stepped into a new chapter of life on Tuesday as Odisha formally launched the Mukhyamantri Kanya Bibha Yojana (MKBY).

The air resonated with Vedic chants, halahuli, haribol and the soulful notes of sankha and mahuri, turning the inaugural mass marriage ceremony into a moving confluence of tradition, compassion and State support.

Before beginning the 'pinda daan' ritual, Murmu performed puja at the 13th-century shrine where Goddess Biraja is worshipped in the form of Durga with two hands or 'dwibhuja', spearing the chest of Mahisasura with one and pulling his tail with the other.

All schools in Jajpur town and its nearby areas were shut in view of the President's visit.

Announced in the State Budget and formally notified in late 2025, the MKBY is designed to help economically weaker families solemnise their daughters' marriages with dignity and cultural respect. Each eligible bride will receive assistance of Rs 51,000, including Rs 35,000 through Direct Benefit Transfer to her bank account, Rs 10,000 towards a wedding gift kit comprising saree, jewellery and essential household items, and Rs 6,000 to support community or mass marriage arrangements.

The initiative aims to reduce the crushing burden of wedding expenses while discouraging dowry practices and preventing child or forced marriages.

The scheme will be implemented across all districts of Odisha from 2025-26 to 2029-30. Applications will be processed at the district level with strict verification.

On this auspicious day, Odisha did more than host a mass marriage; it reaffirmed a promise that every daughter, regardless of economic standing, deserves respect, security and a dignified beginning to her married life.

every bride. "A daughter is never a burden," he said, "she is God's blessing." His words drew heartfelt applause, echoing the spirit of the scheme that seeks to transform social attitudes while easing financial distress.

Highlighting the government's commitment to women's empowerment and social security, the Chief Minister linked MKBY with the Subhadra Yojana, citing inspiring examples such as President Droupadi Murmu, Odisha Assembly Speaker Surama Padhi and Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida as symbols of what women can achieve when given opportunity and support.

The rituals were conducted by 201 Brahmin pandits under the guidance of chief pandit Ashok Kumar Padhi, with marriages solemnised in 201 separate mandaps. As the sacred knots were tied and blessings showered, tears of joy glistened in many eyes, marking not just the union of couples, but the union of tradition with a compassionate state.

On this auspicious day, Odisha did more than host a mass marriage; it reaffirmed a promise that every daughter, regardless of economic standing, deserves respect, security and a dignified beginning to her married life.

Reframing Public Health Education: From metrics to meaning

RAMYA PINNAMANENI &
NITHY RAMESH

THE number of public health schools and programmes in India is at an all-time high and continues to grow annually. As of 2016, only 44 institutions in India offered Masters of Public Health (MPH) degrees. Over the last decade, this number of public health programmes has risen significantly to 129 across India's 28 States and eight Union Territories. Increased visibility of public health during the COVID-19 pandemic drove a renewed focus on essential functions, including epidemiology, health communication and emergency response.

The pandemic redefined public perception, elevating public health from a misunderstood field to a critical pillar of national preparedness and systemic resilience. This change increased both student

interest and institutional willingness to offer formal public health training. Significant national R&D funding represents a more recent lever that could further accelerate this expansion.

The Indian government recently launched a ₹1 lakh crore Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) Fund to boost private sector-led innovation, with an initial outlay of ₹20,000 crore for FY 2025-26. As public health capacity-building initiatives grow and research avenues expand, it is an opportune time to ask: What is the true purpose of an education in public health?

Beyond degrees: The purpose of Public Health Education

As we reflect on the purpose of public health education as educators and practitioners in the field, we ask ourselves and fellow colleagues and stakeholders, is it appropriate to

judge a scholar's success by the citation counts of their published work or by the impact they've made on the communities they serve? Is our goal to produce more publications in journals or to impact our communities? Or does it even have to be one over the other? As India builds its public health workforce, the answers to these questions will define the leaders we develop and the health systems we strengthen.

Education beyond the classroom

A persistent challenge is that many students enter public health programmes without clearly understanding what the field entails. This is understandable, given the vast applications for an MPH degree. Students come from various academic backgrounds such as dentistry, medicine, life sciences, economics and are often guided by parental advice or

the prospect of employment. Career mentorship is often inconsistent, funneling individuals into community-facing roles despite a lack of genuine passion or interest.

A shift towards competency-based education

When we pursued our MPH degrees a decade ago, public health education was largely project-driven and mostly undertaken by MBBS and BDS graduates. Curriculum design often prioritised faculty interests and current projects over a shared understanding of core competencies for graduates. Today, despite the increasing number of MPH programmes and graduates, India still does not have a national framework that defines what a public health graduate education should entail.

This is where competency-based education becomes important.

3rd Bilasuni Mahotsava celebrated with fanfare



HANS NEWS SERVICE
CUTTACK

THE third Bilasuni Mahotsava at Bilasuni village in Niali block of Cuttack district was celebrated with immense grandeur and fanfare. The three-day Sports-cum-Cultural Carnival from January 30 to February 1 drew a massive crowd of 10,000 people. Hosted by Gopabandhu Evergreen Anchalika Yuba Parishad (GEAYP) and Voluntary As-

sociation for Empowerment, Development and Action (VEDA), the mega event was a huge success. On the festival's opening day, State Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahalingh pledged his support for the comprehensive development of Bilasuni and the empowerment of its residents.

The Mahotsava began with the Shree Gopaljew Football Tournament, featuring competition among eight local football teams. The Ma-

hotsava's highlight was the Mahadev Mahapatra Memorial Inter-District and Inter-State Football Tournament, featuring eight top-tier teams. While the Cuttack team won the Cup, Khurda finished as the runners-up.

The highlight of the Mahotsava was the spectacular three-evening cultural extravaganza. The line-up of the artistes who mesmerised the audience with their power-packed performances included playback

singer Ira Mohanty, Ollywood stars Deepak Barik and Riya Dey and comedy masters duo Pranja-Sankar. Actresses Trupti Mirambika and Payal Priyadarshini and talented performers of Sadhana Kala Kendra and Kuttam Chandi Dance Group also enthralled the audience with their spectacular presentations.

Bilasuni Sammans were awarded to distinguished individuals for their outstanding contributions to the society.

MARCH 31 DEADLINE FOR WARD DELIMITATION

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

which were declared by the State government as new ULBs in December 2025.

In a letter on Monday, Director of Municipal Administration Arindam Dakua has directed magistrates-cum-collectors of 18 districts to complete the exercise by March 31, 2026, in line with the Odisha Municipal Act, 1950. Earlier, the SEC, in a letter to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department, had emphasised the need to complete delimitation and reservation of seats to enable timely elections, which must be held within six months of the



notifications which is by June 2026.

In the letter to district collectors, the Director of Municipal Administration suggested that the draft notification for ward delimitation and seat reservation, inviting objections and suggestions, should be done on February 12. "The objections can be submitted until February 21, 2026, and provisional notifications will be published on February 26, 2026," the letter said.

Appeals against the provisional notifications can be filed from February 26 to March 13, the letter said, adding that hearings on

appeals will occur between March 16 and 28. It said that the final notifications will be issued by March 31 and copies sent to the SEC, government, and ULBs concerned.

The new ULBs were located in the districts of Angul, Bolangir, Balasore, Bargarh, Bhadrak, Boudh, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Jajpur, Nayagarh, Kalahandi, Khurda, Koraput, Mayurbhanj, Rayagada, Sambalpur, and Subarnapur. The SEC has also informed the H&UD for holding similar processes in Sambalpur and Puri municipal corporations.

Reduction in US tariffs is big relief for Indian economy

Finally, the saga of Trump tariffs has ended on a happy note—at least from India's perspective. With US President Donald Trump announcing an agreement with India that reduces tariffs on Indian goods from 50 per cent to 18 per cent, the long-standing bilateral trade tensions are likely to subside. He had imposed two tariffs on India: a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff, and later a 25 per cent import duty on account of India's purchase of Russian crude oil. Trade had spilled over into the political and strategic arena, much to the detriment of the best interests of the world's biggest democracies. Trump and his officials made remarks about India that they should not have. They got closer to Paki-

stan, which said last month that it had inked a pact with a firm connected to World Liberty Financial, the main crypto business of Trump's family. The objective is to explore the use of World Liberty's USD1 stable coin for cross-border payments. The Trump administration also pampered the de-facto ruler of Pakistan-Army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir. He was allowed to indulge in loose talk from American soil, which was very hurtful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Trump repeatedly claimed that he had brokered peace between India and Pakistan during the four-day skirmish last May.

Trump should not have said and done the things he did vis-à-vis In-

dia in his second term as President. But, they say, all is well that ends well. With Indian goods to pay an 18 per cent tariff, they suddenly become much more competitive in comparison with the merchandise from other countries. China faces a 37 per cent tariff, Brazil 50 per cent, South Africa 30 per cent, Myanmar 40 per cent, and Laos 40 per cent. We also fare slightly better compared to our neighbours, with Bangladesh and Vietnam facing 20 per cent tariff, and Malaysia, Cambodia, Thailand, and Pakistan paying 19 per cent. There is also a serendipitous result: India gave up its reluctance to augment trade with the world and went into overdrive to finalise free trade agreements, the

recent one being with the European Union. The India-EU agreement is not just another trade deal; it is a statement of intent. It signals that India is willing to engage seriously with large, demanding markets, accept high standards, and open its economy in a calibrated manner. The EU, with its vast consumer base and technological prowess, offers India access to high-value markets, advanced manufacturing ecosystems, and cutting-edge green technologies.

In return, Europe gains a reliable partner in Asia at a time when geopolitical uncertainties are reshaping global supply chains. More importantly, the push towards FTAs reflects a growing realisation in New

Delhi that economic growth, job creation, and strategic influence are deeply intertwined. Trade is no longer viewed merely as an economic activity but as a tool of statecraft. By embedding itself in a dense network of trade agreements, India reduces its exposure to unilateral coercion, enhances its bargaining power, and anchors itself more firmly in the global economic order. If Delhi sustains this momentum—by concluding more FTAs, improving domestic competitiveness, and aligning regulations with global standards, the country could emerge stronger and more resilient from an episode that initially appeared deeply damaging. In India, it takes a crisis to force overdue reform.

Prioritise rejuvenation of 'Buckingham Canal'



DR D SREENIVASULU

THE rapidity of transformation of human civilization increased manifold ever since inventions were made in transportation modes. Even in India, beginning with the colonial period and after independence, continuous efforts are made to improve the transportation networks in the country connecting the length and breadth of the subcontinent.

Presently, governments are developing road networks, highways, bullet trains, national and international flights. Because of their ease and swiftness, the preceding modes of transport overpowered waterways, which used to play a key role in the economy by providing transportation to goods and services, and people across regions. An outcome of this transformation, coupled with rapid urbanisation, encroachment of water bodies and pollution is the neglect of the several water canals in India which became victims of modernisation. It is the responsibility of the government to promote the waterways through the revival of the canals. One such canal whose plight calls for immediate attention and action by the government is 'Buckingham Canal'.

Designed by Western engineers, this 19th-century navigation canal passes parallel through the Coromandel coast and connects Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Its construction was taken up in several phases. This is a private

waterway that was planned and executed based on the 'design-build-operate' project delivery system. This was the predecessor of the present day much-acclaimed Build-Own-Operate-Transfer Model).

The construction of the canal began in 1806. Initially, the 16.5 km stretch of the canal from Madras Port to Ennore was built by the Basil Cochrane company. In remembrance of this contribution, this canal was called the 'Cochrane Canal' in 1806. Later, the British government took interest in extending this canal by stretching it northwards to Madras.

By connecting Kakinada Port via Vijayawada, the canal enabled continuous activity between Madras and Kakinada port. For a while, it was also called Lord Clive's canal. When the Great Famine hit this region during 1876-78, the British government provided relief for the people through the extension works of this canal. This canal was renamed as Buckingham Canal, after the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, who was governor of Madras presidency at that time.

The 796-km long water navigation canal extending parallel to the Coromandel Coast, one kilometre from the coast, is extended till Villupuram in Tamil Nadu. It also connects with Pulicat Lake and at Chennai, it intersects through the city's three major rivers- Kosasthalaiyar, Cooum and Adyar. All these aspects make this canal a marvellous engineering creation and multipurpose project.

This canal was initially used for transportation of commodities, people and later, for fishing. Settlements cropped up on the banks for this canal. Many communities formed their livelihood by depending on this canal.

In his work 'History of the Buckingham Canal Project' (1898), A S Russell writes that the construction of the canal



This historic canal, which used to be bustling with activity, is now ravaged with multiple problems like emitting untreated wastes by the industries and urban populations, encroachment of the canal land, siltation, and damage caused by natural disasters like floods. The mega prawn farms situated at the banks of this waterway dump their diseased and dead stock directly into the canal. Cyclones, against which this canal acted as a buffer zone, have damaged the canal and only a few attempts have been made towards the reconstruction and maintenance of the canal

has placed erstwhile Madras Presidency "in cheap and easy communication with no less than five districts, and with the large and important towns of Cocanada, Bezwada, Masulipatam, Ongole and Nellore".

This canal earlier was "a dreary waste of sand, but much of this barren and arid country has been greatly developed and improved owing to the remarkably cheap means of communication afforded by the canal; cultivation has been brought into existence or extended, owing to the facilities given by the canal for the drainage of low-lying land; numerous casuarina and other plantations have been formed along its entire length; a great increase in the wealth and prosperity of the population has taken place".

Beyond bringing prosperity for the people in the region, this canal has the potential to protect people against natural disasters like floods and tsunamis. The canal has mitigated the effects of the 2004 Tsunami by acting as a buffer zone for 310-km long coastal regions

from Pedaganjam in Prakasam district to Chennai, saving the lives of hundreds of fishermen and coastal villages.

Scientists believe the canal has the potential to act as a barrier to allow tidal waves to merge into the ocean in ten minutes.

This historic canal, which used to be bustling with activity, is now ravaged with multiple problems like emitting untreated wastes by the industries and urban populations, encroachment of the canal land, siltation, and damage caused by natural disasters like floods. The mega prawn farms situated at the banks of this waterway dump their diseased and dead stock directly into the canal. Cyclones, against which this canal acted as a buffer zone, have damaged the canal and only a few attempts have been made towards the reconstruction and maintenance of the canal.

The advent of faster modes of transportation contributed to the deterioration of the canal. In some areas, the canal is filled with filth and debris, while at

some places, it completely disappears and will be visible after some distance. The need of the hour is the immediate restoration of this age-old canal. Whenever a huge hurricane or flood hits any region, the government releases millions of rupees in the form of relief. But if steps were taken to develop infrastructure to mitigate these disasters, loss of people and property could be easily mitigated.

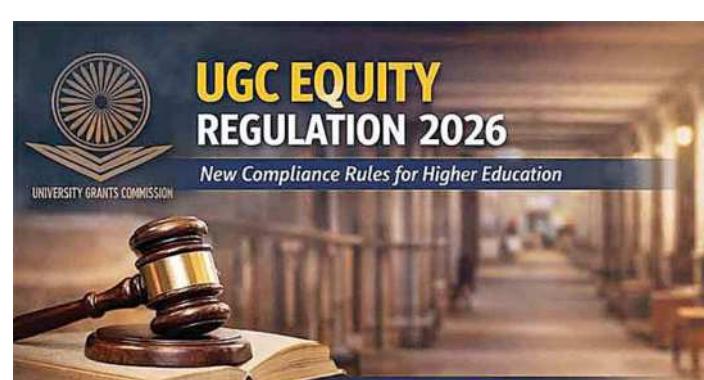
This canal offers an opportunity in that direction, and to provide for the livelihoods of many communities living across the canal. The restoration of the canal with medium- and long-term plans should be the priority of the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, along with the Union government.

It is a matter of great relief and hope that the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has announced its intention for the revival of the Buckingham canal by declaring it as National Waterways 4 (NW-4). Established in 1986, IWAI aims at the development,

maintenance and restoration of Inland Water transportation on national waterways. Rejuvenation of Buckingham canal is placed under NW-4, which covers waterways from Kakinada to Kalapet in Pondicherry in three phases. But the rejuvenation plans under NW-4 are jeopardized due to the shifting of survey works in Phase-1 to Phase-2 and Phase-3. Despite the ambitious plan, the implementation works are going at a snail's pace. Governments have a responsibility to change the order of priority and expedite the work on this national canal waterway in the first place. The role of the State Water Resources Department is crucial for this.

Reviving Buckingham canal requires a concrete and swift plan of action, which involves dredging, removal of numerous bridges that were built on the route of the canal, recovering the encroached lands, and reconstruction of the walls wherever required. It is also necessary to check on the pollutants and untreated wastes that are being released into the canal throughout its stretch. Rejuvenation of the multipurpose canal would ease the environment-friendly transportation of commodities and people between states, reduce traffic woes, irrigation, provide for the livelihood for millions of people, fishing, and boating. It can also open the opportunity for developing more cordial relationships between Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which can share the benefits of this project by recognising dual responsibility for the states to protect this national heritage. A relentless resolve by the governments can ensure that the otherwise 'forlorn' Buckingham canal will start bustling with activity, like in the good old days.

(The writer is a retired IAS Officer)



perceived exclusion has turned a tool for social harmony into a lightning rod for division.

Additionally, the broad and somewhat vague definition of 'indirect discrimination' has raised concerns among faculty that routine academic evaluations or disciplinary actions could be misconstrued as bias, potentially leading to a 'race to the bottom' where merit is sacrificed to avoid litigation. The removal of a previous draft's clause that penalised 'false or malicious complaints' is another glaring demerit, as it leaves the system vulnerable to weaponization for settling personal scores or campus politics.

This perceived lack of balance has sparked widespread resistance, particularly among student groups from

unreserved categories. The pushback, often coalescing under digital movements like #UGCRollback, is rooted in the fear of 'reverse discrimination'. Students argue that the current structure of Equity Committees, which mandates representation from reserved categories but remains silent on the inclusion of general category members, lacks the appearance of neutrality required for natural justice.

There is a palpable anxiety that campuses are being transformed into zones of surveillance. The deployment of 'equity squads' is seen by many as an intrusive overreach that could chill everyday social interactions, replacing organic peer bonding with a culture of suspicion. Resistance is not necessarily against the principle of equity but against a design that many

feel presumes guilt based on identity rather than evidence.

As we look toward the future of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), it is clear that the UGC Regulation 2026 is a necessary but imperfect instrument. The intent to purge campuses of the ancient poison of casteism is noble and constitutionally mandated.

However, for any regulation to be effective, it must be perceived as fair by all stakeholders it governs. To ensure the long-term success of these guidelines, the UGC should consider critical amendments. Reinroducing a safeguard against demonstrably false and malicious complaints would go a long way in building trust. Furthermore, the definition of discrimination should be made 'caste-neutral' in its language, ensuring that any student, regardless of their background, has a pathway to redress if they face identity-based harassment. Equity should be a bridge that connects the campus community, not a wall that segregates it into silos of permanent grievance and fortified privilege. Only by balancing accountability with due process can we create a truly inclusive academic environment that honors both social justice and individual merit.

(The writer is a former college principal and founder of Supporting Shoulders)



LETTERS

Let us join hands to tackle cancer

World Cancer Day is observed every year on February 4 to raise awareness about the devastating impact of cancer and to encourage collective action against this deadly disease. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), it accounts for nearly 10 million deaths annually. In many regions, including in India, lack of modern medical facilities, limited access to early detection and low public awareness worsen the situation. The World Cancer Day urges governments, health organisations and individuals to promote preventive measures, support patients and invest in healthcare infrastructure and research. This year's theme, "United by Unique," reminds us that while every patient's cancer journey is different, our collective action—supporting patients, funding research, and advocating for affordable treatment—is essential. Early detection is our strongest tool. Let us stand united to ensure that no one faces the burden of cancer alone.

Jubel D'Cruz, Mumbai

Quality health ensures longevity

Our editorial 'Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan' aptly calls for adding life to years and not the way round. Undoubtedly, life expectancy has risen due to advances in medical science and breakthroughs in disease management. Today's challenge lies elsewhere—sedentary lifestyles, excessive junk food consumption, rising obesity, and lifestyle-related ailments affecting the heart and other vital organs. Emerging trends like cancer, dementia and Parkinsonism are perturbing trends. Longevity, therefore, must now be matched with quality health and responsible living.

K V Raghuram, Wayanad

Need to focus on preventive health

THE "Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan" editorial (THI, Feb 3) rightly highlights how public health improvements have extended life expectancy in India. But as we cross 70 years on average, the focus must shift to quality of life in older age. Longevity without adequate geriatric care, social support, and financial security can strain families and systems. We need more investment in preventive health, age-friendly infrastructure, and pension coverage, especially in rural areas. Genetic research is valuable, but practical steps—clean water, nutrition, and accessible clinics—still make the biggest difference.

S M Jeeva, Chennai-32

Protect all vulnerable groups

THIS refers to the editorial "Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan". It reminds us that longevity is shaped not just by genes but by living conditions that often hide genetic potential. For India, this has practical implications. While genetic research deserves support, policy attention must stay firmly on basics that still vary widely across regions. Clean air, safe roads, infection control, and early-life nutrition can reduce avoidable deaths that distort lifespan outcomes. Adding years to life is meaningful only if public systems ensure those years are healthier and more productive, especially for vulnerable groups.

M Barathi, Bengaluru-560076

Healthy longevity: Onus on govt

A propos "Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan" (THI, February 3). The editorial highlights an important global study showing that genetics may account for over 50 per cent of human lifespan once extrinsic factors like accidents and infections are properly accounted for. The findings underscore the need to focus on controllable extrinsic risks. While genes play a larger role than thought, public health measures—improved sanitation, vaccination drives, road safety, and access to timely medical care—can still add meaningful years, especially in rural and lower-income groups. Policymakers should continue investing in these areas alongside emerging genetic research to maximise healthy longevity.

A Myilsami, Coimbatore-402

Old-age homes and eroding humane values

THIS pertains to "Interesting insights emerge on human lifespan" (THI Feb 3). Paradoxically, even as human longevity improves, new and unfamiliar diseases continue to haunt and claim lives. Added years of life carry meaning only if accompanied by empathy, compassion, and a fellow feeling. Mushrooming of old-age homes and neglected parents is a sobering reminder that longevity without humane values reduces life to self-centred existence, marked by unfulfilled desires rather than shared fulfilment.

K Parvathy, Mysuru

thehansreader@gmail.com



BENGALURU ONLINE

Paperless property registration through Kaveri 2.0 now..

BENGALURU: Property buyers in Karnataka will no longer need to stand in long queues at sub-registrar offices for registration work. The Department of Registration and Stamps has launched a major reform by introducing a fully paperless property registration system. With the upgraded Kaveri 2.0 software platform, all registration procedures will now be carried out digitally, eliminating the need for physical documents.

Kaveri 2.0 is an advanced online property registration platform developed by the Karnataka government. It is an improved version of the earlier Kaveri software and is integrated with multiple government portals such as Bhoomi, E-Swathu, Khajane-2 and Sakala. The system enables citizens to complete the entire registration process within 10 minutes in a transparent and hassle-free manner without the involvement of middlemen. While digital e-stamping was already in use, the entire registration process has now been converted into a digital format. After successful registration, citizens will no longer receive physical documents. Instead, they will be provided with a login ID and password through which all property-related records can be accessed securely online.

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

CM targets natural farming expansion in state by 2031

- Aims to bring 40 lakh farmers under natural farming
- Launches Digi Rythu Bazaar, APAIMS, Kisan Drone apps
- Directs officials to counter El Niño impact

HAN NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu launches apps related to agriculture and allied sectors at the Secretariat on Tuesday

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday directed officials to launch a comprehensive programme to make Andhra Pradesh the country's largest natural farming State. He said 1.8 million farmers were currently practicing natural farming on two million acres and set a target of covering four million farmers and five million acres by 2030-31.

Reviewing agriculture and allied sectors at the Secretariat, Naidu stressed the need to reduce the use of chemical fertilisers to cut cultivation costs and improve farmers' incomes. He called for certi-

cation and traceability systems to ensure product quality and market credibility.

He directed officials to implement these facilities by April and complete them statewide by June. He also suggested encouraging agriculture students to take up natural farming and said training programmes would be conducted with Subhash Palekar.

The Chief Minister emphasised that Andhra Pradesh's farm products must secure a strong presence in national and international markets. He instruct-

ed officials to take proactive steps to prevent losses due to the impact of El Niño and prepare alternative crop plans in drought-prone areas. He also directed the use of AI-based advisory services such as 'Bharat Vistar'.

Naidu said water scarcity in Rayalaseema had been addressed through efficient management and that major reservoirs were full, ensuring sufficient irrigation. Officials informed him that trade agreements with the US and EU had opened new export opportunities for shrimp, dried chillies, mangoes, rice,

and processed foods. He stressed strict adherence to quality standards.

The Chief Minister directed the establishment of a Cocoa City over 500 acres in Eluru district with international standards. He encouraged intercropping in mango, cocoa, cashew, and coconut plantations and called for increased focus on banana exports. He also approved saffron cultivation in Lambasingi under the PPP model with tribal participation.

He made registration of aquaculture farming mandatory and directed that egg

supply contracts for schools and Anganwadis be given to farmers. He said State policies should align with those of the Centre.

Naidu proposed organising crop-based festivals in different regions to promote tourism and stressed the need to reduce logistics costs. He suggested discussions with the Centre for special railway wagons to transport farm produce.

He directed the establishment and modernisation of Rythu Bazaars and approved a flower market in Vijayawada under the PPP model.

During the review, he launched the Digi Rythu Bazaar, APAIMS, and Kisan Drone apps, enabling farmers to book machinery and drones. About 9,512 machines have been made available. He instructed officials to educate farmers on crop registration and promptly resolve their doubts. Agriculture minister K Atchanna Naidu and senior officials attended.

CM happy over turnaround of Vizag steel plant



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds a review on Visakhapatnam steel plant at the Secretariat on Tuesday

HAN NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

achieved unprecedented progress in the last one-and-a-half years, moving from heavy losses to a profitable path. Hot metal production has risen sharply to 19,401 tonnes per day, compared to just 9,215 tonnes per day during the second quarter of 2024-25. The significant increase in output was attributed to the operation of all three blast furnaces.

The capacity utilisation of the plant has reached a record 94 percent, a sharp rise from about 45 percent during the second quarter of 2024-25. Financially, RINL has staged a strong recovery, turning around from a loss of Rs 486 crore in September 2024 to a profit of Rs 54 crore in January 2026. Officials also noted that the Rs 11,000 crore

assistance extended by the Central government played a crucial role in stabilising the plant, and that RINL's credit rating has improved.

The Chief Minister advised the management to introduce new policies across all departments to further strengthen the plant. He emphasised the efficient utilisation of workers and employees to achieve better results and said that management, workforce and governments must work together to take Visakhapatnam Steel to greater heights. Recalling the reforms implemented in Singareni during the United States, he expressed confidence that similar cooperation would ensure sustained success. He assured full support from the State government to Visakhapatnam Steel.

Cabinet nod for panel to probe TTD laddu issue

Continued from P1

Hence, the government ordered an independent inquiry and would direct the Commission to submit its report at the earliest.

Ministers discussed changes in tender norms for the procurement of ghee and questioned why former TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singh did not object to these relaxations. The Cabinet reviewed the 2022 Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) report indicating adulteration, which was allegedly ignored by officials Balaji and Subrahmanyam. It was also noted that the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) report confirmed the presence of animal fat in the ghee.

Several ministers questioned the alleged use of fake documents to secure tenders and the sidelining of cooperative dairies in favour of private and bogus suppliers. The Cabinet directed the Commission to examine these aspects in detail.

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan sought clarification on whether former chairman YV Subba Reddy's role was mentioned in the SIT report and whether animal fat was cited in the charge sheet.

Officials said Page 35 of the charge sheet clearly referred to it. Ministers stressed that identifying the main conspirators was essential and said the SIT failed to expose the real masterminds. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said the inquiry was ordered to bring the truth before the public and ensure strict action. He assured that further action would be taken immediately after receiving the commission's report.

Addressing the media, Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav said the SIT had submitted a charge-sheet and a confidential 11-page report recommending action against erring committee members and senior TTD officials. He said the charge-sheet was filed in court and formal cognizance was awaited.

Keshav said the Cabinet found serious irregularities in tender relaxations, quality control failures, and dilution of safeguards. He said tender conditions were relaxed without proper technical evaluation or field assessment. Citing the SIT, he said action was recommended against Balaji, Dharma Reddy, and Singh for deliberate omissions. Ministers Kolu Parthasarathi, Nadendla Manohar, and Y Satyakumar Yadav also spoke.

He further said that the government decided to constitute a short-term administrative committee to examine procedural lapses and ensure natural justice. Officials facing allegations will be given an opportunity to explain before disciplinary action.

Keshav said the government was following due process and not acting out of political vendetta.

He said the SIT probe was nearing completion and that only extracts had been received so far. Conclusions could be drawn only after examining the full charge sheet. He clarified that the inquiry was not targeted at individuals but aimed at restoring the integrity of the TTD system. He also warned against politicizing Tirumala.

On whether the government still believed animal fat was present in the ghee, he said decisions were based solely on evidence, particularly the NDDB CALF report, and not on assumptions. Ministers Kolu Parthasarathi, Nadendla Manohar, and Y Satyakumar Yadav also spoke.

NAIDU CALLS US TRADE PACT HISTORIC

Continued from P1

He observed that the pact would significantly boost Indian exports and open new avenues for trade and investment. "Under the leadership of PM Modi, India is steadily consolidating its position as a global economic powerhouse," Naidu said in his tweet.

He also highlighted that the agreement would generate immense opportunities for the country's youth and farmers, including those in Andhra Pradesh. According to him, improved market access and stronger trade relations would help create jobs, encourage entrepreneurship, and strengthen the agricultural sector.

The Chief Minister expressed confidence that the India-US trade partnership would play a key role in driving economic development and strengthening bilateral relations in the coming years.

CII-Yi dialogue spotlights AP-Oz ties, youth and women-led innovation

- CII-AP and Yi Amaravati hold an interactive session with Australian Consul General Silai Zaki, following Minister Nara Lokesh's Australia visit that boosted bilateral engagement
- Talks focus on creating pathways for women entrepreneurs and young leaders in sectors like healthcare, green energy, clean tech, education, tourism, and sustainability
- Emphasis was laid on promoting AP's artisans, arts, crafts, and handlooms through cultural showcases, diaspora platforms in Australia, and global partnerships

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

An interactive session of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)-Andhra Pradesh, in association with the Young Indians (Yi) Amaravati Chapter, with Silai Zaki, Consul General of Australia, Chennai in Vijayawada on Tuesday

Discussions focused on building pathways for women entrepreneurs and young leaders from AP to engage with Australian institutions and innovation ecosystems. Key sectors such as healthcare, green energy, clean technologies, education, tourism, and sustainability were deliberated upon. In the tourism and cultural space, participants examined ways to empower local artisans of AP by enabling their participation in national and international platforms, particularly within Indian Diaspora communities in Australia. Cultural showcases, curated ex-

hibitions, and tourism-linked events were highlighted as avenues to enhance global visibility for the State's arts, crafts, handlooms, and creative industries.

Welcoming the gathering, Yi-Amaravati Chapter chairman Balakrishna Chittineni said the interaction encouraged youth and women leaders to think globally and explore international entrepreneurial opportunities. Addressing the session, Silai Zaki emphasised Australia's strong interest in deepening people-to-people and business connections with AP, noting immense scope for collaboration in Andhra Pradesh.

...in final stages: Goyal

Continued from P1

"We will be shortly issuing a joint statement by both countries along with the details, which we will be shortly inking between the United States of America and India. And as soon as the final understanding of the deal is inked, and the joint statement is finalised, technical processes are completed, full details will be shared" he added. "But I can assure every Indian that the details of this deal will make every Indian proud," he further said. He did not share a timeline, but a government source said the joint statement is expected within this week.

NEW BAGGAGE RULES COME INTO EFFECT

Continued from P1

Also, the government has raised the limit for passengers bringing duty-free imported goods into India from Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000. Under the new rules, a resident or a tourist of Indian origin arriving in India other than by land, shall be allowed clearance free of duty articles, up to Rs 75,000, if such articles are carried on the person or in the bona fide accompanied baggage of the passenger. A tourist of foreign origin, not being an infant, arriving in India, shall be allowed duty-free clearance of articles up to the value of Rs 25,000.

INDIA PLEDGED ZERO-TARIFF BARRIERS IN US DEAL: TRUMP

Continued from P1

A lot remains unclear about the terms of the deal, but Trump said New Delhi has agreed to several measures, including stopping Russian oil trade, reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers to "zero", and buying over \$500 billion of US goods, including energy, technology, agricultural products, and coal. Tariff barriers are taxes levied on imported goods, making them more expensive to protect local industries. Non-tariff barriers, meanwhile, are indirect restrictions like quotas, subsidies, licensing, standards, and labelling rules that limit trade without direct taxes, often through complex regulations, costs, or delays, affect-

ing quantity, price, or market access. Both aim to support domestic economies, but tariffs are explicit taxes, whereas non-tariff barriers use policy and procedures, making them more subtle and complex. Trump's claim that India has agreed to "reduce tariffs and non-tariff barriers against the United States, to ZERO", has not been confirmed by New Delhi. Moreover, both parties have not explained on which lines the barriers would be reduced, if at all, to zero. Largely, Trump's language signifies an in-principle commitment to lower or phase out duties on selected US products rather than an immediate elimination of all import duties.

'India got best deal'

Continued from P1

"Rahul Gandhi ko kya mirchi lagti hai? (What is Rahul Gandhi's problem?)" The Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha "will have to answer to the people about what he wants to achieve with his negative mentality," Goyal said. "I saw some Opposition leaders asking, 'Why did Donald Trump announce the deal?' The US imposed reciprocal tariffs on India, so it should have announced the removal," he added.

"Friends, we all know, and the entire country knows, how the Prime Minister consistently cares for the welfare of our farmers, our brothers and sisters involved in animal husbandry, and the dairy sector. He protects their interests at every step," he told the media. Describing the broader impact of the agreement, Goyal said the agreement unlocks unprecedented opportunities for farmers, MSMEs, entrepreneurs, and skilled workers to make in India for the world. Design in India for the world, and Innovate in India for the world," he said, adding that it would also help India access advanced technology from the US.

"It is not just a trade deal – it is a historic turning point that will reshape India-US relations and accelerate our journey towards Vitsit Bharat 2047," he added. The minister also took a swipe at the Congress, recalling

Oppn stages walkout demanding debate on deal

Continued from P1

As Opposition members started protesting in the House, Leader of the House J P Nadda said the US President was informed about the reduction in tariffs on Indian goods through a post on social media and also spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Nadda alleged that the Opposition's frustration was coming out, and it had started seeing bad even in good things. "I want to assure the house that the government is ready to discuss the Indo-US trade deal and provide all minute details of the deal. The government will come

PM buckled under pressure to sell out farmers' blood: Rahul

Continued from P1

out with a suo motu statement on the trade deal. As the Opposition members continued raising slogans alleging that the interests of the country were being bartered, Chairman C P Radhakrishnan said, when the government is making a statement, and they should listen. He said the government is ready to discuss, but the opposition members are creating an uproar. Opposition members were on their feet, raising slogans against the government, as they moved towards the front row. Nadda said the government will come out with a suo motu statement today itself.

'Father of all deals'

NEW DELHI

FORMER Ambassador of India to Poland Dr Deepak Vohra on Tuesday described the India-US trade deal as a significant diplomatic achievement, highlighting India's patience, strategic restraint and firm protection of key domestic sectors during negotiations and termed it the "father of all deals".

Explaining India's diplomatic approach, Dr Vohra referred to what he described as "duck diplomacy". He said the concept reflects calmness on the surface while intense efforts continue behind the scenes. "If you look at a duck on the surface, everything appears calm and quiet, but beneath the surface its feet are paddling furiously. That is how India has handled

the negotiations," he said.

Drawing a historical comparison, Dr Vohra likened US President Donald Trump's leadership style to that of Roman Emperor Caligula, quoting the Latin phrase "Oderint dum metuunt (Let them hate, so long as they fear)." According to him, President Trump prioritises respect and popularity over being loved. He said India responded to this leadership style with restraint and strategic engagement.

Dr Vohra added that India has largely achieved its core objectives in the trade agreement without compromising sensitive sectors.

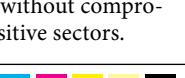
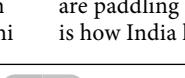
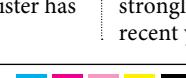
ing India's decision to stay out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). "We also remember the large-scale trade deal, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which Congress had pushed India into in 2011.

The Congress committed a grave mistake in negotiating an FTA with China, but PM Modi protected the country by refusing to join the RCEP. That decision brought relief across the nation," he said.

Goyal said the government had intended to make a statement in Parliament on the deal but was unable to do so due to disruptions. "Normally, we would have wanted to speak about this in Parliament, but we all witnessed that disgraceful scene," he said, strongly criticising the Opposition's conduct and adding that it forced the government to brief the media instead.

The India-US agreement comes a week after New Delhi signed a landmark trade pact with the European Union. PM Modi on Monday confirmed the breakthrough after speaking with Trump.

"Wonderful to speak with my dear friend President Trump. Delighted that Made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18%," Modi said in a post on X, thanking Trump "on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India."





Today is World Cancer Day 2026

A simple vaccine, lifesaving impact

World Cancer Day highlights the urgent need for prevention as much as treatment, especially against cancers caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV). Often silent and symptomless, HPV is linked to cervical, throat, and anal cancers that can turn deadly if detected late. Health experts say timely vaccination and regular screening could prevent up to 90% of these cases, making awareness the first line of defense

D VAISHNAVI

World Cancer Day serves as a powerful reminder that many life-threatening diseases can be prevented with timely awareness and action. Among them is Human Papillomavirus (HPV), a silent but widespread infection linked to several cancers that often go unnoticed until it is too late. On February 4, radiologist-oncologist Dr. Sandeep Kumar Tula is urging families to take prevention seriously, calling vaccination and early screening the strongest weapons against HPV-related cancers.

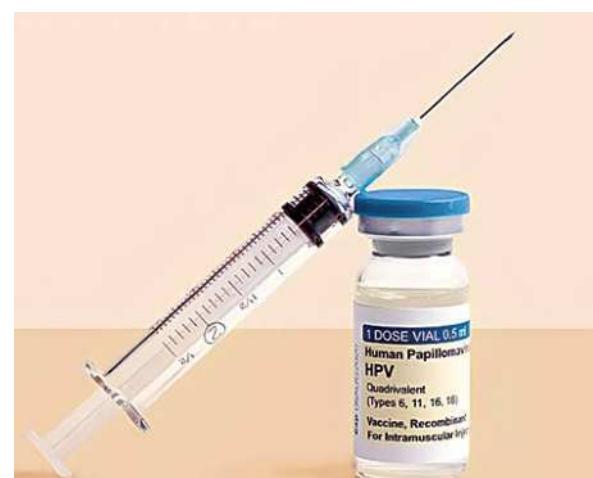
Drawing from over four years of frontline cancer care, Dr. Tula says the biggest danger with HPV is how quietly it spreads. "People think of it as just another infection, but HPV is actually responsible for multiple cancers. High-risk strains like 16 and 18 alone cause nearly 70% of cervical cancers worldwide. These viruses silently integrate into cells and trigger mutations that lead to cervical, vaginal, vulvar, penile, anal, and throat cancers."

He explains that transmission is easier than most people assume. "Sexual contact is the primary route, and even a single exposure can transmit the virus. Smoking, weak immunity, poor diet, alcohol use, and obesity further increase the risk because the body struggles to fight the infection."

What makes the disease especially dangerous, he adds, is the absence of early warning signs. "Most HPV infections don't show symptoms initially. That's why it's so deceptive. By the time patients notice abnormal bleeding, unusual discharge, throat hoarseness, difficulty swallowing, or anal discomfort, the disease may already be advancing."



Dr. Tula highlights the dramatic difference early detection can make. "If we catch cancer at Stage 1, survival can be close to 90%. But by Stage 4, it drops sharply to around 15-20%. That's why screening is critical."



He recommends regular Pap smears and HPV DNA tests for women, especially after the age of 30, along with routine health check-ups for everyone. "Follow the screening guidelines every three to five years. Detect it early, and we can treat it effectively with surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy before it spreads."

For him, however, the most powerful tool remains prevention through vaccination. "The HPV vaccine is essentially a shield. It produces antibodies that neutralize the virus before it can infect you."

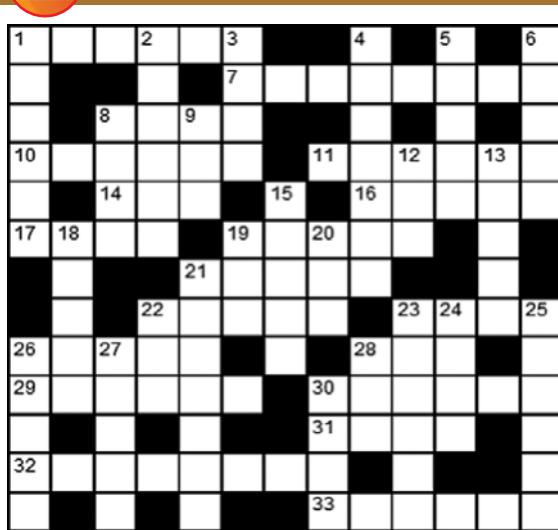
Explaining the options available in India, he says, "Gardasil protects against four strains and costs around Rs 3,800 per dose, while Gardasil 9 covers more strains at about Rs 10,300 per dose. Government programs are increasingly offering it free, though availability differs by region."

Vaccination at the right age, he stresses, offers maximum protection. "Children between 9 and 14 need just two doses. After 14, three doses are required. And it's not just for girls — boys must take it too because it prevents anal and throat cancers and reduces transmission. There's no strict upper age limit, but earlier vaccination works best."

Beyond medical advice, Dr. Tula has also been leading community outreach efforts to spread awareness. Since Republic Day this year, he and his volunteers have conducted campaigns

at public spaces, traffic signals, villages, and colleges to educate families and students about HPV risks. "We want awareness to reach people who may never walk into a hospital for preventive care. Education at the grassroots level can save thousands of lives," he says. As World Cancer Day spotlights prevention, Dr. Tula leaves people with a straightforward message: "Quit smoking, practice safe habits, eat healthy, screen regularly, and vaccinate early. HPV-related cancers are up to 90% preventable. We have the tools — we just need to use them."

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Point a finger at? (6)
- Leaves high and dry (8)
- Horned goddess (4)
- Most sensible (6)
- Three-fold (6)
- Some forensic evidence (3)
- Absolute (5)
- Plant part (4)
- Spells (5)
- Value (5)
- Wishful words (1,4)
- Place of cultivation (4)
- Harry Potter's professor (5)
- To free (3)
- The glasses in spectacles (6)
- Female foxes (6)
- Poker declaration (2,2)
- Chewed the fat (8)
- Locomotive (6)

DOWN

- Is he trying his best to keep you entertained? (6)
- Not dispatched (6)
- The orient (4)
- Lie or fib (7)
- Uncertainty or misgiving (5)
- Escort courteously (5)
- Our country, as a prefix (4)
- International Standard Atmosphere (3)
- Aliens? (3)
- Crowbar (5)
- Body of troops (5)
- Or like sheep (5)
- Jeering cry (3)
- Red Indian tribe (3)
- Like a car or a bus? (7)
- Internet addresses (3)
- Mending or repairing (6)
- South Yemen port (4)
- Royal city in Karnataka (6)
- Injured-arm support (5)
- "In at a" change for a girl's name? (5)
- Outer edge (3)
- Footnote word (4)



Solution to February 3

SUDOKU



Solution to February 3

Mental well-being tips for people living with breast cancer

World Cancer Day reminds us that healing from cancer isn't only physical — it's deeply emotional too. For women facing early breast cancer, fear, uncertainty, and stress often accompany treatment decisions. Prioritising mental well-being can be just as important as medical care in navigating the journey

ASKARI JAFFER



homemaker, remembers feeling overwhelmed after her diagnosis. Balancing family responsibilities with frequent hospital visits left her exhausted and anxious about the future. Gradually, she began prioritising her mental health along with medical care.

She joined a patient support group, practiced simple mindfulness exercises daily, and spoke openly with her doctors about her concerns and treatment choices. These steps helped her feel more grounded and better equipped to cope with uncertainty, restoring a sense of

Meera, a 47-year-old woman

calm during a difficult phase of life. Studies show that nearly four in ten people living with breast cancer experience significant anxiety or depressive symptoms at some point.

Emotional strain is often compounded by treatment side effects, lifestyle disruptions, and fear of recurrence.

More than half of patients report some level of anxiety by the end of chemotherapy, highlighting the need for holistic care that addresses both physical and emotional health.

Dr. M Vamshi Krishna, Director and Head of Department

ment, Medical Oncology and Hematology at AIG Hospitals, Hyderabad, says, "Breast cancer treatments can take a heavy physical and emotional toll. Visible changes, frequent hospital visits, and uncertainty often intensify anxiety. Advanced therapies, along with counseling, support groups, and mindfulness practices, can ease these burdens and help patients focus on their overall well-being."

Five ways to support mental well-being during early breast cancer:

- Choose the right treatment:** Discuss options and side effects with your doctor to reduce emotional stress and improve quality of life.
- Address fear of recurrence:** Stay informed and proactive about therapies that may lower risk.
- Seek professional help:** Therapists can provide coping tools and emotional guidance.
- Join support groups:** Sharing experiences reduces isolation and builds strength.
- Practice mindfulness:** Meditation, yoga, or breathing exercises can calm anxiety and restore focus.

Living with early breast cancer is challenging, but caring for your mental health can make the journey more manageable and empower you to move forward with hope.

CELEBRATING STRENGTH, INSPIRING SURVIVORS



Manisha Koirala with Dr Vijay Anand Reddy, Founder, Cure Foundation, Hyderabad; with young cancer survivors, at the World Cancer Day Celebration - Light the Night & the 23rd Anniversary Celebrations of CURE Foundation; hosted by Cure Foundation; at Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club, Gachibowli

Payal Rajput: I may fail, but I won't give up!

Well known actress Payal Rajput, who has made a name for herself with her impressive performances in films like 'RX100',

'RDX Love' and 'Mangalavaram', has now revealed that there were people who wanted her to quit but that she was not going to give up.

Taking to her X timeline to pen a post, Payal Rajput said, "They want me to quit, and I find myself questioning whether I should. But then I think about the hard work I've put in over the last 12 years. So I tell myself no. I may fail, but I won't give up. #justthinking."

It may be recalled that last year, the actress had penned a post, expressing concerns about favoritism and nepotism overshadowing talent in the film industry.

Taking to her timeline on the social media platform X, Payal Rajput had then said, "Being an actor is one of the toughest careers out there. Each day starts with the weight of uncertainty, as I step into a world where nepotism and favoritism often overshadow talent."

The actress went on to admit that there were times when she wondered if her hard work and dedication would even get noticed in a world that was dominated by those with privilege.

She wrote, "There are moments of doubt when I question whether my hard work and dedication can truly shine through in a landscape dominated by privilege. I watch as opportunities slip away to those with famous last names or a powerful agent, wondering if my talent is enough to break through."

The actress had also added the hashtag #Struggleisreal to make it clear that the problem indeed existed in the film industry.

Currently, Payal is working on a number of films including the Telugu film titled 'VenkataLachimi', which is being directed by Muni and which the makers intend to release in three languages — Telugu, Tamil and Hindi.

Payal also plays the lead opposite Legend Saravanan in his second Tamil film that is



being directed by well known director R S Durai Senthilkumar.

While Payal Rajput stars opposite Legend Saravanan, the Tamil film will also feature actors Shaam and Andrea in pivotal roles.

The yet-to-be-titled film is a grand-budget venture directed by R S Durai Senthilkumar, known for his blockbusters like 'Kakkai Sattai', 'Kodi', and the recent success 'Garudan'.

The first phase of shooting was completed in Chennai, while the second phase was in and around Panikka Nadar Kudiyiruppu in Thoothukudi, which happens to be Legend Saravanan's hometown.

Sources say the new film promises to deliver a thrilling action-packed experience based on real events, set against the backdrop of Thoothukudi.

Music for the film will be composed by Gibran, with cinematography by S. Venkatesh and editing by Pradeep. The art direction is managed by Durairaj, while Ambikapathi is the executive producer.

The government is in discussions with mobile phone makers, IT firms and other electronics manufacturing companies for the next version of the production linked incentive scheme before getting approval from the Cabinet

-Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Electronics and IT Minister



BIZ BRIEFS

Skoda clocks sales milestone

Skoda Auto India, has announced that the Kylaq has emerged as a strong pillar of Skoda Auto's growth story in India. The Kylaq has been a major contributor to Skoda Auto India's best-ever sales performance, in the brand's 25th year in the country. Ashish Gupta, Brand Director, Skoda Auto India, said: "The Kylaq is a strong testament to our long-term commitment to India and saw us enter the market's most competitive segment."

Amazon's RD sales grew 2.5X

Amazon India reported strong customer participation and robust demand for the company's first big shopping event - the Great Republic Day Sale 2026. Same-day delivery orders by Prime customers increased 2.5x compared to last year. Saurabh Srivastava, VP, Amazon India, said: "The Amazon Great Republic Day Sale reinforced several key trends, including strong participation from first-time customers - particularly those from tier 2 and 3 cities. We also continue to see a clear shift towards premiumization."

EPAM at Agentathon

EPAM Systems, Inc., a leading global digital and AI transformation company, played a pivotal role in enabling Agentathon, the world's largest annual AI hackathon, hosted by Google Developer Groups (GDG) Hyderabad. As a strategic technology sponsor and enabler, EPAM supported the developer community with engineering rigor and enterprise-grade AI product thinking, helping teams strengthen their architectures and consider the scalability, reliability and real-world applicability of agentic AI systems.

CareEdge's new report

According to CareEdge Ratings, the Union Budget 2026-27 reflects a steady policy hand at a time when India's economy is transitioning from recovery-led growth to a phase of consolidation and medium-term planning. Meenal Pandya, MD, CareEdge, said: "The Union Budget for 2026-27 comes at a time when India's economy is undergoing a period of consolidation and planning. What stands out this year is not just the scale of announcements but the steady hand guiding them."

KMAMC's new scheme

Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Company Ltd. (KMAMC) announced the launch of the Kotak Services Fund, an open-ended equity scheme designed to tap into India's fast-expanding services sector, which contributes about 55 per cent to the country's Gross Value Added (GVA) and employs nearly one-third of the workforce. The New Fund Offer (NFO) is open for subscription through February 4 and 18, it follows a services-led investment theme and seeks to benefit from structural growth.

Rupee skyrockets 122ps to close at 90.27/\$

The local unit rose to the highest levels in two and a half weeks and rallied by around 1.5% on the trade deal between India and the US

MUMBAI: The Indian rupee emerged as the best-performing Asian currency on Tuesday, registering a gain of 122 paise or 1.33 per cent in a single trading session to settle at 90.27 (provisional) against the US dollar, after India and the US agreed to a trade deal. Forex traders said the Indian rupee rose to the highest levels in two and a half weeks and rallied by around 1.5 pc on the trade deal between India and the US. Domestic indices also surged by around 2.75 per cent, boosting domestic market sentiments. Further, weakness in crude oil prices and expected foreign inflows also favoured investor sentiment.

India and the US agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian

goods to 18 per cent, lower than that for countries like China, Bangladesh and Vietnam. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.30 against the US dollar, then gained some ground to touch an intraday high of 90.05 and a low of 90.52 against the greenback. At the end of the trading session on Tuesday, the rupee was quoted at 90.27 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 122 paise from its previous close. The rupee gained 44 paise to close at 91.49 against the US dollar on Monday, a day after the Union Budget 2026-27 was presented. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the India-US trade deal is a "big decision" that will benefit everyone in the country and asserted

"With the 'reciprocal' tariffs on India's exports to the US now lowered, we estimate the current account deficit to narrow by around 0.25 per cent of GDP in CY26 to 0.8 per cent of GDP. In addition, if capital flows recover in CY26 on the conclusion of the India-US trade deal, which would ease some pressure on the INR, and result in downside risk to our current USD/INR 12-month forecast of 94," Goldman Sachs said in a research note.

However, things may not be completely smooth sailing for the INR, some experts believe.

"There could be hiccups along the way with this trade agreement" for example, it may not be easy for India to divert its Russian oil purchases quickly.



STT hike effect on markets to subside soon

MUMBAI: Markets are used to tweak in taxation and the adverse impact of the steep hike in securities transaction tax (STT) will not last long, leading bourses said. NSE, the largest stock exchange, feels that the move to curb volumes will not have any impact on its upcoming initial public offering (IPO) plans, its Managing Director and Chief Executive Ashish Kumar Chauhan said.

"What has been raised is the STT has been increased in a minor way. Broadly, markets are used to having STT on options and this time it has also been increased on futures but broadly, I do not see any large impact on the IPO of NSE or otherwise asset valuations in the stock market going forward," Chauhan told.

Rival BSE's Managing Director and Chief Executive S Ramamurthy said markets react in a "bit adverse" way whenever any such changes are proposed by the government and exuded confidence that gradually things will settle down. "This is not the first time that STT is increased. When any such move is an-

nounced, the market reaction is a bit adverse to start with and then it stabilises," he said. The proposal to increase the STT on futures and options will also encourage long-term equity investments, he said, adding that it may also lead to a shift of money from the arbitrage funds to banks' fixed deposits as the returns one stands to make get on par.

The moves to hike the STT on the F&O segment was attributed as one of the key reasons that led to a sharp correction in the equity markets after the Budget speech by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

It can be noted that as per studies by Sebi, over 90% of retail investors' trades in the F&O segment lead to losses, and the capital markets regulator has also taken steps to reduce the volumes in the past.

The government is required to offload another 6.5 per cent stake in the public

sector life insurer to meet the mandated 10 per cent

public shareholding requirement by May 2027.

Govt mulls stake sale in LIC via FPO in next financial year

NEW DELHI: The government is actively considering further reducing its stake in insurance behemoth LIC through a public offering in the next financial year, Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju said on Monday. Currently, the government holds a 96.5 per cent stake in Life Insurance Corporation (LIC). It had sold 3.5 per cent through an initial public offering (IPO) in May 2022 at a price band of Rs 902-949 per share. The share sale fetched the government around Rs 21,000 crore.

Talking to reporters, Nagaraju said, "LIC public offer has to be done slowly. We have asked DIPAM (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management) to look at government stake dilution in LIC." LIC FPO may come in the next financial year if all approvals are in place and market conditions are conducive," he added.

The government is required to offload another 6.5 per cent stake in the public sector life insurer to meet the mandated 10 per cent

public shareholding requirement by May 2027.



President Donald Trump. In a reciprocal move, India has committed to reducing trade barriers for American goods and significantly increasing imports across sectors, including energy, technology, and agriculture.

Meanwhile, top finance ministry officials stated that the announcement of the Indo-US bilateral trade pact has ended the atmosphere of uncertainty and will have positive implications for the Indian economy amid global problems.

"Today Indian Economy continues to demonstrate strong macroeconomic resilience. Despite a global

environment which has uncertainties, a great deal of uncertainty dropped today morning..." Economic Affairs Secretary Anuradha Thakur said in her address to the industry chamber FICCI here. She further said India stands out as a macroeconomically strong country in the world today. The government is further awaiting the details of the trade deal to gauge if India's economic growth will exceed the estimate of 6.8-7.2 per cent in 2026-27, she said. The government prepared its Budget for the next financial year based on the then India-US dynamic that entailed steep tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent, lower than that for countries like China, Bangladesh and Vietnam. US President Donald Trump made an announcement regarding the trade deal on Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

TO BOOST FDI, FII INFLOWS: EAC-PM CHIEF

NEW DELHI: The Indo-US trade deal will boost FDI as well as portfolio investments in the country, having a positive impact on the value of rupee, Chairman of Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) S Mahendra Dev said on Tuesday. India and the US agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff

India hasn't said it will stop oil imports: Russia

Moscow



Russia has not heard any statements from India about stopping Russian oil purchases, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday. His comments came a day after US President Donald Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela." "We haven't heard any statements from New Delhi on this matter yet," Peskov said.

The Kremlin spokesman also said that Russia intends to continue to develop its relations with India in every possible way, according to Russian media reports. Sources in Russia's energy ministry said they have not received any notice from Indian refiners to cancel contracts.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump, who spoke with PM Modi on Monday, announced that India and the US agreed to a trade deal un-

der which Washington will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff on Delhi, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent. Trump last year imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, among the highest in the world, including 25 per cent levies for its purchases of Russian energy. India buys about 88 per cent of its crude oil, which is converted into fuels like petrol and diesel, from overseas.

Russian oil made up hardly 0.2 per cent of all crude oil that India imported till 2021. India, the world's third-largest oil importer, became the largest buyer of discounted Russian crude after Western countries shunned Moscow

Textile, leather scrips soar around 20%

After the US reduced tariffs significantly, which will benefit sectors like textiles, seafood, chemicals, auto ancillaries, and new energy businesses like solar



Modi. Among leather and footwear stocks, Bhartiya International jumped 6.37 per cent, Mayur Uniquoters surged 7.73 per cent, Metro Brands (0.41 per cent) and Bata India (0.23 per cent). "Overall, this deal is a major positive for Indian equity markets," Sunny Agrawal -- Head of Fundamental Research at SBI Securities, said.

We are seeing tariffs reduced significantly, which is excellent news for sectors like textiles, seafood, chemicals, auto ancillaries, and new energy businesses like solar, Agrawal said. The announcement assumes significance as several labour-intensive sectors like textiles, apparel, leather and marine were facing challenges to export goods to the US due to the 50 per cent tariffs. India's

merchandise exports to the US declined 1.83 per cent to \$6.88 billion in December 2025 due to high tariffs imposed by America, according to commerce ministry data.

"Indian equities witnessed one of the biggest single-day gains on Tuesday after India and the US announced a long-awaited trade deal, easing tariff-related concerns that have weighed on Indian markets since April 2025. Key beneficiaries include auto ancillaries, defence, textiles, EMS, consumer durables, IT services, and utilities, while financials could see second-order gains through improved growth visibility," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Over 70% recruiters turning to AI to tap hidden talent: Report

About 80 per cent of recruiters reported that AI makes gaining insight into a candidate's skills easier

Finding Talent via AI

- AI use for pre-screening interviews
- Scope for better recruiter-candidate conversations
- Now struggle to find qualified candidates

NEW DELHI



makes gaining insight into a candidate's skills easier. More than three-quarters (76 per cent) believe AI is already speeding up hiring.

Around eight in 10 Indian recruiters said they plan to expand their use of AI to support hiring goals, evaluate applicants, and source top talent.

A majority also plan to increase AI use for pre-screening interviews in 2026, believing it will lead to more valuable recruiter-candidate conversations (83 per cent), faster hiring experience (83 per cent), and better candidate insights (82 per cent).

About 80 per cent of recruiters reported that AI

shift in hiring from pedigree and past titles to demonstrate skills and capability. This shift is hard to execute at scale without AI. Used responsibly, AI helps recruiters detect the right skills earlier, reduce screening friction, and create a more consistent and fair evaluation process," said Ruchee Anand, APAC VP, LinkedIn Talent Solutions.

The research showed that 74 per cent of recruiters now struggle to find qualified candidates, even as hiring activity runs 40 per cent above pre-pandemic levels in India.

"This is because recruiters are facing a volume-quality mismatch. Among recruiters

who say hiring has become more difficult, over half point to a surge in AI-generated applications (53 per cent), while many cite continued shortages in in-demand skills (47 per cent).

Further, as AI becomes more embedded in hiring, expectations from candidates are rising, too. Professionals increasingly want visibility into how hiring decisions are made, signalling a clear demand for transparency.

Half of recruiters (50 per cent) in India now say they are under pressure to explain how AI is being used in their processes and hiring flow, particularly when it comes to screening and shortlisting candidates.

"Our priority at LinkedIn is to build AI tools like Hiring Assistant that serve as a decision-support layer in hiring, so recruiters can find the right talent more quickly and confidently without compromising on quality or candidate experience," Anand said.

"Having Gukesh D return to Norway Chess as reigning World Champion is something we truly value. India has become one of the strongest chess nations in the world today, and we know many fans will be following Gukesh D closely. We hope chess audiences across India will tune in as he competes in Oslo in 2026,"

-Benedicte Westre Skog, COO of Norway Chess.

T20 WC BOYCOTT ROW

Broadcasters may move court against PCB

KARACHI/NEW DELHI

THE ICC has warned the Pakistan Cricket Board that it faces the prospect of legal action from T20 World Cup's official broadcasters JioStar for boycotting its February 15 game against India, a PCB source said on Tuesday.

Pakistan decided to boycott the match in Colombo on February 15 on instructions of their government but haven't yet officially specified the reasons to ICC. As reported by PTI, there is a possibility that the ICC will withhold the entire annual revenue share of Pakistan, which is around USD 35 million and pay the broadcasters from that purse.

A PCB source informed that although chairman Mohsin Naqvi had taken advice from the board's legal experts before briefing PM Shehbaz Sharif on the issue last week, the board is bracing for some serious consequences.

"If Pakistan doesn't relent and play against India, not only will they face financial penalties, perhaps a lawsuit from broadcasters but also any efforts to go to the ICC Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) are likely to fail," a PCB source told PTI.

ICC's DRC is an internal committee which doesn't hear appeals against the decisions made by its own board. "The PCB might face problems regardless of their government directive to not play India as they are playing all their matches at a neutral venue (Sri Lanka) as per their wishes and not in India," another PCB source said.

"Secondly, while the In-



ICC, PCB open 'back-channel talks'

NEW DELHI: Pakistan's decision to boycott their T20 World Cup group match against India has reportedly prompted "back-channel talks" between the International Cricket Council (ICC) and the Pakistan Cricket Board amid concerns over potential financial fallout.

Pakistan's boycott decision could reportedly cost world cricket more than 250 million dollars.

As per The Dawn report, a few other cricket boards have also extended support to the ICC in its attempt to reach an understanding with PCB.

It is currently unclear whether Pakistan will be sanctioned for the move, with the ICC urging the PCB to consider the significant and long-term implications if the boycott were to go ahead.

"While the ICC awaits official communication from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), this position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," the ICC said.

dian government has not given permission to its team to play in Pakistan, it has not stopped them from playing against Pakistan at neutral venues in Asia Cup or ICC events even after the May conflict," the board source, who tracks Naqvi closely, added.

"When the ICC signed its four year deal with the broadcasters for all ICC events, the contract included Pakistan and India matches based on

which the broadcaster made the payments to the ICC," the source explained.

"So the broadcaster will be within its rights to take the PCB and ICC to court over a major breach of the contract." It is reliably learnt that the PCB approached other members boards for support on the matter but failed to find any backers.

There is a school of thought that Naqvi, who is also the interior minister of his coun-

T20 WC: Ticket sales of third stage begin

NEW DELHI: The BCCI announced the commencement of the third stage of ticket sales for the upcoming T20 World Cup following the two successful ticketing windows, with Phase 1 launched on December 11, 2025, and Phase 2 on January 14, 2026.

This latest phase provides fans with a further opportunity to secure seats for matches across the tournament, which will bring together the world's leading teams, the BCCI said in a release.

The T20 World Cup, starting on Saturday, will be staged at some of India's most recognised cricketing venues, creating an environment where fans can witness elite international players and the intensity that defines the T20 format throughout the competition.

As preparations across host cities move into final stages, the BCCI, in close coordination with the stakeholders, continues to focus on venue readiness, operational planning, and match-day experience.

try, might just make a U-turn once the general elections are held in Bangladesh on February 12 and a democratic government takes charge instead of the present one headed by Mohammed Yunus.

"There would still be two days before the India game and things could just change. Else he knows that Pakistan could be ostracised," another source tracking Pakistan cricket said.

HARARE: Unbeaten so far in the tournament, a confident and all-round India will be overwhelming favourites against Afghanistan in the semifinal of the ICC Under-19 World Cup here on Wednesday. India are the most successful team in the history of the event, having annexed the title five times (2000, 2008, 2012, 2018, 2022), followed by Australia, who have won the trophy four times. Come Wednesday, India will look to take one step forward towards a record sixth title.

India have had a great run in the tournament, having won all their five matches quite comfortably, including a 58-run win over arch-rivals Pakistan in the Super Six stage.

Afghanistan too has had a fairly good tournament, winning four out of their five games, their only loss coming against Sri Lanka by four wickets.

Going by form and overall composition, India will hold an edge over the Afghans in the knock-out game. Wicket-



Match starts at 1 pm IST

keeper batter Abhigyan Kundu has been the star performer for India with the bat as the left-hander has so far amassed 199 runs from five games with two half centuries to his name.

Big-hitting opener Vaibhav Suryavanshi (196 runs in 5 matches with 2 fifties) too has been in good form but the team management would want him to convert his half-centuries into three-figure scores.

All-rounder Vihaan Malhotra (172 runs from 5 games) is the other Indian batter to look out for. He struck the lone century (109 not out) against Zimbabwe in group stages. Skipper Ayush Mhatre has been consistent with the ball in hand, picking up six wickets with his off-break.

India U-19: Aaron George, Abhigyan Kundu, Harvansh Pangalia, Vaibhav Suryavanshi, Vedant Trivedi, Ayush Mhatre (c), Vihaan Malhotra, RS Ambrish, Kanishk Chouhan, Khilan Patel, Deepesh Devendran, Henil Patel, Mohamed Enaan, Udhav Mohan, Kishan Singh.

Afghanistan U-19: Mahboob Khan (c), Azizullah Miakhil, Faisal Shinwazai, Khalid Ahmadzai, Osman Sadat, Uzairullah Niazai, Abdul Aziz, Aqil Khan, Khatir Stanikzai, Nazifullah Amiri, Nooristani Omarzai, Roolullah Arab, Salam Khan, Wahidullah Zadran, Zaitullah Shaheen.

"We are confident that, under your leadership, the championship will be organised to the highest standards and will be a great success," the letter, which is in PTI's possession, stated.

Punitive demolitions persist in UP despite SC ban on bulldozer action: Allahabad HC

PRAYAGRAJ

TAKING a stern note of alleged demolition drives in Uttar Pradesh, the Allahabad High Court has observed that punitive demolition of structures continues to take place in the state despite the Supreme Court's November 2024 ruling that "bulldozer justice" is simply unacceptable under the rule of law.

A two-judge bench of Justices Atul Sreedharan and Siddhartha Nandan

also asked the state government whether demolishing a structure immediately after the commission of an offence was a colourable exercise of executive discretion.

The bench observed that it came across various cases in which the notice for demolition was issued to the occupants immediately after the commission of an offence.

Thereafter, the dwelling places were demolished after the ostensible fulfilment of statutory requirements, it said.

Therefore, bearing in mind the "overarching" nature of the case, spanning the right of the state to demolish a structure and the rights of its occupants under Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India, the court fixed February 9 as the next date for hearing.

In the order passed on January 21, the court observed, "Preliminary submissions have been made by both sides. The case of the petitioners appears to be that

though the petitioners are not co-accused in the FIR, the respondents issued a notice to Petitioner No. 2, who owns the residential house in which they dwell, immediately after the commission of the offence and registration of the FIR."

The court said the respondents have sealed a commercial property registered in the name of Petitioner No. 3 as 'Indian Lodge', and a saw mill, the licence of which was renewed in the name of Petitioner No.

2 on February 11, 2025, and its renewal is pending. The petitioners have expressed an apprehension that their properties have been marked for "destruction by mechanical means" (a euphemism for bulldozer action).

"The obvious primary

prayer is judicial intervention to prevent the anticipated destruction of the properties," the court said. The bench was hearing a petition filed by Faimuddeen and others, who claimed that their relative,

Aafan Khan, was booked under various sections of the BNS, POCSO Act, IT Act and the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Act. The petitioners claimed that though they were not co-accused in the FIR, they were targeted by a mob allegedly in collusion with the police.

The Uttar Pradesh government, however, termed the petition "premature" and said the petitioners must respond to the notices issued to them.



MP cough syrup deaths

4-yr-old dies months after being in coma

BETUL



A four-year-old boy died at AIIMS-Nagpur, months after he fell critically ill and slipped into a coma after allegedly consuming Coldrifl cough syrup in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district, an official said on Monday.

According to the official, Harsh, from Tikabari village of Betul district bordering Chhindwara district, had been in a coma for more than four months and was admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU), but died during treatment on Sunday night. Betul Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr Manoj Hurmade confirmed the child's death and said the post-mortem examination was conducted in Nagpur on Monday, and the body was handed over to the family.

The cause of death would be ascertained after the post-mortem report, Dr Hurmade said. Harsh's uncle, Shyam Yadav, said over the phone that the child's last rites were performed on Monday evening.

Yadav said his nephew was undergoing treatment under Dr S S Thakur in Parasia, Chhindwara, and the child's condition deteriorated after consuming the cough syrup prescribed by him.

Harsh remained admitted at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for months, his uncle said. In October 2025, children in Parasia town of Chhindwara district began falling ill after consuming Coldrifl cough syrup, with complaints of vomiting, inability to urinate and fever. Investigations revealed that the syrup contained diethylene glycol, a toxic chemical that causes kidney failure.

Around two dozen children from Chhindwara and Betul districts had died in the incident, following the Drug Controller General of India also conducted a probe.

US-India trade deal

BJP attacking farmers again, govt must answer: Akhilesh

LUCKNOW



SAMAJWADI Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday slammed the government over the India-US trade deal, saying opening Indian markets to American agricultural produce amounted to "betrayal" of nearly 70 per cent of the country's population dependent on farming.

His remarks came after India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from a total 50 per cent.

Yadav claimed that the BJP and its associates were "agents of foreign interests" even before Independence and continued to be so today.

Targeting the ruling party, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said BJP leaders should explain to the public how much "commission" they had earned by compromising the country's economy.

Yadav said such policies would not only harm farm-

ers but also adversely impact the lower middle class and middle class by encouraging profiteering in foodgrains and agricultural products and creating a new class of middlemen, leading to a rise in prices. He alleged that the BJP would also collect donations from corporate entities, making food items even costlier. These steps would gradually reduce farmers' income, forcing them to sell their land to wealthy individuals and corporates, Yadav said.

"Capturing land is the ultimate objective of the BJP and its associates," he alleged.

Referring to the proposed Seed Bill, Yadav described it as "fatal for Indian agriculture" and alleged that it was

the product of an anti-farmer mindset of the BJP government. He accused the ruling party of bringing land acquisition laws, humiliating people by forcing them to stand in fertiliser queues every year, and promoting corporate interests linked to seeds, pesticides, storage silos, crop insurance and agricultural trade.

Yadav called for organised resistance against such policies, asserting that farmers already troubled by issues such as stray cattle would no longer tolerate the government's actions. He alleged that the BJP had been, was and would remain anti-farmer, and said it was time to "remove BJP, save fields, farming and farmers."

Relief for our exporters': Abdullah welcomes US' tariff cut

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday welcomed the US government's decision to bring down reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods, saying this would bring relief to many exporters in the country who were facing difficulties in view of the increased tariff.

US President Donald Trump on Monday announced that India and the US have agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will reduce the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the current 25 per cent.

The announcement is crucial for India as the US imposed a steep 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering American markets from August 27, 2025. "These tariffs were proving to be quite burdensome for us, and we also know very well why these tariffs were imposed. The United States was not happy with the fact that we buy oil from Russia.

Trump announced that the Indian government has now stopped purchasing oil from Russia, and because of that, the tariffs will no longer be imposed on us," the chief minister told reporters in the Assembly lawns here.

Sabarimala gold case

Uproar in Kerala Assembly as UDF alleges CMO interference

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM



DRAMATIC scenes unfolded in the Kerala Assembly on Tuesday over the Sabarimala gold loss issue after a Congress MLA tried to climb onto the Speaker's Chair that forced an adjournment, the opposition declaring non-cooperation in the House and the government calling it "unfortunate" and "deplorable".

Alleging interference by the Chief Minister's office in the SIT probe into the Sabarimala gold loss cases, the Congress-led UDF opposition boycotted Assembly proceedings, declaring that it would no longer cooperate with the House.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan termed the opposition conduct as "unfortunate" and "deplorable". Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, V D Sathesan, informed Speaker A N Shamseer about the UDF's boycott decision as the House proceedings commenced. As the opposition protest continued in the House amidst the question hour, Congress MLA Anwar Sadat sud-

denly attempted to climb onto the Speaker's dais, leading to Shamseer stopping the proceedings for around 30 minutes and leaving for his chamber. Sathesan alleged that there was government interference in the probe and that even the Kerala High Court observed there was delay in filing of charge sheet in the Sabarimala gold cases by the Special Investigation Team (SIT). He said that the High Court also observed that there was a "laxity" in the SIT probe.

The LoP claimed that conditions were being created so that the accused in the two cases can come out on statutory bail and thus, "stone-wall" the investigation. He said that if the accused are released from jail, there was every possibility that the evidence in the cases would be destroyed.



YOU CAN'T BUILD VIKSIT BHARAT WITHOUT INNOVATION: IIT HYD DIRECTOR

ARTI ADKE

At a time when AI is rapidly reshaping careers and Indian students remain caught in a relentless cycle of grades, rankings, Prof. B. S. Murty, Director of IIT Hyderabad, is quietly steering one of the country's boldest experiments in higher education. From fractal academics and artists-in-residence to deep-tech startups and AI-powered engineering programmes, his vision challenges long-held assumptions about how engineers should be trained—and what success truly means.

"If somebody comes to me and tells me they have never failed in life," Prof. Murty says, "I tell them they have probably never learned anything—or never experimented enough."

That belief underpins the transformation unfolding at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT Hyderabad). In an education system often criticised for rigidity, exam obsession and placement-centric thinking, the institute has emerged as a striking outlier—prioritising freedom, creativity and skills over conformity and fear. Here, students are encouraged to explore across disciplines, build products, create enterprises and think beyond conventional career paths.

In a wide-ranging conversation, Prof. Murty tells *The Hans India* about the future of jobs in the age of AI, why India must evolve from a service economy into a product nation, and how nurturing skills, innovation and purpose is central to building a truly Viksит Bharat.

EXCERPTS:

Q: You have often described Indian education as rigid. What do you believe is fundamentally wrong with it?

Education in India has been quite straitjacketed for decades. Students are told what to study, how to study and often what they should become in life. But the current generation does not want to fit into such a structure. They want freedom. They want flexibility.

If you look at older IITs and engineering colleges, the curriculum is very straight. Even electives are often not real electives. Many times, only one elective runs. That means the student is forced to take it—it becomes a core course in disguise. There is no real choice.

When I studied B.Tech, we faced the same issue. That experience stayed with me. We felt it was time to break away from this model and create an environment where students can genuinely explore different interests.

Q: You repeatedly stress the need for deep-tech innovation. Why is this so critical for India?

India is currently known more as a service economy. We provide services to the world. But no country has ever become developed by being only a service economy.



Every developed nation—big or small—is known for its products. India must also be known for its products. Software and apps are important, I do not deny that, but deep-tech innovation is essential.

For me, Viksит Bharat is the day I go to a place like Tokyo or Melbourne and buy a product labelled "Made in India"—because it is high quality, globally competitive and reasonably priced.

Q: Will degrees lose relevance in the coming years?

I am sure that in the years to come, people will not care much about your degree. They will care about your skills. What matters is what you can do, what problems you can solve. Institutions must create environments where skills and ideas are nurtured. The success of our startups already shows that this shift has begun.

Q: You frequently speak about Viksит Bharat. What does that term mean to you personally?

For me, Viksит Bharat is not a slogan—it is a practical vision. A developed nation is one that is known for its products, technology and innovation. Today, India is largely known as a service economy. We provide services to the world, which is good—but it is not enough.

No country in the world has become developed by being only a service provider. Every developed nation—whether it is Germany, Japan, South Korea or the United States—is known for what it makes. For India to become Viksит Bharat, we must become a product nation.

Q: How do student startups fit into the Viksит Bharat narrative?

Startups are not just about valuation—they are about value creation. When a 19-year-old student tells me he has paid salaries to five employees, that is nation-building in action. That is economic activity, confidence and leadership. In six years, IIT Hyderabad students have created 330 startups with ₹1,500 crore in revenue. These are not just numbers—they represent ideas

becoming reality. If every IIT produces job creators instead of only job seekers, India's transformation will accelerate.

We introduced something called Fractal Academics, which is a very unique system in India. Typically, a full semester course is a three-credit course—about 42 hours of teaching spread over 14 weeks. We divided the semester into six segments. This allows us to offer courses worth 0.5 credits, one credit, 1.5 credits, two credits and, of course, three credits. A 0.5-credit course is about seven hours of teaching. A one-credit course is around 14 hours.

In the first year especially, we encourage students to explore many such short courses. I compare it to tasting food at a restaurant—you sample different dishes before deciding what you like. Once students discover a subject they enjoy, they can take full three-credit courses and go deeper. This kind of academic freedom—we are the first in the country to offer it at this scale.

Q: IIT Hyderabad has made liberal arts and creative courses mandatory for engineers. Why was that mandatory?

If India has to become Viksит Bharat, innovation is essential. And for innovation, intuition is just as important as intelligence. Engineers are trained to calculate everything. Out-of-the-box thinking does not come easily. Artists, on the other hand, think intuitively. That is why we decided that about 10% of a B.Tech student's total credits—out of roughly 130—must come from liberal arts and creative arts. These include anthropology, psychology, philosophy, music, dance, painting and even martial arts. We are now introducing sports as credit-based courses—cricket, tennis, hockey—where students study, practise and are evaluated. When students balance left-brain logic with right-brain creativity, you get far better innovation.

Q: You strongly advocate student choice. Why does this matter?

At 17 years of age, we allow citizens to decide who becomes the Prime Minister of India. Then why can't they decide what they want to become?



Why should someone be told, "You must become a mechanical engineer"? Many students later realise this is not what they wanted in life. Education should expand freedom, not curtail it.

When parents ask me, "What kind of job will my child get?", I ask them—why should every B.Tech graduate get a job? Let them create jobs. India needs job creators, not just

job seekers. We need leaders.

Parents often measure success only through salary packages. How do you respond to that mindset?

I understand parental anxiety. It comes from concern for their children's future. But salary should not be the sole measure of success.

A student who builds a startup, creates employment, files patents or works on deep-tech innovation may

not earn the highest salary in the first year—but they contribute far more to the nation in the long run. At IIT Hyderabad, we have students who chose not to sit for placements because they are building companies, pursuing research or working on socially relevant technologies. That is also success.

We must broaden our definition of achievement beyond the first job or first salary slip.

Recent and upcoming academic and institutional launches

New academic programmes with AI integration

This year, the institute is set to launch a new M.Tech programme in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Chemical Engineering. IIT Hyderabad already offers an M.Tech in Integrated Computational Materials Engineering (ICME), where AI and ML are applied to the design of advanced materials such as new-generation steels, alloys, and functional materials with enhanced properties. These programmes reflect the institute's academic approach of integrating AI across core engineering disciplines, rather than limiting it to computer science alone.

Digital transformation initiatives

As part of its move towards deeper digital integration, IIT Hyderabad has created the position of Dean of Digital Transformation. In the coming months, the institute plans to roll out a ChatGPT-based digital system designed to provide quick access to information related to research activities, faculty expertise, patents, startups, and technology transfers. The system is expected to help students, faculty, and industry

stakeholders gain a clearer understanding of the institute's work in areas such as quantum technologies, materials science, artificial intelligence, and clean energy within a short time.

Integration of arts and humanities

The institute is also preparing to announce the association of Padma Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan award-winning performing artists as distinguished professors. In addition, an Artists-in-Residence programme is being introduced, under which eminent artists will spend one to two weeks on campus interacting with students. The initiative aims to expose students to creative disciplines alongside technical education, encouraging broader perspectives and sensitivity beyond conventional engineering training.

Student-led innovation through BUILD projects

IIT Hyderabad has implemented BUILD projects—Bold and Unique Ideas Leading to Development—to encourage student innovation. Under this initiative, students submit brief proposals, sometimes as short

as half a page, which are evaluated by a committee for support. Over the past six years, students have launched around 330 startups, collectively generating approximately Rs 1,500 crore in revenue. A significant number of these ventures were founded while the students were still enrolled at the institute.

BHARATI programme for engineering excellence

The institute has also introduced the BHARATI programme—Bold-Hearted Aspirants Raising to Transform India. The programme seeks to reinforce the importance of engineering excellence and product development, encouraging students to focus on building and creating solutions rather than viewing education solely through the lens of placement outcomes.

The initiative aligns with broader national goals of strengthening India's technological and manufacturing capabilities.

Together, these initiatives highlight IIT Hyderabad's focus on interdisciplinary learning, innovation, digital access, and the development of well-rounded professionals.

Today is Global School Play Day

Encouraging creativity with screen-free childhood experiences



knowledge in later life.

Promoting screen-free play is especially important in early childhood. Excessive screen exposure can limit physical activity, imagination, and attention span. In contrast, play-based learning supports movement, sensory exploration, and hands-on experiences that contribute to healthy physical and emotional development.

Ensuring access to pre-school education through play for every child is vital for inclusive growth. Play-based learn-

ing environments create equal opportunities for children from all backgrounds to explore, express themselves, and build foundational skills. They also help children develop a positive relationship with learning, making the transition to formal schooling smoother and more meaningful.

By encouraging unstructured, screen-

A conclave Neev 2026 Chapter 2 examined how startups are responding to changing expectations of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, focusing on talent, workplace culture, and the future of work



youth place greater emphasis on purpose-driven work, flexibility, continuous learning, and meaningful engagement, rather than viewing compensation as the sole measure of career success.

Harsh Kumar Sarohi, Senior Vice President – Technology at TradeIndia, highlighted the growing demand among young professionals for clarity of purpose and structured mentorship. He spoke about the role of organisational values and leadership in career development, while underlining the importance of soft skills

such as communication, negotiation, and conflict management in professional growth. Startup founder Mukil Vannan, Founder of Kplor, observed that while Gen Z professionals are comfortable with artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, foundational skills remain essential. He stressed the importance of communication, creativity, and problem-solving, advising students to focus on building core capabilities rather than being driven by job titles. Shilpa Arora, Co-founder and COO of

Insurance Samadhan, spoke about changing attitudes toward work-life balance and flexibility. She noted that younger professionals tend to be more intentional in career planning and place value on meaningful work, customer engagement, and long-term relevance.

From an HR perspective, Sumedh Singh, AVP and Head of Human Resources at EPack Durable Limited, highlighted the analytical strengths of the new generation while pointing to the need for flexible work models, transparent communication, recognition, and continuous skill development.

The session was moderated by Goluk Ramanan, Manager – Business Strategy at Medinou. Faculty members and students attended the conclave, which reflected ongoing discussions around preparing youth for evolving workplace realities.

How startups are adapting to GenZ workforce trends

The Indian Institute of Management Kashipur hosted Neev 2026 | Chapter 2 – The Startup Conclave, a discussion-driven event that examined how startups and emerging organisations are adapting to changes in workforce expectations, particularly among Gen Z and Gen Alpha. The conclave focused on themes of startup talent, workplace evolution, and the future of work in fast-growing environments.

Industry leaders, startup founders, and human resource professionals discussed how younger professionals are reshaping organisational cultures. Speakers noted that today's

such as communication, negotiation, and conflict management in professional growth. Startup founder Mukil Vannan, Founder of Kplor, observed that while Gen Z professionals are comfortable with artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, foundational skills remain essential. He stressed the importance of communication, creativity, and problem-solving, advising students to focus on building core capabilities rather than being driven by job titles. Shilpa Arora, Co-founder and COO of

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Rebel Star Prabhas praises the 'Couple Friendly' trailer, shares it on Instagram

THE trailer of 'Couple Friendly', starring Santosh Soban and Manasi Varanasi in the lead roles, was released recently. Rebel Star Prabhas appreciated the trailer, calling it well-made, and shared it on his Instagram account. He described it as a love story told straight from the heart.

The 'Couple Friendly' team has expressed their happiness over receiving praise from Prabhas for the trailer. This recognition is a huge boost for the entire team and has raised the buzz surrounding the film.

Presented by the renowned production house UV Creations, the film is being grandly produced by UV Concepts in both Telugu and Tamil. Ajay Kumar Raju P. serves as the co-producer, and the film is directed by Ashwin Chandrasekhar. Made as a musical romantic love



story, 'Couple Friendly' is set to release on February 14, on the occasion of Valentine's Day, in both languages. The

film will be distributed in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana by passionate producer and distributor Dheeraj Mogilineni.

Kayadu Lohar returns to Malayalam; New poster of 'Pallichattambi' released

A new poster of 'Pallichattambi', directed by Dijo Jose Antony and starring Tovino Thomas in the lead role, has been released. The latest reveal is a single-character poster featuring the film's heroine, Kayadu Lohar. The poster also confirms the film's release date. Posters have been unveiled in five languages, including Malayalam. 'Pallichattambi' is set for a worldwide theatrical release on April 9. Kayadu Lohar's announcement video as the female lead in 'Pallichattambi' had earlier drawn significant attention. She became a favorite among South Indian cinema audiences following her performance as the heroine in the Tamil superhit 'Dragon'.

In 'Pallichattambi', Tovino Thomas will be seen in a never-seen-before look. The film is produced by Noulal and Brijesh under the banner of Worldwide Films, along with Chanukya, Chaitanya, and Charan under C Qube Bros Entertainments. It will be released in five languages, including Malayalam. The screenplay has been written by S. Suresh Babu.

Apart from Kayadu Lohar in the female lead, 'Pallichattambi' also features an ensemble cast that includes Vijay Raghavan, Sudheer

Karamana, Baburaj, Vinod Kedamangalam, Prashanth Alex, and several other prominent actors. The film is set in the 1950s-60s period.

The cinematography is handled by Tijo Tomy, while the music is composed by Mollywood's music sensation Jakes Bejoy. Megha Shyam and Thanseer serve as co-producers. Costumes are designed by Manjusha Radhakrishnan, and makeup is by Rasheed Ahmed. Alex E. Kurien is the line producer, Anil Ambalur the finance controller, and Rajesh Menon the production controller. Renith Raj and Kirash Raphael are the chief associate directors. Sound design is by Sync Cinema, and art direction is by Rajesh Menon. Casting is handled by Binoy Nambala. Digital marketing is managed by Akhil Vishnu V.S., with PR by Akshay Prakash. Stills photography is by Rishabh Unnikrishnan, and the poster design is by Yellow-tooths.



Ravi Teja cheers Team 'Sumathi Sathakam'

PRODUCED under the Vision Movie Makers banner by Sai Sudhakar Kommalapati and directed by M.M. Naidu, 'Sumathi Sathakam' is a wholesome family entertainer gearing up for a worldwide theatrical release on February 6. The film stars Amardeep Chowdary and Sayli Chaudhary in the lead roles. Renowned production house Mythri Movie Makers will release the film across the Telugu states.

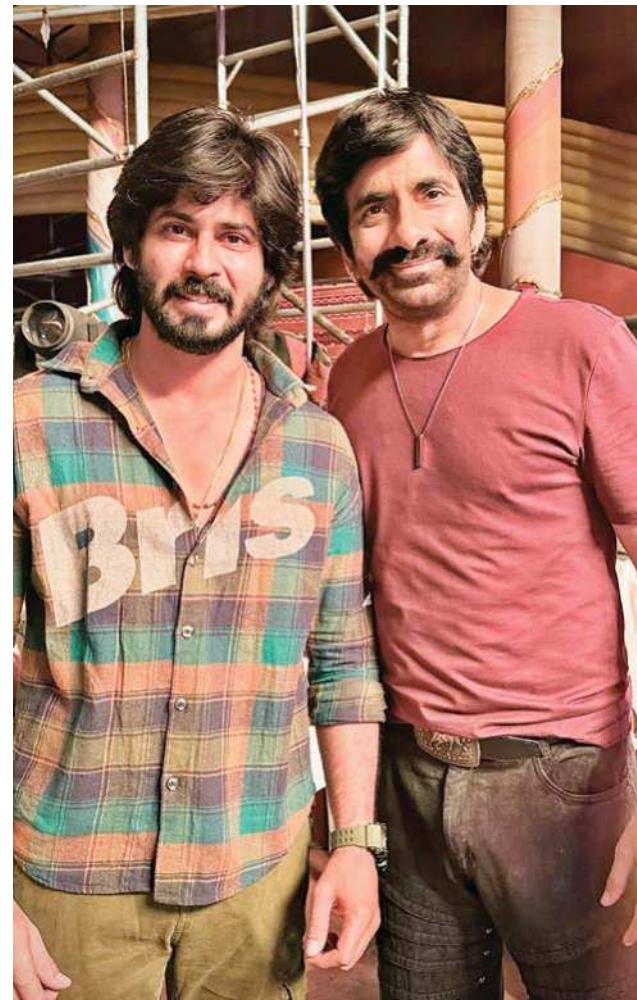
The first look, teaser, songs, and promotional content of 'Sumathi Sathakam' have already received an encouraging response from audiences. Amardeep Chowdary's energetic dance moves in the songs have been widely appreciated, while Subhash Anand's music adds strong emotional and entertainment value to the film.

As part of the promotions, the film's team conducted an extensive tour across the Rayalaseema region, receiving an overwhelming response. The trailer launch event held at a college in Tirupati turned out to be a grand success, with students enthusiastically responding to the film's hook steps and youthful content.

Popular actor and Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja, who is widely known as Amardeep Chowdary's inspiration, watched the teaser, trailer, and other promotional content and shared his appreciation. He said,

"I have watched the teaser, trailer, and content of Amardeep's film 'Sumathi Sathakam'. I really liked it. I wish the film great success and hope Amardeep has a bright future ahead."

During the college

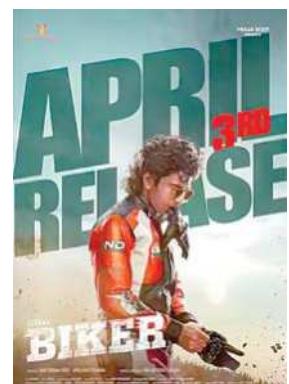


Sharwanand's 'Biker' to hit screens worldwide on April 3

THE makers of director Abhilash Kankara's eagerly awaited sports action film, 'Biker', featuring actor Sharwanand in the lead, on Tuesday announced that their film would now hit screens worldwide on April 3 this year.

Taking to its X timeline, the production house producing the film, said, "The engine's revved up. The track is ready. Now, THERE IS NO STOPPING HIM. #BIKER grand release worldwide on April 3rd, 2026. #BIKERMovie #GoAllTheWay #BikerOnApril3rd." It may be recalled that the film was originally scheduled to hit screens on December 6 last year. However, in November, the makers issued a statement saying they were postponing the release of the film as they wanted to give audiences not just a film but an "experience like never before."

Taking to its X timeline, UV Creations had, in November last year, said, "#Biker stands postponed! A new release date



will be announced soon. A bigger, better experience is being crafted with care and being assembled with passion. #Biker will be releasing in 3D, 4DX, and many more formats."

In its statement, the production house called the film "An experience beyond the screens!" and said that to ready this "beast," the cast and crew had worked hard and were continuing to work hard on countless nights.

"Trust us, this film is much more than the little laps we

showed, and it is bigger than what Telugu Cinema has seen until now! To this kind of an experience, to this kind of a scale," it said, and further added, "We want to give you a product that races in your hearts, pumps up your adrenaline, and makes you breathless! Biker stands postponed, not just to give you a film but an experience like never before. BIKER is coming to theatres in 3D, 4DX and many more formats. Tighten your helmets. You are in for a ride of a lifetime." For the unaware, actor Sharwanand plays a bike racer in this upcoming film, which was initially being referred to as 'Sharwa36'. Sources close to the unit of the film say that Sharwanand will be seen as a skilled motorcycle racer in the film.

A source had, in September last year, said that the shooting of the film was going on in Hyderabad and that key scenes related to the race on Sharwanand and the team had been shot. "These scenes are

going to be the highlight of the film," the source had said then. "He (Sharwanand) is going to impress audiences with stunts that will give viewers an adrenaline rush like never before."

Malavika Nair plays the female lead in this film, which will also feature well-known character artistes Brahmaji and Atul Kulkarni in pivotal roles. Produced by Vamsi and Pramod, this high-energy film is set against the backdrop of motocross racing. Sources say it is a thrilling story of a family that is spread over three generations and set against the exciting motocross backdrop of the 90s and early 2000s. Cinematography for the film is by well-known cameraman J. Yuvraj. Music for the film has been scored by famed Tamil music director Ghibran. Anil Kumar P is the editor of the film, which has N Sandeep as its executive producer. Rajeevan is the production designer, and A. Panneerselvam is the art director.

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