



THE Hans India



Awesome Debut: Diya Pathak's Kathak Arangetram Mesmerises Hyderabad
A graceful celebration of rhythm, devotion, and classical excellence unfolded at Ravindra Bharati as young dancer Diya Pathak marked her Kathak Arangetram.

TG Speaker's order on anti-defection petitions is a tricky constitutional test
It seems like the Anti-Defection Law is a defective law or a totally defective conclusion on the judgment of the Speaker of Telangana, Gaddam Prasad Kumar, on March 11.

Majhi congratulates BJP winners
Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday congratulated the BJP's Rajya Sabha poll nominees and the Independent candidate backed by the party for winning the election, though the official announcement.

State to be developed as East-West cargo corridor
Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to develop the state as a major East-West cargo corridor by strengthening cargo handling operations at ports across the state.

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WINDOWS
RAMZAN TIMINGS
IFTAR (Tue) 6.32 PM
SEHAR (Wed) 5.00 AM
OSCAR AWARDS

Jessie Buckley and Michael B. Jordan took home the awards for Best Actress and Best Actor on Sunday night

'One Battle After Another' named Best Picture

NEW DELHI: It was 'One Battle After Another's' night. Paul Thomas Anderson's action-thriller took home six Oscars at the 98th Academy Awards on Sunday, including Best Supporting Actor, Best Directing and Best Picture. The film also won awards for Best Editing and Best Adapted Screenplay, as well as the first-ever Oscar for Best Casting. Upon accepting his award, Anderson — who had previously been nominated for an Oscar around a dozen times — joked, "You make a guy work hard for one of these, I really appreciate it." Sinners also had a big night, bringing home four Oscars, including Best Actor for Michael B. Jordan's role as twins Smoke and Stack.

Political slugfest over transfer of Bengal CS, DGP

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission's move to transfer West Bengal's chief secretary and DGP soon after the announcement of the Assembly poll dates triggered a political slugfest on Monday. While the opposition parties accused the poll panel of acting at the behest of the BJP at the Centre, the saffron party hit back, alleging that the opposition was attempting to malign constitutional institutions. Speaking to reporters inside the Parliament House complex, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav alleged that officers are routinely removed in states where the BJP is not in power. "Whenever elections are held, and if the state government is not run by the party ruling in Delhi, the first thing they do is remove the DGP and the chief secretary."

CM TO OFFICIALS

'TAKE STEPS TO PREVENT LPG BLACK MARKETING'

- CM enquires about LPG supply to Anna Canteen kitchens
- Orders daily monitoring of stocks, bookings and supply

HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu on Monday reviewed the LPG stock, booking and supply situation in the state in the backdrop of the on-going war-related global uncertainties. The review was conducted from the Real Time Governance Society (RTGS) with representatives of various gas supply companies participating in the meeting. Senior officials informed the Chief Minister that 17,209 metric tonnes of LPG stock is currently available in the state. They said LPG cylinders are being supplied through 1,154 agencies belonging to Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited and Indian



CM N Chandrababu Naidu reviews the LPG supply in the Secretariat on Monday

Oil Corporation Limited. The Chief Minister sought details on the measures being taken to prevent black marketing of LPG cylinders and instructed officials to ensure that cylinders are not diverted or misused during delivery. He directed authorities to take steps to remove any

public concerns regarding LPG availability and ensure transparency in the supply process. Naidu also enquired about LPG supply to Anna Canteen kitchens, and officials assured him that there are no issues in providing gas for their operations. He emphasised that there should be no confusion or panic among the public regarding LPG supply and asked officials to normalize cylinder delivery timelines as soon as possible. The Chief Minister ordered daily monitoring of LPG stocks, bookings and supply to ensure uninterrupted distribution. He also directed officials to ensure that essential services such as hospitals, schools and temples do not face any disruption due to gas shortages.

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True tribute to Amarajeevi lies in all-round growth of state: Naidu

HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has asserted that the National Democratic Alliance government in the state has been balancing development and welfare, while working towards building a healthy, wealthy, and happy society. Referring to the national leadership, Naidu said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been working with the vision of Viksit Bharat and that Andhra Pradesh should strive to become the number one state in the country. The Chief Minister made these remarks after inaugurating a 58-foot bronze

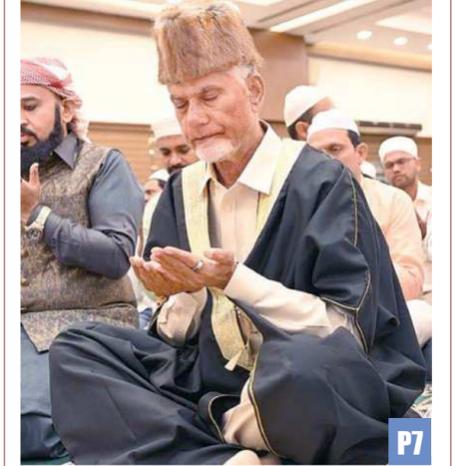


Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu at the inauguration of the statue of Potti Sreeramulu at Shakamuru Park in Amaravati on Monday

statue of Potti Sreeramulu at Shakamuru Park in Amaravati on Monday, marking the freedom fighter's 125th birth anniversary. The statue, named the 'Statue of Sac-

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Naidu: Haj House in Amaravati soon



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in traditional attire

Continued on Page 7

Global energy crisis deepens as Iran keeps hold on Hormuz

Allies snub Trump's call to send warships to keep Hormuz open

BEIRUT: Fears of a global energy crisis rose Monday as the war in the Middle East raged on, with more U.S.-Israeli strikes on the Iranian capital and Israel's bombardment of Lebanon. An Iranian drone strike temporarily shut Dubai's airport, a crucial global travel hub, underscoring the threats to the world economy. Since the United States and Israel attacked Iran more than two weeks ago, Tehran has regularly fired on Israel, American bases in the region, and Gulf Arab countries' energy infrastructure with drones and missiles. It has also effectively stopped shipping traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil is transported, dramatically increasing the price of oil and putting pressure on Washington to do something to ease the pain consumers are feeling. Brent crude, the international standard, remained stubbornly over \$100 a barrel on Monday. It was at \$104 in early trading, up nearly 45% since the US and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28. It has spiked as high as about \$120 during the conflict.

US President Donald Trump said he has demanded that about seven countries to send warships to keep the Strait of Hormuz open, but his appeals have been snubbed by the Allies. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called claims that his country may be seeking a negotiated end to the war "delusional", saying in a social media post early Monday that Iran was seeking neither "truce nor talks."

United States President Donald Trump accused Iran of resorting to 'disinformation' and 'fake news' by using AI and blasted 'radical left-wing' media for spreading 'lies' about the Iran war. Accusing media outlets, including the Wall Street Journal, of 'spreading lies' and using American Airwaves for anti-US propaganda, he said such media outlets should be booked for "Treason." Trump maintained that Iran is being 'decimated.' He described Iran as "master of media manipulation and public relations," and said that they (Iran) are militarily ineffective and weak but are really good at "feeding" the very appreciative "fake news media" false information.

Continued on Page 7

INDIA RULES OUT TALKS WITH US ON HORMUZ P7

PNG and CNG supply uninterrupted: Govt

NEW DELHI: The supply of piped natural gas (PNG) and compressed natural gas (CNG) remains uninterrupted across India, the government said on Monday, while reaffirming efforts to shift households from LPG to piped gas in areas with existing pipeline infrastructure.

Continued on Page 7

FAILURE TO ANSWER MLAS' QUESTIONS Karnataka Speaker raps govt

BENGALURU IN an embarrassment to the Congress government, Karnataka Assembly Speaker, UT Khader, on Monday adjourned the House, sharply criticising it for failing to provide answers to unstarred questions of the MLAs despite repeated warnings from the Chair.

warned multiple times to ensure that replies to legislators' questions were prepared in time. "If the government fails to answer questions of MLAs, why should they even come to the Assembly? How is this fair? I have already issued strict orders four times, and this is the fifth time," he said.

Continued on Page 7

'DISTORTED PICTURE OF INDIA' MEA slams US report recommending sanctions on RSS

NEW DELHI THE Ministry of External Affairs on Monday rejected the annual report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom for 2026, which recommended targeted sanctions on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Research and Analysis

(USCIRF). We categorically reject its motivated and biased characterization of India. For several years now, USCIRF has persisted in presenting a distorted and selective picture of India, relying on questionable sources and ideological narratives rather than objective facts. Such repeated misrepresentations only undermine the credibility of the Commission itself," Jaiswal said. "Instead of persisting with selective criticism of India, USCIRF would do well to reflect on the disturbing incidents of vandalism and attacks on Hindu temples in the United States, selective targeting of India, and growing intolerance and intimidation of members of the Indian diaspora in the United States, which merit serious attention," he added.



Wing for violations of religious freedom. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, in a statement, said the commission has persisted in presenting a distorted, selective picture of India by relying on questionable sources and ideological narratives rather than objective facts. "We have taken note of the latest report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom

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57.78 crore Jan Dhan accounts opened

NEW DELHI A total of 57.78 crore Jan Dhan accounts with a deposit balance of Rs 2,94,702 crore have been opened (as on February 25) under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday. Out of these, 32.21 crore (55.8 per cent) Jan Dhan accounts belong to women, and about 45.17 crore (78.2 per cent) PMJDY accounts have been opened in rural and semi-urban areas, she said in the Lok Sabha. The Finance Minister further stated that under the

Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), 26.88 crore cumulative enrolments (as on February 25) have been made to provide life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh for death due to any reason. "Under Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), 57.11 crore cumulative enrolments (as on 25.02.2026) have been done to provide a one-year accidental cover of Rs 2 lakh (death or permanent total disability) and Rs 1 lakh (permanent partial disability) respectively," she said. Under the Atal Pension Yojana (APY), 8.84 crore

55.8 PC BELONG TO WOMEN, SAYS FM SITHARAMAN



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaking in the Lok Sabha

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), 57.26 crore loans amounting to Rs 39,48 lakh crore have been sanctioned to provide collateral-free institutional finance to micro/small business units up to Rs 20 lakh for income-generating activities in manufacturing, trading, and services sectors, including activities allied to agriculture (as on February 27). "Under the Stand-Up India Scheme (SUPI), 2.75 lakh cumulative loans amounting to Rs 62,790 crore have been sanctioned to Scheduled Caste/Schedule Tribe and Women entrepreneurs for setting up greenfield projects in the sectors such as manufacturing, trading, services and activities allied to agriculture (as on 31.03.2025)," Sitharaman said. The Finance Minister said that a robust financial inclusion platform, namely JAM - a Jan Dhan Aadhaar Mobile pipeline for linking of Jan Dhan account with mobile number and Aadhaar -- has been created, which is being extensively leveraged by various Ministries and Departments for the delivery of various welfare benefits like Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), etc.



YSRCP pays tribute to Potti Sriramulu on 125th Jayanti

- Jagan hails Sriramulu as a symbol of Telugu self-respect and sacrifice for Andhra statehood
- Leaders recall his 58-day fast that paved the way for linguistic states in India
- Critique the coalition govt for allegedly neglecting his legacy, including failure to fund a planned 58-foot statue



MLC Lella Appi Reddy, former minister Vellampalli Srinivas, Sake Sailajanath, former MLA Malladi Vishnu and others pay tributes to the portrait of Amarajeevi Potti Sriramulu on the occasion of his 125th birth anniversary at YSRCP Central office at Tadepalli on Monday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GUNTUR

YSRCP president Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Monday said Potti Sriramulu symbolises the self-respect of Telugu people and that his supreme sacrifice for a separate state for Andhra continues to inspire generations. YSRCP leaders paid rich

tributes to the legendary freedom fighter on the occasion of his 125th birth anniversary at the party's central office in Tadepalli. Floral tributes were offered as leaders recalled his historic sacrifice for the creation of a separate state for Telugu-speaking people.

Speaking on the occasion, party leaders said the name

of Potti Sriramulu would remain immortal as long as the Telugu community exists. They remembered his 58-day fast unto death demanding a separate state for Telugu people, which ultimately paved the way for the formation of linguistic states in India.

MLC Lella Appi Reddy said such a selfless sacrifice

for a linguistic state was unparalleled in world history. He added that the ideals of Potti Sriramulu are reflected in the leadership and governance approach of Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, who, he said, has upheld values of integrity, credibility and commitment towards the state and its people.

Former MLA Malladi

Vishnu recalled that inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, Potti Sriramulu undertook several fasts in his life, including the historic fast that eventually led to the formation of linguistic states in the country.

Former minister Vellampalli Srinivas said the previous YSRCP government restored the celebration of Andhra Pradesh Formation Day on November 1 and honoured Potti Sriramulu's legacy.

He criticised the present coalition government for allegedly neglecting his memory, including failing to allocate funds for the construction of a 58-foot statue while spending heavily on other projects.

Former minister Sake Sailajanath said the life and dedication of Potti Sriramulu should inspire people to work with similar determination for the pride and unity of Telugu society.

3 contract workers attempt suicide at Nandyal govt hospital

- The outsourced workers allegedly consumed phenyl on the hospital premises, creating a tense situation before staff rushed them for emergency treatment
- The workers blamed alleged unfair treatment by the contracting agency after being removed from supervisor posts and reassigned as security guards
- Agency representatives say the changes followed MoU rules requiring a degree qualification for supervisor roles; police have registered a case and begun an investigation



Contract workers who attempted suicide undergoing treatment at Nandyal government hospital on Monday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NANDYAL

A tense situation prevailed at the Government General Hospital here on Monday after three contract workers allegedly attempted suicide by consuming phenyl, triggering concern among hospital staff and authorities. The workers, identified as Naganna, Chennaiah and Adi, were employed under the Eagle Hunter agency and were reportedly serving as supervisors at the hospital. The incident

caused a brief commotion at the hospital premises before staff members intervened and rushed them for immediate medical treatment.

According to hospital sources, the three workers consumed phenyl within the hospital premises. Alert hospital staff quickly noticed their condition and shifted them to the emergency ward, where doctors administered timely treatment.

Medical officials later confirmed that the workers are currently out of danger. The incident created anxiety among other contract workers and visitors, drawing attention to ongoing issues faced by outsourced employees.

The affected workers alleged that the suicide attempt was driven by distress over what they described as unfair treatment by the agency. They claimed that after staging protests earlier demanding payment of salaries as per

the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the management allegedly took retaliatory action.

According to them, despite working at the hospital since 2014 without any complaints, they were removed from their supervisor roles and reassigned as security guards, which they described as humiliating.

However, representatives of the Eagle Hunter agency stated that the changes were made in accordance with the terms of the MoU. They explained that as per revised regulations, a degree qualification is mandatory for the post of supervisor and only candidates meeting the eligibility criteria are being continued in those positions. Police have registered a case and initiated an investigation into the incident. Meanwhile, the families of the workers have appealed to the authorities to conduct a fair inquiry and ensure justice.

DGP PAYS TRIBUTES

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

ON the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of freedom fighter and proponent of linguistic state of Andhra Potti Sriramulu, Director General of Police Harish Kumar Gupta paid rich



DGP Harish Kumar Gupta paying tributes to 'Amarajeevi' Potti Sriramulu by garlanding his portrait

floral tributes by garlanding his portrait at the Andhra Pradesh Police Headquarters on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, the DGP said that Amarajeevi Potti Sriramulu played a crucial role in India's freedom struggle by following the ideals and path of Mahatma Gandhi. He noted that Sriramulu's immense sacrifice for the formation of linguistic states remains a permanent chapter in the nation's history. Harish Kumar Gupta stated that Potti Sriramulu's historic fast unto death for the creation of a separate Andhra state stands as an extraordinary episode in India's history and symbolises the self-respect and aspirations of the Telugu people. His 58-day hunger strike ultimately led to the formation of Andhra State and became a turning point in the reorganisation of states on linguistic lines in the country.

High alert as tiger moves near Annavaram



Drone camera captured the tiger near Mandapam village in Sankhavaram mandal

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

FOREST officials have intensified efforts to track and capture a tiger that has been moving near Annavaram hill and surrounding villages in Kakinada district, prompting authorities to alert devotees and residents in the area.

On Sunday evening, the tiger was spotted moving near Annavaram hill and close to the Pampa reservoir, raising concern among pilgrims visiting the temple. Following the sighting, temple authorities warned devotees staying in accommodation on the hill not to venture out at night. Staff attending duties on Monday were instructed to reach the hill only through temple buses from the toll gate. As a precautionary measure, devotees were

not allowed to use the footpath route to the hill. Forest officials confirmed that the tiger crossed the Sankhavaram-Kathipudi road and moved through agricultural fields towards Mandapam village.

Earlier, drone cameras deployed by the forest department detected the animal in an open field near the forest stretch between Sankhavaram and Annavaram. Though the tiger's presence was confirmed through VHF tracking equipment and officials attempted to surround the area, the animal unexpectedly changed its route and moved away. According to officials, the tiger has been creating concern among residents in Kakinada and Polavaram districts for the past 17 days. The animal had earlier caused panic in several villages in East Godavari district for nearly ten days before

it was finally trapped near Kurmapuram. It was later released into the Papikonda forest region by forest authorities, but it appears to have strayed out of the forest area again and returned to nearby habitations. Efforts are under way to capture the tiger and shift it safely back into the forest.

The operation is being carried out under the supervision of Divisional Forest Officer N Ramachandra Rao. Nearly 100 personnel, including forest staff, rescue teams and tranquiliser dart specialists, have been deployed for the operation with the help of drone surveillance and VHF tracking systems. Chief Conservator of Forests Srikanta Nath Reddy is personally monitoring the operation as officials continue their search in the surrounding forest and agricultural areas.

'Statue of Sacrifice' puts Telugu pride on global stage: Lokesh

Minister says the 58-foot bronze statue of Potti Sriramulu unveiled in Amaravati symbolises the pride and self-respect of Telugu people and takes their legacy to the international stage

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

MINISTER for education and IT Nara Lokesh said the installation of the 58-foot bronze statue of Potti Sriramulu in Amaravati has taken the greatness of the Telugu people from the state capital to the international stage. He said the "Statue of Sacrifice" symbolises the pride and self-respect of Andhra Pradesh and stands as a living reminder of Sriramulu unparalleled sacrifice. Lokesh participated in the unveiling ceremony of the 58-foot bronze statue of Amarajeevi Potti Sriramulu in the people's capital Amaravati along with Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on the occasion of Sriramulu's 125th birth anniversary. The statue was erected to commemorate his historic 58-day fast unto death demanding the formation of a separate Andhra State.

Paying tributes at the memorial, Lokesh said he felt proud to say that he is a Telugu citizen of Andhra Pradesh and that this sense of pride was given to the Telugu people by Potti Sriramulu. "He is not just an individual but a symbol of Telugu honour. His sacrifice gave us our state, and his birth anniversary is like a festival for every Telugu person," he said.

Lokesh recalled that during his Yuva Galam padayatra, he had promised members of the Arya Vaishya community that a grand statue of Amarajeevi would be installed in Amaravati. "It gives me immense satisfaction that we were able to fulfil that promise in a short time," he said.

He noted that the foundation for the statue



Minister Nara Lokesh addressing the gathering at the unveiling of Potti Sriramulu's statue in Amaravati on Monday

was laid on September 3, 2025, and the project was completed within 194 days, reflecting the commitment of the coalition government, the memorial trust, officials, workers and donors who contributed to the initiative.

Lokesh described Potti Sriramulu as a tireless freedom fighter and social reformer who fought selflessly for society without seeking power or political positions. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, Sriramulu joined the Sabar-mati Ashram, participated in the freedom movement, and even went to jail during the Satyagraha struggle. He also led movements for Dalit temple entry in Nellore and fought against untouchability, undertaking several hunger strikes for social justice.

Lokesh explained that Sriramulu began his historic fast on October 19, 1952, at the residence of Bulusu Sambamurthy in Madras and continued it for 58 days, sacrificing his life for the cause of a separate Andhra State. His death stirred the nation and ultimately led to the formation of Andhra State with Kurnool as its capital on October 1, 1953.

He also referred to historian Ramachandra Guha, who wrote that Potti Sriramulu had a profound impact on India's history and geography, as his sacrifice paved the way for the reorganisation of states on linguistic lines.

Four get life imprisonment for gang rape, murder

- The case was investigated by South Zone DSP S Bhavya Kishore, who filed the charge sheet
- Court also imposed a fine of Rs 2,000 on each of the convicts



SP D Narasimha Kishore addressing the media in Rajamahendravaram on Monday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

THE VIII Additional District Judge Court here has sentenced four accused to life imprisonment for the gang rape and murder of a woman, Routhu Kasturi, from Buri-lanka village in Kadiyampuram mandal. District Superintendent of Police D Narasimha Kishore disclosed the details of the case to the media on Monday. According to the police, Kasturi had left her house around 2 pm on October 15, 2024, to work at a nursery owned by Patamsetti Ramudu near the Buri-lanka bridge. When she did not return home

by evening, her husband tried calling her phone, but it was switched off. Family members and villagers searched the surrounding areas but could not find her. A complaint was lodged at Kadiyampuram police station on October 16, following which police registered a case of a missing woman under Crime No 314/2024 and began an investigation. On October 17, Kasturi's body was found in a canal near Choppella locks. The body was shifted to the Government General Hospital in Rajamahendravaram for post-mortem examination. During the investigation, police identified four suspects, Devara Yesu (26), Velubudi

Praveen (21), Lokina Jayapradev (19) and Dasari Suresh (22), all residents of Buri-lanka and nearby areas. They were arrested on October 30, 2024. Police investigation revealed that the accused were consuming alcohol among the nursery plantations around 5.30 pm on October 15. When Kasturi was returning home after completing her work, they allegedly dragged her into the nursery area, sexually assaulted her and later murdered her. The accused then dumped the body in a nearby canal to conceal the crime.

The case was investigated by South Zone DSP S Bhavya Kishore, who filed the charge

sheet against the accused under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including Sections 70(1), 103(1), 238 read with 3(5). After hearing the arguments from both sides, the VIII Additional District Judge Court at Rajamahendravaram delivered its verdict on March 16, 2026, sentencing all four accused to life imprisonment.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 2,000 on each of the convicts, with an additional six months of imprisonment in case of default. The SP appreciated the efforts of Assistant Public Prosecutor K Radhakrishna Raju, investigating officer DSP S Bhavya Kishore, Kadiyampuram SI B Naga Durga Prasad, court constable K Srinivas and other police personnel who assisted in the investigation and ensured the presence of witnesses in court. SP announced rewards also for the officers and staff involved in successfully securing the conviction.

APCRDA wins 'Economic Times GovTech Award 2026'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (AP CRDA) has received national recognition for its innovative digital planning initiative for the development of the people's capital, Amaravati. The authority's "Amaravati Integrated Digital Urban Planning and Governance Platform" has been selected for the Gold Award at the Economic Times GovTech Awards 2026. The award has been announced by The Economic Times, which informed APCRDA Commissioner K. Kannababu about the honour and congratulated the authority for its achievement.

The digital platform, developed based on the Amaravati Master Plan, integrates advanced technologies such as Amaravati Digital Twin and ICT platforms to support effi-

cient urban planning and governance. The project has been selected for the Gold Award under the "Smart Cities & Urban Tech Leadership" category, recognizing its role in enabling technology-driven city development. The Economic Times GovTech Awards aim to identify and honour innovative technology projects implemented in the government sector across India. The winners were selected by a distinguished jury comprising experts and former senior government officials. The awards will be formally presented at a ceremony scheduled to be held Thursday at the Hyatt Regency in New Delhi.

Officials said the recognition highlights the growing emphasis on digital governance and smart urban planning in Amaravati and strengthens the state's efforts to build a modern, technology-driven capital city.

State has turned into a drug capital, alleges YSRCP

• YSRCP Visakhapatnam district president KK Raju came down heavily on MP Putta Mahesh Kumar for his alleged involvement in a drug party

• Demands a detailed probe into Eluru MP's alleged involvement in the case

• Says that there is a free flow of ganja, heroin and cocaine in the state

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM



YSRCP Visakhapatnam district president KK Raju speaking to the media in Visakhapatnam on Monday

ANDHRA Pradesh turned into a 'drug capital,' while TDP has become 'Telugu Drugs Party,' criticised YSRCP Visakhapatnam district president KK Raju.

At a media conference held here on Monday, KK Raju came down heavily on Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar for his alleged involvement in a drug party at a farmhouse in Moinabad. "The TDP-led coalition government has turned

into a drug-capital under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu," he remarked.

Accompanied by YSRCP east constituency coordinator Molli Apparao, among others, KK Raju demanded immediate resignation of the Eluru MP and expulsion from the party. He said that the incident shocked the people of Andhra Pradesh. "However the ruling party

is trying to protect the MP despite Mahesh testing positive for drug consumption," he said.

Further, KK Raju stated that there is a free flow of ganja, heroin and cocaine in the state and alleged that a number of coalition leaders are involved in the network.

The YSRCP Visakhapatnam district president said that a mafia culture is in progress in Andhra Pradesh.

Recalling an earlier incident, Raju said how the TDP created ruckus when a container carrying dry yeast of 25,000-kg reached Visakhapatnam Port from Brazil, suspecting cocaine. "However, CBI officials confirmed that the container comprised dry yeast," he recalled.

Despite the seriousness of the case, KK Raju questioned why the Eluru MP

was granted station bail.

Accusing the government of double standards on curbing ganja in the state, Raju demanded a detailed probe into Eluru MP's alleged involvement in the drug case. "If Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu respects constitutional values, he should ensure that Mahesh resigns from the MP post and launch an investigation with immediate effect.



District in-charge Minister Kollu Ravindra at the 'Raithanna Meekosam' programme held in Anakapalli district on Monday

Coalition govt committed to strengthening agriculture sector, asserts Ravindra

• Minister for Mines, Excise and Commercial Taxes Kollu Ravindra the govt has successfully implemented 'Annadata Sukhibhava' scheme

• Under the scheme, approximately Rs 9,000 crore was directly credited into farmers' bank accounts in three phases

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ANAKAPALLI

MINISTER for Mines, Excise and Commercial Taxes Kollu Ravindra said the coalition government is strongly committed to the development of the agricultural sector and farmers' welfare remains a top priority. Addressing farmers at the 'Raithanna Meekosam' programme held on Monday at Venkuppalem village in Anakapalli mandal, the Minister stated that the initiative was launched in Gannavaram to highlight various welfare measures implemented for farmers across the state.

Ravindra said that the government has successfully implemented 'Annadata Sukhibhava' scheme, benefiting nearly 46.83 lakh farmers across Andhra Pradesh. Under the scheme, approximately Rs 9,000 crore was directly credited into farmers' bank accounts in three phases. Rs 3,174 crore in the first phase, Rs 3,135 crore in the second phase, and Rs 2,600 crore in the third phase, he informed.

The Anakapalli district in-charge Minister informed

that Rs 132 crore has been deposited into the accounts of farmers in Anakapalli district alone, emphasising the government's commitment towards supporting farmers at the grassroots level. A record budget allocation of Rs 53,000 crore has been made for farmers' welfare and it reflects the government's dedication to strengthening the agricultural economy, he added. Talking about environmental and health concerns, the minister cautioned that the excessive use of chemicals in agriculture has become a serious threat. He urged farmers and stakeholders to recognise the consequences of chemical dependency in farming practices. Citing the example of Punjab, he noted that several farmers have been affected due to cancer following their prolonged exposure to chemicals and several patients reportedly travelling daily to Delhi for the treatment.

To address this issue, Ravindra said that the government is actively promoting natural farming, which not only safeguards farmers' health but also enhances soil fertility and sustainable crop productivity.

The Minister also pointed out the growing agricultural potential of Anantapur district, stating that while the Godavari districts were traditionally known as the state's agricultural backbone, Anantapur is now emerging as a strong competitor due to improved farming practices and irrigation initiatives.

Speaking on irrigation projects, Ravindra stated that the government is

working towards completing the Polavaram project by 2027 which will enable abundant irrigation water supply to several regions, including Anakapalli district through the Left Canal.

He also said that during a recent visit to Andhra Pradesh, Bill Gates expressed willingness to provide technical assistance for agricultural development, opening new avenues for technological advancement in farming.

Speaking on the occasion, Anakapalli District Collector Vijaya Krishnan explained that the main objective of the 'Raithanna Meekosam' programme is to ensure that officials from agriculture and allied departments visit farmers' homes and spread awareness about modern agricultural practices. She said that natural farming is being actively promoted in the district, and directed agriculture officials to intensify awareness campaigns to encourage farmers to adopt sustainable farming methods across larger areas.

Highlighting the government's push towards agricultural modernisation, she stated that the government is encouraging mechanisation in farming, and 60 agricultural drones have already been distributed to farmers in the district to assist in precision farming and crop monitoring.

District Agriculture Officer Asha Devi, along with former MLA Peela Govinda Satyanarayana, Gava Corporation chairman Malla Surendra Babu, and several farmers, participated in the programme.

Operationalisation of ECHS Polyclinic to cater to ex-servicemen



Naval officials inaugurating Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme Polyclinic in Vizianagaram

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

IN a concrete step towards strengthening healthcare services for the veteran community, a new Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) Polyclinic has commenced functioning at Vizianagaram.

The facility was recently inaugurated by Rear Admiral M Murali Mohan Raju, Chief Staff Officer (Personnel and Administration), Eastern Naval Command (ENC), in the presence of Surgeon Rear Admiral Dilip Raghavan, Command Medical Officer, ENC and members representing the ex-servicemen fraternity.

The establishment of the ECHS Polyclinic at Vizianagaram is aimed at providing accessible and quality healthcare services to approximately 15,000 ECHS beneficiaries, including veterans ex-servicemen, Veer Naris, and their eligible dependents residing in Vizianagaram district and surrounding areas. The polyclinic will offer comprehensive outpatient

medical services, including consultation with medical specialists, diagnostic facilities, pharmacy services, and referral to empanelled hospitals for advanced treatment where required.

The importance of ensuring timely and effective medical care for veterans who have served the nation with dedication and distinction was highlighted.

Equipped with modern medical infrastructure to cater to the healthcare needs of ECHS beneficiaries, the polyclinic is staffed with qualified medical and support personnel. The facility is expected to significantly reduce travel time and improve access to medical services for a large number of veterans, veer Naris and their families in the region.

Members of the ex-servicemen (ESM) community expressed their appreciation for the establishment of the facility, noting that it will greatly enhance healthcare accessibility and convenience for beneficiaries in the district. Later, the officials interacted with veterans.



Participants at the workshop organised at Dr. Lankapalli Bullayya College in Visakhapatnam on Monday

A two-day workshop on column chromatography and HPLC techniques

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

A two-day workshop on 'thin layer, column chromatography and HPLC techniques' was organised by the Department of Chemistry, Dr. Lankapalli Bullayya College, Visakhapatnam on Monday.

The workshop, held in association with the Royal Society of Chemistry Deccan Section, India, was inaugurated by GVR Sharma, convener of the programme, Professor of Chemistry and head of chemical research, explained the significance of the workshop.

Prof Sharma stated that chromatographic techniques are widely used in both academic research and industrial applications.

He urged the students to utilise the opportunity to gain knowledge and practical skills from the eminent speakers during the two-day programme.

Secretary and Correspondent of Dr Lankapalli Bullayya College G Madhu Kumar emphasised the need to continuously upgrade knowledge in chemistry and chemical sciences and highlighted the importance of using scientific knowledge for the constructive development of society.

Principal GSK Chakravarty spoke about the achievements of the college, while Kiran and the team from Spincio Biotech displayed HPLC and GC instruments for live demonstration.

V Peesapati, chairman

of the Royal Society of Chemistry, Deccan Section, shared his professional experiences and explained the applications of thin layer chromatography and column chromatographic techniques used in the pharmaceutical industry. He advised faculty and students to maintain the traditional guru-shishya relationship to ensure the continuous flow of knowledge.

Principals, vice-principals, heads of departments and faculty members attended the programme.

About 150 undergraduate and postgraduate students from the departments of chemistry, biotechnology and microbiology took part in the two-day skill development workshop.



Hotel workers cooking biryani on firewood at Quarry Market area in Rajamahendravaram

DEEKSHITULA
SUBRAHMANYAM
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

FUEL supply disruptions linked to the ongoing conflict in West Asia have begun affecting LPG availability across the joint East Godavari district during the past two weeks. While domestic cylinders are reaching households with some delay, a severe shortage of commercial LPG

cylinders is creating difficulties for hotels, restaurants and small food businesses. Many hotel owners say the scarcity has forced them to cut down operations. Some restaurants have restricted service to a single meal a day, while small eateries and biryani stalls have started cooking on firewood stoves due to the lack of gas cylinders.

Residents say the impact of tensions involving Israel,

the United States and Iran is felt locally despite assurances from authorities that supplies remain adequate. Mohanakrishna, an employee from Danavapeta in Rajamahendravaram, said he had to wait nearly 15 days after booking a domestic cylinder before receiving delivery.

Officials acknowledge that LPG bookings have increased sharply in the undivided East Godavari district over the past

• Some restaurants have restricted service to a single meal a day, while small eateries and biryani stalls have started cooking on firewood stoves due to lack of gas cylinders

• Officials acknowledge that LPG bookings have increased sharply in the undivided East Godavari district over the past 15 days

15 days. Gas agency operators say bookings have risen nearly threefold as consumers are placing orders in advance fearing shortages. This surge has made it difficult for agencies to deliver cylinders within the usual timeframe. District Civil Supplies authorities, however,

urged consumers not to panic. District Supply Officer Parvathi said domestic cylinders are being delivered on a first-in, first-out basis. She said around 20,000 bookings are currently pending for delivery within 72 hours, while about 17,000 cylinders were available in stock as of Sunday. On average, around 12,000 cylinders are supplied daily in the district. She added that LPG supplies are continuing from distribution points at Gokavaram, Visakhapatnam and Kondapalli near Vijayawada as usual and assured domestic consumers that there was no need for concern.

Changes in booking rules have nevertheless caused anxiety among families. Earlier, urban consumers could book the next cylinder 21 days after

receiving one. The interval has now been extended to 25 days. In rural areas, consumers can place the next booking only after 45 days. Many households say this restriction is difficult to manage. M Krishnaveni, a homemaker, said families with four to six members often finish a cylinder within about 20 days, making it difficult to wait for the next booking window. Shortage of commercial cylinders has also led some businesses to use domestic LPG cylinders illegally in restaurants and food stalls. Following complaints, officials conducted inspections at several hotels during the past four days and seized 45 domestic cylinders being used for commercial purposes. Cases were registered against 22 persons under the relevant

provisions. The situation has prompted people to look for alternatives. Traders in Rajamahendravaram say sales of induction stoves and electric cookers have increased significantly as households prepare for possible supply delays. A dealer on Main Road, Satish, said demand for these appliances has risen so sharply that many models are currently out of stock. Meanwhile, the effects of the conflict are also being felt in the edible oil market. Consumers allege that traders are increasing prices by citing supply disruptions. Over the past ten days, prices of various cooking oils have risen by up to Rs 20 per litre. A sunflower oil packet that previously sold for around Rs 165 is now priced at about Rs 180.

Retail traders say wholesale suppliers are providing only half the quantity requested, claiming reduced availability. According to wholesale dealer Janardhan, the undivided district consumes nearly 75 tonnes of cooking oil every day, with more than half of the supply dependent on imports.

Palm oil raw material is largely imported from Singapore and Malaysia, while sunflower oil raw material comes mainly from Indonesia through sea routes. These shipments reach ports such as Kakinada and Krishnapatnam, where the oil is refined, packed and then distributed to markets across the Godavari districts. Traders say any disruption in imports quickly affects local availability and prices.



State to be developed as East-West cargo corridor

- CM orders faster cargo operations at Mulapeta, Machilipatnam, and Ramayapatnam ports, targeting hinterland cargo from six neighbouring states
- Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam ports slated for completion by December; Ramayapatnam to gain prominence with BPCL refinery and dedicated rail link to Kadapa Steel Plant
- Port townships, industrial corridors, and fishing harbour expansions planned to position Andhra Pradesh as a logistics hub on India's east coast amid global shipping disruptions

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CHIEF Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has directed officials to develop the state as a major East-West cargo corridor by strengthening cargo handling operations at ports across the state.

During a review meeting held at the Secretariat on ports and fishing harbours, the Chief Minister stressed the need to expedite cargo operations at the newly constructed ports of Mulapeta, Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam. He instructed officials to take necessary steps to ensure cargo movement

from the hinterland regions of neighbouring states such as Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka through these ports.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that construction of Machilipatnam and Ramayapatnam ports is expected to be completed by December 2026. Naidu said that once the refinery of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited is established, Ramayapatnam will emerge as a major container and bulk cargo port.

The Chief Minister also revealed that the Railway Ministry has approved a dedicat-



Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu holds a review on works on ports and fishing harbours with officials at the Secretariat on Monday

ed rail connectivity project from Ramayapatnam to the Kadapa Steel Plant, which will significantly improve cargo transportation.

Naidu suggested developing port townships near the three ports to boost commercial activity and said industrial corridors are also likely to emerge in these regions due to improved infrastructure.

He further directed officials to accelerate the second phase of fishing harbour construction at Budagatlapa-

lem Fishing Harbour, Pudidamadaka Fishing Harbour and Kothapatnam Fishing Harbour. Highlighting the state's strategic location, the Chief Minister said Andhra Pradesh is poised to become a logistics hub on India's east coast, with ports and fishing harbours planned roughly every 50 kilometres along the coastline. He emphasized that the state's ports should emerge as game changers in cargo handling.

Naidu also pointed out that due to the ongoing glob-

al conflicts affecting ports in Dubai and Gulf countries, there is a growing perception that ports on India's east coast are safer. He urged officials to take advantage of this opportunity to strengthen Andhra Pradesh's maritime infrastructure and attract greater cargo traffic. The review meeting was attended by Special Chief Secretary for Investments and Infrastructure M. T. Krishna Babu and Maritime Board CEO Abhishek Kumar, among other officials.

AP fixes Rs 2.39 lakh unit cost for PMAY-Gramin 2.0 houses

- Interest subsidy on SHG loans to be reimbursed from 2026-27 to 2028-29
- State housing corporation directed to implement scheme across the state

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Andhra Pradesh government has fixed the unit cost at Rs.2.39 lakh for construction of houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin 2.0 (PMAY-G 2.0). Housing special chief secretary Ajay Jain issued GO Rt No 20 to this effect on Monday.

According to the government order, the revised unit cost includes convergence funds and Self-Help Group (SHG) loans. The order also provides for reimbursement of interest subsidy on SHG loans by the state government for the financial years from 2026-27 to 2028-29.

Officials said the decision was taken after examining proposals submitted by the managing director of the Andhra Pradesh State Housing Corporation Limited (APSHCL). The proposal



was prepared in accordance with guidelines issued by the ministry of rural development, Government of India, for the implementation of PMAY-Gramin 2.0. Under the scheme, the Centre provides assistance of Rs 1.2 lakh per house, which includes a central share of Rs.72,000 (60 per cent) and a state share of Rs 48,000 (40 per cent). In addition, beneficiaries will be eligible for an SHG loan of Rs 80,000 at an interest rate of 3 per cent, with the state government reimbursing the interest component.

The funding structure also includes convergence components such as wage support under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajevika Mis-

sion - Gramin (VB-G-RAM-G) Scheme and the National Rural Livelihood Mission, amounting to Rs 27,000, and Rs 12,000 for sanitation support for construction of Individual Household Toilets (IHHLT) under the Swachh Bharat Mission. With these components, the total unit cost per house has been fixed at Rs 2,39,000.

The government has directed the managing director of APSHCL to take necessary steps for implementation of the scheme across the state. Officials said the revised unit cost would enable beneficiaries to construct better quality houses with additional financial support through convergence schemes and SHG loans.

DRIVER'S MURDER CASE

MLC Anantha Babu's wife appears before SIT

- Lakshmi Durga was questioned by SIT in Kakinada after High Court directive, linked as second accused in 2022 Dalit youth murder
- MLC Anantha Uday Bhaskar, first accused, allegedly staged driver Subrahmanyam's death as a road accident; later released on default bail

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KAKINADA

STATE Legislative Council member Anantha Uday Bhaskar's wife Lakshmi Durga, on Monday appeared before the Special Investigation Team (SIT), probing the murder of his former driver.

She appeared before the investigating officer in Kakinada at the direction of the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Anantha Uday Bhaskar dropped her at the office of Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), where investigating officer Manish Patil Devraj questioned her.

The High Court had directed her to appear before SIT between March 16 and March 30 from 10 am to 5 pm. The order was passed on her petition seeking cancellation of a non-bailable war-



File picture of Anantha Babu and his wife Lakshmi Durga

rant against her issued by the Special SC/ST Court in Rajamahendravaram. The SIT, in the supplementary charge sheet filed last month, had stated that Lakshmi Durga had a role in the 2022 murder of Dalit youth Veedhi Subrahmanyam. Following this, she was named a second accused in the case and a non-bailable warrant was issued a week ago.

MLC Anantha Uday Bhaskar, also known as Anantha Babu, is the first accused in the case. He is accused of killing his former driver, Subrahmanyam, and later delivering the body to the victim's house. Sub-

rahmanyam (34) was found dead under suspicious circumstances in Kakinada on May 19, 2022. The MLC of the then-ruling YSR Congress Party had personally transported the body to the victim's parents' residence around 2 a.m. in his own car, claiming it was a road accident.

The family, however, suspected foul play and refused to accept the body. The murder had sparked protests by the victim's relatives and Dalit organisations.

Anantha Babu had allegedly pushed the deceased during an argument, resulting in his fall and death. The

legislator allegedly inflicted additional injuries on the body to make it appear as though the death resulted from a road accident.

The MLC was subsequently arrested, and the YSRCP suspended him from the party.

With the investigating officer unable to submit the charge sheet within 90 days, Anantha Babu was released on default bail in December 2022.

After coming to power in June 2024, the TDP-led coalition government decided to re-investigate the case. Indian Police Service (IPS) officer and incumbent Kakinada DSP Manish Devraj Patil was appointed as the investigation officer. In July 2025, the SC/ST Special Court ordered a re-investigation into the case. The MLC had challenged the order in the High Court, but it granted a stay on a lower court's order, which had also directed that a supplementary chargesheet be filed within 90 days.

Last month, the Supreme Court observed that there was a clear "nexus between police and power" in the case and that the police had attempted to help Ananta Uday Bhaskar secure bail.

Following this, the state government suspended four police officers over the lapses in the investigation that led to the release of the MLC.

KANIPAKAM TEMPLE TO GET RS3.4 Cr PUSHKARINI

- The existing temple tank to be shifted forward by 80-90 ft to create open space in front of temple
- Akhilandam to be developed on Tirumala model for coconut breaking and lamp lighting rituals
- Two Kalyana Mandapams and a guest house to be constructed with Rs 25 cr TTD funds

PRADEEP VENNELAKANTI
TIRUPATI

THE historic Sri Varasiddhi Vinayaka Swamy temple at Kanipakam is set to witness a major transformation with temple authorities launching a series of development initiatives aimed at improving pilgrim amenities and ensuring the smooth conduct of religious rituals and festivals. The plans form part of a comprehensive master development programme being implemented for the temple town.

A key highlight of the initiative is the construction of a new Pushkarini near the Supatha Mandapam at an estimated cost of Rs 3.40 crore. The existing temple tank located in front of the shrine



A view of the Kanipakam temple

has been creating difficulties during major processions, particularly Vahana Sevams conducted as part of the annual Brahmotsavams, as it restricts the movement of temple chariots and vehicles despite the presence of Mada streets on three sides.

Devasathanam Chairman V Surendra Babu popularly known as Mani Naidu said permissions for the project had already been secured from the Endowments Department and the temple administration was moving ahead with the execution schedule.

He told The Hans India that, land transfer process from a private hotel owner will be completed in the next 10-15 days after which tenders will be called for. The target is to complete the new

Pushkarini before the Brahmotsavams this year.

Officials stated that the new Pushkarini would be constructed with the same dimensions as the existing one, measuring about 140 feet in length and width and 12 feet in depth. Stones from the present tank will be re-used, preserving traditional elements while introducing improved facilities.

The structure will feature stone pillars sourced from older temple architecture, along with a centrally located stone Neerajana Mandapam housing an idol of Lord Vinayaka. Steps for devotees, barricades, water purification systems and modern lighting arrangements will also be installed.

The redesign will effectively shift the Pushkarini for-

ward by nearly 80 to 90 feet, creating a spacious open area in front of the temple.

According to the Chairman, this change will significantly improve the movement of the Lord's Utsava Murthy idols during festivals and provide better convenience for devotees visiting the shrine in large numbers.

As part of the expansion, the Devasathanam is also planning to establish an Akhilandam in front of the temple on the lines of Tirumala, enabling devotees to break coconuts and light lamps as part of fulfilling their vows. The existing TTD building and a nearby police station will be relocated, and alternative locations have already been identified. Meanwhile, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasathanams has sanctioned Rs 25 crore for the overall development of the temple town. With this, two air-conditioned Kalyana Mandapams will be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 16 crore, including one dedicated to conducting mass weddings, the Chairman revealed.

A guest house costing around Rs 9 crore will also be built by TTD. These facilities will be maintained by the Kanipakam Devasathanam, and the revenue generated from them will accrue to the temple administration.

TTD announces schedule for June ticket quota

- Arjita Seva tickets will be released online at 10 am today
- Rs 300 Special Entry Darshan tickets will be released on March 24

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUMALA

THE Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) will release the quota for various Srivari darshan tickets and accommodation for June 2026 in phases starting March 18.

According to TTD, tickets for Srivari Arjita Sevams - Suprabhatam, Thomala, Archana and Ashtadala Pada Padmaradhana - will be released online at 10 am on March 18. Devotees can register for the electronic dip for these sevams until 10 am on March 20.

Those allotted tickets through the electronic dip must complete payment between March 20 and March 22 before 12 noon to confirm their bookings.

Tickets for other Arjita Sevams such as Kalyanotsavam,

Unjal Seva, Arjita Brahmotsavam, Sahasra Deepalankara Seva and Jyeshthabishekam will be released online at 10 am on March 21.

The quota for Virtual Sevams along with their darshan slots will be made available online at 3 pm on March 21. TTD will release Angapradakshinam tokens online at 10 am on March 23, while the quota for Srivani Trust darshan tickets will be released at 11 am on the same day. The quota of free special darshan tokens for senior citizens, differently-abled persons and devotees suffering from chronic illnesses will be released online at 3 pm on March 23.

Special Entry Darshan tickets will be released online at 10 am on March 24. On the same day, the accommodation quota for Tirumala and Tirupati will be made available online at 3 pm.

TTD has advised devotees to book Srivari Arjita Sevams and darshan tickets only through its official website: <https://ttdevasthanams.ap.gov.in>

SSC exams begin smoothly across state

- Over 6.22 lakh students appear on Day 1; attendance recorded at 98.90%
- Authorities conduct 1,753 inspections to ensure fair conduct of exams

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Secondary School Certificate (SSC) public examinations began smoothly across the state on Monday, with authorities reporting peaceful conduct of the examinations at all centres.

According to the Board of Secondary Education (BSE), a total of 6,29,109 regular candidates had registered for the examinations. Of them, 6,22,217 students appeared for the first-day examination, while 6,852 candidates were absent. The exams were conducted at 3,415 centres across the state. Officials said the overall attendance on the first day stood at 98.90 per cent, reflecting a high turnout of candidates.

To ensure smooth and transparent conduct of the examinations, the Board of Secondary Education put in place a comprehensive monitoring mechanism.

As part of these arrangements, various authorities conducted 1,753 inspection visits to examination centres across the state. The inspections were carried out by



SSC students attending the public examinations at a centre in Vijayawada on Monday

Photo: Ch Venkata Mastan

district collectors, district-level observers, district educational officers, assistant commissioners of government examinations, district monitoring coordinators, flying squads and other officials.

Director of Government Examinations KV Srinivasulu Reddy said that four invigilators were found negligent in discharging their duties during the examination. Two invigilators in YSR Kadapa district, one in Anantapur district, and another in Palnadu district were reported

for lapses. He said the matter was taken seriously and strict action would be initiated against the concerned invigilators as per the rules governing the conduct of examinations.

He also instructed district educational officers, chief superintendents, departmental officers and invigilators to maintain strict vigilance and adhere to examination protocols to ensure the smooth conduct of the remaining SSC examinations.

APA India launches tele-counselling for Class 10 students during exams

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE Advanced Psychological Services Association launched a free tele-counselling initiative to support Class 10 students appearing for public examinations in the state.

Announcing the initiative, association national working president Krishna Bharat said the organisation has decided to extend psychological support to students facing stress and anxiety during the examination period. As part of the programme, 55 psychologists from across the state have volunteered to provide tele-counselling services.

Krishna Bharat explained that a special poster listing the psychologists, their availability timings and contact numbers district-wise has been prepared and steps are being taken to circulate it widely among students across the state. Students

experiencing examination stress can directly call the listed psychologists and receive counselling support.

He added that the number of psychologists participating in the tele-counselling service will be increased further if required, depending on the demand from students.

The tele-counselling initiative will be coordinated by Krishna Bharat along with Dr Varalakshmi, State president of the AP Committee, and MP Janakiram.

Students or psychologists facing any issues related to tele-counselling can contact the organisers at 9985428261, the association said. Association leaders including honorary president of the AP Committee Dr. Puli Srinivas appealed to Class 10 students across Andhra Pradesh to make use of the free counselling facility to manage stress and approach their examinations with confidence.

Rajya Sabha poll

Majhi congratulates BJP winners

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

ODISHA Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Monday congratulated the BJP's Rajya Sabha poll nominees and the Independent candidate backed by the party for winning the election, though the official announcement in this regard is yet to be made.

The BJP Odisha unit president Manmohan Samal and its sitting Rajya Sabha member Sujeet Kumar are the official candidates, while the party supported former Union minister Dilip Ray, who fought the polls as an independent.

In a post on X, Majhi said, "Heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the party's State president Shri @SamalManmohan7 Ji, who emerged victorious as a candidate on behalf of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the Rajya Sabha elections, the party's senior leader

Shri @SujeetKOfficial Ji, and the party-supported independent candidate Shri @DilipRayOdisha Ji".

Majhi said the victory marks an important milestone in fulfilling the resolve to build a 'Viksit Odisha' under the BJP government. "Their presence in the Upper House of Parliament will further strengthen the voice of Odisha's interests, progress, and public service at the national level," the Chief Minister said.

The BJP nominees are party leader Santrupt Misra and eminent urologist Dr Dattaswar Hota, whom the Congress and the CPI(M) are supporting. At least five MLAs of the Opposition BJD and Congress on Monday reportedly voted in favour of the BJP-supported Independent nominee Dilip Ray in the Rajya Sabha elections, for which the voting ended at 6 pm. Results of the polls are yet to be officially announced.

Odisha Pradesh

Congress Committee president Bhakta Charan Das told reporters that three of its MLAs - Ramesh Jena, Dasarathi Gomango and Sofia Firdous - have "voted in favour of the BJP". The BJD's Banki MLA Devi Ranjan Tripathy also announced that he voted in favour of the BJP-backed Independent candidate. Another BJD MLA Souvic Biswal's wife Dr Ananya Priyadarshini claimed that her husband voted in favour of Ray.

Both BJD president Naveen Patnaik and OPCC chief Bhakta Das were surprised when their MLAs came out openly in support of the BJP-backed Ray. "The party will certainly take action against the erring members who jumped party discipline," Das said.

Patnaik said, "I have spoken that the BJP and its allies would indulge in 'horse-trading'. Those Opposition members who voted in favour of the BJP have criminal records and were sent to jail."

BJD objects to 2nd ballot paper issued to Upasana

BHUBANESWAR: Polling for the four Rajya Sabha seats in Odisha was halted for about half an hour on Monday over a dispute on the issuance of a second ballot paper to a BJP MLA. The Opposition BJD agent objected to the issuance of a second ballot paper to BJP MLA Upasana Mohapatra. She sought another ballot paper for overwriting on the one, issued in her name earlier. Later, Mohapatra was allowed to cast her vote.

However, BJD president Naveen Patnaik strongly objected to the issuance of a second ballot paper to the BJP MLA. "The lady MLA from Brahmagiri made a clear mistake while voting. However, the officers present in the voting room, who are in charge, have illegally accepted her vote and issued a second ballot paper."

"This is completely against democratic norms and a violation of election rules. We strongly object to this. Some of our members have raised the issue, but they are not listening, thereby destroying the democratic election process," Patnaik told reporters.

Ruling BJP MLA Saroj Padhi said, "There is no harm in issuing another ballot paper to a voter. The voter may be provided with the second ballot paper if she has not shown the first paper to the party agent present at the booth. Patnaik does not know the rules of Rajya Sabha elections." The voting for the four Rajya Sabha seats commenced at 9 am. Odisha Health and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling was first to cast his ballot, followed by Revenue Minister Suresh



Pujari, who returned to Odisha after a treatment in Delhi.

Patnaik also cast his vote while several MLAs were in the queue to exercise their franchise at the polling booth on the Assembly premises. The BJP has fielded its State party president Manmohan Samal and sitting Rajya Sabha member Sujeet Kumar as official candidates and supported former Union minister Dilip Ray as an Independent nominee.

The BJD nominees are party leader Santrupt Misra and eminent urologist Dr Dattaswar Hota. The Congress and the CPI(M) are supporting Hota. The voting for the Rajya Sabha polls is being held in the State after a gap of 12 years, as this time, five candidates are in the fray for the four seats which will fall vacant on April 2. In the 147-member Odisha Assembly, the BJP has 79 MLAs and the support of three Independents, while the BJD has 48 members after the suspension of two of its legislators on January 15. The Congress has 14 MLAs and CPI(M) one legislator. A candidate needs 30 first preference votes to win a Rajya Sabha seat. As the BJP has the support of 82 members, it will have 22 surplus votes after electing its two candidates. Similarly, the BJD will have 18 surplus votes after electing its one candidate.

SCB MEDICAL FIRE

Hope for loved ones' recovery turns into gloom

HANS NEWS SERVICE
CUTTACK

IN the stillness of the early hours, when exhausted attendants of patients were sleeping on hospital floors and benches after a night of anxious waiting, a fire ripped through the trauma care ICU of SCB Medical College and Hospital and turned their fragile hope of loved ones' recovery into gloom forever. By sunrise, at least 10 patients were dead, as families wandered from ward to ward in disbelief, and the corridors of the State's premier government hospital had become a landscape of shock, smoke and grief.

The blaze broke out around 2.30 am on the first floor of the trauma care unit, where 23 patients were undergoing treatment. Patients, who were on ventilator support, were suddenly exposed to thick smoke as chaos prevailed in the ICU and staffers struggled to rescue the patients.

The trauma care centre, where critically ill patients are treated, soon turned into a quagmire of panic and subsequent deaths as the first floor of the five-storey building was engulfed in flames.

The relatives of the patients were fast asleep in the corridors of the hospital as it was past midnight and no person was allowed inside the ICU, when news of the fire spread on the premises, panicking the kin who scrambled to search for their loved ones.

They woke up to cries, running footsteps and confusion in the corridors. Many ran towards the ICU. However, security personnel restricted their entry into the ICU as the blaze spread inside the closed air-conditioned unit. Many hoped their relatives had been rescued on time. Instead, several found their dear ones lying dead with burns.

For the families outside the ICU, the tragedy unfolded not



through official updates, but through desperate searching, unanswered questions, and the unbearable discovery of their loved ones' deaths. "My brother was on ventilator support but he was recovering. Doctors had informed me that he would be brought out of ventilation in one or two days. But, today, when I was searching for him following the fire incident, I found his body lying on a stretcher in the medicine department," the younger brother of Ramesh Chandra Parida, who died in the incident, said.

The shock was perhaps deepest for those who had gone to sleep holding on to the reassurances from doctors of recovery of their kin. Krushna Ballav Das of Balasore had admitted his 27-year-old son to the trauma care unit after a road accident that left him with a head injury on Sunday.

"He was doing well... He was recovering. When I woke up and heard about the fire, I rushed to the hospital, where a staffer told me that my son

had died," Das said, weeping. A mother of four children, who lost her husband to the fire, said she was sleeping in the corridor when suddenly she woke up to the commotion of people rushing towards the ICU.

"When I searched for my husband and asked a staffer, he told me to visit another ward. There, I found my husband dead," she said. In another harrowing account, the son of a patient from West Bengal said his father had been undergoing treatment at the trauma centre for the past four days after suffering a brain stroke.

"I was sleeping in front of the ICU when the staffers asked me to go downstairs for safety," he said. "Later, I found my father dead. His body was charred beyond recognition." Another man, who thanked the almighty as he managed to rescue his brother, said, "When the fire erupted, I, with the help of another person, shifted my brother by carrying him on my shoulder."

Nita Ambani gets KISS Humanitarian Award

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

NITA Ambani, Founder and Chairperson of Reliance Foundation, was honoured with KISS Humanitarian Award 2025 here on Monday. The ceremony took place on the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) campus. The award was presented by the

institution's founder, Achyuta Samanta, in recognition of her extensive work in social development through the Reliance Foundation.

The KISS Humanitarian Award is a gold-plated trophy featuring two hands lifting a heart, symbolising compassion, hope and the transformative power of humanitarian service. The

event was attended by senior functionaries of the KISS and members of the Reliance Foundation. Earlier, Nita Ambani was received at the campus by Achyuta Samanta and other senior officials. Nita interacted with the students of KIIT University and KISS, sharing insights and encouraging their academic and personal growth.

CBI court awards 4-yr jail to ex-post office official

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

A Special CBI Court in Bhubaneswar convicted and sentenced a former Assistant Superintendent of Post Offices working at Baripada in Mayurbhanj district to rigorous imprisonment for four years with a fine of Rs 1 lakh for demanding Rs 2 lakh bribe, an official said on Saturday.

Radha Krushna Sahoo, the then Assistant Superintendent of Post Offices in-charge of Central Sub-Division Baripada, was punished by the court on Friday, the official said in a statement. The CBI registered the instant case on February 4, 2014, against Sahoo.

It was alleged that the accused demanded a bribe of Rs 2 lakh from the complainant to take initiatives for his joining as GDS (Gramin Dak Sevak),

MD (Mail Deliverer/ ABPM), and MC (Mail Carrier) in Debsolo branch post office. The accused did not take any step for facilitating his joining and demanded Rs 50,000 on February 3, 2014 (out of the total bribe demand of Rs 2 lakh), the CBI said.

When the complainant expressed his inability to pay Rs 50,000, the accused agreed to accept the money in two instalments, that is Rs 20,000 out of Rs 50,000, at his rented residence at Baliganja on February 6, 2014, said the statement.

The CBI laid a trap and caught the accused red-handed while demanding and accepting bribe of Rs 20,000 from the complainant. After investigation, the CBI filed the chargesheet on June 25, 2014 against the accused and the trial continued for 12 years before the federal agency secured a four-year jail term for the convict.

Fake CBI agents held after fleeing with gold

SUNIL MOHAN PATNAIK
BERHAMPUR

IN a swift and coordinated crackdown, the Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railway Protection Force (RPF) cracked a sensational case of robbery in which miscreants, posing as officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), decamped with a bag containing gold ornaments and valuables from passengers near Berhampur railway station.

The incident came to light following a complaint lodged on February 26 at around 10.30 pm by the victim, Husmukh Jain (43), a resident of Arianth Tower, Pune Market area, Visakhapatnam. In his report to the IIC of Berhampur GRPS, Jain stated that he and his associate Khima Ram had deboarded Konark Express at Berhampur railway station on the night of February 25. As the duo was proceeding outside the station premises between 9.15 pm and 9.30 pm, two unknown persons allegedly intercepted them and introduced themselves as CBI officials. Under the pretext of conducting an inquiry, the imposters snatched their bag containing two mobile phones and 33 pieces of gold ornaments weighing over 800 grams, along with documents such as Aadhaar, PAN and ATM cards and driving licence, before fleeing the scene.

Acting promptly on the complaint, a joint investigation team comprising GRP and RPF officers launched a multi-state operation. The probe team conducted extensive raids across several locations including Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh and multiple towns in Rajasthan such as



Jodhpur, Samdari, Balotra and Majivala.

The relentless pursuit yielded results with the arrest of three accused persons — Narendra Kumar (24), Poonam Chand (55) and Jitu Choudhary (28), all from Rajasthan. Police also recovered the looted gold ornaments from their possessions. The arrested persons have been forwarded to the court.

Meanwhile, police are intensifying efforts to apprehend five more absconding accused, Meethalal (28), Balakram (29), Khetu Ram (28), Mahendra Kumar Prajapat (28) and Dinesh, all reportedly hailing from Rajasthan.

The successful operation was carried out by a joint team comprising Apathesh Behera, Crime Inspector, Khurda Road GRP, along with C V Ramana, IIC of RPF Berhampur, and Biswanath Mallick, SI of Berhampur GRPS.

A case has been registered at Berhampur GRPS under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including Sections 309(4), later altered to 126(2), 319(2), 320, 310(2), 317(3), 61(2) and 111(3)(4). Investigation is continuing to nab the remaining accused and unravel the full extent of the interstate crime network.

OSCPCR directs admins to eradicate child begging

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR

THE Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSCPCR) has directed district administrations across the State to take immediate and coordinated action to eradicate child begging and ensure the protection and rehabilitation of affected children.

According to official sources, the Commission, in its letter issued on March 11, has directed the Inspector General of Police, IUCAW (Investigative Units for Crime against Women) of Odisha Police, all Municipal Commission-

ers, Collectors and District Magistrates, Superintendents of Police (SPs), Executive Officers of Municipalities and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), all District Labour Officers (DLOs) and District Child Protection Officers (DCPOs) to take immediate and coordinated action for the complete eradication of child labour in the State.

In the letter, the Commission remarked that it had recently come across instances where children are frequently found begging on streets, at traffic junctions and in public places across various districts of the State. "Such practices expose



children to exploitation, trafficking, abuse, accidents and denial of their funda-

mental rights to protection, education, nutrition and dignified childhood," noted

OSCPCR.

The Commission stated that child begging is a serious violation of child rights and is prohibited under various provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, and other child protection laws.

It instructed the officials concerned to treat children found begging as Children in Need of Care and Protection (CNCP) and to take steps to rescue and rehabilitate them through appropriate legal mechanisms.

The Commission has

asked the authorities to form task forces at the district level that shall plan, coordinate and monitor actions for the eradication, rescue, rehabilitation and prevention of child begging. The District Task Forces, constituted under the leadership of the District Collector, will include the District SP, Municipal Commissioner/ Executive Officer of ULBs, DCPOs, DLOs, representatives of Special Juvenile Police Units, the Women and Child Development Department and NGOs working on child protection.

The OSCPCCR further asked district administrations to conduct regular

joint rescue drives at traffic junctions, streets, market-places, bus stands, railway stations and other public places to identify and rescue children engaged in begging.

It also instructed officials to immediately produce the rescued children before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) for appropriate orders under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act. Rescued children in need of care should also be placed in appropriate Child Care Institutions and provided with education, counselling, healthcare, nutrition and rehabilitation support as per the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act.

Officials have also been directed to take strict legal action against persons or groups forcing or using children for begging, including the registration of appropriate cases under relevant laws.

Municipal authorities and district administrations have been instructed to undertake awareness campaigns discouraging the public from encouraging child begging and promote reporting of such cases to authorities or the child helpline. "A brief compliance report on actions taken may be submitted to OSCPCCR every month with detailed data base," instructed the OSCPCCR.

TG govt should curb drug menace with iron fist

In a shocking incident, Putta Mahesh Kumar and 'Pilot' Rohith Reddy tested positive for drugs. They are not ordinary men on the street. One of them is a lawmaker in Parliament while the other is a former lawmaker from Telangana. And they are nouveau riche as well. Mahesh Kumar is a member of Lok Sabha from Eluru in Andhra Pradesh. Representing Telugu Desam Party (TDP), he became an MP in 2024, at the young age of 36 years. His father Putta Sudhakar Yadav is a legislator from Mydukur in YSR Kadapa district. Sudhakar Yadav also served as the chairman of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) between April 28, 2018, and June 19, 2019. As an MP, Mahesh Kumar's primary role is to take part in enacting laws that govern the

country. Rohith Reddy, who calls himself 'Pilot' Rohith Reddy, was also a lawmaker in the past, albeit at the state-level. In 2018, he won on a Congress ticket as an MLA from Tandur, now in Vikarabad district, but shifted loyalties to Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) which was in power then. However, he lost elections from the same Assembly segment in 2023 on the BRS ticket.

Today, the two have been found consuming drugs! Does this incident show the callous attitude of these two politicians? Or are they not afraid of law enforcement agencies in Telangana?

Incidentally, the duo was allegedly caught red-handed when a team from Elite Action Group for Drug Law Enforcement (EAGLE), on a tip-off, raided a farm-

house owned by Rohith Reddy in Moinabad area. While a liquor party was underway, one of the accused even opened fire at the police team when it entered the farmhouse. A drug test was conducted on 11 people and five of them, including the MP and the ex-MLA, tested positive. Surprisingly, the MP was given a station bail, a police action which is likely to kick up a row nationally, while Rohith Reddy and others were remanded to judicial custody. This incident clearly indicates how fast drug menace is spreading in and around Hyderabad. Drug usage has reached menacing proportions, primarily due to ever-growing pub culture and widespread growth of farmhouses. It is said that there are over 2,000 farmhouses around Aziznagar in

Moinabad mandal alone. Incidentally, the same Rohith Reddy's farmhouse was the place where a plot to buy four BRS MLAs was uncovered in 2022. That incident also rocked Telangana politics as did the Sunday's drug bust.

Nevertheless, strict vigilance on pubs, farmhouses and colleges will reduce the drug threat significantly. Besides, stringent punishment for both drug peddlers and consumers can be a strong deterrent. Coming back to the latest drug bust, it is good that TDP, which is in power in Andhra Pradesh, acted swiftly, served a notice on Mahesh Kumar seeking his explanation, and decided to keep him away from party activities till he comes clean on the allegations. AP Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu

also condemned the irresponsible behaviour of the young MP, while ordering for an immediate action. But BRS has remained silent on Rohith Reddy! A few months back, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy directed the police to act tough against drug peddlers and consumers. He called for zero-tolerance towards drug usage. He was also instrumental in setting up EAGLE for eliminating the drug menace from the state. The name looks menacing, but EAGLE's action on the ground seems to be lackadaisical. Will this latest sensational drug case spur it into action? Unless the Telangana government acts tough and deals with the narcotics issue with an iron hand, the state will continue to face drug threats day in and day out.

LETTERS

Bring a law on euthanasia

The Hans India reader Datta Prasad Shirodkar has rightly stated that the debate about whether mercy killing is right or wrong, ethical or unethical, is likely to continue in the society (THI March 16). There are many families who have exhausted all medical avenues and resources in the treatment of their ailing family member, whose condition is permanently irreversible. They just pray to God to put an end to the suffering of their loved one quickly. It is time the government takes cognizance of the Supreme Court's landmark verdict and enact a law on euthanasia.

Dinanath Shenolikar, Hyderabad

A touching tribute to Potti Sriramulu

It is a fitting tribute to erect a 58-foot bronze statue of Potti Sriramulu at Shakhmuru in Amaravati as the height of the statue symbolises the number of days he was a fast-unto-death. The statue was unveiled on Friday commemorating his 125th birth anniversary. It is reported that a park is coming up on 6.80 acres of land at an estimated cost of ₹150 crore. His fast-unto-death not only helped create Andhra Pradesh on linguistic lines but also paved the way to forming states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar and Punjab, among others. Though Sriramulu hailed from a humble family, he protested twice before independence for the rights of Dalits and another two times after independence for the same. He sat on a protest for the fifth time for a separate state for Telugu people. His determination and attitude towards public issues made Mahatma Gandhi remark that he would have achieved independence much earlier if he had 10 followers like Sriramulu. The Smrutivanam in his memory will guide future generations.

Pratap Reddy Yaramala, Tiruvuru (AP)

Naidu backing criminals

Hailed as the youngest MP, Putta Mahesh Kumar Yadav, representing TDP in the Lok Sabha, did the unthinkable by consuming cocaine unmindful of the repercussions, if caught. Forgetting his position, he behaved like any other Gen-Z and is now repenting whereas his party boss Nara Chandrababu Naidu, as is his wont, simply issued a show cause notice to the MP seeking a reply within 48 hours. Naidu knows how best to circumvent laws and hush up any case filed against his party leaders, including himself. It is a shame that 'criminals' are masquerading as political 'leaders' in our country and rulers, leaving the people high and dry. Naidu himself is "involved" in several white-collar crimes. A past master in managing the entire system including the judiciary, he "managed" to get an interim bail for himself on medical grounds in the Skill Development Scam case after 53 days in jail as a remand prisoner.

Govardhana Myneedu, Vijayawada

E-waste recycling and safe disposal

This refers to "GHMC collects 15 tonnes of E-waste during mega drive" (March 16). This highlights the urgent need for continuous action. Establishing e-waste collection bins in every residential complex would ensure regular disposal. The collected material can then be recycled, with residues safely handled by GHMC through certified facilities. E-waste recycling recovers valuable metals, plastics, and glass, while safe disposal prevents toxic substances like lead, mercury, and cadmium from contaminating soil and water. The benefits are manifold—conserving resources, reducing pollution, creating green jobs, and supporting a circular economy. It also minimizes landfill waste and lowers the carbon footprint of new electronics production. The challenges include informal recycling practices that expose workers to hazards, limited infrastructure, weak regulation, and rising volumes of e-waste driven by rapid technological change. Stronger policies, global cooperation and consumer responsibility are essential to make e-waste management sustainable.

Dr O Prasad Rao, Hyderabad

Go for a contingency fund

Propos the editorial "Prudent fiscal situation gives govt headroom to tackle crisis" (March 16). The Rs one lakh crore Economic Stabilisation Fund is a wise move to cushion global shocks, but a crisis corpus cannot substitute for fixing structural flaws. The recent Rs 19,230 crore additional fertiliser outlay exposes this reality. Subsidising manufacturers rather than farmers encourages waste, leakages, and soil damage from imbalanced urea use. Genuine fiscal prudence demands shifting to direct benefit transfers, promoting sustainable farming, and diversifying import sources. A contingency fund should address genuine emergencies, not mask the absence of long-overdue reforms. Creating new corpus without tackling old inefficiencies is not consolidation, it is cosmetic comfort.

K Chidanand Kumar, Bengaluru

thehansreader@gmail.com

TG Speaker's order on anti-defection petitions is a tricky constitutional test



PROF. MADABHUSHI SRIDHAR ACHARYULU

It seems like the Anti-Defection Law is a defective law or a totally defective conclusion on the judgment of the Speaker of Telangana, Gaddam Prasad Kumar, on March 11. This has intensified a debate on whether the Speaker's decision was based on a strictly legal interpretation or influenced by political considerations.

The controversy surrounding the alleged defection of ten Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Telangana has once again placed India's anti-defection law, legislative ethics, and constitutional accountability under intense public scrutiny. What began as a political dispute has now evolved into a significant constitutional question involving the powers of the Speaker, the limits of judicial review, and the integrity of representative democracy. The recent (March 13) directions of the Supreme Court of India in the matter have not decided the merits of the dispute but have highlighted a critical issue: transparency and procedural fairness in the Speaker's adjudication of disqualification petitions. The matter was heard by a two-judge bench, comprising Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice

Augustine George Masih.

During the proceedings, senior advocates appearing for the Speaker's office and the State government submitted that the Speaker had already completed the inquiry and had passed the final orders in all the disqualification petitions.

The controversy arose after ten MLAs, who were elected to the Telangana Legislative Assembly on the Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) ticket, were accused of joining the ruling Congress party. Alleging that these MLAs had voluntarily given up their party membership, BRS leaders, including its working president K T Rama Rao (KTR) and Padi Kaushik Reddy, along with BJP MLA Yeleeti Maheshwar Reddy, approached the Supreme Court seeking directions regarding the disqualification petitions.

The petitions challenged the delay and the Speaker's alleged inaction in deciding the disqualification complaints under the anti-defection law. According to the Speaker's decision, the 10 MLAs had not defected from the BRS, and hence the disqualification petitions were dismissed. However, the petitioners raised a serious objection before the Court: copies of the Speaker's orders and records of the proceedings were not furnished to them.

SC's directions:

Taking note of these concerns, the Supreme Court questioned why the Speaker's office had not supplied the relevant documents to the petitioners, especially when they were parties to the proceedings. The court directed that certified copies of the



When voters elect a candidate based on the platform and ideology of a particular party, they are essentially endorsing that political programme. If the elected representative later switches allegiance, the voters' mandate is arguably compromised. The anti-defection law was meant to protect this mandate

Speaker's orders must be provided within 24 hours, while the depositions, statements, and other documents recorded during the proceedings had to be furnished within four days. At the same time, the court closed the present batch of petitions, observing that since the Speaker had already delivered his decisions, the appropriate remedy available to the petitioners would be to challenge those decisions through judicial review before the High Court. Thus, while the Supreme Court did not examine the correctness of the Speaker's verdict, it ensured that the petitioners would have access to the necessary documents to pursue further legal remedies.

The controversial findings:

The Speaker's ruling that the 10 MLAs had not defected triggered widespread criticism from political opponents and constitutional commentators. Several facts cited in the public domain have raised doubts about this conclusion. For instance, Khairatabad MLA Danam Nagender reportedly contested the Lok

Sabha elections from Secunderabad as a Congress candidate. Meanwhile, records on the Election Commission's website list him as a Congress nominee.

Similarly, Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiyam Srihari had been seen participating in Congress meetings and public programmes. His daughter contested the Warangal Lok Sabha seat as a Congress candidate and won. Given these developments, critics argue that it is difficult to reconcile the Speaker's finding that these MLAs continue to remain members of the BRS.

Constitutional Framework

The issue of defections in India is governed by the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution, introduced by the 52nd Constitutional Amendment in 1985. Under the Tenth Schedule, a legislator may be disqualified if:

1. They voluntarily give up membership of the political party on whose ticket they were elected;
2. They vote or abstain from voting against the party whip without permission;

3. An independent member joins a political party after being elected;
4. The authority to decide disqualification petitions rests with the Speaker (or Chairman) of the legislature.

Judicial review of the decisions:

The question of whether the Speaker's decisions can be reviewed by courts was settled in the landmark case of Kihoto Hollohan v. Zachillu. In that judgment, the Supreme Court upheld the validity of the anti-defection law but ruled that the Speaker's decisions are subject to judicial review. The court held that judicial intervention may be justified if the Speaker's decision:

- a. Violates constitutional provisions;
- b. Breaches the principles of natural justice;
- c. Is vitiated by mala fides or perversity.

Thus, the Speaker's decision is not beyond scrutiny. This principle is likely to be central if the Telangana matter reaches the High Court. Another recurring problem in anti-defection cases is the delay in deciding disqualification petitions. In the Telangana case, critics argue that not only was there a delay in deciding the petitions, but there was also a reluctance to provide certified copies of the orders, which further obstructed judicial review.

Natural justice:

At the heart of the controversy lies the issue of natural justice. Two core principles govern fair adjudication: Audi alteram partem, both sides must be heard, and reasoned decisions, the par-

ties must know the basis on which a decision has been made.

Democratic mandate:

Beyond legal technicalities, the issue of defections raises deeper questions about democratic morality. The Supreme Court's latest order does not conclude the controversy. Instead, it marks the beginning of the next phase of legal scrutiny. Once the Speaker's orders and related records are obtained, the petitioners are likely to approach the Telangana High Court seeking judicial review.

The High Court may examine several crucial questions:

1. Whether the MLAs had effectively given up their party membership;
2. Whether the Speaker's inquiry was fair and impartial;
3. Whether the decision is consistent with the constitutional principles governing defections.

Depending on the outcome, the matter could eventually return to the Supreme Court.

The Telangana episode also revives a broader institutional debate: Should the power to decide defection cases remain with the Speaker? Several constitutional scholars have suggested that this responsibility should instead be entrusted to an independent tribunal or the Election Commission of India to ensure impartiality. Until such reforms are undertaken, controversies like the present one are likely to recur.

(The writer is Advisor, School of Law, Mahindra University, Hyderabad)

The silent thunder: When Vajpayee, the poet-PM, recalibrated the global order

NOMULA SRINIVAS RAO

We have the capacity for a big blast. Ours is not a cry of despair; it is a challenge to the world - Atal Bihari Vajpayee

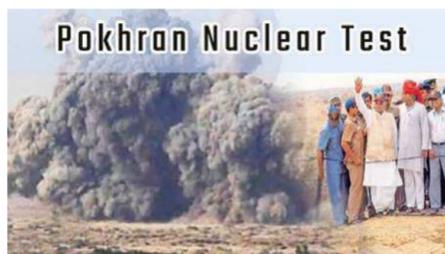
In the blistering, white-hot heat of the Thar Desert on May 11, 1998, the very sands of Pokhran didn't just shift; they shook the foundations of a geopolitical hierarchy that had long sought to keep India in a state of perpetual "strategic restraint." As the ground buckled and the sensors registered a seismic tremor of 5.3 on the Richter scale, a coded message flashed across the high-security corridors of New Delhi: "The Buddha has smiled again."

It was a moment of supreme audacity, orchestrated by a man who was as much a master of silence as he was of the spoken word. Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the poet-statesman, had just led India across the nuclear Rubicon, transforming a "post-colonial entity" into a "formidable power."

Anatomy of a secret: Defying the eye in the sky:

The 1998 Pokhran-II tests, codenamed 'Operation Shakti', were not merely a scientific achievement; they were a masterclass in clandestine leadership and psychological warfare. Vajpayee understood a chilling reality: the world's superpowers—armed with billion-dollar KH-11 "Keyhole" spy satellites—were watching India's every move from the heavens. The CIA had successfully blocked previous attempts by detecting heat signatures and soil movement. To succeed, Vajpayee knew he didn't just need scientists; he needed shadows.

Under his unwavering direction, the mission was shrouded in a "cloak of invisibility." He empowered the duo of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and Dr R Chidambaram to operate with total autonomy, bypassing the traditional, leak-prone bureaucracy. Scientists wore army fatigues to blend in with the local units, worked only during the brief "black



spots" when satellites were positioned elsewhere, and moved heavy equipment under the cover of swirling sandstorms.

Vajpayee's leadership was the steady, invisible hand on the tiller. He took the ultimate gamble with India's economy, knowing that the fallout—draconian economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation—would be immediate. Yet he remained resolute. While the West slept, a poet was preparing a symphony of fire. He chose the nation's long-term dignity over the world's short-term approval, proving that true sovereignty cannot be requested—it must be taken.

The nuclear paradox-Iron fist, a velvet heart:

Vajpayee was a walking paradox, a leader who authorized the creation of world-ending weapons while penning verses about the fragility of a dewdrop. His decision to "go nuclear" was not born of warmongering or a thirst for conquest, but of a deep-seated, civilisational desire for peace through strength. He famously remarked that weapons are not for war, but to ensure that war never happens.

He believed that a weak India could never be a truly peaceful India but a vulnerable one. By declaring India a nuclear-weapon state, he wasn't seeking a tool for ag-

gression; he was building a "Minimum Credible Deterrent." His strategic foresight was prophetic. He anticipated the two-front threat from neighbours long before it became a staple of modern defense journals.

The "poet's resolve" was visible even as he faced the wrath of the Clinton administration. He remained unfazed in the face of global condemnation, famously stating in Parliament that India would never use these weapons against non-nuclear states—the No First Use (NFU) policy. This was his hallmark: the heart of a poet who wept for the fallen soldier, but the spine of a warrior who ensured that no mother would ever have to weep because her country was defenseless against nuclear blackmail.

From 1998 to a global power:

Estimates are that India possesses an arsenal of approximately 180 nuclear warheads. Vajpayee transformed India from a "suppliant" state, constantly asking for

permission, into a "deciding" power. He proved that India could withstand global sanctions and emerge stronger, eventually forcing the world to sign the Civil Nuclear Deal and recognize India as a responsible nuclear state.

He led with a smile that carried the weight of a thousand suns and a voice that could silence a storm. He showed that you could be a man of peace while holding the ultimate deterrent, and that a poet's vision is often clearer than a politician's calculation.

As we look back at the 1998 explosions, we remember not just the fire in the sky, but the calm in the heart of the man who ignited it. He was Bharat's true Ratna—a bridge between the ancient wisdom of the Buddha and the modern necessity of the missile.

My poetry is a declaration of war against defeat, not a song of surrender - Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

(The writer is a former OSD to Union Civil Aviation Minister)

Minister assures adequate LPG supply, warns against rumours

- Civil supplies minister Manohar says state is delivering nearly 3 lakh cylinders daily, exceeding bookings
- States strict action is underway against black marketing; 616 cases filed, 2,500 cylinders seized
- OTP verification and digital booking promoted to curb misuse and ease consumer access

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

CIVIL supplies minister Nandendra Manohar on Monday assured that there is no shortage of LPG cylinders for domestic consumption in the state and urged people not to panic or believe rumours circulating on social media.

Addressing a press conference at the Secretariat, the minister said the government is taking strict measures to prevent black marketing and artificial shortage of LPG. He warned that strict action would be taken against those involved in illegal sale or diversion of domestic cylinders.

The minister explained that the review meeting on



Civil supplies minister Nandendra Manohar along with officials addressing a press conference at the Secretariat on Monday

LPG supply conducted by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu confirmed that the state has sufficient stock and delivery systems are functioning normally. He said people should avoid standing in queues at gas agencies out of fear and instead use online booking methods such as mobile apps, phone calls, WhatsApp, missed calls and digital payment platforms.

According to the minister, the state normally records about 2.81 lakh LPG bookings per day, while gas companies have been delivering an average of 2.92 lakh cyl-

inders daily in the past five days, with deliveries touching three lakh cylinders on some days.

Manohar said the sudden surge in bookings due to rumours had temporarily affected servers, but supply remains adequate. As per central guidelines, a new booking can be made after 45 days in rural areas and 25 days in urban areas.

To curb misuse and black marketing, the government has made OTP verification mandatory for cylinder delivery. Officials have also been directed to ensure that domestic LPG cylinders are

not diverted for commercial use. He revealed that 616 cases have been registered and about 2,500 LPG cylinders seized in the last five days during enforcement drives. District-level call centres have been set up under the supervision of Joint Collectors to assist consumers.

The minister further assured that schools, hospitals, temples and welfare hostels will receive uninterrupted gas supply, adding that gas companies have also assured the government that there will be no shortage of domestic LPG in the state.

Continuous Annaprasadam launched at Vontimitta temple

- TTD chairman says a German shed is installed to provide comfortable seating for pilgrims to take Annaprasadam
- CM Chandrababu Naidu will take part in Sri Sitarama Kalyanam on April 1

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VONTIMITTA
(YSR KADAPA DISTRICT)

TTD chairman B R Naidu on Monday announced that Annaprasadam will be distributed continuously to devotees visiting Sri Kodandarama Swamy temple in Vontimitta. He inaugurated the Annaprasadam distribution centre set up opposite the temple premises.

Speaking on the occasion, Naidu said the facility was established following the directions issued by the Chief Minister last year to ensure uninterrupted serving of free meals to devotees. A German shed has been installed at the centre to provide comfortable seating for pilgrims while partaking of Annaprasadam.

The chairman said Sri Kodandarama Swamy Brahmotsavams will be conducted for nine days from March 27 to April 5 with elaborate arrangements. Special preparations are being made for Sri Sitarama Kalyanam sched-



TTD chairman B R Naidu serving food to devotees after inaugurating Annaprasadam distribution programme at Vontimitta on Monday

uled on April 1. On behalf of the State Government, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will offer Pattu Vastrams to the deities during the ceremony.

Devotees attending the Sri Sitarama Kalyanam will be provided free Srivari Laddu Prasadam worth Rs 50. Arrangements are also being made to distribute Annaprasadam, drinking water, and buttermilk packets to pilgrims. The district administration and Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) are jointly overseeing the arrangements for the annual festivities.

Sri Sitarama Kalyanam will be telecast live worldwide through SVBC. Electrical illumination, LED lighting, and a public address system are being arranged at an estimated cost of Rs 4 crore for the celebrations.

Naidu further said steps are being taken to construct a 108-foot statue of Jambavan-

tha at a cost of Rs 20.17 crore. Under the temple master plan, 100 rooms will also be built at an estimated cost of Rs 37 crore to improve accommodation facilities for devotees. He added that, as per the directions of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, free Annaprasadam will now be served three times a day to devotees at Vontimitta.

Earlier, the TTD chairman visited Sri Kodandarama Swamy Temple and offered prayers. Temple priests and officials welcomed him with traditional honours, and he was presented Theertha Prasadam after darshan.

Later, he inspected the arrangements being made for the Sri Sitarama Kalyanam. District Collector Dr Cherukuri Sridhar, Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chowdary, SP Shelke Chakraborty, JEO V Veerabrahmam, CVSO KV Murali Krishna and other officials were present.

US PREZ TRUMP ACCUSES IRAN OF SPREADING LIES

Continued from P1

"Now, AI has become another Disinformation weapon that Iran uses, quite well, considering they are being annihilated by the day," he said on his social media platform on Monday. Trump said Iran showed "phony Kamikaze Boats," shooting at various ships at sea, which looks "wonderful, powerful, and vicious." "But these boats don't exist — It's all false information to show how tough their already defeated Military is!"

The five US refuelling planes that were supposedly struck down and badly damaged, according to the "Wall Street Journal's false reporting," and others, are all in service, except for one, which will soon be flying the skies, Trump claimed. "Buildings and Ships that are shown to be on fire are not — It's FAKE NEWS, generated by AI."

Karnataka Speaker raps govt

Continued from P1

Stating that there had been no improvement from the government side, the Speaker questioned how the House could function smoothly if such lapses continued. "If this is the attitude of the government, how are we supposed to run the House in a manner agreeable to all?" he asked. Khader further declared that the proceedings would not continue until the ministers and officials concerned explained the reason for the delay in answering questions. "Until the ministers and officials concerned come to me and explain what the issue is, I will not conduct the House. I am adjourning the House," he said. Earlier, after Question Hour, Home Minister G. Parameshwara informed the House on behalf of the government that out of the 230 questions that were to be answered in written format, the government had responded to 84.

Chandrababu: Haj House in Amaravati soon

Releases Rs 45 crore honorarium dues for imams and muezzins

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu announced here on Monday that the Andhra Pradesh government will construct a new Haj House in Amaravati and immediately release Rs 45 crore in pending honorarium dues for imams and muezzins. He pointed out that the coalition government has implemented several welfare initiatives for Muslims over the past 21 months.

The Chief Minister made these remarks while participating in an iftar hosted by the state government here. He joined the prayers and extended Ramzan greetings to the Muslim community.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said the incomplete Haj House in Kadapa would soon be made operational. The government has organised iftars across districts and constituencies during the holy month of

Ramzan. Emphasising the teachings of Prophet Muhammad on charity and compassion, the Chief Minister said the government is committed to supporting the poor and ensuring the socio-economic advancement of Muslims.

Naidu highlighted several welfare measures implemented by the state government. Under NTR Bharosa pensions, about 4.38 lakh Muslims receive financial assistance, with the government spending around Rs 3,511 crore annually. Around 4.5 lakh Muslim students are benefiting from the 'Thaliki Vandanam' scheme, while Rs 264 crore has been released as post-Matric scholarships for 19,215 students. Under the Deepam 2.0 scheme, 6.2 lakh families are receiving LPG support worth Rs 158 crore.

The Chief Minister said Rs 180 crore has already been distributed as honorariums, providing Rs 5,000 for imams and Rs 10,000 for muezzins,

and ordered the immediate release of the remaining Rs 45 crore dues.

Naidu stated that the government respects the sentiments of Muslims and is taking steps to protect Waqf properties. Around 1,500 Waqf properties have been surveyed and the board has been recast, after cancelling earlier orders that created disputes.

The Chief Minister mentioned that Rs 100 crore has been allocated to the Dadekula Muslim Finance Corporation, minority welfare allocations were increased from Rs 5,434 crore to Rs 6,090 crore, and Rs 7 crore was sanctioned to the Urdu Academy.

The event was attended by Minority Welfare Minister NMD Farooq, MP Kesineni Sivanath, MLAs Mohamed Nasseer Ahmed, Bondam Umamaheswara Rao, Gadde Rammohan, and several public representatives and leaders from the Muslim community.

Trump may send troops to capture 'Crown Jewel of Iran'

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is reportedly weighing the possibility of seizing Kharg Island-- a scrubby stretch of land in the Gulf that handles almost all of Iran's crude exports-- amid a growing energy crisis due to war in the Middle East.

Trump may order the seizure of Iran's critical oil depot on Kharg Island if tankers remain bottled up in the Persian Gulf amid Tehran's blockade, US officials said. If the US goes ahead with the move, it will put US troops on the ground, which risks triggering Ira-

nian retaliatory strikes against oil facilities and pipelines across Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. But America's main ally in the Middle East, Israel, may not be inclined to put its boot on the ground in Iran just yet, as Israel's ambassador to India, Reu-

ven Azar, has claimed that neither Washington nor Jerusalem intends to invade Iran. He said the focus of US-Israeli actions remains on encouraging change within Iran through pressure from its own people rather than through military occupation.

True tribute to Amarajeevi lies in all-round growth of state: Naidu

Continued from P1

The monument has been installed by the Amarajeevi Potti Sreeramulu Memorial Trust.

The Chief Minister observed that the "real tribute" to Potti Sreeramulu would be the comprehensive development of the state in all sectors. He urged people to constantly remember Sreeramulu's sacrifice and work collectively for the progress of Andhra Pradesh.

Naidu said the statue is the first major sculpture in Amaravati and stands as a lasting symbol of Sreeramulu's sacrifice. The memorial has been built across 6.80 acres in Shakamuru Park, with the first phase of the project completed in a record six months. In the first phase, the massive structure used 26 tonnes of bronze and 42 tonnes of iron framework. In the next phase, a museum, an auditorium and skill devel-

opment centres will be developed as part of the memorial park.

Describing Sreeramulu as a symbol of inspiration, the Chief Minister said the great freedom-fighter belonged to all communities and not just one section of society. Sreeramulu's sacrifice paved the way for the creation of Andhra State and later encouraged the formation of linguistic states across India. Naidu recalled that Sreeramulu fought also for social causes, including Dalits' entry into temples by undertaking a 29-day fast earlier in his life.

Naidu emphasised that Andhra state was achieved through Sreeramulu's sacrifice, just as the state capital has been made possible by the sacrifices of farmers who contributed land for Amaravati's development. The Chief Minister criticised the previous government for attempting to

divide the capital and said Amaravati is now progressing as a "people's capital".

Naidu also announced that the state government would soon issue a Government Order (GO) to recognise various Vaishya groups under the unified identity of Arya Vaishyas, respecting their sentiments. He assured that the coalition government is committed to creating a business-friendly environment for the community.

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Union Minister Pemmasani Chandrababu Naidu, Ministers Nara Lokesh, Nandendra Manohar and several public representatives attended the unveiling ceremony. The Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister also released a postal cover issued by India Post in honour of Potti Sreeramulu and felicitated members of his family during the event.

Global energy crisis deepens as Iran keeps hold on Hormuz

Continued from P1

As morning broke Monday, a drone hit a fuel tank near Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international passenger traffic, causing a large fire. Firefighters contained the blaze and there were no injuries reported, but the airport suspended all flights before resuming them a few hours later. Later, a person was killed in the capital of the United Arab Emirates when an Iranian missile hit a vehicle, the Abu Dhabi media office said. Fire also broke out at an oil facility in Fujairah, one of the UAE's seven emirates, following a drone attack.

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, said it intercepted a wave of 35 Iranian drones sent to its eastern region, home to major oil installations. Iran has fired hundreds of missiles and drones toward countries in the region hosting U.S. military assets since the war began. Emirati authorities say most have been intercepted by air defenses, though debris and some drones have fallen in-

side the country. Israel's military said on Monday that Iran launched missiles toward Israel as well.

The conflict is battering the world economy, driving up energy and fertilizer prices; threatening food shortages in poor countries; destabilizing fragile states; and complicating efforts by central banks to drive down prices for consumers. Much of the difficulty stems from the virtual shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump said on Sunday that he wants to police the strait to make it safe for shipping, with his party increasingly concerned that rising prices for American consumers will hurt the Republicans in elections this fall. He did not identify the countries he said he asked to help with those efforts, but he said he won't forget the countries that decline. He has previously appealed to China, France, Japan, South Korea and Britain. "Whether we get support or not, but I can say this, and I said to them: We will remember," Trump said.

'Take steps to prevent LPG black marketing'

Naidu suggested holding consultations with hotel associations to encourage measures that could temporarily reduce LPG consumption if necessary. Officials also informed the

Chief Minister that the Centre is expected to allocate additional LPG supplies to Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka in the coming days.

He further advised offi-

cials to explore alternative options such as pipeline gas and induction stoves as supplementary solutions to ensure energy security and reduce dependence on LPG in the long term.

MEA slams US report recommending sanctions on RSS

Continued from P1

This comes after USCIRF designated India as a "country of particular concern" and asked United States to link arms sales and trade policies to religious freedom.

USCIRF said its report, Systematic Religious Persecution in India, provides an overview of India's social, political, and criminal justice systems as they relate to issues regarding freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). "It also examines the relationship between Hindu nationalist groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the implications of this dynamic for FoRB.

Despite offering some constitutional protections for FoRB, India's political system facilitates a climate of discrimination toward religious minority communities," the

report alleged. USCIRF also argued that conditions for religious freedom in India have "continued to deteriorate" and accused the Indian government of "targeting" religious minorities and houses of worship. "Several states undertook efforts to introduce or strengthen anti-conversion laws to include harsher prison sentences. Indian authorities also facilitated widespread detention and illegal expulsion of citizens and religious refugees and tolerated vigilante attacks against religious minority communities," the report said.

Created in 1998 by an act of the United States Congress, the USCIRF "monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) abroad" and makes recommendations to the President of the United States, the United States Department of State, and Congress.

10 killed in Cuttack ICU fire

Continued from P1

The fire broke out around 2:30 am to 3 am, where critically ill patients were being treated. Multiple fire engines rushed to the spot and are engaged in the rescue operations.

Shortly after the incident, the Odisha Chief Minister, along with Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling, visited the hospital and reviewed the situation. They also visited other patients who are receiving treatment at the facility.

"A total of 23 patients have been shifted to other departments. Seven serious patients died while shifting to other ICUs and wards, while another three patients died later.

I have directed the concerned officers for proper treatment of the injured patients," the Chief Minister told the media. Majhi announced a compensation of Rs 25 lakh for the families of those people who died.

Iran seeks return of 3 tankers seized by India

IN RETURN FOR HORMUZ SAFE PASSAGE

TEHRAN

IRAN has asked India for the release of three seized tanker ships in return for the safe passage of India-bound tankers through Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing Gulf crisis, sources said on Monday.

The report said that Iran's ambassador to India met Foreign ministry officials on Monday to discuss the issue. However, neither India, nor Iran has not reacted to the report yet.

Indian coastal authorities in February reportedly seized three oil tankers sanctioned by the United States and allegedly linked to Iran. The vessels were intercepted off the Mumbai coast and taken in for investigation over sus-

pected involvement in illicit oil trade activities.

The 'Shadow Fleet' vessels Stellar Ruby, Asphalt Star, and Al Jafzia, which were carrying sanctioned Iranian oil, were seized on February 6.

Iran, meanwhile, has made it clear that Strait of Hormuz cannot be used to launch strikes on Tehran and set conditions on the passage of vessels through it. It said vessel movement through the strait could occur only under special conditions due to what he described as insecurity created by Israel and the United States, adding that Iran's armed forces oversee the passage and would prevent its use for military action against Tehran.

PNG and CNG supply uninterrupted: Govt

Continued from P1

During an inter-ministerial briefing, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary (Marketing and Oil Refinery) at the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, said fuel stations supplying CNG and households using PNG continue to receive normal supply. Authorities have also initiated enforcement action against hoarding, with raids conducted across several states to monitor storage and distribution. The government said crude oil availability remains adequate, with refineries operating at full capacity and petrol pumps functioning normally without reported shortages.

City gas distributors are also promoting PNG adoption. Indraprastha Gas Lim-

ited has announced an incentive of free gas worth Rs 500 for consumers registering for PNG connections before March 31.

LPG bookings have declined as concerns over domestic gas availability eased. Meanwhile, 22 states and Union Territories have set up control rooms to monitor supply and curb hoarding or black marketing.

The ministry urged consumers to avoid panic bookings and use digital platforms for LPG orders. The government said it continues to prioritise uninterrupted supply to households and key sectors such as hospitals and educational institutions, while closely monitoring the situation amid prevailing geopolitical developments.

India rules out talks with US on Hormuz

NEW DELHI: India on Monday said it has not held bilateral talks with the United States on deploying naval vessels to secure merchant shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

The clarification came after US President Donald Trump urged countries to send warships to keep the strategic waterway open amid tensions with Iran. Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Trump said that his administration has contacted 7 countries for support. India has not held bilateral discussions with the United States on deploying naval vessels to ensure the safe passage of merchant shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the External Affairs Ministry said on Monday.



Awesome debut: Divya Pathak's kathak arangetram mesmerises Hyderabad

Young dancer Divya Pathak marked a graceful milestone with her Kathak Arangetram, delivering a performance that blended tradition, precision and expressive storytelling. Held at Ravindra Bharati under the guidance of award-winning guru Raghava Raj Bhatt and the aegis of Akruti Kathak Kendra, the debut captivated audiences throughout

A graceful celebration of rhythm, devotion, and classical excellence unfolded at Ravindra Bharati as young dancer Divya Pathak marked her Kathak Arangetram with a performance that held the audience spellbound. Organised under the auspices of Akruti Kathak Kendra, the evening showcased the arrival of a promising artiste deeply rooted in tradition and refined training.

The debut was presented under the mentorship of noted Kathak exponent and Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee Raghava Raj Bhatt, whose guidance was evident in every detail of the recital. Divya opened the evening with Guru Stotram, offering a devotional invocation that set a serene tone. She then moved into an elegant presentation of Teen Tal, the popular 16-beat rhythmic cycle of Hindustani classical music, displaying impressive command over footwork, posture, and laya control. Her expressive depth shone in a lyrical interpretation set to a Meera bhajan, where rhythm and emotion blended seamlessly. One of the most captivating segments portrayed the divine love of Radha and Krishna during Holi, performed in the Dhamar style of Dhrupad. The choreography beautifully combined storytelling with technical finesse, evoking festivity and devotion in equal measure.

A semi-classical Thumri followed, rich in abhinaya and delicate rhythmic variations. Drawing from devotional ragas and reflecting the refined aesthetics of the Lucknow tradition, the piece stood out for its emotional nuance and visual grace. Divya further impressed the audience with Dashavataram, effortlessly transitioning through varied mythological themes and moods with striking clarity and energy. The recital concluded on a vibrant note with a traditional Tarana, bringing the performance to an exhilarating close.

The evening was also marked by blessings and tributes. Renowned Bharatanatyam guru Dr. Rajeshwari Sainath conveyed her blessings and fondly remembered the late Dr. Mangalabhat, honor-

ing his invaluable contributions to Kathak. Appreciation was extended to Guru Bhatt for his thoughtful choreography and dedicated mentorship. Among the distinguished guests, Ashar Faran, Trustee of Lamakaan, wished Divya a bright future and encouraged her continued journey in dance. A touching highlight was Divya's Guru Pooja, a heartfelt gesture of reverence reflecting the spiritual essence of the classical arts.

The recital was elevated by an accomplished live orchestra led by Fateh Singh Ganga on pakhawaj. Vocal support came from Madhu Prasad, with instrumental accompaniment by Uday Kumar, Lavanya Ambade,

Puneet Sisodia, Raghav Sai, and Harika. Presentation by Amit Kumar, lighting by Basava Raju, and stage design by Madhav Raj Bhatt added visual richness. The sabha was smoothly coordinated by Parag Pathak.

With poise, devotion, and artistic maturity, Divya Pathak's debut announced the rise of a Kathak dancer to watch.



Parenting

Raising emotionally brave kids

WHY LETTING CHILDREN FACE SMALL FAILURES BUILDS LIFELONG RESILIENCE

DR DEEPTI T NAIR

The present world which emphasizes achievement brings about protection for children against disappointment and frustration and failure. The protective measures which parents use to protect their children arise from their love for their children yet these measures create an unintended result which weakens the emotional strength of the children. Children develop emotional bravery through real-life experiences which include facing their first small failures. The process of brain development requires failure as an essential factor which also supports emotional development. Children learn to persevere through difficult challenges when their brains adapt to difficult situations which they cannot immediately solve. The process enhances neural connections which are essential for solving problems and managing emotions and maintaining determination.

Children learn to recognize discomfort as a temporary condition which they can handle. They develop a mindset which psychologists refer to as growth mindset because they believe that effort leads to skill development. Students who develop this mindset achieve academic success throughout their educational journey which extends into their professional life and mental health. The term emotionally brave describes children who experience fear and embarrassment and calmly perform the tasks and maintain their courage.

Children develop emotional strength through learning that these feelings represent



standard reactions which people experience. Children experience sadness and frustration and self-doubt when they lose a game or face school challenges or forget performance lines or fail to join a team. The moments which people experience teach them how to manage their emotions. The child recognizes that challenging emotions will emerge reach their highest point and then disappear. Building emotional endurance enables people to face their future life challenges which include academic pressure and workplace stress and relationship difficulties.

The emotional weakness develops through excessive protection from parental care. The presence of adults who solve problems and handle disputes and shield children from failure hinders their development of coping mechanisms. The unknown experience of failure makes them develop intense fear of failure. Children with this condition avoid new experiences and they show quick abandonments of tasks and they need to receive approval from others. The condition develops into anxiety issues and low self-esteem and an inability to handle rejection and criticism in both teenage years and adult life. Minor

mistakes provide students with opportunities to learn social responsibility and self-reliance. The process enables children to understand how their choices result in specific outcomes when they forget their homework or mismanage their time or make mistakes. Children learn to evaluate themselves through their experiences when they should learn from their mistakes instead of waiting for others to help them. The process helps people develop executive functioning abilities which include planning skills and self-control abilities and decision-making skills. The process of failure provides another crucial advantage which enables people to separate their self-worth from their actual performance level. Children who receive constant praise for their achievements start to think that their worth exists only when they achieve success. Children who experience both success and failure discover that their worth does not depend on their accomplishments. They establish self-assurance through internal development instead of needing external support. The process protects mental wellbeing while decreasing the anxiety of being evaluated by others. Parents and caregivers shape children's understand-



In a world that prizes constant achievement, many children are shielded from failure in the name of love—often at the cost of their emotional resilience. Experts say that small setbacks are essential for building confidence, problem-solving ability and lifelong mental strength

ing of failure through their actions. The goal is not to create harsh or stressful situations but to create situations that match the natural development needs of children. The adult response matters more than the actual failure when children experience their first unsuccessful attempts. Children need calm reassurance and empathy together with encouragement to attempt again because these elements help them develop constructive ways to handle their situations. Resilience gets strengthened through statements which recognize persistence and courage because those statements direct focus towards effort instead of final results.

Children need to develop their ability to solve problems through independent thinking because this skill holds equal value with their need to solve problems through independent thinking. The process of solving problems without assistance helps individuals build their confidence when they face challenges with friends or work on tough tasks or ac-

quire new abilities. The ability to handle difficulties enhances emotional security for children because they understand their own capacity to deal with problems.

Children who display emotional courage develop into adults who possess strong mental abilities and adaptable nature and self-assuredness. The methods enable them to take safe risks and try out fresh possibilities while using their previous failures to guide them toward success. The practice of avoiding all failures leads people to develop fear-based behaviors which result in emotional weakness.

People develop resilience through their challenges instead of their comfortable experiences. The process of developing resilience requires people to go through various life situations which include their temporary periods of rest and their self-evaluation time.

(The writer is a Senior Consultant - Pediatrics and Neonatology, Rainbow Children's Hospital, Sarjapur Road)



Shilpa Shetty reveals her ultimate 'secret to staying calm' before work

amaForTheWin."

In the video, the 'Baazigar' actress can be seen practicing pranayama as she gears up for a professional stint.

Dressed in a shimmering gold halter-neck outfit with delicate embellishments, the actress is seen sitting outdoors and calmly performing the breathing exercise.

Talking about Shilpa Shetty, the actress has long been known as a yoga enthusiast and has constantly advocated the benefits of the generations-old practice of yoga along with healthy and clean eating.

The actress has often been seen em-

phasising the importance of balance in lifestyle and fitness.

In many of her earlier interviews, she has shared that throughout the week she follows a strict and disciplined diet, while Sundays are reserved for sheer indulgence.

Apart from her film work, Shilpa is also popular for her "Sunday binge" posts on social media, where she offers fans a glimpse into her cheat-day rituals.

On the professional front, Shilpa Shetty made her Bollywood debut with the 1993 thriller 'Baazigar' opposite Shah Rukh Khan and Kajol, which

went on to become a major success.

Over the years, she has appeared in several popular films like 'Tu Khiladi Main Anari', 'Dhadkan' and many more.

Shilpa's younger sister, Shamita Shetty, is also an actor who made her debut with 'Mohabbatein'.

Apart from films, Shilpa has also built a strong presence on television as a reality show judge, appearing on popular shows such as 'Super Dancer' and 'India's Got Talent'.

On the personal front, she is married to businessman Raj Kundra and the couple is blessed with two children.

Soha says her mother's house is the 'only home where she's still someone's baby girl'

Actress Soha Ali Khan, on Sunday, shared a heartwarming glimpse of her beautiful time with her mother, veteran actor Sharmila Tagore.

Sharing a picture alongside her mother, Soha mentioned that it is the only home where she's still somebody's baby girl, highlighting the warmth of her maternal house.

Taking to her social media account, Soha posted a carousel featuring her pictures along with Sharmila Tagore and her daughter Inaaya Naumi Kemmu.

She captioned the post as, "The only home where I'm still someone's baby girl."

In the pictures, Soha can be seen dressed elegantly in a red saree paired with traditional jhumkas and a small bindi.

She is seen standing beside her mother Sharmila Tagore, with both of them smiling warmly at the camera.

Another picture in the carousel shows her daughter Inaaya hugging her grandmother Sharmila Tagore.

Adding a nostalgic touch to the post, Soha used her mother's timeless song 'Taarif Karoon Kya Uski' as the background track, originally sung by legendary playback singer Mohammed Rafi.

The song was a part of Sharmila Tagore's debut movie 'Kashmir Ki Kali', where she starred opposite legendary actor Shammi Kapoor.

For the uninitiated, Soha



Ali Khan comes from the illustrious Pataudi family and is the daughter of Sharmila Tagore and late cricket legend Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi.

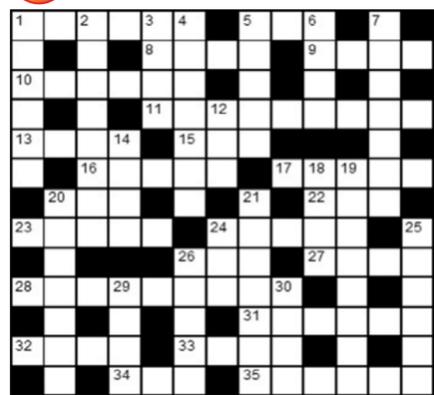
She is also the sister of actor Saif Ali Khan and the sister-in-law of actor Kareena Kapoor Khan.

On the professional front, Soha made her

Bollywood debut with the film 'Dil Maange More' and later appeared in films like 'Rang De Basanti', 'Tum Mile' and many more.

Apart from acting, Soha also turned an author and podcaster host. She is married to actor Kunal Kemmu and the couple are parents to their daughter Inaaya Naumi Kemmu.

CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- Concocted (4-2)
 - Marsh (3)
 - Memory alone (4)
 - Atop or over (4)
 - Wash bowls (6)
 - Absolute freedom from living micro-organisms (9)
 - Greek god of love (4)
 - Lopsided (3)
 - Couches (5)
 - Pertaining to the pope (5)
 - Drowsy state produced by bhang etc. (3)
 - Harry Potter's best friend (2)
 - Length or breadth, should we say? (5)
 - Reel (5)
 - A corded cloth (3)
 - Big Apple law enforcers (4)
 - Puzzled (9)
 - Secured (6)
 - House rodents (4)
 - Elder sister, in India (4)
 - Diddle and Derek (3)
 - Pieces of rocks used as roofing material (6)

DOWN

- Lynched by a crowd (6)
- ___ towards : inclined to? (8)
- Vessels for ashes (4)
- After 1945 (4-3)
- Transport across river etc (5)
- Invalid (4)
- Mail carrier (7)
- Conversational stopgaps (3)
- Easily influenced (4)
- Elvis ___ Presley? (4)
- Multilingual (8)
- Caused by motion (7)
- Adds on (7)
- The divisions, male and female (3)
- Gymwear name (6)
- Rips apart (5)
- Plebeian (4)
- Irish parliament (4)



Solution to March 16

SUDOKU



Solution to March 16

Workers have been using small gas-enabled burners for cooking. Now, due to LPG cylinder shortage, some factory canteens have shut down, forcing workers to return to their native places. Currently, the situation is not like the COVID pandemic, but it could escalate if the issue is not resolved
-Vinnie Mehta, DG, ACMA

BIZ BRIEFS

Levi's rolls out new campaign

The Levi Strauss & Co., has unveiled its 2026 global campaign, 'Behind Every Original', to India, starring Global Brand Ambassador Alia Bhatt. Hiren Gor, MD, Levi Strauss & Co, said: "For over 150 years, Levi's has been worn by those who move culture forward, and Behind Every Original reinforces our commitment to staying at the center of that momentum. Alia Bhatt represents a new generation of originals — confident, self-defined and unapologetically authentic."

Cooling technology event in Mumbai

Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) and CEPT University convened industry leaders at a summit in Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai. The event titled: 'Can Today's Air Conditioners Keep Up with a Hotter, More Humid World? Delivering Affordable, Efficient Comfort for the Global South.' Sanjay Sudhakaran, MD, Bosch Home Comfort India Ltd, said: "As the heat waves intensify and climate patterns shift, India stands on the brink of a cooling revolution."

Price hike by Tata Motors

Tata Motors announced a price increase of up to 1.5 per cent across its commercial vehicle range, effective April 1. The price increase is being undertaken to partially offset the impact of rising commodity prices and other input costs. The increase will vary depending on the model and variant. According to the company: "With over eight decades of leadership in commercial mobility, Tata Motors is known for its innovation, reliability, and performance."

PhysicsWallah's expansion plans

Education company PhysicsWallah (PW) has expanded its presence in Andhra Pradesh with the inauguration of its first tech-enabled PW Vidyapeeth centre in Vijayawada, located on MG Road. Ankit Gupta, CEO, Vidyapeeth Offline, PW, said: "At PW, we try to find out avenues of making students' learning experience better. We believe that students should not have to travel to other cities to access quality education, as this can be both emotionally and financially stressful."

Kai India's new product

KAI India, a name in personal grooming products, offer CAN Face Razor for Women, a product for facial hair removal for Women. Keijiro Takasago, MD, KAI India, said: "We designed the CAN Face Razor to be simple and dependable — something a woman can use quickly, even on busy mornings. It removes the finest hair with care and makes skin feel smooth. Kai products make everyday grooming easier, and that's what we set out to do."

Markets rebound over 1% on bargain buying after 3-days fall

The equity market staged a late-session rebound, supported by value buying in domestically oriented sectors such as auto, banking, and FMCG

Domestic Support

- BSE-Sensex rose 938.93pts or (+1.26%) to 75,502.85
- NSE-Nifty climbed 257.70pts or (+1.11%) to 23,408.80
- FII offloaded Rs10,716.64-cr; DIIs bought Rs 9,977.42 cr on Fri



UltraTech Cement surged 4.22 per cent. Trent, HDFC Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Eternal, Bajaj Finance, ITC, Tata Steel and State Bank of India were among the biggest gainers. Bharat Electronics, Sun Pharma, Power Grid and Bharti Airtel were among the major laggards.

"The equity market staged a late-session rebound, supported by value buying in domestically oriented sectors such as auto, banking, and FMCG, a relief rally following the recent sell-off." In the near term, investor sentiment will hinge on developments in the Strait of Hormuz, where any easing of supply chain disruptions

could provide further support," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE MidCap Select index dipped 0.36 per cent and Smallcap Select index edged lower by 0.25 per cent. Among sectoral indices, BSE Top 10 Banks surged 1.61 per cent, followed by Private Banks index (1.38 per cent), Financial Services (1.32 per cent), Auto (1.23 per cent), Bankex (1.08 per cent) and FMCG (0.94 per cent). BSE oil & gas index dropped 2.29 per cent, hospitals (1.64 per cent), realty (1.51 per cent), energy (1.36 per cent) and healthcare (1.13 per cent).

"Markets started the week on a volatile note and gained

over a per cent, snapping their recent losing streak, supported by bargain buying. The rebound largely reflects participants taking advantage of lower levels to accumulate select large-cap stocks after the sharp decline. "However, the overall mood remained cautious amid persistent geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and elevated crude oil prices, which continue to raise concerns over inflation and India's import bill. In addition, continued foreign institutional investor outflows and currency volatility are keeping risk appetite in check," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 10,716.64 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however, bought stocks worth Rs 9,977.42 crore. On Friday, the Sensex settled at 74,563.92, down 1,470.50 points or 1.93 per cent. The Nifty tanked 488.05 points or 2.06 per cent to end at 23,151.10.

Exports dip marginally in Feb

Trade deficit narrows to \$27 bn | Imports surge even as global tensions disrupt trade routes

Trade Insights

- Exports (Feb 2026): \$36.61 bn
- Imports (Feb 2026): \$63.71 bn
- Trade Deficit: \$27.1 bn
- Exports (Apr-Feb FY26): \$402.93 bn (+1.84%)

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S merchandise exports dipped marginally in February while the trade deficit narrowed sequentially as imports moderated compared with the previous month, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Monday. Exports in February

stood at \$36.61 billion, registering a slight 0.81 per cent decline year-on-year. Imports, however, rose sharply by 24.11 per cent to \$63.71 billion, pushing the trade deficit to \$27.1 billion during the month.

On a month-on-month basis, the deficit narrowed from \$34.68 billion in January, as imports fell from \$71.24 billion while exports were almost unchanged.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said exports have remained resilient despite global challenges, though shipments may see a downward trend in March due to logistical disruptions arising from tensions in West Asia.

For the April-February period of FY26, India's merchandise exports grew 1.84 per cent to \$402.93 billion, compared with \$395.66 bil-

lion in the same period last year. Imports during the period increased 8.53 per cent to \$713.53 billion.

The data comes amid escalating tensions in West Asia following military action by the US and Israel against Iran on February 28. The crisis has disrupted key trade routes, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly 20 per cent of global oil and gas shipments pass.

Officials said India has strengthened its resilience to global energy shocks through diversification of imports across about 40 supplier countries and by building strategic petroleum reserves. Government officials added that India is also in contact with Iran to ensure safe passage for merchant ships through the region.



LG HVAC system showcased at ACREX

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

LG Electronics India Limited (LGE India) has participated at ACREX ISHRAE India 2026 - South Asia's largest exhibition for HVAC and Intelligent Business Solutions. The company presented its most comprehensive product portfolio at the exhibition, spanning residential, commercial, and industrial applications, highlighting innovations that deliver intelligent, reliable, and energy-efficient climate solutions for India. LG Electronics showcased its advanced VRF, Chillers & Cassette range ACs best suited for diverse Indian climate & consumers requirements. Commenting on the company's participation in ACREX, Hong Ju Jeon - Managing Director & Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, LG Electronics India Limited said, "LG Electronics has been part of India's journey for nearly three decades, and has during this period built unparalleled expertise in addressing the country's infrastructure requirements, while meeting performance standards that developers, consultants, and facility managers demand."

HCLTech ties up with Google Cloud for Agentic AI adoption

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

HCLTech, a technology company, has announced the expansion of its strategic collaboration with Google Cloud to help accelerate enterprise adoption of Agentic AI. HCLTech will use Gemini Enterprise and Gemini models to build custom AI agents for global clients, while strengthening collaboration and security through Google Workspace, supporting their scalable, AI-driven transformation. As enterprises scale AI, the company's Gemini-enabled offerings embed AI into systems, workflows and decision-making to unlock new market opportunities, introduce innovative capabilities and boost operational efficiency. Many of the agents the company has developed are already available on the Google Cloud Marketplace. This expanded collaboration formalises a structured program to accelerate clients' GenAI and Agentic AI adoption, cultivate Google Cloud



champions across HCLTech and support over 2,000 GenAI-led customer engagements.

The company's key areas include: Building unique offerings with Data and AI at its core, the AI Force platform integrates with Google's Gemini family of models and Gemini Code Assist to transform software development and IT operations. Additional offerings include Unified Migrations, including Oracle, SAP and VMware transformation to Google Cloud and Security transformation.

The company is growing its Center of Excellence to expand industry-specific agentic solutions. Advancing Agentic AI solutions, building on offerings such as Insight for manufacturing and Netsight for telecommunications.

Sebi mulls light-touch penalty structure for IAs

The regulator aims to promote compliance while ensuring transparency and fairness

NEW DELHI: With an aim to strengthen the investment advisory ecosystem, markets regulator Sebi is working on a raft of measures, including a standardised light-touch penalty structure, a digital regulatory guidance platform, and a common advertisement code, its chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said. Speaking at an event organised by the Association of Registered Investment Advisers (ARIA), Pandey said the investment advisory ecosystem in India is currently at an important stage of transition.

At present, there are around 1,000 registered investment advisers (IAs) in the country-- about 470 individuals and 530 non-individual entities. He said the regulator is working on a standardised light-touch penalty structure aimed at encouraging compliance



while ensuring transparency and fairness. "A standardised light-touch penalty structure for IAs is being worked out. This should promote compliance while ensuring transparency and fairness," he said.

The regulator is also developing a digital platform -- SEBI SETU -- to provide simple, end-to-end regulatory guidance for investment advisers, covering the entire lifecycle from registration to ongoing compliance, he added.

In addition, the regulator is preparing a common advertisement code for all intermediaries to reduce

operational challenges and improve consistency in communication. Among other initiatives, a working group has been constituted to review the existing regulatory framework for Mutual Fund Distributors (MFDs) and examine overlaps, if any, between MFDs and investment advisers.

Pandey said a simplified certification module is also being developed by National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM) for individuals associated with investment advice who are engaged in sales and other non-core functions. However, he expressed concern over the declining number of registered investment advisers despite a rapidly expanding investor base.

"It is a matter of concern that the number of registered investment advisers has declined since 2021.

Vedanta eyes ₹2,575-cr via NCDs

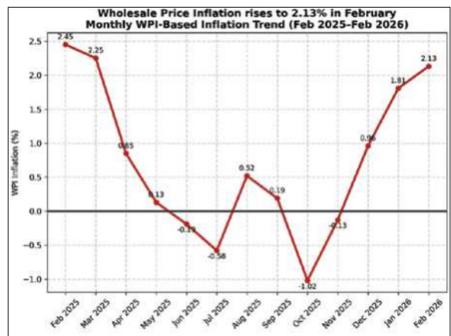
NEW DELHI: Vedanta Ltd said its committee of directors has approved raising up to Rs 2,575 crore through issuance of debentures. The fundraising is part of Vedanta's efforts to diversify funding sources and strengthen its balance sheet as it continues to refinance debt and reduce borrowing costs. The committee has approved the allotment of 2,57,500 unsecured, redeemable, rated, listed, non-convertible debentures of face value of Rs 1,00,000 each, aggregating to Rs 2,575 crore on a private placement basis, a BSE filing said. Vedanta has seen strong investor interest in recent debt issuances. In October 2025, its \$500 million bond issue was oversubscribed three times, while an NCD offering in June last year saw nearly 60 per cent oversubscription. The company has been gradually deleveraging its balance sheet. Vedanta Resources Ltd, the parent of Vedanta Ltd, has reduced net debt to about \$4.8 billion as of December 2025 from about \$8.9 billion in March 2022.

Inflation: Rising crude prices push WPI to 11-month high of 2.13% in Feb

It is likely to pick up pace if oil price rise persists, and spills over to other goods

Global Jitters

- Inflation in food articles was 2.19%
- Vegetables, inflation eased to 4.73%
- Pulses, potato and egg, meat and fish saw an uptick



NEW DELHI: Wholesale price inflation rose to a 11-month high of 2.13 per cent in February, driven by an uptick in prices of food and non-food articles, even though vegetable prices eased on a month-on-month basis, government data showed on Monday.

This is the fourth straight month of rise in Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation. It was 1.81 per cent in January and 2.45 per cent in February last year.

Economists said the WPI inflation is likely to pick up pace further if the oil price

rise persists, and spills over to other goods (fertilisers, aluminium) given it tracks international prices more closely relative to the CPI basket.

According to WPI data, inflation in food articles was 2.19 per cent in February, as against 1.55 per cent in the previous month. Although in vegetables, inflation eased to 4.73 per cent in February against 6.78 per cent in Janu-

ary, pulses, potato and egg, meat and fish saw an uptick in inflation in February.

"Positive rate of inflation in February 2026 is primarily due to an increase in prices of other manufacturing, manufacture of basic metals, non-food articles, food articles and textiles, etc.," the industry ministry said in a statement. Negative inflation, or deflation, in the fuel and power basket narrowed

to 3.78 per cent in February, vis-a-vis 4.01 per cent in January. Global oil prices averaged \$68/bbl in February from \$63/bbl in January.

Barclays in a research note said the passthrough of the rise in crude oil prices from the Middle East conflict will reflect more in WPI inflation vs retail CPI inflation, as retail fuel prices are unchanged in the latter.

"With a sharp jump in crude oil prices crossing \$100/bbl as of 16 March, the corresponding WPI will likely reflect this in the March print," Barclays said.

India Ratings and Research the rising crude oil prices since the US-Iran war will have a strong impact on wholesale inflation from March 2026, till the supply side issues are resolved.

The average price of Indian crude basket March 2026 (up to March 12) touched a 44-month high of \$101.25/bbl.

Nifty likely to reach 35,000 in 3 yrs: Report

In last 4 years Indian markets delivered about 12.7% CAGR; If the index maintains its current valuation multiple of about 20.9x earnings, it could translate into around 12.8-14% CAGR

NEW DELHI: India's benchmark index Nifty 50 is likely to touch 34,000-35,000 levels over the next three years due to earnings growth, stronger consumption and banking credit expansion, a report claimed on Monday.

From these factors and continued investment in infrastructure and manufacturing, Nifty earnings per share may rise to Rs 1,281 in FY27, Rs 1,463 in FY28 and Rs 1,650-1,700 by FY29, the report from investment platform smallcase said. Mid-caps led market returns, outperforming large caps during the past four years when global markets experienced shocks from multiple geopolitical conflicts, the report said.

Indian markets delivered about 12.7 per cent CAGR demonstrated notable resilience, with most geopolitical shocks triggering short-term corrections of



around 2-8 per cent, followed by swift recoveries within weeks, during times of conflict in last 4 years.

This performance has been supported by the strength of the domestic economy, improving corporate earnings, and rising retail participation in the stock market, the firm said. Assuming the index maintains its current valuation multiple of about 20.9x earnings, the trend could translate into approximately 12.8-14 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR), the report added.

The firm highlighted mid-caps delivered CAGRs of about 18.4 per cent dur-

ing this period versus 13.4 per cent for small caps and 9.8 per cent for large caps. Defence and aerospace companies have emerged as key beneficiaries of heightened geopolitical tensions, supported by rising global defence spending and stronger domestic procurement initiatives, it said.

Oil and gas producers have also historically performed well during geopolitical crises due to supply disruptions and rising crude oil prices. Commodity-linked sectors such as metals and mining have similarly witnessed phases of outperformance during periods of supply constraints and commodity price rallies, it added. Meanwhile, manufacturing and capital goods companies are gaining prominence as global supply chains undergo structural shifts, the firm suggested.

If your name is Jasprit Bumrah, the pressure comes automatically. He is that kind of bowler. He creates an impact in every game, guarantees you a wicket, and restricts the opposition. That responsibility brings a lot of pressure because his four overs are the most precious thing for MI - Aakash Chopra

India has depth to field several T20 teams: SKY

'Batting a mix of instinct and reaction and team effort behind 80 per cent win rate'

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S T20 World Cup-winning captain Suryakumar Yadav believes the country's talent pool in the shortest format has grown so vast that it could comfortably field two or even three international-quality teams at the same time, underlining the depth created by a thriving domestic structure and franchise ecosystem.

The flamboyant batter, who has overseen a period of remarkable consistency since taking over the leadership after the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, credited the steady pipeline of players emerging from domestic competitions and the Indian Premier League for strengthening India's dominance in T20 cricket.

Since Suryakumar took over the captaincy in 2024 -- right after Rohit Sharma stepped down following the World Cup victory in Barbados -- the Indian team has won 42 of the 52 matches played, reflecting team's domi-



nance in a fickle format.

In a podcast interview with PTI Videos on Sunday, Suryakumar called the current group "the best T20 team India has produced", adding that India's depth in T20 cricket is now too evident to be downplayed.

"If you talk about talent, I feel you can find talent regularly. There is IPL cricket, franchise cricket, then there is domestic cricket. You can see how many players come every year. So you can make as many teams as you want in T20 when I am talking about T20," Suryakumar said.

"So I feel talent is unlimited. If you can make two-three

playing XIs, our base is so strong, of the Indian team. So this is not a modest and diplomatic reply. But now it is so strong, so there is no shame in telling the truth," he said.

Suryakumar credited the team's success coming into the World Cup to a collective approach in the dressing room, saying a shared vision among players and support staff helped produce an impressive 80 per cent win rate in a notoriously unpredictable format.

Even with that success rate, the World Cup was not going to be a cake-walk because as Suryakumar noted, "we played bilateral matches one way, and in ICC tournament something

else happened."

For this reason, he needed to motivate the team to maintain the winning streak in the Feb 7 to March 8 tournament.

"I don't pay too much attention to statistics but I hate losing any game. If everyone in the dressing room moves in the same direction, only then can you achieve such a percentage," he said.

Known for his 360-degree strokeplay, Suryakumar described batting in T20 cricket as largely a reactive sport, with preparation accounting for only part of the process. "I feel batting is about 70-75 per cent reaction. The remaining 25 per cent is instinct, what you decide to do in the moment. Once you enter the ground, you are almost in autopilot mode. You try to bat with rhythm and according to the situation," he said. He also traced the origins of his unconventional range of shots to childhood rubber-ball games in Mumbai, where uneven boundary sizes forced him to improvise.

Indian women's team to feature in FIH Hockey Nation Cup

LAUSANNE (SWITZERLAND): The Indian women's team will feature in the FIH Hockey Nations Cup to be held in Auckland, New Zealand from June 15 to 21.

The Hockey Nations Cup was launched in 2021 to offer a top-level competition to the best-ranked teams not participating in the Hockey Pro League, and give the winning team an option to be promoted in it the following season. The Indian women's hockey team was relegated from the Pro League 2024-25 after finishing at the bottom of the nine-team standings.

Apart from India, hosts New Zealand, USA, Japan, Korea, Chile, Scotland and France, who were promoted via the Hockey Nations Cup 2, will take part in the event.

The men's event will be held in Cape Town and will involve South Africa, New Zealand, France, Korea, Japan, Wales, Malaysia, along with Scotland, who were promoted via the Hockey Nations Cup 2, as well as Ireland, who were relegated from the 2024-25 season of the Hockey Pro League.

ORLEANS MASTERS SUPER 300

Ayush, Tanvi to lead Indian challenge; Injured Prannoy pulls out

ORLEANS (FRANCE): Youngsters Ayush Shetty and Tanvi Sharma will lead India's challenge at the USD 250,000 Orleans Masters Super 300 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday after senior shuttler HS Prannoy pulled out due to a shoulder injury.

Prannoy, who was originally slated to face top seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei in the opening round, was forced to withdraw after experiencing shoulder pain during the Swiss Open in Basel last week. While the cause of his discomfort was unclear initially, the Indian had decided to pull out of his match against Japan's Koki Watanabe to avoid aggravating the injury.

"The shoulder pain developed after travelling to the Swiss Open. We didn't know the reason then, so I decided to withdraw and fly back," Prannoy told PTI. "After a scan it showed a slight tear. It is a minor thing and hopefully I should be okay soon," added the seasoned pro, who is targeting a return at the Asian Championships to be held from April 7 to 12 in Ningbo, China.

All eyes will be on eighth seed world No. 25 Ayush Shetty, who won the US Open Super 300 last year, as he opens his campaign against Lee Chia Hao of Chinese Taipei.

Former world No. 1 and currently ranked 30th, Kidambi Srikanth will face Denmark's Magnus Johannesen.

Tharun Mannepilli, fresh from a quarterfinal finish at last week's Swiss Open, takes on



Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei in his opening game. World No. 42 Kiran George will face third seed Kenta Nishimoto of Japan.

In women's singles, Tanvi Sharma, the silver medalist at last year's BWF Junior World Championships, will take on Thailand's Supanida Katethong, while Malvika Bansod will continue her quest for glory after returning to action from a major injury when she faces Sung Shuo Yun of Chinese Taipei.

Rakshit Sree Santhosh Ramraj will meet Japan's Manami Suizu, while Anmol Kharb will be up against Turkey's Neslihan Arin.

In women's doubles, Devika Sihag and Isharani Baruah will take on a pair coming through the qualifiers. The men's doubles pair of Hariharan Amsakarunan and M R Arjun will face the Chinese Taipei duo of Lai Po Yu and Tsai Fu Cheng.

In women's doubles, Ashwini Bhat K and Shikha Gautam will be up against the fourth-seeded Japanese pair of Rui Hirokami and Sayaka Hobara.

Bumrah creates an impact in every game: Aakash Chopra

NEW DELHI

FORMER India opener Aakash Chopra says pace ace Jasprit Bumrah is guaranteed to deliver in every match for the Mumbai Indians (MI) in IPL 2026, but warned that the five-time Indian Premier League (IPL) champions face a complex puzzle to solve to fit their array of overseas talent into their playing eleven.

Bumrah picked 18 wickets in 12 games at an average of 17.56 and an economy rate of 6.68 in IPL 2025. MI will kick-

start their campaign at home against three-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on March 29 at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. The side had reached Qualifier 2 in IPL 2025 before losing to eventual runners-up Punjab Kings.

"If your name is Jasprit Bumrah, the pressure comes automatically. He is that kind of bowler. He creates an impact in every game, guarantees you a wicket, and restricts the opposition. That responsibility brings a lot of pressure because his four overs are the

most precious thing for MI. Bowl one over in the powerplay, keep one for the middle phase, and two at the death.

"That is Bumrah -- that pressure is not going anywhere. Whether Boult bowls well or Deepak Chahar is fully fit, Bumrah's pressure stays with him. But if Boult is fit, MI will want to continue with him. Fit, available, in form. They will want the new ball to move around a little with Boult and Deepak Chahar. "Shardul Thakur is a capable replacement for Cha-



har, but it does not necessarily mean that he plays ahead of him. A fit Deepak Chahar, a fit Trent Boult, Bumrah, and Hardik Pandya will be MI's four starting pacers. Corbin Bosch is waiting in the wings. He is a very good all-rounder. But again, you cannot play all overseas players," said Chopra on JioStar.

NATIONAL TENPIN BOWLING C'SHIPS

Kishan, Preemal crowned champions

BENGALURU: Former national champion Kishan R of Karnataka clinched his second national title in the men's division at the ARC 34th National Tenpin Bowling Championships, which concluded at Amoeba, Church Street, Bengaluru, on Monday.

In the women's division, Preemal J. of Karnataka captured her maiden national title, ending a 15-year wait for Karnataka in this division.

In the Championship Match played based on cumulative pinfall of two games, top-seeded Kishan produced a composed performance to gain a lead of 17 pins in Game 1 (208-191). He extended his lead in the 2nd game, scoring a high game of 244 to Aakash's 238, seal-



ing the Title with an overall margin of 23 pins (452-429).

In the Championship Match, fourth-seeded Preemal J. took an early lead of 20 pins in the first game with 188 against top-seeded Sabina Athica (Tamil Nadu) (168). Despite a close second game, Preemal maintained her composure

to secure victory, claiming her maiden National Title by a margin of 24 pins (332-308).

Special prizes: Most Promising Player: Anirudhan Sanjeevi (TN) and Suchita S. Kumar (KER)

The largest number of scores above 225 in the Men's division: Kishan R. (KAR) (11)

The largest number of scores above 200 in the Women's division: Sabeena Athica (TN) (4)

Highest block of 6 games in Men's division: Kishan R (KAR) (1369 pins)

Highest block of 6 games in Women's division: Sabeena Athica (TN) (1122 pins).

BJP MP's remarks on namaz draw flak from Oppn

ALIGARH (UP)

THE remarks of a BJP MP that he does not know what Eid or Ramzan is while opposing namaz in this Uttar Pradesh district have gone viral on social media, drawing criticism from opposition politicians, even as community leaders have

appealed for calm.

When reporters asked BJP MP Satish Gautam on Sunday about a local AIMIM leader's demand for permission to hold Eid prayers at the exhibition grounds here, he said he is not interested in such festivals and does not even know their names. "I do not

know what Eid or Ramzan is. I am least interested in them," Gautam said.

He also accused Muslims of "illegally occupying huge tracts of land during the Samajwadi Party's rule" in Uttar Pradesh and questioned the need for additional space for prayers. "There is no need to give

them the ground. They have the Eidgah for prayers," the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said.

He further said that Muslims are among the major beneficiaries of the present BJP-led government's welfare schemes. "They are getting more than their due share, so what else

do they want from us now?" he asked.

Reacting to the MP's remarks, former Aligarh Muslim University Students' Union president Salman Imtiaz said Gautam is known for frequently making "senseless and provocative statements" and that both Hindus and Muslims

ignore such comments in the interest of peace.

Imtiaz, now associated with the Congress and a former contestant for the Aligarh City Assembly seat, alleged that Gautam's remarks were intended at diverting attention from internal disputes within the city unit of the BJP.



Man kills 2 in-laws during Panchayat; wife critical

BAREILLY (UP)

A man on Monday allegedly stabbed his mother-in-law and brother-in-law to death and seriously injured his wife during a panchayat in Rahrura Chaudhary village in Bareilly district, police said.

The accused, identified as Afsar Khan, fled after the attack and police teams have been deployed to trace him, Bareilly Additional SP Manush Pareek said.

"Raids are being conducted at several locations and the accused will be arrested soon," he added.

According to the police, the victims have been identified as 19-year-old Adil and his 45-year-old mother Asma, while the accused's wife Saima sustained serious stab injuries and is undergoing treatment in a hospital where her condition is stated to be critical. Family members said Afsar Khan had a violent temperament and frequently quarrelled with his wife over minor issues, forc-



ing her to repeatedly return to her parental home. Saima had reportedly refused to go back with him due to his aggressive behaviour.

They said the accused had earlier been arrested in 2022 for allegedly killing his maternal uncle in the Bithri Chainpur police station area and had recently returned to the village after securing bail from a court.

The police said Saima had submitted a written complaint at Izzatnagar police station on Sunday alleging that her husband was threatening to kill her and her family members. On Monday, villagers convened a panchayat to resolve the dispute when the accused allegedly attacked the family members with a knife before fleeing, the police said.

'Embezzlement' of Rs 11.4-cr scholarship funds

CBI registers FIR against govt officials in 5 states

NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case into the alleged siphoning of more than Rs 11.4 crore from scholarship funds intended for students with disabilities by "non-existent" institutes and students, officials said Monday.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed an FIR against unidentified public servants and nodal officers in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Jammu and Kashmir for allegedly embezzling funds from the Umbrella Scholarship Scheme, launched in 2018 after six scholarship schemes including the Post-matric Scholarship for Students with



Disabilities were merged, the agency said.

Scholarships under this scheme were available to students of classes 11 and 12, as well as in post-matriculation diploma and certificate courses. Bachelor's degree and diploma and master's degree and diploma from any university recognised by UGC/AICTE were also funded under

these scholarships.

"The objective and allowances of the scheme for the post-metric scholarship, including the details of maintenance allowance, disability allowance, reimbursement of compulsory non-refundable fees and book allowance, are referred to in the scheme book (scholarship scheme for students with disabilities)," the

CBI said.

The central agency had launched a preliminary enquiry last year on a complaint from the secretary of the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, alleging that Rs 11.41 crore in scholarships had been paid to 926 students related to 28 institutes, which were either fake or showed serious malpractices during an inspection by the ministry.

During the enquiry, it surfaced that many of these institutions were non-existent or were closed while still claiming funds from the National Scholarship Portal, according to the FIR.

Hoax cyanide gas email threat alarms Bhopal office

BHOPAL

AN email threatening to "blow up" the premises of a Madhya Pradesh government office here using cyanide gas cylinders on Monday prompted precautionary evacuation, officials said.

The threat turned out to be a hoax after police personnel searched the office of the Weights and Measures Department in the MP Nagar area.

"While checking mails, I came across a message at 10:20 AM stating that 16 cylinders filled with cyanide gas had been placed inside the department office and would go off around 1 pm," office superintendent Shyam Solanki told PTI.

He contacted his seniors, and the police were informed. Bomb disposal squad personnel and police teams with sniffer dogs rushed to the spot and searched the premises, he said, adding that the office



was evacuated as a precaution.

Solanki said the police did not find any cylinders or explosives in the office. Officials said similar threatening emails had earlier targeted People's University and AIIMS in Bhopal, but those alerts also proved false.

Bhopal City Zone 2 Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Vivek Singh stated that the investigation is underway to identify the sender of the email. He suspected that a gang was behind such emails nationwide, using fake names. Department officers and workers' leader Umashankar Tiwari said staffers resumed work at 1:10 PM.



Venugopal urges LS Speaker to revoke 8 MPs' suspension

NEW DELHI: Congress leader K C Venugopal urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Monday to revoke the suspension of eight opposition members, saying they were suspended "unfairly".

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour, Venugopal said Parliament has seen countless protests but suspending MPs is a "disturbing new trend" that cannot be allowed to continue.

Birla said a decision of the Lok Sabha cannot be discussed on the floor of the House and disallowed Venugopal to speak further. Later, in a post on X, the Congress leader said he had raised concern over the "unfair suspension of 8 Opposition MPs for this Session". "Rose in the Lok Sabha to raise concern over the unfair suspension of 8 Opposition MPs for this

Session. Parliament has seen countless protests but the suspension of MPs is a disturbing new trend, which cannot be allowed to continue. This suspension should be revoked immediately," he said. The eight opposition members were suspended during the first part of the Budget Session for "unruly" behaviour. They were suspended for the entire session.



13-year-old Hyderabad student develops multi-system AI architecture

Raja Dharma Tej Maddala develops a unique artificial intelligence framework designed for multi-perspective reasoning and collaborative decision-making



ARTI ADKE

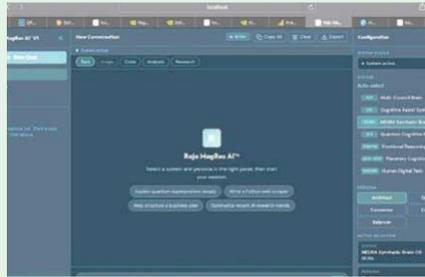
IN an unusual example of young innovation, a 13-year-old student from Hyderabad has designed an artificial intelligence ecosystem that is attracting attention in technology and research circles. Raja Dharma Tej Maddala, a Grade 7 student, has developed an original AI framework called Raja MagRex AI™, which has been recognised as an innovation initiative by the Government of India's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). At an age when most students are just beginning to explore coding and basic digital tools, Raja is attempting to rethink how artificial intelligence systems can be structured and coordinated.

Raja, who studies in the IB Middle Years Programme at Oakridge International School,

Gachibowli, describes himself as a technology enthusiast with a deep interest in artificial intelligence, science and complex systems. His curiosity about how mathematics, computing and scientific ideas connect with each other gradually led him to explore artificial intelligence more seriously.

This interest eventually resulted in the creation of Raja MagRex AI™, an AI ecosystem designed around a structured architecture rather than a single model. According to Raja, the system is built on 22 cognitive systems, 87 modules and more than 100 functional features. The aim is to allow the system to examine problems from multiple analytical perspectives before producing a final response.

The project introduces a concept he calls "Artificial Civilisation Intelligence."



The idea is inspired by how human societies solve complex problems. In the real world, experts from different fields such as science, engineering, economics and policy often collaborate to reach better decisions. Raja's framework attempts to replicate this model within an AI environment, where multiple reasoning systems analyse an issue simultaneously and contribute to a unified conclusion.

At the centre of the architecture is a

coordination system called NEURA, which manages how the different cognitive modules interact with each other. When a problem or prompt is introduced, NEURA analyses it and determines which reasoning systems should be activated. These systems may focus on areas such as logical reasoning, contextual understanding, analytical evaluation or creative exploration. Their outputs are then combined through a structured synthesis process to produce a final response.

Unlike many current AI tools that rely on a single large model to generate answers directly from prompts, Raja's framework emphasises structured reasoning and collaborative analysis. The architecture allows different reasoning pathways to examine the same problem before arriving at a conclusion, which he believes could make AI systems more transparent and easier to interpret.

Building the system while continuing regular school responsibilities was one of the biggest challenges, Raja said. Balancing classes, assignments and examinations while working on research and system design required careful time management and discipline.

Much of the work involved not just coding but also conceptual thinking about how

different systems should interact and how reasoning should flow across the architecture.

Despite the challenges, Raja continued refining the concept and developing the structure of the AI ecosystem. He is currently working on Version 1 of Raja MagRex AI™, focusing on integrating the core systems and modules and preparing the framework for real-world testing.

The next stage will involve deploying the system to observe how different cognitive modules collaborate in practical scenarios. This phase will help improve the orchestration logic and refine the coordination between different reasoning systems.

In the long term, Raja hopes to expand the architecture by adding more advanced modules and exploring applications in research,

Examples of how it helps solve problems

For example, if a city wants to reduce air pollution, the system can study pollution sources, traffic patterns, weather conditions and policy options before suggesting balanced solutions such as improving public transport or regulating emissions.

In education, if a student faces a difficult scientific question, the AI can break the problem into smaller steps, examine different theories and explain possible solutions.

By combining these viewpoints, the system helps users understand the problem better and arrive at more thoughtful and practical solutions.

Today is National 3D Day



How 3D helps students develop creativity, problem-solving and design thinking

Three-dimensional (3D) technology is transforming the way students learn, create and explore ideas. From 3D modelling software to 3D printers, these tools allow students to move beyond textbooks and turn their imagination into real, physical objects. By doing so, 3D technology plays an important role in developing creativity, problem-solving skills and design thinking among young learners.

One of the most exciting aspects of 3D technology is that it encourages students to think creatively. Instead of only drawing ideas on paper, students can design objects in a digital environment and then print them as real models. Whether it is building a miniature bridge, designing a science project model, or creating an artistic sculpture, students learn to experiment with shapes, structures and ideas in new ways.

3D technology also strengthens problem-solving abilities. When students design a model, they must think carefully about how the parts fit together, how strong

the structure will be and whether the design will work in real life. If something does not work during printing or assembly, they need to analyse the issue, adjust the design and try again. This process teaches them to learn from mistakes and improve their solutions.

Another important benefit is the development of design thinking. Students learn to approach problems step by step: first identifying a challenge, then creating possible solutions, testing prototypes and refining their designs. This method is widely used in engineering, architecture and product design.

By combining creativity with technology, 3D tools help students become active creators rather than passive learners. As schools introduce more hands-on learning methods, 3D technology is becoming a powerful way to encourage curiosity, innovation and practical learning. Through designing, testing and improving their ideas, students gain skills that are valuable for future careers in science, engineering, art and technology.

Speaking up to inspire and share ideas

Speech is one of the most powerful tools human beings possess. Through spoken words, people can express thoughts, share knowledge, inspire change and build meaningful connections. The ability to speak confidently and clearly allows individuals to communicate their ideas effectively and influence the world around them. Speaking is not only about delivering information; it is about encouraging dialogue and creating understanding. When people share

their ideas openly, they invite others to think, question and contribute. In classrooms, workplaces and communities, conversations often lead to innovation and collaboration. Many great movements and breakthroughs in history began with someone having the courage to speak up and share a vision. The power of speech also lies in its ability to motivate and uplift others. A few encouraging words can boost confidence, help someone overcome

challenges and inspire them to pursue their goals. Leaders, teachers and mentors often use speech as a way to guide and empower others. By communicating clearly and thoughtfully, they create environments where ideas are valued and voices are heard. Learning to speak effectively is an important life skill. It involves not only choosing the right words but also listening to others with respect and openness. Confidence in speaking develops with practice—through

discussions, presentations, storytelling and everyday conversations. When individuals feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, they become more engaged participants in society.

Speech also strengthens creativity and critical thinking. Sharing ideas allows them to grow, evolve and improve through feedback and collaboration. When people speak and listen with curiosity and respect, they create opportunities for learning and collective progress.

Words have the power to encourage, connect minds, and turn ideas into action



Tips to crack the class XII Economics board exam

Preparing for the Class XII Economics board examination requires a clear strategy, regular practice and strong conceptual understanding. Many students study hard but still lose marks due to avoidable mistakes, poor time management or lack of structured revision. Analysing mistakes, practising sample papers consistently and following a clear revision plan can help improve both accuracy and confidence. The following practical tips can help students prepare effectively and perform well in the Economics board examination.

General Tips

1. By now, most students would have attempted two pre-board examinations. Carefully evaluate your mistakes, identify recurring errors and clearly mark the chapters or topics where you are weak. Begin your revision with these weaker areas and practise related questions alongside.
2. While revising the syllabus, do not stop solving sample papers thinking you will attempt them after completing revision. Over the next two months, try to solve one sample paper every two days. For Economics, analyse your mistakes in each paper and maintain a separate

A focused preparation strategy to improve accuracy, manage time effectively and score better in the Economics board exam



notebook to record them. Revisiting these errors regularly will help you avoid repeating them.

3. Practise a wide variety of questions, including objective questions, case-based questions and numericals. Avoid skipping any section during preparation.
4. Go through at least the last five years of official sample papers and previous year questions. Read each question carefully, frame answers mentally and verify them using the marking scheme. Solve all MCQs and numericals thoroughly and keep a

record of your mistakes.

5. Practise case-study based questions from the official question bank as they are often included in the board examination pattern.
6. Plan your revision by working backwards from the exam dates. Decide how many days you will dedicate to each subject and set a target number of sample papers to practise before the exam.

Macroeconomics Tips

1. Conceptual clarity is essential in Macroeconomics. First revise each chapter thoroughly and then

practise all related questions, especially numericals.

2. Maintain a separate list of graphs chapter-wise with proper labelling and practise drawing them. Use graphs wherever applicable, even in short-answer questions.
3. Many students find it difficult to identify items included in national income or domestic income. Maintain a separate list of such questions along with explanations to understand the logic behind inclusion and exclusion.
4. While solving numericals,

clearly write "Given" and "To Find," mention the formula and show all steps. Avoid shortcuts during practice as writing complete steps helps reduce errors in the exam.

Indian Economy Tips

1. The NCERT textbook is the most important source for Indian Economy. Read it carefully as questions are often directly based on it.
2. Prepare short notes for quick revision before the exam.
3. Follow a structured revision flow: read the chapter carefully, revise the recap section, practise

questions based on the chapter and solve objective questions for reinforcement.

4. Maintain a list of important dates, data points and policy-related developments. Using accurate data in answers can improve the quality of your responses.
5. After completing your first revision, cross-check the official syllabus and ensure that every topic has been covered.

Answer Writing Tips

1. Manage time carefully. You may spend around one hour on Macroeconomics and about one and a half hours on Indian Economy. Keep at least twenty minutes at the end to revise the entire paper.
2. In Macroeconomics, use tables and graphs wherever required. Write full formulas in numericals and avoid abbreviations.
3. Begin answers with definitions wherever possible and conclude with a short line. Present answers in clear points.
4. You may start with either section depending on your comfort, but complete one section fully before moving to the other.

(The writer is PGT Economics, HOD Social Science, Seth Anandram Jaipuria School)



Raashii Khanna promises vintage Pawan Kalyan magic

The excitement around 'Ustaad Bhagat Singh' has been steadily building ever since the project brought together Power Star Pawan Kalyan and director Harish Shankar, the blockbuster duo behind 'Gabbar Singh'. Mounted on a grand scale by Mythri Movie Makers, the film promises a festive theatrical experience when it releases on March 19 for Ugadi. With the teaser, trailer, and songs already striking a chord, expectations are soaring — and leading lady Raashii Khanna is feeling the buzz.

Calling this phase of her career "incredibly hectic but exciting," Raashii reveals that joining the film was an instant decision driven purely by admiration. "The moment I heard it was Pawan Kalyan Garu's film, I said yes immediately — even before listening to the story. Since my first film, I've heard so much about his stardom and the phenomenon people call 'Pawanism.' I always wished to work with him at least once. With this film, that dream finally came true."

In the film, Raashii plays Shloka, a contemporary young woman written with depth and presence. She describes the role as both stylish and substantial. "Every character in the story has importance, and Shloka has a strong arc with solid characterization. There's good emotional range in the role." She adds with a smile, "I also have a proper

mass song in the film. I love dancing, so shooting that number was pure fun for me."

Working alongside Pawan Kalyan left a lasting impression on the actress, not just professionally but personally. "He is an incredibly simple person. You'll almost always see him reading books. There's an innocence about him that's very rare and difficult to explain," she says. Their first conversation remains memorable. "On day one, he asked me if I always wanted to become an actress. I told him I had once dreamed of becoming an IAS officer. He speaks very little, but every word carries weight."

What moved her most was his perspective on life beyond cinema. "He encouraged me to think about public service and contributing to society. He genuinely cares about people. I learned a lot about humanity from him." Witnessing his fan following up close was overwhelming. "When I looked at the crowd during the film event, it felt like people were worshipping him like a god."

Raashii is equally appreciative of director Harish Shankar's filmmaking intensity. "He's extremely sharp and understands the pulse of the mass audience perfectly. What amazed me most was his speed — a schedule that usually takes 120 days was completed in just 40. He worked tirelessly, often sacrificing sleep." She recalls how his creativity

flowed even on set. "He would write punch dialogues on the spot. His patience and dedication to cinema taught me so much."

Despite sharing screen space with another leading lady, Raashii says the narrative gives each character room to shine. "We don't have scenes together, so there was never a concern. Each role has its own space, and mine comes with good variations."

Managing schedules around the star's commitments required flexibility and stamina. "I was told in advance that dates could be unpredictable, and I was prepared. There were days we worked 24-hour shifts without knowing whether it was day or night."

She also credits the producers for fostering a creative environment. "They put their heart and soul into films, never compromise on scale, and give directors complete freedom. The working atmosphere is wonderful."

For audiences, Raashii promises a wholesome entertainer. "Like 'Gabbar Singh', this film is packed with entertainment. It's a complete family film everyone can enjoy together in theatres. Releasing during Ugadi makes it even more special. Most importantly, you'll get to see vintage Pawan Kalyan Garu on screen."



Suriya shines in 'Vishwanath & Sons' emotional teaser

The teaser of 'Vishwanath & Sons', starring Suriya, has been unveiled, offering a glimpse into the world of Sanjay Vishwanath. Directed by Venky Atluri and produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi, the film promises an emotional and engaging cinematic experience.

The teaser introduces Sanjay Vishwanath, an international pistol shooter who continues to chase his dreams even in his 40s. Suriya appears in a layered role, portraying both fatherly warmth and emotional depth. His stylish screen presence and the impactful dialogues penned by Venky Atluri bring back shades reminiscent of his iconic performances.

Adding freshness to the narrative is Mamitha Baiju, who brings vibrant and charming energy to the film. The teaser hints at an unconventional love story featuring a noticeable age gap. With Venky Atluri's storytelling sensibilities, the film is expected to handle this aspect with depth and

emotional maturity.

The teaser also highlights the film's strong technical craftsmanship. G. V. Prakash Kumar delivers a classy and powerful background score that elevates the visuals. Cinematographer Nimish Ravi captures the film in rich and visually striking frames, while editing is handled by Navin Nooli. Production design by Banglan further enhances the film's immersive world.

Touted as a large-scale family drama with strong emotional undercurrents, 'Vishwanath & Sons' brings together a compelling ensemble cast and a top-tier technical team. Director Venky Atluri, who is riding high on the success of 'Lucky Baskhar' and 'Vaathi', aims to deliver another memorable entertainer.

Produced under the banners of Sithara Entertainment and Fortune Four Cinemas, and presented by Srikara Studios, the film has successfully wrapped up shooting and is gearing up for a grand worldwide theatrical release this July.

Kiran Abbavaram unveils Thimmarajupalli TV's 'Ooru Song'

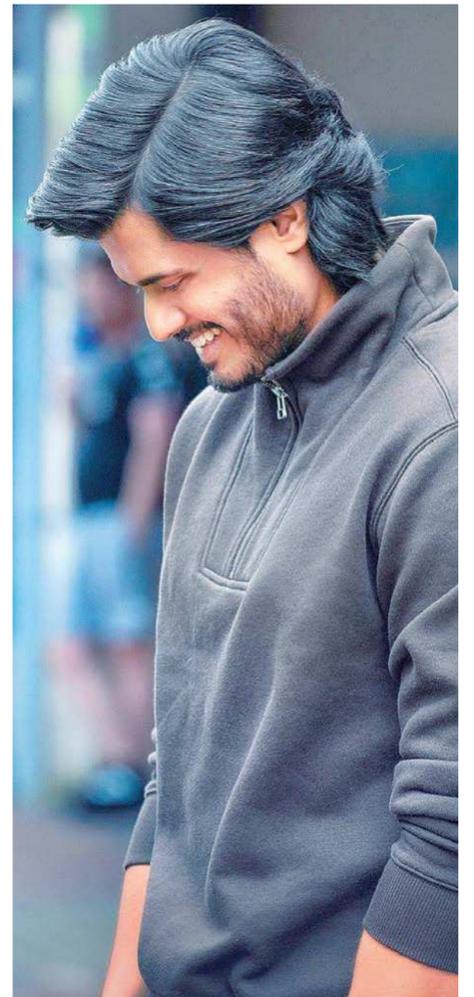
Hero Kiran Abbavaram's KA Productions, in association with Sumaira Studios, is backing the film 'Thimmarajupalli TV', encouraging fresh talent in the industry. Teja Velpucharla is serving as the co-producer. The film introduces Sai Tej and Veda Jalandharr as the lead actors, while V. Murniraju makes his directorial debut with 'Thimmarajupalli TV'.

Set against a rural backdrop, the film is being made as a period drama and is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon. Today, the makers unveiled



the "Ooru Song" from 'Thimmarajupalli TV'. The track has been beautifully composed by Vamsikanth

Rekhana, with lyrics penned by Sanare and vocals rendered by Mamatha Ramesh. The song vividly captures the festive spirit of a village preparing for the Shivaratri fair. The song portrays the charm of rural life — from the sound of cuckoos perched on tree branches and the lush greenery at dawn to the colourful rangolis adorning homes and the fragrant breeze carrying the scent of flowers. The lyrics also reflect the excitement among people of all ages as the village gears up to celebrate the Shivaratri festival and the vibrant fair that accompanies it.



Anand Deverakonda's 'Epic' birthday promo impresses fans

An impressive birthday promo from young hero Anand Deverakonda's upcoming film 'Epic' has been drawing significant attention. The film is directed by Aditya Haasan and produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya under the banners of Sithara Entertainment and Fortune Four Cinemas. Srikara Studios presents the film, while Venkat Upputuri and VMR are serving as co-producers. On the occasion of Anand Deverakonda's birthday today, the makers released a special promo from 'Epic'.

The promo shows the hero celebrating his birthday in

London with friends, while his parents call from India to wish him. A touching moment highlights the father subtly conveying his heartfelt wishes to his son.

The promo carries a unique emotional tone, enhanced by the use of the iconic Amrutham title song as the background score.

After the cult blockbuster Baby, Anand Deverakonda and Vaishnavi Chaitanya are reuniting for this film. The recently released song "Sancharame.." from 'Epic' has also received a positive response. With this exciting combination, the film is generating strong curiosity among audiences.

Sudigali Sudheer's 'G.O.A.T' cleared for March 26 release



The upcoming Telugu film 'G.O.A.T.' (Greatest Of All Times), starring popular comedian-turned-hero Sudigali Sudheer, has successfully completed its censor formalities and is gearing up for a worldwide theatrical release on March 26.

The film features Divya Bharathi as the female lead and is directed by Vedavyas. It is being produced by Chandrasekhar Reddy Mogulla under the banners of Mahateja Creations and Jaishnav Productions. The film is currently undergoing post-production work.

According to the makers, the content released so far has received a positive response from audiences, and the trailer will be unveiled soon. The film has now completed the censor process and has been awarded a U/A certificate by the censor board.

Speaking about the film, the producer said it is being made on a grand scale without compromising on quality. He added that the film will be technically strong and is expected to become a milestone in Sudigali Sudheer's career. "Every frame of the film has

come out beautifully. Along with being a complete commercial entertainer, the movie also carries a meaningful message that will make today's youth think," he said, expressing confidence that it will entertain audiences across all sections.

Apart from Sudigali Sudheer and Divya Bharathi, the film also features Sarvadaman Banerjee, Nithin Prasanna, Brahmaji, Prithvi Raj, Aadukalam Naren, Rajendran, Anand Ramraj, Chammak Chandra, Pammi Sai, and Naveen Neni in important roles.

The film's music is composed by Leon James, with the background score by Mani Sharma. Cinematography is handled by Rasool Ellore, while editing is done by Vijay Muktavarapu. Rajeev Nair serves as the production designer. Samaira Reddy N is the co-producer, and Prasoon Mandava is the creative producer.

With its blend of commercial elements and a socially relevant message, 'G.O.A.T.' is expected to entertain audiences when it hits theatres worldwide on March 26.