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Removing roadblocks in path of youth by introducing reforms:

**Modi**



**'RBI WILL REMAIN ALERT AND AGILE TO MEET CHALLENGES'**



The 'Manchu' drama

**CONTINUES....**



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer

Revanth's behaviour is like a cat embarking on a pilgrimage after eating 100 rats. Not once did Revanth say 'Jai Telangana' or place a flower at the Martyrs' Memorial. He was never a part of the TG Movement. While we were in jails facing 350 cases, where was Revanth? Not a single case was filed against him during the TG movement. Revanth's history is one of betrayal, not transformation. His opportunism and ignorance have no place in the true story of Telangana's struggle



- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

**DON'T MISS...**

**AI-powered APOC unveiled at airport**

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu on Wednesday unveiled GMR Airport's AI-powered digital twin, namely Airport Predictive Operations Centre (APOC) and invited the GMR team to further develop it for all other airports which can be viewed by the Civil Aviation Ministry. Speaking at the inaugural, Ram Mohan Naidu said, "We wanted to have this kind of system where we can observe all the airports that are there in the country for us. We are not really into the operations much, but when we create those policies, it is very important for us to ..."

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**RS Chairman 'biggest disruptor'**

The Congress and several Opposition parties on Wednesday accused Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar of being the "biggest disruptor" in the House and alleged he was acting as a government spokesperson for his "next promotion", as they defended their move to seek the removal of the Vice President. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge launched a no-holds barred attack against the Vice President, who is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, saying his "partisan" conduct in the...

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**'Agri has tremendous opportunity to grow'**

There is a 'serious concern' over food and nutrition security across the world, and it is among the factors that are making food inflation 'sticky', ITC Chairman & Managing Director Sanjiv Puri said on Wednesday. The agriculture sector has a "tremendous opportunity" to grow vertically but there is a need to build resilience with sustainable farming and use technology to provide such solutions. The sector has to increase productivity and quality, and at the same time it also has to deal with the newer...

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**India loses to Australia**

Opener Smriti Mandhana's elegant century went in vain as India lost to Australia by 83 runs in the third Women's ODI to suffer a 0-3 series whitewash here on Wednesday. Opting to field after winning the toss, India had Australia on the ropes at 78 for four before middle-order batter Annabel Sutherland's scintillating 95-ball 110, and brisk half-centuries from Ashleigh Gardner (50) and skipper Tahlia McGrath (56 not out), lifted the hosts to a competitive 298 for six in the allotted 50 overs at WACA...

-SPORTS

**BRS still under illusion of being in power, says Speaker Gaddam**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar emphasized the importance of legislators in safeguarding democracy and ensuring the welfare of the people during a Legislative Orientation Programme held at the MCHRD, Hyderabad, on Wednesday.

The programme was organized for MLAs and MLCs, focusing on legislative responsibilities and democratic values.

Speaking at the event, Speaker Prasad criticized the BRS for boycotting the training sessions, stating, "I am speaker...I have no connection with any party. Even though BRS lost power, they remain under the illusion of being in charge. It is not right for KTR as a senior leader to make comments about the Speaker. The BRS and KTR have not changed their ways."

He asserted that the BRS is losing public trust by missing opportunities to engage constructively in the Assembly.

The Speaker highlighted the need for legislators to engage meaningfully with the democratic process.

"The people of Telangana watch legislative sessions closely. To enhance transparency, all sessions will be broadcast live, enabling citizens to assess the discussions and

**Condemns KTR's statements**

**Remain approachable to public: Gutta**



decisions being made," he said.

Prasad also proposed the introduction of a "Best Legislator Award," like the Best Parliamentarian Award, to encourage excellence among lawmakers.

The Speaker urged legislators to familiarize themselves with essential legislative activities, including Question Hour, Zero Hour, Resolutions, and Budget Discussions.

"Understanding the rules of the House is as important as representing the people. Only by knowing the pulse of the public can legislators truly serve their purpose," he said.

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**TG gears up to meet Rabi, summer power demand**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Principal Secretary of Energy and Chairman and Managing Director of TGGENCO, Sandeep Kumar Sultania, reviewed the state's power supply preparedness during a meeting at the Vidyut Soudha on Wednesday.

The review covered the work of TGTRANSCO and TGDISCOs to ensure that Rabi season and summer electricity demands are met without any disruptions.

The meeting included a detailed review of the current 400KV, 220KV, and 132KV transmission network. Sultania directed the Director of Transmission and field engineers to expedite the completion of ongoing EHV Substation works and associated line projects to ensure readiness before summer.

The Principal Secretary also reviewed the works of TGSPDCL and TGNPDCL, emphasizing the need to analyze past challenges and prepare for the anticipated surge in electricity demand, particularly in the GHMC area.

He instructed utilities to advance procurement processes and main-

tain a sufficient stock of essential equipment, including distribution transformers, circuit breakers, insulators, and poles, to enable the timely execution of works.

Sultania urged all power utilities to maintain a commitment to quality and reliable power supply across Telangana. He instructed field engineers to remain present at their headquarters to address emergencies promptly and warned that any lapses in consumer service would be taken seriously.

Key officials, including D. Krishna

Bhaskar (CMD, TGTRANSCO), Musharraf Ali Faruqi (CMD, TGSPDCL), K. Varun Reddy (CMD, TGNPDCL), and C. Srinivasa Rao (JMD, TGTRANSCO), along with Directors and Chief Engineers attenders the review meeting.

The government's proactive steps aim to ensure uninterrupted power supply during critical seasons, reflecting its commitment to meeting the state's growing electricity demands effectively.

**The Principal Secretary also reviewed the works of TGSPDCL and TGNPDCL, emphasizing the need to analyze past challenges and prepare for the anticipated surge in electricity demand, particularly in the GHMC area**

**Govt focusing on Warangal city development: Minister Ponguleti**



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has placed special emphasis on the development of Warangal city, said

Revenue, Housing and Warangal district in-charge Minister, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy. During a review meeting held at his secretariat office on Wednesday,

the minister, along with Endowments Minister Konda Surekha and Chief Minister's Principal Advisor Vem Narender Reddy, discussed the key development projects in Warangal.

The meeting focused on the development of the Inner and Outer Ring Roads (IRR and ORR), the rejuvenation of the Bhadrakali Lake and the construction of an airport.

Ponguleti emphasised the importance of speeding up the preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) and ensuring that all works are completed within

Continued on Page 2

**'Sorry for attack on journo'**

- Manchu brothers apologise
- Vishnu submits one lakh bond to maintain peace

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Actor Manchu Mohan Babu has been admitted to a private hospital with severe body pains and high blood pressure. The Continental Hospitals explained that Mohan Babu will undergo diagnostic tests including a CT scan. However, his two sons have addressed the media and apologised for attacking a vernacular journalist on Tuesday.

Manchu Vishnu said, "Don't blow the situation out of proportion. We feel sorry for the attack on the journalist. Irrespective of anybody I strongly



condemn it but if my father invited the media and raised a hand then I would hang my head in shame. However, the

**HC grants relief to actor Mohan Babu**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court has granted relief to veteran actor Mohan Babu in connection with a notice served on him by the Rachakonda Police in a breach of peace case regarding an incident that occurred on Tuesday.

Hearing a lunch motion petition filed by the actor, the court deferred the notice and stated that Mohan Babu need not appear before the police until December 24.

situation was not that and the house is my father's, if anybody has to get permission it is from him and not anybody else." On the families issues, we would like to give time to the outsiders who are creating the ruckus to apologise and as my father said we are upright in providing education, he added.

Later, Manchu Vishnu who has visited Rachakonda Police and submitted a one lakh bond to maintain peace, addressed the media, "I sincerely apologise and it is my mistake to bring media along with me but I was helpless as my daughter was inside my father's house."

All the allegations against me in the viral audio by my father are competent and false my wife is being dragged unnecessarily. She has no parents and I am her parent, husband and everything. In such scenarios how can a woman be blamed, he added.

**FRS at Sectt from today**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has announced the implementation of a Facial Recognition System (FRS) for recording the attendance of secretariat staff, effective from December 12.

The directive, issued by Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, aims to streamline the attendance registration process for regular employees as well as outsourced staff whose payments are made by the secretariat heads of accounts.

The General Administration Department (GAD) circular outlines



that attendance will be recorded using devices installed at all entry points of the Secretariat building. Staffers must mark their attendance through this system upon entry in the morning and

Continued on Page 2

**'Attacks on journalists will not be tolerated'**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Transport and BC Welfare Minister Ponnabandhu Ponnabandhu strongly condemned the attack on journalist Ranjith in connection with a personal dispute involving the son of actor Mohan Babu.

He said that such incidents are unacceptable and emphasized that the government stands firmly with journalists in safeguarding their rights.

"There is no need for journalists to worry. We have discussed Ranjith's condition with the Collector and

Continued on Page 2

**Police detain 2 for questioning**

The Rachakonda Police have detained two of the suspected individuals whose names were mentioned by Manchu Manoj in his complaint.

In another case, a criminal case has been booked against Telugu veteran actor Manchu Mohan Babu for allegedly abusing and assaulting a regional language news channel journalist at Jalpally in Pahadi Shareef on Tuesday.

The alleged assault occurred when the media persons reached the actor's residence to report on

his ongoing family feud on Tuesday. It was when the journalist went towards Mohan Babu to ask questions on the issue, the latter who was enraged without any provocation snatched the mic from the reporter and hit him on his face injuring him severely.

In connection with the family dispute involving actor Manchu Mohan Babu, a notice was issued by Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudheer Babu under Section 126 of the BN&S Act, based on cases

**AHEAD OF LOCAL BODY POLLS**

**Sanction to probe KTR in Formula E Race gains traction**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The file regarding the Formula E race pending at the Raj Bhavan is reportedly under active processing,

signalling a shift in the developments surrounding the issue.

As the state gears up for local body elections early next year, the demand for prosecution sanction to

probe BRS working president KTR in connection with the Formula E race has gained traction.

The ACB had sought permission for prosecution of the BRS leader under Section 17 A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2018, in a case over alleged financial irregularities in the conduct of the Formula E Race in Hyderabad when the BRS was in power.

Political analysts see this as a strategic move, especially as KTR's involvement in the probe could impact the party's plans for the elections. Both the BJP and the Congress will gain from it, indicate analysts.

BRS sources indicated that they are prepared to highlight the collusion between the BJP and the Congress in Telangana.

Continued on Page 2

**'Governance crisis in TG'**

**KTR lashes out at Cong govt in open letter to Rahul**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao strongly criticised the Congress Government's one-year rule in Telangana and its failures, in an open letter to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi.

He accused the Congress of thrusting an

'incompetent' Chief Minister upon the state and said that this has led to a governance crisis affecting farmers, women and other sections of society.

In his letter, KTR highlighted how the Congress failed to deliver on its election guarantees and the promises in its election manifesto.

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**India has significantly reduced malaria incidence, mortality: WHO**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

According to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) World Malaria Report released on Wednesday, India has significantly reduced its malaria incidence and mortality and officially exited the High Burden High Impact (HBHI) group of endemic countries in 2024.

The malaria case-load in India was slashed by 69 per cent from 6.4 million (64 lakh) in 2017 to two million (20 lakh) in 2023. Similarly, the estimated malaria deaths decreased from 11,100 to 3,500 (a 68-per cent decrease) in the same period.

The WHO South-East Asia Region had eight malaria endemic countries in 2023, accounting for 40 lakh cases and contributing 1.5 per cent to the burden of malaria cases globally.

In 2023, India accounted for a half of all estimated malaria cases in the region, followed by Indonesia, which accounted for just under one third.

The estimated malaria deaths in the region fell by 82.9 per cent, from 35,000 in 2000 to 6,000 in 2023.

India and Indonesia together accounted for about 88 per cent of malaria deaths in the region, the WHO said.

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# One-third of households in districts of TG depend on coal

## Report on 'Just Transition for Net-zero Telangana' launched

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Swaniti Initiative, a Delhi-based public policy think tank, launched its comprehensive report titled 'Just Transition Pathways for a Net-zero Telangana: Case Studies from the Coal-dependent districts of Peddapalli and Mancherla' at an event held at the Taj Vivanta here on Wednesday.

The report highlights Telangana's coal dependency and outlines strategies for achieving economic diversification and sustainable development in its coal-dependent districts. It focuses on actionable pathways for transitioning to renewable energy, establishing new industries and supporting the local communities of Peddapalli and Mancherla districts.

The report was launched by



TG Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, along with its authors Deeksha Pande, Rishi Kishore, Sriram Kolasani and Sai Chandra.

### THE REPORT'S FINDINGS ARE:

One-third of households in coal districts depend on coal for their livelihood, with most jobs in coal transport.

24% of households in Mancherla have medical insurance cards from the NTPC or SCCL.

One in 10 households rely

admins for effective net-zero planning.

Launch awareness programmes to promote a just transition at both the state and district levels.

### VISION FOR CHANGE

Speaking ahead of the event, Sandeep Pai, the Director of Swaniti Initiative and co-author of the report, stated, "This report provides a roadmap for Telangana's transition to a net-zero economy. We hope to engage policymakers, industry leaders and the community to drive meaningful change."

Swaniti Initiative is a non-profit organisation delivering development solutions. Its Global Climate and Development Institute (GCDI) spearheads initiatives addressing climate change while ensuring equitable economic growth.

## Revanth Reddy welcomed in Jaipur

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy was accorded a grand welcome during his visit to Jaipur on Wednesday. Rajasthan PCC president Govind Singh, Congress Legislative Party leader Tikaram Jalli, MLA Amit Charan, and other leaders extended their greetings to him. He was in Jaipur to attend a wedding ceremony.

The leaders reportedly discussed political developments in various states during the meeting. For the next two days, Revanth Reddy is scheduled to be in Delhi.

# Loans worth Rs 22,408 cr repaid by TG govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The actual repayment of loans by Telangana stands at Rs 22,408 crore in 2023-24. The figure was disclosed in the RBI's Handbook on Statistics of Indian States 2024.

It says outstanding loans amount to Rs 3.52 lakh crore, with total liabilities, including repayments, nearing Rs 4 lakh crore. The BRS said the Congress misgued the media over loan repayment stating that Rs 65,000 crore was

repaid.

BRS Working President KTR responded sharply to the revelations, using the RBI data to highlight the remarkable strides Telangana has made in agriculture and irrigation.

"These undeniable facts not only expose the Congress's lies but also showcase the achievements of the BRS government," KTR said.

The RBI report underlines Telangana's progress in agriculture between 2013-14 and 2022-23. Irrigated land (two

crops) increased from 78.18 lakh acres to 1.6 crore acres. Cultivated land (two crops) expanded from 1.55 crore acres to 2.29 crore acres. Food grain production surged from 2.25 crore tonnes to 5 crore tonnes.

KTR attributed this growth to initiatives like the 24-hour free power supply, Mission Kakatiya, Kaleshwaram and Rythu Bandhu.

"Telangana has made agriculture a celebration and irrigation a festival transforming the lives of farmers," he said.

# BRS hail Nandini Sidda Reddy's move to reject Rs 1 crore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A political storm erupted in Telangana over cultural identity as prominent poet Nandini Sidda Reddy decided to reject a government honour gained attention.

BRS Leaders KTR and Harish Rao publicly hailed the poet for his principled stand against what they called an affront to Telangana's culture and self-respect.

Nandini Sidda Reddy was reached out by the government over being honoured, however, he subtly denied being included in it.

It is learnt that Sidda Reddy got a call that morning however, he didn't record it. It is learnt that the intent of the poet was not to make a controversy but protest that bathukamma which is symbol of Telangana was removed from the statue.

Consequently the Telangana Government had not officially announced his name for any recognition.

The awards, which include a 300-yard house plot, a cash prize of Rs. 1 crore, and a felicitation letter, have so far been confirmed for noted figures like Guda Anjaiah, Gaddar, Bandi Yadagiri, Andesri, Goret Venkanna, Suddala Ashok Teja, Jayaraju, Pasham Yadagiri, and Ekka Yadagiri Rao.

KTR sharply criticized the state government for altering the iconic Telangana Talli image by removing Bathukamma, calling it a permanent stain on the state's history, culture and pride.

In a statement, KTR said, "The removal of Bathukamma from Telangana Talli's image is a direct insult to our culture and identity. Nandini Sidda Reddy's bold decision to reject

an honour from a government that disrespects our traditions is a moment of pride for every Telanganite. My heartfelt congratulations for your commitment to protecting Telangana's cultural and self-respect. I bow in reverence to your leadership in this fight for self-respect."

Harish Rao echoed similar sentiments, emphasizing that Telangana Talli holds greater value than any monetary reward. "More than Rs 1 crore, Telangana Talli holds a place in the hearts of millions.

Removing Bathukamma is akin to disrespecting Telangana's very life force. By rejecting the government award, Nandini Sidda Reddy has upheld the honour of Telangana. My heartfelt revolutionary salutations to him for this inspiring gesture," Harish remarked.

# TGCSB saves cybercrime victim's Rs 1.1 cr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Cyber Security Bureau (TGCSB) successfully recovered Rs 1,10,70,000 stolen from a Hyderabad resident in a cybercrime incident reported on December 10, 2024.

The victim alerted the 1930 Cybercrime Call Centre after discovering an unauthorised transaction of Rs 1.9 crore debited from his account without receiving an OTP.

The complaint, registered at 4pm revealed that the fraudulent transaction had occurred at 2 pm. Acting swiftly, 1930 Call Centre personnel coordinated with Punjab National Bank (PNB), where Rs 75,69,223 was intercepted. Further investigation revealed that Rs 35,00,000 had been transferred to other banks. With the help of nodal banking teams, this amount was also tracked and recovered.

The operation was led by G Mounika, the call agent who first received the alert, along with a follow-up team headed by Sirisha, WPC Swapna, and PC Venkatesh. They collaborated with nodal teams from AU Small Finance Bank, Bank of Baroda, Indian Bank and the PNB. Their quick action ensured the recovery of Rs 1.1 crore across various banks, while efforts are underway to retrieve the remaining Rs 79.3 lakh.

## TECHIE SUICIDE

# Victim's family demands justice, strict action against harassers

PNS ■ BENGALURU/ SAMASTIPUR/JAUNPUR

The family of the 34-year-old techie who allegedly died by suicide here, has demanded justice for him and strict action against his harassers, so that his "soul can rest in peace".

Atul Subhash, whose body was found hanging at his residence at Manjunath Layout area in Bengaluru, had left a 24-

24-page purported death note, giving extensive details of what he alleged was years-long emotional distress and harassment by his wife and relatives, and a judge based in Uttar Pradesh, and a multiple cases filed against him, police said.

Following Subhash's death, a case of abetment of suicide was registered against his wife Nikita Singhania, her mother Nisha, father Anurag and uncle Sushil on Tuesday, a police official said.

Meanwhile, a police team probing the matter has reached Uttar Pradesh. The team will question the deceased's wife and her family members as

part of the probe. "We are looking into all the allegations and the matter is being investigated from all angles", a senior police officer said.

Speaking to PTI Videos in Bengaluru, Subhash's brother Bikas said, "I want my brother to get justice. I want this

24-page purported death note, giving extensive details of what he alleged was years-long emotional distress and harassment by his wife and relatives, and a judge based in Uttar Pradesh, and a multiple cases filed against him, police said

country to have a legal process through which even men can get justice. I want strict action against those sitting on a legal chair and doing corruption because if this continues, how will people expect justice."

Alleging corruption in the system, he said justice could only be expected when it is corruption-free. When every party

is heard equally and arguments are done based on facts, he added.

"...can expect justice only when decisions are made based on facts and if it does not happen, then people will slowly start losing faith in the judicial system. It may lead to a situa-

tion where people may get afraid to get married. Men may start feeling that if they get married, they will just end up being an ATM for vending money," he alleged.

Subhash's body was found hanging at his residence in the Manjunath Layout area, which falls under the Marathahalli police station limits, on

Monday. A placard reading "Justice is due" was found in the room where he allegedly ended his life.

Before taking the extreme step, he recorded an over 80-minute video on Rumble, explaining the circumstances behind his decision.

In the video, which has gone viral on social media platforms, Subhash can be heard saying, "I feel that I should kill myself because the money I earn is making my enemies stronger. That same money will be used to destroy me, and this cycle will keep going."

Subhash's uncle Pawan Kumar alleged his nephew was being harassed and tortured for money and that he was also humiliated by his wife and the judge.

"What has happened is very unfortunate. He was losing the case (filed by his wife). He was being tortured. They (wife and family) were constantly demanding money from him. To the best of his capacity, he was giving her money for child maintenance," his uncle claimed.

# BRS stands firm in Bhopal court against Som Distilleries, Congress govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS has reiterated its commitment to exposing malpractices and safeguarding public health after successfully bringing to light the fraudulent nature of Som Distilleries and its sale of spurious liquor in Telangana.

The controversy began when the BRS accused the Congress Government of granting permissions to the company, a claim initially refuted by Congress Minister

Jupally Krishna Rao, who even threatened a defamation suit.

However, when the BRS presented irrefutable evidence, the Minister was forced to admit that Som Distilleries had indeed received permission to sell beer in Telangana.

Som Distilleries, a company headquartered in Madhya Pradesh, has faced repeated allegations of producing and selling substandard, spurious liquor. Concerns have been raised about the health risks posed by their products, with

reports of violations in quality standards and regulatory norms. The firm has also been under scrutiny by the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and the State Child Rights Commission, highlighting its questionable operations.

## Govt focusing ...

Continued from page 1

the stipulated time frame. The key directives of the meeting are that the proposed ring road projects must be integrated with National Highways to improve connectivity. Land acquisition for these projects should be undertaken on a priority basis. The airport project requires swift land acquisition to meet the development needs of the region. Bhadrakali Lake restoration should be fast-tracked due to its ecological and cultural significance.

The Minister asked officials to prioritise these projects and ensure their timely execution, keeping in mind the promises made by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy during his recent visit to

Warangal. He reiterated that the government is committed to fulfilling the aspirations of the people of Warangal.

The meeting was attended by Municipal Administration Secretary Dana Kishore, Finance Department Special Principal Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, Municipal Administration Director Sridevi, Mining Department Secretary Surendra Mohan, and Warangal and Hanamkonda Collectors Dr Sathya Sharada and P. Pravinnya and other senior officials.

The government's determined approach to developing Warangal aims to transform the city into a key urban hub, with projects progressing on a war footing to meet public expectations.

## Sanction to probe ...

Continued from page 1

With KTR getting preoccupied with the probe during this critical period, it is being interpreted by some as an attempt to divert his focus during election time.

The BRS is using the development to mount fresh attacks on the Congress, questioning the transparency of the Formula E project and raising concerns about financial irregularities.

While the Raj Bhavan's decision on the file is awaited, the momentum behind

the prosecution sanction debate is drawing wide attention. Political observers speculate that the outcome of this file could set the tone for the coming months, particularly as local body polls approach.

It may be mentioned here that last month, Revanth Reddy expressed his disapproval over the delay in taking a decision on the ACB's plea to prosecute KTR and alleged that the file seeking permission has been pending with the Governor.

## FRS at Sectt ...

Continued from page 1

again when leaving. Sixty facial recognition attendance devices have been installed on every floor, nearby lifts and the entrances of all departments.

In case of any issues with the recording process, designated officials can be contacted via phone or WhatsApp for

immediate assistance.

All departments have been requested to maintain the existing physical attendance system alongside FRS until December 13 to ensure a seamless transition. The government has emphasised that this initiative is a high-priority task and should be treated as "most urgent."

## India has ...

Continued from page 1

More than 270 million (27 crore) malaria cases and 4.2 lakh malaria deaths were averted in the region between 2000 and 2023, the global health body said.

From 2000 to 2023, the number of malaria cases reduced by 82.4 per cent, from 2.28 crore in 2000, and incidence reduced by 87 per cent, from 17.7 to 2.3 per 1,000 population at risk.

The decrease can mainly be accounted for by a decrease in India of 1.77 crore estimated cases and a decrease in incidence by 93 per cent, from 20 to 1.5 per 1,000 population at risk.

Continued from page 1

Prasad also advised new legislators to learn from experienced lawmakers, citing leaders like Rosaiah, Jaipal Reddy, and Vidyasagar Rao as exemplary orators.

The Speaker reiterated the responsibility of lawmakers to ensure that their actions align with public aspirations. He called for the effective implementation of laws and meaningful discussions in the Assembly.

Council Chairman Gutta Sukhendar Reddy and Legislative Affairs Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu also addressed the gathering, emphasizing the importance of training programmes for lawmakers. They pointed out that a lack of understanding of legislative processes among public representatives has contributed to inefficiencies and disconnect with

# BRS still under ...

the public.

Sukhendar stressed the need for MLAs and MLCs to remain approachable to the public, urging them to avoid reliance on personal assistants who often alienate constituents.

"The main reason why MLAs distance themselves from the people and lose elections is because of PAs and PROs. If someone calls an MLA, the PAs and PROs will speak rudely. MLAs should be in touch with everyone on the phone," he said.

He also raised concerns about the rising cost of elections and the need to make politics more inclusive. We should get used to picking up our phones ourselves. Our PAs and PROs

are also getting annoyed when they get phones. There is some opposition among the people even about gunmen. We should be careful with those who come to the side after winning. Elections have become costly. Even if we are the Speaker, the decision on how many days the House will be held is up to the government. If the government wants to hold the House for more days, it will be held for more days. Minister Sridhar Babu also stressed the need for MLAs to actively participate in sessions, regardless of their political stance. "In the past, despite ideological differences, all members fulfilled their roles in the Assembly. This tradition must contin-

ue," he said.

"When I was first elected, the Congress was in the opposition. When I was in the Assembly for the fourth time, the PAC was not given to the opposition. All MLAs should continue the tradition of attending the Legislative Assembly. Don't stay away from the Assembly after winning as an MLA. We are people who look for when we get an opportunity to speak," said Minister Sridhar Babu.

Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy stressed the need for longer Assembly sessions, criticizing the previous trend of holding sessions for only four to five days annually.

He emphasized that the Congress Government intends to extend session durations to ensure comprehensive discussions on governance and legislation.

## Police detain...

Continued from page 1

registered following the recent alterations. Responding to this, Manchu Manoj appeared today before the Rachakonda Police Commissioner at the Commissionerate in Neredmet, in the presence of Commissioner Sudheer Babu, in his capacity as the District Additional Magistrate.

During the proceedings, Manchu Manoj's statement was recorded regarding the family dispute. The Commissioner emphasized that family issues should not be escalated into matters of public disorder, urging both parties to resolve the dispute peacefully.

He warned that if any action was taken that could disrupt peace or affect the safety of nearby residents, appropriate action would be taken.

The Commissioner also advised both parties to maintain restraint and avoid further conflicts, warning that strict measures would be enforced in case of any future disturbances.

## HC grants ...

Continued from page 1

Acknowledging the matter as a family dispute, the court directed the police to ensure peace in the area. It ordered Blue Coat personnel to regularly monitor the situation at Mohan Babu's residence. The actor had earlier sought police security and a picket at his residence amid escalating tensions.

The court also expressed concern over the media and social media platforms intruding into the family matter and spreading misinformation, emphasising that such disputes should not be sensationalised. The hearing in the case has been adjourned to December 24.

This order provides temporary relief to Mohan Babu as legal proceedings continue.

## 'Attacks on ...

Continued from page 1

health department officials to ensure that he receives proper medical care," the minister said.

Assuring strict action against those responsible, he added, "We will conduct a thorough investigation into the incident and ensure that appropriate steps are taken against those involved."

## 'Governance ...

Continued from page 1

He specifically pointed to the unfulfilled promises of waiving the farm loans of farmers, providing financial support under 'Rythu Bharosa', and creating jobs.

"The promise to waive farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh given to farmers has been reduced to a token exercise, leaving farmers disillusioned," KTR stated, adding that around 620 farmers have committed suicide due to the government's indifference.

KTR also criticised the lack of progress on schemes for women and youth, including the promise to pay Rs 2,500 per month to all women aged above 18 and interest-free loans for unemployed youth. "Even after 365 days, these guarantees remain mere election rhetoric," he remarked.

He accused the Congress

Government of undermining Telangana's cultural identity by attempting to replace the Telangana Thalli statue with a "Congress Thalli."

KTR said the Chief Minister's actions insulted the state's self-respect and history. "For a party that once insulted Sonia Gandhi, these new moves are nothing but political gimmicks aimed at erasing the symbols of Telangana's identity," he wrote.

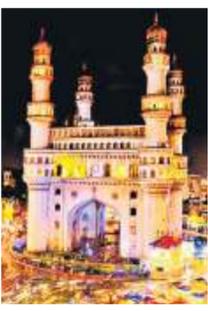
KTR lambasted the Congress Government's administrative inefficiency and corruption, citing examples like the misuse of funds allotted for projects like the Musi beautification initiative and irregularities in the civil supplies department. "The Congress has created a dark chapter in Telangana's history, marked by massive loot and negligence," KTR said.

# City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | DECEMBER 12, 2024

03



## CITY EVENTS

### Inauguration

Inauguration of the revamped Para-Sports Academy & felicitation of the para-athletes who have won in recently held World Ability Games 2024. Chief Guest Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma.

#### Venue

Aditya Mehta Foundation's Infinity Para Sports Academy & Rehabilitation Centre, Viman Nagar, Behind Hockey Stadium, Near Rasoolpura Metro Station. December 12, 3 pm.

### Live Performance

By Dastak (Band)

#### Venue

Heartcup Coffee, Gachibowli. December 12, 8:00 pm.

### Restaurant Awards 2024

By Franchise India

#### Venue

Trident, Madhapur. December 12, 10:00 am.

### Book release function

By Balraj Yadav

#### Venue

Conference hall-Ravindra Bharathi, Lakdikapul. December 12, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

### Elena Gabriele - OK!?

#### Venue

KLN Prasad Auditorium, December 13, 8 pm onwards

### Self-confidence and character building

#### Venue

Swamy Vivekananda Institute Of Human Excellence, Hyderabad. Till December 15, at 6:00 pm.

### NYU CARNIVAL

With singer KARTHIK

#### Venue

Boulder Hills, Hyderabad. December 31

### Weekend kids cooking camp

Master cooking and baking in 09 fun weekends

#### Venue

Culinary Guru Institute, Hyderabad. Till January 11, 2025.



IT Minister D Sridhar Babu seen with New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan and T-Hub CEO Sujit Jagirdar at the MoU signing ceremony on Wednesday

## MoU with US body for tie-up on trade and tech innovation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Highlighting Telangana's commitment to becoming a global hub for innovation and a leading centre for advanced technologies, IT Minister D Sridhar Babu signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between T-Hub Foundation, New Jersey Innovation Institute (NJII) and New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) for collaboration on trade and technological innovation. In the meeting on Wednesday, Sridhar Babu stated that Telangana has become a top destination for investments by attracting major projects in artificial intelligence, life sciences and technology. He also highlighted that New Jersey is offering great opportunities for Indian Americans and skilled professionals by creating a supportive environment for innovation and talent growth.

He expressed confidence that this partnership would lead to further growth and development in Telangana.

The MoU signing event was attended by New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, Telangana Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, T-Hub CEO Sujit Jagirdar, Chief Delivery Officer Phani Kondepudi, among others.

## Allu Arjun moves HC in stampede case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Actor Allu Arjun has approached the Telangana High Court in regard to the death of a woman and a boy who was seriously injured in a stampede-like situation during the Pushpa-2 Premiere show at RTC cross-roads on December 4.

The petition is seeking to quash the case registered against him by the Chikkadpally Police.

The Police have registered a case against Allu Arjun under Sections 105 and 118 of the IPC in connection with this incident.

A case has also been registered against the theatre owners under various sections for not taking security precautions when Allu Arjun arrived at the theatre. Three people have already been arrested.



WILL OPTIMISE PASSENGER FLOW AND SECURITY: MINISTER

## AI-powered tech-savvy APOC unveiled at GMR Airport

DEEPIKA PASHAM  
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com  
■ HYDERABAD

Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu on Wednesday unveiled GMR Airport's AI-powered digital twin, namely Airport Predictive Operations Centre (APOC) and invited the GMR team to further develop it for all other airports which can be viewed by the Civil Aviation Ministry.

Speaking at the inaugural, Ram Mohan Naidu said, "We wanted to have this kind of system where we can observe all the airports that are there in the country for us. We are not really into the operations much, but when we create those policies, it is very important for us to get in this real-time data to see each and every airport at a click of a button on what is happening there. Now we have the lead to go ahead and I want to get in touch with the GMR team to make it successful."

Appreciating the various initiatives that GMR Hyderabad Airport specifically has taken like the e-boarding system, Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said, "The Hyderabad Airport has seen the highest passenger growth in the country from about 6.5 million passengers in 2010 to 25 million passengers in 2024, reflecting a growth of almost four times.

The number of flights has jumped from 220 per day to more than 550 flights per day during the same period, which is quite remarkable growth."

SGK Kishore, ED - South and Chief Innovation Officer, GMR Airports said, "New AI-enabled digital platform and the Airport Predictive Operation Centre (APOC) consists of five islands and it integrates alerts in the new system.

It will manage the crowd and optimise passenger flow and security, reducing congestion and enhancing safety."

## Nov 17 remembered for five lakh domestic passengers footfall: Min

Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu in the GMR Airport programme has detailed that in October this year, domestic air passenger traffic registered a 5.3 per cent increase reaching 1.36 crore passengers compared to 1.26 crore in the last month. November 17 has been a day to remember as there were 5 lakh domestic passengers recorded on a single day. "December 2023 has witnessed a staggering 1.37 crore domestic passengers and this November we surpassed that number in just 29 days, making it the best of a month in the year and November 17th, particularly that date, will always be remembered in

the history of civilisation in the country because we crossed over five lakh domestic passengers," he added. This achievement has been a dream for a few countries and India has done it. "The airport numbers used to be 74 in 2014. We now have a staggering number of 157 and still counting as we have three and many more coming. For the next five years we have to establish 50 more airports in this country," he added. That is going to be the change in the method that India can bring into the whole civil aviation. Also, India right now has 800 aircrafts and another additional 1,500 are scheduled for delivery, said the Minister.

## Nasscom should partner with Skills varsity: Minister

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Emphasising that the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) should partner with Young India Skills University, IT Minister D Sridhar Babu held a meeting with NASSCOM President Rajesh Nambiar and discussed various key topics.

During the meeting on Wednesday at the Secretariat, Sridhar Babu emphasised the rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and called for NASSCOM's role in upskilling IT professionals and engineering graduates. He requested NASSCOM to use its influence to encourage new com-

panies to set up operations in Hyderabad, helping to strengthen the city's position as a hub for Global Capability Centers (GCCs).

The Minister expressed confidence that Telangana would become a leader in the IT sector nationwide in the coming years. He credited Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's visionary leadership for creating a world-class ecosystem that stands out in terms of scale and ambition.

The meeting was attended by the State Government's IT Advisor, Sai Krishna, NASSCOM representatives Srikanth Srinivasan and Praveen, along with Government IT strategist Srikanth.

## Big C presents offers to mark anniversary

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The number one mobile retail company Big C has announced innovative offers to mark its 22nd anniversary, according to its CMD M Balu Chowdhury. He said on the purchase of a smartphone, a smartwatch worth Rs 5,999 or ear buds worth Rs 1,799 will be offered, he said and added that there are offers of 10% instant cash-back, zero down payment and no cost EMI on VIVO, OPPO, MI, REALME and ONEPLUS mobile purchases. Similarly, up to Rs 20,000 instant cash-back is offered on purchase of Samsung mobiles; up to Rs 7,000 instant discount on Iphone mobiles; up to 51% discount on branded accessories and an attractive facility to purchase mobiles, smart TVs, laptops and air-conditioners without any interest and down payments on ATM cards.

## IITH hosts grand finale of Hackathon on agriculture

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IITH) hosted the grand finale of the 7th Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2024-Software Edition, focusing on agriculture, which concluded on Wednesday. This event was organised under the Ministry of Education and AICTE simultaneously which ran across 51 centres nationwide.

IITH hosted it for the first time, empowering young innovators to tackle real-world agricultural challenges.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the participants via a video conference, emphasising the event's importance. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated it, while local dignitaries, including Dr Ch



Srinivasa Rao (NAARM) and Dr Shreenivas Desai (UAS Dharwad), highlighted agriculture's critical role.

Four winning teams received Rs 1 lakh each during the valedictory session. Participants addressed problems like AI-driven crop disease prediction and sustainable fertilizer optimisation. The event attracted 26 teams and 200 participants, who worked intensively under expert guid-

ance. Meanwhile, IITH Director Prof. BS Murty appreciated SIH as a platform driving innovation aligned with India's vision for 'Viksit Bharat 2047.' Experts emphasised leveraging technology to transform agriculture, strengthen rural economies and ensure food security. The finale exemplified collaboration, creativity and the drive for sustainable progress in critical sectors.

## SCR adds 2,000 general coaches for EWS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) has added 2,000 general coaches to improve unreserved passenger travel, focusing on accessibility for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).

Secunderabad trains with additional general coaches in Phase I are: 12706/12705: Guntur - Secunderabad - Guntur (1 rake), 12757/12758: Secunderabad - Sirpur Khagaznagar - Secunderabad (1 rake), 12791/12792: Secunderabad - Danapur - Secunderabad (4 rakes)

Additional general coaches in Phase II are: 12704/12793: Secunderabad - Howrah - Secunderabad. 12710/12709: Secunderabad - Gudur - Secunderabad. 12797/12798: Tirupati - Secunderabad - Tirupati.

## Horticulture farming declines around city due to real estate

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chairman of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Commission Kodanda Reddy noted that the Commission has already recommended a farmer identification card to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. While the Central government recently announced an Aadhaar-like card for farmers, the Chairman expressed doubts about the pace of its implementation. Officials highlighted the decline in horticulture farming around Hyderabad due to the rise of real estate, urging the Commission to bring this issue

to the government's attention. The Commission also called for the implementation of a cluster-based approach and instructed officials to present a detailed DPR for future initiatives. Member Bhavani Reddy directed the department to submit a report on the usage of integrated markets across the state.

Officials from the Horticulture department met with the Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Commission at its office to discuss strategies for strengthening horticulture in Telangana. During the session, the officials provided a comprehensive overview of

the department's initiatives and challenges. The Commission emphasised the need to encourage farmers to transition to horticulture crops, which can provide better financial returns. "We must work collectively to empower farmers to stand on their own feet," Chairman Kodanda Reddy stated.

Highlighting the importance of drip irrigation, the Commission noted that many farmers relying on this system lack access to the scheme's benefits. Kodanda Reddy urged officials to ensure the scheme's reach is expanded. The Commission also emphasised

the need for MPs to push for central government funding and schemes that benefit farmers.

The discussion shed light on various challenges: including 1. Mango farmers have suffered losses due to unseasonal rains; 2. Chillies and turmeric farmers face financial burdens due to the lack of remunerative prices, with prolonged storage reducing crop quality; Despite proposals, no progress has been made on establishing a turmeric board in Nizamabad, a key demand of farmers.

The Commission assured that it would engage with the Central government to address these issues.

## AI Academy Bootcamp concludes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

T-Hub and MATH, in partnership with Google, successfully concluded the AI Academy India 2024 Bootcamp, held at T-Hub. The three-day programme aimed to empower early-stage startups to address global challenges using Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Supported by MeitY Startup Hub, it featured 26 startups from Telangana, offering hands-on training, mentorship and access to Google's advanced AI tools, including cloud credits worth up to \$350,000.

## Work on desilting sewer manholes completed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Highlighting that a huge amount of silt has been pulled out of over 1,21,200 sewer manholes in the city across 12,673 locations, Managing Director of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply & Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) K Ashok Reddy said. He announced the progress of a 90-day special action plan for a sewage overflow-free Hyderabad. In a press meet on Wednesday, he shared the progress of 70 days as on December 10.

Ashok Reddy shared that the work is 50% complete



within a stretch of 1,602 km. He noted that 144 vehicles are deployed and monitored via a dashboard, with plans to implement geo-fencing to ensure vehicles stay within designated areas.

The MD also explained about the special dashboard, which monitors daily activities, including complaints about sewer overflows, polluted water and silted roads. These complaints are recorded on Google maps, where issue frequency and resolution status appear as bubbles whose sizes indicate severity.

The dashboard also tracks pipeline lengths, cleaned manholes and includes photos for verification. He noted that GPS technology identifies areas covered by silt vehicles, improving efficiency. Proposals for new pipelines are also logged.

# CM Cup 2024 mandal-level competitions in full swing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The CM Cup 2024, now in its second phase, is witnessing enthusiastic participation at the mandal level across all towns and villages in Telangana. Following the successful conclusion of the village-level competitions on December 7 and 8, the winners have advanced to compete at the mandal level.

The competitions feature six main events: athletics, volleyball, football, yoga, kho-kho, and kabaddi. Additionally, in response to local demand, other popular sports are being included at various mandals, making the event diverse and inclusive. Several public representatives and officials are gracing these events as chief guests, boosting the morale of the participants. For instance, Panchayat Raj Minister Seethaakka inaugurated kabaddi competitions in a mandal in Mulugu district, setting an inspiring tone for the games.

Similarly, local leaders and officials in various constituencies are contributing to the successful organisation of the competitions,



encouraging budding athletes and ensuring smooth execution of events. District Collectors, in collaboration with departments such as Panchayat Raj and Education, are coordinating the events to ensure their success. Government officials across various sectors are actively involved in monitoring and supervising the competitions.

The mandal-level winners from the ongoing competitions will advance to the district-level events scheduled from December 16. The current phase will conclude with three days of intense matches on December 10, 11, and 12, finalizing the representatives for the next stage. The Telangana Sports Authority has set up a monitoring cell at its headquarters in LB Stadium to oversee the proceedings. This cell is streamlining the online documentation of player details, competition results, and updates from mandals, ensuring seamless coordination across all levels.

With vibrant participation and meticulous planning, the CM Cup 2024 continues to be a grand celebration of sportsmanship and talent across Telangana.

# Harish Rao questions Revanth's role in Telangana movement

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

At a media interaction held at the Sangareddy MLA camp office, former minister T Harish Rao launched a blistering attack on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, questioning his contribution to the Telangana movement and accusing him of betraying the cause. Harish Rao compared Revanth's behavior to "a cat embarking on a pilgrimage after devouring a hundred rats," criticising his attempts to rewrite the state's history.

Harish Rao highlighted Revanth's lack of involvement in the Telangana movement, stating, "Not once did Revanth say 'Jai Telangana' or lay a flower at the martyrs' memorial. He was never a part of the movement. Claiming that Telangana was granted out of someone's kindness is an insult to the sacrifices of our martyrs and the aspirations of Telangana's people."

Rao blamed the Congress party for repeatedly betraying Telangana, citing instances from history, including the suppression of the 1969 Telangana agitation during Indira Gandhi's regime. "The Congress has a legacy of betrayal, from merging Telangana into Andhra against Fazal Ali Commission's recommendations to suppressing movements with iron fists," he said.

Referring to the events leading up to the creation of Telangana, Harish Rao credited K Chandrashekar Rao's (KCR) relentless struggle for the state's formation. "The December 9 announcement by Chidambaram



Former minister T Harish Rao speaking to the media in Sangareddy on Wednesday

was the result of KCR's fast-unto-death protest, not any act of charity by Congress. Claiming otherwise is a distortion of history," Harish Rao asserted.

Harish Rao accused Revanth of being a political opportunist with no moral right to speak about Telangana. "While we were in jails facing 350 cases, where was Revanth? Not a single case was filed against him during the movement. He betrayed the cause and now speaks about Telangana as if he played a role," Harish Rao remarked.

He also dismissed Revanth's claims about Telangana Thalli statues, calling them baseless. "The Telangana Thalli statue was inaugurated on

June 2, 2015, at Sangareddy Collectorate, in the presence of the MLA, Collector Rahul Bojja, and myself. Revanth's ignorance on this matter is shameful," he added.

Rao criticised Revanth Reddy's governance, alleging that welfare schemes like KCR Kit and Dalit Bandhu were stalled, while deaths in welfare schools and other lapses had increased. He concluded by asserting that no amount of distortion could erase KCR's contributions to Telangana.

"Revanth's history is one of betrayal, not transformation. His opportunism and ignorance have no place in the true story of Telangana's struggle," Harish Rao declared.

# 20 beneficiaries of Rajiv Civils Abhaya Hastam clear UPSC Mains exam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana candidates showcased exceptional performance in the UPSC Mains 2024 results, with 20 aspirants emerging successful under the state government's financial assistance scheme. For the first time this year, the state implemented the Rajiv Civils Abhaya Hastam programme to support financially weak candidates preparing for civil services.

Through this initiative, 135 aspirants received financial aid of Rs. 1 lakh each, facilitated by the Singareni Collieries Company. On August 26, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy personally handed over cheques to the beneficiaries, marking a significant step towards empowering aspiring civil servants from economically weaker backgrounds.

Among those who received



aid under the Rajiv Civils Abhaya Hastam scheme, 20 candidates have now successfully cleared the UPSC Mains examination. These achievers include E. Sai Shivani, Rahul Shankeshi, Potharaju Hari Prasad, Vikram Bethi (Warangal Urban), Nallamala Sai Kumar, Banoth Nag Raja

Nayak (Khammam), Kadari Srivani, Gade Swetha, Raparathi Preeti (Medchal-Malkajgiri), Kummari Shruvan Kumar (Medak), Mohammad Ashfaq, Togaru Suryateja (Rangareddy), Besta Priyanjali (Mahabubabad), Narige Swami (Siddipet), Gokamalla Anjaneyulu (Nagar Kurnool),

R. Pramod Kumar (Adilabad), B. Prahlad (Vikarabad), Burugupelli Neeraj Kumar (Jagtlal), Jaswanth Kumar (Bhadradi Kothagudem) and Ramtangi Sudhakar (Asifabad-Kumurbheem).

Acknowledging the candidates' success, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy extended his congratulations, praising their hard work and determination. "These results reflect the state's commitment to nurturing talent and supporting aspirants through innovative programs like Rajiv Civils Abhaya Hastam," he said.

The programme has not only provided financial assistance but has also served as a motivational boost for aspirants across Telangana, setting a benchmark for future initiatives aimed at uplifting underprivileged communities in the state.

# Medigadda project withstood a 5.3 magnitude earthquake: BRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS leader and former MP Boinapalli Vinod Kumar demanded clarity on the Congress government's stance regarding repairs to the Medigadda project. "Why has the Revanth Reddy government not made a decision on the matter under the National Dam Safety Authority's jurisdiction, but the Dam Safety Act nowhere mandates that the authority's permission is required for repairs," he explained.

He emphasised that the state government holds complete authority over Medigadda, Annaram, and Sundilla barges, while the National Dam Safety Authority merely has advisory powers. "Despite thousands of TMCs of water flowing into the sea, the state government has failed to ensure the last irrigation for Yasangi crops," he said.

The former MP refuted Congress leaders' allegations of the Medigadda project sinking, calling it a deliberate attempt to malign BRS leadership. "The Medigadda project has withstood even a 5.3 Richter scale earthquake without any damage. Congress leaders are spreading lies for political gain," he said.

Vinod Kumar, along with

former Zilla Parishad Chairperson Tula Uma, BRSV President Gellu Srinivas Yadav, and labour leader Roop Singh, addressed a press meet at Telangana Bhavan on Wednesday, where they criticised the Congress government for its failure to address issues related to the Medigadda project and irrigation needs for the Yasangi crop season.

Vinod Kumar accused the Congress-led state government of neglecting the needs of farmers, pointing out that officials were advising farmers to scale down Yasangi crop cultivation due to water shortages. "This situation reflects the complete failure of the state government. Yasangi is a crucial season for farmers, and this indifference is unacceptable," he said.

Vinod Kumar urged Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy to convene a review meeting with officials immediately. He also called for prompt completion of repair works at Medigadda to ensure water supply for Yasangi crops.

"Farmers cannot wait. The government must act now. Commissions and debates will not feed farmers or solve their problems. If there are mistakes, address them swiftly, but delaying action is not an option," he asserted.



BRS leader K Kavitha speaking at a meeting in Hyderabad on Wednesday

# Kavitha demands govt to deliver promises to BCs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Wednesday issued a strong warning to the Congress government, stating that there is no question of remaining silent if the promises made to Backward Classes (BCs) are ignored. Speaking at a meeting with Telangana Vaddera Sangham leaders, she demanded the immediate implementation of commitments made in the Kamareddy BC Declaration and the party's election manifesto. She emphasised the need for a separate ministry for Most Backward Classes (MBCs), a promise made by the Congress during its election campaign.

Kavitha appreciated the Telangana Jagruthi organisation's submission of a report to the BC Dedicated Commission, advocating an increase in reservations for BCs in local bodies. She criticised the Congress for its inaction, pointing out that despite being in power for a year, the government has failed to establish the promised MBC ministry or construct BC Unity Bhavans in every district with an allocation of Rs. 50

crore. She further accused the Congress of neglecting BC welfare, saying, "They promised 42 per cent reservations for BCs in local bodies during elections. Any delay in implementing this is unacceptable. The government's indifference to supporting traditional professions of BC communities is glaring."

Kavitha also expressed deep concern over the recent food poisoning incident at Sarangapur Kasturba Girls School in Jagtlal district, where six students fell ill. She highlighted the growing fear among parents of children studying in welfare schools due to frequent reports of food poisoning. "Every day, students from welfare schools are being admitted to hospitals due to food poisoning. This government's failure to provide quality food reflects its inefficiency," she remarked. Kavitha criticised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who also holds the Education portfolio, for not visiting welfare schools even once in the past year. She demanded that the Chief Minister immediately visit these schools, review their conditions, and take measures to prevent such incidents from recurring.

# 'DEROGATORY' COMMENTS AGAINST KAVITHA

## BRSV leaders demand apology from Cong MLAs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Vidyarthi (BRSV) leaders expressed strong anger over Congress MLAs Beerla Ilaiah and Yennam Srinivas Reddy for their objectionable remarks against MLC Kavitha. In a dramatic protest at Osmania University Arts College, the leaders symbolically sent a medical kit and

phenyl to the MLAs, urging them to "cleanse their mouths" before making any further comments. Beerla Ilaiah termed Kavitha as "Liquor Rani" and Yennam said that Kavitha will stop to any low for politics and came to Telangana during agitation as they felt it will work out. Speaking to the media,

BRSV leaders Kandula Madhu and K Vijay Rao demanded an immediate public apology from the two Congress MLAs. "If Ilaiah and Srinivas Reddy fail to apologise, we will ensure their admission to Erragadda Mental Hospital. Their statements are not only disrespectful but also reflect their deteriorating mental state," they stated.

The leaders accused the Congress of failing to respect women and warned of severe consequences if such behavior continued. "If they cannot learn to respect women like Kavitha, we will make sure they face the music. Their tongues might as well be cut off if they continue this disrespect," warned the BRSV leaders.

# Lok Adalat on Dec 14 for civil, criminal cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Lok Adalat will be held on December 14 across Telangana for the speedy and amicable settlement of all civil and compoundable criminal cases (both pre-litigation and pending cases). This programme is being organised under the guidance of the Chief Justice and Patron-in-Chief, as well as the Executive Chairman of the Telangana State Legal Services Authority.

The Lok Adalat will be conducted at all levels, from the High Court of Telangana to taluq-level courts. It provides free services and if a pending case is resolved through the Lok Adalat, any court fee already paid will be refunded. Importantly, no appeal can be filed against the awards passed.

The public is encouraged to use this opportunity to settle disputes in physical or virtual mode. Interested individuals should contact the District Legal Services Authority or the nearest Mandal Legal Services Committee/Court.

# CHILD-SELLING RACKET

## Child Welfare Committee declares rescued children to be free for adoption

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Child Welfare Committee (CWC) of Medchal-Malkajgiri district in Telangana has declared 15 children who were rescued by police from a child-selling racket busted earlier this year as "Legally Free for Adoption (LFA)". Official sources on Wednesday said the Committee decided the children to be LFA as per Section 38 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 as their biological parents could not be traced. The High Court had on November 28 directed the CWC to pass an order in terms of Section 37 (orders regarding a child in need of care and protection) of the Act within two weeks from the date of receipt of the copy of its order.

The Section 38 of the Act stipulates that the Committee, in case of orphan and abandoned child, shall make all efforts for tracing the parents or guardians of the child and on completion of such inquiry, if it is established that the child is either an orphan

having no one to take care, or abandoned, the Committee shall declare the child legally free for adoption. The court also gave directions to the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) to decide within four weeks on the applications filed by some of the "adoptive parents" seeking adoption of the children. The court was dealing with pleas filed by some couples, who purchased the children as part of the racket, seeking custody of the kids.

The interstate child-selling racket was busted by police in May this year with the arrest of more than 10 people who were selling infants in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for a price ranging between Rs. 1.80 lakh and Rs. 5.50 lakh. The Rachakonda Police had acted based on information that a racket was being run wherein infants brought in from different places, including Delhi and Pune, were being sold here and in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh to childless couples.

The children have since been provided shelter in a state-run children's home.

**BEFORE THE HONOURABLE TELANGANA ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION**  
Viduth Nyantran Bhavan, Sy.No. 145-P, G.T.S Colony, Kalyan Nagar, Hyderabad - 500045.

**SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

1. Notice is hereby given to all that the Distribution Company viz. SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED (TSPDCL) holding Distribution and Retail Supply License No. 13/2000, as, on 29-12-2000, filed before the Telangana Electricity Regulatory Commission (TGERC), the Additional Surcharge for HI of FY2025-26. These filings have been taken on record by the Hon'ble Commission in O.P.No.28 of 2024.

2. Copies of the filings referred are available in the office of the Chief Engineer (RAC), TSPDCL Corporate Office, 1st floor, 'A' block, Mini Compound, Hyderabad-500063 and the Superintending Engineer, Operation circles of the Distribution Company at Bangalore Hills, Hyderabad(South), Hyderabad(Central), Medchal, Cybercity, Habesguda, Secunderabad, Rajendranagar, Sarconagar, Vikarabad, Mahabubnagar, Godwal, Nagar kurnool, Naranjpet, Wanaparthy, Medak, Siddipet, Sangareddy, Jaygonda, Yadaiah and Suryapet. Interested persons may inspect/petition the said filings and take note thereof during office hours of any of the said offices free of cost. These proposals are also available on [www.tspower.com](http://www.tspower.com) and the same may be accessed at [www.tgerc.telangana.gov.in](http://www.tgerc.telangana.gov.in). A copy of these filings can be obtained from the above offices from 12.12.2024 onwards on payment of charges (in cash) for photocopying.

3. Objections/suggestions, if any, on the filings, together with supporting material may be sent to the Chief Engineer(RAC), TSPDCL, Corporate Office, 1st floor, 'A' block, Mini Compound, Hyderabad-500063 in person or through Registered Post so as to reach on or before 03.01.2025 by 5 PM. A copy of the same must also be filed with the Commission Secretary, TGERC, at the address mentioned above. The objections/suggestions should be duly signed and should carry full name, postal address, email id and contact number of the person(s) sending the objections/suggestions. If the objections/suggestions are filed on behalf of any organization or any category of consumers, it should be clearly mentioned. If the objector also wants to be heard in person it may also be specifically mentioned. The objection/suggestion should accompany the following statement:

Name & full address of the Objector along with e-mail id and contact number	Brief details of Objection(s)/Suggestion(s)	Whether copy of objection & Proposed of Additional Surcharge (TSPDCL)	Whether copy of proof of delivery at Licensee's office enclosed (Yes/No)	Whether Objector wants to be heard in person (Yes/No)

4. The gist of the filings of the Discom for Additional Surcharge for HI of FY 2025-26 are indicated in the Schedule-I below.

5. Telangana Electricity Regulatory Commission intends to conduct Public Hearing at Court Hall, TGERC, Viduth Nyantran Bhavan, Sy.No.145-P, G.T.S. Colony, Kalyan Nagar, Hyderabad 500 045 on 20.01.2025 (Monday) from 11:00 hrs onwards.

Sd/ CHAIRMAN & MANAGING DIRECTOR  
Southern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Ltd.

Place Hyderabad  
Date:12.12.2024

**NORTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

1. Notice is hereby given to all that the Distribution Company viz. NORTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED (TGNPDCL) holding Distribution and Retail Supply License No. 14/2000, as, on 29-12-2000, filed before the Telangana Electricity Regulatory Commission (TGERC), the Additional Surcharge for HI of FY2025-26. These filings have been taken on record by the Hon'ble Commission in O.P.No.29 of 2024.

2. Copies of the filings referred are available in the office of the Chief Engineer (IPC & RAC), TGNPDCL, No.2-5-312, Viduth Bhavan, Nakkalagutta, Hanamkonda-500001 and the Superintending Engineer, Operation circles of the Distribution Company at Hanamkonda, Warangal, Mahabubabad, Jays Shankar (Bhupalpally), Jangoon,Kammragar, Jagtlal, Peddapally, Khammam, Badradi Kothagudem, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Adilabad, Nirmal, Warangal and Koramancheruvu (Asifabad). Interested persons may inspect/petition the said filings and take note thereof during office hours of any of the said offices free of cost. These proposals are also available on [www.tgnpdcl.com](http://www.tgnpdcl.com) and the same may be accessed at [www.tgerc.telangana.gov.in](http://www.tgerc.telangana.gov.in). A copy of these filings can be obtained from the above offices from 12.12.2024 onwards on payment of charges (in cash) for photocopying.

3. Objections/suggestions, if any, on the filings, together with supporting material may be sent to the Chief Engineer(IPC & RAC), TGNPDCL, H.No.2-6-312, Viduth Bhavan, Nakkalagutta, Hanamkonda-500001 in person or through Registered Post so as to reach on or before 03.01.2025 by 5 PM. A copy of the same must also be filed with the Commission Secretary, TGERC, at the address mentioned above. The objections/suggestions should be duly signed and should carry full name, postal address, email id and contact number of the person(s) sending the objections/suggestions. If the objections/suggestions are filed on behalf of any organization or any category of consumers, it should be clearly mentioned. If the objector also wants to be heard in person it may also be specifically mentioned. The objection/suggestion should accompany the following statement:

Name & full address of the Objector along with e-mail id and contact number	Brief details of Objection(s)/Suggestion(s)	Whether copy of objection & Proposed of Additional Surcharge (TGNPDCL)	Whether copy of proof of delivery at Licensee's office enclosed (Yes/No)	Whether Objector wants to be heard in person (Yes/No)

4. The gist of the filings of the Discom for Additional Surcharge for HI of FY 2025-26 are indicated in the Schedule-I below.

5. Telangana Electricity Regulatory Commission intends to conduct Public Hearing at Court Hall, TGERC, Viduth Nyantran Bhavan, Sy.No.145-P, G.T.S. Colony, Kalyan Nagar, Hyderabad 500 045 on 20.01.2025 (Monday) from 11:00 hrs onwards.

Sd/ CHAIRMAN & MANAGING DIRECTOR  
Northern Power Distribution Company of Telangana Ltd.

Place Hanamkonda  
Date:12.12.2024

**SCHEDULE-I**  
**ADDITIONAL SURCHARGE FOR HI OF FY 2025-26**

Sl.No.	PARTICULARS	UNIT	VALUE
(A)	Long Term Available Capacity	MW	9,380.87
(B)	Capacity stranded due to open access	MW	54.83
(C)	Fixed Charges paid	Rs. Cr.	6,042.34
(D) = (C)/(A)	Fixed Charges per MW	Rs. Cr./MW	0.64
(E) = (D)*(B)	Fixed Charges for Stranded Capacity	Rs. Cr.	3.52
(F)	Transmission Charges Paid	Rs. Cr.	2,908.94
(G)	Actual Energy Scheduled	MU	41,784.58
(H) = (F)/(G)	Transmission Charges per unit	Rs. kWh	0.71
(I)	Distribution Charges as per Tariff Order	Rs. kWh	0.19
(J) = (H)+(I)	Total transmission and distribution charges per unit	Rs. kWh	0.90
(K)	Energy consumed by OA consumers from the DISCOMs	MU	1,196.31
(L) = (K)*(J)	Transmission and Distribution charges to be paid by OA consumers	Rs. Cr.	107.30
(M)	Demand Charges recovered by the DISCOMs from OA consumers	Rs. Cr.	112.55
(N) = (M) - (L)	Demand Charges to be adjusted	Rs. Cr.	4.65
(O) = (E) - (N)	Net stranded charges recoverable	Rs. Cr.	30.67
(P)	Open Access Sales	MU	181.80
(Q) = (O)+(P)	Additional Surcharge Computed	Rs. kWh	1.69

R.O.No.: 773-PP/CL-AGENCY/ABVT/11/2024-25, Date:11.12.2024

ACROSS THE STATES

# Removing roadblocks in path of youth by introducing reforms: Modi



## Developing new app for passenger services: Vaishnav

The railway ministry is developing a mobile application that will let users book unreserved train tickets, lodge complaints, and track trains, the Lok Sabha was informed on Wednesday. Telugu Desam Party MPs B K Parthasarathi and Bastipati Nagaraju raised the issue of the government's plan to launch a 'super app' for rail services. They also wanted to know the timeline by which the app will be launched for commercial usage along with the cost of developing the app. Responding to these queries, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said, "Indian Railways is developing a passenger service focussed app. Passengers will be able to avail unreserved ticketing, lodge complaints, check train availability and many more functions in a single app."

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The government is introducing reforms to remove roadblocks in the path of the country's youth, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told young innovators on Wednesday, asserting that the future of the world will be driven by innovation and knowledge. Interacting with the innovators during the grand finale of the 'Smart India Hackathon (SIH)', the prime minister said the youth today is developing a feeling of ownership towards finding solutions for the country's challenges. "India's strength is its innovative youth and technology power. We have introduced a new National

Education Policy to nurture a scientific mindset. The government is removing roadblocks in the path of the country's youth by introducing reforms," Modi said while addressing more than 1,300 student teams via video conferencing. "The future of the world will be driven by innovation and knowledge and India's youth today is developing a feeling of ownership towards finding solutions for the country's challenges," he added. The seventh edition of the SIH concurrently began at 51 nodal centres nationwide on Wednesday. The Software Edition will



run nonstop for 36 hours, while the Hardware Edition will continue from December 11 to 15. Like past editions, the student teams will work on either the problem statements given by ministries, departments or industries or submit their ideas under the Student Innovation category against any of the 17 themes linked to sectors of national importance. These sectors are - healthcare, supply chain and logistics, smart technologies, heritage and culture, sustainability, education and skill development, water, agriculture and food, emerging technologies, and disaster manage-

ment. According to the Ministry of Education, this year, more than 250 problem statements have been submitted by 54 ministries, departments, state governments, PSUs and industries. "A 150 per cent increase has been recorded in internal hackathons at the institute level, growing from over 900 in the SIH 2023 to around 2,247 in SIH 2024, making this the largest edition so far. "More than 86,000 teams have participated in the SIH 2024 at the institute level and around 49,000 student teams (each consisting of 6 students and 2 mentors) have been recommended by these institutes for the national level round," a ministry official said.

## 'Working on policy of 'zero casualties' during disasters'

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The government is working on the policy of "zero casualties" during disasters in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pledge of making India a developed country by 2047, Union Minister Nityanand Rai said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. Moving the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill 2024 for consideration and passage, Rai said that since the Modi government has come to power, losses have come down due to able disaster management techniques. Members of the opposition expressed reservations on the bill during the discussion, alleging that it would lead to centralisation of power in the hands of the Union government, but the minister asserted that the legislation was framed to address the difficulties flagged by the states. "India faces a

variety of disasters across seasons. The government is working on the policy of "zero casualties" in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pledge of making India a developed country by 2047," Rai said. The minister of state for home said in the recent cyclones, there was zero loss of lives as compared to the super cyclone (of 1999) in which thousands had perished. "States faced difficulties in implementing the Disaster Management Act of 2005. The proposed amendment is based on overcoming the difficulties flagged by states to the Union Home Minister," he

said. Initiating the debate, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor claimed that the legislation is constitutionally untenable as it lacks on various fronts, is "ill thought out" and will lead to "overlapping". He said the bill would bring greater centralisation of power in the hands of central government. Tharoor said the legislation seeks to weaken the national executive committee and state executive committees related to disaster management. He lamented that the Kerala government's demand for declaring the rains, floods and landslides in Wayanad, that took place in July, as a national disaster was rejected by the central government. Asking the central government to withdraw the bill, the Congress MP said that the MPs will have no voice in disaster management once the legislation is passed. Supporting the bill, BJP MP Trivendra Singh Rawat said that the legislation will help the states in handling all disasters in a better way. He said the bill took care of the concerns of the people living in remote areas of hill states like Uttarakhand, which has seen many natural disasters over the years.

## Rahul urges LS Speaker to expunge remarks against him

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi met Speaker Om Birla on Wednesday and urged him to expunge remarks made by BJP MPs against him, and ensure the House functions smoothly. Gandhi said the BJP has been making "baseless" allegations against him to "distract" attention from the Adani issue, but he would not be provoked by any of these charges. He also said he and his party wanted a discussion on the Constitution in Lok Sabha starting December 13, and asserted they will ensure the House functions properly, even though it is not their responsibility. "I had a meeting with the Speaker and I told him that our party is saying that derogatory comments against me will be expunged. The Speaker said he will examine them. They (the BJP) continue to make all kinds of baseless allegations, but we have decided that we want the House to function. "Whatever provocation they do,



we will allow them. But we will try and run the House. We would want that somehow the House functions. We want there should be a debate and discussion. We want that there should be a debate on the Constitution on December 13," Gandhi told reporters outside Parliament. He said BJP MPs can speak against "me on whatever issue, but the debate on the Constitution should happen". "It is very simple, they do not want a discussion on the Adani issue and want to distract from the Adani issue. You know, we will not leave them at the end," he said.



## Need to give rights to all sections of society: Soren

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Wednesday said there was a need to give rights to all sections of society, especially the deprived and the exploited. Soren addressed the extended meeting of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) central committee here. Later, in a post on X, Soren said, "A strong 'Abua Sarkar' (our government) was formed in Jharkhand due to the hard work of hardworking leaders, workers and blessings of crores of people of the state." Stating that the JMM was born out of struggle, he said the roots of the party would be strengthened in the coming times. "This is the reason why we have always fought for our rights. We have won by fighting. We have never accepted defeat," he said. Soren said party workers will have to work to strengthen the roots of the JMM by reaching every corner of the state in the coming times.

## Much needed to completely eradicate manual sewer cleaning: Supreme Court

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Observing much needed to be done, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to file an action taken report on the compliance of its direction for ensuring manual sewer cleaning was completely eradicated in a phased manner. A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Aravind Kumar asked additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, to call a meeting of the central monitoring committee with all the stakeholders within two weeks. The committee reviews the implementation of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (MS Act, 2013).



## RS Chairman 'biggest disruptor' in House: Kharge

● Defends Opposition no-confidence motion

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Congress and several Opposition parties on Wednesday accused Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar of being the "biggest disruptor" in the House and alleged he was acting as a government spokesperson for his "next promotion", as they defended their move to seek the removal of the Vice President. Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge launched a no-holds barred attack against the Vice President, who is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, saying his "partisan" conduct in the House prompted them to move a notice for his ouster and that it has harmed the country's dignity. It was for the first time in Parliament's history that a move has been initiated by the Opposition to remove the Chairman through a no-confidence motion. Addressing a press conference along with leaders of other opposition INDIA bloc parties, Kharge alleged that Dhankhar was acting like a school headmaster, often ser-



monising experienced Opposition leaders and preventing them from speaking in the House. "We have no hesitation in saying that the biggest disruptor in the Rajya Sabha is the Chairman himself," he said, adding, "His loyalty is towards the ruling party, instead of the Constitution and constitutional traditions. We can see that he is acting as a government spokesperson for the sake of his next promotion." Alleging that politics has taken precedence over rules in the Upper House of Parliament, Kharge said the Chairman's conduct has been contrary to the dignity of the high post he holds.

Meanwhile, Dhankhar, who was addressing a programme in Jaipur, said there are forces in the country and outside who are unable to digest India's progress but made no reference to the ouster move by the Opposition. "This act of fragmenting the country, dividing the country, insulting the institutions of the country is being done in a planned manner. We must neutralise every anti-national narrative," Dhankhar said. The Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day without transacting any business amid uproar by the treasury and opposition benches over the no-trust notice against the House Chairman and the George Soros issue.

## India, Nepal discuss defence cooperation, regional security concerns

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Nepal's Chief of Army Staff General Ashok Raj Sigdel on Wednesday engaged in an "in-depth interaction" with Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi during which they discussed various aspects of bilateral defence cooperation and "regional security concerns". General Sigdel commenced a "significant" official visit to India on Tuesday, marking a key step in further strengthening the defence ties between the two nations, the Defence Ministry said. The Chief of Army Staff of Nepal also met Chief of the Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri.



## 'No possibility of alliance with Cong for Delhi polls'

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday once again ruled out the possibility of an alliance with the Congress for the Delhi Assembly polls, amid reports that the two parties could join hands for the election in the capital. In a post on X, Kejriwal said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will contest the election on its own strength in Delhi. "There is no possibility of any alliance with the Congress," the former Delhi chief minister said. His remarks came amid media reports that the two parties are likely to have a tie-up for the polls to the 70-member Delhi Assembly due in February. Earlier this month also, Kejriwal had ruled out the possibility of an alliance between his party and the Congress for the Delhi election. The recent buzz over an alliance between the two Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) partners was fuelled by the



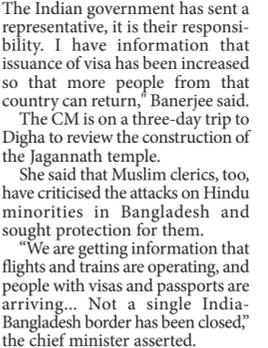
cancellation of the Congress's "Nyay Chaupal" event scheduled for Wednesday. Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi was supposed to participate in the event to mark the culmination of the "Nyay Yatra" taken out by the party ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls. Kejriwal met Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar on Tuesday amid a rising demand in the INDIA bloc to appoint West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as the head of the alliance that is currently chaired by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge. However, neither Kejriwal nor the AAP has so far commented on the discussions that took place at the meeting with Pawar. These developments are being seen as the Congress and the AAP making their moves cautiously in view of the upcoming Delhi polls, so that future options remain open, sources said. AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha said reports suggesting any possible alliance between his party and the Congress are "completely baseless". "There is no scope for any alliance in Delhi. I urge everyone not to propagate such baseless rumours. The AAP is fully prepared to contest the election independently," Chadha asserted.

## Centre must act, protect minorities in Bangla: Mamata

**PNS ■ DIGHA (WB)**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said the Centre must give protection to minorities in violence-hit Bangladesh, and bring back "those willing to return". Banerjee also claimed that fake videos were being purposefully circulated, as certain sections were trying to foment communal tension. "We want protection for minorities in Bangladesh. The Union government must act. It should also bring back those who want to return to India," she told reporters here. Bangladesh's minority Hindus,

who constitute about 8 per cent of the 170 million population, have faced attacks in 50-odd districts since the fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on August 5. "I have already said in the assembly (regarding Bangladesh)... Several fake videos are being circulated and people are getting misled. The Indian government has sent a representative, it is their responsibility. I have information that issuance of visa has been increased so that more people from that country can return," Banerjee said. "The CM is on a three-day trip to Digha to review the construction of the Jagannath temple. She said that Muslim clerics, too, have criticised the attacks on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh and sought protection for them. "We are getting information that flights and trains are operating, and people with visas and passports are arriving... Not a single India-Bangladesh border has been closed," the chief minister asserted.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Race for Delhi

With the Delhi Assembly elections on the horizon, the political temperature in the capital is rising

As the Delhi Assembly Elections 2025 draw closer, the political landscape of the national capital is abuzz with activity. Major players—the incumbent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the Congress—are gearing up for what promises to be a fiercely contested battle. With 70 seats at stake, every party is refining its strategies to sway the electorate in its favour. The Aam Aadmi Party, led by Arvind Kejriwal, remains a dominant force in Delhi politics. In the 2020 elections, AAP swept the polls, securing 62 out of 70 seats, while the BJP managed only 8, and Congress failed to open its account. However, the 2025 elections present new challenges for the party, including anti-incumbency sentiments and a more aggressive opposition. One of the most intriguing aspects of AAP's strategy is the decision to field senior leader Manish Sisodia from the Jangpura constituency. Political analysts suggest this move reflects a calculated attempt by AAP to strengthen its presence in



South Delhi, which has traditionally been a mixed battleground. Sisodia's administrative acumen and popularity could be pivotal in securing a win in this crucial region.

Yet another aspect is Kejriwal's decision to go solo. Despite initial speculations about a possible alliance between AAP and Congress, Arvind Kejriwal has now said that AAP would have no electoral alliance with Congress. The strained relationship between the two parties, fueled by ideological differences and a history of rivalry, seems to have outweighed any potential advantages of a partnership. Additionally, AAP's leadership might perceive a tie-up with Congress as

a liability, given the latter's diminished presence in Delhi politics. But it also diminishes its own chances as vote split in this scenario is imminent. Congress has dedicated vote bank in Delhi and that could hurt AAP. On the other side, the BJP, aiming to reclaim its footing in Delhi, is expected to focus on its core voter base and polarising issues to galvanise support. The party has intensified its outreach efforts and is likely to emphasise nationalistic themes and the central government's achievements under Prime Minister Modi. However, its challenge remains breaking through AAP's stronghold on key urban constituencies. Congress faces an uphill battle as it tries to regain relevance in Delhi's political scene. The party's lack of significant organisational groundwork and leadership issues have kept it on the sidelines in recent years. However, Congress might attempt to consolidate minority vote and traditional voters to make a dent in the electoral outcome. The decision to avoid an alliance with Congress underscores AAP's confidence but also raises questions about its ability to counter a potentially consolidated opposition. As candidates hit the campaign trail, the capital is set to witness a clash of ideologies, promises and personalities. For now, all eyes are on the unfolding strategies as Delhi gears up for another defining electoral battle.

### PICTALK



Monkeys huddle together on a chilly day, in New Delhi

# For Joe Biden it is family first

Biden's decision to pardon his son is rooted in political and emotional complexities, with far-reaching implications for presidential clemency



KALYANI SHANKAR

Last week, Americans and people worldwide were stunned by the news that President Joe Biden pardoned his son, Hunter Biden. This clemency controversy was significant because Hunter Biden, a family member, contributed to the debate surrounding the pardon. The pardon ensures that Hunter will not be sentenced for his alleged crimes and will not go to prison.

The judges handling his cases will likely cancel the sentencing hearings scheduled for December 12 for the gun case and December 16 for the tax case. Also, the President is no longer running for office. He made his no-pardon pledge before dropping out of the June presidential race. Presidential pardons in the United States have often sparked controversy; however, some decisions—such as President Biden pardoning his son—have led to more criticism than others. Constitutionally, the President can grant pardons, a power previous presidents have used. Traditionally, US presidents dole out pardons as they leave office.

However, Joe Biden's 'complete and unconditional' pardon of his son adds a layer of complexity and public scrutiny to the issue, a historical context that is important for the public to understand. It is important to understand why Joe Biden acted as he did. Joe Biden has faced many difficulties in his life. He has faced significant personal challenges. He was caught between saving his son and the public criticism. Everyone knows that he is loyal to his family. His baby daughter and first wife died in a car accident, which also injured his sons, Beau and Hunter. Biden wanted Beau to become President, but Beau sadly died from brain cancer in 2015. This focus on the Biden family's struggles aims to create empathy from the public. According to the American media, Biden's second wife persuaded Joe to make a final decision. The public reaction to the Presidential pardon is both crit-



ical and supportive. While some think it is fair, others consider it not justified. This mixed reaction from the public, as well as from Biden's party colleagues, adds a layer of complexity to the issue. Presidents from both parties have used their pardon power, which has raised eyebrows.

George Washington used the power to pardon some people. Presidents often use their pardon powers for friends and allies. A controversial case was former President Richard Nixon, who Gerald Ford pardoned on September 8, 1974. Nixon faced possible prosecution for the Watergate scandal.

In late 1992, President George H W Bush pardoned six men implicated in the Iran-contra affair, including former Defense Secretary Weinberger. Bill Clinton, who, despite stating he would not, pardoned his half-brother Roger for past cocaine charges. Similarly, Donald Trump pardoned his son-in-law Jared Kushner's father for tax evasion and for retaliating against a cooperating witness.

Both had already served their prison sentences. During the latter part of his first term, Trump issued pardons to various individuals who had engaged in wrongdoing. A relieved Hunter

THE PUBLIC REACTION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PARDON IS BOTH CRITICAL AND SUPPORTIVE. WHILE SOME THINK IT IS FAIR, OTHERS CONSIDER IT NOT JUSTIFIED. THIS MIXED REACTION FROM THE PUBLIC, AS WELL AS FROM BIDEN'S PARTY COLLEAGUES, ADDS A LAYER OF COMPLEXITY TO THE ISSUE

said in a statement, "I have admitted and taken responsibility for my mistakes during the darkest days of my addiction — mistakes that have been exploited to publicly humiliate and shame me and my family for political sport."

The case against Hunter Biden has spanned several years, involving allegations of tax crimes and gun fences. He was convicted in June and pleaded guilty to tax evasion in September. Biden said Hunter was 'selectively and unfairly prosecuted' and pointed out that the charges were politically motivated. The immediate impact of the pardon is that it makes it harder for Democrats to criticise Trump.

Also, it has given Trump a chance to pardon people charged with the January 6 events. Biden's change of heart after initially declaring he would not pardon Hunter had his reasons. One of them was his wife, who persuaded Biden to do so.

He stated Hunter was singled out only because Hunter was his son. President Biden has pardoned 25 individuals, none directly connected to him. Typically, presidents approve several clemency requests toward the end of their terms. Still, the pardon "damages the public's trust in the presidency." President Bill

Clinton signed 140 pardons on January 20, 2001—his final day in office. Many lawmakers are worried about the potential bad precedent for the future.

One way of solving the problem could be to amend the Constitution. Still, it is a lengthy process, and neither party has the number to carry it through in Congress. The critics argue it could set a dangerous precedent and erode public trust in the justice system. Recent Supreme Court rulings have made it more difficult to charge a president for actions taken while in office.

They limit the avenues for holding a president accountable for any potential misuse of the pardon power. After Hunter's clemency, President Biden is considering granting broad pardons to protect his aides and officials. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre stated that before leaving the White House, Biden plans to issue additional pardons.

However, in his second term, Trump declared he would pardon the 2021 clash in Congress while Biden took the oath. Trump must be careful before doling out Presidential pardons if they respect public opinion.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SYRIAN REBELS CONQUER DAMASCUS

Madam —The manner in which Islamic rebels conquered Syria's capital Damascus and forced President Bashar al-Assad to flee the country is not only surprising, but it may also mark the start of a new era of uncertainty for West Asia as a whole. The excitement with which Syrians welcomed the opposition soldiers demonstrates that Bashar al-Assad has become even more unpopular. His disfavour stemmed from his brutal governance over Syria. Syria has been dealing with insecurity and upheaval for nearly 13 years. Iran has suffered a significant setback with the seizure of Syria by rebel forces. It is dubious that Iran will sit in peace after the demise of the administration it sponsored in Syria.

Even if the rebels win Syria without massive violence, the chances of durable peace are slim because Turkey wants to administer the country its way. Although India's economic ties with Syria have not grown significantly, both countries have joined forces in the battle against terror. Not only that, but Bashar al-Assad has always supported India about Kashmir. Syria has even stated that the elimination of Article 370 in Kashmir is a domestic matter for India and that any country has the right to take the necessary steps to safeguard its residents on its territory. It remains to be seen what kind and how much Syria's posture will alter considering the new circumstances. Indian-Turkish relations have recently improved. While its attitude on Kashmir has softened, India has not attempted to block Turkey's membership in BRICS.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

### LEGACY OF SHAKTIKANTA DAS

Madam—The outgoing pro-reformist RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das leaves a legacy of stability and consistency in monetary policy in the most difficult and challenging times of COVID and geopolitical turbulence consequent upon the trade and tariff war of the US and China while the country is poised to be the third largest economy. The persuasive approach and preemptive policy decision-making with

## Congress faces challenges



The knives are out in Opposition to INDIA bloc, especially after the drubbing suffered by the Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi at the hands of the BJP-helmed Mahayuti in Maharashtra. The grand old party's poor show has dented its predominant position in India, prompting West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee to throw her hat into the ring. Dissatisfied with the bloc's functioning, Mamata has signalled her

intention to take charge of the alliance if given the opportunity. She has found support from NCP stalwart Sharad Pawar, who has called her a "prominent leader" of the nation.

It's apparent that Rahul Gandhi, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, is losing ground as the face of INDIA. There are three Gandhis in Parliament now—with Priyanka being the latest entrant—but this dynastic milestone has not enthused the voters or Congress' allies. Though party president Mallikarjun Kharge is also the chairperson of the bloc, it is no secret that the Gandhi family is calling the shots. But this arrangement is strengthening neither the Congress nor INDIA. The Congress has no option but to pay heed to its partners. In case of no course correction, the alliance might implode sooner or later, leaving the field open for the BJP and PM Modi.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

immediate action marked the success story of the outgoing RBI Governor. Issuing perfunctory warnings and advisories was not his work culture.

The economic impact of demonetisation on trade and business was smoothly handled in his tenure. In such a vast country facing multiple challenges, the new RBI Governor faces the toughest test of the sustaining economy and people expect a daring chief banker who sails against the winds. The new incumbent Revenue Secretary, Sanjay Malhotra, as RBI Governor, knows his job well, as he is already at the helm of economic affairs and is fully conversant about how the economic policies of the government and RBI move and work at ground level. The new RBI Governor faces the trilemma of growth, inflation, and stabilisation of rupees while keeping banks' NPAs low, controlling the mis-selling of health and life insurance policies, maintaining FDI and FPI inflows, and managing the impacts of US-China confrontations. The new US President, Donald Trump, may also throw significant challenges on RBI's monetary policy and val-

uation of the rupee. Cryptocurrency is also one of the major concerns for RBI.

Vinod Johri | Jalandhar

### RBI MOOTS FOR BETTER WAGES

Madam — The Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) to the Government of India has emphasised the need for better employee compensation growth, especially when India Inc is experiencing record profit growth. With the rising prices of education fees, medical fees, vegetables, grocery items, and daily necessities, there is a strong need to raise the compensation growth of employees, as their salary/wages are their primary source of living. This downfall in compensation growth is also affecting GDP growth, as employees are controlling their expenditures for survival. Government agencies need to address this issue by implementing policies that promote fair compensation practices for the overall well-being of India.

Shreyanshi Jain | Ujjain

## Bridging the educational divide through computer-based testing

A successful classroom isn't just about books and resources; it's about creating an environment where students feel valued, heard and empowered to succeed

In populous and diverse countries like India, the educational landscape often mirrors the stark contrasts between urban and rural regions. Urban areas benefit from advanced infrastructure and access to extensive educational opportunities, while rural regions often struggle with limited resources and opportunities. This disparity significantly affects students in rural communities, restricting their career prospects and perpetuating cycles of poverty. However, innovative solutions like computer-based testing (CBT) hold the potential to bridge this divide, fostering enhanced employability and socioeconomic progress.



initiatives by enabling a broader range of courses and certifications, including technical skills like coding and data analysis and soft skills such as communication and leadership. Certifications that are nationally or globally recognised add value to individuals' skillsets, making them more competitive in the job market. As more people upskill and secure employment, communities experience economic upliftment. Educated individuals often share knowledge within their communities, creating a ripple effect that promotes continuous learning and development. **Addressing Skills Gaps:** The demand for tech skills is on the rise globally. The World

Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023 highlights that technology and IT roles constitute 16 of the top 100 rising jobs, reflecting the growing importance of tech-related expertise. Conversely, the Global Talent Shortage report by Manpower Group reveals a significant skills gap, with 77 per cent of employers struggling to find qualified talent. Bridging this gap is critical to meeting current and future market demands, particularly through IT and tech-focused courses.

According to Pearson VUE's 2023 Value of IT Certification Candidate Report, professionals who earned IT certifications gained confidence in their abilities, with 81 per cent feeling empowered to explore new job opportunities. Educational centres with CBT capabilities enable individuals in rural areas to acquire certifications that align with market needs, thereby promoting quality education and employability across the nation.

**The Broad Reach of Computer-Based Testing:** The flexible nature of CBT offers unique advantages over traditional testing methods.

Candidates can choose convenient testing locations and time slots, reducing stress and improving performance. This approach proved invaluable during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing individuals to take exams remotely. The 2023 Value of IT Certification Report underscores the tangible benefits of certifications: 35 per cent of Indian candidates experienced job promotions, while 37 per cent secured new opportunities within their industry, and 20 per cent transitioned to different fields.

**Bridging Urban-Rural Disparities:** The increasing availability of CBT centres in remote areas is a step toward addressing regional disparities in education and employment. These centres provide a pathway for individuals to upskill, earn recognised certifications, and improve their career prospects. As India continues to expand its CBT infrastructure, the nation moves closer to realising equitable educational opportunities and fostering inclusive socioeconomic growth.

(The writer is Vice President EMEA and Asia, Pearson VUE; views are personal)



MATHEW POYIADGI

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT LIFE

Our journey through birth and death is inevitable, we must therefore detach ourselves



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

**W**e should do it because evidence is overwhelming that we are eternal souls. We are in a birth and death cycle getting different bodies life after life. What will you say about Shanti Devi's rebirth? She was born in Delhi but recalled details of her past life in Mathura. Her recollections were so compelling that Mahatma Gandhi got interested. He appointed a committee of 15 prominent persons to study the case. They took Shanti Devi to Mathura and she was able to recollect all the relevant details even though she had never been to Mathura in her present life. Dr Ian Stevenson, a leading authority on reincarnation, came to India to interview her. He wrote that at least 24 statements of her memories matched verifiable facts.

These days TV channels have become interested in the rebirth phenomenon. They are producing evidence from all over the world to confirm the same. Then, the Bhagavad-Geeta – the book of eternal wisdom is full of detailed information about us being souls. I will cite just one verse. 'Just as childhood, youth and old age are changes in the body of this soul, getting another body is a similar change. (2.93) And the ultimate confirmation is God saying it. Isn't He omniscient, who knows past, present and future also? Having convinced ourselves of this reality, let us see how we can prepare for a transfer or relocation from our present life. There are two main parts. The first one is getting mentally ready. Personally speaking, when the time came for me to go to the USA for higher



studies, I visualised how my life would change for the better in the coming years. I also realised that there will inevitably be many challenges in the new country. The second was to take with me whatever I could to make my life there as comfortable as possible. I took the necessary clothes and a little money, which was allowed at that time. But mainly it was my certificates and what I had learnt by that time. Similar preparations are required for the bodily change, though they are quite different in detail. The first one has to be the mental preparation for such a change. We should accept the fact that such a change is inevitable. And it can be a lot better than our present. Lord Krishna has assured, "Those who have begun their spiritual journey take birth in a family of pure and prosperous." (6.41) Therefore, it is essential that we do so too before our time comes to leave the present body. We must be in the shelter of God at that time by doing spiritual activities.

Surely, we must be following dharma in our activities as far as possible. We should be mainly in the mode of goodness, which is illuminating and free from diseases on account of purity. (14.6) We should be in control of bad emotions like lust, greed, anger, hate, etc. We should have accumulated a lot of good 'karmas' (acts) because this is all we are allowed to take with us. But we shouldn't put too much pressure on ourselves because we can make improvements gradually only. Whatever, we are presently doing, we should do it better. As the present determines the future, the present has to be safeguarded fully. Are we inclined to make the necessary preparations? We should get started right away at least mentally. It will be such a shame not to do so when we have time to do so. Those wanting to do so are encouraged by God; one will succeed.

*(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)*

# Rebel forces oust Assad as Damascus falls



B K SINGH

The fall of Assad's regime signals a new chapter in Syria's tumultuous history, raising critical questions about the country's path to stability



**S**yrrian President Bashar al-Assad's government has been fighting rebel groups with the support of Russia, Iran, Lebanese and Hezbollah right from 2011. Within ten days of rebels getting control over northwestern city of Aleppo and further capturing Hama and Homs, the capital Damascus also fell under their control on December 8. President Assad along with his wife and three children fled the country before rebel forces could reach him. He has been granted asylum in Moscow. His younger brother was tipped to succeed his father as President, died in a road accident.

He was called back from London, where he was practising ophthalmologist, to succeed his father as President of Syria. In the initial months after taking over the Presidency in the year 2000 he was seen as a reformist and pro-people in sharp contrast to his father Hafez al-Assad's three-decade rule with iron hands. Once pro-democracy protests erupted in 2011, he followed the brutal tactics of his father to crush dissent. The conflict escalated into civil war and he was seen unleashing his military to blast opposition-held territories. All supporters of the Assad regime have considerably weakened their backing on account of the ongoing war they are engaged in.

Russian forces have a challenging battle in Ukraine. Owing to the high level of casualties of soldiers in the battle, Russia has withdrawn its forces from Syria partially and is even further recruiting foreign nationals in the force to keep the war going, which has already been continuing for a quarter to three years. Hamas's terror attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 and Israel's response to Gaza opened several dimensions of the West Asia conflict.

Iran's supported terror groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Houthis in Yemen have denounced Palestinians suffering in Gaza on account of Israeli bombardment and it opened additional fronts for Israel in the conflict. This has also weakened Iran and Hezbollah to provide adequate support to Assad's regime. In addition, 13 years of Syrian civil war has exhausted the Syrian Army. Owing to the corruption in the bureaucratic and political circle of the Syrian government, and the series of Western sanctions, the economy



THE CONFLICT ESCALATED INTO CIVIL WAR AND HE WAS SEEN UNLEASHING HIS MILITARY TO BLAST OPPOSITION-HELD TERRITORIES. ALL SUPPORTERS OF THE ASSAD REGIME HAVE CONSIDERABLY WEAKENED THEIR BACKING ON ACCOUNT OF THE ONGOING WAR. THEY ARE ENGAGED IN

has been hardly afloat. Further President Erdogan in Ankara, is facing the heat on account of three million Syrian migrants living in Turkey and more so because Syria dismisses his proposal for deportation of migrants alleging that his country has illegally occupied Syrian areas along the border. There was an option for Assad to join the Arab League last year, but he did not accept making Arab nations also opposed to him. Earlier with the help of Iran and Russia, he had survived the Arab Spring Rebellion against him, which originated in Tunisia in 2011. The next question is about the future of Syria. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is a Sunni Islamist militant group, that played an important role in the Syrian civil war. It is this group that has led other rebel groups to occupy Damascus.

The US, UK and UN have designated it as a terrorist organisation. A bounty of \$10 million was on its chief Abu Mohammad al-Golani's head. UK has indicated lifting the ban on HTS if it delivers on promises like protecting minorities and people's rights. Turkey has backed some other rebel groups in the Syrian civil war, which do not have good ties with HTS. US-backed Kurdish YPG militia has established control in Syria's northeast, also known as the Kurdish democratic union party (PYD) does not enjoy good and workable relations with HTS. There are separate rebels in Syria's southwest.

It is quite difficult for all the groups to come together and be partners in Syria's new regime. 900 strong military men are maintained by the US in northeastern Syria. The US has maintained this presence in the name of countering ISIS, but its actual goal was the regime change in Syria. The US has now emerged clear winner. As rebels have asserted control over Syria and its capital Damascus, uncertainties remain about the future of the country.

The first day was marked by arsenals, looting of shops and banks, and emptying prisons followed by a night curfew, but the second day saw normalcy slowly returning to the capital and other cities. The main rebel commander al-Golani met Assad's PM Mohammad Jolani and Vice President Faisal Mekdad to install a transitional government in Syria. Further, Golani has announced publicly that they would bring out a list of government officials responsible for torturing the citizens.

In the meantime, there have been air strikes in Syria by Israeli, US and Turkey forces to protect each of their interests. Iran and Russia have suffered major setbacks with the fall of Assad's government. Both countries have lost their key allies. As Sunni Islamic groups are going to be in control of Syria, Iran a predominantly Shia population is more vulnerable to Israeli attacks. When rebel forces took control of Aleppo about a week earlier, both Iran and Russia could not extend adequate defence leading to the fall of even Damascus. Iran was exposed in recent Israeli direct attacks, and Hezbollah was also decimated, no significant support came from Assad. In recent months, Assad's Syria and Iran could not support each other when exigencies arose. Syria is the only state that had joined Iran's 'Axis of resistance' against the US and Israel.

The axis has become weak; even Hezbollah's downfall could not be prevented. Hezbollah has signed a ceasefire deal with Israel ahead of any Gaza deal. The action of the state of Iran and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) to defend Assad did not go well with the people of Iran. It had political and economic costs. The fall of Assad sends a disturbing signal to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei, who now understands that the axis of resis-

tance can no longer protect the allies. Assad's fall has also emboldened opposition groups in Iran. Besides these, women are protesting for their rights.

All these may lead to regime change in Iran too. If the Supreme Leader realigns himself with the US by reviving/softening its stand on the 2015 nuclear deal, then regime change in Iran can be avoided. The last two weeks of violence that culminated in Assad's fleeing Syria, also saw the Shia population enthusiastically taking measures to secure the tomb of Sayyeda Zainab, the daughter of Hazrat Ali and Fatima and granddaughter of Prophet Muhammad. This holy site signifies great importance for Shia Muslims worldwide. To guarantee the security of this precious shrine, Shias from Iran, Iraq and Pakistan are also moving to Syria. The shrine is located in al-Sitt, south Damascus.

Since 1979 Iranian government has provided financial support for the management of the shrine. Several Shia scholars and celebrities are buried in the shrine and surrounding cemeteries. Since 2012 the town has been under attack from armed militants in neighboring Sunni towns. Many Shia families were driven out of their homes in southern Damascus.

Rockets landing on random places was quite common. Sunni Muslims comprise 74 per cent of Syria's population, whereas Shias are only 3 per cent. Shias hold quite a strong sentiment for the shrine; the issue can be a potential flash point between the two sects and would also determine the rivalry between rebel groups.

Will Syria's transition to democracy be smooth? It is possible only when different rebel groups learn to share power.

*(The writer is Principal Chief Conservator of Forests-Head of Forest Force- Karnataka; views expressed are personal)*

## Empowering India's solar revolution: Navigating challenges and embracing opportunities

As energy demands are set to double by 2030, addressing these gaps is essential to transforming India's solar aspirations into reality

**I**ndia has been declared as the third-largest energy-consuming country, thanks to the rising income and improving standards of living. In response to the escalating energy demand, India has set ambitious targets for solar energy capacity, aiming to reach 280 GW by 2030 (the highest among all renewable sources). And owing to the rise in awareness surrounding solar energy solutions, the country has achieved 70.10 GW of solar energy capacity by June 2023, which is 70.1 per cent of the target of 100 GW set in the year preceding. The rising awareness of solar solutions among consumers, particularly rooftop solar solutions, is a notable trend in the solar energy market. This trend has been driven by



PREETI BAJAJ

various factors, including technological advancements, innovation, digital revolution to unlock more of the sun's potential and support from the Central Government. Community leaders, particularly in rural and non-metro areas, have also emerged as crucial drivers in promoting the adoption of solar energy solutions. However, despite this awareness, a significant gap exists between the aware-

ness of the advantages of solar energy and its widespread adoption. The adoption rate remains relatively low. Reportedly, the country fell short of its renewable energy target for 2022 by 32 per cent, with an installed capacity of 119 GW compared to the target of 175 GW. Financial and cost considerations, geographical limitations, and perception issues further cause a challenge to solar energy adoption in India. To understand the potential consumers, Luminous initiated a large, nationwide survey to delve further into the perceptions, awareness, adoption, and challenges concerning solar energy among respondents in India. The initial analysis of the survey data suggests that while

people are increasingly aware of alternatives to traditional energy sources, a majority of consumers in India face three primary challenges in their adoption: Accessibility, Skill shortage, and Perceived cost implication, as discovered in the 'Solar Spectrum of New India' research. For instance, over two-quarters of the respondents (54 per cent) in the 'Solar Spectrum of New India' research rate their knowledge about solar energy solutions as high, however, nearly a quarter of the respondents (24 per cent) say solar energy solutions are inaccessible to them.

In fact, according to the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), 59 per cent of respondents do not possess



even a basic understanding of solar energy. Therefore, while awareness is spreading, concerns linger about the accessibility of solar infrastructure. Another challenge that came to the fore, is the shortage of specialised skills in the solar energy sector.

The boost in the solar energy sector is facing a shortage of trained personnel for the effective implementation and maintenance of solar infra-

structure. According to the COO of the Skill Council of Green Jobs, there will be a requirement of 30,000 skill-certified human resources in the manufacturing segment by the end of FY 2024, and only 10,000 skill-certified jobs will be added by the end of this financial year. As per the 'Solar Spectrum of New India' survey data also, despite the acknowledgement of skill requirements, nearly half of the respondents (45 per cent) believe that skilled labour for implementing solar energy solutions is unavailable in their area, suggesting a mismatch between demand and supply of qualified personnel. While the government has introduced various policies and incentives to promote solar adoption- including

financial incentives, tax advantages, subsidies for solar power generation, net-metering regulations, basic customs duty, Production Linked Incentive (PLI), and the Aatmanirbhar campaign, perceived costs remain a significant deterrent for many individuals. Thus, the Solar Spectrum of New India presents both challenges and opportunities on the path towards a sustainable energy future. By addressing issues of accessibility, skill shortages, and perceived costs, stakeholders can work together to accelerate solar adoption trends and pave the way for a brighter, cleaner future for India. It's also imperative because the demand for reliable power in urban and rural areas will double by 2030. This surge in

demand will be powered by increased industrial, economic, and domestic consumption activities throughout the country. Moreover, according to the National Electricity Plan, the projected all-India peak electricity demand and electrical energy requirement is 277.2 GW and 1,907.8 BUs for the year 2026-27 and 366.4 GW and 2,473.8 BUs for 2031-32, respectively. However, the absence of power line infrastructure and distribution utilities' lag in supplying power around the clock indicates the need for significant changes in existing energy infrastructure and the availability of alternate sources. *(The writer is MD & CEO of Luminous Power Technologies; views expressed are personal)*

## IN BRIEF



### Coca-Cola to sell 40% stake of bottling arm HCCBL

Global beverage major Coca-Cola on Wednesday announced sale of 40 per cent stake in its India bottling business Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt Ltd (HCCBL) to Jubilant Bhartia Group. Though the company has not disclosed the amount of the deal, some media reports have pegged it at around Rs 10,000 crore for 40 per cent stake in Hindustan Coca-Cola Holdings Pvt Ltd, India (HCCH) through its entity Jubilant Beverages Limited. HCCH is the parent company of HCCBL, the largest Coca-Cola bottler in India. The transaction is subject to regulatory approval. Jubilant Beverages Ltd is a new entity incorporated this year in October by Jubilant Bhartia Group.



### American Express launches 3-yr initiative for sustainability

Global payments company American Express on Wednesday introduced a three-year initiative to promote sustainability, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience. The programme aims to support India's climate and sustainability goals by empowering local communities, restoring ecosystems in collaboration with safe water network, the company said in a statement. In the Aravalli region, reforestation and ecosystem restoration will be central, including the planting of 15,000 trees and land restoration across 10,000 hectares. These actions will increase green cover, boost biodiversity, and support the region's climate resilience efforts. Solar-powered solutions will also be implemented in key public areas, reducing carbon emissions and promoting renewable energy.



### One MobiKwik Systems IPO subscribed 7.3 times

The initial public offering (IPO) of fintech company One MobiKwik Systems got subscribed 7.3 times, receiving an overwhelming response from retail investors, on the first day of sale on Wednesday. This is the second attempt by the Gurugram-based firm for the public issue following its first attempt in July 2021. Earlier, the company shelved its IPO plans and withdrew the draft papers due to unfavourable market conditions. The share sale received bids for 8,68,26,031 shares, as against 1,18,71,696 shares on offer, as per data available on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). The Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) part got subscribed 26.71 times, while non-institutional investors category received 8.97 times subscription, and the quota for Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) received a mere 2 per cent subscription. MobiKwik has reduced its IPO size from its earlier plans of Rs 1,900 crore in 2021 to Rs 700 crore in January this year to Rs 572 crore now.



## Focus would be trust, growth & stability, says Malhotra

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Sanjay Malhotra took charge as the 26th Governor of Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday, and promised to focus on deepening trust, growth and ensuring stability.

Malhotra, 56, takes over as the central bank governor at a critical time where inflation has shot above the comfort level, growth has declined to a 7-quarter low and rupee is at all-time low level against US dollar.

"I can assure that we will put in the best foot forward in public interest to deliver what the public of India looks forward to, which is trust, which is growth and which is a stable and certain policy," he told reporters at his maiden interaction as a RBI Governor.

The career bureaucrat arrived at the RBI headquarters at the Mint Street around 1000 hours and completed formalities of taking charge in the presence of Deputy Governors M Rajeshwar Rao, T Rabi Sankar and Swaminathan J.

Michael Patra, Deputy Governor in-charge of the critical monetary policy function, was not present.

Malhotra said, "We are in

### Takes over as 26<sup>th</sup> RBI Guv



a very dynamic world right now fraught with geopolitical tensions, climate change risks and political uncertainties", and affirmed that the RBI will remain "alert and agile" to meet the challenges.

RBI is a prestigious institution which has done commendable work over its history courtesy the diligence and hard work of its staff members and senior officials, said Malhotra, specifically mentioning his predecessor Shaktikanta Das' name.

"I will continue to uphold the legacy (of the RBI) and take it forward," he affirmed, outlining his thoughts on the key focus areas.

On growth, he said it is a "huge responsibility" to ensure that the expansion in economic activity continues.

Although there was no explicit mention of inflation in his remarks, Malhotra stressed that the focus will be on "stability" and "trust".

Policy certainty can be among the factors which can ensure stability, Malhotra said, adding that in his earlier assignment as the Revenue Secretary he focus was on stability in policy.

As an institution, he said, the RBI is what it is because of the "trust" it has earned for working with the public's interest in mind, and added that it would be his endeavour to strengthen it.

Whatever decisions are taken will be done with public interest in mind, Malhotra said. He, however, declined to take any specific questions from the media.

## Labour Min mulls scheme for gig, platform workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Labour & Employment is working on a scheme to provide various benefits like social security to gig and platform workers in the country, a senior official said on Wednesday.

Addressing the CII Global Economic Policy Forum, Union Labour Secretary Sumita Dawra said the labour code on social security has outlined social security benefits for them.

"We are putting together the scheme for the gig and platform economy workers because there is no traditional employer-employee relationship defined for the gig and platform workers but we need to bring social security coverage for them so that they can be more productive and support the country's economy and the e-commerce and services sector more effectively," she said.

In October, Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said that a policy for providing social security benefits like pension and health services to gig and platform workers is under process.

He had also said that Niti Aayog has estimated 65 lakh gig and platform workers in the country, but the number is likely to be over 2 crore as this segment is growing very fast.

Dawra also stated that by 2030, the ministry expects more than 3 crore workers in the gig and platform economy.

She also acknowledged that the ministry is aware that almost a crore workers are there in the gig and platform economy and it is going to grow further.

For the first time, the definition of 'gig workers' and 'platform workers' has been provided in the Code on Social Security 2020.



## Need active participation of MFs, pension funds in corp bond mkt: SBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State Bank of India chairman C S Setty on Wednesday called for active participation by mutual funds and pension funds in the corporate bond market.

"I am sure that a lot of corporates would like to issue bonds. I believe that if household/corporate savings are finding ways into these three investment categories, it is important that insurance and mutual funds also actively participate in the corporate bond market. I don't see that kind of participation actively coming in," Setty said.

He said the pension/mutual funds are making invest-

ments in AAA-rated bonds and this is not going to help deepen the corporate bond market. Setty said the corporate bond market has to come into financing of infrastructure as well as balance sheet funding of corporates.

He said the investments are happening not only in equity but also in mutual funds, pension funds and insurance funds.

"We have been debating on depth of the corporate bond market for many years. We could not achieve that depth," Setty said, adding that SBI is the largest issuer of corporate bond and has issued Rs 50,000 crore worth of bonds this year.

## 'Agriculture has tremendous opportunity to grow'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is a 'serious concern' over food and nutrition security across the world, and it is among the factors that are making food inflation 'sticky', ITC Chairman & Managing Director Sanjiv Puri said on Wednesday.

The agriculture sector has a "tremendous opportunity" to grow vertically but there is a need to build resilience with sustainable farming and use technology to provide such solutions.

The sector has to increase productivity and quality, and at the same time it also has to deal with the newer challenges such as climate change, he said here at a CII function here.

"It has to deal with the newer challenge, a very severe challenge that this sector faces, of climate change. It is a sector that is most vulnerable to erratic weather patterns, and all these issues are no more things of the future. They are live and with us today," he said.

More importantly, India has a large number of small and marginal farmers. "How can we work with them? How can we enable them and make them productive, make them future-ready? These are



certain areas that I think offer a great opportunity for growth ...," he said.

Puri also said, that while dealing with productivity, there is also a need to think about sustainability, as how the whole practice of farming has to transform such that it's more environmentally friendly, said Puri.

There is a need to harness new-age digital technologies to provide innovative and comprehensive solutions to farmers, and purposeful government support over the years for startups has enabled tremendous progress in this.

"No doubt progress has been made, but we still have challenges. And more importantly, I think it's important to recognise the quantum of opportunity that is available now," he said.

There are various estimates on how much world food production needs to increase by 2050, and this has to be done at a time when natural resources are depleting.

There lies a big opportunity and given the potential that India can grow vertically from about 2 to 3 per cent of global trade.

## Sensex, Nifty edge up in restricted trade ahead of US inflation data

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher in restricted trade on Wednesday as investors awaited key US inflation data for further cues.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 16.09 points or 0.02 per cent to close at 81,526.14 even as 17 of its constituents declined and 13 advanced.

Snapping its three-day losing run, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 31.75 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 24,641.80.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Bajaj Finance, Nestle India, Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Infosys, Maruti, Bharti Airtel and Hindustan Unilever were among the gainers.

JSW Steel, Adani Ports, NTPC, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank, Titan and HDFC Bank were the laggards.



"The Indian market exhibited subtle movements, reflecting mixed sentiments prevailing in global markets ahead of the US CPI inflation data release, which could influence the Fed policy," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.35 per cent and the midcap index gained 0.25 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, Consumer Durables rose 0.59 per cent, Industrials by 0.40 per cent, Auto by 0.37 per cent, IT and Teck by 0.35 per cent each and FMCG by 0.34 per

cent.

Utilities, Bankex, Power and Services were the laggards.

Meanwhile, shares of PNC Infratech surged 12 per cent to close at Rs 347.90 apiece, after the company announced the early completion of a key highway project in Uttar Pradesh, boosting investor sentiment.

During the day, the scrip of the company climbed 15 per cent to hit intraday high of Rs 357.15 apiece on the BSE.

On the other hand, stock of food delivery and quick-commerce major Swiggy fell 4 per cent to close at Rs 522.70 apiece, as investors booked profits after the one-month lock-in period for anchor investors expired.

As many as 2,146 stocks advanced, 1,840 declined and 110 remained unchanged on the BSE. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms climbed by Rs 91,110.2 crore to Rs 4,46,46,637.96 (USD 5.43 trillion).

## SEBI to launch survey on increasing retail participation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Market regulator SEBI will conduct a pan India survey on how to bring more people into the capital market, create risk awareness and bridge the gaps in the ecosystem, a Sebi official said on Wednesday.

Sebi whole time member Ananth Narayan G said that volatility in the Indian markets is low and USD 14 billion FPI outflow in October-November was matched by an equivalent amount of inflow by the domestic investors, like mutual funds.

He, however, cautioned that there is no room for complacency.

"While we celebrate the growth of domestic investors, it does not mean we do not need foreign investments.

We need foreign investment. We have to ensure that we remain an attractive destination to draw in investment across the globe so that we can fund future growth," Narayan said at the CII Global Economic Policy Forum 2024.

He also said that this inflow from retail and fresh investors should not be taken for granted.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
**WANAPARTHY DISTRICT GAZETTE**  
**EXTRAORDINARY PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY**  
**No. 17/2024 WANAPARTHY THURSDAY DATE: 14-11-2024**  
**No: GR/62/2024 Dated: 14-11-2024**

**The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013**  
**As per Section -18 (1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Central Act No. 30/2013) and sub Rule (1) of Rule -25 FORM - VIII**

**PUBLICATION OF DECLARATION**  
 Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana / Collector, Wanaparthy that a total Ac-3-18 Ots is required in the village namely Chandragad village in Anantapur Mandal Wanaparthy Division and District for public purpose i.e. Pathway to connect RAR Centre under Prapadashri Juru Project. The said Land Acquisition for the project is reserved from the Chapter - II and Chapter - III of the LA Act 2013 i.e. Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and Food Security as per Section 10 (A) of Right to Fair Compensation and Resettlement 2013.

Therefore, a declaration is made for the above said project the village namely Chandragad Anantapur Mandal Wanaparthy Division and District, land measuring to an extent of Ac-3-18 gals of standard measurement, whose detail description are as follows:

SCHEDULE										
Sl. No.	Sp. No.	Patta No.	Patta or Dry Cont.	Total Extent in Hectares	Name of the Pottadars	Boundaries				Variety of tree plantation as per Span Table
						North	South	East	West	
1	176	Patta Dry	D-05	177	vb	175	vb			
2	176	Patta Dry	D-05A	177	vb	175	vb			
3	176	Patta Dry	D-05B	177	vb	175	vb			
4	176	Patta Dry	D-05C	177	vb	175	vb			
5	176	Patta Dry	D-05D	177	vb	175	vb			
6	179	Patta Dry	D-01	207	176	178	VB			
7	179	Patta Dry	D-02	207	176	178	VB			
8	179	Patta Dry	D-03	207	176	178	VB			Acacia No structure
9	178	Patta Dry	D-02	207	179	177	177			
10	178	Patta Dry	D-01	207	179	177	177			
11	176	Patta Dry	D-01	207	179	177	177			
12	176	Patta Dry	D-01	207	179	177	177			
13	178	Patta Dry	D-19	207	179	177	177			
14	177	Patta Dry	D-05	207	176	178	208			
15	177	Patta Dry	D-09	207	176	178	208			
16	177	Patta Dry	D-07	207	176	178	208			
17	207	Patta Dry	D-06	178	179	208	177			
18	208	Patta Dry	D-20	209	207	202	VB			
19	209	Patta Dry	D-02	212	209	210	VB			
20	198	Patta Dry	D-03	167	VB	VB	173			
21	198	Patta Dry	D-03	167	VB	VB	173			
22	198	Patta Dry	D-03	167	VB	VB	173			
23	198	Patta Dry	D-03	167	VB	VB	173			
24	173	Patta Dry	D-05	188	VB	188	179			
25	172	Patta Dry	D-01	189	173	170	174			
26	171	Patta Dry	D-02	189	169	188	170			
27	169	Patta Dry	D-04	170	169	171	166			
						<b>Total</b>	<b>3-16</b>			

This declaration is made after considering the objections from interested persons as provided under section 15 (Central Act No. 30/2013) Mines of coal, iron, stone or other minerals lying under the said land or any particular portion of the said land, extent such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the construction phase of the project for the public purpose of which the land being acquired are not need.

A plan of the proposed project may be inspected in the office of the land acquisition officer Special Deputy Collector, (Land Acquisition), Bheema Project, R.L.S.P.-II, Pebar: Hq. Wanaparthy on any working day during the working hours.

Sd/- Additional Collector, District Collector, Wanaparthy  
 Spl.Dy. Collector, (L.A)  
 R.L.S.P-II, Pebar: Hq. Wanaparthy  
 DIPR No.464/LA/PP/2024-25

## 'FMCG sector needs to reignite volume expansion'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The FMCG sector needs to reignite volume expansion and embrace strategic innovation to maintain growth, Pidilite Managing Director Bharat Puri said on Wednesday amid the FMCG companies reportedly facing subdued growth during October and November hit by the slowdown in urban demand.

"To maintain growth, the FMCG sector must focus on reigniting volume growth and embracing strategic innovation. Companies have shown that market outperformance is possible through product and dis-

tribution innovation," said Puri at a Summit on the FMCG sector hosted by the CII here.

Noting that modern trade and quick-commerce channels are thriving, offering new growth avenues, he said insurgent brands are capturing significant growth by winning the hearts of underserved customers.

"To stay competitive, companies must innovate, invest in digital capabilities, and adopt entrepreneurial operating models, while maintaining robust data strategies for personalized engagement," Puri, who is also the chairman of the CII, FMCG



**To stay competitive, companies must innovate, invest in digital capabilities, and adopt entrepreneurial operating models, while maintaining robust data strategies for personalized engagement**

National Committee, added. The summit was attended by representatives from leading brands such as Tata Consumer

Products, Britannia Industries, Pidilite Industries, Godrej Consumer, HUL, among others. "We expect overall FMCG

industry revenue growth to return to consistent lower double digit growth in over the next 3-5 years; relatively higher contribution from volume growth compared to prior years, varying across categories," said Joydeep Bhattacharya, Partner at Bain & Company.

Stating that Indian FMCG has a great potential to achieve volume growth, Sudhanshu Vats, Managing Director Designate, Pidilite Industries said, "Margin expansion is likely to continue in the days to come. There is a huge potential for brands to benefit given macro fundamentals remain very strong."

"Modern channels are now contributing over a quarter of packaged FMCG sales in over one million towns, and growing rapidly. Shopper missions are becoming more frequent, and 60 per cent of these missions are now unplanned.

"It is an exciting time, and absolutely essential for FMCG companies to re-invent their brands, their pack price architecture, and their approach towards growth in sync with the shifting consumer and channel trends," said Ravi Swarup, Partner and Consumer Products Practice Head at Bain & Company in India.

In a heartening tale of social change, the Bangarutalli Foundation has emerged as a ray of hope for marginalised girl children in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

**The Pioneer** interacts with the founder, **MV Mallikarjuna Reddy**, as he shares insights about their initiatives and creating a better community



communication.” With Prerana, the foundation aims to empower children by providing them with quality education and opportunities for personal growth. BBG works tirelessly to ensure that children of all backgrounds have the opportunity to receive an education that enables them to reach their full potential as part of its motto of “Empowering the girl child.” They actively work towards warriors’ awareness sessions like memory skills, good touch and bad touch, citizen’s responsibilities and the importance of education and study skills.

As a part of its Bharosa program, which aims at empowering women and children for a safer tomorrow, the foundation announced the inauguration of its twin Bharosa Centres in Shamshabad and Bhongir. “The new ‘Bharosa’—Support Centre for Women and Children—is BBG’s latest initiative, offering integrated assistance in areas such as police, medical, legal, prosecution Services and psychotherapeutic counseling. The centres, located in Ranga Reddy and Yadadri districts, aim to provide a safe haven for women and children to seek support and address various issues. Equipped with conference rooms, counselling facilities and medical counselling rooms, and staffed with trained professionals, the Bharosa Centres will serve as vital hubs for the community.”

Meanwhile, Aahlada is on a mission to foster student happiness through education and growth, recognising the vital role of a positive environment in a student’s academic success.

“In our efforts, we provide essential school supplies such as desks and blackboards. But our commitment extends further—we adorn school premises with vibrant paintings to ignite creativity, offer toys for children and build sports courts to promote both mental and physical development. Through our Aahlada program, we have enhanced government schools in numerous ways, including the construction of facilities like toilets and beautification projects. Additionally, we have initiated various development programs with the same enthusiasm and dedication.”

With immense pride, he speaks of one of his successful community-led projects: Prerana, their 5th initiative, which aims to empower underprivileged children by providing them with access to quality education and opportunities for personal growth. “We understand that education is a powerful tool that can help break the cycle of poverty and pave the way for a better future. Therefore, we work tirelessly to ensure that children from all backgrounds have the opportunity to receive an education that will enable them to reach their full potential as part of our purpose, under the slogan ‘Girl Child Empowerment’.

Girls, he says, have proved their mettle everywhere in the world and it happened only because of the right kind of opportunities and resources. “On the other side, in our country, the majority of girls lack the facility of education in rural and remote areas, even though they have the complete right to it. To address this huge issue, which has a significant impact on the country’s future, Bangarutalli Foundation has been striving to empower girls through education in schools. It has provided various educational facilities to many government schools by breaking the barriers that girls face in accessing education and helping them get empowered.”

Recognising that education is key to a brighter future, they assist economically disadvantaged girls with their studies and equip them with essential life skills such as critical thinking and communication.

“As we continue to work towards our goals, Bangarutalli Foundation’s initiative Bharosa is near to complete and in December we are about to launch the Bharosa centres,” concludes the founder, bringing an end to this chat.

## CREATING BRIGHTER TOMORROW FOR BANGARUTALLI’S

TEJAL SINHA  
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

In the heart of India, a quiet revolution is unfolding. The Bangarutalli Foundation, a pioneering non-profit organisation, is transforming the lives of marginalised girl children in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Since its inception in 2019, the foundation has been dedicated to enabling and empowering the girl child, aligning with Mahatma Gandhi’s vision of women as instruments of social change. The foundation’s mission is to empower 2 million girl children by 2040 and it has already made a significant impact in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

“Bangarutalli Foundation was born with a wondrous worldview: one daughter empowered, entire family empowered,” says MV Mallikarjuna Reddy, founder of Bangarutalli Foundation in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*. “And with the aim to assist and educate the marginalized section, the foundation has relentlessly endeav-

oured to stand up for social causes and the development of the girl-child.”

Through its five initiative programs—Aahlada, Swashakti, Suraksha, Prerana, and Bharosa—they have transformed the lives of nearly 200,000 girls in its twin states. These programs address critical aspects of girl child empowerment, from education and personal safety to life skills and career development. Sharing more in-depth insights on these programs, Reddy highlights, “Suraksha aims at securing the future of the girl child with safety being paramount and we provide workshops and training sessions on personal safety and self-defense to empower these girls to protect themselves. Bangarutalli Foundation is committed to empowering underprivileged girls, unlocking their potential and providing them with the tools they need to succeed. Then comes Swashakti, empowering underprivileged girls to soar towards self-sufficiency. Recognising that education is key to a brighter future, we assist economically disadvantaged girls with their studies and equip them with essential life skills such as critical thinking and



## CONSTIPATION AWARENESS MONTH

### Tame the tummy trouble!

Constipation is a common yet often overlooked health issue that affects people of all ages. To promote better understanding and awareness, the medical community observes Constipation Awareness Month annually. The initiative emphasises the importance of recognizing symptoms early, addressing potential underlying causes and adopting preventive measures to maintain optimal digestive health.

#### Understanding constipation

Constipation refers to infrequent bowel movements, typically fewer than three times a week, accompanied by difficulty in passing stools. It can manifest as bloating, abdominal pain, or the sensation of incomplete evacuation. While occasional constipation is normal, chronic constipation can lead to complications such as hemorrhoids, anal fissures, or even psychological stress.

#### Causes of constipation

Constipation arises from a variety of factors, including dietary habits, lifestyle choices and medical conditions. Common causes include:

- **Low fiber intake:** Diets lacking fruits, vegetables and whole grains can slow digestion.
- **Dehydration:** Insufficient water intake leads to hard, dry stools.
- **Sedentary lifestyle:** Physical inactivity can reduce gut motility.
- **Medications:** Certain painkillers, antidepressants and antacids may contribute to constipation.
- **Underlying health conditions:** Disorders like diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, or pelvic floor dysfunction can impair bowel movements.

#### Recognising the signs

While occasional constipation is typically harmless, chronic constipation warrants medical attention. Warning signs include:

- Persistent abdominal pain
- Rectal bleeding
- Unintended weight loss
- A sudden change in bowel habits lasting more than three weeks

#### Prevention and management

Most cases of constipation can be

effectively managed through lifestyle changes and medical guidance. Here are key strategies:

#### 1. Increase fiber intake

Dietary fiber adds bulk to stools, making them easier to pass. Aim for at least 25–30 grams of fiber daily by incorporating foods like whole grains, beans, lentils, and leafy vegetables.

#### 2. Stay hydrated

Drink at least 8–10 glasses of water a day. Proper hydration softens stools and promotes smooth bowel movements.

#### 3. Exercise regularly

Physical activity stimulates the natural contraction of intestinal muscles. Simple exercises like walking, jogging, or yoga can significantly improve digestion.

#### 4. Practice good bathroom habits

Avoid delaying the urge to pass stools, as this can exacerbate constipation. Establishing a routine, such as visiting the restroom at the same time daily, can help regulate bowel movements.

#### 5. Consider medical help

For chronic or severe constipation, doctors may recommend laxatives, stool softeners, or other medications. Diagnostic tests like colonoscopy or motility studies may also be necessary to rule out serious conditions.

#### Role of awareness

Constipation Awareness Month aims to dispel myths and reduce stigma surrounding bowel health. Many people feel embarrassed discussing constipation, often resorting to self-medication instead of seeking professional advice. This awareness campaign encourages open conversations and promotes education about preventive measures.

#### A healthier future

Constipation may seem minor, but its impact on physical and emotional well-being can be significant. With proper awareness, proactive lifestyle adjustments, and timely medical intervention, constipation is both manageable and preventable. This Constipation Awareness Month, take the opportunity to prioritize your gut health — because a healthy digestive system is the cornerstone of overall well-being.

(The author, Dr. Amit Yelsangikar, consultant-medical gastroenterology, at Aster CMI Hospital in Bangalore.)



## Serving up strife: Restaurants vs aggregators

PNS| HYDERABAD

In India’s booming dining and food delivery industry, a new conflict is brewing. The National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) has issued a stark warning to its members, urging them to reconsider their reliance on food aggregators like Zomato and Swiggy. These platforms, once seen as enablers of growth, are now under fire for practices that restaurants say are undermining their sustainability and autonomy. Central to the debate are aggregator-controlled payment gateways and the allure of deep discounting.

#### How discounts and delivery platforms are reshaping the restaurant industry

The restaurant industry stands at a crossroads, balancing the benefits of delivery platforms with the challenges they bring. For many, the online food delivery revolution offered a lifeline during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing an alternative revenue stream when dine-in operations were disrupted. However, as the dust settles, the true cost of this reliance on aggregators is becoming increasingly clear.

“Online food ordering was a revolution,” says Sampath Tummala, President of the National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI), Hyderabad Chapter and owner of The Spicy Venue. “During COVID and post-COVID times, it helped us build

a parallel alternative to increase turnovers. But now, with commission percentages hiked, it’s becoming harder to sustain. Once started, it’s difficult to come out of the game.”

#### Rising costs and shrinking margins

For restaurants, operating costs have surged across the board. “All costs have gone up—real estate, food, remuneration. At the same time, our establishment costs have increased, and margins are becoming thinner,” explains Tummala. Delivery aggregators, which initially appeared as a partnership opportunity, are now being criticised for practices that cut into profitability. With commission rates as high as 30%, many restaurateurs find themselves struggling to maintain viable margins.

“Dine-in was always the strength of restaurants,” Tummala notes. “Legendary places still see huge rushes because their product is strong. But when you factor in discounts of 20–50% and additional gateway fees for payments processed through platforms, the economics simply don’t add up.”

#### Pitfalls of dine-in discounting

In recent years, some delivery platforms have extended their influence into the dine-in space, promoting steep discounts that many restaurateurs find unsustainable. Kavitha Mantha, Secretary of the NRAI National Committee and owner of Sage Farm Café, warns that this practice erodes the value of the din-

Amid rising fees and deep discounts, NRAI urges restaurateurs to reassess reliance on food aggregators.



The Pioneer speaks to Hyderabad Restaurant Association and Industry Stakeholders more in detail

ing experience. “Diners may start choosing restaurants based solely on discounts, pushing those that cannot afford price cuts to the margins,” she observes.

Tummala echoes these concerns, highlighting how such discounts can distort customer expectations and harm a restaurant’s reputation. “Every place has its own set of guests. But when discounts attract a different audience, their perceptions can backfire,” he explains. “For example, comparing biryani at an Irani café with biryani at a fine-dining restaurant doesn’t make sense. The former focuses on taste and quantity, while the latter offers ambience and presentation. A bad online review from someone who doesn’t understand the difference can impact a restaurant’s rating.”

Celebrity chef Rakesh Sethi, reflecting on these challenges, emphasises the delicate balance between maintaining profitability and delivering value. “As chefs, we pour our passion into every dish, striving to create a memorable experience for diners. However, deep discounting undermines this effort. While it might drive short-term footfall, it erodes the margins we need to innovate and sustain quality. More importantly, it devalues the artistry of dining, conditioning customers to expect cuts at the expense of authenticity. Hefty commissions from aggregator payment gateways only add to the strain, leaving restaurants vulnerable. Instead, the focus should shift to nurturing direct relationships with patrons, offering fair pricing, and emphasising the true value of the culinary experience.”

#### Walking away from aggregators

Recognising these challenges, the NRAI Hyderabad Chapter has taken a firm stance against aggregator-driven dine-in discounts. “As a body, we’ve decided to stay away from the dine-in vertical of aggregators,” says Tummala. “We don’t want to get into the game of giving more commissions and spoiling our organic customer growth. Our focus is on protecting our ongoing business and maintaining the integrity of our offerings.”

This decision reflects a broader concern about the long-term viability of over-reliance on delivery platforms. “Deep discounts are not just unsustainable; they also condition customers to expect lower prices,” adds Mantha. “It’s a race to the bottom that ultimately hurts the entire industry.”

#### Preserving soul of dining

Despite the challenges, industry leaders believe in the resilience of the dine-in experience. “The product should always be strong,” Tummala emphasises. “Restaurants that focus on quality and service will continue to thrive, even without discounts or aggregator support.”

Mantha agrees, noting that the connection between food creators and their customers remains central to the hospitality industry. “We need to safeguard the soul of the dining experience,” she says. “That personal connection is what makes restaurants special—and we cannot afford to lose it.”

As restaurants navigate this evolving landscape, the focus is shifting back to fundamentals: quality, service, and direct customer engagement. It’s a strategy that may not promise overnight success, but it’s one that ensures long-term sustainability in an increasingly competitive market.

# what's brewing?

**PARTY**

Photos by- SV Chary

● Tarin

● Madhvi Chandra

● Gita Karan

● Sravani Gokaraju

● Aditi

● Maya

Gitanjali Group of Schools announced its 40th anniversary. The event marked the official invitation to the school's alumni to reconnect and participate in the upcoming festivities. The event was attended by Karthik Ramana, president of the Alumni Committee and Ssuyodhan, the senior-most alumnus and former President of the Alumni Committee, among the rest.

● Sushimta

● Swapna

● Yoshita

● Priyanka

● Nishita

● Sanjana and Likhita

Sri Chaitanya Knowledge Hub, a specialised wing of Sri Chaitanya Educational Institutions, with a proven track record of delivering phenomenal results in JEE and NEET, has once again added another outstanding results across its Knowledge Hub Centers. 18 NEET 2024 students scored above 700/720, 7 JEE-Mains 2024 students achieving under AIR 100, and over 40% of students gaining admission into India's most prestigious medical and engineering colleges

PURE EV announced the inauguration of one of its largest showrooms in Hyderabad. The new showroom serves as a one-stop destination for electric two-wheeler enthusiasts, displaying Pure EV's flagship products. The facility was inaugurated by N Sriganesh, Member of Legislative Assembly, Telangana, who commended the company's efforts to promote eco-friendly transportation in the region.

CREDAI Hyderabad celebrated its silver jubilee, commemorating 25 years of reshaping the sector into an ethical, professional and innovation-driven industry. On this occasion, the organisation honoured its founder members for their visionary leadership and unwavering commitment.

## FUN

**ARCHIE**

YOU'D BETTER STOP BETTY AND VERONICA! THEY'RE WASHING YOUR CAR TO SURPRISE YOU!

UH-OH!

GORRY! I SHOULD HAVE WARNED YOU TWO ABOUT MY CAR--

IT'S THE DIRT THAT'S HOLDING IT TOGETHER!

**CALVIN AND HOBBS**

Z

LOOK AT YOU. ALL YOU DO IS LIE IN THE SUN.

I HAVE TO.

HOW COME?

TIGERS' TUMMIES ARE SOLAR CELLS.

YEAH, RIGHT.

**GARFIELD**

IT'S OKAY, GARFIELD...

I SEWED THE STUFFING BACK INTO YOUR BEAR

COOL-LOOKING SCAR THERE, POOKMAN

**REALITY CHECK**

DON'T GET ME WRONG--A SPRAY TAN STILL LOOKS CHEESY, BUT MINE SOUNDS MUCH CLASSIER SINCE IT'S FRENCH

RANGE CHICKEN VS DUCK A L'ORANGE

**SPEED BUMP**

I CRAWLED OUT OF A TOILET AND ATE A GUY.

GAV MY NAME 3 TIMES IN A MIRROR. I DROPE YOU.

NO ONE SUSPECTS IM SLANDERMAN.

SHE TOOK MR HOME, THEN SHE WOKER UP IN A TUB OF ICE MISSING A KIDNEY.

URBAN LEGENDS--IN-THEIR-OWN-MINDS

**CROSSWORD**

**NANCY**

NANCY, HOW DID YOU GET THAT TAN LINE?

THE SUN MUST HAVE HIT ME AT A WEIRD ANGLE

**EARLIER:**

WHAT A WEIRDLY AMAZING ANGLE

**SUDOKU**

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

**ACROSS**

- Got better after illness
- A money-holder
- The parts along the end or sides of something
- Reply
- Part of a song or poem
- By yourself
- Fifty percent

**DOWN**

- Mistake
- Follow an order
- This covers an eye
- A large bird of prey
- Clothes worn in bed
- A bright red colour
- Reply
- Part of a song or poem
- By yourself
- Fifty percent

**SOLUTION**

C	O	S	O	E	F				
A	P	T	E	R	S	M	A	L	L
H	I	C	H	O	R	D	I	S	T
L	E	P	T						
D	A	M	P	B	O	T	T	L	E
R	A	P	I	T	W	N			
A	R	G	E						
L	I	T	T						
S	C	I	S	S	O	R	S		



# THE 'MANCHU' DRAMA CONTINUES....

The Manchu family feud seems to have no end in sight. On Wednesday, Vishnu organised a press conference, where he expressed his thoughts on his father's upbringing. He stated, "My father gave a lot of love to all of us, which I think is a big mistake." This comes after his father, senior actor Mohan Babu, was hospitalised and is currently stable.

"We are a joint family and I wanted to continue that way, but unfortunately, this incident happened, which makes us all feel terrible. I hope this issue will resolve soon. My father loves my brother, sister and me too much and that's the big mistake he made," said Vishnu.

Regarding the incident where Mohan Babu attacked a journalist, he stated, "It was not a deliberate attempt by my father to hurt anyone. It was unfortunate and he didn't want to hurt anyone. He came out with folded hands and suddenly someone put a microphone in his face. He reacted impulsively in the heat of the moment."

The *Ginna* fame added that he spoke to the journalist's family and assured them of his support. "We never invited the media into our home; they entered forcefully. In that heated situation, everything happened suddenly."

The *Denaikana Ready* actor stated that his mother is also unwell due to the situation at home and has been hospitalized. "If I were in India, the situation would be different and the letters and audio files might not have been leaked," he said. He explained that he was in Los Angeles for the post-production work of his film *Kannappa*.

He requested the media to refrain from sensationalising the issue. "My humble request to all media personnel is to please leave this issue alone. Don't make our lives a circus. I will meet the Commissioner of Police and take legal action," he said. He emphasised that he respects his father's words. "If he asks me not to stay in his house, I don't have the right to stay. He struggled hard to

My humble request to all media personnel is to please leave this issue alone. Don't make our lives a circus. I will meet the Commissioner of Police and take legal action!



build everything we have and people respect us because we are Mohan Babu's sons."

Regarding his family members, he further mentioned that he has differences with his sister Lakshmi, but they respect each other. He also defended Vinay, who attacked his brother Manoj, saying, "He's a good person. My father always says Vinay is like his elder son. He worked for reputable organisations earlier."

The *Mosagallu* actor advocated for resolving issues with love rather than quarrels. "I don't want to talk about my family anymore."

Meanwhile, Manchu Manoj also addressed the media, apologising on behalf of his father. "It's not true that my mother is in the hospital. They're spreading false news," he said. He had also met the Commissioner of Police and submitted a bond of Rs 1 lakh. Manoj, however, said that he is ready to have a conversion on the issue. Manchu Lakshmi, too had shared a post where she captioned it as "peace".



## Amritha Aiyer wants it all—romance, drama and action

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
sureshkvirayani@gmail.com

Amritha Aiyer has become a pan-Indian actress after the stupendous success of *Hanuman*, where she played the female lead opposite Teja Sajja. "When we started filming, it was purely a Telugu film, but once it was released, it became a huge success all over India," said actress Amritha Aiyer. The actress revealed that while shooting for *Hanuman*, she accepted the offer to star in *Bachchalamalli*, where she played the female lead opposite Naresh. "When this script came to me, I liked it because my character has a lot of importance in it, so I didn't want to let it go," she said about her role in *Bachchalamalli*. The film is scheduled to release on December 20. "The story is set in the 1980s and I play a city girl who is very sensitive and emotional," said Amritha about her role. She added that some of the scenes between her and Naresh are very emotional. Talking about her co-star Naresh, she said, "He is very aggressive on screen in his role, but off screen, he is very quiet."

The actress stated that her criteria for selecting projects are the story and her role. "From the beginning of my career, I have always wanted to do meaningful characters and luckily, I got a good role in *Bachchalamalli*," she said. She added that, like *Hanuman*, she wishes for *Bachchalamalli* to be a big hit. "If the content is good, everyone will like it and the movie will definitely be successful," she said. Amritha clarified that the success of *Hanuman* did not change her approach to selecting stories. "It's not true that I would have done *Bachchalamalli* only after *Hanuman*. I wanted to do it because of my character and the story," she said.

The Telugu songs *Neeli Neeli Akasam* from *30 Rojulo Preminchadam Ela* and *Poolamme Pilla* from *Hanuman* were very popular and remain chart-toppers even today. Amritha believes that the music in *Bachchalamalli* will also gain popularity after the film's release. "When I found out that Vishal Chandrasekhar was composing the music for this film, I was thrilled. He had earlier worked on *Sita Ramam* and I am confident that the songs in *Bachchalamalli* will be just as popular once the film is released," she said. Talking about her dream roles, Amritha mentioned that she would like to play princesses, queens and dream girls. "I would also like to do action-oriented films," she added. When asked about her upcoming projects, Amritha revealed that she is working on a Tamil and Kannada film. "I am also listening to Telugu scripts," she said.

Amritha Aiyer, the talented actress who rose to Pan-Indian fame with her impressive performance in the blockbuster film *Hanuman*, is now gearing up for her next release, *Bachchalamalli*. Ahead of the release, Amritha opens up about her experience working on *Bachchalamalli*, her dream roles and her future projects.



## Samantha's Instagram post, is she ready to move on?

Samantha Ruth Prabhu is making headlines with her latest Instagram post, where she shared predictions for Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn zodiac signs in 2025. The post hints at her desire for a "loyal and loving partner" in the new year. This comes after her ex-husband Naga Chaitanya tied the knot with Sobhita Dhulipala on December 4.

In her latest story, the actress shared a post of 2025 predictions of zodiac signs for Taurus, Virgo and Capricorn. It was predicted that the year is going to be a very busy year for the three mentioned signs and progress in your craft and earning more money on it. There are also predictions about financial stability, multiple streams of income, completion of goals, relocations and better mental and physical health. Along with these predictions, it also says, 'A

very loyal and loving partner.' Sharing the predictions of the 2025 story on her Instagram, Samantha wrote, 'Amen.' Now, this post is going viral. Samantha's post has gone viral, with fans speculating about her personal life.

According to our sources, Samantha is dating director Raj Nidimoru (Raj & DK), who is one of the directors of *Family Man* and *Citadel*.

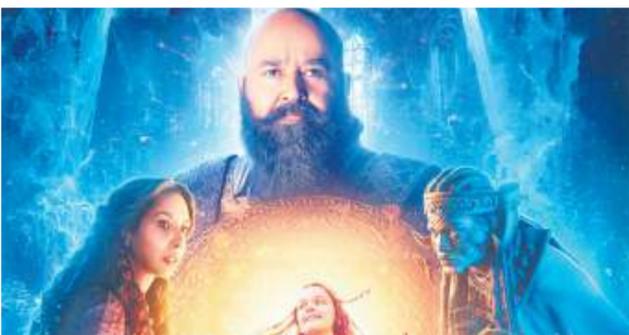
On the professional front, the actress has not signed any films down South, but she is doing another web series, *Rakt Brahmand—The Bloody Kingdom*, which is directed by Rahi Anil Barve of *Tumbbad* fame. Interestingly, this web series is produced by Raj & DK, which is Samantha's third collaboration with them.

## VISHWAK SEN JOINS HANDS WITH JATHI RATNALU DIRECTOR

Vishwak Sen, known for his penchant for diverse scripts and characters, is set to collaborate with acclaimed director Anudeep KV, of *Jathi Ratnalu* fame, on an upcoming family entertainer titled *Funky*. The film, produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya, was officially launched in Hyderabad on Wednesday, with esteemed directors Nag Ashwin and Kalyan Shankar gracing the occasion as chief guests.

In line with the film's lively spirit, the team unveiled a vibrant poster on the auspicious day. According to the makers, *Funky* promises to deliver a perfect blend of witty humour, cleverly crafted by Anudeep and Vishwak's impressive performance skills, ensuring an entertaining experience for audiences of all ages. Noted music director Bheems Cecireleo will be composing the music for the film.

Production on *Funky* is slated to commence post-Sankranti 2025, with the team gearing up to bring this exciting family entertainer to life on the big screen.



## Mohanlal's directorial debut Barroz promises visual spectacle

With a career spanning nearly 47 years and over 360 films, Mohanlal has brought to life numerous iconic characters across genres and languages, carving a special place in the hearts of audiences worldwide. Now, he embarks on a new journey to elevate Indian cinema to a global level by stepping into the director's chair with *Barroz*. Mounted to be a cinematic marvel, the film is shot entirely in 3D. Director-actor Mohanlal released the Hindi trailer of the film in the presence of Chief Guest Akshay Kumar. He also launched their coffee table book at the event, introducing Akshay Kumar to the fascinating world of *Barroz*. The trailer takes you on an enchanting journey into the

world of *Barroz* with stunning 3D visuals that are set to captivate audiences across the globe. It's a timeless tale where the past and present intertwine, and the magic of friendship and loyalty holds the key to breaking ancient curses. *Barroz* stars the legendary actor Mohanlal alongside Mayo Rao West and June Vig. With Santosh Sivan's masterful touch in cinematography, *Barroz* promises to be a visual extravaganza. Produced by Antony Perumbavoor of Aashinward Cinemas in association with Pen Studios, Mohanlal's directorial debut *Barroz*, is set to release in 3D across Hindi, Malayalam, Telugu, Tamil and Kannada languages. The film is set to hit theatres on December 27 in the Hindi language.

## Dhandoraa launched in style

Acclaimed producer Ravindra Banerjee Muppaneni, known for his National Award-winning film *Colour Photo* and the successful *Bedurulanka 2012*, is set to unveil his latest project, *Dhandoraa*. The film, directed by Muralikanth, was officially launched on Wednesday at Ramanaidu Studios in Film Nagar.

*Dhandoraa* is a rural drama set in Telangana, exploring age-old customs and traditions with a satirical twist. The makers

promise wholesome entertainment, boasting a stellar ensemble cast, including Sivaji, Navdeep, Rahul Ramakrishna, Ravi Krishna, Manika Chikkala and Anusha. Renowned music composer Mark K Robin will score the film's music. Confident that *Dhandoraa* will captivate audiences, just like his previous films, Ravindra Banerjee Muppaneni announced that shooting will commence soon. He plans to reveal more details about the film in the coming days.

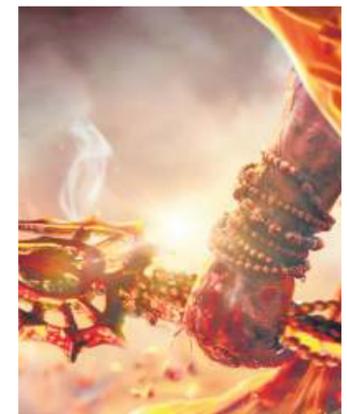


## Akhanda 2 heads for Dasara 2025 release

Balakrishna is now a busy actor with many films lined up for him. The actor has just completed the film *Daaku Maharaj* with Bobby Kolli as director; he has now started shooting for another of his films, *Akhanda 2*.

This is the sequel to his earlier successful *Akhanda*, directed by Boyapati Srinu. Interestingly, Boyapati and Balakrishna combination films are huge blockbusters, beginning with *Simha*, *Legend* and *Akhanda*. This is the fourth combination from them and fans expected more from this film. Ram Achand and Gopi Achanta are producing this sequel on their 14Reels Plus banner.

On Wednesday, they announced that the film's shoot started. "The protector of Dharma will wage a powerful battle. *Akhanda 2 - Thaandavam* shoot begins," said the makers. The interesting part is that they announced the release date of this film as September 25, on the occasion of Dasara. SS Thaman is providing music for this one.



# India loses to Australia, suffer 0-3 whitewash

PTI ■ PERTH

Opener Smriti Mandhana's elegant century went in vain as India lost to Australia by 83 runs in the third Women's ODI to suffer a 0-3 series whitewash here on Wednesday. Opting to field after winning the toss, India had Australia on the ropes at 78 for four before middle-order batter Annabel Sutherland's scintillating 95-ball 110, and brisk half centuries from Ashleigh Gardner (50) and skipper Tahlia McGrath (56 not out), lifted the hosts to a competitive 298 for six in the allotted 50 overs at WACA. In reply, India were bowled out for 215 in 45.1 overs. In pursuit of a stiff target of 299, the stylish Mandhana anchored the innings beautifully during her 105 off 109 balls and as long as the southpaw was at the crease, the visitors were in with a chance. However, her dismissal at a crucial juncture put paid to India's hopes of earning a consolation win. The problem with the Indian innings was that the senior batter lacked support from the others after Alana King ended a 118-run partnership between Mandhana and Harleen Deol (39 off 64 balls) by dismissing the latter. During her stay in the middle, Mandhana found the fence 14 times



and cleared it once, leading the team's recovery after the swashbuckling Richa Ghosh's (2) early departure. Spin bowling all-rounder Gardner completed a fine match by taking five wickets for 30 runs after her contribution with the willow. Besides Ghosh, captain Harmanpreet Kaur (12 off 22 balls)

and Jemimah Rodrigues (16 off 11 balls) failed with the bat, and it did not help India's cause. Senior all-rounder Deepti Sharma too flopped, getting out for a duck. Earlier, Australia survived a stellar spell from India pacer Arundhati Reddy to post a challenging total in the final match of what has been a one-side series dominated

thoroughly by the formidable home team. Sutherland led Australia's recovery after Reddy struck four times in quick succession for career-best figures in limited-overs cricket. Having already lost the series, India opted to bowl at the iconic WACA ground but did not get the required breakthroughs in the first

powerplay with Phoebe Litchfield (25 off 33) and Georgia Voll (26 off 30) going strong. However, Reddy, playing only her fifth ODI, changed the course of the game in one over by removing the openers in a space of four balls. Unlike Renuka Thakur and Saima Thakor, Reddy got the ball to swing back from a fuller length which led to the fall of last match's centurion Voll, who saw her stumps disturbed. Left-handed Litchfield was caught behind chasing an away swinger and all the momentum gained by Australia was suddenly lost. Next to depart was star all-rounder Ellyse Perry who had no answer to a beauty from Reddy that held its line to hit the top of off-stump. When Beth Mooney departed, Australia were reduced to 78 for four from 58 for no loss. Sutherland and Gardner then showed the enviable depth of the Australian batting by sharing a 96-run stand for the fifth wicket. Sutherland was the aggressor in the partnership and especially pounded the spinners, smashing two fours and a six off Deepti in the 40th over. India's catching left a lot to be desired as they grassed three tough chances. McGrath joined Sutherland in the 35th over and the duo pushed the score towards 300.



## Entire Australian top-order is under pressure: Warner

PTI ■ BRISBANE

in Adelaide he managed 49 runs. Khawaja has 34 runs in the first two Tests and in his last 16 innings he has reached fifty only once. Former skipper Smith is also in the middle of a woeful run, having scored 19 in his three innings of the series. On McSweeney, Warner said: "He's had four of probably the five hardest jobs when it comes to an opening batsman, and I think he's handled it well," Warner said. "We saw glimpses the other day of the intent that you show when you're scoring, and there are a lot of question marks around why they chose him, but the glimpses that you've seen, we now know why. "He's got a good temperament, I like the way he sets up, and I think he's got a good future ahead of him. It's just this bowling attack from India is relentless if they bowl in partnerships." On whether Sam Konstas should replace the struggling Khawaja, Warner said: "They would have picked him if they thought he was ready by now. That's up to the selectors." There have also been talks about a Test comeback for gun all-rounder Glenn Maxwell but Warner feels the white ball specialist "doesn't deserve that opportunity." "If you're not being picked for your Shield team, then why do you deserve it? You've got to actually want it, to want to play four-day cricket," Warner told CODE.



## Gabba pitch to have traditional pace and bounce, says curator

PTI ■ BRISBANE

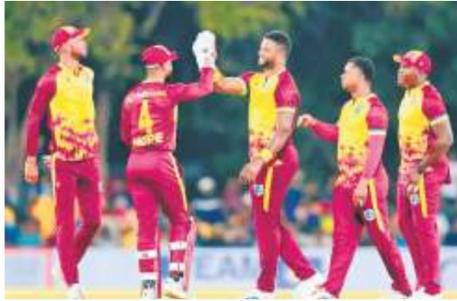
The pitch for the third Test between India and Australia at the Gabba is expected to have traditional pace and bounce considering the game is scheduled in the early part of the summer and not post Christmas. India's famous win at the Gabba on their previous tour came when the game was scheduled in the second half of the series. A Rishabh Pant special ensured India a back-to-back series win Down Under with Australia left licking their wounds. It was the hosts' first loss at the venue since 1988. Since then Australia have lost to the West Indies at the 'fortress' and no wonder the players prefer to play at the Gabba at the start of the summer and not at end of it. "Different times of year definitely makes it different, it can be a slightly different pitch," Gabba curator David Sandurski was quoted as saying by cricket.Com.Au ahead of the third Test beginning Saturday. "Pitches later in the season might have a bit more wear and tear while ones early in

the season usually are a bit fresher and might have a bit more in them. "Generally speaking, we still prepare the pitch the exact same way every time to try and get the same good carry, pace and bounce that the Gabba is known for. We are just trying to make a traditional Gabba wicket like we do each year," he said. The five-match series is locked at 1-1 following Australia's comprehensive win in the pink ball Test at Adelaide. As many as 15 wickets fell on the opening day of a domestic pink ball game last month and the curator said the surface would be similar to that. "The aim is to be similar to that wicket where there was a good balance between bat and ball. Hopefully there is a bit in it for everyone," Sandurski added. Indian teams lands in Brisbane The BCCI on Wednesday posted a video of the India players' arrival in Brisbane from Adelaide. India won the opening Test in Perth by 295 runs before succumbing to the moving pink ball in Adelaide.

## West Indies win ODI series against Bangladesh

AP ■ BASSETERRE

The West Indies won a one-day international series against Bangladesh for the first time in 10 years. The West Indies shot out Bangladesh for 227 in 46 overs and strolled to 230-3 in 37 overs on Tuesday. The host won the series with a game to spare. "It's great to see the bowlers bounce back the way they did," captain Shai Hope said. "Gotta tick boxes and keep improving. We were clinical. We've been struggling to win series at home (so) hope to finish 3-0 now." On the same pitch where the West Indies won by five wickets on Sunday, the par score was 300. But fast bowler Jayden Seales undercut Bangladesh with three wickets in the first powerplay. Seales returned to bag Mahmudullah for 62 in the 45th over and



finish with a match-deciding 4-22 in nine overs. The chase was almost a formality. Brandon King and Evin Lewis opened with a 109-run partnership in 21 overs. King led with 82 and Lewis and Keacy Carty were out just short of half-centuries. Bangladesh was 115-7 in the 26th over when Tanzim Hasan Sakib joined Mahmudullah and they rescued the innings. While they were batting with increasing ambition, Bangladesh could dream of 270-280. Mahmudullah reached a fifty off 84 balls, and Tanzim was closing on his when he was out caught and bowled by off-spinner Roston Chase. Tanzim had 45 off 62 and the partnership reached 92 runs from 106 balls. Mahmudullah was out in the next over for 62 off 92. In the chase, Lewis was slower to get in a groove than King and was dropped on 28. King and Lewis were both hit on the body in the 40s while attempting pulls at Nahid Rana. King's eighth boundary brought up his fifty off 52 balls but Lewis was out for 49, to a tame caught and bowled by Rishad Hossain. King's best shot was a six when he came down the track at Tanzim and sent the ball back over the medium-pace's head and rebounding off the roof. He was eventually yorkered by Rana, out for 82 off 76 balls, including eight boundaries and three sixes. He'd combined for 66 in eight overs with Carty, who would fall for 45 off 47 with victory just 31 more runs away.

## Matthew Hayden advises Indian bowlers to target fourth, fifth stump

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Former Australia opener Matthew Hayden has advised the Indian bowlers to target the "fourth, fifth stump line" and make use of the natural bounce offered by the Gabba surface in the third Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy starting here on Saturday. The five-match series is locked at 1-1 after Australia's emphatic win in the pink Test in Adelaide. India won the opener by 295 runs at Perth. Hayden shared his views on how to dismiss the Australian batters at Gabba. "India, when they do get a chance to bowl, they need to rely on hovering in that fourth, fifth stump line a bit more. And most importantly, they need to use their bounce," Hayden told Star Sports.



"It's a key arsenal as part of a fast bowling unit in Brisbane. Under a day, unacceptable. Has to be in that 350 zone. India should bat first even if there are challenging conditions," Hayden said. "Brisbane, different ball game! It's a home game, but it's actually a very good game for India as well because they've got memories of the last time they encountered Australia in the BGT."

## Brook displaces Root at top of Test batter rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Charismatic England batter Joe Root's reign at the top of the ICC Test batting rankings ended on Wednesday with compatriot Harry Brook taking the No.1 spot, while India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Ravindra Jadeja held on to their top positions in the bowlers' and all-rounders' charts respectively in the longest format. Brook, 25, overtook Root following his eighth Test century against New Zealand in Wellington last week, with the right-handed player now enjoying a slender one-point advantage over his more experienced teammate at the top of the latest ICC rankings. Brook has a total of 898



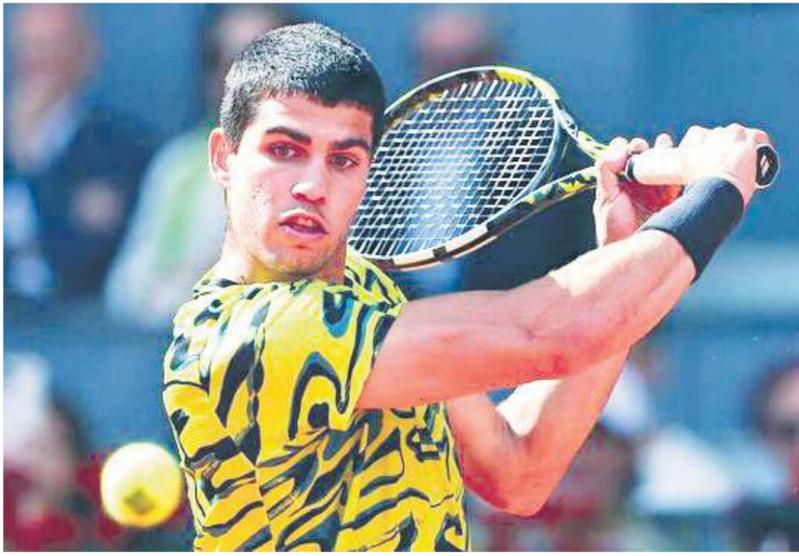
rating points, one more than Root, and joins Indian legend Sachin Tendulkar with the equal 34th highest rating of all time for Test batters. Root had held on to the top spot since July this year when he displaced former New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson from the No.1 position. Brook scored 123 and 55 in England's massive 323-run victory over New Zealand, while Root had innings of 3 and 106 in the same Test. "If you're asked me, Brooky is by far and away the best player in the world at the minute," Root said following England's victory in Wellington. "He has such an all-round game, he can absorb pressure, he can apply it, he can whack you over your head for six, he can scoop you over his head for six, he can smack spin, he can smack seam. He's so hard to bowl to." Bumrah maintained his No.1 position at the top of the Test bowlers' rankings with 890 rating points. The Indian has some tough competition from South Africa quick Kagiso Rabada (856) and Australian pace bowler Josh Hazlewood (851).

## Alcaraz has best of Nadal, Djokovic, Federer, but he can't do what they did: Agassi

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Legendary Andre Agassi said Carlos Alcaraz combines the best qualities of Novak Djokovic, Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal but cautioned the tennis world against expecting the Spaniard to repeat the incredible feats of the "Fab Three." Federer, Nadal and Djokovic have a combined tally of 66 Grand Slams and Alcaraz, 21, has so far bagged four majors. "I'm not a genius and I don't have a crystal ball. What I can tell you is Alcaraz defends like Novak, has power and spin like Nadal and has hands and finesse like Federer," said Agassi during a talk session during the Marathon Mindset at the TIE Global Summit. Agassi, himself an eight-time Slam champion, then outlined the reason to not place a massive load of expectations on Alcaraz. "Just because he has the best of all those three doesn't mean he can do what they did because there're so many other parts to the game,

which mean decision-making, injuries, you know, luck," he said. At 37, Djokovic too is closer to his retirement and Agassi said the Serbian will now find it even tougher to remain competitive in the absence of the retired Nadal and Federer. "He's already done so much, so long, and it's hard to imagine longer. I think he'll run out of the energy for it, more than the capability of it, I would imagine. "It cannot be easy, especially when the people you came to the dance with have left." The American explained his thoughts further. "When Pete (Sampras) retired, it was a blow to me. It set me back a little bit. It made me have to rediscover my inspirations on some level. "And he's (Djokovic) lost the guys that he's made history with. So, it's probably emotionally going to get tougher and tougher quickly, but I would never bet against him. Bet against him at your own peril," said Agassi.



To prolong his career, Djokovic has hired former British player Andy Murray as his coach, and Agassi remained curious about the future of their alliance. "They've been fierce rivals on court, and now Murray will be coaching Djokovic. Well, in any coaching student relationship, you need trust. Trust can take time. "I think there's an asset to their history as competitors, but any success of a relationship is based on (9:07) complete buy-in." Agassi backs American players The 54-year-old from Las Vegas said the new generation of American players have the ability to bring the country back to the top layers of the tennis world, like it was in the 80s and 90s. "I was the first one to turn pro. I made (Michael) Chang, Pete, (Jim) Courier believe they could do it. And then Chang was the first one to win (Grand Slam), Pete believed that he could win, and made Courier believe that he could win, and then Courier said, well, I can not only win, I can be

number one in the world. "And I was saying, wait a second, what the hell about me? So we all helped each other in a lot of ways, and I think these Americans now are starting to prove to the other Americans that not only they can do it," he detailed. Agassi also reminisced how he clawed back from a series of setbacks in life to find a second wind in the latter half of his career. "I hit rock bottom probably at a time when people thought I was on top of the world. And then I just spiralled. I gave up on myself. But one thing that's good about rock bottom, you can bounce off something. "So, I kind of recognized that, well, tennis wasn't my choice. So, I turned my attention towards helping kids that don't have choice or any hope. So, I forced myself to use tennis. "I think that was an underlying inspiration and reason for me having a second chance at my career," he signed off.