

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

Is there democracy in the state? The Speaker rejected our adjournment motion regarding the assurances of the Congress. It is nothing but suppressing the Opposition's voice. We demand that the Congress Government should reveal when it will enact a law on the six-guarantees

- A. Maheshwar Reddy, BJLP leader

P2

'New DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' in defence'

5



FIGHT AGAINST ECONOMIC OFFENDERS WILL CONTINUE: FM

8



Comedy is my home ground, I won't leave it: NARESH

P11



DON'T MISS...

Chit fund company shuts up shop

In Vikarabad, people from various backgrounds, ranging from the poor to the middle class, are often cheated by chit fund schemes. People join the chit fund schemes hoping to save a portion of the money they earn through hard work. By contributing a certain amount every month, they hope to take out a larger sum when needed. While some people participate in chit funds scheme run by their acquaintances, others ...

-PAGE: 4

Jamili poll will lead to economic growth

Once the 'One nation one poll' proposal by the Centre becomes functional, it will galvanise the election process and will also help in the economic growth of the country, former President Ram Nath Kovind said here on Tuesday. Kovind was the chairman of the high-level committee on simultaneous elections that was constituted by the Centre in September 2023. Speaking at a ...

-PAGE: 5

Investors' wealth down Rs 4.92 lakh cr

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 4.92 lakh crore on Tuesday amid a sharp sell-off in the equity market where the Sensex tanked 1,064 points. Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,064.12 points or 1.30 per cent to settle at 80,684.45. During the day, it slumped 1,136.37 points or 1.39 per cent to 80,612.20. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 4,92,644.06 cr to Rs 4,55,13,913.24 crore ...

-PAGE: 8

New Zealand beat England by 423 runs

Captain Ben Stokes was unable to bat because of a hamstring injury on Tuesday as England slumped to a 423-run loss to New Zealand before tea on the fourth day on the third cricket Test. Stokes strained his left hamstring while bowling on the third day and could not take the field as England was bowled out for 234 as it chased an impossible target of 658 for victory. New Zealand's winning margin matched its largest test win by runs of a 423-run win ...

-SPORTS

Centre tables ONOE Bill amid fiery debate

- Says it won't tamper with states' powers
- Oppn terms it as 'dictatorial'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two bills that lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous elections were introduced in the Lok Sabha after a fiery debate on Tuesday, with the opposition terming the move "dictatorial" and Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal asserting that the legislation would not tamper with the powers enjoyed by states. The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Meghwal after a nearly 90-minute debate, followed by a division of votes. As many as 269 members voted in favour of the Bill and 198 against it. Meghwal also introduced The Union Territories Amendment Bill, which seeks to align elections in the Union territories of Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir with the Lok Sabha polls. He said the proposed bills did not attack the "basic structure doctrine, as claimed by the opposition". Principles such as judicial review, federal character of the Constitution, separation of powers, secular character, supremacy of the Constitution had not changed, Meghwal said, adding that the objections to the Bill were political in nature. Congress member Manish Tewari opposed the introduction of

Continued on Page 2

Big boost to tourism

Govt unveils first-ever Tourism Policy



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a move aimed at tapping the state's tourism potential, the Telangana Government has unveiled its tourism policy for 2025-2030. Aimed at revamping the sector through infrastructural growth, investments and global branding, the policy seeks to position Telangana as 'India's Most Preferred Destination'. The comprehensive policy focuses on community empowerment, sustainable practices and world-class services to attract both domestic and international tourists. The policy document was tabled in the Telangana Assembly and Minister Juppally Krishna Rao spoke about it. The state government, recognising a decade-long gap in cohesive tourism initiatives, emphasized the urgent need for structured

Aims to attract Rs 15,000 cr investments in 5 years

To create 3 lakh jobs in the same period

interventions. Aiming to attract investments of Rs 15,000 crore and to create three lakh jobs over the next five years, the policy sets targets to place Telangana among the top five tourism states. The policy introduces 27 Special Tourism Areas (STAs) to leverage the state's natural, cultural and spiritual heritage. Nine key STAs, including Nagarjuna Sagar, Ramappa, Bhadrachalam, Warangal and Charminar, will receive priority attention. These areas will be equipped with robust infrastructure, adventure activities and facilities like water sports and heritage conservation projects modelled on international standards. The policy prioritises infrastructure development to make Telangana globally competitive. The initiatives are positioning the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport as the focal point, constructing mega retail malls, promoting river festivals on the Godavari and Krishna rivers, and enhancing waterfronts with eco-tourism facilities. Helipads, golf tourism and specialized shopping experiences along the Regional Ring Road are part of the proposed framework. The government has adopted public-private partnership (PPP) models with clear incentives in an attempt to attract private investors.

Continued on Page 2

Tummala orders purchase of 25,000 more tonnes of soybeans

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TG Government has issued orders allowing additional purchases of soybeans. Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao issued orders to procure 25,000 more tonnes of soybeans over the quantity announced earlier. As per a statement issued on Tuesday, the government has already procured 59,000 tonnes of soybeans from farmers through the nodal agency Mark Fed during the monsoon 2024 crop season at the support price of Rs 4,892 announced by the Centre. Keeping the interests of farmers in mind and as per the request of public representatives and Collectors, the Agriculture Minister gave orders to procure 25,000 more tonnes in addition to the 59,508 tonnes specified by the Centre. The procurement of soybeans through Mark Fed 49 centres went smoothly on Tuesday without causing any inconvenience to farmers. Meanwhile, Tummala said the Centre has been asked to give permission for the procurement of another 25,000 tonnes so that the state's

2

'Hold debate on Formula E'

KTR challenges CM Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao came down heavily on the Congress Government and challenged Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to conduct a 15-day Assembly session to debate public issues, including farm loan waivers, weaver problems and governance failures. Speaking at a meeting of BRS workers from the Kodangal Bhavan, KTR emphasized that the government should focus on

public welfare, not vindictive politics. "If Revanth has any guts, let him conduct the Assembly for 15 days to discuss the problems faced by farmers, weavers, auto-rick drivers and students. We are ready to debate all issues, including his allegations of scams and the controversial Formula-E event," KTR said. Cabinet meetings are held not to decide whom to arrest, but to discuss people's issues, he said. Lashing out at the Congress's failure to fulfil its promises, KTR

accused Revanth of deceiving people with false assurances during Assembly elections. "Revanth made grandiose promises during the campaign but failed to implement even basic ones like farm loan waivers. Not even 30% of loans have been waived. Let him prove otherwise in Kondareddipalli, his own village," KTR challenged. He predicted that Revanth's downfall would begin from Lagcherla and praised former MLA Patnam Narendra Reddy for standing

Continued on Page 2



BRS legislators protest wearing handcuffs, black dresses

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS legislators staged a protest in the Assembly by wearing handcuffs and black dresses expressing solidarity with the farmers of Lagcherla. The BRS legislators demanded the release of farmers from jail and the withdrawal of all cases registered against them.

Continued on Page 2

TPCC planning 'Chalo Raj Bhavan' today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TPCC is organising a Chalo Raj Bhavan programme on Wednesday under the leadership of TPCC President B. Mahesh Kumar Goud.

The Chalo Raj Bhavan programme will be held from the statue of Indira Gandhi on Necklace Road to the Raj Bhavan.



2

Three Bills passed amid BRS protests in Assembly

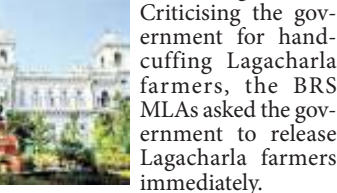
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amidst BRS and BJP MLAs protests the Assembly passed three bills on Tuesday.

The three Bills - the Young India Physical Education and Sports Varsity Bill, the Telangana Universities Amendment Bill and the Telangana GST Amendments

Bill were passed in the Assembly without any discussion.

BRS MLAs demanded the government to allow a discussion on the Lagacharla incident. The BRS MLAs entered the well demanding a debate on Lagacharla. Criticising the government for handcuffing Lagacharla farmers, the BRS MLAs asked the government to release Lagacharla farmers immediately.



After passing the Bills, the Speaker adjourned the House for Wednesday.

'No question of scrapping districts'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said that many governance problems have arisen due to the BRS Government's policy of carving out new districts and revenue divisions and that they will try to solve them.



Replies to a question by former Minister Sunitha Laxma Reddy, he said that the government has no intention to scrap any district or revenue division. He said the state has 33 districts, 621 mandals and 76 revenue divisions and that will continue. There is no need for changes in districts and revenue divisions, the minister clarified. He said the government will direct Collectors to examine the possibility of setting up Malkhal and Athmakur revenue divisions and a new mandal in the Alair Assembly constituency.

TN CM presents Rs 5 cr to Gukesh

Announces plan to set up Home of Chess Academy

PNS ■ CEHNNAI

World's youngest chess champion D Gukesh was felicitated by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin and others at a function organised by the state government here on Tuesday. The Chief Minister presented him with a cheque for Rs 5 crore and a shawl on behalf of the state government and announced to establish a Home of Chess Academy through the state sports department to encourage talent and groom achievers in the state. "Tamil Nadu has a history of having 31 Chess grandmasters out of 85 in India. This felicitation is not only for Gukesh but also for all achievers. A Home of Chess Academy will be established to encourage the talent and to groom achievers," the



Chief Minister said. "I laud our Gukesh for becoming the world chess champion at the young age of 18. Our Chennai lad has set a record and the entire world is appreciating him," Stalin said. The Chief Minister asked

Gukesh's parents to come on stage and handed over the cheque in their presence. At the event, Stalin said Gukesh became a grandmaster when he was 12 years and a world chess champion at 18.

Continued on Page 2

'KTR will have to be in jail for 7 years'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that BRS Working President KT Rama Rao will have to stay in jail for seven years and that he is not likely to get bail. Reacting to BRS MLAs coming to the Assembly wearing black dresses on Tuesday, Venkat said that what KTR has done was a big mistake and that he should go to jail. The Minister said that KTR will have to stay in jail for years and will not even get bail. He said that BRS MLAs were praying so that KTR gets bail and that BRS MLAs wore black clothes like Sabarimala pilgrims.

Continued on Page 2

SHGs to be trained to turn temple garlands into incense sticks

NAVEENA GHAMATE naveena.ghanate@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

In a bid to address temple waste and empower women, Telangana's Endowments Department is reportedly thinking of a plan to convert the sacred garlands used in temples into incense sticks. The initiative, spearheaded by Minister Konda Surekha, serves the dual purpose of ensuring proper disposal of tonnes of floral waste while offering devotees an option to purchase incense sticks for religious offerings. Sources said that dedicated spaces, like sheds near temple pre-

Sources said that dedicated spaces, like sheds near temple premises, will be provided to Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to carry out production. This initiative achieves twin objectives - creating sustainable livelihoods for women in SHGs and offering devotees an eco-friendly way to make divine offerings. Temple authorities have long

grappled with the challenge of managing tonnes of floral waste generated during daily rituals and festivals. By recycling these flowers into incense sticks, the plan ensures proper disposal while turning waste into valuable products. The Endowments Department plans to provide skill training to SHG members, enabling efficient production and marketing. Given the consistent demand for incense sticks, both in temples and households, the initiative is expected to generate sustainable income for women. Devotees purchasing these incense sticks will directly contribute to supporting SHGs and promoting eco-friendly practices.

Continued on Page 2

Weakened by desertions, YSRCP faces an uphill task

Naturally, any opposition party which suffers a massive defeat would be immobilised for a few months. It may continue for some more time in the absence of a conducive atmosphere to build up an adversarial mood among the public against the ruling dispensation. If the humiliating defeat continues to linger on the party, the plan to expose the ruling party's failures may not take off. This can make the party directionless.



take on the ruling NDA as both the public and the opposition felt that the time had not come for that. Any government needs a minimum time to leave its imprint on the administration after getting a chance to rule. In the same way, the opposition has to wait for a suitable time to go on the offensive against the rulers till the 'honeymoon' is over. Generally, political parties focus on the promises made by rulers during campaigning. If governance slips from the right track, then it's time for the opposition to expose the rulers.

If one looks at the YSRCP it is clear that the party leadership is still not able to draw up a plan of action to take on the NDA comprising the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and the BJP. This lack of aggressiveness is confusing YSRCP cadres.

But instead of planning moves against the government, the YSRCP appears to be in disarray. Desertions are said to be the main reason for its lack of preparedness. Actually, the YSRCP can be considered the principal oppo-

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M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

sition in AP despite its inability to secure enough numbers in the Assembly. As per rules securing 10% (17) of seats (175) in the House is necessary to get the main opposition tag. Although the YSRCP couldn't secure the required numbers in the Assembly, it has a strong presence all over Andhra Pradesh. The YSRCP was defeated due to anti-incumbency although it effectively implemented social welfare

schemes which benefitted crores below the poverty line. But welfare measures sans development proved costly for the YSRCP and it could win only 11 seats against its earlier tally of 151 out of 175 seats in the House.

Desertions are worrying the YSRCP leadership. The YSRCP's Rajya Sabha Members Mopidevi Venkata Ramana Rao, Beeda Mastan Rao and R. Krishnaiah left and

joined the TDP and the BJP. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had picked Krishnaiah for the BC Welfare Association President post and had fielded him in the 2014 TG Assembly polls by projecting him as CM if the TDP is voted to power. As the TDP was margin-

alised in TG by the BRS no one in TG expected the TDP to win. It is believed that the TDP announced Krishnaiah as its CM candidate knowing this. But he could win his Assembly seat. Then he joined the YSRCP and became an RS Member. Later, Krishnaiah joined the BJP to continue as an RS Member. The BJP sought Chandrababu's help to ensure his victory. In fact, it is against CBN's policy to help somebody who had left the TDP to win the RS election. But he had to obey the BJP's orders.

Prime Minister Modi has been fielding people from disadvantaged groups. Krishnaiah was taken into the BJP as per this strategy. Madiga leaders are also believed to be under BJP watch. Recently, Modi attended the rally of an organisation which demands reservations for Madigas.

The YSRCP has accused the TDP of forcing its RS Members to join it. The YSRCP's RS Member, V. Vijayasai Reddy, raised the issue in Parliament to 'expose' the TDP. Continuous desertions have become a concern for the YSRCP now. Recently, former minister Muttamsetti (Avanti) Srinivas resigned from the party and criticised the leadership for launching protests against the NDA when there was no public support for that. This incident left YSRCP cadres more confused. They think that the time will come soon for dragging the government to the streets. Former MLA Grandhi Sreenivas also left the party. Sreenivas hit the headlines during the 2019 elections when he defeated JSP President Pawan Kalyan. But he didn't get a cabinet berth due to the views Jagan Mohan

Reddy's views about Pawan. He thought that making Sreenivas a minister may boost Pawan's image.

Recently, some YSRCP district presidents kept away from the party decision to stage dharnas at collectorates. Some senior YSRCP leaders are still analysing their defeat in the LS elections. Surprisingly some seniors pat themselves as they had lost only by small margins. This is quite funny as the party is facing a precarious situation. Many YSRCP candidates who lost their seats are believed to be thinking of 'saving' their future by contesting on the tickets of other parties.

The only option now before the YSRCP is to launch public movements against the rulers. But that looks like an uphill task as the NDA Government is on a strong wicket and as there is no anti-incumbency.

Congress govt borrowed Rs 1.27 L cr in one year: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao criticized the Congress government for misleading the public and the Assembly over the state's debts.

Speaking during a heated session, Harish demanded a special debate on state finances in the presence of auditors and financial experts and challenged the Congress to prove its claims.

"I challenge the Congress government to conduct a special debate in this House. Bring financial experts and auditors. I will prove the truth. The Congress is trying to hide its mismanagement by blaming past governments," he asserted.

Harish revealed that, as per RBI data, the Congress government has taken loans of Rs 55,277 crore under FRBM limits and a total of Rs 1,27,208 crore in loans within a year. "At this rate, in five years, the Congress will take loans of Rs



6,36,400 crore. Compare this with that of the BRS government, which borrowed just Rs 4,17,496 crore in 10 years," he stated.

He accused the Congress of deliberately misleading people about state finances. "In its white paper, the Congress mentioned Telangana's debt as Rs 6,71,757 crore during BRS rule. Now, they claim it is Rs 7,11,911 crore. They are throwing random numbers at the public," Harish said.

'Handcuffing of all BRS MLAs except KTR & Harish exposes 'dora' party brass'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Panchayati Raj Minister Seethakka said that except for former BRS Ministers KT Rama Rao and T. Harish Rao, all BRS MLAs were handcuffed and that it exposes the 'dora' attitude of KTR and Harish once again.

Seethakka said that there is no equality among BRS MLAs even while staging protests and that KTR and Harish showed their tyranny over party MLAs even during protests.

Speaking to scribes on Tuesday, Seethakka said that BRS leaders have no right to speak about handcuffing farmers. She remembered that at least 10 times the BRS Government had handcuffed farmers and no action was taken against the police. However, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy took the issue of handcuffing the Lagacherla farmer seriously and took action against the officials concerned, she said.

Megha must treat TIMS construction as a 'sacred mission': Venkat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government is determined to provide corporate-quality medical facilities to the poor, said Roads, Buildings & Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy.

After reviewing construction at the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS) in Sanathnagar (Erragadda), he announced that the hospital would be inaugurated on Telangana Formation Day next year by Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy.

He highlighted the government's efforts to ensure that even the poorest can get world-class

treatment. "We are building TIMS to ensure that the poor gets better treatment than what private hospitals provide," he said, reiterating that the focus remains on welfare schemes.

He outlined initiatives to strengthen public healthcare, including reinforcing AarogyaSri and increasing its coverage to Rs 10 lakh. He also revealed plans to construct TIMS hospitals in all major locations to ensure the poor do not get into debt.

Emphasising coordination between Roads & Buildings and Medical departments, Venkat said a nodal officer would soon be appointed to

streamline construction and operations. "Within the next few days, we will hold a joint meeting with officials from both departments to finalise the roadmap for future projects," he added.

Addressing construction quality, Venkat asked Megha Engineering, the project contractor, to treat TIMS project as a 'sacred mission.' He stressed the importance of flawless installation of electricity, oxygen pipelines, water, and drainage systems, warning against any post-completion leakages that could damage the company's reputation.

Who will pay EMIs of houses demolished for Musi Project: Kavitha

BRS MLC Kavitha has accused the Telangana government of misleading the public and the legislature on the Musi Project and questioned the financial basis of its proposals.

Speaking in the Legislative Council, Kavitha demanded to know how the state approached the Centre and

the World Bank for funds without a Detailed Project Report (DPR).

"On what grounds did the government seek Rs 4100 crore assistance from the World Bank without a DPR? We have information that such a proposal was sent," Kavitha asserted.

She questioned the gov-

ernment's dual approach of seeking Rs 14,000 crore assistance from the Centre while simultaneously approaching the World Bank. "Why is the government keeping the people and the legislature in the dark? If this continues, we will move a privilege motion," she warned.

Centre tables onee ...

Continued from page 1
the bills and termed the move an assault on the basic structure doctrine that stipulates certain features of the Constitution are beyond the amending power of Parliament.

"One of the essential features is federalism and the structure of our democracy. The bills assault the basic structure of the Constitution and exceed the legislative competence of this House," Tewari, a former Union minister, said.

Samajwadi Party member Dharmendra Yadav said the measure to introduce "one nation, one election" by the BJP was an attempt to bring dictatorship in the country. Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had favoured referring the bills to a joint committee of Parliament for

wider deliberations at every level.

"Detailed discussions can take place in the JPC. The report of the JPC will be approved by the Cabinet. Then again, there will be a discussion on this (bills) in the House," Shah said.

Meghwal said he would move a resolution referring the Bills to a joint committee of Parliament.

Earlier, Trinamool Congress member Kalyan Banerjee said the bills linked the tenure of state assemblies to that of the Lok Sabha, thus undermining the mandate of the people. "The state government is not subordinate to the central government or Parliament. The bills take away the autonomy of the state assembly. It is not an election reform but just the fulfilment of one gentleman's desire and dream," he said.

Big boost to ...

Continued from page 1

These include capital investment subsidies, state GST reimbursements, and exemptions in land conversion and registration charges. Tourism projects will be categorized into micro, medium, large and mega with incentives reserved for iconic projects such as theme parks and film studios.

The policy also incorporates a strong emphasis on safe tourism, introducing dedicated tourist police units, surveillance systems, and women-friendly measures. Simultaneously, eco-friendly initiatives like green energy, water conservation and plastic-free zones underline the state's commitment to responsible tourism.

Marketing and branding strategies will play a pivotal role in the policy's implementation. Telangana Tourism plans to engage professional agencies, strengthen its digital presence,

and promote its handlooms, handicrafts, and cuisine through food festivals, fairs and global tourism forums. Notable programmes include the 'Telangana Darshini' initiative, aimed at encouraging educational tours for students.

The policy highlights efforts to skill local communities through a hub-and-spoke training model. The state plans to upgrade the National Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management (NITHM) into a full-fledged Tourism & Hospitality University to bridge skill gaps. Specialized training programs will ensure the active participation of women and local entrepreneurs.

A calendar of iconic festivals will be created with events like Bathukamma, Kakatiya Festival, International Buddhist Festival, and River Festivals to attract global attention. The Medaram Jatara will be pro-

moted on par with the Kumbh Mela to highlight Telangana's cultural richness.

A robust institutional mechanism has been outlined for implementation. A State Tourism Promotion Board, chaired by the Chief Minister, will oversee policy execution, while Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), headed by collectors will manage STAs. The policy also integrates frameworks for thematic tourism sectors, including medical, eco and heritage tourism.

The government hopes this landmark policy will significantly enhance Telangana's contribution to the national tourism map. Officials underscored its potential to create a vibrant ecosystem which fosters prosperity, empowers local communities and safeguards the state's heritage for future generations.

Cyberabad Police launches cybercrime awareness drive

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Police, in collaboration with the Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC), launched a major awareness initiative, Project PROTECT, on Tuesday. The project aims to educate the public on cybercrime prevention through education, collaboration, and training.

Cyberabad Police Commissioner Avinash Mohanty highlighted the growing challenge of cybercrimes and stressed the importance of collective efforts, including media, social media influencers, and students, in raising awareness. He urged citizens to use the helpline number 1930 for immediate assistance in cybercrime cases.

Tummala orders...

Continued from page 1

soybean farmers can get support price. However, the Minister said the state government immediately granted permission keeping in mind the interests of farmers.

He said that 27,811 tonnes of soybeans were procured in Adilabad, 14,476 tonnes in Nirmal, 7,867.75 tonnes in Kamareddy, 5,413.85 tonnes in Nizamabad and 3,339 tonnes in Sangareddy.

BRS legislators ...

Continued from page 1

BRS MLAs G. Jagadish Reddy, Dr Palla Rajeshwar Reddy and Anil Jadav launched a blistering attack on the Congress Government over the Lagcherla farmers' issue and accused the Congress of suppressing opposition voices and evading debates in the Assembly.

Speaking at the Assembly Media Point, the BRS leaders criticised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and the government's handling of the crisis.

Dr Palla Rajeshwar Reddy pointed out that despite the BRS repeatedly demanding a debate on the Lagcherla incident for two consecutive days, the government deliberately avoided a discussion.

"The Congress which preaches Assembly rules to the opposition has itself violated them. Why did the Speaker allow the ruling party to bring placards into the House? Bills were passed amidst protests without addressing the core issue," he said.

He accused the government of being insensitive to the farmers' plight. "While Lagcherla farmers languish in jails, the Chief Minister and his Ministers are celebrating. Farmers are shedding tears while the

Congress is drowning itself in luxury," Palla Rajeshwar said, adding that the BRS would not let the government avoid accountability on this issue.

BRS MLA G. Jagadish Reddy accused the Congress of turning the Assembly into a farce and undermining democratic institutions.

"Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has weakened all systems in the state. For two days, we demanded a debate on Lagcherla farmers, but the government ran away. Instead of facing us, the Chief Minister is leaking selective news to the media to survive," Jagadish said.

Pointing out Revanth's reluctance to appear in the Assembly for debates he said, "If the government has the guts, let it conduct a 15-day session. Let us discuss everything - from Formula E to Congress's failures and BRS's achievements. You can suppress our voices in the Assembly, but you cannot silence us among the people," he declared.

Jagadish said the state is now under "police rule" and accused the Chief Minister of orchestrating arrests and filing false cases to suppress dissent.

TPCC ...

Continued from page 1

The CM, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, AICC in-charge Deepa Das Munshi, Ministers, MPs, MLCs, MLAs and senior leaders will participate in the rally.

The TPCC is organising the rally to protest against the financial manipulations of Gautam Adani in the US, which have damaged the image of the country's business and financial sectors.

TN CM presents ...

Continued from page 1

"So, take him as your inspiration and achieve. We should create lakhs of Gukeshes," Stain said.

Whenever the DMK was in power it encouraged sportspersons and recognised their achievements. Former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi felicitated former five-time world chess champion Viswanathan Anand and now Gukesh is being felicitated, he said.

As in the game of chess, one should be prepared to make meaningful sacrifices to gain big victories in life, he said.

SHGs to be ...

Continued from page 1

The project is similar to the one launched by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) in 2021, which will initially be implemented in major temples like Vemulawada, Komuravelli, and Dharmapuri.

The government aims to expand the project to include more temples after assessing its impact.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Dec 17 10:56 AM to Dec 18 10:06 AM
Chaturthi: Dec 18 10:06 AM to Dec 19 10:03 AM
Nakshatram: Pushya: Dec 18 12:44 AM to Dec 19 12:58 AM
Ashlesha: Dec 19 12:58 AM to Dec 20 01:59 AM
Rahukalam: 12:12 PM to 1:35 PM
Yamagandam: 8:06 AM to 9:28 AM
Varjyam: 02:19 PM to 03:59 PM
Gulika: 10:50 AM to 12:12 PM
Amritakalam: 06:30 PM to 08:07 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 28°
Humidity: 42%
Sunrise: 6:44 AM
Sunset: 5:41 PM
Updated: December 17, 2024 5:00 PM

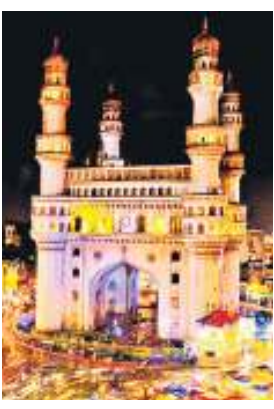
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City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | DECEMBER 18, 2024

03



CITY EVENTS

Good Morning

Japanese Movie With English Subtitles

Venue

Lamakaan
On: 18-Dec-24 (7:30 pm)

Anandam Yoga Camp

On The Occasion Of National Naturopathy Day

Venue

Jaya Laxmi Gardens
On: 18-Dec-24
(4 pm to 6 pm)

Live Performance By Rudhra (Band)

Venue

Tabula Rasa - The Bar
On: 18-Dec-24 (8 pm)

Christmas Bazaar

Exhibition-cum-Sale

Venue

Lulu mall
Till December 31,
daily at 10:00 am

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.

TGCHE appoints conveners for TG CETs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE) has appointed several officials as conveners for the Telangana Common Entrance Tests (TG CETs) 2025. The tests are set to be held for admissions into various undergraduate and postgraduate professional courses offered by universities in Telangana for the academic year 2025-26.

Prof B Dean Kumar, Professor and Head, Dept of Civil Engineering, JNTU College of Engineering, Hyderabad.

Prof A Aruna Kumari, Professor of Mechanical Engineering and Director, DUEX, JNTU, Kukatpally, Hyderabad.

Prof Aluvaal Ravi, Dept of Business Management, Mahatma Gandhi University, Nalgonda.

Prof P Chandra Sekhar, Principal, OU College of Engineering, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

Prof B Vijayalaxmi, Dean, Faculty of Law, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

Prof B Venkataram Reddy, Professor of Physics, Kakatiya University, Warangal.

Prof NS Dileep, Professor of Physical Education, JNTU, Kukatpally, Hyderabad.

The schedule for the Common Entrance Tests will be announced later.

President Droupadi Murmu arrives in Hyd on five-day visit

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

President Droupadi Murmu arrived in Telangana on Tuesday for a five-day visit. Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, and senior officials welcomed her at the Air Force Station in Hakimpet. Earlier in the day, the President attended the first convocation of AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) at Mangalagiri in Andhra Pradesh.

During her visit to Telangana from December 17-21, the President will stay

at Rashtrapati Nilayam, one of the Presidential Retreats.

On December 18, she will inaugurate and lay the foundation for various initiatives at Rashtrapati Nilayam in Bolarum, Secunderabad.

On December 20, she will present the President's Colours to the College of Defence Management in Secunderabad.

Later that evening, she will host an "At Home" reception at Rashtrapati Nilayam for state dignitaries, leading citizens, and academics, among others, an official release stated on Monday. The President visits Rashtrapati Nilayam at



Governor Jishnu Dev Varma welcoming President Droupadi Murmu in Hyderabad on Tuesday

least once a year to conduct official business.

The locations of the 'Retreat Building' in Shimla and 'Rashtrapati Nilayam' in Hyderabad, as Presidential Retreats,

Yadadri temple earnings go up by Rs 33.81 crore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On account of increased footfalls of devotees at Yadadri temple, the Yadagirigutta Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple earned Rs 232, 77, 95, 796 during the period December 2023 to December 2024, as against the revenue earned - Rs 198, 96,48, 413 - during the period December 2022 to December 2023. The temple revenue has increased by Rs 33,81,47, 383 during the past one year.

The huge increase in the temple's income is attributed to the unprecedented increase in the number of devotees visiting the temple during December 2023 to 2024 when compared to earlier.

The RTC buses to the Yadagirigutta are always overcrowded. The devotees visit the temple as they regard the presiding deity to be a powerful Lord and would fulfill their wishes. Because of the strong belief, the footfalls of devotees to the temple have been on the



rise.

Normally, women visit temples only on festive occasions and during important occasions like their weddings. However, under the Mahalakshmi scheme of the state government the state government allowed free travel of women by RTC buses since last December pushing up the number of women devotees visiting the temple significantly.

Till last year, the number of devotees visiting the temple on week days was put at between 15,000 and 20,000. However, their number increased on week-ends to cross 30,000-mark. During the deity's Brahmotsavam cele-

brations and during the Telugu auspicious month of Karthika Masam the devotees visiting the temple will increase. Because of the free journey for women by RTC buses, even on ordinary days the number of women visiting the temple was found to be extraordinary. On holidays, at least 50,000 people on an average visit the temple to have darshan of the deity increasing the time required to have darshan of the deity.

In tune with the increase in devotees to the temple, amenities at the temple have been increased proportionately. A dormitory has been provided a top the Yadadri Hills for the benefit of the devotees. Moreover, the temple authorities made arrangements for the devotees to have a dip in the temple pond atop the hill. Auto-ricshaws are being allowed to ply to the temple. Lift facility has been provided for the aged and physically challenged and a wheel chair facility has been provided.

Officials told to speed up developmental works in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner K Illambathi held a video conference with officials on Tuesday to assess the progress of developmental works. He directed the officials to speed up the developmental works. Along with Deputy Commissioner E Panasa Reddy, Illambathi reviewed progress of work at waterlogging points, rainwater storage structures,



GHMC Commissioner K Illambathi holding a video conference with officials in Hyderabad on Tuesday

and foot overbridges in various zones.

The Commissioner instruct-

ed officials to complete the projects within the given time without causing inconvenience to people. He emphasised the need to identify suitable locations for building foot overbridges and prepare plans for permanent structures to address 141 waterlogging points. Measures should ensure no issues arise in the next rainy season.

He also ordered the immediate completion of rainwater harvesting structures. Out of 12 planned structures, four are

completed, and the rest are in progress. Feasibility studies for new water-holding structures should be conducted.

The Commissioner highlighted forming a committee involving Engineering, Town Planning, Electrical, Advertisement, and UBD departments to address land acquisition and utility shifting for 125 junction upgrades.

He noted that of 195 beautification projects costing Rs 124.68 crore, 28 are completed, while 167 are ongoing.

Mayor inaugurates developmental projects



Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi inaugurating the beautification and development works at several junctions at Serilingampally zone on Tuesday.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi inaugurated several beautification and developmental projects in Serilingampally on Tuesday. MLA Arekapudi Gandhi also attended the event.

The mayor opened an animal graveyard built by the Raga Foundation under its CSR initiative. Beautification efforts included projects like sculptures, fountains, and cascades at the JRC Junction and the development of Biodiversity Junction. Street decoration and fur-

niture installations from Roda Mistry College to the Telangana State Election Commission office have also begun.

At Gachibowli Stadium, rotary beautification with sculptures and fountains has been initiated. Similarly, upgrades involving sculptures, fountains, and lighting are underway at Khajaguda Junction. These works aim to enhance the city's visual appeal and overall ambience.

Zonal Commissioner Upender Reddy and Shankar along with others were present.

quals in connection with the case: one of the theatre's owners, its senior manager, and the lower balcony in charge.

A medical bulletin from the private hospital where the boy is being treated stated on Tuesday that "Child Sritej continues to remain in PICU (Paediatric Intensive Care Unit) needing mechanical ventilation with minimal support of oxygen and pressures."

"His fever is reducing, and he is on minimal inotropes. His vital parameters are stable, and he is tolerating feeds well. Given his static neurological status, a tracheostomy is being planned to facilitate weaning from the ventilator," the doctors treating him said.

Meanwhile, Hyderabad Police Commissioner CV Anand and Health Secretary Christina Z Chongthu visited the hospital on Tuesday to enquire about the boy's condition.

"There was a discussion in the government today, and whatever is required to save the boy and provide better treatment will be done," Anand said.

The Health Secretary also assured the boy's father that the government would extend whatever support is necessary to the fullest extent.

The Hyderabad Police chief further stated, "The neurological condition is severely impacted. The doctors have opined that it will be a long haul before any improvements can be seen. The treatment is ongoing, and we are all hoping for the best."

The government will bear the entire expenditure for the treatment, the officials confirmed.



People submitting their petitions at Prajavani Programme in Hyderabad on Tuesday

PLEAS AT PRAJAVANI

'Make us SBM coordinators in right earnest'

SAMUEL JOSHUA
samuelmjoshuamjmc@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

Village and mandal coordinators working under the Saakshar Bharat Mission (SBM) appealed for their reinstatement. Over 15 people attended Prajavani, hoping the Congress administration would address their issue. A total of 465 grievance applications were submitted to Prajavani on Tuesday at the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan.

When asked, SBM Committee president B Srinivas stated that they had worked as mandal and village coordinators under the Sakshara Bharat Mission for nearly a decade between September 2010 and March 2019. He noted that apart from teaching illiterate individuals aged 15 and above, they also performed junior panchayat secretary duties, including collecting taxes for Gram Panchayats and supporting the Swachh Bharat programme of constructing toilets. Srinivas also highlighted that they have also taken part in implementing welfare schemes like Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bhima and Haritharam, besides conducting surveys. Srinivas said they still continue to work as Booth Level Officers (BLOs) without job security.

Srinivas revealed that the previous government neglected their services, leaving over 18,000 coordinators jobless. He mentioned that they had met with Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka and other Cabinet members, who assured them of resolving the issue. He also said that during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, when they appealed for help raising their banner, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy promised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to include their issue in the manifesto and resolve their problem. Srinivas urged the CM to fulfill this promise.

Another member, Vasanthi, expressed hope in Congress, noting that the Congress itself had implemented the Sakshara Bharat Mission. She shared their struggles, surviving on a just Rs. 2,000 salary while performing various government tasks.

She mentioned that Minister Seethakka has responded positively, saying the file is under review. However, she pointed out that despite repeated visits to offices, they have not received a clear answer. Vasanthi added that they submitted grievances through Prajavani five times, but officials respond that the file is in process. She cried out that everyone gives positive responses but takes no action. Vasanthi urged the reinstatement of their jobs according to GP rules, emphasizing their good reputations and willingness to work.

The committee urged the Congress government to address their issue quickly, honoring the program the congress party initiated.

Shaikhpeta IoS suspended for dereliction of duty

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Durishetty suspended Shaikhpeta Mandal Deputy Inspector of Schools (IOS) K Yadagiri for allowing a lunch party during school hours by closing schools.

On Friday, teachers in Shaikhpeta Mandal suspended classes and gathered for a lunch party with permission from K Yadagiri.

The notice said that Yadagiri was serving as the Additional In-Charge Deputy IOS and Gazetted Headmaster of Banjara Hills. Citing his dereliction of duty, the District Collector took swift action and placed him under suspension.

Furthermore, the District Collector issued show-cause notices to 80 teachers from various government schools in Shaikhpeta Mandal who participated in the lunch party, neglecting their teaching duties and violating government regulations.

The Collector warned that strict action would be taken against anyone displaying negligence toward their duties.

Ranganath warns against encroachment on Kamuni lake

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Commissioner AV Ranganath visited Kamuni and Maisamma Lakes located in the Moosapet of Kukatpally Mandal, Medchal District on Tuesday.

During the visit he clarified that HYDRAA would target and remove any unauthorised constructions.

HYDRAA was formed in July 2024 and residents who have permissions near lakes or constructed will be asked for its removal.

However, this exemption does not apply to commercial complexes. He also stated that constructions approved by relevant government departments would remain unaffected.

The visit was prompted by complaints that certain individuals were encroaching on Kamuni Lake by dumping construction debris and soil, as well as illegally occupying the



HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath interacting with people at Moosapet in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

connecting canals.

The Commissioner sternly warned that those responsible for filling the lake with soil would not be spared, and any illegal constructions within the lake area would be demolished.

Highlighting a positive development, the Commissioner AV Ranganath appreciated the fact that local residents were unitedly filing complaints and assured cooperation with government agencies to protect the lakes.

Ranganath urged residents around Kamuni and Maisamma Lakes to stay vigilant and prevent encroachments.

During the visit, he inspected the areas around Maisamma Lake and expressed anger at Vasavi Construction Company for starting work without completing the flood canal connecting Kamuni and Maisamma Lakes.

He instructed the construction company to immediately complete the 17-meter-wide flood canal as planned.

Local residents informed the Commissioner that diverting the flood canal had caused severe flooding in Safdar Nagar and Rajiv Gandhi Nagar slums during the monsoon.

To prevent similar issues next monsoon, the Commissioner directed local officials to ensure the completion of flood canal works between Kamuni and Maisamma Lakes without delay.

Kothagudem Municipality likely to be upgraded as corporation

PNS ■ KOTHAGUDEM

It is learnt that Kothagudem Municipality is all set to be upgraded to a municipal Corporation. The Telangana government has reportedly decided to do so.

Currently, there are 13 municipal corporations in the State, and the government is considering promoting Kothagudem as one of them. The proposal is under review, and the government plans to merge Kothagudem, Palvoncha and 35 panchayats across four mandals into the proposed new corporation.

Kothagudem municipality has a population of 188,191 (93,300 men and 94,891 women), while the population in the Palvoncha area exceeds one lakh. The panchayats in the proposed regions—Sujatanagar (11,124 people), Chunchupalli



(41,860 people), Lakshmidivipalli (21,432 people), and Palvoncha (5,903 people)—bring the total population to nearly 4 lakh when all these areas merged with the proposed Kothagudem municipal corporation.

The government is considering all aspects of establishing Kothagudem as a municipal corporation.

Combining Kothagudem and Palvoncha into a single corporation could lead to significant

Kothagudem. This would enhance transportation facilities, boost the real estate sector, and attract more industries, leading to rapid development. The merger of the two municipalities into a corporation is seen as a step towards revitalising the region.

Additionally, the Congress party is focusing on this area as it is critical for retaining its influence in the Khammam district, where the ruling BRS party has won only one seat in the past two elections. With Congress now holding sway in Khammam, the government is keen on focusing on Kothagudem's development to maintain its hold on the region.

Furthermore, once the Polavaram project is completed, displaced people from Palvoncha might return to their native villages, adding to the area's growth.

economic benefits for the region. With Singareni Collieries headquartered in Kothagudem and industries like the Kothagudem Thermal Power Plant and Sponge Iron India Limited in the Palvoncha area, the region is positioned as an industrial hub. However, it has not seen the expected development over the past decade.

The State government, focusing on the development of the Bhadrachalam district, is also planning to set up an airport in

MLA urges govt to repair Peddavagu, Vengala Rao Projects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Aswaraopeta

MLA Jare Adinarayana has appealed to the State government to take immediate action to repair the Peddavagu project, which was severely damaged during the floods three months ago. The MLA highlighted that the floods had washed away thousands of acres of crops, leaving farmers in distress. While Ministers Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and Tummala Nageshwar Rao had visited the site earlier and set up a temporary ring bund for relief, the MLA stressed the need for permanent repairs to protect the interests of farmers as 13,000 acres of agricultural land depend on the project.

In his first speech in the assembly, MLA Jare Adinarayana also urged the government to repair the damage to the Jalagam Vengala Rao project in Chandrugonda mandal, which has been in disrepair for the last five years. He said that the farmers in the region had ensured his victory in the elections on the condition that he would work towards repairing the project once in office. According to the MLA, the approach canals have been completely destroyed, exacerbating the hardships faced by local farmers. Adinarayana mentioned that he had submitted detailed estimations for the repairs to the Irrigation Minister, who forwarded them to the relevant officials. However, the officials rejected the proposed estimations. The MLA has now appealed to the Irrigation Minister to reconsider and approve the necessary repairs to assist the farmers.

Additionally, the MLA appealed to Transport Minister to provide a bus service to the remote Adivasi village of Kavadigundla, located 45 kilometers from Aswaraopeta, to improve connectivity for the local population.



Chit fund company shuts up shop in Vikarabad district

PNS ■ VIKARABAD

In Vikarabad, people from various backgrounds, ranging from the poor to the middle class, are often cheated by chit fund schemes. People join the chit fund schemes hoping to save a portion of the money they earn through hard work. By contributing a certain amount every month, they

When the victims questioned the chairman of SLNK, Kalkuntla Antharam Devender Goud, he failed to respond. Similarly, when they confronted the company's manager, Giridhar Reddy, he denied any involvement, and the victims alleged that when they went to his home to inquire, his wife insulted them.

The victims expressed their frustration, stating that they had worked tirelessly to save money and had invested it in the chit funds, hoping for a better future. Some had invested for weddings, while others hoped to start businesses. Now, they feel helpless and angry as they are left with nothing.

The chairman allegedly transferred all his assets to an office boy's name, claiming he has no assets left, it is alleged. Another victim complained that for three years, they had not been paid rent, and now the company was resorting to threats when asked about the money. The victims have demanded immediate legal action against the company and want their money refunded. They have formally filed a complaint with the DSP.



However, many chit fund companies have already defrauded people by absconding with crores of rupees. Recently, in the Parigi area of Vikarabad district, a chit fund company shut down and the operator absconded with around Rs 2 crores of subscribers' money. This unexpected development left the people who had invested their money in the company in despair, prompting them to file a complaint with the Deputy Superintendent of Police.

People warned against cybercriminals posing as police officials

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Recently, cybercriminals posing as Mumbai police officers have been targeting ordinary people and employees. They claim to be from the Mumbai police Narcotics wing or CBI police and tell the victim that a parcel booked in their name was intercepted and it contained narcotics. They threatened the gullible people by saying that a case was being registered against them. They warn that if a case was filed, the persons concerned would lose their job, and they would be arrested, beside their reputation being ruined. They threatened to file a case unless the persons concerned immediately sent money. The criminals pressured the victim to send all the money they had, even forcing them to take out a loan from the bank to send the money.

District Superintendent of Police Sharat Chandra Pawar warned that the people should be vigilant about phone calls from unknown numbers. He urged the people to report to police immediately if they



Nalgonda Superintendent of Police Sharat Chandra Pawar speaking to the media in Nalgonda on Tuesday

received such spam calls. Digital arrest scams too have been reported, he said.

In a similar incident, cybercriminals, posing as Mumbai Narcotics Department officials, made a call to a woman in the two Town area of Nalgonda and enacted the same drama. They forced her into transferring nearly Rs 5 lakh from her bank account. After realizing she had been cheated, the victim filed a complaint with the Cybercrime police, leading to the registration of an FIR. Many innocent people have already fallen victim to similar scams.

Class 7 student dies by suicide at residential school

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a tragic incident, Lohit Akshay, a seventh-grade student at Narayana Residential School in Hayat Nagar, died by suicide on Sunday night. He hailed from Wanaparthy district. Lohit allegedly faced physical punishment from a physics teacher, reportedly with the involvement of the class leader

in the classroom. The grieving family expressed outrage, claiming that the school management has yet to provide any explanation regarding the incident. The situation escalated as student union leaders staged protests outside the school, demanding

answers and accountability. In response, police arrested several protesters, including those questioning how the authorities transferred Lohit's body without first informing the family. The handling of the situation has drawn criticism from various quarters with protesters accusing both

the school and law enforcement of negligence and insensitivity. The incident has sparked widespread concern about the safety and well-being of students in residential schools, as well as the accountability of educational institutions in addressing such tragic events. Investigations are ongoing, and the family continues to demand justice for Lohit Akshay.



LAGACHERLA INCIDENT

BRS leaders place memorandum at Ambedkar statue

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Former MLA Kancherla Bhupal Reddy, along with senior leaders, people's representatives and party officials of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), gathered at the District Education Officer (DEO) office in Nalgonda to submit a memorandum at the statue of Dr BR Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution. The memorandum raised concerns about alleged atrocities committed by the Congress government, particularly against farmers at Lagacharla.

Speaking to the media, Bhupal Reddy strongly condemned the Congress government's treatment of Dalits, tribal people and the people belonging to marginalised communities. He accused the State government of forcibly seizing agricultural land from the poor Dalit and tribal farmers, falsely implicating them in criminal cases, and subjecting them to brutal third-degree torture. He specifically highlighted the case of farmers in Lagacharla, where land was allegedly being seized for the Pharma City project under



BRS leaders, led by former MLA Kancherla Bhupal Reddy, staging a protest at BR Ambedkar Statue in Nalgonda on Tuesday

misleading pretenses, and those protesting were reportedly facing illegal cases. Bhupal Reddy also criticised the Congress government's handling of the protest by people against setting up of a cement factories in the Ramannapet region. He warned that the Congress government's actions were systematically undermining the constitutional rights of citizens, particularly those from vulnerable sections of society.

The event was attended by several BRS leaders, including Kattikam Sattayya Goud, former

Chairman of the Market Committee Borra Sudhakar, former RO Male Sharanya Reddy, Nalgonda Municipal ex-Chairman Mandadi Saidireddy, and others. The leaders collectively urged the state government to adhere to the Constitution and stop the oppression of farmers and marginalized groups.

The memorandum emphasised the need for urgent justice and a more compassionate approach from the government, particularly in addressing the grievances of the farmers of Lagacharla.

Cold wave conditions grip Rangareddy district

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Ranga Reddy district is facing an intense cold wave with night temperatures falling to record lows on Sunday. Chilly winds from the north have left residents shivering, particularly affecting children and the elderly.

Ibrahimpatnam mandal recorded the district's lowest temperature at 5.7°C in Chandanavelli, while Amanagallu experienced the highest at 17.3°C. Heavy frost was observed in several areas during late-night hours, leading to frequent road accidents on major highways such as Bijapur, Vijayawada, Srisaillam, and Nagarjuna Sagar, as well as the Outer Ring Road.

The cold wave has made daily life difficult for many. Women, children, and elderly individuals are staying wrapped in warm clothing until late in the day to combat the biting chill. Office-goers and marketing staff who leave early in the morning are particularly affected, struggling to cope with the severe cold. The sudden temperature drop has also led to an increase in respiratory, skin, and heart-related health issues, forcing residents to seek warmer clothing like sweaters, woolen rugs, and monkey

caps. The demand for these items has driven up prices in local markets.

The sudden weather change has caused a rise in health problems such as cough, cold, nasal congestion, and asthma. Many are also experiencing dehydration due to reduced water intake, along with dry and cracked skin. Elderly individuals and those with pre-existing heart conditions are at a higher risk, as blood clots caused by the cold can lead to severe heart attacks. Dr. Naginder, a senior medical expert from Maheswaram Medical College, has advised people to wear warm clothing, avoid stepping out early in the morning, stay hydrated, and use massages to prevent burning sensations in their extremities.

The cold wave has also significantly reduced power consumption across the district. With air conditioners, coolers, and fans switched off, electricity demand has dropped. On December 10, power demand peaked at 3,141 MW, but by Sunday, it had fallen to 2,593 MW. The use of geysers and heaters in the mornings continues, but the absence of cooling appliances in offices and homes has eased the load on the power grid.

HISTORIC MEDAK CATHEDRAL TURNS 100

Built to feed the poor; it is now revered by all

PNS ■ MEDAK

Medak, a famous tourist destination in Telangana, is home to the second-largest Christian prayer cathedral in Asia. This year marks the centenary of the Medak Church, and the church is being beautifully decorated for the celebrations. The Medak Cathedral, which is completing 100 years, is an architectural marvel.

Standing at 175 feet tall and 100 feet wide, the construction of this church involved both Indian and foreign experts. The church, built over two floors, remains in perfect condition even after a century. This durability is a testament to the strong construction techniques used, which are believed to have incorporated ancient Indian architectural practices. Not only the walls but also the interior of the church, with its

colorful stained glass paintings, is a highlight of the church. These paintings, which depict the birth of Jesus Christ, the crucifixion, and ascension, are eye-catching. What's particularly interesting is that these paintings were not created on a single sheet of glass. Instead, individual pieces of glass were painted in England and then brought to India to be assembled. These paintings are best visible when sunlight falls on them.

Historians suggest that the marbles used in the church's construction were sourced from England and Italy. Special care was taken during the construction to ensure proper acoustics within the church. The church was built using only stone and dung lime, which is another unique feature. The church, with its two-story spacious prayer hall and



tall spire, stands as a testament to the expertise of the builders. The church stretches 200 feet in length and has a vast interior that captivates visitors.

The year was 1914, during World War I. Amidst the global power struggles, thousands of soldiers were heading into battle, and many were suffering from hunger and depriva-

tion. India was no exception, with people facing severe hardships. In this bleak situation, Charles Walker, an Englishman, conceived the idea of building a church dedicated to the merciful. For this, the Nizam of Hyderabad allocated 1,000 acres of land. Construction began in 1914 and was completed on

December 25, 1924. Over ten years, around 12,000 workers were employed, providing them with much-needed work. It is the church to feed the poor. It is revered by all.

The construction cost of the church at that time was approximately Rs 14 lakh. In recent years, Rs 2 crore were spent on its restoration. The church has enough space to accommodate 5,000 to 6,000 people at a time. During festivals like Christmas and Good Friday, not only people from Telangana but also visitors from across India and abroad come to the church. Interestingly, it is not just Christians who visit; people of other faiths also come to see this magnificent structure. Visitors come not only during the festivals but also on ordinary days to admire this architectural wonder.

TELANGANA POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD
REGIONAL OFFICE, NALGONDA

H.No.8-15, 1st Floor, Sri Lakshmi Complex, Near IT Tower, Sri Vinayaka Nagar, Hyderabad Road, Nalgonda - 508 001, Phone No: 08682-248005, E-mail: ee-nig-tspcb@telangana.gov.in

ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEARING NOTIFICATION

In accordance with the Notification No.S.O.1533 Dt.14th September, 2006 of Ministry of Environment Forests, Government of India, it is to notify that M/s Penna Cement Industries Limited has for enhancement of Chaanakya Cements Lime Stone Mine for increase in Lime Stone from 1.5 MTPA to 1.8 MTPA with increase of total excavation from 1.864 MTPA to 2.263 [Lime Stone - 1.8 MTPA + Mineral Sub Grade - 0.433 MTPA + Interstitial Waste - 0.018 MTPA Soil - 0.012 MTPA] out of 354.236 Ha in the total mine lease area, 303.684 Ha mine lease area in Ganeshpahad Village, Damaracherla Mandal, Nalgonda District & 50.572 Ha mine lease area in Sunyapahad Village, Palakaveedu Mandal, Suryapet District. **Environmental Public hearing for Suryapet District** in the part of Chaanakya Cements Lime Stone Mine enhancement of M/s. Penna Cement Industries Limited. and it is also proposed to have a Public Hearing as per 1 (a) of the schedule to the ETA Notification 2006 i.e., Non coal (Mining of minerals)

1. Name of the Project and location of the project	M/s Penna Cement Industries Limited (Chaanakya Cements Lime Stone Mine), Sunyapahad Village, Palakaveedu Mandal, Suryapet District, Telangana.
2. Name & registered office address of the company with Telephone No.	M/s. Penna Cement Industries Limited, Lakshmi Nivas 705, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad - 500034, Telangana. Phone No: 040-44565100 / 400. e-mail: gpd.environmental@adani.com
3. Land details	Total area of the project — 50.572 Ha.
4. Name of the authorized person to be contacted	Mr. K. Subbalakshmanan, Chief Plant Manager Phone No: 8096900270 / 8096900264
5. Capital Cost of the proposed project	Rs.1.0 Crore
6. Line of activity	Lime Stone Mine (Mining of minerals) Increase in Lime Stone production from 1.5 MTPA to 1.8 MTPA
7. Date / Time / Venue of Public Hearing	Date: 18.01.2025 (Saturday), Time: 1.00 PM; Venue: Near the project area.
8. Project / Environmental consultant	M/s. B.S. Envi-Tech Private Limited, Secunderabad. Phone No: +91-40-49783062 E-mail: info@bsenvitech.com
9. Places of availability of Executive Summary (Telugu & English) & Draft ETA report on proposed project for the Public:	1. District Collector's Office, Suryapet. 2. District Industries Centre, Suryapet. 3. Zilla Parishath Office, Suryapet. 4. Tahasildar's Office, Palakaveedu Mandal, Suryapet District. 5. Grampanchayath Office, Sunyapahad Village, Palakaveedu Mandal, Suryapet District. 6. Integrated Regional Office, MoEF&CC, Govt. of India, 3rd Floor, Aranya Bhavan, Saifabad, Hyderabad. 7. Telangana Pollution Control Board, Paryavaran Bhavan, A-3, Industrial Estate, Sanath Nagar, Hyderabad. 8. Telangana Pollution Control Board, Zonal Office, R.C. Puram, Sangareddy District. 9. Telangana Pollution Control Board, Regional Office, Nalgonda.

Suggestions, views, comments and objections of the public, if any, are invited within 30 days from the date of publication of the notification from all persons including bonafide, residents, environmental groups, others located at project site / sites of displacement / sites likely to be affected. All the above persons can also submit written suggestions to the undersigned of the Telangana Pollution Control Board or through e-mail: ee-nig-tspcb@telangana.gov.in. The interested persons can take part in the proceedings of the public hearing on the date and venue specified above. The Executive Summary (in English & Telugu) and draft EIA report is also displayed in TGPCB website @ tspcb.cgg.gov.in.

Sd/- ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER
Telangana Pollution Control Board,
Regional Office, Nalgonda

Place : Nalgonda
Date : 16.12.2024
Note: The notice of Public Hearing is issued as per the Appendix-IV of ETA Notification, 2006 and its cost is borne by the project proponent.
R.O. No. : 801-PPICL-AGENCY/ADVT/11/2024-25

ACROSS THE STATES



ASI begins repair work of temple's 'Ratna Bhandar'

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Tuesday commenced repair work of 'Ratna Bhandar' of the Jagannath temple in Odisha's Puri, a state minister said. The work started around 1 pm and will continue till 6 pm. Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said. "The ASI has assured us a three-month timeline, but we have requested them to expedite the process," he told reporters in Bhubaneswar. Harichandan said the repair work will be carried out without affecting the daily rituals of deities inside the 12th century shrine, and the timings for devotees. ASI Superintending Archaeologist D B Garmayak said: "We will set up scaffolding first before removing plasters from the walls of the Ratna Bhandar (temple treasury). The entire structure will then be cleaned, and the repair of old iron beams and cracked stones will be undertaken." Both the inner and outer chambers will undergo repair. The renovation of the Ratna Bhandar will not be carried out on Saturdays and Sundays, and other holidays, keeping in view the crowd of devotees, the ASI official said.



'UP govt recruited over 1.60L in education sector'

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted the government's achievements in the education sector on the second day of the state assembly's Winter Session on Tuesday. "Our government has successfully carried out more than 1.60 lakh recruitment in the education sector," Adityanath said. Addressing the concerns raised by SP MLAs Manoj Kumar Paras, Pooja, and Pankaj Patel, the chief minister acknowledged the importance and sensitivity of their issues but urged members to present facts while maintaining the decorum of the House. The chief minister said that a new selection board, the Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission, has been formed to streamline recruitment in the education sector, including basic, secondary, higher, technical, vocational, and medical education.



Willing to resign as Maha Congress chief: Patole

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Tuesday said that he has expressed his willingness to resign from the post, and now the party high command will decide on it. Talking to reporters on Vidhan Bhavan premises, Patole said the Congress's group leader in the state legislature will be chosen today. Following the party's worst-ever defeat in the assembly elections in Maharashtra, party sources had earlier claimed that the senior Congress leader had requested the central leadership to relieve him of the responsibility of the organisational post. Patole, however, had clarified last week that he had not tendered resignation and rumours were being spread. Patole said the Congress's Maharashtra in-charge will arrive in the city on Tuesday evening, and the party's group leader in the state legislature will be elected. He said discussions about the state chief's post would also take place. Queried whether he has tendered his resignation from the state chief's post, Patole said, "I have expressed my willingness."

Rajya Sabha: NDA, Congress wrangle on Sengol's significance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sengol, a symbol of transfer of power from the British that has been installed in Parliament, was at the centre of a BJP-Congress verbal duel in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday as the Congress claimed that an untrue story was told about its significance and the government countered it.

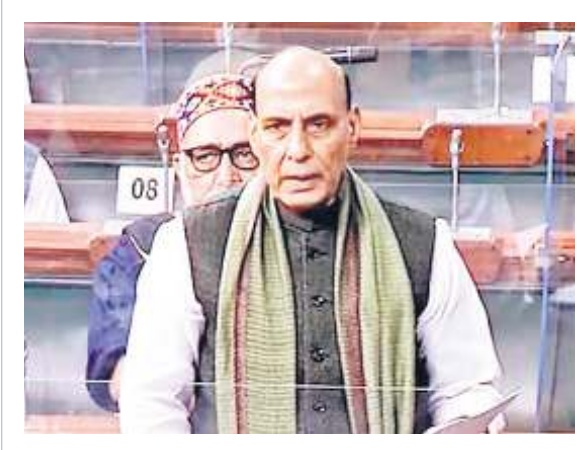


Constitution of India" in the Upper House. Yadav said that when the Sengol was given during the transfer of power at the time of independence, it was treated as a "walking stick" of Jawaharlal Nehru instead of a symbol of justice.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, however, objected to the remarks, saying that it was not given to anyone.

'New DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' in defence'

Singh made the remarks at a meeting of the Consultative Committee for the defence ministry. "Our new DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) in the field of defence production," he said



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday exuded confidence that the new defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs) will set new dimensions in quality, turnover and profitability. Singh made the remarks at a meeting of the Consultative

Committee for the defence ministry. "Our new DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) in the field of defence production," he said.

The government set up seven state-run defence companies which were carved out of the erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in 2021.

The main objective of the restructuring was to transform ordnance factories into productive, and profitable assets, improve expertise in the product range and increase competitiveness. The roles and functions of the new DPSUs, which were created post corporatisation of erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board,

were deliberated upon at the meeting. The committee was apprised of the financial figures, modernisation, capital expenditure, exports and new products developed by the DPSUs.

In his remarks, Singh appreciated the efforts taken by the new DPSUs in indigenisation of critical products, modernisation of manufacturing facilities and promotion of MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises). He appreciated the fact that post corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board, the new DPSUs have shown improvement in productivity and quality, according to the defence ministry.

There has been good progress in the sales and profit of these DPSUs in a very short span of time, he added. Singh exuded confidence that the new DPSUs will carry forward modernisation and indigenisation, and will set new dimensions in quality, turnover, profitability and other financial parameters by incorporating world class technologies.



'Synopsis can't run into 128 pages'

SC tells registry to take note

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A synopsis cannot run into 128 pages, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said and asked its registrar (judicial) to take note, particularly in cases where litigants were allowed to appear in person.

While hearing a plea challenging an order of the Allahabad High Court, a bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Ahsanuddin Amanullah said the appellant, who was appearing in person, had filed a synopsis running into 128 pages, loaded with details, most of which were not relevant.

"We understand that the appellant is not a trained lawyer, but it is for the registry to have asked the appellant to trim down the synopsis. A synopsis cannot run into 128 pages," said the bench. The top court went on to add, "Let the registrar (judicial) take note of this, particularly

the cases where litigants are allowed to appear in person." The bench was hearing an issue pertaining to a matrimonial case when it noted the appellant woman was married to the respondent in 2006 and she got a decree of divorce on the ground of cruelty in 2016.

The bench noted that the high court, in its order passed in December, 2019, restored the Section 125 CrPC petition of the appellant and directed the family court to decide the case in accordance with law. Section 125 of CrPC deals with order for maintenance of wives, children and parents. The bench said the high court had directed the said petition was required to be decided on merits by the additional principal judge, Family Court, Agra. "We see absolutely no reason as to why we should interfere with the aforesaid impugned order.

North India continues to feel the chill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cold weather conditions persisted in many parts of north and east India on Tuesday, with minimum temperature in parts of Kashmir dropping several notches below freezing point, and Kanke in Jharkhand recording a low of 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 5.3 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, down from minus 3.4 degrees Celsius the previous night, with water supply lines in many parts of the city and elsewhere in the Valley getting frozen due to the cold, officials said. Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 4 degrees

Celsius, the same as the previous night, while Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 6.8 degrees Celsius, down from the previous night's minus 5 degrees Celsius.

Konibal on the outskirts of Pampore was the coldest in the Valley at minus 8.5 degrees Celsius, officials said.



Cong considered Constitution 'private fiefdom' of one family: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday attacked the Congress in the Rajya Sabha, saying the party treated the Constitution as the "private fiefdom" of one family and "played fraud" with Parliament.

Concluding a two-day debate on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India", Shah ripped into the Congress for its appeasement politics and claimed that the party wanted to breach the 50 per cent quota limit to provide reservation to Muslims.

He also asked the Congress if it supported the Muslim personal law and alleged that the party never worked for the welfare of the backward classes. Shah asserted that the BJP has already brought in a common civil code (Uniform Civil Code) in Uttarakhand and will implement it in all states.

He attacked the Congress for being a "sore loser" as it blamed EVMs for its defeat in the assembly polls in Maharashtra and Haryana, saying the party should give up its canard against EVMs and shed its appeasement and dynastic politics as well as corruption to return to power.

"In the last 75 years, the Congress played fraud in the name of the Constitution... They (Nehru-Gandhi family)



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considered not just the party as their private property, but also treated the Constitution as their 'private fiefdom'," Shah alleged, referring to the insertion of Article 35A without parliamentary assent. Criticising the Congress for

bringing in reservation on the basis of religion in two states ruled by it, Shah termed it "unconstitutional". "It is clearly stated in the Constitution that no reservation will be based on religion... They (Congress) do not want any welfare of OBCs, they want to give reservations to Muslims by increasing the limit of 50 per cent. "But today, once again I say with responsibility in this House that as long as the BJP has even one MP, we will not allow reservation on the basis of religion," the home minister asserted.

He said that in 1955, the Kaka Kalelkar Commission was formed to provide reservations to OBCs but the report was nowhere to be found.

Jamili poll will lead to economic growth: Kovind

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Once the 'One nation one poll' proposal by the Centre becomes functional, it will galvanise the election process and will also help in the economic growth of the country, former President Ram Nath Kovind said here on Tuesday. Kovind was the chairman of the high-level committee on simultaneous elections that was constituted by the Centre in September 2023.

Speaking at a programme of a tribal organisation here, Kovind said voters are tired of meeting candidates of political parties seeking votes every year and probably do not want to face them so frequently.

"Once the proposal becomes fully functional in 2029-2030, or say at a later date, as it might take 5-10 years to have simultaneous polls, voters won't have to head to polling stations every year for one poll or another. This will also lead to economic growth as the GDP growth of the country will rise by 1.5 per cent from 7.23 per cent at present," he said.

"Think about that if 1.5 points are added to the existing GDP it won't take long to reach the 10 per cent (GDP) figure. Then our country will be among the top 3-4 economic superpowers in the world," he said. Kovind claimed that



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the 'one nation one poll' will galvanise the election process.

"If candidates have to ask for votes from people every year, they will have to reply why this development promise has not been implemented. Yearly elections make people averse to going to booths at times," he said. He said the 18,000-page report of the committee is in public domain and will streamline economic governance.

"If you sit in one place, you can see it with the click of a mouse or mobile and there is no need to visit different libraries. A voluminous compilation of different parliamentary committee reports have been put in one place," he said recalling his stint as chairman of the high-powered committee on 'one nation one poll' proposal when he met delegations of different parties and Election Commission officials and others. Turning to the gathering of 'poor, Dalits and backward castes', Kovind said, "They are holding the country. They represent the beautiful mosaic of culture and play a dominant role in projecting the dignity of Bharat by preserving their indigenous culture."

"We need to make them feel as stakeholders in nation-building. We need to have them inside this auditorium to listen to the proceedings and our speeches and not just present their cultural programmes in the open space before the building as the dignitaries enter," he said. When this inclusivity becomes a reality, the nation will truly progress. It is already progressing in that direction with proposals like 'one nation one poll', Kovind said. He called upon the members of tribal, backward-class communities to aim high and never back out from their resolve for better education.

'Too early to make Aadhaar based system mandatory for MGNREGS payments'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary Panel has recommended that the Rural Development Ministry's Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (ABPS) for making payments under MGNREGS should not be made compulsory.

In a report tabled in Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj also said alternative mechanism should always operate to ensure that the primary goal of the scheme to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology.

The Committee pulled up the government on low wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and recommended a better inflation linked index for



payment of wages to the workers. The Committee noted that the APBS has been made mandatory since January 1, 2024. "While accepting the gains of APBS, the Committee is of the view that it is too early to make it mandatory as the problems relating to Aadhar

seeding still have not been resolved leading to exclusion of lakhs of workers," the panel said. "The Committee, therefore, reiterates their earlier recommendation that APBS should not be made mandatory and alternative mechanisms should always operate side by side to ensure

that the primary goal of MGNREGA to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology," it said.

The panel also said observing the rate of wages paid under MGNREGS since 2008, it found the amount inadequate



and not in consonance with the rising cost of living.

"Taking up wages under MGNREGA is a sort of last resort for many of the poor rural masses who do not have any other option of livelihood or job option to utilise but wages of such nominal nature sometime with delayed payment only discourage them and propel them to migrate and seek work in areas giving better remuneration," the panel said. The Committee said even as MGNREGS is a demand driven scheme where the workers move out in search of better opportunities, the figures are

"The Committee, therefore, reiterates their earlier recommendation that APBS should not be made mandatory and alternative mechanisms should always operate side by side to ensure that the primary goal of MGNREGA to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology," it said

abysmally low and it "definitely points towards low wage rates as one of the major reasons for the workers to opt out of MGNREGA, thereby hampering the percentage of work completed under MGNREGA". It said the panel has time and again urged the Department of Rural Development (DoRD) to increase the wage rates under MGNREGS by linking it to an index commensurate with national inflation, but the wage rates continue to remain stagnant on account.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A timely assurance

Sri Lanka assures New Delhi that it will not permit anybody to use its territory to threaten India's security

In what must come as music to the ears of the Indian government, the Sri Lankan President has said that his country will not allow anyone to use its territory to threaten India's security. This assurance comes at a time when China is aggressively pursuing 'Mission Indian Ocean' - which targets India. In a joint statement issued, Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake made Colombo's position clear during his dialogue with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. This assurance is seen as a critical development in India-Sri Lanka relations, especially given China's use of Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port for docking its naval surveillance and spy ships, including the ballistic missile tracking ship Yuan Wang 5. China's growing footprint in the Indian Ocean has raised red flags for New Delhi. The Hambantota Port, now under a 99-year lease to China following Sri Lanka's inability to service its debt, has become a hub for Chinese naval operations. Over the past two years, Beijing has stationed the Yuan Wang 5, a 25,000-tonne satellite and missile tracking ship, at Hambantota multiple times. This vessel, equipped with advanced tracking and communication systems, has been closely monitoring satellite and missile activities in the region, creating strategic challenges for India. In 2022, Sri Lanka briefly delayed the docking of Yuan Wang 5 following Indian concerns but eventually allowed the vessel to dock under the guise of 'replenishment.' Since then, Chinese surveillance ships have regularly patrolled the Indian Ocean, adding to India's apprehensions about Beijing's strategic intentions in the region. The agreement between India and Sri Lanka ensures that Sri Lankan territory, including its waters,



will not be used in any manner that could harm India's security or regional peace. This is a welcome relief for New Delhi, which views such commitments as crucial for maintaining stability in the Indian Ocean Region. This of course hasn't happened overnight. India's steadfast support for Sri Lanka during its economic crisis in 2022 has further solidified the bond between the two nations. President Dissanayake expressed gratitude for India's timely assistance, which was instrumental in stabilising Sri Lanka's economy during one of its most challenging periods. As far as China is concerned it has been courting Sri Lanka for the sole purpose of encircling India and getting a foothold in Indian Ocean. China's influence in Sri Lanka has grown significantly, particularly after Colombo defaulted on its \$1.7 billion loan for the Hambantota Port project. India has consistently raised concerns about the strategic implications of Chinese investments and activities in Sri Lanka. In this background the assurance of Sri Lankan president signals Sri Lanka's intent to balance its ties with both regional powers while safeguarding regional stability. The agreement also underscores Colombo's recognition of the importance of India's security and regional stability and paves the way for a stronger, more strategic India-Sri Lanka alliance in the years to come.

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PICTALK



Tourists enjoy paragliding, in Manali

Nepal embraces China's BRI

Nepal's deepening ties with China through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have set alarm bells ringing in New Delhi



PARUL CHANDRA

India has cause for extreme worry. In yet another indicator of China's growing sway over Nepal, the two are moving forward to implement Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Himalayan nation. India is not only opposed to this in principle on grounds of sovereignty but also fears it will enable China to increase its already considerable inroads into Nepal.

If 2017 marked Nepal's initial step to coming on board the BRI with an MoU, the year 2024 marks a giant leap for the Himalayan nation in that direction. A framework agreement for cooperation on the BRI was signed during Nepalese PM K P Sharma Oli's visit to China in early December, apart from nine other pacts. With the strategically located Himalayan nation having become a hub for Great Powers contestation, the US too would be uneasy with the latest Beijing-Kathmandu tango. While the US had managed to get Nepal on board its own Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact to fund Kathmandu's power and transport infrastructure, the BRI seems far broader. Kathmandu is trying to play down the framework as just a continuation of the 2017 MoU. The framework, however, underlines Kathmandu and Beijing's renewed push for the BRI, an initiative on which New Delhi harbours deep suspicions for what it perceives as China's hegemonic ambitions through debt-trap diplomacy. Sovereignty is another major concern, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), another project under BRI, passing through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

India is certainly worried about PM Oli-led Nepal once again moving into China's sphere of influence. The CPN-UML leader is widely seen as being pro-China, and bilateral ties with India were prickly during his previous stints as the PM. India has yet to host Oli since he took charge as PM in July



this year for the fourth time, with him first heading for Beijing, in a break from the tradition of visiting New Delhi. Also, showing scant regard for New Delhi's sensitivities, the Oli government recently allowed 220 Buddhist monks from China to travel to Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha even as the Nanhai Buddhism Shenzhen round-table was being held in Kathmandu. Oli delivered the inaugural address at this roundtable. There were also reports the China-appointed Panchen Lama would travel to Lumbini, though it did not eventually happen. The Oli government's encouragement of Beijing's concerted moves to claim Buddhism as a shared heritage will not go down well with New Delhi, which has been making its efforts to build on its shared Buddhist heritage with Nepal. Kathmandu's thrust on greater economic cooperation with Beijing - the BRI is part of this endeavour - would also whittle down India's influence over Nepal. The BRI framework agreement, incidentally, also envisages the opening of branches of Chinese banks and financial institutions in



WITH THE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED HIMALAYAN NATION HAVING BECOME A HUB FOR GREAT POWERS CONTESTATION, THE US TOO WOULD BE UNEASY WITH THE LATEST BEIJING-KATHMANDU TANGO

Nepal. India has traditionally had deep economic linkages with Nepal, nurtured in no small measure due to reasons of geography - the two neighbours share a long and porous 1,751-km-long border.

This, along with the landlocked nature of Nepal, has helped India become its largest trading partner. During the 2022-23 fiscal, bilateral trade was pegged at \$8.85 billion. This included \$8 billion of exports from India to Nepal, with \$840 million of exports in the reverse direction. As per the Nepal Rastra Bank, India's share in Nepal's trade accounted for 64.1% in 2022-23. PM Oli sees cooperation on BRI as a means to forge closer economic ties with China, with the framework agreement resolving to deepen the economic partnership by "injecting new momentum to trade, infrastructure and connectivity cooperation".

Not a single project under the BRI rubric has been executed in Nepal since the 2017 MoU. Nepal would be hoping that the 10 initial projects, including those meant to boost regional connectivity, will now see the light of day. India has its work cut out and should

ensure it does not come across as overbearing. India's approach in the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura border dispute, where New Delhi ignored Kathmandu's request for foreign secretary-level talks, is a case in point.

It led Oli, in his earlier stint as the PM, to cock a snook at New Delhi by changing his country's map showing the disputed territories as part of Nepal. Neither did New Delhi show respect due to a close neighbour when it decided to give a quiet burial to the joint 2018 Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report, which suggested that the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship be replaced with a new one?

Nepal has also been unhappy with India's refusal to give overflight rights for aircraft using the Chinese-built Gautam Buddha International Airport in Lumbini.

India would do well to remember that its dominating approach only serves to alienate a close neighbour further and push it into China's ever-willing embrace. India should not lose sight of its strategic imperatives. (The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA STRUGGLES IN BRISBANE TEST

Madam — While Travis Head hits a century again in the Brisbane test, it was a surprising and grave omission of the crafty and successful off-spinner Washington Sundar for the third test at Gabba. While Sundar has been among the wickets in recent tests and also did well with the bat, the head coach and the out-of-form skipper Rohit Sharma couldn't realise the need for a quality off-spinner is a blunder at the moment. The need for the quality off-spinner is mandatory when the Aussies have two solid left-handers, Travis Head and Alex Carey. When Head is the consistent match winner for the Aussies, leaving Washington Sundar out will prove costly for India in this test.

Whenever there were solid left-hand batters, the formulae of the Indian team in the past from the era of Skipper Ajit Wadekar used to play Erapalli Prasanna and S Venkatraghavan proved to be of great success. After Rohit won the toss and put the Aussies to bat first, the Aussies had scored 445, and now the pressure will be on the Indian batters, who may succumb to pressure again, as proved by losing the 4 top order for a paltry 51. After having won the first test under the standby skipper Jasprit Bumrah, Rohit Sharma seems to have not yet learnt the lesson that the composition of the right combinations is important to be in the match. Missing a clever off-spinner can never be an easy task for the team to come back once they lose the grip in the first innings, which is what's happening at present in Brisbane. Bumrah alone can't take the match away from the opponents; this needs to be realised by head coach Gautam Gambhir. By dropping down in the order, Skipper Rohit is unbeaten on zero, and Rahul, with 33 against his name, has been the only consolation for the fans while rain stopped play. Rain God can be the only saviour as it looks for the team to have a sigh of relief. Rohit and Kohli must take a voluntary exit rather than bring the morale down of the team at this juncture.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Rural education needs reform



For a majority of Indian school children, especially from rural pockets, a feeling of uneasiness sets in when they hear something in English. They find it difficult to listen to and understand the English language. In a country like India, classes of mixed-ability

groups are a feature of every small village. While the teaching-learning process is done in the local language in rural villages, most of the competitive examinations are held in the English language. The rural atmosphere doesn't provide these students the opportunity to speak and learn English.

In fact, in many northern villages, English becomes the third language, with the local language and Hindi as the first and second languages, respectively. The policymakers have to bridge the urban-rural divide when it comes to English teaching. An English teacher, teaching in rural schools, has to come up with innovative strategies in the classrooms. Skilled and committed teachers need to be appointed at the primary level, and they should be upgraded and trained to meet the problems faced by the learners.

R Sivakumar | Gandhi Nagar

HEALTHCARE REFORMS FOR PUBLIC

Madam — If the AAP government has done one good thing for society by making Mohalla clinics, the BJP has done another by making Jan Aushadi chemist shops. One can now get a free consultation from the AAP clinic and get medicines at nearly one-fifth the rate from a Jan Aushadi shop, thereby catering to the health aspect of a common man. The prominent good work visible on the ground needs to be applauded for both. The belief that a drug in a normal chemist shop is better than the generic drug being sold by a Jan Aushadi shop (popularly known as 'Modi ki Dukaan' in Patiala) is a myth that can be best removed by the doctors to their patients depending on the degree of moral courage they have to refuse obligations of pharmaceutical companies and give priority to generic rather than tradenamed medicines to their patients. The fleeing private pharmacies need to be brought down to their knees in the interest of the public for their overinflated rates of medicines.

RS Narula | Patiala

PURCHASING POWER DECLINES

Madam — For the success of any economy, a vibrant market with sound and sustained demands is imperative, as production and market cannot flourish in a dry market. To vibrate the market, people's purchasing power should be increased by ensuring employment and a viable wage. The Indian economy is driven with an objective of enriching the rich, leaving the 81 crore poor in a lurch to manage sustaining life with 5 kgs of free rice per month. Even the small employed section is left without a reasonable increase in wage and faces the untamed inflation. The changes being pushed through in the name of labour reforms are going to pull down demands and create telling effects on the already volatile economy. Such a programme inevitably leads to dwindling demands. Course correction is inevitable to ensure bridging the gap between the poor and the affluent.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Why reading and writing matter more in the age of AI



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

As AI grows increasingly sophisticated, our commitment to these skills will determine whether we remain active participants in innovation—or passive consumers

In an era increasingly defined by technological innovation, reading and writing—cornerstones of human intellect—are facing a profound transformation. While artificial intelligence (AI) bots like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google Bard redefine the boundaries of information generation, the necessity of cultivating human literacy has never been more crucial. The transition from Neanderthals to modern humans (Homo sapiens) involved significant cognitive and cultural advancements, but Neanderthals themselves did not read or write. Reading and writing developed after modern humans became the dominant hominin species. These are not merely communication tools but exercises that keep our cognitive faculties sharp and resilient. When we read, our brains decode symbols, conjuring vivid images, emotions, and concepts. This intricate process activates the left temporal cortex, which is responsible for language processing, and strengthens neural connectivity. Studies



underscore that reading enhances memory, concentration, and analytical thinking. Engaging with diverse genres deepens empathy and broadens perspectives, fostering a nuanced understanding of the world. Writing, on the other hand, is an intellectual partner to reading. Crafting words—whether in a journal, essay, or story—requires us to organise thoughts, synthesise ideas, and express them clearly. This process activates the prefrontal cortex, the brain's hub for decision-making and problem-solving. Writing is more than an intellectual task; it is therapeutic. Research shows that expressive writing can alleviate stress, enhance mood,

and even bolster the immune system. The tactile act of writing also strengthens memory, embedding information deeply within our minds. Reading and writing foster neuroplasticity, enabling the brain to adapt and form new connections. They are antidotes to cognitive decline and shields against neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. Regular engagement with these skills cultivates intellectual independence, creativity, and emotional depth—uniquely human attributes. Yet, as AI bots revolutionise the way we consume and produce information, there is an alarming decline in human literacy. Tools like Book AI, which transforms any book into a conversational chatbot, exemplify AI's capacity to digest and reproduce complex information effortlessly. AI lacks the intrinsic human qualities of creativity, empathy, and ethical judgment. As AI literacy surges, the stagnation of human literacy risks creating a dangerous imbalance. Over-reliance on AI can diminish critical think-

ing and communication skills, weakening the very attributes that distinguish humans from machines. While the fear of displacement is understandable, the answer lies in shifting our perspective. AI is not an adversary but a powerful partner that can amplify human capabilities and drive innovation. Individuals can leverage their unique strengths to complement AI capabilities by prioritising the development of reading and writing skills. In an environment controlled by artificial intelligence, these abilities are necessary to navigate complicated concepts, understandably articulate them, and affirm human importance. The development of artificial intelligence highlights the significance of human expertise rather than diminishing it. By committing to studying throughout our lives, we can ensure that technology will not replace our humanity but rather improve it. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN REDISCOVER HAPPINESS

Happiness is a state of mind that transcends life's adversities



RAVI VALLURI

A couple first met in an estimable business school in India where they were conferred reputable degrees in management. The couple soon migrated to the land of El Dorado in search of greener pastures, seeking professional and economic security. They were a happy couple as the angels showered gargantuan benediction. Soon, a new dimension to their lives arrived in the form of angelic twins. When the twins turned six months old, it was time to visit the hometown of their parents. They were received by sentimental and misty-eyed grandparents.

The sojourn concluded the mother and twins were afloat on a flight back to their home. However, fate had other plans and a double whammy struck the family. The father never reached the airport as he was killed in a car crash on the way to the airport. The disconsolate woman became a mental wreck, her moments of happiness fastened only in her memory bank and the picture album. The alluring woman was transfigured into stone. A cousin empathised with her distraught mental state and robustly suggested that she undertake the Happiness Course of the Art of Living. After considerable blandishment and extensive persuasion, she enrolled for the course and deposited all her emotions and feelings while undergoing the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya. Life need not be tragic if only we realise that happiness is a state of mind that can



be achieved independent of material success.

As per ancient Japanese mythology, the light from Tsukuyomi, the Shinto God of the moon could induce illusions and delusions. Hecate, the Greek Goddess of the dark moon bestowed visions, but also caused humans to be afflicted with insanity. The human body is made up of seventy per cent of water elements. Full moon water recharges the body, mind and spirit and bestows harmony on our thought processes. Therefore, practising the Full Moon Meditation has a consequential and noteworthy influence on the mind, whereby one is suffused with efficacious thoughts and purges nugatory ones. It was a cathartic experience for the young single mother to emerge from her traumatic experience by unflinchingly practising this technique. It is an established fact that the Sakyan prince, Siddhartha, upon attaining enlightenment on the full moon day metamorphosed into the Compassionate One, Gautama Buddha and made a prescient statement, "Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." How does one define an efficacious emotion called happiness? Happiness is a state of well-being, jollity, blitheness and primarily to be contented in life. The amphitheatre of the mind is a veritable nuclear reactor, where waves of thoughts and emotions arise and subside. These in turn determine our happiness quotient and consequentially the quality of our lives.

There once lived a farmer, who grew apples. He perpetually grumbled that there was not adequate produce to sustain the family. Providentially, there was a spurt in production and apples grew in plenitude. Still dissatisfied, the farmer cavilled that he was now laden with gruelling work, apples were rotting and prices now plunged! Sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras has postulated certain cardinal principles to live harmoniously, encompassed in happiness. These are non-violence, truthfulness, no regrets, not accepting invectives or salutations hurled by people, physical cleanliness of the body, inner contentment, forbearance or penance, self-study or examination of the mind and development and finally love and surrender to the supreme cosmic force.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Pesticides are poisoning the Punjab soil



AS MITTAL

Punjab's agriculture is facing a harrowing reality—its lifeblood, the soil, is being contaminated by toxic pesticide residues at alarmingly high levels



It's time to face the disturbing truth about Punjab's agriculture—and it's a nightmare. In districts like Bathinda, Mansa, and Ludhiana, up to 60 per cent of farm soil samples are infested with toxic pesticide residues—including the deadly chemicals endosulfan and carbofuran—at levels far beyond what's even remotely safe. This isn't just a warning; it's a full-blown crisis, a ticking time bomb, the result of irresponsible, reckless pesticide and fertiliser abuse running rampant in our fields.

On World Soil Day—December 5th—we're forced to confront the cold reality of a rapidly disintegrating agriculture system, while the world's been talking about "Caring for Soils: Measure, Monitor, and Manage"! The consequences of this madness are devastating. Our once fertile land is transforming into a barren wasteland, and that's only the beginning. These toxic chemicals aren't just staying in the soil. They're seeping into our food chain—contaminating every bite we take and slowly poisoning us all. But it doesn't stop there. These toxic residues are embedding themselves into our very DNA, passing down a legacy of genetic mutations to our children and grandchildren.

We are breeding a future full of compromised health and genetic decay. This is a catastrophe that will echo across generations. We're not just destroying our present health; we're condemning our children to inherit the consequences of our stupidity and greed. The survival of future generations is at risk, and the clock is ticking—every moment of inaction is a moment closer to irreversible genetic damage. It's time to wake up, stop burying our heads in the sand, and confront this crisis head-on before it's too late for the survival of future generations.

The Pesticide Management Bill, 2020: India's regulatory framework for pesticides, established in 1968, is woefully outdated and incapable of addressing the modern-day challenges posed by the rampant overuse of agrochemicals. Although efforts to amend this framework have been ongoing since 2008, significant gaps remain in safeguarding farmers, consumers, and the environment. The legislation—still governed by the Insecticides Act of 1968 and the Insecticides Rules of 1971—requires comprehensive reforms to address the multifaceted risks associated with pesticide overuse. The Pesticide



INDIA'S REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR PESTICIDES, ESTABLISHED IN 1968, IS WOEFULLY OUTDATED AND INCAPABLE OF ADDRESSING THE MODERN-DAY CHALLENGES POSED BY THE RAMPANT OVERUSE OF AGROCHEMICALS

Management Bill (PMB) 2020 was introduced to replace outdated legislation, but critical concerns must be addressed. While the bill outlines pesticide registration and licensing procedures, it must protect farmers more adequately from hazardous exposure. Statistics from Pesticide Action Network (PAN) International paint a grim picture: approximately 11,000 deaths globally are attributed to accidental pesticide poisoning annually, with India accounting for a staggering 6,600 fatalities. These numbers highlight critical deficiencies in pesticide usage protocols and safety measures.

Farmers and rural communities often bear the brunt of chemical exposures, especially in agriculturally intensive regions. For instance, Punjab, which heavily depends on rice and wheat cultivation, reports alarming pesticide consumption rates. With an average usage of 77 kg/hectare, significantly above the national average of 62 kg/hectare, Punjab ranks third in India after UP and Maharashtra for pesticide consumption.

A study by the Central Soil Salinity Research Institute (CSSRI) revealed that 6.74 million hectares of land in India are affected by salinity, a condition exacerbated by the overuse of agrochemicals. Persistent pesticide application has been found to reduce microbial biomass by 30-50 per cent, compromising soil fertility and diminishing the land's ability to provide essential nutrients to crops.

A Call for Robust Regulation Pesticides—insecticides, fungicides, or herbicides—play a vital role in modern agriculture. However, their toxic nature necessitates stringent oversight throughout their lifecycle, from production to disposal. The current regulatory framework lacks provisions for periodic review of registered pesticides based on emerging toxicological data. This oversight exposes the public to significant health risks, particularly in a country where improper handling of pesticides is widespread.

Training and Awareness: A Neglected Imperative Over the past three decades, the indiscriminate use of pesticides has surged, often driven by aggressive marketing strategies that portray chemical inputs as indispensable for high crop yields.

The limited scale of training initiatives highlights the need for more current efforts. Between 1994-95 and 2021-22, the Plant Protection Department of Agriculture and Farming Welfare Ministry trained only 585,000 farmers in Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a dismal figure in a nation with over 150 million farmers. According to the International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management, governments and industry stakeholders must provide comprehensive training and information to farmers and retailers. Yet, the implementation of these guidelines still needs to be more robust. Retailers often serve as farmers' sole point of contact, and in many cases, they disseminate misleading or incomplete information. Data Collection: Bridging Critical Gaps The absence of robust data collection mechanisms further undermines India's regulatory ecosystem.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) documents pesticide poisoning deaths only if they are registered as medico-legal cases, excluding countless instances of non-institutional exposure and chronic health effects. This data void impedes effective policymaking and perpetuates a lack of accountability among stakeholders.

Addressing Weak Grievance Mechanisms: One of the most glaring deficiencies in India's pesticide regulation is the lack of accessible grievance redressal systems. Farmers and agricultural workers exposed to pesticides face prohibitive costs and lengthy procedures when seeking justice. Meanwhile, state governments can impose only temporary bans on hazardous pesticides, typically lasting 60 days, exposing vulnerable communities to ongoing risks.

Personal Protective Equipment: A

Forgotten Necessity The Pesticide Management Bill 2020 neglects the safety of small-scale farmers, who often lack access to affordable, climate-appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Farm workers face heightened health risks without mandatory provisions requiring them to supply adequate protective gear, especially in hot and humid agricultural regions. Labelling and Consumer Protection India's pesticide labelling standards fall short of both domestic and international norms. Safety information is frequently crammed into illegible leaflets, leaving farmers ill-informed about risks and proper usage.

Although the Consumer Protection Act theoretically covers farmers, legal recourse against manufacturers for misleading labels or substandard products is rarely pursued. The Way Forward India can no longer afford to ignore the human and environmental toll of unsafe pesticide practices.

Establishing a robust, farmer-centric legal framework aligned with international standards is the only way forward to ensure safe and sustainable agriculture. A gradual shift towards agro-ecological farming methods that emphasise non-chemical pest management is imperative. The government must phase out hazardous pesticides and promote environmentally friendly alternatives to safeguard farmers' health and ensure consumer food safety. Addressing the gaps in the Pesticide Management Bill 2020 and adopting proactive measures, such as mandatory training and the provision of accurate information on pesticide usage and risks, are critical steps towards securing safe and healthier future generations.

(The author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association. Views expressed are personal)

India@2024: A resilient economy on the fast track to growth

But challenges such as persistent inflation, a slowdown in the banking sector and environmental concerns continue to pose hurdles

India has firmly established itself as the fastest-growing economy among the G20 nations, with a projected GDP growth rate of 6.5 per cent-7 per cent for the fiscal year 2024-25. This remarkable trajectory underscores the nation's economic resilience and immense potential despite global challenges. The year 2024 presents a vivid picture of India's economic landscape, marked by notable achievements and emerging challenges.



KAJLEEN KAUR

One of the most significant indicators of progress is the substantial improvement in employment. The unemployment rate has decreased from 6 per cent in 2017 to an impressive 3.2 per cent in 2024, reflecting robust job creation across sectors. Foreign

direct investment (FDI) has also shown a dramatic surge, rising 45 per cent year-on-year to USD 29.79 billion in the first half of 2024-25, with key inflows in services, telecom, and pharmaceuticals. Complementing this momentum, India's foreign exchange reserves swelled to \$704.89 bil-

lion, driven by an \$87.6 billion increase this year alone. This growth includes a \$10.468 billion boost in foreign currency assets and a \$2 billion rise in gold reserves, which now stand at \$65.7 billion.

India's fintech sector continues to shine on the global stage, ranking as the third-largest fintech economy after the USA and the UK. The country also boasts the fourth-largest stock market in the world, with a market capitalisation of \$4.33 trillion, surpassing Hong Kong. A significant milestone in digital payments was achieved with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which saw transaction values soar to an astounding Rs 200 trillion in 2024, compared to Rs 139 trillion in the previous year. India even showcased its

UPI prowess on a global stage, introducing the system at the Eiffel Tower in Paris as part of a digital payments agreement with France.

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collection also reached unprecedented levels, hitting Rs 21.0 lakh crore—a substantial 12.4 per cent increase from the previous year. This growth was driven by a robust 13.4 per cent rise in domestic transactions and an 8.3 per cent increase in imports, showcasing the strength of India's tax infrastructure.

Amid these promising figures, certain challenges continue to loom. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), remains persistently high, exceeding 5 per cent. The banking sector has



witnessed a slowdown, with credit growth declining to 11 per cent in November 2024 from 20.6 per cent the previous year. Deposit growth also moderated, with banks adding Rs 13.8 lakh crore in deposits between April and November, compared to Rs 16.1 lakh crore during the same period

last year. In response, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 basis points to 4 per cent in December to improve liquidity and stimulate credit growth. Qualitative indicators present a mixed picture. India climbed 14 ranks on the UNDP

Gender Inequality Index, highlighting significant strides in bridging the gender gap. It also improved its position on the Global Innovation Index, rising from 40th to 39th among 133 global economies, driven by entrepreneurial activity, vibrant startups, and successful public-private partnerships. The Human Development Report 2023-24 placed India at 134th among 193 countries, reflecting gains in life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income. However, no progress was seen in the Happiness Index, where India remains at 126th, largely due to dissatisfaction among older citizens, perceived discrimination, and poor health metrics. Moreover, India continues to struggle in environmental performance,

ranking 176th out of 180 countries. Challenges such as air quality, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gas emissions demand urgent attention.

As India navigates these complexities, it is also undergoing key transitions. The US economy has entered a new phase, and India sees a shift in RBI leadership, with Sanjay Malhotra taking over as the 26th Governor after Shaktikanta Das's tenure. While the final assessment of FY2024-25 remains pending, India's growth story offers optimism for a brighter future and a strong foundation for the vision of 'Viksit Bharat@2047'.

(The writer is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi. Views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



ITC Hotels demerger to be effective from January 1

ITC on Tuesday said all conditions for the demerger of its hotel business are "fulfilled" and the scheme would be effective from January 1, 2025. The multi-conglomerate has already received regulatory approvals, including from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on October 4, sanctioning the scheme between ITC and ITC Hotels. "ITC Ltd and ITC Hotels Ltd have mutually acknowledged that all the conditions specified in Clause 28 of the Scheme have been fulfilled and satisfied, including filing of the aforesaid order with the Registrar of Companies, West Bengal, and accordingly, the appointed date and the effective date of the scheme shall be the first day of the following month i.e., January 1, 2025," it said. The shareholders of ITC had already approved the demerger of ITC Hotels into a separate entity. This will create a new wholly-owned subsidiary, ITC Hotels Ltd, to handle its hotels and hospitality business.



Skoda Auto India hikes vehicle prices

Skoda Auto India on Tuesday announced a price hike of up to 3 per cent across its range of cars, effective January 1. This adjustment is necessitated by rising input and operational costs, ensuring the company continues to deliver premium vehicles and services to its customers, Skoda Auto India said in a statement. The company is a subsidiary of European carmaker Skoda Auto. The price increase will apply to the company's entire portfolio, including the Kushaq, Slavia, Superb, and Kodiaq. "The recently launched Kylaq will remain unaffected by this adjustment until it reaches the milestone of 33,333 bookings, which are fast-filling," the company said.



Bihar to host 2nd edition of investor meet

Bihar Business Connect 2024 - the second edition of the global investor summit that looks at boosting industrial and entrepreneurial growth in the state, will be held on December 19-20, it was announced Tuesday. The prestigious event, curated by the state's Department of Industries, seeks to showcase Bihar as a vibrant investment destination. "The inaugural edition in 2023 witnessed participation from over 600 entrepreneurs from India and abroad. Bihar Business Connect 2023 was a landmark initiative. During the two-day summit held last year, a total of 278 investment proposals amounting to Rs 50,530 crore were signed as MOUs, out of which 244 projects worth Rs 38,000 crore have already been implemented on the ground," an official statement said. This investment has significantly accelerated industrial development in the state and created numerous employment opportunities. "Considering the success of last year's Bihar Business Connect, the Department of Industries, Government of Bihar, is once again organising this event," it said.

Investors' wealth down Rs 4.92 lakh cr as mkts slump

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 4.92 lakh crore on Tuesday amid a sharp sell-off in the equity market where the Sensex tanked 1,064 points.

Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,064.12 points or 1.30 per cent to settle at 80,684.45. During the day, it slumped 1,136.37 points or 1.39 per cent to 80,612.20.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 4,92,644.06 crore to Rs 4,55,13,913.24 crore (USD 5.36 trillion).

The Indian stock markets witnessed a sharp decline on Tuesday, with the benchmark BSE Sensex sinking 1,064 points or 1.30 per cent to 80,684.45.

Investor sentiment remained cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy meeting, scheduled for Wednesday. While markets have priced in a 25 basis points rate cut, much of

the focus is on Fed Chair Jerome Powell's commentary regarding future rate moves," Vikram Kasat, Head - Advisory, PL Capital - Prabhudas Lilladher, said.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, all firms ended in the red. Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, JSW Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, Asian Paints, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank were the biggest laggards from the Sensex pack.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

European markets were mostly trading in negative territory. Wall Street ended mostly higher on Monday.

"Widespread pessimism prevails across all sectors ahead of key policy decisions from the US Fed, BoJ (Bank of Japan), and BoE (Bank of England). While the market has already factored in a 25 bps cut from the US Fed, it remains vigilant for any hawkish signals.

Fight against economic offenders will continue: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the Enforcement Directorate has restored properties worth Rs 22,280 crore to the victims or rightful claimants and asserted that the fight against economic offenders will continue unabated.

Replying to a debate on the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants in the Lok Sabha, she said Rs 14,131.6 crore worth properties belonging to fugitive Vijay Malya have been restored to public sector banks.

As regards the Nirav Modi case, properties to the tune of Rs 1,052.58 crore have been restored to PSBs and private banks.

In the Mehul Choksi case, properties worth Rs 2,565.90 crore have been attached and will be auctioned.

In the National Spot Exchange Ltd (NSEL) case, Rs 17.47 crore worth properties were restored to the gen-



uine investors who were defrauded.

"On the PMLA, ED has successfully restored properties valued at least Rs 22,280 crore from major cases... We have not left anyone, even if they fled the country, we've gone after them. ED has collected this money and given back to the banks.

"...So it is important to recognize that we have not left anybody (committing) economic offences. We are after them. We will be making sure that money, which has got to go back to banks, will go

back," Sitharaman said.

With regard to foreign black money, the minister said the Black Money Act of 2015 is actually having a deterrent effect on a lot of taxpayers and they come forward on their own to disclose their foreign assets.

She said the number of taxpayers disclosing foreign assets has gone up to 2 lakh in 2024-25, from 60,467 in 2021-22.

Under the Act, as of June 2024, demand of more than Rs 17,520 crore has been raised in 697 cases. Total 163 prosecutions have been launched

'Economy to improve in coming quarters'

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the lower-than-expected GDP growth of 5.4 per cent in the second quarter was a "temporary blip" and the economy will see healthy growth in the coming quarters. Replying to a debate in the Lok Sabha on the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants, she said India has seen "steady and sustained" growth and its GDP growth rate has averaged 8.3 per cent in the last three years. India continues to be the fastest-growing major economy in the world, Sitharaman added. The second quarter growth is only a "temporary blip", and the economy will see healthy growth in the coming quarters, Sitharaman said.

'Use Made in India machinery to reduce infra project cost'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday urged the infrastructure industry stakeholders to adopt 'Made in India' machinery that would help reduce project cost.

The Minister for Road, Transport and Highways made the remarks at Assocham's 'Annual Infrastructure Conference: CEOs Roundtable Discussion and Achiever Awards' event in the national capital.

There are many under-construction tunnel projects in India. "We should have...good technology. But at the same time, we have to reduce the cost.

And for that reason, my request to all of you is that how it is possible for us, to have Made in India machinery, which is our dream and which is the mission for all of us," Gadkari said.

The minister also said a project cost should be reduced without compromising quality, as bridge and tunnel projects are very crucial.

Gadkari further said 55 per cent work on the Zojila tunnel project is complete.

Jindal Saw to acquire 31.20 pc stake in ReNew Green Energy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jindal Saw on Tuesday said it has inked a pact to acquire 31.20 per cent equity in ReNew Green Energy.

However, the company did not divulge the financial details of this equity acquisition. In a filing, Jindal Saw said, "It has entered into a share purchase agreement with ReNew Green Energy Solutions Private Limited (RGES) to acquire shareholding up to 31.20 per cent equity share capital in ReNew Green MHH One Private

Limited (RGMHH), which resulted RGMHH as an associate of the company".

The acquisition is with an objective to procure electricity at a concessional rate, the company said.

Jindal Saw further said it aims to complete the acquisition by May 31, 2025, or any other date as may be mutually decided between the parties.

It is a manufacturer and supplier of steel pipe products, fittings and accessories with manufacturing facilities in India, the US, Europe and the UAE.

CGTMSE achieves milestone of approving 1 crore guarantee to MSMEs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) on Tuesday said it has achieved a milestone of approving 1 crore guarantees to MSE beneficiaries.

CGTMSE was set up by the central government and SIDBI in August 2000 to provide credit guarantees to micro and small enterprises, enabling them to access credit without the need for collateral and third-party guarantees.

To mark the occasion, an event was organised, and attended by CGTMSE chairman Manoj Mittal and CEO Manish Sinha and representatives of various banks, including State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Union Bank, and MSMEs.

During the occasion, three Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) borrowers and three prominent Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) were felicitated which have played a significant role in this achievement, CGTMSE said in a statement.

Speaking at the event, Mittal emphasised the transformative impact of credit guarantees on the MSE ecosystem, enabling busi-



CGTMSE was set up by the central government and SIDBI in August 2000 to provide credit guarantees to micro and small enterprises, enabling them to access credit without the need for collateral and third-party guarantees

nesses to access funding without collateral, third-party guarantee and achieve sustainable growth. Credit guarantees worth Rs 4 lakh crore were extended in the last two years via the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for

Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

The government aims to ramp up credit guarantees extended to MSMEs through the CGTMSE scheme by another Rs 5 lakh crore in the next two years.

'Value of Indian Rupee market-driven with no target'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The value of the Indian Rupee (INR) is market-determined, with no target or specific level or band, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

"Various domestic and global factors influence the exchange rate of INR, such as the movement of the Dollar Index, trend in capital flows, level of interest rates, movement in crude prices, current account deficit etc," Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply in Rajya Sabha.

The RBI monitors key developments across the globe which may have an impact on USD-INR exchange rate, he said.

Among others, monetary



policy actions of major central banks, major economic data releases across the globe and their impact, OPEC+ meeting decisions, tracking, and analysing geopolitical events, daily movements in G-10 and EME currencies etc, are key in determining the exchange rate, he said.

designing their products which include regulatory prescriptions, actuarial analysis and accordingly decide on rate of premium, rate of bonus and commission payable within prescribed limits.

Insurance companies being regulated commercial entities have flexibility to decide on all these matters, in alignment with regulatory guidelines issued by IRDAI and their board-approved policy on commission structure, he said.

Insurance sector regulator, IRDAI has issued Expenses of Management Regulations, 2024 dated January 22, 2024 and Master Circular dated May 15, 2024 stipulating specified limits for commission payable on life insurance products.

Replying to another question, Chaudhary said insurance companies including LIC follow various principles in

India to become world's renewable energy capital: Joshi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Renewable energy capacity addition in the country almost doubled to 15 GW during the April-November period of this fiscal year, compared to year ago, and the country is all set to become the renewable energy capital of the world, Union New & Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Tuesday.

Addressing at CII International Energy Conference & Exhibition 2024 here, Joshi said, "in fact, over the past decade, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has charted an extraordinary path in the renewable energy sector. Today, India is one of the world's most promising nations in the clean energy space."

The minister noted that India is not only witnessing an energy revolution but is also becoming

the renewable energy capital of the world.

Between April-November of the current financial year, India added almost 15 GW of renewable energy capacity, nearly double the 7.54 GW added during the same period last year, he said.

At present, India's total installed capacity of the non-fossil fuel sector has touched 214 GW, over 14 per cent increase compared to the same month last year.

The government is transforming the entire energy sector as this transformation is driven by a strong belief that a Viksit Bharat by 2047, is closely linked to sustainable and green growth, he said, adding that the roadmap for this transition is ambitious but achievable. India is firmly committed to achieving the goal of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based generation capacity by 2030, he said.

Surging gold imports threaten India's trade balance: GTRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's gold imports have surged alarmingly, posing a potential threat to its trade balance and economic stability, and the government should take action to address this issue, think tank GTRI said on Tuesday.

The country's gold imports in November reached a record high of USD 14.86 billion, registering a four-fold increase, mainly on account of festival and wedding demands, according to commerce ministry data. Gold imports stood at USD 3.44 billion in November 2023.

The GTRI said that the imports are driven by multiple factors, including growing investment demand, tariff reductions, and loopholes in trade agreements.

This surge has raised significant economic concerns, distorting the trade balance, weakening the rupee, and widening the current account deficit, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) added.

Gold imports in November accounted for 21.2 per cent of India's total merchandise imports of USD 70 billion. For the first time, gold surpassed crude petroleum as the



country's largest single import item.

"This sharp increase pushed India's monthly trade deficit to its highest level, exerting pressure on the rupee, which has

depreciated against the US dollar.

A weaker rupee raises import costs further, worsening the current account deficit," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava

Gold prices bounce back

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices bounced back on Tuesday, rising Rs 950 to Rs 79,300 per 10 grams in the national capital, as jewellers made fresh buying at prevailing levels to meet the wedding season demand, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Besides, the US Federal Reserve, which starts its two-day monetary policy meeting on Tuesday, is expected to announce its interest rate decision, which could have an impact on the overall gold performance next year.

He said that most gold enters India as bars and rods with 99.99 per cent purity, but traders are also using other tariff-free or concessional cate-

gories to bypass import duties.

The "surging gold imports threaten India's trade balance and economic stability, and urgent action is needed" to address this, he said.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
DISTRICT PANCHAYAT RAJ ENGINEER, PR DIVISION, JAGTIAL
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
 NIT No. 01-07/DE/2024-25 Date: 12.12.2024
 No. of Works (07). Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the works (07) as sanctioned under MPLADS 2024-25, DMFT 2023-24, COP 2021-22 & SDF 2024-25 (Grants in D/O District Panchayat Raj Engineer, PR Division, Jagtial). Total Est. Cost Rs.46.95 Lakhs. Tender Documents will be available in e-procurement market place from 16.12.2024 and will be available for (07) days from the date of Publishing. Further details can be obtained from e-procurement market place on www.tender.telangana.gov.in
 R.O.No: 1986/PNC/JAGTIAL/2024-25, Date: 11-12-2024 Sd/- District Panchayat Raj Engineer, Jagtial.

Modern custodian of Kuchipudi keeping up the eternal rhythms & grace

In a world increasingly captivated by fleeting digital moments, Yamini Reddy is quietly—and resolutely—keeping the timeless tradition of Kuchipudi alive. As a distinguished Kuchipudi dancer, teacher, choreographer and director of Natya Tarangini, her artistry and vision are reshaping how this classical Indian dance form is taught, performed and preserved.

When Yamini Reddy moved to Hyderabad in 2007 after her marriage, her dreams for the city and the art form she devoted her life to were modest. She envisioned merely a small branch of her parents' established institute in Delhi, where she had honed her craft. "I started with just three to four students. I didn't advertise; it was just a passion project. I was performing a lot at the time, and I thought, why not teach?" she recounts. The result was an organic growth that exceeded all expectations. Today, Natya Tarangini's Hyderabad branch trains over a hundred students, a testament to Yamini's deep commitment to nurturing the next generation of Kuchipudi dancers.

Her teaching method, Yamini explains, is rooted in the personal and the profound. "We believe in personal training. From the youngest to the senior-most students, we take great care in their growth," she says. Her father, legendary Kuchipudi exponent Raja Reddy, developed a style of choreography and instruction that Yamini and her sister Bhavana have carried forward. "It's a little different from other Kuchipudi styles—people find it refreshing, from the creativity to the teaching techniques. That's why I think word-of-mouth worked so well for us."

But beyond technique and rigor lies something even more fundamental: her emotional connection to the dance form and its birthplace. "Kuchipudi is native to us Telugu people. When I came back from Delhi, I was so happy to return to the roots—to set up an institute in the birthplace of the dance form itself." Yet, even as she celebrates this cultural legacy, Yamini is candid about the challenges of performing in a world enamored with cinema and digital entertainment.

Cultural landscape in flux

In Hyderabad, where the glamour of Tollywood often eclipses traditional arts, cultivating an audience for Kuchipudi has become an uphill battle. "The culture here is rich and many parents are eager to teach their children classical dance for the discipline and balance it brings to the mind and body. But as audiences, people are not as engaged as they used to be. They'll flock to anything cinema-related, but standalone classical arts? Not so much," she laments.

Yamini believes that consistent performances are crucial for nurturing a cultural ecosystem. "It's not about doing one or two concerts. It has to be a continuous effort. In places like Delhi or New York, you know there's always something happening. There's a monthly calendar for theater, dance, or music performances. In Hyderabad, we don't have that. We need two or three cultural hubs that regularly host programs to grow audiences."

This lack of infrastructure, she argues, reflects a deeper need for government and private patron-

As Natya Tarangini's Hyderabad branch celebrates 17 years, Yamini Reddy reflects on reviving Kuchipudi, building a cultural ecosystem and why Indian classical arts deserve the spotlight now.



age. "If you invest in something over five years, you'll see a remarkable change. But you need that initial push," she says, adding that such long-term efforts could eventually create a self-sustaining cultural ecosystem in the city.

While many art forms are now experimenting with storytelling formats to capture the attention of modern audiences, Kuchipudi has always been rooted in narrative traditions. "It's natural to the art form, which originates from theater and classical arts. We've been storytelling for ages," Yamini explains.

Reclaiming Hyderabad

Reflecting on her deep connection to Hyderabad, she shared her vision for the future: "I haven't done a full-fledged show in a long time, so of course that is on my agenda for 2025—definitely to bring some new productions to Hyderabad audiences," she states with a determined smile. Beyond performances, her aspirations stretch into community-building. "Maybe, God willing, I'll set up centers where Hyderabadis can enjoy art in a space dedicated to it."

That's a long-term goal," she adds. For her, Hyderabad is not just a performance venue but a fertile ground to nurture her dual passions as an artist and teacher.

"Performances are my life," she declares. "I look forward to traveling, performing and taking my work not only in India but abroad as well."

At the heart of her choreography is a profound engagement with philosophy. While classical Indian dance is often steeped in religious themes, she emphasizes the philosophical undercurrents that unite diverse traditions.

"For me, more than Indian religion, it is Indian philosophy that has a great impact on my work," she explains. "Religion is intricately involved in the art, but I try to connect it with philosophy. This way, I can weave in influences from biblical or Islamic traditions too. For me, it's the values and the goodness we are trying to impart that are the ultimate takeaway from any presentation."

This ethos was most evident in her celebrated piece, 'My Heart is a Temple', choreographed by her father. A blend of biblical verses and classical Indian aesthetics, it stands as a testament to her ability to seamlessly marry diverse cultural narratives while retaining the integrity of the art form. The journey forward is brimming with possibilities. She is currently working on two to three new choreographies and is eager to present these on stage soon. But her goals extend far beyond personal accomplishments. With a visionary eye, she dreams of creating platforms that bring artists and audiences together in ways that foster cultural exchange and appreciation.

In her words, "It's not just about performing—it's about building something meaningful that lasts. It's about ensuring that the art continues to inspire, educate and evolve."

KUCHIPUDI IS NATIVE TO US TELUGU PEOPLE. WHEN I CAME BACK FROM DELHI, I WAS SO HAPPY TO RETURN TO THE ROOTS—TO SET UP AN INSTITUTE IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE DANCE FORM ITSELF



BEYOND OPINION, SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING

Malnutrition is rapidly becoming a global crisis, putting the health and future of millions of young children at severe risk. In these challenging circumstances, breastfeeding is more vital than ever—it's one of the most powerful ways to ensure babies receive the essential nutrients they need for a healthy start. However, over half the world's population still lacks access to basic health services, so countless women are left routing this journey alone. This means there is still a lack of compassionate and respectful health counseling for mothers, which hinders them from providing their children with a strong foundation for lifelong health and well-being.

Taking actions: Grasping the physical and psychological power of breastfeeding

First and foremost, there needs to be knowledge of the incredible health advantages that breastfeeding brings. From birth, breast milk provides all the energy and nutrients an infant needs, meeting up to half or more of a child's nutritional requirements well into the second half of the first year. One of its important roles is strengthening the baby's immune system. Indeed, the greatest concentration of antibodies is contained in the first milk—the colostrum—that protects the newborn baby from pathogens. As breastfeeding extends, the infants also receive additional antibodies that will keep developing immunity against disease now and in the future. Additionally, breast milk provides white blood cells, including macrophages and lymphocytes, which play a role in combating infection by consuming or neutralising the pathogenic germs and viruses that help the baby maintain his immunity as he grows.

Regarding long-term benefits, breast milk is critical in establishing a healthy gut microbiota in infants. During the early stages of life, the gut microbiome is still developing and the first exposure to beneficial bacteria is largely influenced by breastfeeding. This early gut microbiome development helps regulate digestion and reduces the risk of infections. It also contributes to developing healthy metabolic processes, which can help prevent conditions like obesity and diabetes later in life. Breast milk is not only essential for a child's physical health but also for the psychological well-being of both mother and child.

Over the past 12 years, the global rate of exclusive breastfeeding for infants under six months has increased by more than 10%, reflecting its growing recognition. For mothers, it is an intrinsic part of motherhood that fosters a strong sense of accomplishment and empowerment. By intimately nourishing their child, mothers

strengthen their emotional bond with their babies and gain confidence in their ability to provide. Another psychological benefit is the release of oxytocin—a "bonding hormone." This neurochemical, released during breastfeeding, deepens the connection between mother and baby, fostering feelings of love, attachment and emotional closeness. Simultaneously, it gives mothers a sense of competence and capability as they meet the challenges of perfecting latch techniques or ensuring an adequate milk supply.

Myths and facts: Ongoing discussion

Misconceptions about breastfeeding can create additional challenges for mothers already managing the physical and emotional demands of new motherhood. A common myth is that mothers must avoid all medications; however, many are safe to take and timing or dosage adjustments can be made when needed. It's vital to inform healthcare providers about any medications being used to ensure the safety of both mother and baby.

Another widespread belief is that a strict or restrictive diet is required. There's no specific "breastfeeding diet" or list of foods to avoid—most women can continue their regular diets without affecting milk quality. While a nutritious, balanced diet supports a mother's overall health, there's no need to eliminate particular foods. Embracing this flexibility allows mothers to focus on their well-being and enjoy a less stressful nursing experience.

Evidence-based perspectives matter

Studies have always indicated that the benefits of breastfeeding are enhanced immune development, cognitive growth and overall health in children, which greatly reduce the likelihood of developing chronic diseases. Additionally, breastfeeding cuts down the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) by up to 64% and reduces the risk of total infant mortality by as much as 40%. For mothers, beneficial effects include postpartum recovery and lower risks for certain cancers and other diseases. These outcomes, however, rely on a strong support network, accurate facts, healthcare guidance and social support. The most effective way to foster informed, supportive environments that allow more families to experience these life-changing health benefits is by building a healthier, more resilient society for future generations.

(The author, Sonal Babbar Bhardwaj, is the Co-Founder of Viraa Care.)

GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS

Captivating drama of love, control & liberation

TEJAL SINHA
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PLOT

Set in the 1990s at a strict boarding school in the Himalayan foothills, *Girls Will Be Girls* delves into the stifling effects of patriarchal norms on women's lives and desires. The story centers on Mira (Preeti Panigrahi), a disciplined and high-achieving student whose orderly world is disrupted by the arrival of Sri (Kesav Binoy Kiron), a charming and mischievous new transfer student. As Mira navigates her growing attraction to Sri, the narrative takes an unexpected turn when her mother, Anila (Kani Kusruti), becomes part of the story. Living nearby to oversee Mira's academic progress, Anila struggles with her own social and romantic frustrations, leading her to compete for Sri's attention. This layered dynamic reveals not only the personal consequences of repressive societal rules but also how these structures influence women's relationships and self-perception across generations.

HIGHLIGHTS

Girls Will Be Girls is a poignant psychological drama that delves deep into the layered complexities of a mother-daughter relationship in a patriarchal society. One of

the most striking aspects of the film is its ability to capture the subtleties of repression and rebellion. Mira's internal journey, as she explores her suppressed desires, is intricately juxtaposed with her mother Anila's struggles with her own unresolved frustrations. The film's setting—a boarding school in the serene yet isolating Himalayan foothills—serves as a metaphor for the emotional suffocation the characters experience.

DRAWBACKS

While the film excels in its emotional depth and thematic focus, its pacing might prove to be a challenge for some viewers. The narrative adopts a deliberate, slow-burn approach, which, while effective in building tension and introspection, occasionally drags in the second half. Certain moments feel overly extended, testing the patience of those accustomed to a faster narrative rhythm. Additionally, the film's heavy focus on Mira and Anila's dynamic leaves little room for supporting characters to develop. While this tight lens strengthens the main story, it also limits the scope of the narrative, leaving other potentially interesting subplots underexplored. These minor shortcomings, however, do not take away from the film's overall impact.

PERFORMANCES

The performances in *Girls Will Be Girls* are its beating heart. Preeti Panigrahi delivers a magnetic performance as Mira,



REVIEW
DIRECTED BY: Shuchi Talati
PRODUCED BY: Pushing Buttons Studio, Dolce Vita Films, Crawling Angle Films by Richa Chadha, Claire Chassagne and Shuchi Talati with Ali Fazal as the executive producer.
CAST: Preeti Panigrahi, Kesav Binoy Kiron and Kani Kusruti
STREAMING ON: Prime Video
RATING: 4/5

masterfully portraying the journey of a young woman torn between societal expectations and her awakening individuality. She captures every nuance of Mira's character, from her moments of quiet rebellion to her raw vulnerability, making her both relatable

and compelling. Kani Kusruti is equally captivating as Anila, Mira's mother. Her portrayal is layered, oscillating between control and yearning, as she struggles with her own unfulfilled desires while attempting to shape Mira's life. Kani's performance brings

a level of gravitas to the role, making Anila both a product of societal repression and a perpetrator of it. Kesav Binoy Kiron as Sri, the sly and charming transfer student, adds depth and charisma to his role, becoming the catalyst for both Mira's and Anila's self-discovery. The chemistry between the actors is natural and contributes significantly to the emotional resonance of the story.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Shuchi Talati's direction shines in its ability to blend the personal and the political, giving equal weight to the characters' individual struggles and the societal structures that shape their lives. The film bravely tackles the themes of female sexuality and generational trauma, making the audience reflect on how societal expectations influence women's autonomy and relationships. The film's technical brilliance enhances its narrative depth. Cinematographer Jih-E Peng's stunning visuals beautifully capture the contrasting elements of the story. The vast Himalayan landscapes serve as a metaphor for freedom and longing, while the claustrophobic interiors of the boarding school and Anila's home reflect the confinement of the characters' lives.

The production design authentically recreates the 1990s setting, with every detail, from the uniforms to the decor, immersing the audience in the time period. The musical score by Pierre Oberkampf and Sneha Khanwalkar is another standout

aspect, subtly underscoring the emotional highs and lows of the characters' journeys without ever overwhelming the narrative.

However, the editing could have been slightly tighter in certain parts of the film, especially in the middle section, where the pacing issues become more evident. Despite this, the technical aspects overall contribute significantly to the film's immersive experience.

VERDICT

Girls Will Be Girls is a thought-provoking and emotionally charged exploration of how patriarchal norms stifle women's sexuality and autonomy. With its searing examination of generational trauma and repression, the film offers a unique perspective on themes often overlooked in mainstream cinema. Shuchi Talati's directorial debut is marked by a sharp focus on emotional authenticity, supported by powerful performances from Preeti Panigrahi and Kani Kusruti. The film's ability to intertwine personal struggles with broader societal commentary makes it a significant addition to contemporary Indian cinema.

While its pacing may not appeal to all viewers, the film's psychological depth, stunning visuals, and atmospheric storytelling make it a rewarding experience. *Girls Will Be Girls* is a must-watch for those seeking a nuanced and courageous portrayal of women's lives and desires in a repressive world.

what's brewing?



● Navya swamy



● Sonika Aggarwal



● Sana bettaib



PARTY



● Lisa Mukhedkar



● Sradha



● Aishwarya



● Shreya

Aukera's exclusive preview of its diamond jewellery collection drew a sophisticated crowd of entrepreneurs, business leaders, influencers and socialites. Under the gracious hostship of Shreya Pandey, the event spotlighted its remarkable craftsmanship and ageless designs.



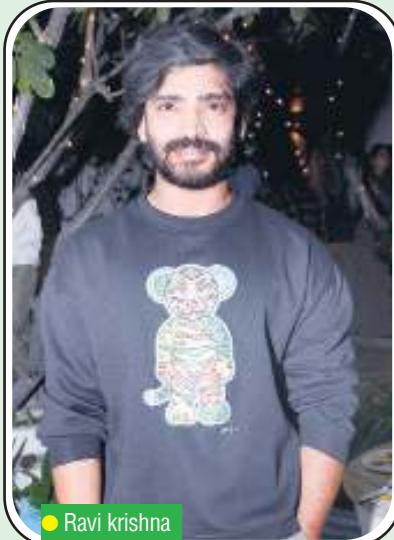
● Manasa and Subhram reddy



● Gulnar and Aadarsh krishna



● Ramya and Vikas



● Ravi krishna



● Anuj, Aadarsh and Niranjn



● Reshma

HashTag Marketing hosted an exclusive event at Olive Bistro in Jubilee Hills, representing BNW Developments from Dubai. The evening drew a gathering of prominent personalities from Hyderabad's social circle, including Aadarsh Balakrishna, Gulnar Virk, Navya Swamy, Ravi and several other distinguished guests.

Photos by- SV Chary



● Monika and Garima



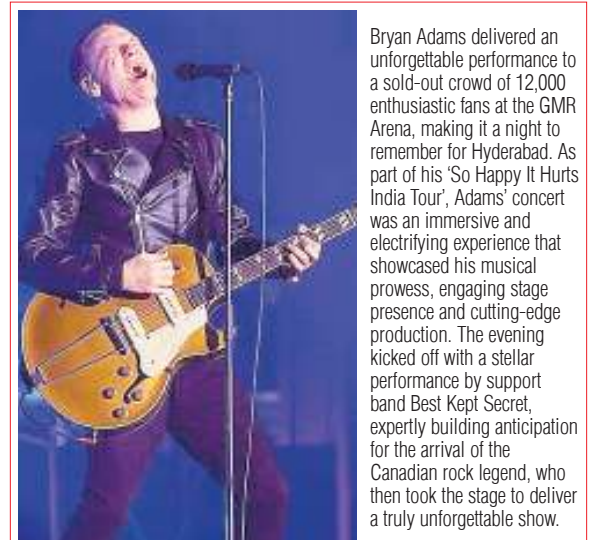
● Varsha



● Zainab and Parveen



Mahindra University has launched its School of Hospitality Management in Hyderabad, introducing B.Sc (Hons.) in Culinary and Hospitality Management. This interdisciplinary program aims to equip students with culinary excellence and hospitality management skills, preparing them for global careers. The school will offer 30 seats for its first academic session, starting in February 2025, with admissions opening in January 2025 and a regular academic session of 60 seats beginning in August 2025, opening doors to exciting global opportunities.



Bryan Adams delivered an unforgettable performance to a sold-out crowd of 12,000 enthusiastic fans at the GMR Arena, making it a night to remember for Hyderabad. As part of his 'So Happy It Hurts India Tour', Adams' concert was an immersive and electrifying experience that showcased his musical prowess, engaging stage presence and cutting-edge production. The evening kicked off with a stellar performance by support band Best Kept Secret, expertly building anticipation for the arrival of the Canadian rock legend, who then took the stage to deliver a truly unforgettable show.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



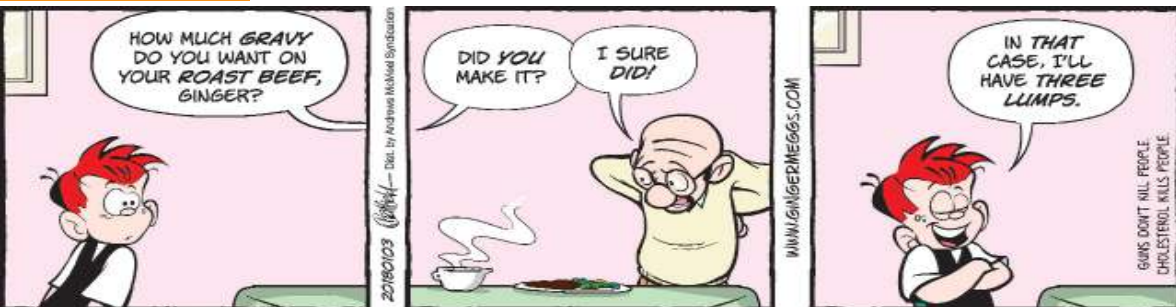
GARFIELD



NANCY



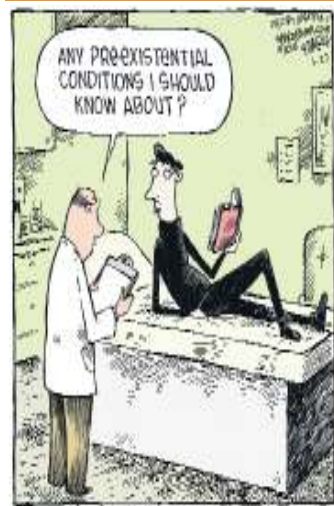
GINGER MEGGS



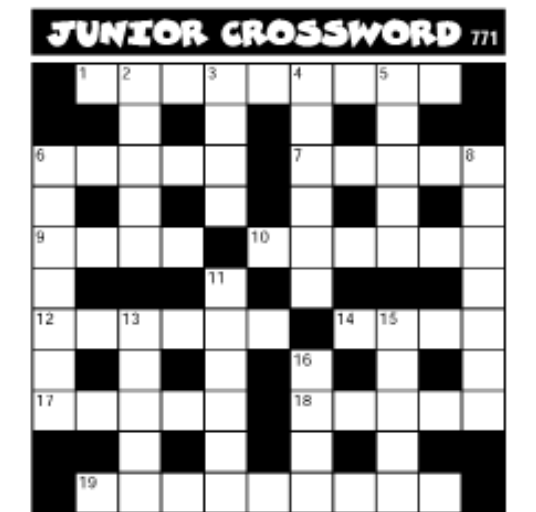
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

ACROSS

- 1 Not remembered
- 6 A brass musical instrument blown in the army
- 7 Time of darkness
- 9 Very small
- 10 This is made from cream
- 12 A symbol on playing cards
- 14 Wear this on a foot
- 17 Lift up
- 18 A word of greeting
- 19 Allowed
- 6 Seller of meat
- 8 A kind of long bomb fired over the sea to sink ships
- 11 A small river
- 13 Similar
- 15 Cut exactly into two pieces
- 16 Injured by a gun

DOWN

- 2 A keyboard instrument
- 3 Leaves
- 4 Poke this out at someone you don't like
- 5 Two times six minus four

SOLUTION 770

T	R	O	U	S	E	R	S		
A	N	G	R	I	E	S			
R	E	G	O	I	L				
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Comedy is my home ground, I won't leave it: Naresh

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Allari Naresh is known for his comedy films, but in recent years, he has been attempting to do more serious films like *Naandhi*, *Ugram* and *Itlu Mareduvilli Prajaneeekam*. Now, he is set to release another serious film, *Bachchalamalli*, in which he plays a raw and rustic character. Subbu Mangadevi is the director.

"Two years ago, director Subbu approached me and narrated this story. Generally, I didn't ask the director which genre the story was based on, because many approached me with those kinds of subjects. But Subbu came with a different story, and when he narrated it to me, I felt that this film was definitely something I wanted to do, because the character has all emotions. As an actor, this will definitely get me a good name," said Allari Naresh about this film and how it started.

The actor felt that audiences were also now watching content-based films, so he agreed to do this one. "He approached me when I was shooting for *Mareduvilli*, so the same producer, Razesh Danda, inquired about this story, and I asked Subbu to narrate the story to him as well," said Allari Naresh.

AHEAD OF THE RELEASE OF HIS FILM BACHCHALAMALLI, ALLARI NARESH TALKS ABOUT HIS UPCOMING FILM, CHALLENGES, ABOUT COMEDY FILMS, HIS FATHER AND MORE

Razesh also liked the story and told Naresh that he would produce the film. The actor said that he did *Ganyam* a long time ago, and people still remember his role as Gali Seenu from the film. "Now, I am confident that people will remember this *Bachchalamalli* role for a longer time," said Naresh.

He added that he came out of his comfort zone and did this film. "I tried something different and new. This film is not an autobiography. But there is a person called 'Bachchalamalli' and the director has taken a few incidents from his life as inspiration and made a complete fiction story," said the actor. Interestingly, the actor also met the real-life 'Bachchalamalli' while shooting this film at Tuni. "My makeup man showed me that it was

'Bachchalamalli'. But I imagined him differently - strong, very tall and with a different face. But he is completely opposite to my thoughts - skinny, with average height, but his voice is very strong. He is now a bit aged, so I met him," said Naresh. He added that he was surprised after seeing him. "When I saw his personality, I doubted that this person would quarrel with everyone? But he is the real Bachchalamalli," said Allari Naresh.

The challenging part about this film is doing something new. "The director wants the stupidity in my face when I walk, asking me to cry something new, which is my challenge. When I do something, the director compares it with my old films, so he asked me to do something new," said Naresh.

He added that he put his hard work into this film. "After five minutes of the start of the film, you will definitely be immersed in the *Bachchalamalli* world," said the actor. For the look also, they tried different looks. "It's another big challenge, because the story happened in the 90s in a rural area. The character is not that neat, so we have tried different looks, and finally come to this one," he said.

He added that in this film, every scene comes out realistic. "Even the action scenes were designed more in a realistic way. I beat up goons and they too beat me; it's not like the regular commercial film where the protagonist hits a goon, and he goes to a distance and hits a lorry. Those kinds of action scenes are not in this film," said Naresh.

For another question, he said he had doubts when he did *Naandhi* about whether people would believe him or not. "I used to be known more for comedy roles and suddenly if I hit goons, I had doubts about whether the audience would believe it or not. But luckily, I started with a couple of action scenes in *Naandhi* and then a few more in *Ugram* and slowly I started doing action scenes because people liked it," he said. He added that these days, many films forcefully put action scenes to appeal to the North (Hindi) audience. "In this film, we didn't put any extra action scenes, as those come as part of the story," he said.

The actor is now confident to do serious films and also action films. "Slowly I am coming out of my comfort zone to do these kinds of films. But at the same time, I won't leave comedy, because it is my home ground, and I am comfortable doing it," said Naresh.

He added that when he is doing comedy, people ask him to do serious films and vice versa, they are asking for comedy films.



Nithiin's Robinhood release postponed, here's why!

The film *Robinhood*, starring Nithiin and Sreeleela as the lead pair, was initially scheduled to release on December 25. However, the film's director, Venky Kudumula, has officially postponed the release and the makers will announce a new release date soon.

Interestingly, Mythri Movie Makers, the production house behind *Pushpa 2*, is also producing *Robinhood*. *Pushpa 2* was released on December 5 and created records in the Hindi belt, but it did not perform well in Telugu states, allegedly due to Allu Arjun's differences with the Mega Family. According to a source, the makers deliberately postponed the release of *Robinhood* to avoid reducing the collections of *Pushpa 2* in Telugu states. Initially, the makers had held a media conference a few days back and confirmed that the film would release on December 25, as it was already completed. However, the makers did not expect *Pushpa 2* to perform poorly in Telugu states and they were reportedly shocked by the response. Under pressure from distributors, the makers have now postponed the release of Nithiin's film to a later date.

"Due to unforeseen circumstances, #Robinhood will not be releasing on December 25. A new release date will be announced soon," said the production house on their social media page.

Twist in Manchu saga; Nirmala enters the fray

The Manchu family saga continues to unfold with more twists and turns. The main protagonist, Mohan Babu, left Hyderabad for Tirupati and surrendered his gun at the Chandragiri police station. Meanwhile, Manchu Manoj, the younger son of Mohan Babu, filed a complaint against his brother Vishnu at the Pahaadi Shareef police station on Sunday. Manoj alleged that Vishnu had harmed him and his family, and also claimed that Vishnu had poured sugar into the generator, causing a power outage at his house.

However, in a surprising twist, Mohan Babu's wife and Manoj's mother, Nirmala, sent a letter to the Pahaadi Shareef

police station, refuting Manoj's allegations. In her letter, Nirmala stated that on December 14, her elder son Vishnu had brought a cake to her Jalpally residence to celebrate her birthday. Nirmala claimed that Manoj had taken a video footage of the celebration and was using it to make false allegations against Vishnu. "On

December 14, my elder son Vishnu brought a cake to my Jalpally residence and celebrated my birthday. My younger son took this video footage and said that Vishnu did a fight and also made false allegations on him," said Nirmala.

Nirmala further stated that both her sons, Vishnu and Manoj, have equal rights to stay in their family home. She also clarified that Vishnu had not come to the house with any people, nor had he engaged in any physical altercation or forced entry. According to Nirmala, Vishnu had simply come to celebrate her birthday and collect some belongings from his room. "He came and celebrated my birthday and took some belongings from his room," said Nirmala in her letter.

With Nirmala's entry into the family dispute, the Manchu saga has taken a new turn. Meanwhile, the police have decided to wait until December 24 to question Mohan Babu before taking further action.



Shruti Haasan out; Mrunal Thakur in for Dacoit



Adivi Sesh is having a tough time as the shoot for his film *Dacoit* started with Shruti Haasan and the team even released some promotional videos featuring her. However, it seems that the unit had some problems with Shruti Haasan, leading them to replace her with another actress, Mrunal Thakur.

The makers have now released new posters featuring Adivi Sesh and Mrunal Thakur for *Dacoit*. The actor is making this film a pan-India action drama. Directed by Shaneli Deo, who marks his directorial debut, this ambitious project is produced by Supriya Yarlagaadda and co-produced by Suniel Narang. The film is being shot simultaneously in Hindi and Telugu and features a story and screenplay jointly crafted by Adivi Sesh and Shaneli Deo.

The film is currently being shot in Hyderabad, followed by an extensive schedule in Maharashtra. On his birthday on Tuesday, Adivi Sesh announced his new leading lady, welcoming Mrunal Thakur to the project. The stunning actress joins the film as the female lead.

According to a source from the unit, the team couldn't handle Shruti Haasan's attitude at some point, leaving them with no option but to replace her with another actress.

Dacoit tells the story of an angry convict seeking vengeance on his ex-girlfriend who betrayed him. He devises a dangerous plan to trap her, setting the stage for an intense action drama driven by elemental forces -- love, betrayal, and revenge.

"The team couldn't handle Shruti Haasan's attitude at some point, leaving them with no option," revealed a source

"It's an action film with a touching love story. Mrunal has brought some of the finest characters to life on the big screen, bringing a unique panache to each role," said Adivi Sesh. He added that they are thrilled to welcome Mrunal into this project.

"The story of *Dacoit* is true in its essence, a great mixture of rustic storytelling that is elevated with the stylised vision of both Adivi Sesh and Shaneli Deo. The character I'm set to depict in the film will allow me to explore shades of playing an on-screen character that I haven't explored before as an actor," said Mrunal about her role.

RAMANA GOGULA BREAKS HIS HIATUS WITH SANKRANTHIKI VASTUNNAMU



Popular music director and playback singer Ramana Gogula is back in the spotlight. He is well-known for his work on films like *Thammudu*, *Premante Idera*, *Bhadri*, *Yogi*, *Yuvaraju*, and many others as a music composer and singer. Now, Ramana has sung a song in the upcoming film *Sankranthiki Vastunnamu*, starring Venkatesh. After a long hiatus, Ramana Gogula has sung the song *Godaru Gattu*, which has received an overwhelming response on YouTube, with over 27 million views and counting.

Talking about the song, Ramana Gogula revealed that music director Bheems Ceciroleo had asked him to sing this particular song. "I was in the USA when Bheems called and asked me to sing this song. I told him to send the lyrics, which I liked. There's a lot of creative freedom when I sing this song," said Ramana Gogula about the song. He also praised the other singer, Madhupriya, who sang along with him very well. "This is the first time I've sung a song for another music composer. Venkatesh is my good friend and director Anil, music director Bheems are lovely people. My first film as music director was with Venkatesh's *Premante Idera*. So, with all these combinations, I decided to sing this song," said Ramana Gogula.

Regarding his hiatus, Ramana explained that he had been working in the USA for several years. His last film as music director was *1000 Abaddalu*. "I worked for a multi-national company in the USA and I'm interested in technology, so I worked on Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics projects for that company," said Ramana. The music composer expressed his eagerness to work again and is waiting for the right opportunity. "At present, music directors are giving excellent music, but there's a gap for a new kind of music and I want to fill that gap. I have some great ideas in music and I'm confident that I can deliver good music," said the music composer. He has worked on four films with Pawan Kalyan in the past and is now happy to see Pawan Kalyan in a prominent position as the Deputy CM of Andhra Pradesh.

Rahul, Jadeja fifties help India avoid follow-on in Brisbane Test

PTI ■ BRISBANE

KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja were determination personified as their fighting fifties helped India avoid the follow-on on the fourth day of the weather-hit third Test against a menacing Australia that seems meandering towards a draw. Jadeja (77, 123b, 7x4, 1x6) and Rahul (84, 139, 8x4) were the heavy-lifters in India's 252 for nine when bad light forced an early close to the day. Jasprit Bumrah (10) and Akash Deep (27), who showed appreciable gumption, are holding the fort for India. The visitors trail Aussies by 193 runs. But they wouldn't mind that one bit as Australia will now have to bat again and forcing a result in three sessions looks an improbable target, considering the Brisbane weather pattern. The city is bracing up for rain and a thunderstorm or two on Wednesday. A quick word of appreciation is also required for No. 10 Bumrah

and No. 11 Akash Deep for knocking down the 33 runs required to go past the follow-on mark of 246. The much-awaited moment came when Akash crunched Pat Cummins over gully for a boundary. When these two joined forces, India were reeling at 213 for 9 after Jadeja was dismissed off a Cummins' snorter. But while resuming from a wafer-thin overnight score of 51 for four, India needed someone to offer fight, and Rahul, India's standout batter in this series so far, did precisely that. Rahul displayed admirable technical nous to withstand the stern test posed by the Australian bowlers to take the game deep into the day. A nine toes down Rahul and an equally feisty Jadeja added 67 runs for the sixth wicket, and it was the first sign of India's fight. There was a moment of massive fortune too for Rahul when Smith spilled a regulation catch at second slip off the first ball of the



day from Cummins. Rahul was on 33 then. A quick look upwards and a silent prayer showed how much he valued that



reprieve, which he exploited to the hilt, notching his 17th Test fifty. Once he woke up from a bit of morning haziness, Rahul looked a

class apart from the rest of his colleagues. The Aussies employed three slips and a gully, leaving the vast

expanse of the ground to play his favourite shot -- drive through the cover or in front of the point. It was a dangerous proposition as there was enough movement and bounce for the Aussie pacers. But Rahul was prudent enough to see through that ruse. He did not bring out that shot until the bowlers pitched the ball well up in his driving arc. The Bengaluru man's sagacity shone in how he defended too -- all soft hands and playing close to the body. Cummins tested him with that fifth stump line outside off, but Rahul either left the ball wisely or merely tucked his bat behind his pads. However, a remarkable redemption catch by Smith at slip off Nathan Lyon ended his stay. But Jadeja carried on and he added 53 runs for the seventh wicket with Nitish Reddy to keep India afloat. The 36-year-old scored a good chunk of runs either down the ground or square of the wicket, enabling him to collect runs

without the risk of getting caught behind or in the cordon. Jadeja brought up his 22nd fifty in Test cricket off 89 balls and the innings was also dotted with sweep shots that he effectively employed against off-spinner Lyon. Nitish should also be patted for giving some solid company to Jadeja as batting for time was more important than the volume of runs considering the weather situation in this Test. However, a slice of misfortune ended Nitish's stay as he dragged Cummins' climbing delivery back onto his stumps. Jadeja also soon departed while trying to farm the strike with Bumrah. He looked to smash Cummins' rising delivery out of the ground but Mitchell Marsh settled nicely under the ball to give a heap of frayed nerves to Indian fans. But Bumrah and Akash added 39 runs to put the smiles back on their faces, as Aussies dearly missed the metronomical Josh Hazlewood, who was ruled out of the series with a calf injury.



New Zealand beat England by 423 runs in the 3rd test

AP ■ HAMILTON

Captain Ben Stokes was unable to bat because of a hamstring injury on Tuesday as England slumped to a 423-run loss to New Zealand before tea on the fourth day on the third cricket Test. Stokes strained his left hamstring while bowling on the third day and could not take the field as England was bowled out for 234 as it chased an impossible target of 658 for victory. New Zealand's winning margin matched its largest test win by runs of a 423-run win over Sri Lanka in 2018 and prevented England from completing a series whitewash. England had an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series after winning the first test by eight wickets and the second by 323 runs. "You can't fault any of the energies or efforts we put into this game, particularly in the field," Stokes said. "It's obviously not ideal to end the tour on this note but we've come here against a New Zealand team which is very strong and full of confidence after beating India in India 3-0. So to come here and lift that trophy at the end proves we played some very good

cricket." England resumed its second innings Tuesday at 18-2 after losing the wickets of Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley late on day three after New Zealand, leading by 204 on the first innings, was dismissed for 453. Joe Root made 54 and Jacob Bethell 76 in a 104-run partnership for the third wicket which briefly fanned England's hopes that it might somehow endure for two full days to draw the match. But dogged perseverance is not a feature of England cricket in the "Bazball" quick-scoring era and instead it maintained a policy of all-out attack before the final wicket fell midway through the second session. After lunch Gus Atkinson blasted 43 from 41 balls with seven fours and a six and Ollie Pope made 17 but wickets fell steadily and the result became inevitable. "I think anytime you finish a series with a win when you've been behind is pleasing," New Zealand captain Tom Latham said. "We weren't at our best in those first two games but the way we came here on a wicket that was slightly different to the first couple and we adapted was very

pleasing." New Zealand's win owed a great deal to the contribution of Mitchell Santner in the first innings who made 76 batting at No. 8 and worked with Matt Henry, Tim Southee and Will O'Rourke to add 116 runs for New Zealand's three wickets. That allowed New Zealand to reach 347 after losing the toss and being sent in. Santner's last-wicket stand with O'Rourke which lasted 77 minutes at the end of the first day and the start of the second was a display of resilience which had been missing from New Zealand's performances in the first two tests. Southee has been the spearhead of New Zealand's attack for many years, mostly in combination with Trent Boult. But this was his 107th and final test before his retirement from international cricket and Boult no longer is contracted by New Zealand Cricket.

Mandhana moves to top three in both ODI and T20I rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's vice-captain Smriti Mandhana has surged three places to second in the latest ICC Women's ODI rankings while climbing one spot to third among T20I batters, following her stellar displays against Australia and the West Indies. The left-hander struck 105 in the final match of the series against Australia in Perth and 54 in the first game of the ongoing T20I rubber against the West Indies in Mumbai to headline the latest rankings update released here on Tuesday. Mandhana is the lone Indian batter in the top 10 as her skipper Harmanpreet Kaur moved down two spots to 13th while Jemimah Rodrigues climbed six places to 15th and Harleen Deol moved up nine rungs to 64th. Among bowlers, Deepti Sharma has slipped two spots



to five. India seam bowler Arundhati Reddy has shot up 48 places to 51st after a haul of four for 26 while Renuka Thakur has moved up from 28th to joint 26th. England opener Tammy Beaumont advanced two places to 11th after an unbeaten 65 helped clinch the South Africa series 2-1. Ashleigh Gardner has moved up one place to 16th with a 50 in Perth, Tahlia McGrath has progressed from 32nd to 24th

with an unbeaten 56, and Annabell Sutherland is up 15 places to 29th after a match-winning 110. Gardner is also up two places to a career-best-equaling third position in the bowling rankings with a haul of five for 30 and has moved up from fourth to second in the all-rounders' list. Sutherland is in the top 20 of the bowling rankings. Others to move up in this list include South Africa's Marizanne Kapp, who has gained two slots to reach fourth position after a haul of three for 24, and the England trio of Charlie Dean (up two places to seventh), Nat Sciver Brunt (up one place to 16th) and Lauren Bell (up four places to 21st). Kaur moves back into top 10. In the T20I rankings, Kaur is in the top 10 and Rodrigues has gained six slots to reach 15th position after a fine 73 against the West Indies. In the bowling rankings, Deepti has moved up two places to take the second position in the bowling rankings and Titas Sadhu is up to 52nd. For the West Indies, all-rounder Deandra Dottin has advanced 21 places to 59th after a half-century while Qiana Joseph (up 22 places to 65th among batters) and Karishma Ramharack (up six places to 20th among bowlers) are other notable gainers.

Vettori admits Indian tailenders partnership foils Australia's plans

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Australia assistant coach Daniel Vettori admitted that a resilient partnership between Indian tailenders Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep foiled their plans to enforce a follow-on, while also defending the decision not to declare the home team's first innings in the third Test which seems heading towards a draw. With the Indian batters, barring KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja, failing once again, it was the obstinate 39-run unbeaten partnership between Bumrah and Akash Deep that saved India the blushes as the tourists avoided a follow on a rain marred day four on Tuesday. "I think the only way to force the game was to force the follow-on," Vettori said at the post-day press conference. "There was a desperation to get that final wicket. We thought we had a really good chance when Jadeja was dismissed, but it was a real fighting partnership from Bumrah and Deep. "Unfortunately, just the amount of time that's been lost from the game has made it difficult," he added. Akash Deep, making his debut in Australia, walked in to bat at 213 for 9, with India still needing 33 runs to avoid the follow-on that could have cost them the game. Alongside pace spearhead Bumrah, he guided India to 252 for 9, frustrating the home team. Australia had ended day three on 405 for 7 but chose to bat, consuming a considerable amount of game time on a rain affected day four rather than declare their innings.

Josh Hazlewood likely to miss Test series against India due to calf injury

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood is likely to miss the remainder of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India due to a right calf strain that he sustained during the ongoing third Test at the Gabba, Cricket Australia said on Tuesday. The niggle has also ruled Hazlewood out of the Brisbane Test, weakening Australia's bowling attack. "Josh Hazlewood has sustained a right side calf strain which will prevent him from playing any further part in the Test match against India in Brisbane," Cricket



Australia said in an official statement. "He is likely to miss the remainder of the Test series." On Tuesday, the New South

Wales player bowled just one over before walking out of the field following a discussion with captain Pat Cummins, senior cricketer

Steven Smith and team physio Nick Jones. Hazlewood later underwent scans to ascertain the severity of the injury. The 33-year-old had nicked off star India batter Virat Kohli on Monday, the third day of the match, with a fine delivery outside the off-stump. Hazlewood made his return to the side for the third Test after missing the Pink Ball Test at Adelaide due to a side strain. He had replaced fellow pacer Scot Boland, who played in the day-night Adelaide Test, in the Australia eleven for the ongoing Brisbane Test.

Can 'Guru' Gambhir and Nayar offer cogent solutions to technical flaws in batters?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are reaping maximum criticism for being walking wickets during the ongoing Test series against Australia but even Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant haven't shown the patience needed to survive Down Under, indicating a larger problem. Patience is a virtue that one develops over time and Kohli had once showed how it's done during his golden phase between 2014 and 2019. KL Rahul, blessed with sound technique, has displayed that during the current series with scores of 77 and 84 in Perth and Brisbane. In case of Jaiswal, save his second innings knock of 161 at Perth, a shuffle across the crease is making him a candidate for leg-before. Gill loves to play on the rise outside the off-stump and away from his body and could be impatient when one bowls the stump and even for Pant, a compulsive stroke player, the ball that leaves him from five metre length with adequate bounce, is creating issues. So, will head coach Gautam Gambhir and his deputy Abhishek Nayar, who is highly regarded in Mumbai cricket circuit for being a

"Mind Coach and Life Coach rolled into one", do anything about it? A former India great, who didn't wish to be named, offered his perspective. "Not all great players or players of repute happen to be great coaches. They might have done some incredible things as players and knew what to do and how to react during a particular situation," the veteran of 100-plus Tests said. "But coaching is science and not many can tell why certain things need to be done. Even Gautam used to play with hard hands and dab technique in Australia and England. "You can still work with younger guys but difficult to mould the older ones who don't get enough time to work on their game in a packed calendar," he added. Watching the dismissals of especially Kohli in Australia, which seemed like a replay of previous ones, has led to growing concerns. Everyone understands the technical flaw, but can anyone provide the corrective measures to break the rut? Rohit, barring the England tour in 2021, he does not really have a track record in SENA countries in Tests. But with Kohli, the problem of reaching for deliveries on and



outside the off-stump has resurfaced once again and has been a persistent issue for quite some time. Sanjay Manjrekar's tweet is worth taking note of. "I guess the time has come to

scrutinise the role of a batting coach in the Indian team. Why major technical issues have remained unresolved for so long with certain Indian batters?" he asked. Manjrekar's view raises questions

on the role of Sanjay Bangar, Vikram Rathour, and now Nayar. Their official designation might be assistant coach, but they essentially are batting coaches. Devang Gandhi, who was a touring selector between 2016-17 to 2020-

21, had a more nuanced take compared to the veteran India star. "It would be very easy to target Nayar as a low hanging fruit or for that matter Gautam," Gandhi, who has coached the Delhi Ranji team and Bengal U-19, told PTI during a conversation. "But they have just come into system. To discuss or nudge a player, first you need to be around for some time and once there is some kind of mutual trust between the two, you can offer him solutions. But at this level, it is more about the experienced player's own mental make-up." So what is Kohli's problem? Gandhi, a former Test opener and an NCA Level-2 coach, believes it's all about his mental approach. "If you watch his training videos that are available for public, I find him doing all the right things. During training he is playing close to his body. But the moment it is the match situation, the hands are moving towards those channel deliveries like conditioned reflex or muscle memory," he explained. Gandhi then blamed it on the rising T20 engagements. "The moment his bat is away from the body, the bat-face will open up towards cover. Now this is a white ball problem of hitting through the

line. In India the ball will hit the bottom of the bat but in Australia, it will towards the upper part. "What solution can Gambhir or Nayar possibly give, apart from telling him to not play those deliveries?" "After 30 Test hundreds, Virat doesn't need to be told that but at 36, does he have that patience to accept that now if he scores a hundred, it will be off 200 balls and not 140 like earlier times? Can he bide those extra 60 balls?," Gandhi questioned. Sachin Tendulkar's epic 241 in the 2004 New Year's Test in Sydney is often cited as a prime example of patience. He didn't hit a single cover drive until he scored his double hundred. "It's about controlling the mind. You can be a sounding board for players like Tendulkar and Kohli but at this stage, you can't coach them. Coaching happens at junior level," Gandhi added. But can a Gambhir or Nayar help Kohli find a solution? "Of course, at some point, honest conversations are necessary. But first, they should ask him what his corrective options are and then offer their own if they have something different to contribute," Gandhi concluded.