

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
In just one year, the Congress Government borrowed Rs 1.27 lakh crore, including loans with and without guarantees. At this rate, in five years, their debt will touch Rs 6.38 lakh crore. The Congress's mismanagement could push debt to Rs 7 lakh crore. Meanwhile, the actual debt contracted by the BRS admin stands at Rs 4.17 lakh crore
 - Harish Rao, BRS MLA

'India moving forward at 'unprecedented' speed'
 5

INDIA, US
 NEED TO TOGETHER LOWER TARIFFS, STRESSES US AMBASSADOR
 8

'I left a web series project where I played lead, just so I could be a part of PUSHPA 2'
 PII

DON'T MISS...

Medaram set for transformation

Temples are being constructed for the tribal deities. Until now, the goddesses were worshipped in the forest, but now they will have temples. The government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, has focused on the development of Medaram. Various works have already been initiated, and now the government has decided to build temples for Sammakka and Sarakka. In 1971, the Endowments Department constructed small temples for the tribal deities. As the number of devotees has steadily increased, especially during ...

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Modi reaffirms India-UK ties

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to UK's King Charles and reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership. During their discussion, they reflected on the historic relationship and emphasized their shared goal of fostering deeper collaboration in various areas. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two nations which has been a cornerstone of...

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Job market projected to grow 9 pc: Report

Hiring activities in 2025 are likely to witness a 9 per cent growth in the country driven by sectors, including IT, retail, telecommunications and banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) sectors, a report said on Thursday. According to the latest data from jobs and talent platform foundit (formerly Monster APAC & ME) there will be a 9 per cent hiring growth in the country in 2025, led by IT, retail, telecommunications, and BFSI sectors. With a 10 per cent growth in 2024 and 3 per cent...

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Ashwin deserved a fitting farewell

Unable to comprehend R Ashwin's sudden decision to retire from international cricket, a shocked World Cup-winning skipper Kapil Dev says the premier off-spinner deserved a fitting farewell, ideally on home soil. Ashwin stunned one and all by calling it quits on Wednesday, right after the Brisbane Test against Australia ended in a draw. Kapil felt Ashwin seemed unhappy with something. "I was shocked by how one of India's greatest cricketers chose to leave the game. The disappointment ...

-SPORTS

Chaos on Parliament premises

2 BJP MPs injured; NDA, Congress file police complaints



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Plumbing new depths of political animosity, rival MPs screamed and shoved in the forecourt of Parliament on Thursday in unprecedented scenes of unruliness, capping three days of acrimonious debate inside the House over preserving the dignity of B R Ambedkar. Two BJP MPs were hospitalised

with injuries as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi became the centre of the ruling party's accusations, including one by a woman MP who said he misbehaved with her. NDA leaders filed a police complaint against him for "attempt to murder, physical assault and incitement". The sordid incident perhaps with-

Two BJP MPs were hospitalised with injuries as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi became the centre of the ruling party's accusations, including one by a woman MP who said he misbehaved with her.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said he was pushed so violently that he lost his balance and sat down. "Now they are the ones who are accusing us of shoving them," the 82-year-old said.



Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said Rahul Gandhi and the others were protesting peacefully, but were prevented from entering Parliament by BJP MPs carrying "sticks", it said.

The BJP MPs were seen carrying placards pinned to sticks. "BJP MPs stopped, threatened and intimidated me," Rahul Gandhi said.

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'IRREGULARITIES IN FORMULA E CAR RACE'

ACB files case against KTR, Arvind



Formula E race file photo; KTR and Arvind are seen

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) registered an FIR against BRS Working President KT Rama Rao in connection with alleged financial irregularities during the Formula E race held in Hyderabad last year. As per the FIR, the total value of properties involved is Rs 54,88,87,043. The anti-graft agency named KT Rama Rao (KTR) as Accused No. 1 (A-1) in its FIR. Former Special Chief Secretary of Municipal Administration, Arvind Kumar, has been designated as (A-2), and the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) Chief Engineer, BLN Reddy, as A-3. The case was booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The ACB registered a case against KTR for alleged misuse of government funds under Sections 13(1)(A) and 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, along with Sections 409 and 120(B) of the IPC.

The FIR was registered two days after the Cabinet gave its nod following Governor Jishnu Dev Varma giving permission to try KTR.

There are allegations that Rs 55 crore was transferred from HMDA funds to Formula E Operations (FEO) without requisite approvals. KTR, as then Minister for Industry,

allegedly sanctioned funds for his race bypassing established procedures.

According to the FIR, the BRS leader authorised payments to Formula-E Organisers (FOE), a foreign company, without Cabinet clearance. The HMDA reportedly transferred Rs 46 crore in two instalments, violating RBI guidelines. This led to a fine of Rs 8 crore imposed on the Telangana Government by the RBI, which was later paid by the Congress government after assuming office in December 2023

Continued on Page 2

Case politically motivated:KTR

HYDERABAD: BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) strongly refuted the allegations made by the Congress-led state government in connection with the Formula E case, terming it a politically motivated conspiracy. Speaking at a press conference, KTR detailed the sequence of events surrounding the Formula E race and challenged the state government to provide evidence of corruption if it existed. Reiterating his commitment to accountability, KTR assured that all financial transactions related to Formula E were above board. "Not a single rupee was misused. The Anti-Corruption Bureau has no grounds to register a case under the Prevention of Corruption Act," he said, adding that the state government was merely resorting to diversionary tactics. He accused the Congress government of targeting him and his party as retaliation for exposing corruption within the Chief Minister's family.

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CM: Will set up SIT to probe ORR tenders

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU
 venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com
 ■ HYDERABAD

Alleging that the BRS government had handed over the Outer Ring Road (ORR) to someone unsolicitedly, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said the government will set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe ORR tenders.

The Chief Minister made this announcement in the Assembly on Thursday making it clear that the government will conduct a comprehensive probe with the SIT.

In a debate on the 'Outstanding Liabilities of the State' held on Thursday at the Assembly, Harish



raised objections to the criticism of the Treasury benches that the BRS government had handed over ORR to a Maharashtra Company on lease cheaply and said that the Congress government should cancel the agreement if it has objections on it.

Continued on Page 2

GODAVARI-CAUVERY LINK MOVE

Telangana sticks to its stand

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has reiterated its stance on the Godavari-Cauvery (G-C) river link proposal during the 38th Annual General Meeting of the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) and the 22nd Special Committee on the Interlinking of Rivers held on Thursday. The key items specific to Telangana, namely 38.6.2 in the AGM and 22.4.2 in the SCILR meeting, were discussed at the meeting.

Telangana emphasised the need to protect its rightful share of water and to minimise the impact on its existing water resources. Telangana demanded that 50% of the water, equivalent to 74 TMCs, should be ensured.

The water draw should originate



from Sammakka Sagar, above +83 metres, to prioritise the downstream requirements of 152 TMC as the first charge. The state also insisted on restricting water draw to the monsoon period and exploring alternative alignments to minimise disruption to large command areas. Telangana asserted its discretion

over the areas to be brought under irrigation. The state demanded a 50% share (9 TMC of 18 TMC) in the Bedti-Varda link diversion. Telangana firmly opposed the diversion of 16 TMCs of water to Karnataka, citing adverse impacts on the Jurala Project.

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'TG paddy varieties used worldwide'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao said that it is a matter of pride for TG that its paddy varieties are used not only in the state but also internationally.

He inspected the arrangements for Professor Jayashankar Telangana Agricultural University's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations on Thursday along with Agriculture Secretary, APC M. Raghunandan Rao IAS and Commissioner B. Gopi, IAS.

The team inspected the arrangements at the PJTSAU Sports Complex and auditorium in Rajendranagar where Prof. Jayashankar Telangana Agricultural University's Diamond Jubilee celebrations are being held on Friday and Saturday.

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwar Rao advised officials that arrangements should be made in full



swing as the Governor, Jishnudev Verma, who is also the University's Chancellor and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy would be attending. Tummala recalled the university's history. The late Vice President, Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, laid the foundation stone of the agricultural college in Rajendranagar on January 6, 1955, and gave birth to today's agricultural university, he said.



Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri formally inaugurated the Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University on March 20, 1965, and dedicated it to the farmers of the United States. The late Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, inaugurated the present university administration building complex on June 23, 1966.

The Minister said that the late former Chief Minister Dr YS Raja Shekar Reddy started the Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University on July 15, 2005, to carry out research in fields like veterinary medicine and horticulture.

Pending bills of contractors touch Rs 907.14 crore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana is grappling with delayed payments to contractors, with 5,822 bills amounting to Rs 907.14 crore remaining unpaid as of November 30, 2024. The issue, brought to light during the Telangana Legislative Assembly's fourth session, has raised concerns over the state's financial management. The Finance Department, responding to a question posed by several MLAs, clarified that payments are being processed on a monthly basis, subject to the state's "ways and means" position. Despite assurances, contractors have expressed difficulties due to prolonged delays.

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Kaleshwaram probe panel grills Somesh, Smita

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TG's debt will touch Rs 6.38 lakh crore in 5 years, warns Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao strongly countered the Congress's allegations about Telangana's debt in the Assembly and accused the ruling party of misleading the public using exaggerated figures.

Harish also exposed Congress's borrowing trends during their one

year in power. "In just one year, the Congress government borrowed Rs 1.27 lakh crore, including loans with and without guarantees. At this rate, in five years, their debt will touch Rs 6.38 lakh crore," he said, cautioning that the Congress's mismanagement could push debt only to Rs 7 lakh crore.

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Electrical safety becomes a cause for concern

Electrical safety has become a growing concern in India, with alarming statistics highlighting the risks. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the country loses around 12,000 lives annually due to electrical accidents. In addition, countless animals perish, and significant commercial losses are reported. Property damage caused by short circuits and overloading occurs almost daily, often escalating into devastating fires in buildings, malls, and hospitals.

The situation is worsened by inadequate preparedness to handle such emergencies. Fires in high-density areas often spiral out of control before fire services can respond effectively. A glaring example was the COVID-19 pandemic when several urban hospitals suf-

Root causes of the problem

1. Overloading and poor infrastructure planning
Many residential, commercial and healthcare facilities fail to plan for future electricity demands. This leads to overloading, which remains a major cause of electrical fires and system failures.

2. Transmission lines in residential areas
Rapid urbanisation has led to distribution and transmission lines being routed dangerously close to residential areas, often violating safety codes.

The situation is worsened by inadequate preparedness to handle such emergencies. Fires in high-density areas often spiral out of control before fire services can respond effectively. A glaring example was the COVID-19 pandemic when several urban hospitals suffered tragic fires caused by electrical overloading.

fered tragic fires caused by electrical overloading. This happened because electrical systems in these hospitals were not designed to handle the surge in demand.

3. Regulatory and Enforcement Gaps

The Electricity Act places responsibility on the government, authorities, electricity inspectorates and the public to ensure safety. However, enforcement remains inadequate. Inspectors, who are often appointed from within

power utilities, tend to focus on data collection rather than actual safety oversight. This conflict of interest compromises the effectiveness of regulatory compliance.

Addressing challenges
During my tenure with the Regulatory Commission and RERA, I tried to address some of these issues by implementing specific standards. However, challenges persist,



D. RADHAKRISHNA
Former Chairman of TERC

particularly in smaller cities where mandatory mock drills and safety protocols are often overlooked. Safety measures need to be enforced at every stage of the electricity lifecycle,

from production and transmission to distribution and usage.

For instance, quality control over meters, voltage levels, and load capacities is critical. However, old and inefficient electrical appliances, such as refrigerators, air conditioners, and ovens, are being reused in downstream markets. These gadgets not only consume excessive electricity but also pose serious safety risks, especially in households benefiting from free electricity schemes.

Proposed solutions

A holistic and coordinated approach is required to ensure electrical safety

Department or the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, should oversee electricity safety. This department should collaborate with fire services and regulatory commissions to streamline safety protocols.

2. Regulatory Reforms
Regulations to ensure the quality of power and compensation for fatalities should be strengthened. Inspectors should be independent professionals, appointed from outside the power utilities, to ensure unbiased safety assessments.

3. Public Awareness Campaigns
Public education on the dangers of using outdated electrical appliances is crucial. Awareness programs should highlight the risks associated with poor-quality appliances,

improper electrical setups and overloading.

4. Safety in Urban Planning
Residential complexes, malls and hospitals must incorporate robust electrical safety measures during construction. Regular audits, capacity planning, and mock drills should be mandatory.

Conclusion
Electrical safety is not just a technical or regulatory issue — it is a public health and urban planning challenge. While some measures have been taken, there is an urgent need for stronger enforcement, institutional reforms and public education. With a unified effort, India can prevent avoidable tragedies and build a safer, more reliable electrical ecosystem

Mismanagement of TG finances exposed: Bandi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said, "The financial mismanagement in Telangana during BRS and Congress rule was exposed in the Assembly."

In a statement issued here on Thursday, Sanjay said that from the formation of Telangana state to date, the irresponsible borrowings and policy failures of both the BRS and Congress Governments have driven the state towards bankruptcy. The truth was revealed today in the Legislative Assembly.

The government itself admitted that during 10 years of BRS rule, a debt of ₹6,71,756 crore was incurred. Similarly, after just a year of Congress rule, the state has already accumulated debts exceeding ₹1,27,000 crore, he said.

He said that due to the misrule of these two parties, Telangana has ended up with a massive debt of ₹8 lakh crore, bankrupting the state and leaving its people improv-



erished. What was once a rich state has now reached a dire situation where new loans are being taken just to pay off the interest on earlier debts, he said.

Sanjay said the Congress is using the state's financial crisis as an excuse to backtrack on its promises made during the Assembly elections.

Before coming to power, the current Chief Minister, Revanth Reddy, and Deputy Chief Minister, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, themselves had

admitted at various public meetings that Telangana was already drowning in debt and facing severe financial problems. Despite this, they made lofty declarations that all six guarantees in the Congress manifesto would be implemented within 100 days.

To prevent this dire situation, the BJP urged intellectuals, public representatives, activists and all those who care for Telangana's welfare to expose the failures of both the BRS and the Congress.

400 acres of Kancha Gachibowli lands create fuss in Assembly

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The opposition charge that the State Government had transferred 400 acres of lands of Sherilingampally Kancha Gachibowli in Rangareddy district to the TGIC at the rate of Rs 75 crore per acre and was getting ready to give the same lands to a merchant banker with 3 per cent commission created a fuss in the Assembly on Thursday.

With the allegations of the opposition and counter allegations heating up the Assembly on the issue.

Participating in the debate during a short discussion on 'Outstanding Liabilities of the State' in the Assembly, BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said the Congress government is also taking loans like the one above crossing FRBM rules.

He said that Finance Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka is saying that the government brought Rs 1.27 lakh crore, however, the CM is saying that the government brought only Rs 64,000

crore and are misleading the people.

Maheshwar said the government is bringing loans by selling lands and as part of it the government transferred 400 acres of Kancha Gachibowli lands to TGIC. Reacting to it, Legislative Affairs Minister D. Sridhar Babu also said the same and mortgaged the lands.

Condemning the comments of Sridhar Babu, Maheshwar said the UP government did not act like the Telangana Government. Maheshwar said the Congress government has been selling the state's assets to contractors while spending funds of loans and revenue with works allowed Commissions. Intervening in the debate, BRS MLA KTR alleged that the Minister Sridhar Babu misled the Assembly and people. KTR said the government released a GOMS No: 54 stating that it sold the 400 acres of Kancha Gachibowli lands located in survey number 25 to IT companies.

Kaleshwaram probe panel grills Somesh, Smita

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Kaleshwaram Commission of Inquiry headed by Justice PC Ghose continued its inquiry into the project, scrutinising the roles of former Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and IAS officer Smita Sabharwal.

On the second day of open hearings, Commission Chairman PC Ghose expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of direct answers from Somesh Kumar, while Smita maintained that her involvement in the project was limited.

The Commission took serious note of Somesh Kumar's delayed entry into the inquiry hall, prompting a sharp rebuke from Chairman Ghose.

Questions centred on permissions given to the three barrages — Medigadda, Sundilla and Annaram — and whether any decisions during Somesh's tenure as Chief Secretary and Irrigation Secretary deviated from rules. Responding to queries,



Somesh claimed his actions adhered strictly to Cabinet decisions. However, his failure to provide direct answers regarding potential irregularities frustrated the Commission.

Justice Ghose is learnt to have warned, "You are here to answer questions, not debate. Provide straight answers."

When asked whether any violations occurred during the construction of the three barrages, Somesh repeatedly stated he could not recall citing the passage of time. Earlier, IAS officer Smita

faced questions regarding the same barrages. When asked whether Government Orders (GOs) were issued without Cabinet approval, she said that she was unaware of that. She emphasised that her role as part of the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) was limited to coordination with collectors and taking information to the CM. "My responsibility was confined to gathering data from districts and ensuring its transmission to the CMO. Any decisions beyond that were outside my purview," Smita clarified.

TG's debt will ...

Continued from page 1

He also provided a detailed breakdown of the state's finances, asserting that the Congress's claims of a Rs 7 lakh crore debt were baseless and misleading. Harish criticized Finance Minister Bhatti Vikramarka's claims, pointing out the contradictions in the Congress's statements.

"A lie repeated a 100 times doesn't become the truth. The Congress's propaganda about Rs 7 lakh crore debt is completely false," he said.

He added that Congress's white paper itself acknowledged that Telangana inherited Rs 72,658 crore from erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, and an additional Rs 15,118 crore debt was incurred under the Congress between December 2023 and March 2024.

He emphasized that the total debt directly linked to the BRS government under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act was Rs 3.01 lakh crore and not the inflated numbers being publicized.

Kavitha, Harish slam Cong's vendetta against KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS leaders Kavitha and Harish Rao launched a scathing attack on the Congress-led Telangana Government, accusing it of resorting to filing politically motivated cases against KTR Rama Rao (KTR) in a desperate attempt to tarnish the BRS's image.

Addressing the issue,

Kavitha accused the Congress of orchestrating a scripted drama, driven by legal manoeuvres instead of political guts. "The people of Telangana are watching the Congress party's tactics. Unable to face us politically, they are targeting KTR and KCR with baseless cases," she said. Kavitha emphasised the indomitable spirit of the BRS and its roots in the Telangana

Movement. "We are soldiers of KCR, born from the Telangana Movement. These petty tactics will not frighten us. They will only strengthen our resolve," she declared. She ended her statement with the rallying cry: "Jai Telangana! Jai Jai Telangana!"

Echoing similar sentiments, Harish accused the Chief Minister of political vendetta by filing FIRs against KTR.

Telangana sticks to its ...

Continued from page 1

Telangana stressed that the Krishna Basin is water-deficient, primarily due to diversions by Andhra Pradesh. It emphasised the need for assured irrigation in the drought-prone Krishna Basin areas, which was a key driver of Telangana's statehood movement.

The state pointed out that there are no approved water demands for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in the Krishna Basin, as allocations are currently being discussed by the Krishna

Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II).

Telangana argued that taking up the G-C link proposal before the tribunal's adjudication could prejudice its claims. Pleadings and cross-examinations have concluded, and main arguments are set to begin in January 2025, and a decision is expected within six months.

The Secretary of the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti reaffirmed that a Special Task Force would meet states involved in the G-C link proposal shortly to

decide the next steps.

The meeting was chaired by CR Patil, the Union Minister of Jal Shakti, and attended by Debarshree Mukherjee, the Secretary of Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, Baleshwar Takur, the Director General of NWDA, and officials from Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Telangana was represented by G. Anil Kumar, ENC (G), V. Mohan Kumar, the CE of the ISWR unit, and other staff members.

ACB files case against ...

Continued from page 1

The remaining amount was to be paid in two instalments.

Formula E cancelled the second Formula E race (Season 10) scheduled in Hyderabad on February 10, 2024. The announcement was made after a decision by the Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department (MAUD) of the Telangana government not to fulfil the Host City Agreement signed on October 30, 2023.

Formula E Operations (FEO)

said it was left with no choice other than to formally give notice to MAUD for breach of contract.

The Congress government issued a notice to senior IAS officer Arvind Kumar for 'serious violations' regarding the agreement. The official was asked to explain why the huge financial expenditure of Rs 46 crore, plus the tax amount of Rs 9 crore, was paid from the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority's (HMDA) resources even before the agreement was signed.

Case politically...

Continued from page 1

"The government is attempting to distract the public from their unfulfilled promises by filing frivolous cases," he said.

KTR outlined the details of the Formula E project, which was aimed at promoting Hyderabad's global image and the electric vehicle industry.

KTR revealed that the Formula E organization had taken legal action against the state government, citing breach of contract. He compared the situation to a sim-

ilar case in Montreal, where a change in local government led to race cancellations, resulting in a substantial compensation payout by the city.

"This is probably one of the biggest, silliest cases and a big joke because Formula E is an internationally reputed organisation and we worked hard to convince them to come to India and Hyderabad. I don't understand how the Anti-Corruption Bureau can come when there is no corruption. We will fight it legally and politically," he said.

CM: Will set up SIT to probe ORR...

Continued from page 1

Reacting to Harish Rao's comments, the Chief Minister commented that it is appreciable that former Minister T. Harish Rao is requesting a probe into the ORR lease.

The government is ordering a probe into ORR lease tenders as per the request of

Harish Rao, the CM said. The probe will be taken up while discussing guidelines in the Cabinet, the CM said.

However, Harish Rao stated that he didn't wish for the probe but still he said that he is welcoming the probe into ORR lease tenders. However, Harish Rao appealed to the Chief Minister to abolish the tenders before ordering the

probe.

The Chief Minister said the Congress is the reason behind Hyderabad shining as an international city. CM said, "Congress is the reason for bringing Krishna-Godavari waters to Hyderabad, ORR, International Airport, Metro Rail, IT Pharma Companies, protecting law and order and

enhancing communal harmony in Hyderabad. The state's revenue increased due to ORR and Shamshabad Airport. The face of the state has changed due to the decisions taken by the then YSR government."

CM Revanth Reddy said that 65 per cent of the revenue of the state is coming due to decisions taken by the

Congress. The state budget increased to more than Rs 2 lakh crore because of Congress decisions, the CM said. When the BRS government handed over ORR to a company on 30 years lease before the Assembly elections. The Congress government is setting up a SIT to probe the ORR lease tenders, the CM said.

BJP member Nishikant

TODAY	
ALMANAC	
Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Panchami:	Dec 19 10:03 AM to Dec 20 10:49 AM
Shashthi:	Dec 20 10:49 AM to Dec 21 12:21 PM
Nakshatram:	
Magha:	Dec 20 01:59 AM to Dec 21 03:47 AM
Purva Phalguni:	Dec 21 03:47 AM to Dec 22 06:14 AM
Rahukalam:	10:51 AM to 12:13 PM
Yamagandam:	2:58 PM to 4:20 PM
Variyam:	12:36 PM to 02:21 PM
Gulika:	8:07 AM to 9:29 AM
Amritakalam:	01:12 AM to 02:55 AM
Ahhijit Muhurtham:	11:51 AM to 12:35 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER	
Forecast:	Mostly Cloudy
Temp:	29°
Humidity:	67%
Sunrise:	6:41 AM
Sunset:	5:47 PM
Updated:	December 19, 2024 5:00 PM

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City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | DECEMBER 20, 2024

03



CITY EVENTS

Devotional Program

By Satsang Foundation
Venue
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (Cultural Venue)
(1.2 km)
On: 20-Dec-24
(5 pm to 10 pm)

A Not So Silent Night

Live Musical Treat
Venue
Lamakaan (2.5 km)
On: 20-Dec-24 (7 pm)

All India Crafts Mela

Vocal Recital By Parnika Manya
Venue
Shilparamam (9.9 km)
On: 20-Dec-24 (5:30 pm)

Friday Night With DJ Ana

Venue
Frat House Hyderabad
On: 20-Dec-24

THE SAREE

Six yards of Sustainable Heritage
Venue
THE LEELA Road No.2, Banjara Hills, Friday 20 December (3 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.



Dr Vivek Kumbhari, Chair of the Department of Gastroenterology at the Mayo Clinic, USA, along with doctors at AIG Hospital in Hyderabad on Thursday

PillBot lets doctors see inside the human body

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

PillBot, a remote controlled robotic disposable endoscopy pill that creates a virtual endoscope inside the human stomach was made live demo at AIG by Dr Vivek Kumbhari, Chair of the Department of Gastroenterology at the Mayo Clinic, USA and Dr Alex Luebke, Co-founder of Endiatx on Thursday.

It is a tiny ingestible robot measuring just 13mm by 30mm, representing a paradigm shift in non-invasive diagnostics. Equipped with advanced cameras, sensors, and wireless capabilities, the device is designed to navigate the gastrointestinal tract and transmit real-time, high-resolution images directly to physicians.

Dr Alex Luebke, Co-founder of Endiatx has swallowed it and the demo was live to many doctors at AIG.

Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman of AIG Hospitals said PillBot is beneficial to all types of gastrointestinal problems.

Speaking To The Pioneer, Dr D Nageshwar Reddy said, "38 percent of the normal Indian population suffers with gastrointestinal issues, in specific 10 percent is acid and 30 percent is liver problems."

In Telangana forty percent all over government hospitals, private hospitals are with gastrointestinal related issues. Our focus is to bring down the price of the product to Rs 5000 until it makes it to the Indian market, he added.

Dr Vivek Kumbhari, Chair of the Department of Gastroenterology at the Mayo Clinic, USA has explained that the exit of the pill is through stools within forty eight hours.

The PillBot is under trials and will be into the market by 2026.

AIG has also begun the trials of the PillBot and will receive its approvals in a year.



Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, along with Ministers Jupally Krishana Rao and Ponnam Prabhakar, at the inauguration of Book Fair in Hyderabad on Thursday

Revanth Reddy emphasises importance of preserving history

The Chief Minister inaugurated Book Fair and highlighted the role of literature and history

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy emphasised the importance of preserving history and fostering societal awareness through literature during his speech at the Hyderabad Book Fair. Addressing the audience, he reflected on the role of books, art, and activism in shaping society and commemorating the sacrifices of those who fought for Telangana.

Revanth Reddy pointed out that naming book fair platforms after poets and artists who used their pen and voice to inspire societal change serves as a powerful message. "These individuals

not only ignited awareness but also led public struggles that must never be forgotten," he said.

Reflecting on the Telangana movement, he observed that while many sacrificed their lives for the cause, history often highlights political beneficiaries over genuine contributors. "The names of those who made sacrifices for Telangana must be preserved in history," he stated, calling for a more inclusive narrative.

The Chief Minister lamented the distortion of historical accounts, particularly regarding the Telangana armed rebellion and the subsequent phases of the movement. He urged historians to document the contributions of

martyrs and activists to ensure their legacy is not overshadowed by manipulated accounts.

He noted that the establishment of the Telangana State was a culmination of lessons learned from books and inspiring songs. "The speech I delivered on the Telangana Bill in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh Assembly was drawn from the knowledge gained through literature and the awakening songs of our movement," he recalled.

Revanth Reddy expressed concern over the declining importance of books in the digital age. He highlighted the Hyderabad Book Fair as an essential platform for inspiring younger genera-

tions and fostering discussions on social change.

"While technology has advanced, many of the younger generation rely solely on Google. It is through reading the works of historians that we uncover the untold stories of those who sacrificed for our freedom," he remarked, underscoring the need to revive the habit of reading.

The Chief Minister assured that the Telangana government remains committed to promoting literary initiatives, including the Hyderabad Book Fair. "We participate in events like these to convey a positive message to society and to honor the true history of Telangana," he said.

He added that the government has already taken steps to recognize historians and literary figures.

"We renamed Telugu University after Suravaram Pratap Reddy to honour those who document authentic history. Legends like Kaloji, Dasarathi, Ande Sri, Guda Anjaiah, and Gaddar have inspired Telangana's movements and remain beacons of our cultural and literary heritage," he said.

Revanth Reddy concluded by reiterating the government's commitment to upholding the true essence of Telangana's history through literature and events like the book fair.

Gen Z drives India's pet parenting boom

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad plays an important role in creating a pet-friendly environment. According to the world's largest pet parent study by Mars, over two-thirds of Gen Z and Millennials in India are first-time pet owners.

The study surveyed over 20,000 people from 21 countries, including 1,000 from India. It highlights the increasing importance of pets in people's lives, especially for younger generations. The report also identifies opportunities to improve pet adoption and care in India

According to the survey, 69 per cent of Indian pet parents are first-time owners, surpassing the global average of 47 per cent. In India, 66 per cent of dog and cat owners consider their pets the most important part of their lives, compared to 37 per cent globally.

Over 64 per cent of young dog owners and 60 per cent of young cat owners in India report stress relief and anxiety reduction as key benefits of pet ownership. Over 67 per cent of puppies and 70 per cent of kittens are adopted at three months or younger, indicating a trend towards early bonding.

The survey also shows that adoption rates remain low in India, with only 6 per cent of puppies and 4 per cent of kittens coming from shelters. Instead, 23 per cent of puppies and 19 per cent of kittens are sourced from pet shops.

In Hyderabad, as in other key metros, efforts like Mars Petcare's mobile shelters and adoption drives aim to improve awareness and create a more pet-friendly culture. With 56 per cent of Indians finding neighborhoods pet-friendly, Hyderabad plays a significant role in driving a welcoming environment for pets.

Two suspects arrested, stolen property recovered

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Balanagar Police arrested two robbery offenders involved in a theft case. The suspects, Shaik Sameer (22) and Mohammed Hussain (19), were apprehended after obtaining CCTV footage from over 50 cameras and call data records (CDRs). The stolen items included a gold chain weighing 20.630 grams and two mobile phones of Redmi Note-13 and IQOO were seized.

According to the Police, complainant Batchu Satish, reported

that on December 5, at around 12:30 am, the accused intercepted him near Usha Company at Balanagar. They caused him to fall off his bike, then pretended to help him before taking his bike. Later, they assaulted him and forcibly took his gold chain and mobile phones.

Guided by DCP K Suresh Kumar and ACP G Hanumantha Rao, the team led by Inspector T Narsimha Raju successfully solved the case. The police stated that all the stolen items were recovered, and the accused will face legal proceedings.



Governor Jishnu Dev Varma opens ISAME Forum 2024 conference

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Jishnu Dev Varma inaugurated the 52nd Lions ISAME Forum 2024 conference here on Thursday. The three-day event will conclude on December 21. ISAME stands for India, South Asia, and the Middle East, and over 1,600 delegates from 20 countries are expected to attend. This is the first time in 15 years that Hyderabad is hosting the forum.

Addressing the Forum, Governor Varma commended Lions Clubs International as the world's largest service organisation, established in 1917 with nearly 1.4 million members globally. The Governor highlighted the Lion's commitment to humanitarian service, quoting ancient wisdom that highlights the importance of selfless service.

He emphasized that the ISAME region as the largest area within Lions Clubs, with 3,50,000 members, including 2,70,000 from India. He appreciated initiatives like She Shakti, which empower women, reflecting the wis-



Lions International president Fabricio Olivera and Patti Hills felicitating Governor Jishnu Dev Varma in Hyderabad on Thursday

dom of Chanakya on leadership and righteousness.

Governor Varma also recognised the Lion's contributions to healthcare, particularly through their 100 hospitals focused on eye care. He highlighted the Meals on Wheels initiative, which serves 1.5 million meals daily, and the establishment of affordable

CT Scan Centers in Telangana. These efforts exemplify the Sanskrit saying: "The wealth of the noble is for the benefit of others."

In conclusion, Jishnu Dev Varma urged the Lions to continue their mission of selfless service, inspiring others to join and create a lasting impact.

Harnessing AI for healthcare transformation stressed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Institute of Technology - IIT Hyderabad hosted the "Harnessing AI for Healthcare Transformation" (HAHT-IUS 2024) workshop from December 16 to 18. This Indo-US event brought together leading experts to explore AI's transformative role in healthcare.

Organised by Prof C Krishna Mohan from IIT Hyderabad and Ram D Sriram from NIST, USA, the workshop aimed to drive collaboration, accelerate research, and form strategic partnerships for AI-driven healthcare solutions.

The event focused on cutting-edge AI research, creating a collaborative roadmap and leveraging joint Indo-US investments to improve healthcare affordability and outcomes. This workshop, supported by the Indo-US iCET initiative, laid the



US Consul General, Hyderabad, Jennifer Larson and others at HAHT-IUS 2024 workshop in Hyderabad on Thursday

groundwork for collaborations in AI-powered healthcare innovations.

US Consul General, Hyderabad, Jennifer Larson appreciated the growing Indo-US partnership in AI, calling it a "virtuous cycle of innovation." They highlighted AI's potential to improve healthcare efficiency, patient safety, and accessibility.

Meanwhile, Chairman of AIG Hospitals, Dr Nageshwar Reddy emphasised the ethical use of AI and reassured attendees that AI would augment, not replace doctors. Prof Iyengar from Florida International University stressed the need for responsible AI control, while Dr. Sriram described AI as a tool to bridge healthcare gaps globally.

Prof Ramesh Jain from UC Irvine addressed healthcare's social and political dimensions, encouraging diverse solu-

tions for global impact. Sanjay Doddamani, CEO of Guidehealth, shared examples of AI improving patient engagement and reducing healthcare costs. Prof BS Murty, IIT Director, highlighted the institution's pioneering role as India's first institute to offer a B.Tech in AI.

Prof Mohan concluded by emphasising the workshop's role in advancing AI solutions to make healthcare more accessible and impactful globally.

Housing Board to construct compound walls around its lands

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Housing Board owns a significant land bank of 703 acres across the state, while its subsidiary, Deccan Infrastructure Land Holdings Ltd (DILL), holds a land bank of 1,821 acres. The Telangana government is committed to safeguarding these vacant lands from encroachments and has authorised the construction of compound walls around them, supported by a budget of Rs 25 crore. To ensure this, the Housing Board has conducted a DGPS survey and initiated the construction of compound walls for its lands as a priority. Tenders for 16 packages, covering 422 acres of land at risk of encroachment, have been called for, with a total project cost of Rs 10 crore. The work is progressing in phases, with 7,500 meters of the 28,500-meter total length of compound walls already completed. Additionally, the Housing Board has begun the construction of compound walls for DILL's vacant lands, covering 620 acres.

These lands are free from litigation but are also susceptible to encroachment. Tenders for 17 packages, with a project cost of Rs 12 crore, are currently underway.

A review meeting chaired by VP Gautham, Vice Chairman and Housing Commissioner of the Telangana Housing Board and Special Secretary to the Government's Housing Department, was held at the Gruhakalpa Building. During the meeting, it was instructed to complete the construction of compound walls by January 2026 and to begin work on the DILL lands before the Sankranti festival.



Medaram is set to undergo a major transformation

The Congress government allots funds for comprehensive development of place of pilgrimage

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

the work is expected to progress at a brisk pace.

Temples are being constructed for the tribal deities. Until now, the goddesses were worshipped in the forest, but now they will have temples. The government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, has focused on the development of Medaram. Various works have already been initiated, and now the government has decided to build temples for Sammakka and Sarakka.

In 1971, the Endowments Department constructed small temples for the tribal deities. As the number of devotees has steadily increased, especially during the Jatar festival, the officials have found it difficult to manage the crowds. Therefore, the devotees have been requesting the government for new temples.

Taking into account the pleas of the priests, the Endowments Department has sent proposals to the government for temple reconstruction after the grand Jatar in March 2024. In November, the government sanctioned a budget of Rs 1.92 crore for the project. The tender process for temple construction was completed on December 12, and construction work is set to begin soon. The government is determined to complete the temple construction by the time of the 2026 jatara. With funds already allocated,

On the other hand, the government is preparing a master plan for the expansion of the deity platforms in Medaram. The platform, which was built by donors four decades ago, is still in use today. However, despite temporary development efforts before the Jatar, there has been no permanent infrastructure development, leading to difficulties in controlling the crowds of devotees. The government has now decided to address these issues with permanent solutions.

Already, the government has allocated Rs 17.5 crore for road development leading to Medaram and Rs 3.5 crore for the construction of guesthouses, and work has begun on these projects. Recently, the authorities have also prepared plans to enhance facilities for devotees at the deity platforms. Priority will be given to road construction that connects Pasa, Chintal, Kondai, and Tadvai to the deity platform.

Additionally, facilities such as drinking water, toilets, restrooms, and peaceful viewing areas will be prioritised as the second phase of development. Taking all these factors into account, the government is working on a master plan for Medaram, keeping in mind both present needs and future requirements.

POULTRY SECTOR

Farmers suffer but middlemen reap rich

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR



In Karimnagar, while traders involved in the poultry industry are reaping profits from selling chicken, poultry farmers are facing significant losses. This situation is largely due to a syndicate of traders who are purchasing poultry birds from farmers at prices lower than the rate being offered by Chicken suppliers.

For the past 20 days, the price of chicken has been falling, causing substantial loss for poultry farmers who have invested large sums of money in their businesses. Venkob Chicken has set a price of Rs 101 per kg for live chicken, but the syndicate of traders is buying poultry at only Rs 95 per kg. In some cases, the price is further reduced by Rs 8-10, leaving the farmers with only Rs 85 per bird. Previously, the syndicate had offered between Rs 65 and Rs 75 per kg. However, in the open market, the price of live chicken is being sold for Rs 200 to Rs 240 per kg.

The traders, who act as intermediaries between poultry farmers and chicken centres, are pocketing a significant profit of Rs 15-20 per kg at the expense of the farmers.

This raises the question: who gave these traders the authority to set chicken prices and cut the rates further?

On a single Saturday, a trader is said to have purchased between 30,000 and 40,000 poultry birds, demonstrating their clout over the market. Allegedly, these traders are involved in shady dealings worth crores of rupees. Moreover, farmers who question the price are reportedly threatened with being unofficially blacklisted, which would prevent anyone from buying from them. In the undivided Karimnagar district, there are 80 traders overseeing poultry farms with a total of 50 lakh birds. Each week, farmers are rearing 3 lakh chicks, while some farmers lease their sheds to compa-

nies. The farmers, however, are under intense pressure from the syndicated traders to sell their poultry at these low prices.

The cost of poultry feed has also increased. A 50 kg bag of chicken feed, which was sold at Rs 1800, now costs Rs 2100 due to rising soya prices. Although the price of soya has dropped from Rs 45 to Rs 30 per kg, companies have not reduced the price of chicken feed.

Additionally, the companies producing chicks have also formed a syndicate, further exploiting the poultry farmers by selling chicks at inflated prices of Rs 40 to Rs 45 each. This collective market manipulation has left poultry farmers in a difficult and precarious financial situation.



Suryapet SP Sunpreet Singh speaking to the media on Thursday

Stolen cars, two-wheelers worth Rs 30 lakh seized

PNS ■ SURYAPET

In a major breakthrough, Suryapet II Town Police seized two stolen cars and sixteen bikes worth approximately Rs 30 lakh and arrested three persons allegedly involved in the thefts. The details were revealed at a press meet held at the District Police Office on Thursday.

District Superintendent of Police Sunpreet Singh, along with Additional Superintendent of Police Nageshwar Rao and Town Inspector Veera Raghava, provided details.

The arrested are Korapathi Narsing Rao (44), a real estate businessman from Indiramanagar, Secunderabad, Bath Prasad (39), also a real estate business-

man from Parvathipuram, Andhra Pradesh.

The accused had rented cars and consumed alcohol with drivers. Taking advantage of the drivers' intoxication, they would steal the vehicles. Additionally, they stole parked bikes by breaking locks. The police recovered one ETIGA car an Innova and four bikes including a Splendor, Unicorn, Pulsar, and Activa.

Another significant arrest was made involving Gunj Sri Kanth (23) from Huzurnagar. The accused was found stealing bikes parked near colleges and hospitals by tampering with locks using fake keys. Police recovered twelve bikes from him, which had been stolen across multiple locations, the SP said.

Teachers told to organise special sessions for Class 10 students

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Rangareddy District Collector C Narayana Reddy conducted a surprise inspection of the Zilla Parishad High School in Penjarla under Kothur mandal on Thursday. During his visit, the Collector reviewed the school's surroundings, checked attendance registers, and interacted with students and staff.

Addressing the 10th-grade students, the Collector emphasised the importance of self-confidence and hard work in achieving academic success. He advised students to approach their studies with a clear plan, avoid fear during examinations, and strive for the best results. "Regular attendance and dedica-



Rangareddy District Collector C Narayana Reddy with children at the ZP High School at Penjarla in RR district on Thursday

tion are key to achieving a high pass percentage in the 10th class," he stated, urging students to make the most of this crucial phase in their education.

The Collector also instructed teachers to identify students who may be lagging in academics and organise special classes to help them improve. He called on educators to aim for a 10/10 grade point average for their students, stressing the need for focused efforts to achieve academic excellence.

During his visit, the Collector inspected the school's midday meal programme to ensure its quality and adequacy. He later visited the Anganwadi centre located on the school premises, interacting with children and assessing their learning activities. The Collector inquired about the food provided to children and pregnant women at the Anganwadi centre. He advised staff to ensure proper nutrition to prevent anaemia and malnutrition among young children and women.

Govt staff to be trained in AI

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Deputy Secretary for Information Technology, Electronics and Communications, Bhavesh Mishra, on Thursday announced plans to provide training in Artificial Intelligence (AI) to government employees through the Nalgonda IT Tower.

He visited the IT Tower here, along with District Collector Ila Tripathi. Bhavesh Mishra praised the Nalgonda IT Tower and suggested that steps be taken to provide AI training to government employees.



IT Deputy Secretary Bhavesh Mishra and District Collector Ila Tripathi at the Nalgonda IT Tower on Thursday

He recommended identifying employees and dividing them into 20 batches for the training sessions. The Collector said a

Japanese company is planning to set up its operations at the IT Tower by employing 500 software employees. Moreover, AI equipment would be installed at the IT Tower. Mishra highlighted that AI would not only expedite report generation but also simplify computer software tasks.

District Industries Manager Koteswar Rao, IT Tower Manager Nagaraju, RDO Ashok Reddy, local Tahsildar Srinivasulu, and other officials from the District Collector's office, including AO Motilal, were present at the event.

MLA Shankar demands Amit Shah's apology

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA and State Public Sector Undertakings Chairman Veerapalli Shankar has demanded that Union Home Minister Amit Shah apologise to the nation and resign from his position. This

demand came during a protest led by Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud at the Ambedkar statue on the State Assembly premises. Several Congress Ministers, MLAs, and MLCs participated in the agitation, condemn-

Remarks on Ambedkar

ing Amit Shah's alleged disrespectful remarks about BR Ambedkar, the architect of the

Indian Constitution. Speaking to the media, Veerapalli Shankar criticised Amit Shah's comments in the Rajya Sabha, stating they reflected a lack of faith and respect for the Constitution. He called out the BJP for attempting to mislead the

public by justifying Shah's remarks as a misrepresentation. Shankar argued that the BJP's insincerity towards Dalits was evident and accused the party of trying to distort history by undermining the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar.

SP Pawar seeks cooperation of bank officials in curbing cybercrimes



Nalgonda District Superintendent of Police Sharath Chandra Pawar speaking at bankers' meeting in Nalgonda on Thursday

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Superintendent of Police Sharath Chandra Pawar on Thursday urged all bank managers and staff of both public sector and private banks to extend their support to the police in curbing cybercrimes.

In a coordination meeting held at the district police office with bank officials, Pawar stressed the need the curb the growing number of cybercrimes. He noted that with rapid technological advancements, the rate of cybercrime is increasing just as quickly. With the

rise in smartphone usage and cashless transactions, cybercriminals are exploiting innocent people using false means, targeting them via UPI and bank accounts.

He urged bank staff to cooperate with law enforcement by providing complete information on bank accounts involved in cybercrime, so that necessary legal actions could be taken.

The SP recommended that banks credit the money owed to cybercrime victims into their accounts after obtaining court permission, unfreeze the accounts, and provide support to the victims.

He emphasised that only when the money is refunded to the victims, their trust in the police increase. Additionally, he advised banks to install high-resolution CCTV cameras in all locations, including ATMs, and ensure that security alarms are operational. He also suggested that each bank maintain 24/7 security personnel.

Furthermore, he warned against brokers who deceive people with fake loan schemes. He also provided safety tips for the public to avoid falling victim to cybercrimes, urging them to be cautious of suspicious links on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. He advised not to open unknown APK files and avoid interacting with strangers online. If someone becomes a victim of cybercrime, they should report it by calling 1930 or through the Cybercrime Portal at www.cybercrime.gov.in. The meeting was attended by SB DSP Ramesh, Nalgonda DSP Shiva Ram Reddy, Cyber Crime DSP Lakshmi Narayana, SB CI Raghav Rao, and 1 Town CI Rajasekhara Reddy.

2 Class 8 students hospitalised due to suspected snakebites

Parents stage a protest demanding relocation of Peddapur Gurukul School following a series of snakebite incidents

PNS ■ JAGTIAL

Yashwanth, a Class 8 student from Peddapur Gurukul, was hospitalised in Korutla on Thursday morning after reportedly suffering a snakebite. The student had visible bite marks on his leg and hand. The incident caused quite a stir.

The previous day, another Class 8 student, Akhil, was also admitted to the hospital after experiencing vomiting and pain in his hand, where snake bite marks were visible on his wrist. School authorities suspect both students were bitten by a snake on Tuesday night.

While Akhil showed symptoms a few hours later, Yashwanth's symptoms developed later. Doctors suggested that the snake responsible might have been Russell's viper, whose venom can be delayed in showing symptoms, potentially causing fatal organ damage over time if untreated.

Upon learning of the incident, District Collector Satya Prasad visited the private hospital in Korutla to assess the condition of students and spoke with the doctors. He then visited the school.

This follows a tragic sequence of events earlier this year when two students from the same school died due to suspected snakebites. Rajarapu Ganaditya, a 13-year-old student in Class VII, passed away on July 26, and Yedamalla



Parents of Peddapur Gurukul students staging a protest at Korutla on Thursday demanding relocation of the school

Anirudh, a 12-year-old in Class VI, died on August 9. Following these incidents, the school was temporarily closed after multi-

ple students fell ill, and a cleaning operation led to the killing of at least four snakes in August.

Meanwhile, parents of students staged a protest on the road demanding the relocation of the Peddapur Gurukul

School Junior College. They called for a permanent solution to the issue.

Former MLA Vidyasagar criticised the government. He pointed out that under the BRS government, there have been no incidents at Gurukul schools.

However, during Congress rule, many accidents occurred in Gurukul schools. He also criticised the government for misleading the public with promises of integrated schools while failing to provide funds to existing schools, resulting in such incidents.

He visited the students who were undergoing treatment for snakebites at the Korutla hospital.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, LA, HYDERABAD AIRPORT METRO LIMITED, HYDERABAD.

FORM-F
Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML
(See rule 7 (c))

No.CS/88/2024-RHS (78 to 100) Dated: 19-12-2024

Where a notification was issued vide No.CS/89/2024-RHS (76 to 100) dated 16-11-2024 and published in the Gazette Hyd.-HAML, No.26, dated 16-11-2024 for acquisition of the property for the public purpose for Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGIBs in Chandrayangutta, Conctor-VI, situated at Shar-E-Hyderabad Village Bhedurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District.

In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiation. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows:

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds.
1	2	3	4
Sri. Shameem Ahmed, S/o. Md. Ali Ahmed, R/o. 22-6-656/A Shar-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District.	78	22-6-656/A	43.04
Mohammed Mohtsin Azam Siddiqui, R/o. 22-6-665, Shar-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District.	82	22-6-668	62.56
Smt. Shahjahan Begum, W/o. Mir Anwar Uddin Ali Khan, R/o. 22-6-672/1/A, Shar-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District.	86	22-6-672/1/A	60.35
Sri. Mohammed Abdul Raouf, S/o. Mohammed Yasuq, R/o. 22-6-673/2, Shar-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District.	91	22-6-673, 22-6-673/2, 22-6-673/3, 22-6-673/4/1	61.41
Smt. Mahmooda Begum, W/o. Mohd Rahmatullah Khan, R/o. 22-5-585/1, Shar-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District.	98	22-5-585/1	78.33

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District / Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Raosolpura, Hyderabad within the seven days, i.e., by 27-12-2024 of publication of this Notification.

Sd/- Spl. Dy. Collector (LA), HAML, Raosolpura, Hyderabad.

Place: Hyderabad
Date: 19-12-2024. DPR No.479/LA/PP/ADVT/AGENCY/2024-25

NPD NORTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED
CIN No. U40109TG2000SC034119

Short Tender Notice No. 07/ 2024-25 of SE/OP/KMM

Sealed tenders are invited from TGNPDCL registered contractors towards Labour charges for Loading and Un-loading of various materials at District Stores, Khammam on piece rate basis for the financial year 2024-2025 in Operation Circle Khammam. The details of works and other information can be obtained from our website www.tgnpdcl.in. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Operation Circle : Khammam

SHORT TENDER NOTICE No. 04/ 2024-25 OF SE/OIP/BHUPALPALLY WITH SPECIFICATION No. 01/2024-25

Sealed tenders are invited from TGNPDCL registered contractors of Bhupalpally circle for Tender Document for Erection of 33.75 KM of 33KV interlinking line from 33/11 KV Kannajudem SS to 33/11 KV Saravapet SS in Kannajudem Section of Mulugu Division of Bhupalpally Circle. The details of works can be obtained from our website www.tgnpdcl.in. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Operation Circle, Bhupalpally. DPR No. 3128-PP/CLAD/2024-25, Dt. 18-12-2024

ACROSS THE STATES



10 'seed villages' to be set up in Jharkhand

Jharkhand Agriculture Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey on Thursday said her department would establish 10 'seed villages' in a bid to address its shortage and improve quality. The 'seed villages' would come up in West Singhbhum, Chatra and Latehar. "There has been a shortage of good seeds in the state. Along with this, seeds are not available in the state as per demand. Keeping this in mind, the department has decided to develop 10 villages as 'seed villages,'" she told reporters here. Tirkey said the government would purchase the seeds from farmers. "The seeds will then be distributed at a fixed subsidised rate," she said. The minister also reviewed the progress of projects during a meeting with officials of agriculture, animal husbandry and cooperative departments. She also said her department is strengthening the Farmer Producer Organisations, and an amount of Rs 15 lakh was provided to the FPO in Lohardaga district.



Delhi's air quality worsens, AQI hits 451

Delhi's air quality plunged into the 'severe plus' category on Thursday, with a 24 hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 451 recorded at 4 pm, according to the Central Pollution Control Board data. The city witnessed dangerously high levels of PM2.5, the primary pollutant, with 32 of the 35 monitoring stations recording air quality in the severe plus category. Some areas recorded AQI readings as high as 470. The PM2.5 particles, measuring 2.5 micrometers or less in diameter pose significant health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs when inhaled. The national capital remains under Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), which includes the most stringent anti-pollution measures. The measures involve a complete ban on construction activities and the entry of non-essential polluting trucks into the city.



95% of villages declared ODF Plus till now: Govt

About 95 per cent of villages have declared themselves 'open defecation free plus' till now, the Jal Shakti ministry said on Thursday. The 'ODF Plus' status goes beyond the construction of toilets, focusing on overall sanitation and solid-liquid waste management. Among the states, Uttar Pradesh leads with 93,947 villages attaining ODF Plus status, followed by Madhya Pradesh with 50,580 and Maharashtra with 37,327 villages. Smaller states and Union Territories, including Ladakh and Lakshadweep, have also made strides, achieving ODF Plus in all their villages. Responding to a question in Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Jal Shakti V Somanna said the Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) has reached a significant milestone, with 5,60,897 villages declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) Plus as of Tuesday. There are a total of 5,86,707 villages in the country. The ODF Plus villages are classified into 'Aspiring', 'Rising', and 'Model' categories. For instance, Madhya Pradesh showed significant results in the 'Model' category, with over 49,000

'India moving forward at 'unprecedented' speed'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India was left behind in terms of modern weapons and technology but it moved towards self-reliance in the defence sector at an "unprecedented" pace after the Modi government came to power, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday.

In an address at an event, Singh said modern warfare is changing rapidly and there is a need to adopt high-end technology to deal with future and national security challenges.

The defence minister exhorted scientists and engineers to gain command over critical technologies, such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing in tune with the changing times, and urged them to never forget India's heritage. Singh was speaking at the Indian National Academy of Engineering's Annual Convention at IIT Delhi.

The defence minister emphasised that the niche technologies are going to impact almost every sector in a big way in the coming times.

"Right now, we are in the initial phase. Our aim should be to first gain command over these technologies, so that in the future, they can be used for



the welfare of the people to fulfil their immediate basic needs," he said. Singh pointed out that the world is continuously evolving, and the defence sector cannot remain untouched by this change.

He stated that earlier, due to some reasons, India was left behind in terms of modern weapons and technology, but ever since the Modi government came to power, the country has moved towards self-reliance in defence at an unprecedented pace, according to the defence ministry.

"Modern warfare is changing rapidly, therefore there is a need

to adopt high-end technology. Towards this, we have brought out schemes like Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and Technology Development Fund (TDF) to bring out the talent of the youth, through which their as well as the nation's dreams can come true," he said. The iDEX was launched in 2018 to create an eco-system to foster innovations and encourage technological development in the defence and aerospace sector. Singh asserted that India is passing through a "defining moment" as it is exporting even those weapons which it once imported.

The defence minister credited this "revolutionary transformation" to the collective efforts of the public and private sectors, academia, and engineers and innovators. He exuded confidence that the country will soon achieve a formidable technical edge in the global arena. Singh lauded the role of IITs in the scientific development of the country in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation and called for establishing an even better organic relationship among the industry, research and development organisations and academia.



You will be CM one day, Fadnavis tells Ajit Pawar

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said he and his deputies Ajit Pawar and Eknath Shinde would work 24/7 in shifts.

"Ajit Pawar will work in the morning since he is an early riser. I am on duty from 12 noon to midnight while throughout the night... you all know who," Fadnavis said, referring to Shinde, who is known to work till late hours.

He was replying to a debate in the legislative assembly on the motion of thanks to the Governor for his joint address to both Houses of the state legislature during the ongoing Winter Session in Nagpur.

Turning to Ajit Pawar, Fadnavis said, "You are called 'permanent deputy CM'... but my wishes are with you... you will be the CM someday."

Ajit Pawar on December 5 took oath as the deputy CM of

Maharashtra for the sixth time.

The NCP leader, who has been vocal about his chief ministerial ambitions, split the Sharad Pawar-founded Nationalist Congress Party in 2023 and joined the BJP-led Mahayuti government.

In the ensuing battle for the party name and its 'clock' symbol, his faction got both. His uncle and veteran politician Sharad Pawar now heads NCP (SP), an ally of the Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) under the banner of the Maha Vikas Aghadi. After a severe drubbing in the Lok Sabha polls that saw NCP bagging only one seat, Ajit Pawar's party made an impressive comeback in the recently held assembly elections, emerging victorious in 41 of the 57 constituencies where it was in the fray.

The Mahayuti alliance of BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP won over 230 of the state's 288 assembly seats, while MVA could manage to grab only 46.

Modi reaffirms India-UK strategic partnership

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Speaks to King Charles

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday spoke to UK's King Charles and reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership.

During their discussion, they reflected on the historic relationship and emphasized their shared goal of fostering deeper collaboration in various areas. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two nations which has been a cornerstone of bilateral relations, according to an official statement. The conversation also touched upon the Common Wealth of Nations, with both leaders exchanging views on the outcomes of the recently concluded Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in Samoa.



Both countries are key members of the Common wealth and the dialogue highlighted their dedication to advancing the organization's goals.

Climate action and sustainability emerged as pivotal topics during the exchange.

Prime Minister Modi praised King Charles III for his longstanding advocacy on environmental issues and provided insights into India's initiatives in these areas, including efforts to combat climate change and promote green development.

Toll rises to 14; Navy orders probe

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The body of a man who was among the two missing passengers after a Navy craft rammed into their ferry off the Mumbai coast, was found on Thursday, taking the toll to 14, said

police as the Navy launched a probe into one of the deadliest crashes in the city's harbour area. A day after the crash, the body of the 43-year-old man was found near the ferry, police said. Search operation continues to locate a seven-year-old boy who is still missing, a police official added.

A naval helicopter and boats of the Navy and Coast Guard were deployed on Thursday to look for the missing passengers. Eight boats, including those from the Navy and Coast Guard are involved in the Search and Rescue (SAR) operation, the official said.



Of the 113 persons on board both the vessels, 14 died and 98, including two injured, were rescued. There were six persons on board the Navy craft, of which two survived, the official said.

The tragedy struck when the speeding Navy craft undergoing engine trials lost control and collided with passenger ferry 'Neel Kamal' off Karanja near Mumbai. The ferry carry-

ing more than 100 passengers was on its way from the Gateway of India to the Elephanta Island, a popular tourist attraction which has a collection of ancient caves.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Thursday told the state assembly that three persons injured in the boat tragedy included a four-year-old girl and an eight-month pregnant woman.

Rahul Gandhi does not deserve to be Leader of Opposition: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing Rahul Gandhi of "pushing and shoving" its MPs on the Parliament premises, the BJP on Thursday said he does not deserve to be the Leader of Opposition after such "indecent and shameful" conduct.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters hours after unprecedented scenes of unruliness unfolded during protests by the ruling and opposition parties, Union Minister Shriraj Singh Chouhan squarely put the blame on Gandhi for the fracas which left two MPs injured.

"Rahul Gandhi does not deserve to hold the post of the Leader of Opposition," Chouhan said as he slammed



the Congress leader's behaviour and alleged it is against India's cultural ethos.

Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, has rejected the BJP's charge that he pushed its lawmakers and alleged that the ruling party MPs "stopped, threatened and intimidated" him.

Chouhan said that the party was also pained at the treatment meted out to its tribal MP from Nagaland S Phangnon Konyak, who alleged in the Rajya Sabha that Rahul Gandhi shouted at her after coming in "close proximity" that made her feel uncomfortable during a demonstration outside the Parliament's Makar Dwar.

"Will physical strength be used in Parliament? Will musclemen and goondas come to Parliament? In which direction is the Congress taking the country's democracy?" said the BJP leader, who was flanked by Union Minister Piyush Goyal and party MPs Anurag Thakur and Anil Baluni. BJP MPs -- Pratap Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput -- were injured in the melee and

hospitalised as BJP and opposition MPs allegedly marched towards each other minutes before the start of the parliamentary proceedings.

"What happened in Parliament today is unimaginable," Chouhan said as he accused Gandhi of pushing the BJP members, terming his conduct as "indecent, impudent and goondagardi." Such kind of behaviour cannot be imagined in a civilised society, he said. Chouhan claimed that when the BJP MPs were protesting, Gandhi "deliberately" approached them and insisted on passing through them instead of using the space left on one side of the staircase of the Makar Dwar, used by members to enter and exit the building.

BJP indulging in distraction: Cong

Says Shah must resign for 'insulting' Ambedkar



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday accused the BJP of diverting attention from the issue of Home Minister Amit Shah's "insult" to BR Ambedkar, and demanded that Shah must resign and apologise for his remarks. The opposition party also alleged that the BJP is "anti-Constitution" and "anti-Ambedkar".

Addressing a joint press conference at the AICC headquarters here, Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi condemned Shah's remarks on Ambedkar and said they would continue to protest across the country and that a movement against this had already begun.

"The BJP wants to divert attention from Shah's remarks on Ambedkar and that is why they are raising other issues," Kharge told reporters.

He said they (Congress leaders) were only demanding the resignation of Home Minister Shah and were

protesting "in support of our demands, but the BJP MPs blocked us from entering Parliament".

"They pushed me, I lost my balance and sat down," the Congress chief said, adding that he condemns Shah's remarks on Ambedkar. Kharge said they will run a nationwide movement raising the issue of Ambedkar's alleged insult by the home minister. Gandhi said the BJP-RSS thinking is "anti-Constitution" and "anti-Ambedkar". "The BJP is indulging in distraction. We want the apology and resignation of home minister over his remarks on Ambedkar," Gandhi said, adding that they would continue to raise their demand and the Adani issue.

Later, in a post on X, Gandhi said, "Amit Shah, Apologise and Resign." At the press conference, he said a few days ago, the issue of a case being filed against (Gautam) Adani in America came up, on which the BJP did not allow any discussion in the House for the entire session.

Air pollution linked to more hospitalisations for all causes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A research has found an increased hospital admissions for all causes, including mental illnesses, in relation to a long-term exposure to air pollution.

The Scottish study, published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) Open, found that a higher exposure to nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) combined was linked to a higher hospitalisations for cardiovascular, respiratory and infectious diseases.

Further, higher hospital admissions for mental or behavioural disorders were associated with an increased exposure to nitrogen dioxide

Researchers from the University of St Andrews, UK, found that for every one micron per cubic metre increase in PM2.5 and NO2 pollutants, the incidence for hospitalisations for respiratory conditions

rose by over four per cent and one per cent, respectively.

Further, higher hospital admissions for mental or behavioural disorders were associated with an increased exposure to nitrogen dioxide.

While the average yearly levels of NO2, PM10 and PM2.5 were lower than the 2005 World Health Organization guidelines, the levels of NO2 and PM2.5 were higher than those in the more recent 2021 guidelines, the team said. They added that previous studies analysing the

health impacts of long-term exposure to air pollution have tended to look at deaths, rather than hospital admissions.

The study tracked 202,237 people (representing five per cent of the country's population), aged 17 and above, from the Public Health Scotland database between 2002 and 2017. "Air pollution was associated with higher rates of hospital admissions for both physical (eg, respiratory, cardiovascular and infectious) and mental/behavioural diseases," the authors wrote.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Clamour for caste census

While the exercise is fraught with challenges, its potential to uplift marginalised communities cannot be ignored

The demand for a caste census in India has been a recurring topic of debate, reflecting the country's complex socio-political fabric. While proponents emphasise its importance for targeted development and policy-making, critics raise concerns about its potential to exacerbate social divisions. The nuanced arguments surrounding this issue highlight both its necessity and its challenges. The caste census refers to the systematic collection of data on the caste composition of the population. India has not conducted such a comprehensive exercise since 1931, even though caste remains a significant determinant of socio-economic status in the country. Proponents of the caste census argue that it is essential for ensuring equitable development, especially for historically marginalised communities. As Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) leader Chirag Paswan points out, specific data on caste populations is critical for designing and allocating funds for community-based development schemes. Paswan's endorsement of the caste census is pragmatic. However, he also issues a cautionary note: while the government should collect such data, making it public might deepen societal divisions by reinforcing caste identities.



A caste census would provide granular data on the socio-economic conditions of various communities. This information is crucial for crafting effective affirmative action policies and welfare programmes. Historical injustices and systemic exclusion of certain communities require targeted interventions. A caste census would help identify the actual beneficiaries of reservation policies and assess whether they are achieving the intended outcomes. The Opposition, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, has emphasised that a caste census is a step toward realising the promise of social justice. By understanding the precise demographic composition, governments can ensure proportional representation and resource allocation. But having said that, making caste census data public could lead to heightened caste consciousness and further fragment society. India's socio-political landscape is already fraught with identity-based divisions, and the misuse of such data could deepen these fault lines. There is a legitimate fear that caste census findings might be weaponised for political gain. Instead of addressing inequities, the data could fuel caste-based mobilisations, electoral strategies and even conflicts. This aspect must be looked into and safeguarded before taking up this mammoth exercise. Besides, conducting a caste census is a massive logistical challenge. The accuracy of data collection and classification would be critical, as any errors could lead to disputes and undermine the credibility of the exercise. The caste census is essential and must be conducted, but it requires careful attention to ensure its accuracy and to address potential repercussions.

they are achieving the intended outcomes. The Opposition, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, has emphasised that a caste census is a step toward realising the promise of social justice. By understanding the precise demographic composition, governments can ensure proportional representation and resource allocation. But having said that, making caste census data public could lead to heightened caste consciousness and further fragment society. India's socio-political landscape is already fraught with identity-based divisions, and the misuse of such data could deepen these fault lines. There is a legitimate fear that caste census findings might be weaponised for political gain. Instead of addressing inequities, the data could fuel caste-based mobilisations, electoral strategies and even conflicts. This aspect must be looked into and safeguarded before taking up this mammoth exercise. Besides, conducting a caste census is a massive logistical challenge. The accuracy of data collection and classification would be critical, as any errors could lead to disputes and undermine the credibility of the exercise. The caste census is essential and must be conducted, but it requires careful attention to ensure its accuracy and to address potential repercussions.

PICTALK



A person dressed as Santa Claus rows a boat as seagulls fly past, near Causeway of Tapi River in Surat

Vipul Nautiyal: Chandan Mitra's calamity reporter

Whether it was crafting flawless editorial pages or recounting tales of his newsroom days, Vipul Nautiyal's legacy is one of dedication, warmth and passion for his craft

He flaunted the title "calamity reporter" with pride as he vividly narrated the story behind how Dr Chandan Mitra, editor-in-chief of The Pioneer, gave him the name. Known to friends as Nauty (that's how he spelled it) and to juniors as Vipul Sir, or Nauty Sir, I was introduced to him in August 2021, while writing a test for an editorial role at The Pioneer. I hadn't met him before, but had heard things about him — his co-workers respected him, but they feared him even more. It was my first stint in the media and I was nervous.



ended up addressing this "old-looking, humbly dressed" fellow as "Vipul Sir" ever since. I learned an important lesson that day. Nevertheless, I was hired. A few weeks of working with him I realised that he was extremely honest towards his job, so much so that he made me question myself. He would reach the office sharp at 2 pm, retouch his already super-organised desk and begin the thinking work — often with a glass in his hand. He was proud of the work he did, he knew he was good. He had an impeccable eye for detail — if it was Vipul Nautiyal's page then it had to be error-free, even if nobody was going to read it, even if he hadn't been paid in months. Headlines were paid even

more attention, they had to be perfectly symmetric — a habit that I picked involuntarily. This was the Vipul effect. He once recounted an incident from his days at The Times of India, when Dr Mitra had asked him to return to The Pioneer. Later, during the exit interview at TOI, when Mr Nautiyal was asked "TOI chhod kar Pioneer kaun jata hai?" (Who leaves TOI to join Pioneer) he replied with lit-up eyes: "Jisko Chandan Mitra bulaata hai." He knew how to efficiently run a desk and bring the team up to speed with some flair. A senior editor at TOI says, "Vipul Sir could beat you in a game of table tennis single-handedly, with his favourite drink in his other hand." Mr Nautiyal often mentioned that he received job offers from almost all leading media houses, except for The Indian Express, for which, he said, he waited for quite some time. In my five months of working with him, I never saw him snap at anybody — unless somebody caught him on the phone during work hours. He was known to be unpredictable at times. But he was there for his colleagues —

those who worked with him will agree. His way of getting his point across was his own. When I had to negotiate my salary while joining TOI — where he had referred me — he told me to ask for a massive raise, saying: "Purse bhaley hi HR ke paas hai, but tu journalist hai, boli tu lagayega" (Even though the purse is with HR, you are a journalist, so you will call the shots). He had more confidence in me than I had in myself. Those who teamed up with him absorbed a great deal of wisdom in all walks of life. That's how Vipul Nautiyal was. Besides being an exceptional storyteller, he had a song, a sher or an anecdote for almost every occasion. He was a fanboy when it came to Dev Anand. He often wrote an editorial piece on Dev Sahab's birth anniversary. He was proud of the fact that he had seen Guide several times. He would often play Mohammed Rafi songs or Mehdi Hassan ghazals, lower the volume, and write the edit columns.

(The writer is a former staffer of The Pioneer; views are personal)



NEERAJ KUMAR

Victory Day: Bangladesh's legacy of liberation

Victory Day serves as both a celebration of freedom and a reminder of the challenges ahead in safeguarding its democratic and inclusive aspirations



SANTHOSH MATHEW

Victory Day holds profound significance for Bangladesh, marking its liberation and the triumph over the Pakistan Armed Forces in the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. Celebrated annually on December 16, the day symbolises the birth of a sovereign state and the culmination of a long struggle for self-determination, where India played the pivotal role of midwife in the creation of the newest state in South Asia. The Bangladesh Liberation War was not merely a conflict confined to its borders but a defining moment in the geopolitics of the region. The roots of this war were entrenched in the systemic neglect and exploitation of East Pakistan by the ruling elite of West Pakistan.

Decades of economic disparity, cultural suppression, and political disenfranchisement laid the foundation for a movement demanding autonomy, which was catalyzed by the brutal military crackdown on March 25, 1971. Operation Searchlight unleashed a reign of terror that sought to silence the aspirations of millions but instead ignited a people's resistance. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the towering leader of the Awami League, became the symbol of this resistance. His leadership united the Bengali population, and his call for independence resonated with millions who yearned for freedom. As the conflict escalated, millions of refugees poured into India, creating a humanitarian crisis of unparalleled magnitude.

India's intervention under the leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was both a strategic and moral decision. The Indian Armed Forces, working in coordination with the Mukti Bahini, mounted a joint operation that decisively defeated the Pakistani forces within a mere 13 days. The surrender of the Pakistani military on December 16, 1971, in Dhaka is one of the most iconic moments in modern history. The image of General AAK Niazi signing the Instrument of Surrender in the presence of Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora remains etched in the collective memory of both nations. This marked not



only the liberation of Bangladesh but also a significant blow to the two-nation theory that had led to the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. The emergence of Bangladesh was hailed globally, but it also underscored the complexities of international politics. The then-US President Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, who had been staunch supporters of Pakistan due to Cold War dynamics, were caught off guard. Nixon's infamous remark about South Asia becoming an "international basket case" was a harsh reflection of the scepticism with which the new nation was viewed.

Yet, Bangladesh defied the odds and began its journey toward self-reliance and growth. Over the past five decades, Bangladesh has transformed remarkably, earning the moniker "the garment factory of the world." Despite initial challenges, including political instability, natural disasters, and infrastructural deficits, Bangladesh has managed to sustain an impressive growth trajectory. Today, Bangladesh stands as a significant player in South Asia, with a GDP growth rate that often outpaces its neighbours. The country's success in achieving many of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in areas such as gender

BANGLADESH DEFIED THE ODDS AND BEGAN ITS JOURNEY TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE AND GROWTH. OVER THE PAST FIVE DECADES, BANGLADESH HAS TRANSFORMED REMARKABLY, EARNING THE MONIKER "THE GARMENT FACTORY OF THE WORLD"

equality, education and healthcare, is commendable. It has become a model for other developing nations, showcasing how strategic planning and a focus on human development can lead to sustained progress. Victory Day is not just a celebration of past triumphs but also a moment to reflect on the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The geopolitical landscape of South Asia has evolved significantly since 1971. While the ties with India remain strong, underpinned by historical bonds and mutual interests, Bangladesh has also embraced China's Belt and Road Initiative, balancing its foreign policy to maximise economic benefits.

Victory Day also underscores the importance of remembering the sacrifices that led to Bangladesh's independence. The war claimed the lives of countless freedom fighters and civilians, whose bravery and resilience paved the way for a new nation. The liberation struggle also left deep scars, including the atrocities committed by the Pakistani military, which continue to evoke strong emotions. Efforts to bring justice through war crimes tribunals and to preserve the memory of the Liberation War are vital in honouring this legacy. As Bangladesh celebrates another Victory Day, it does so as a nation that has defied expectations and charted its path to

progress. The dreams of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Mukti Bahini have been realised in many ways, with a vibrant democracy, a thriving economy, and a resilient population. However, recent political instability has cast a shadow over Bangladesh's progress. The fall of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League, after years of dominance, has left a power vacuum, fueling uncertainty and unrest. Political polarisation has deepened, and concerns over democratic backsliding have surfaced. The status of minorities, particularly Hindus and indigenous groups, remains precarious, with reports of rising communal tensions and targeted violence. Ensuring minority rights and fostering inclusivity will be critical for Bangladesh to maintain its social fabric and democratic principles. The anniversary of Victory Day is a reminder of the enduring spirit of a people who fought for their right to self-determination and emerged victorious against overwhelming odds. It is a celebration of freedom, a tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice, and a pledge to build a future worthy of their dreams. Bangladesh's story, from a war-torn newborn state to a thriving economy, stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration, not just for South Asia but for the world.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

G7 FACES CRISES

Madam — The 'Group of Seven' or G7 countries are considered to be the group of the richest countries in the world. But after the Covid pandemic, their economic condition also seems to be almost in shambles. Especially three of those countries can be named here, in which political turmoil has been seen within the last 10 days. Those countries are Germany, the biggest economic power in Europe. France, the third biggest economy there, and the North American country Canada. In France, four prime ministers have been sworn in within the last one year. Emmanuel Macron's government can fall at any time. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz had announced the dismissal of Finance Minister Christian Lindner, citing breach of trust and economic policy differences. Now he himself has lost the vote of confidence.

Due to which elections will be held again there in the coming February. On the other hand, Canada's Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, has resigned from her post, citing disagreement with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. She has expressed disagreement on how to respond to the tariff threat of incoming President Donald Trump. Meaning, here too the main reason for instability is economic and financial problems. France has been affected by Europe's energy crisis and high interest rates, which have weakened the country. In 2024, Europe's largest economy will be stuck in recession for the second consecutive year. More and more businesses are under pressure and are suffering from falling sales, high energy costs and taxes, and Germany's overly cumbersome bureaucracy. Starting from 2022, per capita production in Canada has declined in six of the last seven quarters. Unemployment has also increased by a full percentage point compared to last year.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

TRUMP DEMANDS EQUAL TARIFFS

Madam — Donald Trump, the newly elected President of the United States,

R Ashwin retires from international cricket



Ravichandran Ashwin, India's second-highest Test wicket-taker (only behind Anil Kumble's 619 wickets), announced his retirement from international cricket at the age of 38. He expressed gratitude to his teammates and the BCCI, highlighting his fulfilling career. While he feels he still has more to offer, he'll focus on club-level cricket. Ashwin concluded his international career with 537 Test wickets, 156 ODI wickets and 72 T20I wickets. His crick-

et journey, from a fringe player in the 2011 World Cup to one of India's greatest match-winners, has been marked by trials, triumphs, and unwavering dedication. Despite overseas challenges and controversies, his innovative approach and analytical mind have solidified his place in cricketing history.

The 38-year-old Ashwin, with 537 Test wickets and six centuries, will continue playing franchise cricket, notably for Chennai Super Kings in the next edition of the IPL in 2025. We should not forget that Ashwin is the man who played his cricket all through with cleverness and dignity and decided to retire cleverly and in a dignified manner too. We should not be ungrateful and miss recognising and saluting him for his immense contribution to Indian cricket after Anil Kumble hung up his boots. Love you, champion!! Cricket lovers will miss you for sure! Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

has proposed a "Reciprocal Tariff" policy, signalling a new direction in global trade. Criticising the high tariff policies of countries, including India, he highlighted them as a source of inequity. Trump stated that if any country imposes tariffs on American products, the US will respond with equivalent tariffs. He specifically pointed to developing countries like India, which levy high tariffs to protect domestic industries. Using bicycles as an example, he alleged that India imposes over 100 per cent duty on American bicycles, while the US does not charge such high tariffs on Indian products.

This policy, claimed to be based on reciprocity and fairness, is likely to promote protectionism, potentially destabilising the global trade system. It raises concerns about increasing trade tensions between India and the US. Higher product prices could add economic burdens on consumers and strain bilateral relations. For India, it is crucial to engage in dialogue with the US administration to maintain trade balance. This tariff

conflict will not be limited to economic impacts; it will also have far-reaching diplomatic and social consequences. R K Jain | Barwani

TABLA MAESTRO'S LEGACY

Madam — Zakir Hussain's music was intertwined with his all-encompassing love for everyone without an iota of bias or prejudice. In fact, it reminds one of a popular Kishore Kumar number, "Pyaar Baantte Chalo" (Keep spreading love), from the 1965 Hindi movie "Hum sab ustaad hain." Apart from his divine renditions on the tabla, what endeared him most to his audiences was the halo of love and humility that surrounded him. In an interview with the BBC, he once said that all his shows were sold out well in advance, not because of him, but because of the power and attraction of music. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

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FIRST COLUMN

SRI LANKA-INDIA:
ON THE SAME PAGEBoth nations reiterate commitment to defence
collaboration and regional stability

KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

India strengthened its ties with its closest maritime neighbor, Sri Lanka, this week, countering the growing influence of China in the island nation. Sri Lanka's President, H.E. Mr. Anura Kumara Disanayaka, made his first bilateral visit to New Delhi following the recent presidential and parliamentary elections. Earlier this year, President Disanayaka had also visited Delhi at a time when Sri Lanka's political future, including the timing of its elections, was still uncertain. The new President came to power riding on the left-leaning party, which is known to have harboured some Anti-Indian sentiments in the past. However, New Delhi chose to bet on the relatively young Marxist leader, hoping for a sense of prudence in future. Disanayaka in the past, has managed to maintain a fine balance in Sri Lanka's bilateral relations with India and China, not trying to get caught in any crossfire.

Meanwhile, while India's military tensions with China have de-escalated in the recent past, it still chooses to be cautious. Special Representatives from India and China also met this week in Beijing, to discuss their mutual bilateral relations. It seems that with the Trump administration back in the Oval Office in January, China wants to de-escalate military tensions with countries it considers as rivals. China is aware that Trump is likely to impose tariffs on many of its exports to the US, and perhaps further tighten the transfer of high-end technology from America. It is acutely aware that, India would not join an economic dialogue unless the overarching military issues are sorted. It is against this background, that Sri Lanka President's visit to India assumes significance. It may be recalled that China had in the past, sent spy ships



(which it calls maritime research vehicles) to Sri Lankan waters, which have raised many red flags for the Indian security agencies.

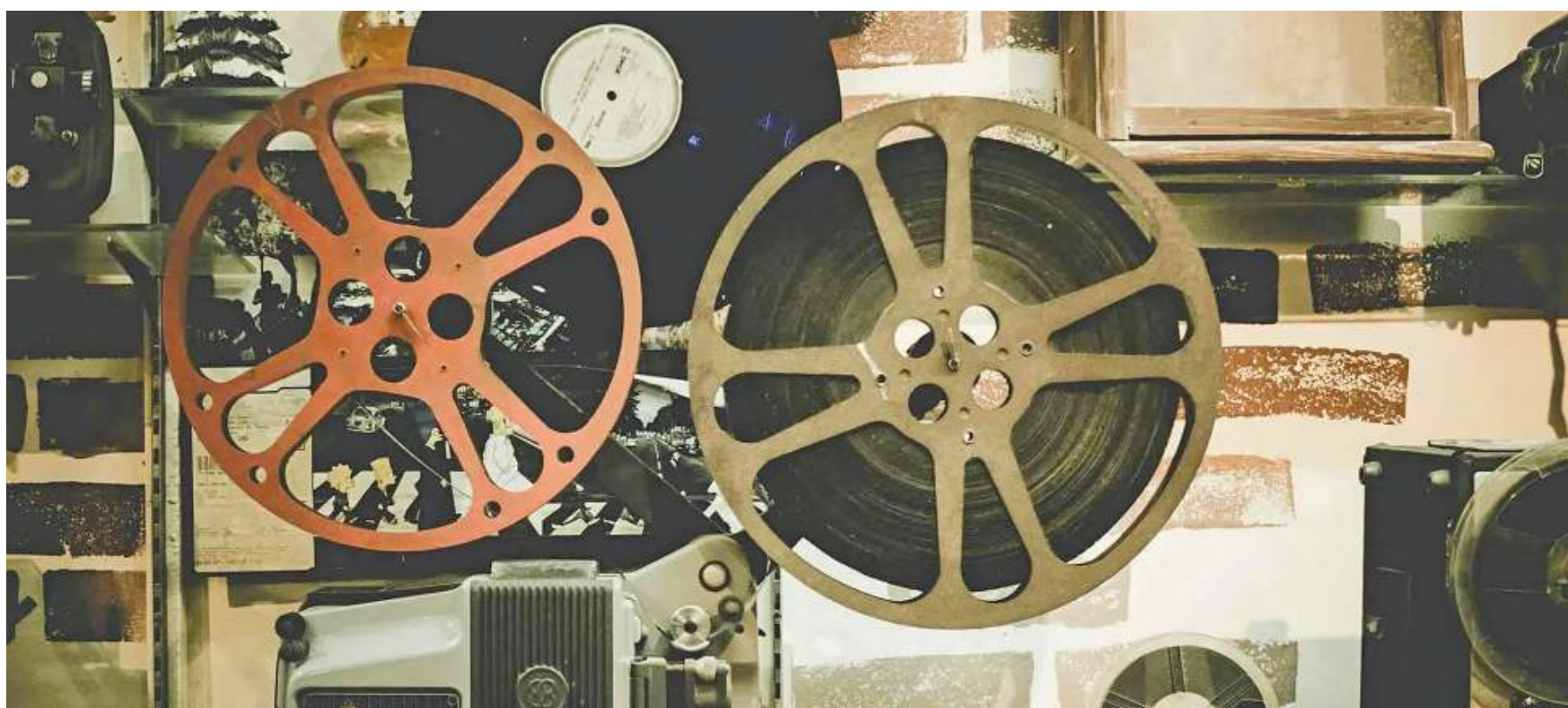
China also controls critical ports in Sri Lanka, which during any military conflict could be used for strategic purposes. Sri Lanka's President is aware of his country's dependence on China to keep its economy afloat, while, also not trying to disturb the deep bilateral partnership with India. It was heartening for policy watchers in India to note that the Sri Lankan President chose Delhi to be his port of call after getting elected and came out with some emphatic statements, regarding not allowing, their national territory to be used for any anti-India activities. The joint statement released after the President and Indian PM's meeting read "Recognising shared security interests of India and Sri Lanka, both leaders acknowledged the importance of regular dialogue based on mutual trust and transparency and giving primacy to each other's security concerns. India is Sri Lanka's closest maritime neighbour, President Disanayaka reiterated Sri Lanka's stated position of not permitting its territory to be used in any manner inimical to the security of India and towards regional stability."

Taking cognisance of India's security concerns the two nations further reiterated to "Explore the possibility of concluding a framework Agreement on Defence Cooperation; Foster cooperation in hydrography; Provision of defence platforms and assets to augment Sri Lanka's defence capabilities; Intensify collaboration through joint exercises, maritime surveillance, and defence dialogue and exchanges; Extend assistance to strengthen capabilities of Sri Lanka on disaster mitigation, relief and rehabilitation, including through training, joint exercises and sharing of best practices; and Enhance capacity building and training for Sri Lankan defence forces and conduct tailor-made training programmes, wherever required." The bedrock of this relationship is India's generous economic support to Sri Lanka without putting it through non-transparent, self-serving infrastructure loans, which has led to the loss of strategic ports for the island nation.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

The evolution of cinema
through technology

CHAITANYA K PRASAD

Whether through sound, colour, digital effects, or immersive technology,
filmmakers have always sought to expand the boundaries of what is possible

Beneath the flickering lights of an old projector, cinema was born—a dance of shadows and light, whispering stories into the dark. From silent dreams projected on silver screens to the roaring worlds of colour and sound, cinema has always been a magician, conjuring entire universes with the stroke of a reel. As technology sprinkled its magic dust over time, the cinematic world transformed, evolving from simple moving pictures into immersive journeys that now wrap us in their digital embrace, where imagination knows no bounds. In the late 19th century, cinema was a purely visual experience. Films like Raja Harishchandra (1913), India's first feature film, relied entirely on visuals, as sound was not yet a part of cinematic storytelling. Globally, the Lumière brothers' early works, such as L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (1895), left audiences mesmerised.

The technology was simple—manual cameras, mechanical projectors, and natural light. But this early era laid the foundation for the visual storytelling techniques that filmmakers would continue to refine for decades to come. The advent of sound in cinema was a game-changer. Alam Ara (1931) became India's first talkie, marking the beginning of an era where dialogue and music played a crucial role in storytelling. Globally, The Jazz Singer (1927) made similar waves, showcasing the transformative power of synchronized sound. Colour, too, began to seep into cinema's world. While Kisan Kanya (1937) was India's first colour film, it wasn't until Mughal-e-Azam (1960) and Hum Dono (1961) that colour became a truly artistic element, bringing emotional depth and grandeur to the screen.

The partially colourised Mughal-e-Azam in particular stunned audiences, giving the larger-than-life historical drama a visual vibrancy that was previously unimaginable. Ramesh Sippy's Sholay (1975) was a groundbreaking film, being the first Indian movie shot on a 70mm screen. Indian theatres were not initially equipped to accommodate this scale, but the format gave Sholay's action sequences a larger-than-life feel, adding to its epic narrative. The film also introduced enhanced stereophonic sound, a novelty in Indian cin-



THE TECHNOLOGY WAS SIMPLE—MANUAL CAMERAS, MECHANICAL PROJECTORS, AND NATURAL LIGHT. BUT THIS EARLY ERA LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR THE VISUAL STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES THAT FILMMAKERS WOULD CONTINUE TO REFINE FOR DECADES TO COME

ema. Shan (1980) followed, introducing impressive special effects such as explosions, action choreography, and stunt sequences, drawing comparisons to Western films like James Bond, with a blend of spectacle and style that had rarely been seen in India. The onset of digital technology and CGI changed the landscape of Indian cinema in the 2000s. Films like Krrish (2006) and Ra. One (2011) ushered in a new era of superhero films and futuristic themes, using advanced CGI and motion capture. Robot (2010), featuring a humanoid robot protagonist, combined impressive VFX with engaging storytelling, marking a turning point in Indian cinema's relationship with technology. As CGI became increasingly prevalent, Hollywood and Indian cinema both embraced digital effects as a core component of storytelling.

Hollywood's Jurassic Park (1993) and The Matrix (1999) showcased the immense potential of CGI. Indian films like Baahubali (2015-2017) set new standards with their breathtaking visual effects, making Indian cinema a global player in the visual effects arena. R (2022) followed suit, pushing the envelope with dynamic CGI-enhanced action scenes. Cinema is now becoming more immersive than ever. James Cameron's Avatar (2009) brought 3D to the forefront of mainstream cinema, while Indian cinema explored immersive experiences with films like Kaala (2018), which offered a 360-degree VR experience. Technologies like VR and AI are now beginning to merge with traditional filmmaking, pushing the boundaries of storytelling even further. Technological advancements have transformed both the creative and commercial aspects of cinema, allowing films to evolve into multifaceted brands. Innovations like high-definition cameras, VFX, and animation have significantly elevated

the quality of filmmaking, enabling large-scale productions such as RRR and Baahubali to create immersive experiences that attract global audiences.

These technological tools have expanded the branding potential of films, positioning them as not just stories, but as global entertainment products. Furthermore, the media and entertainment sector's growth, particularly in India, reflects this shift, with theatrical revenues reaching an all-time high of INR 120 billion in 2023. The business model of cinema has expanded beyond traditional box-office revenue, thanks to digital platforms like OTT services, which offer new avenues for distribution and monetisation. These platforms provide filmmakers with the opportunity to market their films globally, turning local content into international brands. Films now capitalise on multiple revenue streams, including merchandising, digital rights, and exclusive streaming deals. Additionally, high-end multiplexes have begun focusing on premium cinematic experiences, creating "experience zones" that cater to affluent audiences and further enhance the brand identity of films.

Cinema has also become a significant platform for advertising and brand collaborations. FMCG, e-commerce, and tech companies increasingly use films for product placements and promotions, contributing to the industry's revenue.

Meanwhile, Indian films are reaching wider audiences across 160 countries, thanks to advancements in content production and global distribution. This expanded global reach is turning Indian cinema into a formidable international brand, with films frequently topping global streaming charts, further proving that technological advancements are integral to both the branding and business of cinema? Recently released films like

Kalki 2898 AD and Stree 2 have pushed the envelope for Indian cinema by leveraging advanced CGI and innovative storytelling techniques. Kalki 2898 AD embraced futuristic narratives, with its visually rich depiction of a dystopian future made possible through cutting-edge visual effects, similar to global sci-fi films. Stree 2 blended horror, comedy, and CGI to craft a unique, immersive experience, further proving that Indian filmmakers are increasingly adept at balancing narrative depth with technological prowess, placing them on the global stage. From the early days of silent films to today's CGI-driven spectacles, cinema has continuously evolved with technological advancements.

Whether through sound, colour, digital effects, or immersive technology, filmmakers have always sought to expand the boundaries of what's possible. The future of cinema technology promises exciting advancements. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are set to provide even more immersive storytelling experiences, allowing audiences to interact with cinematic worlds in unprecedented ways. Artificial intelligence (AI) is also emerging in post-production, helping streamline visual effects and editing processes. Additionally, innovations in 3D and holographic projections could redefine how we experience films in theatres and at home. Advances in sound technology, like spatial audio, will make the viewing experience more immersive, ensuring cinema continues to evolve. The cinematic journey, it seems, is far from over—technology is pushing the boundaries further, transforming both the art of storytelling and the audience.

(The writer is a former additional DG, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI; views are personal. Inputs by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan)

Rajasthan's Golden Horizon: From cultural marvel to investment powerhouse

With the success of 'Rising Rajasthan Investment Summit 2024,' the state is poised for an economic transformation

Sone ri dharti jathe-ar chandi ro aasman - translates to "Where the earth is made of gold and the sky is built with silver." This cherished folk song beautifully captures the essence of Rajasthan's Thar Desert. Today, these words remain as relevant as ever, reflecting the state's unique charm and its emergence as a hub of global investment opportunities. Rajasthan, India's largest state, is rich in minerals, endowed with vast solar and wind energy resources, and brimming with potential for investors worldwide.

The Rajasthan Government has successfully hosted the 'Rising Rajasthan Investment Summit 2024' in Jaipur this week. Throughout the event,



MOHIT TANTIA

memorandums of understanding (MOUs) totalling over Rs 35 lakh crore were signed, highlighting the immense investment potential of the state. Actually, very few places can match with Rajasthan's allure. It boasts nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites, iconic palaces and forts, 320 sunny days a year, powerful winds, and expansive land. Combined with excellent law

and order and robust rail connectivity, these factors place Rajasthan in a league of its own as a destination for investment. Currently, the state is undergoing an economic transformation. The government aims to propel Rajasthan's economy from \$180 billion to \$350 billion by enhancing the Ease of Doing Business and creating employment opportunities for the youth.

Over the next five years, the administration seeks to generate one million jobs across private and public sectors, with a focus on attracting significant investments. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma envisions Rajasthan as a pivotal player in India's economic growth. His administration is fostering a

pro-business environment across industries, recognising that Rajasthan's development is integral to achieving the vision of a "Developed India" by 2047. Rajasthan's rich natural resources, skilled workforce, and outstanding connectivity make it a magnet for investments.

Over 58 per cent of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and 39 per cent of the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) pass through the state. This infrastructure connects Rajasthan to domestic and export markets, while its proximity to northern states and western ports ensures seamless trade access. With the third-largest national highway network and second-largest rail network in India, along with



nine inland container depots, seven airports, and an air cargo complex, Rajasthan is a logistical powerhouse. Rajasthan's investment prospects span diverse sectors: petroleum infrastructure, food processing, education, chemicals, electronic systems, automotive, electric vehicles, and renewable

energy. Traditional industries like tourism, and emerging fields like startups, also offer immense potential.

For instance, in agriculture and agro-processing, Rajasthan is a top producer of mustard, millet, guar gum, fenugreek, isabgol, and medicinal crops. The sector contributed 29 per cent to the state's Gross State Value Added (GSVA) in 2022-23. The state also ranks second in livestock population and milk production and is a leader in spices, organic farming, and coarse wool. With these advantages, the agriculture sector presents vast opportunities in agri-food parks, warehousing, and cold chain facilities. Rajasthan's journey from a

cultural and historical treasure to a thriving investment hub reflects its unparalleled potential and forward-looking vision. The state's abundant natural resources, excellent infrastructure, and strategic location make it an ideal destination for investors across various sectors, from renewable energy and agriculture to manufacturing and technology. With an ambitious economic transformation underway, Rajasthan's government is committed to creating a pro-business environment that will not only attract global investments but also create employment opportunities for its youth. As the state continues to capitalise on its diverse strengths, the "Rising

Rajasthan" initiative stands as a testament to its growing prominence on the global stage.

The government's efforts, backed by strategic partnerships and forward-thinking policies, position Rajasthan as a key player in India's economic future, driving growth, prosperity, and development.

The initiative seeks to bolster Rajasthan's industries, create jobs, and amplify its economic potential, ensuring the timeless folk song "Sone ri dharti jathe-ar chandi ro aasman" resonates on a global stage.

(The writer is Executive Member, National Institute for Locomotor Disabilities, Kolkata. Views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



NTPC plans to set up nuclear project in Bihar

Power giant NTPC has plans to set up a nuclear project in Bihar, a move which will increase its non fossil energy portfolio, the company's Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) Gaurdeep Singh said on Thursday. NTPC has also requested the state government for a land parcel at a suitable location to take forward its nuclear plans, he said addressing a session at the 'Bihar Business Connect 2024' summit here.

"Looking at the future of the energy sector, nuclear (energy) is expected to become extremely important for the energy sector, 20-30 years down the line. I want to share that NTPC is now entering the nuclear energy space," Singh said. Without sharing any further details, he said NTPC will conduct a study before taking ahead the plans to set up the nuclear project in the state.

On September 11, the Indian government gave its approval to the Anushakti Vidhyut Nigam Ltd (ASHVINI), a joint venture of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd - NPCIL (51 per cent) and NTPC (49 per cent) to build, own and operate nuclear power plants in India in accordance with provisions of the Atomic Energy Act.



Air India places order for 34 trainer aircraft

Air India has placed an order for 34 trainer aircraft, including 31 single engine planes, for its flying training organisation in Maharashtra that is expected to come up by the second half of 2025. The order includes 31 single-engine aircraft from piper aircraft in the US and three twin-engine planes from Austria-based Diamond Aircraft, the airline said in a release on Thursday. The Flying Training Organisation (FTO) is being set up at Belora airport in Amravati, Maharashtra. It is expected to be operational by the second half of next year post-regulatory approvals. Sunil Bhaskaran, Director of Air India's Aviation Academy, said the FTO will help in building a self-reliant ecosystem of qualified pilots for both Air India and the country's aviation industry.

The Tata Group-owned airline has opened its new Aviation Training Academy in Gurugram, Haryana.



Bharat Mobility to see higher footfalls: EEPC

The second edition of the Bharat Mobility Global Expo, scheduled to be held at three different venues in the National Capital and Greater Noida, is expected to see more than three times footfalls this year compared to the inaugural version year. Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC) said here on Thursday. It is also expecting a higher participation from the exhibitors. The council also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi may inaugurate the six-day Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. To be spread across more than 2,00,000 sq metres with concurrent shows, featuring automobile, auto component and construction equipment segments, among others, across three venues -- Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, Yashbhoomi in Dwarka (West Delhi) and the India Expo Centre & Mart in Greater Noida, the mega event is likely to see half-a-million visitors this year compared to 1.5 lakh visitors at the 2024 edition, EEPC Chairman Pankaj Chadha told reporters here.

Women hold only 10 pc KMP positions in India: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Women constitute less than 20 per cent of the overall workforce, and only 10 per cent hold key managerial personnel (KMP) positions even as companies are making efforts to diversify, according to a report.

Women constitute less than 20 per cent of the overall workforce and hold just over 10 per cent of KMP positions, while female directors account for less than 20 per cent of the total board director positions, according to the 'Mind the Gender Gap' report by CFA Institute and CFA Society India.

The 'Mind the Gender Gap' report is based on insights from 300 Indian companies through their Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR) disclosures.

The report also revealed that women board members and KMPs receive significantly lower compensation compared to their male counterparts, highlighting a gender pay disparity at the top level.

Female directors earn only

India, US need to together lower tariffs, stresses US Ambassador

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti on Thursday said India is the "highest tariff" major economy in the world and New Delhi and Washington need to work together to lower tariffs to increase trade for making it "fair and equal".

His comment comes days after US President-elect Donald Trump said that India charges "a lot" of tariff, reiterating his intention to impose reciprocal tariffs in retaliation for what New Delhi will impose on the import of certain American products.

Addressing an event organised by the US-India Business Council (USIBC) here, Garcetti observed that as the two countries "become closer", they are able to be "more blunt" with each other.

"... We need together to lower tariffs, not to see them go up. We need together to increase trade and to make it more fair and equal. We need to together make sure that there's training and talent that meets the needs of companies on both sides of the Indo Pacific," Garcetti, the United States (US) Ambassador to India, said.

In an interactive session after his address, Garcetti pointed out that "despite the difficulties



on both sides", the India-US bilateral trade has witnessed a "10-fold increase", with America becoming the country's number one trading partner.

"... I think that as you hear, as recently as yesterday, President-elect Trump talk about trade and how tariffs need to be done fairly, let us have honest conversations. I think it's helpful for us to speak bluntly, but let us use that as a starting point to negotiate much more deeply than we do," the US Ambassador to India said.

He further outlined that even though the US and India don't really talk in ambitious ways about trade, yet the two countries have expanded trade ten-fold since 2001.

Garcetti urged his audience to imagine what the two coun-

tries could achieve if they actually sat down and had all these conversations.

"Imagine what we could do if we actually sat down and had all these conversations... The US, could say you might be down 95 per cent from what tariffs used to be, but it's still the highest tariff major economy in the world, here in India. And too often, there are barriers that take too long and are too arbitrary, and everything from labour to land, as we have too in the United States," he asserted.

Trump has repeatedly claimed that India is a "tariff king" and imposes "tremendously high" tariffs on American products.

He has criticised India's "big tariffs" on American paper products and the iconic Harley-Davidson bikes.

Diversify into ethanol-diesel, green hydrogen production

Govt urges sugar industry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Road, Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday called upon the sugar industry to explore multiple avenues for diversification, including ethanol-diesel blending and green hydrogen production.

Addressing the annual general meeting of the Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA) virtually, the minister emphasised the need for setting up ethanol and CNG pumps, including through private sector participation.

There is a huge potential for flex engines, ethanol-based engines, and bioCNG as alternatives to fossil fuels.

Five automakers including Tata, Suzuki, and Toyota are set to launch flex engine fuel cars in the market, he said and urged the tractor makers to start manufacturing tractors on alternative fuels.

The minister suggested examining possibilities of exporting ethanol to neighbouring countries like

Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka to expand market opportunities.

Bio-bitumen production using lignin and biomass sources, along with green hydrogen generation from sugar industry infrastructure, were highlighted as potential areas for expansion.

He emphasised the potential of green hydrogen as an alternative fuel source and suggested using existing infrastructure in the sugar and ethanol industries to produce green hydrogen.

"I know that making sugar is not an attractive job, but at the same time, because of ethanol, CNG, hydrogen and other by-products, we can increase the productivity and profitability in the industry," he said.

"The industry must focus on increasing sugarcane productivity through modern techniques like nano-fertilizers and drone spraying," the minister said.

The government will also consider the industry's request for sugar exports and minimum selling price (MSP), the minister said.

Gold, silver prices plummet due to muted demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold and silver prices fell sharply in the national capital on Thursday due to a muted demand by jewellers amid a weak global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity plunged Rs 800 to Rs 78,300 per 10 grams. It closed at Rs 79,100 per 10 grams in the previous trading session on Wednesday.

Traders said the bullion prices slipped as the US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell takes a stance after the US central bank decided to cut interest rates.

The Fed now projects just two quarter-percentage-point rate reductions by the end of 2025, down from their September estimate of four rate cuts earlier, they added.

Silver also plummeted Rs 2,000 to Rs 90,000 per kg on Thursday. The white metal set-

ted at Rs 92,000 per kg in previous close.

The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity slumped Rs 800 to Rs 77,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 78,700 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery dipped Rs 303, or 0.4 per cent, to trade at Rs 76,350 per 10 grams.

Silver contracts for March delivery declined Rs 1,630 or 1.8 per cent to Rs 88,750 per kg on the bourse.

Comex gold futures in Asian trading session fell USD 19.10 per ounce, or 0.72 per cent, to USD 2,634.10 per ounce.

"Gold fell sharply post-Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting as the Fed's indication of a slower pace of interest rate cuts than previously estimated for the next year," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said

Sebi defers ESG disclosure deadline

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has decided to defer the ESG disclosure deadline for value chain partners of listed companies by one year until FY26, giving more time to them to comply with the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) requirements.

Until then, environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting will remain voluntary instead of the current "comply-and-explain" approach.

The proposal, approved by Sebi's board on Wednesday, is aimed at enhancing ease of doing business for listed companies and their value chain partners in meeting BRSR requirement.

The Sebi's board approved several relaxations and updates for ESG disclosures.

These include "deferring ESG disclosures for value chain", as well as "assessment or assurance" thereof, by one year.

Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 9.65 lakh cr in four days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 9.65 lakh crore in four days of sharp decline in the equity market where the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 2,915 points.

In the past four days, the BSE benchmark slumped 2,915.07 points or 3.54 per cent.

Falling for the fourth day running on Thursday, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 964.15 points or 1.20 per cent to settle at 79,218.05. During the day, the blue-chip index cracked 1,162.12 points or 1.44 per cent to 79,020.08.

Tracking the weak trend in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 9,65,935.96 crore to Rs 4,49,76,402.63 crore (USD 5.29 trillion) in four days.

"Markets were plunged tracking negative global cues as benchmark indices slipped below their psychological levels on broad-based selling after the US Fed's hawkish stance raised concerns over further rate cuts next year.



Rising US bond yields has pushed global currencies, including the rupee to new lows while renewed foreign fund outflows from domestic equities could prompt investors to turn risk averse," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the 30 blue-chip pack,

Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, JSW Steel, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Reliance Industries,

Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Tata Motors and Tech Mahindra were the biggest laggards.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Hindustan Unilever and Power Grid were the gainers.

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

India's job market projected to grow 9 pc, says Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Hiring activities in 2025 are likely to witness a 9 per cent growth in the country driven by sectors, including IT, retail, telecommunications and banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI) sectors, a report said on Thursday.

According to the latest data from jobs and talent platform foundit (formerly Monster APAC & ME) there will be a 9 per cent hiring growth in the country in 2025, led by IT, retail, telecommunications, and BFSI sectors.

With a 10 per cent growth in 2024 and 3 per cent sequential growth in November, the forecast indicates that hiring is set to retain its momentum, with a predictable hiring environment, said the



report.

Emerging technologies and evolving business priorities are likely to further shape India's job market in 2025, it noted.

Innovations such as edge computing, quantum applications, and cybersecurity advancements are set

to transform industries like manufacturing, healthcare, and IT, it added. The report is based on an analysis of data on foundit insights tracker during January 2023 to November 2024.

Meanwhile, the report further stated that the rise of retail media

networks and AI-driven workforce analytics will reshape talent needs in e-commerce, HR and digital services.

Organisations will look for professionals skilled in digital marketing, ad management, and HR analytics.

"As we enter 2025, India's job market looks set to broaden its horizons, with a projected 9 per cent growth in hiring. Companies are not only looking for seasoned professionals but also broadening their search beyond established hubs," foundit Vice President - Marketing, Anupama Bhimrajka said. The report also highlighted that India's job market has shown robust growth in 2024, across sectors and cities when compared to 2023, despite seasonal disparities.

78 PC SMBs IN INDIA USE AI

Majority see increase in revenue: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 78 per cent of SMBs in India using artificial intelligence (AI) have reported revenue growth, according to a report.

The 6th edition of the 'Small & Medium Business Trends' report by Salesforce surveyed 3,350 leaders from Small and Medium-sized Businesses (SMBs) across 26 countries, and highlighted a growing trend among SMBs to adopt AI tech-

nologies to enhance their operations and drive revenue.

The report said 78 per cent of Indian SMBs are either using or experimenting with AI, with automated service chatbots, marketing campaign optimisation, and content generation as their top 3 use cases.

According to the report, 93 per cent of Indian SMBs surveyed said AI has helped increase revenues.

"Small businesses are demonstrating that innovation



and growth are not limited by size. By leveraging AI-driven technologies such as

autonomous agents, SMBs are unlocking efficient ways to scale--delivering personalised

customer experiences and optimising back-office operations," said Arun Kumar Parameswaran, Managing Director--Sales, Salesforce India.

Despite the optimistic outlook, the report also revealed challenges faced by SMB leaders.

The report said 41 per cent of respondents expressed concerns about being left behind in the AI race, indicating a sense of urgency to adopt these tech-

nologies. Additionally, 60 per cent find it challenging to keep pace with rapidly evolving technology, while some feel they lack the time to master all the tech their company employs.

Trust remains a paramount issue in the age of AI.

91 per cent of Indian SMBs surveyed would prefer to invest in technology from trusted vendors, reflecting growing concerns over security and compliance, it said.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
Office of the Special Deputy Collector
LA, HAML, Hyderabad

FORM-F
Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML.
(See rule 7 (c))

No. C6/112/2024-LHS(176 to 200) Dated 19-12-2024.

Where a notification was issued vide No. C6/112/2024-LHS(176 to 200) dated 07-12-2024 and published in the Gazette Hyd. HAML No. 40 dated 07-12-2024 for acquisition of the property for the public purpose for the project of Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Shar-E-Hyderabad Village Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District.

In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiation. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows:

Name and Address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds
1	2	3	4
Sri. Yaseer Bin Saleh S/o Saleh Bin Saleh R/o 18-7-205/B/2 Shar-E-Hyderabad Village Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District	190 LHS	18-7-205/ B/2	27.49
Sri. Mubarak bin Saleh S/o Saleh Bin Saleh R/o 18-07-205/B/03, Shar-E-Hyderabad Village Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District	191 LHS	18-07-205/ B/03	25.96
Sri. Zakar Bin Saleh S/o Saleh Bin Saleh, R/o 18-7-205/B/5, Shar-E-Hyderabad Village Bahadurpura Mandal, Hyderabad District	193 LHS	18-7-205/ B/5	25.98

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District/Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad within the seven days i.e., by 27-12-2024 of publication of this Notification.

Sd/- Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad.

Date: 19-12-2024
DIPR No.482/LA-PP/ADVT/Agency/2024-25

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

NIT.No. GHMC/KC/E/125/2024-25 Date: 19.12.2024

Name of Work: Maintenance Works-1, Estimate Amount: Rs. 10.00 Lakhs, Start Date & Time: 20.12.2024 @ 3.00 P.M. Last Date & Time for receipt of Bids: 24.12.2024 @ 3.00 P.M. Name & Address, Officer Cell No: Sri L Nagender, E.E., Kapra Circle-1, GHMC Cell: 9989930401, Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.tender.telangana.gov.in. Sd/- Executive Engineer, Kapra Circle-1, GHMC.

DIPR R.O.No: 8121-PP/LADVT/1/2024-25, Dt: 19.12.2024

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE MAINTENANCE WORKS

NIT.No. 23/EE-714B/CR2/GHMC/2024-25 Date: 18.12.2024

Name of Work: SI No 1 to 5, Estimate Cost: Rs. 24.56 Lakhs, Download Start Date: 20.12.2024 at 02.00 P.M. Last Date & Time for receipt of Bids: 24.12.2024 at 02.15 P.M. Name & Address, Officer Cell No: Sri G Ekambaram, EE (FAC), Santosh Nagar Circle-7, Channarayana Zone, Masqul Ground, Darab Jung Colony, Santosh Nagar, Hyderabad Ph. No. 7673951166, For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.tender.telangana.gov.in. Sd/- Executive Engineer, Santosh Nagar Circle - 7, Channarayana Zone, GHMC.

DIPR R.O.No: 8116-PP/LADVT/1/2024-25, Dt: 18.12.2024

'Exploitation of artists is something I'm wary of, especially when travelling to new places'

TRAVELOGUE

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Travel is a celebration of freedom, a gateway to new perspectives and a constant reminder that the world is filled with endless stories waiting to be explored. For Sreerama Chandra, travel is not just a part of his career—it's a way of life. As a celebrated singer who has performed across the globe, he has spent countless hours in airports, on flights and in far-off destinations, weaving unforgettable memories along the way.

Sreerama Chandra, celebrated singer and performer, has been a globetrotter for much of his career. In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, the artist opened up about his extensive travel experiences, the joys of performing and the destinations that remain on his bucket list.

"For me, travelling is second nature," Sreerama shared. "Half of my life, I've spent on airplanes. From about 2010 to 2024, I've completed three passports, and my fourth is about to be filled up in just a couple of months." He credits his packed performance schedule for this impressive feat, as his career often takes him across continents.

Speaking about his recent trip to Dubai, the *Subhanallah* singer recalled it as a mix of work and leisure. "I had a show in Dubai, but I stayed back for a few days to explore. I indulged in some shopping, visited different restaurants and even had some peaceful moments by the beach enjoying Arabic cuisine," he said. Reflecting on his previous trips, he shared highlights like skydiving over the iconic Palm Jumeirah and taking his father along for a thrilling desert safari. "Dubai is such a fascinating place—it's just a few hours away, yet it feels like an entirely different world with unique rules, geography, and culture," he noted.

While the *O Rendu Prema* singer cherishes his international trips, he remains deeply connected to his roots. "India is unparalleled. No matter where I travel, there's a feeling of belonging here that no other place can offer. You don't need a visa or passport to explore its beauty, and every corner of the country feels like home," he said passionately.

Traveling for work comes with its challenges. Recalling a harrowing experience in the United States, he said, "A promoter had paid me only half the amount for a show and promised the rest before the performance. However, as the time approached, he refused to pay, leaving me in a tough spot. Being in a foreign country, it was daunting. I had to escalate the matter to officials before the payment was made." Such incidents have made him cautious about working with unfamiliar teams abroad. "Exploitation of artists is something I'm wary of, especially when travelling to new places," he admitted.

For the *Sarphira* artist, performing is more than just a job—it's about connecting with audiences who truly value his work. "I love singing for people who recognise and appreciate me. There's a certain magic in performing for an audience that has been waiting for you, especially in college or

corporate shows where the energy is unmatched," he said. He revealed that he prefers not to perform in settings where there's a lack of connection, such as generic wedding gigs. "I only take up weddings where the clients specifically want me and reach out to me. Respect and mutual appreciation are very important to me as an artist," he explained.

Despite his extensive travels, there are still places Sreerama dreams of exploring. "Paris and parts of Europe remain on my bucket list. I've also never been to South America, which is a region I'm eager to explore," he said. "Closer to home," he expressed an interest in exploring India's northern terrains. "I've been hearing a lot about places like Manali and Uttarakhand. I've never experienced snowfall and it's something I'd love to do."

When asked about his downtime, he confessed that he's a homebody at heart. "When I'm not travelling or working, I love staying at home—whether it's in Hyderabad or Mumbai. It's the perfect time to relax, watch web series, or catch up with friends over a good meal," he said.

For him, travel is both a necessity and a joy, offering him the opportunity to experience different cultures and connect with fans across the globe. Whether it's performing in front of thousands or simply enjoying a quiet moment by the beach, every trip leaves a lasting memory. As he looks ahead, Sreerama remains ready to pack his bags and explore new horizons while staying grounded in his love for home.

With years of jet-setting behind him, completing multiple passports, and countless performances in diverse destinations, **Sreerama Chandra**, in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, shares how travel fuels his creativity, offers moments of solace and connects him to cultures and experiences that leave a lasting imprint



Winter's deadly grip: Cardiovascular cases surge in cold weather

As the temperature lowers, the danger of heart-related diseases is on the rise, making winter a tough season for cardiovascular health. Research studies have shown that the risk of heart attack increases up to 53% in winters compared to summers. Such seasonal increase necessitates increased awareness and proactive heart care during the cold seasons.

Cold weather causes constriction of blood vessels that leads to increased blood pressure, forcing the heart to work hard in circulating blood. With every 1°C drop in temperature, the risk of heart attack increases by 2%. Studies also reveal that there are 26-36% more deaths due to heart problems in winter than during summer. In addition, inhalation of cold air may trigger arterial spasms that decrease blood flow to the heart. At the same time, the body's attempt to produce heat accelerates heart rates that further exert the cardiovascular system.

Dr. Amit Bhushan Sharma, Director and Unit Head - Cardiology - Interventional, Paras Health, Gurugram, explains, "The winter season places unique stress on the cardiovascular system. Cold weather not only increases blood pressure but also makes

pre-existing heart conditions more dangerous. Simple steps such as dressing warmly, staying active indoors and monitoring blood pressure regularly can significantly reduce risks. For those with heart conditions, regular check-ups and vigilance are crucial during this time of year."

To prevent heart problems in winter, experts advise some common measures such as wearing layers to keep the body warm, avoiding sudden exertive activities and opting for light indoor exercises instead of strenuous ones, which can strain the heart too much.

A diet with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and omega-3s also helps regulate cholesterol and promotes cardiovascular well-being. Blood pressure monitoring and vigilance about warning signs such as chest pain or shortness of breath should be considered among the key steps to preventing complications.

Timely health screenings can also allow people to detect potential problems early and receive appropriate care during the winter months.

As the season unfolds, prioritising heart health and adopting preventive measures can significantly reduce winter-related cardiovascular risks and ensure overall well-being.



'Filming in real locations is always challenging, but worth every bit of effort'

In the vast landscape of Indian cinema, few filmmakers dare to venture into uncharted waters with the same fearless intensity as Kanu Behl. Known for his distinctive storytelling that straddles the line between realism and raw emotion, Behl's latest film, *Despatch*, offers a searing exploration of truth, power, and consequence. With the film now streaming on ZEE5, Behl opens up about the gripping partnership with the platform, the gritty challenges of shooting in Mumbai's chaotic real locations and his unique approach to cinema that transforms it from passive entertainment into a powerful conversation.

As *Despatch* makes its mark on ZEE5, Behl reflects on the partnership with a sense of pride and conviction that is palpable. For a director whose work consistently challenges conventional storytelling, aligning with a platform like ZEE5 was an obvious choice.

"I couldn't have asked for a better collaboration than ZEE5," Behl asserts, his words underscoring the strategic synergy between his vision and the platform's ethos. "Over the last decade, ZEE5 has not only backed mass-appeal content but also supported films that carry a distinct voice, often defying mainstream conventions. They've created space for voices that don't just conform to the status quo. In today's environment, where artistic expressions can often be sidelined, ZEE5 is like a breath of fresh air."

This partnership is a perfect match for *Despatch*, a film that refuses to compro-

In a cinematic landscape often dominated by formulaic narratives, **Kanu Behl's *Despatch*** is a daring detour into the raw, unvarnished truths of power and consequence. Speaking exclusively to *The Pioneer*, Behl reveals how his latest work, streaming now on ZEE5, captures Mumbai's soul and sparks a conversation that lingers far beyond the credits

mise on its artistic integrity. Behl sees the platform as a force that encourages diverse narratives, providing a home for stories that may otherwise struggle to find their audience. "It's a platform that understands that cinema isn't just about entertainment—it's about creating conversations. And that's what *Despatch* is: a conversation with the audience."

When it comes to capturing the essence of Mumbai, Behl's commitment to authenticity takes center stage. Instead of resorting to studio sets or staged locations, Behl and his crew opted for the pulsating heart of the city—Dadar station. The choice wasn't just about convenience; it was about embodying the raw energy of the city.



"Filming in real locations is always challenging, but it's worth every bit of effort," Behl admits, acknowledging the logistical hurdles. "We shot at Dadar station with Manoj Bajpayee rather than faking it elsewhere. That decision wasn't just about realism; it was about making the story breathe. The streets, the chaos, the people—it's all part of the fabric of *Despatch*."

Shooting in a place like Dadar station, with its constant hustle and bustle, came with its own set of challenges. But Behl credits his production crew, RSVP Films, and his dedicated team for pulling it off seamlessly, even during the toughest times of the pandemic. "Filming in such locations wasn't easy, but the crew made it possible. The authenticity we captured on screen is all thanks to their dedication and hard work."

What makes Behl's filmmaking stand out is his refusal to impose a singular message on the audience. For him, cinema is not a vehicle for preaching; it's an invitation to engage, question and reflect.

"I don't believe in telling people what to think through my films," he says, his voice measured but passionate. "Cinema is not about standing on a pedestal and delivering a sermon. It's about having a conversation with the audience. Through the characters, the narrative, and the situations, I aim to present certain ideas—whether it's about power, corruption, or the human condition—but I leave enough space for the audience to form their own opinions."

It's this depth of engagement that sets *Despatch* apart from the typical Bollywood

fare. Instead of handing over clear answers, Behl challenges viewers to think critically about the world in which the story unfolds. "The goal is to create a space where, after the film ends, the audience is still thinking, still reflecting. That's where the real conversation begins—when they engage with the film even after the credits roll."

For Behl, the magic of cinema lies not in delivering a pre-packaged message but in sparking dialogue. "If the audience is still with the film, even when they're no longer consuming the story, then you know you've achieved something powerful. That's when they start to really connect with the film."

With *Despatch*, Behl is carving out a space for cinema that doesn't shy away from complexity, nuance, and a bit of discomfort. As he continues to push boundaries, he's a part of a new wave of filmmakers who are reshaping the Indian film industry—one where stories are told on their own terms, without compromise.

"Cinema today needs to be more than just an escape. It needs to reflect the world we live in, with all its messiness, contradictions and complexities. *Despatch* is my attempt to start a conversation, not just tell a story. I want the audience to think, to question, and to engage with the themes long after they've watched the film."

As *Despatch* continues to captivate audiences on ZEE5, Behl's vision is clear: cinema is not about passive consumption; it's about active participation. And in this bold, thought-provoking film, he's inviting the world to join the conversation.

Your bite of Christmas delights!



The Christmas season is synonymous with sweet treats and indulgences and what better way to celebrate than with an assortment of delicious cakes and cookies?

The aroma of freshly baked goods wafts through homes and bakeries, tempting taste buds with promises of sugar and spice. From classic fruitcakes and gingerbread men to sugar-dusted shortbread and chocolate-dipped treats, the festive season is the perfect excuse to indulge in a world of sweet delights. Gifting and sharing sweets is a beloved Christmas tradition, and The Baker's Dozen is here to make it even more festive! With every bite, these treats are sure to spread joy and festive cheer, making your celebrations extra sweet and memorable!

Christmas plum cake:

Plum cake is a true Christmas classic. Soaked with the finest fruits in alcohol and aromatic spices for months, allowing them to develop the rich, intense flavour that defines an authentic Christmas Plum Cake. Experience the warmth of the season with hand-crafted plum cake, made with love and care.

Christmas cake (Eggless):

Embrace the magic of the holiday season with our delectable Christmas cake, a festive tradition full of flavour and cheer. Made with aromatic spices, dried fruits, and a touch of holiday spirit, each bite brings the warmth of cozy gatherings and cherished moments.

Gingerbread man cookies:

Gingerbread man cookies are a Christmas essential. These eggless, crunchy cookies are crafted with an authentic recipe that's sure to add extra joy to your holiday celebrations. Made with love by our neighbourhood artisan bakery, our Gingerbread man cookies are free from chemicals and preservatives, offering a pure, wholesome taste.

Christmas shortbread cookies:

The Scottish shortbread cookies, made with real butter and infused with the festive spirit of Christmas, are the perfect treat for gifting this holiday season. Crafted with premium ingredients, these cookies are as delightful to taste as they are to look at. Indulge your sweet tooth with this buttery, melt-in-your-mouth treat and spread the joy of Christmas with every bite.



Star Maa is set to launch *Ishq Jodi Season 3*, following the success of its previous two seasons. The upcoming season, which will begin on December 21, 2024 and hosted by Omkar, promises to captivate audiences with a fresh and trendy approach, reflecting evolving tastes across generations.

PARTY

Titan Watches marked its 40th anniversary by honouring a defining moment in India's history—the groundbreaking space journey of Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian to venture into space. In 1984, aboard the Soviet spacecraft Soyuz T-11, Sharma made history when he looked down at Earth and famously described India as "Saare Jahaan Se Achha," a phrase that resonated deeply with millions, symbolizing national pride and unity.



The Regional Research Symposium on Project-Based Learning (RRSPBL) was kickstarted at Anurag University, Venkatapur in the city on Thursday. Dr JA Choudary, Founder of the International Startup Foundation & former IT Advisor and Special Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Govt of Andhra Pradesh marked their presence at the inauguration.

Aciana has announced the launch of the Ciana Healthcare Ecosystem, an integrated healthcare platform powered by advanced genetic insights and AI-driven analytics. This first-of-its-kind platform is designed to address critical gaps in healthcare delivery, offering personalised, predictive and precise care to millions.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



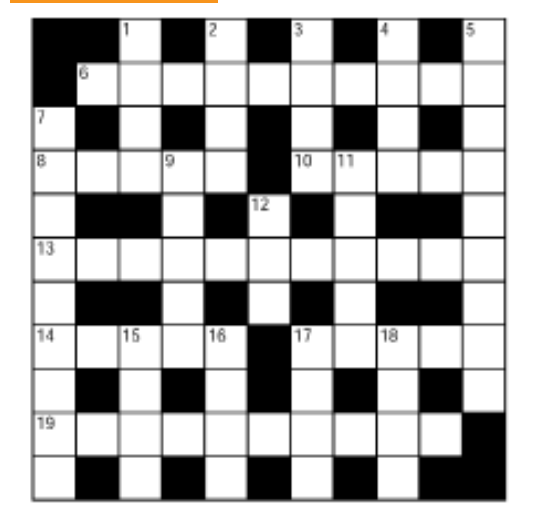
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



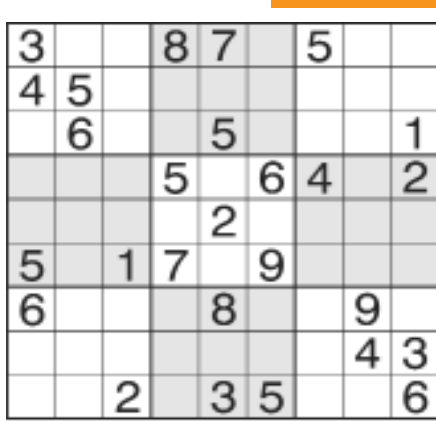
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

- An illness that gives you red spots that itch (7-3)
- Say
- Tongans live here
- Insects with large, often colourful wings
- Not together
- Worship
- A book with words and their meanings
- These have doors and you store things in here
- Go in
- Lubricated
- Remove moisture from under a bridge
- A small tree branch
- A female relation
- A rarer uses these

DOWN

- Closed
- A skin mark from a wound or play
- Take a break from work or play
- Twirl
- Completely tired out



GINGER MEGGS



'I left a web series project where I played lead, just so I could be a part of *Pushpa 2*'

Stepping into the spotlight with her debut in *Pushpa 2*, **Aanchal Munjal** brings a fresh spark to South Indian cinema. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, she opens up about her remarkable journey, her memorable experiences working alongside Allu Arjun and her deep gratitude for the love and recognition she's received from fans and the industry alike



TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

In the cinematic spectacle of *Pushpa 2*, a fresh spark of talent lights up the screen with Aanchal Munjal's small yet unforgettable debut. Known for her performances in TV classics like *Parvarish - Kuchh Khattee Kuchh Meethi* and films such as *We Are Family*, Aanchal's transition to the world of blockbuster cinema is marked by depth and poise, proving that even the smallest roles can create a lasting impact. With a spark in her voice and nothing but a sense of gratitude, in an exclusive conversation, she opens up about her journey in the entertainment industry, her experience working on *Pushpa 2* and her aspirations for the future. Reflecting on her career, she said, "I only have gratitude—for God and, of course, my fans, who have always showered me with immense love. To be honest, I've never taken fame seriously because I believe it can get to your head. But today, when people recognize me and acknowledge my work in projects like *Pushpa 2*, it reminds me of how blessed I am.

I'm incredibly thankful for this journey." Landing a role in *Pushpa 2* alongside stars Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna was a surreal experience for Aanchal. "I was over the moon when I got the call," she recalled. "At first, I thought it was a scam because the main song had already been released. But after verifying, I realised it was real. I even left a Hindi web series project where I was playing the lead because I didn't want to miss being part of *Pushpa 2*. It was a dream come true." Speaking about her character in the film, Aanchal revealed, "My entry was grand and tied to the pivotal plot twist where Pushpa wants to expand internationally. My character, along with another partner (played by Saurabh Sachdeva), helps facilitate that transition. Although I won't reveal too much, it was thrilling to be part of such an impactful sequence." When discussing her experience on set, Aanchal was full of praise for Allu Arjun, describing him as humble and supportive. "Initially, I was hesitant to approach him because when he's in costume, he completely embodies Pushpa. But by the third day, he started interacting with me. I remember that, during one scene, he gave me a suggestion to adjust my position for better delivery. It was such a thoughtful gesture, and it showed how invested he is in every detail," she shared. Aanchal also mentioned a light-hearted moment when Allu Arjun mistook her for a non-Indian. "He thought I was from Dubai or somewhere else. On the last day, when I went to get a picture with him, he complimented me, saying I didn't look Indian. It was a fun and memorable interaction."



The response to her role in *Pushpa 2* has been overwhelming. She revealed, "I kept my appearance under wraps because I wanted it to be a surprise. After the first show, my inbox was flooded with messages. Fans who've followed my career since my early days said they felt a personal sense of pride seeing me in the film. That kind of love and support is incredibly humbling." Addressing the unfortunate incident in Hyderabad, where a stampede during a screening claimed a life, she said, "It's a heart-breaking incident. My heart goes out to the family of the woman who lost her life. While Allu Arjun's gesture of donating to the family is commendable, no amount can truly compensate for such a loss." Looking ahead, Aanchal is optimistic about her future in cinema. "I'm working on a project right now, but I can't reveal details yet. Moving forward, I want to take up roles that resonate with audiences on a deeper level. I aspire to do impactful films and hope for everyone's blessings as I continue this journey," she concluded. With her talent, determination, and grounded nature, Aanchal Munjal is undoubtedly carving a niche for herself in the industry.

LANDING A ROLE IN PUSHPA 2 ALONGSIDE STARS ALLU ARJUN AND RASHMIKA MANDANNA WAS A SURREAL EXPERIENCE. I WAS OVER THE MOON WHEN I GOT THE CALL. AT FIRST, I THOUGHT IT WAS A SCAM BECAUSE THE MAIN SONG HAD ALREADY BEEN RELEASED. BUT AFTER VERIFYING, I REALISED IT WAS REAL.

Dhop from *Game Changer* takes the internet by storm



Mega Powerstar Ram Charan has teamed up with renowned filmmaker Shankar for the highly anticipated project *Game Changer*. As part of the promotional campaign, the star actor is gearing up to attend the grand pre-release event in Dallas, USA, on December 21, 2024. The event has already generated significant buzz among fans and the film fraternity alike. So far, three songs from the movie's soundtrack have been unveiled, each turning into a chartbuster. Adding to the excitement, the team has now released the promo of the fourth single, *Dhop*, coinciding with producer Dil Raju's birthday. This latest track promises to be a standout addition to the album, showcasing a refreshing vibe and spectacular visuals. Composed by Thaman S, *Dhop* is being lauded as one of his finest works in recent times. The song's promo hints at a unique and vibrant composition, setting it apart from the previous releases. The Telugu version of *Dhop* has been sung by Thaman S, Roshini JKV and Prudhvi Sruthi Ranjani, with lyrics penned by Saraswathi Puthra Rama Jogayya Sastry. For the Tamil version, the lyrics were written by Vivek, with vocals by Thaman S, Aditi Shankar and Prudhvi Sruthi Ranjani. In Hindi, Raqueeb Alam crafted the lyrics, while Thaman S, Raja Kumari and Prudhvi Sruthi Ranjani lent their voices. The full song is scheduled to be launched during the pre-release event in Dallas at 9 PM CST on December 21 (8:30 AM IST on December 22). With the promo already creating waves across social media platforms, fans are eagerly awaiting the complete track, which is expected to further elevate the album's appeal. *Game Changer* features Ram Charan in a dual role, supported by an ensemble cast including Kiara Advani, Anjali, SJ Suryah, Srikanth and Samuthirakani. The movie is being produced by Dil Raju and Sirish under the banners of Sri Venkateswara Creations, Dil Raju Productions, and Zee Studios. Set for a grand worldwide release on January 10, 2025, the film will be available in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, promising a cinematic experience like no other.



Nidhi Agerwal's leaked from ad, not *The Raja Saab* sets

There are many reports about the release date of Prabhas-starrer *The Raja Saab*, with speculation that the film might be postponed. Originally scheduled to release on April 10, 2025, rumours have surfaced that the film's release may be shifted to another date. This speculation arose when Siddhu Jonnalagadda's upcoming film announced its release on the same date, leading many to believe that *The Raja Saab* might be rescheduled to avoid a clash. While the makers have not confirmed the postponement, they did address rumours about the teaser launch. "The *Raja Saab* shooting is progressing rapidly with continuous day-and-night schedules. Nearly 80% of the shoot has been completed and post-production work is in full swing. We've noticed various speculations circulating about the teaser release during Christmas or New Year. We kindly request you not to believe these false rumours. We will officially announce any updates at the right time," the production house clarified. However, they made no mention of the release date. Meanwhile, a photo of Nidhi Agerwal, one of the female leads opposite Prabhas in the film, has been leaked and is doing rounds on the internet. Directed by Maruthi, *The Raja Saab* is said to be a horror-comedy. The leaked photo, in which Nidhi Agerwal appears glamorous, has caught the attention of fans. However, the actress later clarified on her social media that the picture is not from *The Raja Saab* but from an ad shoot. The makers are under pressure from Prabhas' fans, who are eagerly waiting for updates on the film. It seems the teaser for *The Raja Saab* will not be released during Christmas or New Year, despite the rising anticipation. For now, fans must remain patient as the team prepares to provide official announcements.

POOJA HEGDE STARTS SHOOTING FOR *THALAPATHY 69* IN CHENNAI

Actress Pooja Hegde has kicked off another shooting schedule for the much-awaited film *Thalapathy 69* in Chennai. Sharing her excitement with her fans, Pooja posted a serene image from the set on social media, capturing the tranquil morning vibes. She captioned the picture, "Chennai Mornings Day 16," hinting at her early start to the day at 6:30 a.m., adding a personal touch to her behind-the-scenes update. *Thalapathy 69* marks Pooja Hegde's first onscreen collaboration with Tamil superstar Vijay. The film is expected to be a major milestone in Vijay's illustrious career. Directed by H. Vinoth and produced by Venkat K. Narayana under the banner of KVN Productions, *Thalapathy 69* is poised to be a grand tribute to Vijay's legacy. The project has generated significant buzz not only due to its star-studded cast but also because it is expected to be Vijay's final film before he embarks on his political journey. In addition to Vijay and Pooja Hegde, the film also stars Bobby Deol in a crucial role, along with renowned actors like Gautham Vasudev Menon, Prakash Raj, Narain, Priyaman, Mamitha Baiju, Monisha Blessy and Varalaxmi Sarathkumar. The diverse cast is one of the key highlights of the film, which promises to offer a compelling story for audiences. According to sources close to the project, Vijay will be portraying a suspended police officer who regains his power for a special mission. This intense role is expected to showcase the actor in a new light, with fans eagerly awaiting his performance.

The film, which commenced with a traditional puja ceremony on October 4, is slated for a worldwide release in October 2025. It will be available in multiple languages, including Tamil, Telugu and Hindi, ensuring a wide reach across various audiences. The makers have kept fans engaged with frequent updates, including a set of behind-the-scenes pictures with the caption, "Pictures layum seri adha paathutu iruka unga face layum seri Happy Smiles irukunu we know #Thalapathy69Pooja stills SET 1 idho. Updates inum mudiyala. SET 2 incoming (I know there are happy smiles by adding pictures and looking at your boss. Updates are still not complete... Set 2 Incoming)," hinting at more exciting updates soon. Alongside *Thalapathy 69*, Pooja Hegde has a packed schedule with several other exciting projects in the pipeline. She will be seen in the action-drama *Deva*, co-starring Shahid Kapoor, which is set for release on January 31, 2025. Additionally, she has signed on for the highly anticipated film *Suriya 44*, where she stars opposite superstar Suriya, and the romantic comedy *Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai*.



Balagam fame Mogilaiah is no more

Popular folk singer Mogilaiah passed away on Thursday morning at the age of 67. Fondly known as *Balagam* Mogilaiah, after his memorable song in the film *Balagam*, he had been unwell for the past few days and breathed his last on Thursday morning. Mogilaiah gained fame for singing the emotional climax song in *Balagam*, directed by Venu. The film, set against a Telangana village backdrop, was a massive success and won several awards. Mogilaiah's soulful rendition in the climax, which delved into family relationships, was one of the highlights of the movie. Following the success of *Balagam*, Mogilaiah received widespread recognition. However, in recent months, he had been battling severe health issues, including kidney and heart problems. Megastar Chiranjeevi and *Balagam* director Venu had extended financial help to him during his treatment. Telangana Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar also provided financial assistance of Rs 1 lakh for his medical expenses. Despite these efforts, Mogilaiah's condition worsened and his family admitted him to a hospital in Warangal, where he sadly passed away on Thursday morning. Mogilaiah hailed from the village of Duggondi, which is now in mourning following the news of his demise. *Balagam* director Venu and producer Dil Raju have expressed their heartfelt condolences to his family. Mogilaiah's contributions to folk music and his unforgettable performance in *Balagam* will always be remembered.



Venky & Meenakshi Chaudhary celebrate love & nostalgia in *Meenu*

Venkatesh and director Anil Ravipudi have teamed up once again for the film *Sankranthiki Vastunnam*. Similar to their previous collaborations, this movie is touted to be an entertainer, according to the makers. The film's first song has already topped the charts and now the makers have released the second single, *Meenu*. In the film, Venkatesh plays the role of an ex-cop, with Aishwarya Rajesh portraying his wife and Meenakshi Chaudhary as his ex-girlfriend. The soundtrack is composed by Bheems Ceciroleo, who has delivered yet another enchanting number with *Meenu*. The promo for the song was unveiled on Venkatesh's birthday, creating anticipation for the full version, which is now out. The song, featuring Venkatesh and Meenakshi Chaudhary, is a flashback sequence set during Venkatesh's time as a trainee at a police academy, where he falls in love with his trainee, Meenakshi. The heartfelt lyrics, penned by Anantha Sriram, are beautifully complemented by the captivating vocals of Bheems and Pranavi Acharya. *Sankranthiki Vastunnam* is scheduled to hit screens on January 14, 2025, coinciding with Sankranthi, promising a festive treat for audiences.



STANDALONE



Keerthy Suresh, who recently tied the knot with her longtime boyfriend Anony Thattil in an intimate wedding ceremony in Goa, made her first public appearance post-wedding at a Christmas bash. The actress joined her *Baby John* co-stars Varun Dhawan, Atlee, and Wamiqa Gabbi for the celebrations, effortlessly stealing the spotlight as she flaunted her elegant mangalsutra, paired with a stunning outfit that radiated her post-wedding glow.

India to play its Champions Trophy matches at neutral venue

PTI ■ DUBAI

The deadlock over the hosting of next year's Champions Trophy finally ended on Thursday when the ICC announced that India will play their matches of the 50-over event at a neutral venue instead of host country Pakistan, which will get a similar arrangement for tournaments to be held in India till 2027. The agreement will also extend to the 2028 women's T20 World Cup, which will be held in Pakistan. Although no formal announcement has been made, but India's Champions Trophy matches are likely to be held in the UAE. "The ICC Board has approved that all matches between India and Pakistan played at ICC Events during the current rights cycle from 2024 to 2027 (which are to be hosted in India or Pakistan)

will be played at a neutral venue proposed by the tournament host," said the ICC in a statement, confirming what PTI reported on December 5. The arrangement will also cover next year's women's World Cup in India and the T20 World Cup in 2026, to be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka. "India's Champions Trophy games will most likely be played in the UAE. As far as the Women's ODI World Cup in India is concerned, the India-Pakistan game could be held in Sri Lanka," said a source. India had refused to travel to Pakistan for the event scheduled in February-March due to security concerns. The Indians have not played in Pakistan since the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks in which 150 people were killed. The two countries' last bilateral engagement was



back in 2012. Travelling to Pakistan also requires Indian government's clearance which has remained firm on the status quo. "The schedule for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 is set to be confirmed soon," the ICC added. The decision, that came after a series of back-channel talks, was on expected lines after the sport's governing body maintained prolonged silence on the contentious matter during the previous set-up led by chairman Greg Barclay. His successor Jay Shah took charge on December 1 and all stakeholders, including the Pakistan Cricket Board, the BCCI and the broadcasters, were running out of time to organise the 50-over event that was last played in the UK in 2017. Thursday's announcement meant it was the first major decision taken in Shah's tenure.

While BCCI's stance was always clear, the matter got stretched because of PCB's refusal to allow a "one-sided" arrangement of neutral venues. Led by Pakistan interior minister Mohsin Naqvi, the PCB was determined not to lose face in front of the local public. PCB, which had sent its team to India for the ODI World Cup last year, had categorically opposed the hybrid model but eventually agreed to it on reciprocal grounds. The PCB had earlier indicated that it wanted a greater share in the annual revenue cycle to accommodate the Indian demand for a hybrid model but there is no word yet on whether that has been discussed or accepted. The tournament will feature eight teams, divided into two groups. The top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals.



Ashwin deserved a fitting farewell: Kapil Dev

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Unable to comprehend R Ashwin's sudden decision to retire from international cricket, a shocked World Cup-winning skipper Kapil Dev says the premier off-spinner deserved a fitting farewell, ideally on home soil. Ashwin stunned one and all by calling it quits on Wednesday, right after the Brisbane Test against Australia ended in a draw. Kapil felt Ashwin seemed unhappy with something. "I was shocked by how one of India's greatest cricketers chose to leave the game. The disappointment among the fans was widespread, but I also saw a tinge of hurt on his face. He looked unhappy, and that was sad. He deserved much better, a fitting farewell," Kapil said in a statement to PTI. As has been his wont, Ashwin chose to walk his own way while retiring in the middle of an important series. Kapil said he would like to hear the Tamil Nadu man's side of the story. "He could have waited and announced his retirement on Indian soil, but I don't know why Ashwin called it a day. I would want to hear his side of the story. Give him that respect. He has played 106 Tests for the country. I don't think anyone can match his

humongous contribution to Indian cricket." Kapil hoped that the Board of Control of Cricket in India (BCCI) would arrange a "grand farewell" to Ashwin. "I'm sure the parent body of cricket in India, BCCI, shall plan a grand farewell for this giant match-winner of Team India," he said. Kapil, 65, said Ashwin was a stalwart, a versatile and unorthodox bowler, who constantly hustled the batters with his change of pace and cleverly disguised line and length. "He was ready to experiment, and that is what set him apart. In a game where the batters get the most accolades, Ashwin stood out with his prowess. "Ashwin was brave. He could bowl at any stage of the contest. Do you find bowlers with such tremendous tactical sense who can adapt quickly? He was his captain's go-to man," he said. Praising both his crickering brain and off-field character, Kapil said Ashwin was a match-winner with no parallel in modern cricket. "He has won India's highest number of Man of the Series awards. That is a tremendous compliment that puts his game and consistency in perspective. He was not a "yes" man and came across as a gritty fighter.

ISL: FC Goa aim to end Mohun Bagan's unbeaten streak

PTI ■ MARGAO

FC Goa will seek to snap a rampaging Mohun Bagan Super Giant's eight-match unbeaten streak in the Indian Super League (ISL) when the two sides square off in a 12th round match here on Friday. FC Goa, under India head coach Manolo Marquez, will also aim to improve their record against the Mariners, having lost five of their eight meetings in the ISL, including a narrow 0-1 defeat in their most recent fixture in February. Super Giant's unbeaten run has seen them win seven and draw one of their last eight ISL games, and that has put them on top of the league leaderboard with 26 points from 11 matches, winning eight, drawing twice and losing once. On the other hand, the Gaurs



are placed fourth with 19 points from the same number of games. Both these teams have been in equally efficient form upfront, with the Kolkata-based side netting 22 times in the competition thus far, as compared to the 21 of the Goan club. However, the visitors have

been comparatively better organised at the back, as they have conceded 10 goals as opposed to the 15 of FC Goa. Head-to-head, FC Goa have won twice, whereas Super Giant have emerged victorious five times in the eight times these two teams have faced each other in the ISL.

FC Goa head coach Marquez admitted that the Mariners have a nice mix of international and domestic stars that make them a strong opponent. "I feel that we are playing one of the strongest teams in the competition. Mohun Bagan have most of the top national team players, and they've spent a lot on getting good foreigners too," Marquez said. "We need to keep fighting to win" Super Giant head coach Jose Molina lauded his team for not giving up under any circumstance. "The mentality of Mohun Bagan Super Giant is to fight every game till the end. We have to attack and defend well, communicate properly, but most importantly we need to keep fighting to get the win," Molina said.



Australian top-three seriously out of form, should go back to basics: Ian Healy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

A head of the crucial Boxing Day Test against India from December 26, legendary wicketkeeper Ian Healy has pointed out the serious lack of form of the top-three Australian batters and advised them to go to the basics and perform if they want to continue in the team. Australia made 445 in the first innings of the rain truncated third Test at Brisbane with Travis Head and Steve Smith smashing centuries but the home team did miserably in the second innings before declaring at 89 for 7. The match ended in a draw with the five-match Test series level at 1-1. "I don't see them (Australia) regressing going into Melbourne, but they are out of form, they're seriously out of form," Healy told SEN Radio. Opens Usman Khawaja, Nathan McSweeney and one-drop batter Marnus Labuschagne performed below expectations at the Gabba before Smith and Head halted the slide with centuries in the first innings.

The second innings was even worse with the top three managing just 13 runs. "Questions have got to be asked of George Bailey: 'Can we get this form back? Are you confident that form will reemerge in our top three?' " "Otherwise changes have to be made, and 'what suggestions might you have for us, George?' That type of thing." Healy opined that the Melbourne Test should be Khawaja, McSweeney and Labuschagne's best chance to redeem themselves and asked the trio to get back to the basics. "The Melbourne Test is probably the least volatile wicket they'll play on and that's their best chance. But form takes a little longer than a week to turn around, and it's just not coming for them. " "They've got to get right back to basics and strip it right back. See the ball and hit it, don't care where your feet go. That's the first step, just get some clarity in your head," said Healy. Australia must avoid defeat in Melbourne to keep their hopes alive of taking back the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Hazlewood 'frustrated' at missing remainder of India series due to 'random' injury

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Australia fast bowler Josh Hazlewood is "frustrated" by the timing of his injury after he was ruled out of the remaining two Tests against India due to a right calf strain sustained during the drawn third match at the Gabba. Hazlewood, who had also missed the second Test (pink-ball) in Adelaide - which Australia won by 10 wickets - due to a side strain, described the latest injury as "random". "Just frustrating really. Ticked every box heading into the (third) Test, I could understand if it was my side again, but it was just a random calf strain," he told 7NEWS. "It's just the timing again, they are only little 2-3 week injuries, it's just the timing of



it and missing big games is the frustrating thing." The 33-year-old Hazlewood was sent for scans after just one over of bowling on the fourth day after hurting his right calf in the warm-up before play. The injury only

turned out to be a strain, but it's expected to be serious enough to end his home Test summer early. "Obviously, do a deep dive into it and see what we can come up with ... Feels pretty random," he said.

"I've had a history of sides and calves, they're probably the two things that have kept me out for the majority over the last four years. " "But yeah I sort of just keep adding another layer to the defence hopefully, get back into the gym, I've ticked a lot of boxes over the last 12 months." Hazlewood said he does not want to rush back to action before regaining full fitness, which he is hoping to achieve by the two-match Test tour of Sri Lanka in late January and February. "That's probably the goal, just take it as it comes over the next few weeks," he said. "No rush to get anything in a hurry, it's just getting everything right. Probably take a few extra days here and there. Ticking things off and getting everything right."

IOC publishes manifestos of 7 candidates running to be president and lead Olympics

AP ■ GENEVA

The seven candidates running for International Olympic Committee president had their manifestos published on Thursday, and one is offering to take just half of the eight-year mandate on offer and stand again in 2029. Sebastian Coe, the World Athletics president who turned 68 this year, pledged to embed "transformative change over the next four years" then seek re-election ahead of schedule. Coe was among several candidates offering to give back to IOC members - who elect their president at a March 18-21 meeting near the site of Ancient Olympia in Greece - a decisive choice in picking future host cities. Under the hands-on presidency of Thomas Bach, who reaches his limit of 12 years in office next year, members now simply rubber-stamp a single host candidate

that has worked with the IOC administration. Two members of the Bach-chaired IOC executive board, Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr. and Prince Feisal al Hussein, joined Coe in promising to empower members to have a bigger role in the Olympic body. They also promise to raise the retirement age for members from 70 to 75 years. Members must be invited to join the exclusive IOC club and the current 111 include European and Middle East royalty, leaders of international sports bodies, former and current Olympic athletes, politicians, diplomats, industrialists and an Oscar-winning actress. Only IOC members can be presidential candidates and the other contenders are board member Kirsty Coventry and three more presidents of sports governing bodies: Johan Eliasch from skiing, David Lappartient from cycling, and Morinari Watanabe from



gymnastics. The manifesto releases are one of just two set-piece events in a mostly opaque campaign with strict rules to limit self-promotion and

engagement with voters. Candidates will present themselves to voters, though not take questions, at a Jan. 30 meeting at IOC headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The IOC has had no female president and just nine men leading it in a 130-year history. Eight of those presidents were from Europe and one from the United

States. Coventry, the 41-year-old sports minister of Zimbabwe, is just the second female candidate ever to run for the IOC leadership and is widely

seen as Bach's preferred choice to continue his policies. Coventry and Coe are two-time Olympic champions in swimming and track, respectively. Coe also led organising the 2012 London Olympics. Coe upset the IOC establishment - including some voters - this year by committing World Athletics to pay \$50,000 prize money to gold medalists in track and field at the Paris Olympics. The sport also will pay silver and bronze medalists at the 2028 Los Angeles Summer Games. Though not specifying prize money, Prince Feisal called for Olympic athletes to be "properly valued" while Samaranch proposed letting athletes use footage of their performances on social media channels. That would relax strict IOC rules on Olympic athletes' ability to promote themselves. Challenges facing the IOC

include picking a host for the 2036 Olympics, with India and Qatar in the mix, and looking at moving the Summer Games from its established July-August place in the modern sports calendar. The next IOC president also must address the impact of climate change on the global sports calendar, gender issues in sports, when and how to bring Russia back fully into the Olympic Games and signing a new U.S. Broadcast deal. Long-time partner NBC's deal expires after the 2032 Brisbane Olympics and has been a foundation of Olympic revenue, which was \$7.6 billion in the 2021-24 Olympic cycle. The IOC presidency has been limited to 12 years in anti-corruption reforms passed after the Salt Lake City bidding scandal erupted in 1999. The first term is eight years and presidents can seek a second and final term of four years.