www.dailypioneer.com

Published From: HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA

Rajnath calls for mastering frontier technologies







DON'T MISS...

Middlemen exploiting cotton farmers

Cotton farmers in Rangareddy district are being exploited by brokers and middlemen by engaging in fraudulent practices under the guise of 'benami' armers. These illegal activities are causing significant financial losses to genuine farmers while benefiting trade license holders and brokers. Farmers, who work tirelessly from planting seeds to harvesting their crops, are being cheated in multiple ...

Life hit in Punjab due to farmers' bandh

Normal life was hit across Punjab on Monday due to a nine-hour 'bandh' called by farmers protesting against the Centre for their various demands including a legal quarantee of a minimum support price for their crops. Rail operations in Puniab were mostly suspended, buses and other vehicles remained off the road, leaving passengers stranded: and shops and establishments downed

-PAGE: 5

Reliance seeks premium for oil

Reliance Industries Ltd is seeking a premium of at least USD 3.5 per barrel over an international benchmark for crude oil it produces for eastern offshore KG-D6 block, according to the tender the firm put out on Monday. Reliance and its partner BP of the UK sought bids from domestic refiners for sale of 17,600 barrels (2,800 kilolitres) of crude oil every month from April 2025 to February 2026. The crude oil has been priced at daily average ...

-PAGE: 8

Australia beat India by 184 runs

India slumped to a demoralising 184-run loss to Australia in the fourth Test here on Monday with contemporary greats Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli failing to come good yet again, signalling that their walk towards the exit door is not too far. Chasing a near improbable target of 340, both Rohit (9 off 40 balls) and Kohli (5) failed to battle their technical frailties and mental cobwebs as India lost seven wickets for 34 runs in just 20.4 overs in the final session ...

Pawan endorses arrest of Allu Arjun

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan has extended his support to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's decision to take legal action in the Sandhya Theatre stampede case,

which claimed the life of a woman. Pawan Kalyan endorsed the arrest of film actor Allu Arjun, holding him accountable for the incident. The tragedy

occurred during a screening of an Allu Arjun film, drawing widespread criticism. Pawan Kalyan lauded Revanth Reddy for his decisive stance, contrasting it with the alleged indifference of the previous YSRCP government, which Continued on Page 2 he claimed often

The decision follows the actor's vir-

woman and left her son hospitalized. ing to murder.

ALLU ARJUN ISSUE

Pawan comments stirs hornet's nest again

Politicos sharpen their criticism on Sandhya Theatre issue

Something went wrong between Revanth and Allu Arjun: Sanjay

CM is now maintaining silence after settlement with cinema personalities: KTR

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

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's comments on Allu Arjun's Sandhya Theatre issue have stirred the hornet's nest once again. Pawan's comments on Monday gave a chance to Telangana politicians

Allu Arjun is currently out on



to speak on the issue at a time when they were silent.

Reacting to Pawan's comments that Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is a great leader, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said, "I have no idea what Pawan said. If he has indeed

called him a great leader, I won-der what qualities he saw in him. Revanth hasn't implemented the six guarantees or fulfilled any other promises he made. Crime has increased. So, how he is a great leader is something only they can

Continued on Page 2



CM Revanth Reddy and Ministers--N Uttam Kumar Reddy, D Sridhar Babau, Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari and IT and Industries Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan meet Microsoff Chief Satya Nadella at Hyderabad on Monday

'Help TG in developing system compatible with AI'

PNS HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu appealed to Microsoft Corporation President Satya Nadella requesting Microsoft help to develop a system compatible with technological requirements like AI, Gen AI and cloud, which the TG government is focusing on to make Hyderabad a leading city in IT.

The CM said that Microsoft is

one of the earliest technology companies in Hyderabad and now has a staff strength of 10,000. It has also invested in a data centre with a capacity of 600 MW.

Nadella for regular investments and the expansion of Microsoft's presence in the state. The Chief Minister accompa-

The Chief Minister thanked

nied by IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu, the Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies, Continued on Page 2 Supplies,

Centre should confer Bharat Ratna on Manmohan: CM 😢

Former US prez Jimmy Carter passes away

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Jimmy Carter, the 39th US president and the third American head which a village in Haryana was named Carterpuri in his honour, has died peacefully at his home in Plains, Georgia surrounded by his family. Carter, who died Sunday at 100, was the longest-lived president in US history.

'Today, America and the world lost an extraordinary leader, statesman and humanitarian," President Joe Biden said in a statement.

Carter is survived by his children -- Jack, Chip, Jeff, and Amy; 11 grandchildren; and 14 greatgrandchildren. He was predeceased by his wife Rosalynn and one grandchild.

'My father was a hero, not only to me but to everyone who believes in peace, human rights, and unselfish love," Chip Carter said.

Carter, a Democrat who served a single term from 1977 to 1981, had been in home hospice care since February 2023 after a series of short hospital stays.

In his statement, Biden said over six decades, with his compassion and Continued on Page 2

A statesman of great vision: Modi

SPACE DOCKING EXPERIMENT

Spacecraft injected into right orbit

PNS SRIHARIKOTA

Hearing on Allu Arjun's bail put off to January 3

tual appearance before the court on interim bail granted by the Telangana

December 27 in connection with the High Court. He was arrested on

Sandhya Theatre stampede case, which tragically claimed the life of a culpable homicide not amount-

Two spacecraft that would aid ISRO in demonstrating space docking, a critical technology for future space missions got separated successfully and were placed into the desired orbit late on Monday, ISRO said. "PSLV C60 mission accomplished

as of SpaDeX spacecraft is considered," said Mission director M Jayakumar.

rocket has placed the satellites in the right orbit of 475 km circular orbit, after over 15 minutes of flight.

"So, as far as we are concerned, the rocket has placed the spacecraft in the right orbit and the Spadex satellites have moved one behind the other, and over the period of time, it will pick up further distance, travel about 20 km away and then the from the



rendezvous and docking process will start. And we hope that the docking process can happen in another one week and the nominal time is going to be approximately January 7," he said in his address Continued on Page 2

Govt demanding 8% to 14% kickbacks for clearing bills: Sanjay

The Union Minister of State for Home, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said that the TG Congress Government is demanding commissions of 8% to 14% for approving bills.

He said that some honest ministers in the Congress Cabinet are unhappy with this, leading to conflicts within the Congress. This commission racket could explode anytime, Sanjay said.

Congre

command to retain their posts rather than addressing public issues. trouble across the state by not clearing their pending bills, Sanjay said. He said that under the leadership

would support former sarpanches



focusing on bribing its Delhi high and launch a movement for their lic recognizes the contributions of cause. Speaking to the media at Karimnagar on Monday, Sanjay list-The Congress Government has put ed the numerous development projaround 12,000 former sarpanches in ects executed by the former sarpanches, like rural development initiatives, farmer support platforms, burial grounds, community of BJP's Kishan Reddy, the party halls, roads and water management. He emphasized that the pub-

PNS AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh

Chief Minister Nara

former sarpanches. Sanjay also highlighted the rising

crime rate under the Congress government, with a 22% increase in overall crime and a 28% rise in crimes against women. He accused the government of failing to maintain law and order.

Continued on Page 2

I think Revanth took money from Formula E-Car Racing reps: KTR

Declaring that the Congress Government has been filing frivolous cases against him, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao lashed out at the government saying that it is filing cases through the ACB even if there was no corruption. He said that he would face the false cases

During a chit-chat with journalists on Monday at the Telangana Bhavan, KTR said, "The CM has been blackmailing officials for mak-

ing his photo with Formula E-Car Racing representatives public. The CM has been threatening those officials saying that he will suspend them and take disciplinary action. Why didn't the ACB file a case against Revanth Reddy for meeting Formula E-Car Racing representatives? Revanth hid his meeting with Formula E-Car Racing representatives. I now have a doubt that Revanth might have taken money from them. Why did Revanth's government not file a case against Formula E-Car Racing representa-

tives if they had made illegal gains? The CM has been speaking as he liked saying that a Rs 600 crore 'scam' took place during the Formula E-Car Racing event."

Making it clear that he will stick

to his comment, KTR said that he took a decision as a Minister and is sticking to the same.

The comments of Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar prove that there was no corruption in it. KTR said. Even Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is not in a position to tell where Continued on Page 2

Chandrababu Naidu has said that the State government has decided to allow VIP break darshan (ticket Rs 500) and 🚳 Special Entry Darshan (ticket Rs 300) on any two

days from Monday to Thursday accepting two letters each from MLA/MLC/MP. The people's representatives can recommend the names of six devotees on each letter. In a release on Monday,

Chandrababu Naidu said that directions have been given in this regard responding to a letter addressed to



AP CM accepts TG CM's request

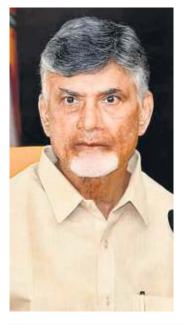
for Tirumala break darshan

Telangana counterpart A Revanth Reddy taking into consideration the rush of devotees, convenience of devotees coming from various states with these letters and to facilitate them

quick darshan. The orders have been issued to maintain cordial relations at people's level in Telugu states.

Meanwhile, Revanth Reddy expressed thanks to Chandrababu Naidu for directing TTD to allow letters of appeal from Telangana public representatives at TTD for darshan of Kaliyuga deity Shri Venkateswara Swami.

Chandrababu Naidu richest CM, Mamata Banerjee poorest: ADR



PNS NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is the richest chief minister in India with assets worth over Rs 931 crore, while

West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee is the poorest with just Rs 15 lakh, according to an Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) report released on Monday.

average asset per chief minister from state assemblies and union territories is Rs 52.59

The report said the

The total assets of 31 chief min-

isters are worth Rs 1,630 crores. Arunachal Pradesh's Pema Khandu is the second richest chief

times the average per capita income

While India's per capita net national income or NNI was approximately Rs 1,85,854 for 2023-2024, the average selfincome of a chief minister is Rs 13,64,310, around 7.3 times the average per capita income of India. The total assets of 31 chief ministers are worth Rs 1,630 crores

While India's per capita net minister with total assets worth over national income or NNI was approx- Rs 332 crores, Karnataka's imately Rs 1,85,854 for 2023-2024, Siddaramaiah is the third on the list the average self-income of a chief with assets worth more than Rs 51 minister is Rs 13,64,310, around 7.3 crore.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, with assets worth Rs 55 lakh, is the second poorest in the list and Pinarayi Vijayan is third with Rs 118 crore. Khandu also has the highest lia-

bilities to the tune of Rs 180 crore. Siddaramaiah has liabilities worth Rs 23 crore and Naidu more than Rs 10 crore, the report said.

It also said 13 (42 percent) chief ministers ĥave declared criminal cases against themselves, while 10 (32 percent) have declared serious criminal cases including those related to attempt to murder, kidnapping, bribery, and

Out of the 31 chief ministers, only two are women - West Bengal's Mamata Banerjee and Delhi's Atishi.

criminal intimidation



World population will be 8.09 billion on New Year's Day

PNS ■ NEW YORK

The world population increased by more than 71 million people in 2024 and will be 8.09 billion people on New Year's Day, according to US Census Bureau estimates released Monday.

The 0.9 per cent increase in 2024 was a slight slowdown from 2023, when the world population grew by 75 million people. In January 2025, 4.2 births and 2.0 deaths were expected worldwide every second, according to the estimates.

The United States grew by 2.6 million people in 2024, and the US population on New Year's Day will be 341 million people, according to

the Census Bureau. The United States was expected

to have one birth every 9 seconds and one death every 9.4 seconds in January 2025. International migration was

expected to add one person to the US population every 23.2 seconds. The combination of births, deaths and net international migration will increase the US population by one person every 21.2 seconds, the Census Bureau said.

So far in the 2020s, the US population has grown by almost 9.7 million people, a 2.9 per cent growth rate. In the 2010s, the US grew by 7.4 per cent, which was the lowest rate since the 1930s.

Centre should confer Bharat Ratna on Manmohan: CM

TG Assembly passes resolution seeking Bharat Ratna for Manmohan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Assembly on Monday passed two unanimous resolutions appealing to the Centre to confer Bharat Ratna on former Prime of Manmohan Singh was an Minister, the late Dr Manmohan Singh, and a condolence motion regarding the passing away of Manmohan PM never lost his patience, he said. The CM said that Singh at its special session, which paid homage to the former PM. The Assembly will send the two resolutions to the

Revanth Reddy, while moving tecting democracy. the condolence motion on the passing away of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in the Assembly, said the Telangana government will

Singh's in the Hyderabad Financial District.

The Chief Minister described Manmohan Singh as the architect of India's economic reforms and that the demise irreparable loss for the country. Despite criticisms, the former said. The CM said that Manmohan focused on strengthening the country economically and socially. He said that Manmohan took part in a protest in New Delhi with him Earlier, Chief Minister and others as an MP for pro-

"This is an event that we will remember the rest of our lives. Taking part in the protest to protect democracy in Parliament is a testament to the

Manmohan introduced the Employment Guarantee Scheme providing 100 days of work to the poor. He is a great person who also introduced the Food Security and the Right to Information Acts. The Land Acquisition Act-2013 was also introduced to help the landless

He that it was Manmohan who introduced the Forest Rights Act of 2006 and many laws taking inspiration from Dr Ambedkar. He said that it is unfortunate to have lost such a great

poor, he said.

humanitarian. The liberal policies introduced by Manmohan changed the country's direction, he said.

The CM said that install a statue of Manmohan former PM's humility, he said. Manmohan served as the

The CM said that Prime Minister and Union Finance Minister and was a soulmate of Telangana. The people of Telangana will keep the former PM in their hearts as he gave statehood to Telangana.

The CM said that former Union Minister S. Jaipal Reddy maintained close ties with Manmohan. The former PM is a great leader who fulfilled the aspirations of the people of Telangana, he said. "We decided to install a

statue of Manmohan Singh in the Financial District of Hyderabad. I appeal to all members to give their suggestions on where the statue should be installed. We believe that it is \logical to install Manmohan's statue on Telangana soil," the CM said.

Uttam hails Manmohan's contribution to nation

Manmohan only PM to waive farmers' loans across nation: Uttam

PNS HYDERABAD

Describing former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh as a unique personality and a global statesman, Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy paid glowing tributes to Manmohan Singh in the Assembly and said he is the only PM who waived the loans of farmers across the nation in one go. Uttam recalled Manmohan's service as Finance Secretary, RBI Governor, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, UGC Chairman, Finance Minister and Prime Minister.

He hailed Manmohan Singh's tenure as Prime Minister, crediting him with waiving farmers' loans across the nation, enacting the Employment



Assembly on Monday

Guarantee Scheme, and drafting the Land Acquisition Act with a humanist approach.

He also emphasised Manmohan Singh's instrumental role in granting tribal people rights on forest lands and rehabilitating displaced per-

Speaking on the condolence motion introduced by Chief Central policies. He said that Minister Revanth Reddy in Manmohan Singh's unassuming

sons through the R&R Act.

the Assembly on Monday, Uttam stressed Manmohan Singh's vast contributions to India, including his economic reforms and welfare initiatives.

He praised Manmohan Singh's statesmanship during the civil nuclear agreement with the United States, which was passed in Parliament despite significant opposition.

He also acknowledged Manmohan Singh's support for Telangana, stating his role during the movement was critical and that Manmohan Singh often engaged with Telangana leaders during the statehood struggle. Highlighting Manmohan Singh's humility, Uttam recounted his participation in protests as a plainclothed MP, walking alongside party colleagues to oppose

nature and dedication to public service remain an inspiration. Uttam

Manmohan Singh as the "backbone of Indian farmers," noting that his decision to waive the loans of all farmers across India changed rural livelihoods across the country.

He emphasised that Manmohan Singh's economic reforms rescued India from a financial crisis and laid the foundation for the nation's growth in subsequent decades. These reforms will endure until the heavens and the earth unite," he said.

Uttam said that Manmohan Singh strongly supported the year-long birth centenary celebrations of his political mentor, former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, reflecting his deep respect and admiration

Manmohan epitomised simplicity, humility: KTR

Describing former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh as the synonym of the 'Simple Living-High Thinking' philosophy, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao supported the resolutions moved by the government demanding that the Centre confer the Bharat Ratna on Manmohan and condoling the passing away of the former Prime Minister on Monday in the Assembly.

Participating in the condolence motion moved by Chief Union Finance Minister. The Minister Revanth Reddy in the nation witnessed comprehentments the path of reforms, KTR said.

said that former PM PV Narasimha Rao should also be given due recognition. He said that PV is the only Prime Minister who does not have a

memorial in New Delhi. "We demand that the TG government move a resolution requesting the same in the Assembly and also hope that the Centre will accept the same. PVN is the Prime Minister who recognised Dr Manmohan Singh's capabilities

ership and Manmohan Singh's reforms. Manmohan Singh is a synonym for the Simple Living-High Thinking philosophy. Manmohan Singh's loy-alty to the Congress is inde-scribable and he extended his services to the Congress till his last breath. He took part in all democratic protests organised by the Congress," KTR said.

He said that Manmohan endorsed the demand for a separate Telangana state. He did and appointed him as the not turn back even though many tried to deflect him from

Boy hospitalised after *Pushpa 2* premiere requires oxygen support

PNS HYDERABAD

The boy who collapsed during the premiere show of Pushpa 2, is once again requiring oxygen and minimal ventilator support, according to a health update provided by KIMS Cuddles Hospital, Secunderabad, on Monday, December 30.

Earlier, the doctors have confirmed that the boy is without oxygen and ventilator

Dr Chetan R Mundada, who is leading the medical team, stated, "The boy's chest X-ray previously showed

right-sided haziness, which has improved following bronchoscopy and suctioning. However, he now requires low-dose inotropic support to maintain circulation since yesterday."

The doctors further confirmed that his antibiotics were changed on Saturday based on Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test results. Dr Vishnu Tej Pudi, another physician on the case, added, While he has not developed a fever and continues to toler-

ate feeds via a nasogastric

tube, his neurological status

Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasada Kumar removed the comments of BJLP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy that while the nation is mourning former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, went to Vietnam to celebrate New Year. Rahul Gandhi's act is nothing but insulting Manmohan, he

PNS HYDERABAD

Maheshwar said the then Congress government didn't allocate an inch of land to for-mer Prime Minister PV



Speaker removes BJLP Leader

Maheshwar's comments from records

Narasimha Rao, but the BJPled Centre honoured PVN by conferring Bharat Ratna on him. However, treasury benches objected to the BJLP leader's comments and they were removed by the Speaker.

The treasury benches also objected when former minister T. Harish Rao chronicled the experiences of KCR with Manmohan Singh. Harish ended his speech after asking the government to name the University after Manmohan Singh.

R&B Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy appealed to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, who had announced that the government would install a statue of Manmohan Singh in the Financial District, to install Manmohan Singh's statues in all district headquarters towns.

Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka said that Manmohan Singh's name would exist as long as

CBI registers another FIR against ED's assistant director over bribery

PNS NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered one more FIR in connection with alleged bribery scandal involving Enforcement Directorate's assistant director posted in Shimla, who had escaped during a trap operation conducted by the agency last week, officials said Monday.

The CBI has now registered two FIRs with one pertaining to alleged bribe demand of Rs 85 and another of Rs 80 lakh from the promoters of educa- the brother of the accused and Laundering Act (PMLA), the Continued from page 1

Continued from page 1

late on Monday night.

Spacecraft injected ...

Mission Control Center. And in this mission the

very important part is POEM-4 (which was cur-

rently on) with 24 payloads from startups, indus-

tries, academic institutions and also from ISRO

centres, he said. These are scheduled to be fired

Dubbed as a prelude to ISRO setting up its own

Space Station by 2035, the PSLV-C60 mission

would also make India join an elite club in achiev-

ing this feat which is expected to take place in the

coming days. The 44.5 metre tall rocket carried two

spacecraft -- Spacecraft A and B, each weighing

220kg which would help in space docking, satel-

After the culmination of the 25 hour countdown

lite servicing and interplanetary missions.

The promoters, who were also the complainant in the case, addressed a press conference in Shimla, alleging that the assistant director used to call them to office, torture them and demanded bribe. The officer and two of his staff members made us sit in the Shimla ED office for hours during which they would keep demanding money, they alleged.

The CBI has three suspects tional institutes in Himachal a middleman already arrested, officials said.

while the officer is understood to be on the run and has not joined the investigation so far, they said.

The assistant director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) posted at Shimla and his brother, a senior manager at the Punjab National Bank in Delhi, had allegedly gone to a location near Chandigarh to receive the bribe from an educational institute promoter, who is facing a probe under the

which commenced on Sunday, the rocket lifted-

off at 10 pm from the First Launch Pad at this

spaceport, emanating thick orange coloured

located about 135 km east of Chennai.

fumes and thunderous sound in the island,

According to ISRO scientists, the two space-

craft-Spacecraft A (SDX01) or the 'Chaser' and

Spacecraft B (SDX02) or the 'Target' would be

merged together later at an altitude of about 470

km after travelling at the same speed and distance.

is set to enhance its operational flexibility and also

expand its mission horizons. This technology is

essential for some of India's space ambitions like

Indian on Moon, getting samples from the Moon

(Chandrayaan-4 mission), building and operation

By mastering the docking technologies, ISRO

Harish will quit BRS soon, says Govt Whip Mahesh

PNS HYDERABAD

Stating that BRS Working President KT Rama Rao will certainly be arrested on new year 2025 and that the Congress government will show cinema to KTR and former Minister T. Harish Rao, Government Whip Beerla Ilaiah said that former Minister T. Harish Rao will quit BRS and search for a new path during new year 2025.

Speaking to the media at the CLP Media Hall on Monday, Beerla Ilaiah said the BRS MLC Kavitha, who is on bail in connection with the Delhi Liquor Scam case, has no eligibility to speak about BCs. The BRS has so much love for BC, why didn't they make him the Chief Minister? Why was the party president not given? Beerla Ilaiah asked.

Ilaiah said that the BRS's story

reached a climax in Telangana. Alleging that the BRS is failing to uphold its main opposition party status in the Assembly, Beerla said that the ruling party expected KCR would attend the Assembly to pay homage to former PM Manmohan Singh as KCR had worked in Manmohan's cabinet. It is unfortunate that KCR did not come to the Assembly to speak about Manmohan's condolence motion.

Criticising KTR for criticising the government, Ilaiah asked KTR to tell why he is afraid of the Formula E-Car Racing case. KTR should answer how he sent the money to foreign countries without the approval of the cabinet, he asked.

The Government Whip said that KTR has a strong desire to go to jail thinking that he would become the

'Help TG in ...

Uttam Kumar Reddy, Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari, the Special Chief Secretary of IT and Industries, Jayesh Ranjan, and the CM's Special Secretary, Ajith Reddy, called on Microsoft Corporation President, Satya Nadella, in Hyderabad at Satya Nadella's residence here on Monday.

The Chief Minister also explained his plans for infrastructure projects in the state like the Regional Ring Road, radial roads, Future City, new manufacturing clusters, and how the government is proposing to create a vast pool of industry-ready talent through institutions like the Young India Skills

Satya Nadella praised Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's vision in skill development and improving infrastructure to meet future needs. He said that skill development and better infrastructure can contribute to economic development and place Hyderabad in the list of top 50 global cities. He also reiterated Microsoft's commitment to partner with the state government in all its initiatives.

Govt demanding ... I think Revanth ...

Continued from page 1

Sanjay said that it was the Congress which continuously insulted Ambedkar at every step.

"Why didn't they confer the Bharat Ratna on him? Why didn't they establish the Panch Teerth in his honour? Why did they attempt to defeat him when he contested the Lok Sabha elections? When former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao passed away, why did they humiliate him by refusing to conduct his funeral in Delhi? Didn't they similarly insult former Prime Minister VP Singh? Isn't it true that during Manmohan Singh's tenure as Prime Minister, Sonia Gandhi acted as the super PM, reducing him to a mere rubber stamp? Manmohan Singh's soul must be deeply pained by the actions of the Congress," he said.

Continued from page 1 the corruption took place,

he said. KTR asked the CM to explain how he cancelled the Formula E-Car Racing event as contracts cannot be cancelled.

"Is there any cabinet approval for this? If there are procedural mistakes, the government should go to the concerned institutions, but it is improper to call them corruption cases," KTR said.

'We paid money to ensure that Hyderabad and Telangana get international recognition. There is not even a single Rupee of corruption in this affair," KTR said.

"I cannot say more on this as court proceedings are going

on. I have registered a case in the High Court seeking dismissal of the ACB FIR. But the ED registered a case based on the ACB case," he said.

"It is true that notices have been received. But if this FIR is dismissed by the High Court what will happen? Unlike in other cases, the ED will act aggressively in this case. Let's see what happens, KTR said.

He said the government which is levelling charges regarding the Outer Ring Road (ORR) lease should immediately cancel the ORR lease. The Chief Minister should explain why the government did not cancel the lease if there was corruption in it, KTR said.

TODAY **ALMANAC** Month & Pakshan Sukla Paksha Dec 31 03:56 AM to Jan 01 03:22 AM Pratipada: Dwitiya: Jan 01 03:22 AM to Jan 02 02:24 AM Nakshatram: Dec 30 11:57 PM to Jan 01 12:03 AM Uttara Ashadha: Jan 01 12:03 AM to Jan 01 11:46 PM 3:04 PM to 4:26 PM Rahukalam 9:34 AM to 10:56 AM Yamagandam: Varjyam: 07:57 AM to 09:32 AM 12:19 PM to 1:41 PM Gulika: 07:14 PM to 08:50 PM Amritakalam: Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:57 AM to 12:41 PM HYDERABAD WEATHER Forecast: Partly Cloudy **Temp:** 30°° **Humidity:** 58% Sunrise: 6:46 AM Sunset: 5:52 PM **Updated:** December 30, 2024 5:00 PM

Former US prez ...

of the Bharativa Antariksh Station.

Continued from page 1

moral clarity, Carter worked to eradicate disease, forge peace, advance civil rights and human rights, promote free and fair elections, house the homeless, and always advocate for the least among the people. He saved, lifted, and changed the lives of people all across the globe.

"He was a man of great character and courage, hope and optimism," said Biden and First Lady Dr Jill Biden.

President-elect Donald Trump said while he "strongly disagreed" with Carter "philosophically and politically", he also realised that he truly loved and respected "our country, and all it stands for".

"He worked hard to make America a better place, and for that, I give him my highest respect. He was a truly good man and, of course, will be greatly missed. He was also very consequential, far more than most Presidents, after he left the Oval Office," Trump said. Carter was considered a friend of India. He was the first American president to visit India after the removal of the emergency and victory of the Janata Party in 1977. In his address to the Indian parliament, Carter spoke

against authoritarian rule.

"India's difficulties, which we often experience ourselves and which are typical of the problems faced in the developing world, remind us of the tasks that lie ahead. Not the Authoritarian Way," Carter said on January

A statesman of great vision: Modi

PNS NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condoled the demise of former US president Jimmy Carter and praised him as a statesman of great vision who worked tirelessly for global peace and harmony.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of former USA President Mr. Jimmy Carter. A statesman of great vision, he worked tirelessly for global peace and harmony. His contributions to fostering strong India-U.S. ties leave a lasting legacy. My heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and the people of the US," he said on X.

Pawan endorses ...

Continued from page 1 targeted the film industry without cause. He praised the Telangana government for demonstrating that the law applies equally to everyone, regardless of their status.

The Deputy Chief Minister also criticised the film unit for its lack of empathy toward the victim's family. "The movie team failed to offer condolences or visit the bereaved family. While Allu Arjun's visit may not have been necessary, someone like the director or producer could have shown solidarity," he remarked. Although he supported the legal action, Pawan Kalyan questioned the focus on Allu Arjun alone. "A film is a collective effort involving many. It is unfair to single out Allu Arjun for the incident," he said.

Hearing on Allu Arjun's ...

Continued from page 1

Following his arrest, the Nampally Court sent him to judicial custody for 14 days, during which he was lodged at the Chanchalguda jail.

The actor's legal team subsequently approached the High Court, which granted interim bail on the same day, directing him to seek regular bail from the trial court.

Pawan comments ...

Continued from page 1

Sanjay said that in the Sandhya Theatre incident, Allu Arjun was bail. That issue is over. However, discussing it for hours in the Assembly as if there is no other pressing mat-

ter is unnecessary, he said. "This seems like a ploy to divert attention from the discussions on of Red Sander are also Pushpas. the six guarantees. As far as I know, something seems to have gone wrong between Revanth and Allu Arjun. They claim 'Pushpa 2' has earned Rs 1,700 crore, even though the film hasn't started yet, and they are already talking about 'Pushpa 3.' Wasn't it publicly announced that the deceased woman's husband withdrew his complaint against Allu Arjun? Then why this uproar over the matter?" Sanjay said.

Responding on the Allu Arjun issue, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said that Revanth spoke to cinema people to divert attention and for publicity. Revanth should have spoken about the deaths of res-

idential school students if he had been sincere. However, he targeted only the film industry. Revanth is arrested, jailed, and later released on now silent after his patch-up with cinema personalities, he said.

> MLA, Paidi Rakesh Reddy, said, "I am the real Pushpa, I exported red sanders legally. The seller and buyer The Congress's Bhongir MP,

Meanwhile, the BJP's Armoor

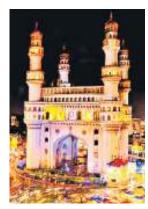
Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, said that Pawan Kalyan spoke facts on the Allu Arjun issue unlike the BJP and

He said, "I don't think that PK didn't speak in favour of the Congress Government. He also said that there was no government like the Jagan Government in Telangana. Allu Arjun's issue triggered a nationwide debate and increased 'Pushpa-2' collections. The film will run for another two months. YSRCP leader Ambati Rambabu is a good actor and dancer. Rambabu will get a good

role in the next film, he said.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responsible for any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

Printed and published by B Krishna Prasad for and on behalf of CMYK Printech Ltd., Phone: 040-23322341, Hyderabad Office: F-502, Diamond Block, Lumbini Rockdale, Somajiguda, Hyderabad - 500 082. Telangana. Printed at Sree Seshasai Enterprises, Plot No.19, IDA Balanagar , Hyderbad-500037, Medchal -Malkajgiri District, Telangana. Editor-in-Chief: Shobori Ganguli. Resident Editor: B Krishna Prasad, AIR SURCHARGE of Rs 2.00.



Annual Day Celebrations

by Sri Sal Samskar **Educational Society**

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi, December 31 (9 am to 1 pm)

Cultural programmes

by Shivani Arts Association

Ravindra Bharathi December 31, (1:30 pm to 5 pm)

New Year Eve 2025

One Last Night

Venue Katriya Hotel & Towers (Fortune Katriya) December 31 (8 pm)

Kuchipudi performance

By students Of Guru Bindhu Abhinay

Venue

Shilparamam December 31, (5:30 pm)

Christmas Bazaar

Exhibition-cum-Sale

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.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A seminar titled 'How to crack

civil services in the first attempt:

UPSC master class' was organised

by VINGS Media and G5 Media

Group, in association with 21st

Century IAS Academy, at G Pulla Reddy Degree College,

Dr Bhavani Shankar, Chief

Mentor of 21st Century IAS

Academy, addressed the stu-

dents and emphasised the impor-

tance of leading a reputable life

Hyderabad, on Monday.

City Pioneer



Uttam releases new year diary, calendar

PNS HYDERABAD

Minister for Irrigation Civil Supplies Department Captain N

Kumar Reddy has described irrigation engineers as the backbone to the irrigation department.

Releasing a new year calendar and diary for 2025 brought out by the Engineering Graduates' Association here on Monday, the Minister said that the skill of the engineers brings good name to the department. He exhorted all employees to take part in strengthening the irrigation department.

Association president Noone Sridhar, secretarygeneral B Gopalakrishna Rao, working president Veggalam Prakash, associate president K Sudhakar Reddy, joint secretary Mahendranath, vicepresident DontiKavita and others were present on the occasion.

130 grievances submitted across GHMC in Prajavani

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Commissioner Ilambarithi has directed officials to prioritise grievances received through the Prajavani programme and take prompt actions for resolution.

During the Prajavani programme held at the GHMC head office on Monday, citizens from various areas of the Greater Hyderabad region submitted grievances seeking solution. The Commissioner, along with Deputy Mayor Mothe Srilatha Shobhan Reddy, personally received the grievances.

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Ilambarithi instructed the Town Planning officials to inspect complaints related to the department on-site and issue notices against illegal constructions.

He also directed them to submit a report on the action taken so far on complaints received in the department. To ensure effec-



GHMC Commissioner Ilambarithi, along with Deputy Mayor Mothe Srilatha Shobhan Reddy at the Prajavani programme in Hyderabad on Monday

appointed under whose supervision the issues should be addressed. The Commissioner stated that he would review the grievances related to town plan-

tive monitoring and resolution, a special Additional CCP was against negligence, emphasising against negligence, emphasising strict disciplinary actions if required.

Deputy Mayor Srilatha Shobhan Reddy urged officials to regularly review grievances

submitted through Prajavani and resolve them swiftly. She stressed the need for special attention from officials concerned to address public issues

effectively.
In the Prajavani Phone-in Programme, three grievances were received and forwarded to the respective departments for swift resolution.

During the Prajavani programme at the GHMC head office, 48 grievances were received, including 29 for the Town Planning department, nine for the Tax department, three for CE Maintenance, two each for Finance, Health, and Land Acquisition, and one each for Housing and Veterinary departments.

A total of 82 grievances were received across six zones under GHMC, with Kukatpally zone receiving 35, Secunderabad zone 18, Serilingampally zone nine, Charminar zone eight, LB Nagar zone 11 and Khairatabad zone

Eight test positive for drugs amid New Year checks

revealed that eight individuals test-In collaboration with Cyberabad

eras is a landmark



The Traffic Officers with Commisioner of Police G Sudheer Babu with body-worn cameras

OBJECTIVE RECORD OF EVENTS

Traffic Police introduces body-worn cameras

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With an initiative aimed at modernising traffic enforcement and fostering greater trust between law enforcement and the

public, Rachakonda Traffic Police has officially introduced bodycameras (BWCs) for its offi-

The BWCs will be worn by traffic officers while on duty, recording their interactions with the public. This initiative is designed to provide an objective record of events, significantly reducing the potential for disputes and com-

plaints. The distribution of BWCs has already commenced, with all sub-inspectors and inspectors in the Rachakonda Traffic division receiving their cameras. The allotment programme was inaugurated by Commissioner G Sudheer Babu, at the

office Neredmet, with the attendance of several key officials, including DCPs and inspectors from various traffic units.

The introduction of body-worn cam-

step in our efforts to modernise traffic enforcement and foster greater trust between the police and the public. We are committed to leveraging technology to make our roads safer and ensure a more transparent system," said Sudheer Babu.

By recording interactions, BWCs ensure that both officers and citizens are held accountable, thereby minimising misunder-standings and enhancing the integrity of traffic enforcement.

The presence of cameras is anticipated to encourage officers to maintain the highest standards of behavior while on duty, promoting professionalism within the force.

With the assur ance that their interactions enforcement officers are being documented, citizens can feel more confident in the fairness and justice of the traffic enforcement process.

The recorded footage will serve as reliable evidence in cases of traffic violations, disputes or investigations, aiding in the resolution of incidents.

Tri-Commissionerates traffic advisory for New Year fete

PNS HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda Traffic Police have issued detailed traffic restrictions and guidelines for smooth conduct of New Year celebrations on December 31, 2024, and January 1, 2025. The public is urged to plan their commute and adhere to these guidelines. Outer Ring Road (ORR): Closed to light motor vehicles, except for airport-bound vehicles with valid tickets, from 10 pm on Dec. 31 to 5 am on January 1.

PVNR Expressway: Open only for airport-bound vehicles during the same period.

Hussain Sagar and surroundings (11 pm to 2 am): NTR Marg, PVNR Marg (Necklace Road), and Tank Bund: Closed to vehicular traf-

Flyover Closures

All flyovers, except Begumpet and Tolichowki, will remain closed from 10 pm on December 31 to 2 am on January 1.

Diversions implemented around major junctions such as Statue, Secretariat,

'Civil services provide unique

opportunity to serve nation'

He highlighted that preparing for the UPSC civil services exam-

ination is a pathway to achieving

this goal, as civil services provide

a unique opportunity to serve the

Shankar presented a detailed power-point presentation that

covered the types of questions typically asked in the UPSC

He urged students not to fear

the exam, clarifying that many

questions are based on concepts

examination.

During his address, Dr

Khairathabad, Mint Compound, Old Ambedkar Statue and

Parking areas for Tank Bund

Secretariat visitors' parking, HMDA parking near Prasad's Multiplex, GHMC head office lane, Race Course Road, Adarsh Nagar lane (2-wheelers only), NTR Stadium. Traffic for heavy vehicles:

Heavy vehicles, private buses, and goods carriers will not be allowed into Hyderabad city limits between 10 pm on December 31 and 2 am on January 1. They must use the ORR for transit.

Drunk driving checks: Extensive checks starting from 8 pm on December 31. Violators face fines, imprisonment and license suspension.

installed: Vi like over speeding, signal jumping, wrong-side driving, and helmet-less riding will be penalised.

Restrictions for minors: Driving by minors is prohibited, and vehicle owners will be pros-

pelling misconceptions about

noted that graduates from any

stream with a minimum of 35%

marks are eligible to attempt the

active Q&A segment, where stu-

dents enthusiastically participat-

ed and gained valuable insights.

pal of the college, welcomed the

participants and shared a brief

note on the significance of civil

Dr K Murali Krishna, princi-

The session included an inter-

examination.

the exam's difficulty. He also

drug consumption.

Anti-Narcotics Bureau with Cyberabad Police found eight individuals positive for drugs such as ganja and cocaine on Sunday. Íelangana Anti-Narcotics Bureau

In a late night raid at Madhapur,

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

(TGANB) received information in the afternoon on December 28. Internationally acclaimed German DJ Ben Bohmer and his team were also subjected to the testing process and were cleared as drug-free, said

Police, a team of 22 officers, including DSsP from State Task Force, Cyberabad and Rachakonda Narcotics police stations used a combination of information networks, intelligence inputs, electronic surveillance, physical surveillance and spotters trained to identify individuals displaying signs of

The team identified 25 potential drug consumers. Out of these, 14 individuals were subjected to advanced drug testing. The tests

ed positive for substances such as THC (found in ganja), cocaine, amphetamine and methampheta-The operation utilised cutting-

edge equipment, including advanced drug detection kits, rapidresult urine and saliva testing kits and trained narcotics detection dogs, These tools enabled on-thespot testing with unparalleled accuracy. The advanced technology ensured immediate results, leaving no scope for evasion.

BREAKING PERIOD MYTHS

Crowdfunding hygiene for slum girls in Medchal

DEEPIKA PASHAM deepikapasham2015@gmail.com HYDERABAD

Menstrual hygiene remains a taboo in many parts of society, leaving adolescent girls, especially those from families below or just above the poverty line, struggling to manage their periods. For many studying in government schools and colleges, the lack of clean toilets, running water and awareness about menstrual hygiene leads to missed school days or even

dropping out entirely. Amidst these challenges, some teachers in government schools have taken it upon themselves to seek help from non-profit organisations and activists to address these issues and ensure that menstruation no longer disrupts the education

of their girl students. One such effort took place recently in a slum in Jawahar Nagar, Medchal district. A local child rights activist, Hima Bindu, identified the challenges faced by adolescent girls in the community and initiated a crowdfunding campaign to dis-



N Bhanu and Hima Bindu with the adolescent girls while creating awareness on menstruation myths

tribute reusable cloth pads.

The initiative was supported by N Bhanu, the founder of Red Express Hygiene, a social enterprise specialising in reusable fabric pads for women. The campaign successfully provided 50 girls with fabric pad sets, each set costing Rs 450 and containing four pads.

Hima Bindu explained the importance of the initiative, stating, "The menstruation and surrounding myths are a huge concern in society. As part of our work, we form adolescent girls' collectives to raise aware-

ness about gender-specific issues and empower them to fight for their safe spaces. These girls expressed their struggles during their periods, and we decided to crowdfund for

reusable fabric pads."
"We train girls and women to understand that period blood is normal and explain the science behind it," she added.

Bhanu highlighted her approach to promoting menstrual hygiene: "I do nothing for money. After testing multiple fabrics, I finalised one that is safe for women.

Stress on increasing fleet strength of RTC, MMTS

PNS HYDERABAD

2024 increased to 10,000 for ever kilometer as against only 6,500 in 2019. Of the 10,000 vehicles, more than 7000 are two-wheelers.

This is attributed to reduction in the fleet of RTC buses and absence of MMTS by the rail-

According to a study, the emission of micro polluting substance from the vehicles is put at more than 35,000 tons per year in the city.

In fact, to cater to the transport needs of the city's population at least 250 MMTS services are needed. Earlier, daily at least 80 lakh used to commute using 121 services. However, their number has been cut down to 80 currently, reducing the commuters using the services daily to just 50,000. At least 1.10 lakh preferring to use personal transport to commute. This is attributed to cancellation of the services, delay in running,

Overcoming the problems, if more and more MMTS trains The number of vehicles com- are operated on Alwal, hi-tech city routes, it would be beneficial to more and more commuters. To cater to the city's popu-

lation's (1.5 crore) transport needs, 7500 city buses should be operated. Daily at least 20 lakh have been

using RTC bus services with the introduction of Mahalakshmi scheme by the Cong regime. They have been commuting on the available 2800 buses almost over-

crowding them. That is why many prefer to use their own vehicles

There are over 3 lakh vehicles in the city whose age is more than 15 years. The pollution-control board officials attribute using of the outdated vehicles to the increasing pollution

In this backdrop, free pollution check for vehicles has been offered two months ago at seven places in the city. However, only 500 vehicles utilized the facility.

services, encouraging students to in society. taught in primary classes and dismake the most of the seminar. SCR holds safety review meet

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railway, conducted a detailed review meeting on safety and punctuality of trains in the SCR jurisdiction on Monday at Rail

Nilayam, Secunderabad. The General Manager instructed the officials to intensify field inspections focusing on functioning of safety related assets and station assets. He also discussed on the safety instructions to be followed in yard shunting. He instructed that every loco pilot / shunter must conduct brake power test before going to train move-

The General Manager advised regular counselling of



Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railway, conducting a review meeting on safety and punctuality of trains

assistant loco pilots and for the staff who are involved in the working of train operations. Officials informed the General Manager on availability of the safety related stock like smoke

the staff such as loco pilots, detecting devices and fire extinguishers over the zone. He instructed the officials to maintain adequate stocks in the depots to meet the unusual exi-

Arun Kumar Jain instructed

the officials to conduct frequent inspections in the yards and sidings to make train movements better so that they will not affects the punctuality of trains. He also discussed on implementation of the Railway Board safety guidelines and advisory and emphasised on the strict adherence of the board's instructions over the zone. Neeraj Agrawal, Additional

General Manager, SCR also participated in the meeting

along with all the Principal

Heads of Departments. Divisional Railway Manager's (DRMs) of all six Divisions i.e. the ditches. Secunderabad, Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Guntakal, Guntur and Nanded through a video

Potholes, ditches abound on GHMC roads in city

PNS HYDERABAD

The city roads in the GHMC limits are full of potholes at many places posing problems to pedestrians as well as vehicle riders. There is apparently negligence in closing the potholes formed in August this year during the monsoon season, let alone developing new

Another strong reason for the damage being caused to the city roads is the contractors digging the roads for installing electric poles, installing water pipelines and for development of drainages and not closing

Of the 9013-km-long network of city roads, roads up to a distance of 1000 km have been damaged. Officials are



allegedly apathetic to undertake repairs to the roads.

According to Indian Road Congress rules, the durability of the black top roads should be at least six years, while that of CC roads should be 10 years. But, nowadays the roads have been needing repairs within a few months of their development.

Karwan MLA Kauser

Mohiuddin on December 11 submitted a memorandum to GHMC zonal commissioner seeking urgent repairs to potholes to the roads in his constituency. Similarly, MLAs of other constituencies have been highlighting the bad condition of roads to the civic body

attracting to response from it. In fact, digging of roads in the city requires the contractor

to obtain an NOC from the civic body. It is the responsibility of the contractor to develop the road after completing his work. If the contractor neglects development of road, the civic body has every right to put his bills on hold. At some places, contractors, without obtaining the permis-

sion, have been digging roads overnight and completing their work and leaving the place unnoticed. Because of this, traffic jams have become frequent in the city and sometimes road accidents are occurring due to the phenomenon. The civic body developed white top roads at some places. Such roads should not be dug for at least five years. Such roads are also being dug nowa-





HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | DECEMBER 31, 2024

Investigation still underway into cops' suicide

District Superintendent of Police Sindhu Sharma on Monday said that the investigation into the suicide of subinspector Saikuamar, constable Shruti and computer operator Nikhil. The trio jumped in Aloor Yellaredy Pedda tank and drowned.

Commenting on the incident, the Superintendent of Police said that there were no eyewitnesses in the case.

It is suspected that one of the three persons jumped into the tank first and two others could have entered the water body to rescue the first one and drowned on December 25. The bodies were retrieved after painstaking efforts.

In reply to a question, she said, "I am not aware of any analysis, she added.



Sindhu Sharam

complaint that indicated a threat to Nikhil's life."

She said the post-mortem primary report has been

"We are investigating the reasons behind the suicides of the trio," she said.

Mobile phones and water samples have been collected and sent to the forensic lab for

Tummala vows to make medical college as model in medical sector

PNS KHAMMAM

Minister for Agriculture
Tummala Nageshwara Rao

Tummala Nageshwara Rao

Tummala Nageshwara Rao

Tummala Fore, a symbol of the region's heritage. There is a proposal to establish a on Monday said that the Khamma Government Medical College would be made a model in the medical and educational sectors. He also mentioned that the Velugumatla Urban Park is being developed for the benefit of people in Khammam city. The 500-acre Velugumatla Urban Park will be developed as an Eco Park. constructed with an invest-He announced plans to set up ment of Rs. 220 crore.

a ropeway at the historical Khamma Fort, a symbol of Shilparamam (craft village) at the Lakaram Tank

Bund. prevent floods in the Munneru River, he announced that concrete walls would be constructed on both sides of the river with a budget of Rs 700 crore. A drainage system for floodwater diversion is also being

Labour shortage shoots paddy transplantation cost

Farmers are forced to hire farmworkers from outside the State by paying higher wages

PNS PEDDAPALLI

Due to a shortage of farmworkers, farmers in the region have been compelled to hire workers from other states such as Bihar, West Bengal, and Maharashtra, often at significantly higher wages. In some cases, farmers are paying double the wages given to local workers. Female workers from other states are paid between Rs 500 to Rs 600 a day, while male workers earn Rs 1,000 a

Additionally, farmers are providing free transport, tea, and snacks to the workers, which has become an added financial burden. For example, the cost of transplanting paddy on an acre of land has risen to Rs 6,000, up from Rs 4,000-4,500 two years ago. The decision to hire migrant workers has been driven by the need to save time, as their services allow for faster completion of the work.

To address the shortage of labour, farmers have turned to both farm mechanisation and migrant laborers. The lack of sufficient farm machinery has made manual transplantation of paddy a more viable option, as it can yield better results. Migrant workers from places such as Kolkata, Gadchiroli, Chandrapur, Bihar, Odisha, and Bengal are now a common sight in the fields.

In some cases, locals are arranging accommodation for these migrant workers, striking deals with farmers to supply them with the labour force while making substantial profits by charging higher



According to officials, the total area for paddy cultivation in the district during the current Yasangi (rabi) season is expected to reach 1,91,351 acres. As a result, the demand for migrant workers has surged, as they tend to work in groups and complete tasks more efficiently.

Their fee for transplanting paddy ranges from Rs 5,000 to Rs 5,500 per acre, with some workers in highdemand areas charging up to Rs 6000 per acre. Farmers generally hire workers on a daily basis to meet

Babul, a migrant laborer from Kolkata, shared that he earns Rs 2,000 a day by working from dawn to dusk in the fields. He and his fellow workers are employed for about two months each season, and the farmers take good care of them. Mangal, another worker from Kolkata, explained that in their home state, they struggle to find

He emphasised that migrant workers transplant paddy more efficiently than local farmerworkers.

Mallareddy, an agent from Gundlapalli, has been bringing around 560 workers from West Bengal annually for the kharif and rabi seasons for the past eight years to help farmers cope with the labor



Middlemen riding roughshod over cotton farmers

Cotton growers losing Rs 1,000 per quintal due to cheating by brokers

GUDUPALLI/RANGAREDDY

Cotton farmers in Rangareddy district are being exploited by brokers and middlemen by engaging in fraudulent practices under the guise of 'benami' armers. These illegal activities are causing significant financial losses to genuine farmers while benefiting trade license holders and brokers.

Farmers, who work tirelessly from planting seeds to harvesting their crops, are being cheated in multiple ways. Brokers are purchasing cotton from farmers in villages at rates far lower than the government-mandated price of Rs 7,521 per quintal. Instead, they are offering Rs 6,400 to Rs 6,500 per quintal, depriving farmers of Rs 1,000 per quintal.

The cotton thus purchased is then resold at Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) centres through benami farmers, generating significant profits for these brokers.

The involvement of trade license holders in this malpractice is particularly alarming. Reports indicate that nearly ten ginning mills across the district are part of this illegal operation. Farmers allege that marketing and agricultural department officials are turning a blind eye to these irregularities, further enabling the exploitation.

Despite the government's assurances of fair practices, brokers are openly purchasing cotton in villages without proper authorisation. Many complicit in the ongoing fraud, as the licenses of those involved remain untouched. These illegal transactions not only harm farmers but also result in significant revenue losses for the government.

In several cases, cotton purchased at lower rates by brokers is sold under fictitious names at CCI centers, creating an artificial demand and inflating profits.

This benami system has left farmers in Rangareddy district with no option but to sell their produce at unfair prices, leading to mounting financial distress.

Farmers and farmer unions have expressed their frustration, urging the government to intervene and address the irregularities at CCI centers. They demand stricter oversight, immediate cancellation of licenses for violators, and measures to ensure farmers receive fair

prices for their crops.

Marketing Officer Srinivas clarified that trade licences would be revoked if violations are confirmed. He emphasised that cotton purchases at CCI centres are conducted based on the farmer's Aadhaar card and photograph. However, this measure appears insufficient to curb the benami operations rampant across the district.

Farmers across Rangareddy district are urging authorities, including the district collector, to take swift action to end the exploitation.

They demand justice and a fair system that safeguards their livelihood, free from the clutches of corrupt brokers and middlemen.

Nirmal Police vows to eradicate drug menace

PNS NIRMAL

District Superintendent of Police Janaki Sharmila on Monday said that though overall crime rate, the number of cases solved also increased.

'The police are constantly working towards addressing various issues. Compared to previous years, the number of crime cases has increased, but at the same time, the number of cases resolved has also grown," she said at a media conference.

She emphasised the efforts being made to eradicate marijuana menace in the district. Special training was provided to the sniffer dogs to sniff out drugs.

She also mentioned the increase in the number of suicides at Basara and the police were working to address the issue.

The police adopted the Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge and Technologies in Basar and are working seriously to resolve the problems being faced by stu-



Nirmal Superintendent of Police Janaki Sharmila addressing a media conference in Nirmal on Monday

Through the Bharosa Centre, the police reunited over 50 families, bringing joy

To address the traffic problems in the district, proposals have been sent for the establishment of a women's police station and a traffic police station in Nirmal and

For the welfare of police personnel, a departmental store has been established and is providing interestfree loans up to Rs 3 lakh to their needs. Additionally, the police helped the victims of cybercrime get back Rs 12 lakh.

Additional Superintendent of Police Upender Reddy, Additional Bhainsa Superintendent of Police Avinash Kumar, Deputy Superintendent of Police Gangareddy, and several Circle Inspectors and subinspectors were present.

Man held on charge of patricide

PNS NIZAMABAD

has dent happened in Nizamabad district. A man, under the influence of alcohol, allegedly mur-



his

village of Ambam (R) under the Rudrur mandal on Sunday night following a confrontation between the duo. A wrangle According to police, the

asleep. Local residents alerted the

Mukkoti Ekadasi fete at Bhadradri temple from today

PNS BHADRACHALAM

The Bhadrachalam temple authorities have been making all arrangements for the Mukkoti Ekadasi celebrations at the temple on a grand scale. The

Swamy temple here will commence from Tuesday. The temple authorities have earmarked Rs 90 lakh for organising the celebrations which will conclude on Jan

Various sectors are going to be set up near the northern

gate of the temple to accommodate VIPs, the media, while Sectors A, B, C, D and E will accommodate the devotees. The number of tickets on the offer for VIP sector is 1,300 with each ticket costing Rs 2,000. Besides the VIP sector, there is a VVIP sector reserved for celebrities for whom the seating would be allotted by the Collector, EO and RDO. In all, 150 media persons will be allowed in the press sector. Besides these, 3,000 devotees can witness the proceedings free of cost.



In all, 400 tickets each costing Rs 1,000 are on the offer for the persons to witness the proceedings from Sector A, while 1,330 tickets each costing Rs 500 are available for B, C and D sectors. There are 650 tickets available for Cultural events

would be organised on a grand scale. Therefore, huge number of devotees not only from state from neighbouring states are expected to witness the spectacle.

A float festival (teppotsavam) is scheduled to take place on

December 9 evening in River Godavari during which the idols of Lord Rama and Sita Devi will be taken out on a specially-decorated swan-shaped boat. The highlight of the festival Uttara Dwara Darsanam would be held at 5 am on Jan 10 allowing devotees to pass through the temple's

northern entrance. The temple EO Rama Devi said that two lakh laddus would be prepared. The temple authorities are going to procure 7,000 kg of ghee for the preparation of laddus from Vijaya Dairy.

Admonished by parents, student ends life

PNS PEDDAPALLI

ing his poor academ-

ic performance. According

enrolled as a first-year student at a private

expressed their concerns about his academic struggles.

over their warnings, he is believed to have tragically taken his own life at their residence in Markandaya colony here.

Dated, 23-12-2024

GITAM signs MoU with CDS, SS and II to promote skill development

PNS PATANCHERU

GITAM Deemed to be University has entered into strategic partnerships with Chenna Digital Solutions (CDS), Structural Solutions (SS), and Incline Inventions (II) by signing three pivotal Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs).

These collaborations aim to promote entrepreneurship, skill development, and innovation, further strengthening the university's ties with the industry.
The MoU with CDS focus-

es on developing cutting-edge technologies, fostering innovation, and providing internship and placement opportunities to students. Structural Solutions will enhance students' industry-aligned skill sets, preparing them for evolv-



ing workforce demands. Meanwhile, Incline Inventions will establish a Silicon Core AI R&D Centre at GITAM, specializing in AI-driven video analytics and broadcasting solutions on System-on-Chip

(SoC) platforms. The agreements, effective for three years, were signed by Dr. Gunasekaran D, Registrar

of GITAM, along with Satyanarayana Chennapragada (MD, CDS), E Dwarakanath (MD, SS), and Dr. B. Pradeep Kumar (Co-Founder & CTO, II). Senior representatives from GITAM, including Dr. Kirthi Gupta, Fakhruddin Sheik, and Damodar, were present at the signing ceremony.

A tragic inci-

dered father.

The event unfolded in the

youth, identified as Mehboob, allegedly smothered his father, Haimad, to death while he was

authorities, who promptly arrived at the scene, apprehended the suspect. The police confirmed that a murder case has been filed, and the accused would be taken into custody for interrogation.

Bandi calls upon ex sarpanches to defeat Cong in local body polls

PNS KARIMNAGAR

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar called on the former sarpanches to defeat Congress in the upcoming local body elections and assured them that BJP would stand by them in their fight. He said the BJP would force the Congress government to clear all pending bills.

He further accused the Congress government of deceiving the sarpanches by promising to clear the bills but failing to deliver on it word. The former sarpanches, who worked in good faith for public development, are now burdened with debt and left high and dry. On Monday, a delega-tion led by Akkinapally

Karunakar, president of

the State Association of



Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar in Karimnagar on Monday

Former Sarpanches, met Congress government for Bandi Sanjay and submitted a petition. Karunakar its corrupt practices. He pointed out that approxiexpressed faith in Sanjay, mately Rs 1,300 crore in stating, "He has always bills are pending for nearfought for resolving issues ly 12,769 former sarpanchin the state, and we believe es across the state. Despite he will address the probpromises, the Congress government has not lems faced by us." Later, speaking to the media, released even a single Sanjay criticised the rupee in over a year.

developmental programmes such as Palle Pragathi, Rythu Vedika, Vaikuntha Dhamam,. Dumping Yards, 5. Palle Prakruthi Vanam (Village Nature Park), Haritha Revenue Plantations, Community Halls, High Mast Lights, Internal CC Roads, CC Drains, Mission Bhagiratha (Water Supply Program), 13 Plastic Waste Management, and Mana Ooru - Mana Badi (Our

today, you can visibly see

Village - Our School). People know that all these were accomplished because of the efforts of

the former sarpanches. However, with no current sarpanches in place, people are now saying that there's no one even to lay a handful of soil in the vil-

A 17-year-old intermediate student, Mukka Rohan, was found hanging in Godavarikhani late on Sunday night after he had been admonished by his parents regard-

police, Rohan was

No. 76/2024

college. His parents had

REVENUE (LA) DEPARTMENT FORM-VII (See Sub-rule(I) of rule-25 And Section-19(1) of the Act-30/2013) Collector/Joint Collector Declaration

No. G/804/2024 Whereas it appears to the Telangana/Collector that Structures in Total extent in length 8 Width 610 Sq.yards Karukonda Village of Bijnepally Mandai, Nagarkumool Division Nagarkumool District, for public pu-pose, namely for formation of Vattern Balancing Reservoir at Karukonda Village of Bijnepally Mandai.

Therefore declaration is made that a piece of Structures i Total extent in length & Width 610 Sq yards standard measure ment under acquisition for the above said project in the village Karukonda, Mandai Bijinepally District Nagarkumool whose detailed description is as following:

٦.	1. Weage: Kartikonda Mandat: Signepally										
	Sy No		Type of	Extent	Name of the Structures	B	0,0	dark		Tie	Stru
			Land	length & Width Sq. fants	and owner	я	5	ŧ	W		
1	1	3	4	10		ř	*	9	10	11	ū
1	11	Gas Ser	Dy	eter- tes- te te tepes	SRI ANJANE'S TESTLE Burstained by president Societie of Sri. Inquirego Swarny Temple 20 per Reg No. 101 of 2023	4	41	41	¥	NE	RCC with Compoun chall
1	47	Gas tan	Day	10'40" - 400% 400 Bypets	SHORLAND TOWN,2 Bartaned by prosbed Society of Structures Tempt as por Reg tio 101 of 3031	F	47	47	ď	160	RCC with Compose chall
Total in Sq.yards				816 Squards							

This declaration is made after hearing of objections of pe ions interested and due enquiry as provided u/s of the Act No land Acquisition is NIL for whom Resettlement area has bee identified, whose brief description is as following-

Village NII Mandai Nii District Nii Area Nii

Mines of coal, iron-stone, state or other minerals lying unde the said land or any particular portion of the said land, expect such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the construction phase of the project for the purpose of which the land is being acquired

A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the Land Acquisition Officer & Spl.Dy.Collector LA PRUS Unit-III. Nagarkumool on any working day On account of the proposed land Acquisition no family is

being displaced. Hence rehabilitation and resettlem scheme doesn't arise Sd/- Spl. Dy.Collector Sd/- Additional

LA (R&R) PRLIS Unit-II Collector (Revenue) Collector

Nagarkumool



ACROSS THE STATES



Juveniles to be tried as adults for heinous crimes

ut of 52 juveniles accused of heinous crimes, 11 will be tried as adults in the outer North Delhi district of the national capital, an official said on Monday. Police said the district has undertaken a special drive aimed at creating a stronger and safer law-and-order environment for its residents. "As part of the special drive, a total of 52 juveniles, all between the ages of 16 and 18, have been identified for their involvement in heinous crimes, including robbery, snatching, murder, attempt to murder, and other such offenses. Recognising the gravity of these cases, 52 applications were moved to try them as adults. We got approval for 11 applications," Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer north) Nidhin Valsan said Sharing break-up from different police stations of the district, the DCP said that they moved eight applications from the Bawana police station and one person will be



Protests continue in Rajasthan over abolition of 9 districts

Protests against the abolition of nine newly-created districts in Rajasthan spilled into Monday, with the opposition Congress and other organisations warning the government that the agitations would continue till the districts were restored. The state government on December 28 decided to abolish nine of the 17 districts created by the previous Congress dispensation, saying they were neither practical nor in public interest. Three new divisions were also dissolved in a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma. The state will now have seven divisions and 41 districts. In response, a 'mahapadav (massive sit-in)' was held outside the Sanchore collectorate under the leadership of former minister Sukhram Vishnoi. Markets were closed on the call of the Vyapar Mandal. In Shahpura, several organisations held protests against the government's decision and submitted a memorandum to the subdivisional officer for the district's restoration.



Gujarat home to over 200 wolves: Census

he latest census conducted by the Gujarat Forest and Environment Department has estimated the population of Indian wolves to be 222 in the state. The enumeration exercise carried out in 2023 in collaboration with the Gujarat Ecological Education and Research (GEER) Foundation, surveyed 13 districts, with significant findings on their distribution and habitat, an official release stated on Monday. At 80, Bhavnagar district has recorded the highest number of wolves in Gujarat, followed by 39 in Narmada district, 36 in Banaskantha, 18 in Surendranagar, 12 each in Jamnagar and Morbi, and 9 in Kutch district. Porbandar, Mehsana, Navsari, Patan, Aravalli and Surat districts have also recorded the wolf presence, according to the release. Wolves are mainly found in forest and desert areas in Gujarat. Their natural habitats also include the Bhal area in Bhavnagar, which includes the Blackbuck National Park in Velavadar and surrounding Dholera. Wolves, a natural predator, help control the population of blackbucks in Velavdar. The survey pointed out that the forests of the Shoolpaneshwar sanctuary in Narmada district have also become a preferred habitat for wolves.

SP team gives Rs 5 lakh each to Sambhal victims

PNS SAMBHAL

A Samajwadi Party (SP) delegation on Monday visited Šambhal and distributed cheques of Rs 5 lakh each to the families of those killed in the November 24 violence in the district during a courtordered survey of a mosque.

The cheques were distrib-uted by Leader of Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey, who led the SP delegation, at the Public Works Department guest house. He also interacted with

the victims' families. Speaking to reporters,

Pandey alleged that police are harassing Muslims and that the government has no sympathy for them.

"They only know (underworld don) Dawood Ibrahim, they do not know Abdul Hamid or Brigadier Usman who sacrificed their lives for the security of the country's borders," he said.

"They do not have goodwill in their hearts, they are creating tension between Hindus and Muslims," the SP leader said. Pandey further accused the BJP of creating bitterness among people for its benefit.

Rajnath calls for mastering frontier technologies

SAYS INDIA'S DEFENCE EXPORTS CROSSED RECORD RS 21,000 CRORE

PNS ■ MHOW (MP)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Monday that India's defence exports have crossed a record Rs 21,000 crore from Rs 2,000 crore a decade ago. Addressing officers at the Army War College (AWC) in more than two-centuries-old Mhow Cantonment, Singh said a target has been set to achieve defence exports of Rs 50,000 crore by 2029.

He said mastering frontier technologies is the need of the hour in the constantly evolving times, noting that military training centres are playing a crucial role in equipping and readying soldiers to deal with future challenges.

"Our defence exports, which around Rs 2,000 crore a decade ago, have crossed the record figure of Rs 21,000 crore today. We have set an export target of Rs 50,000 crore by 2029," Singh said. He said Made-in-India equipment is being exported to other countries.

Singh mentioned radical changes in warfare in his speech, saying that unconventional methods like information warfare, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based warfare, proxy warfare, electromagnetic warfare, space warfare, and cyber-attacks are pos-

ing a big challenge.

He stressed the need for the military to be well-trained and equipped to fight off such attacks and lauded training centres in Mhow for their valuable contributions.



"Our defence exports, which around Rs 2,000 crore a decade ago, have crossed the record figure of Rs 21,000 crore today. We have set an export target of Rs 50,000 crore by 2029," Singh said. He said Made-in-India equipment is being exported to other countries

Singh commended the training centres for constantly improving their training curriculum as per changing times, and striving to make the personnel fighting fit for every kind of challenge.

The defence minister said the Modi government is committed to strengthening integration and jointness among the three services.

"In the times to come, the armed forces will be able to face challenges together in a better and more efficient way," he added. Singh said high-level training is provided to officers of all wings in the Mhow Cantonment.

He appealed to officers to explore the possibility of promoting integration through training in areas such as weapons training in Infantry School; AI and communication technology in Military College

Telecommunication

Engineering (MCTE), and leadership - junior and senior

Singh said that some officers will work as defence attaches in the future, and they should strive to secure national interests at the global level.

"When you take up this post of defence attaches, you should imbibe the government's vision of 'aatmanirbhar Bharat'. Only through self-reliance can India strengthen its defence capabil-

ities and gain more respect on the world stage," he added. The defence minister is on a two-day visit to MP since Sunday. He said the government is committed to making India one of the strongest economic and military powers in



'Arrest Hardeep for having Rohingya infiltrators settled in Delhi'

PNS NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener Arvind Kejriwal on Monday demanded the arrest of Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri, alleging he has all the data on the places he has made the Rohingya infiltrators settle down in Delhi.

Puri hit back accusing Kejriwal of playing with national security. The politics over Rohingya immigrants living illegally in Delhi has intensified ahead of Assembly polls with the BJP accusing AAP of helping Rohingya and Bangladeshi infiltrators settle down in the national capital and using them as vote bank in elections. The Delhi Police, following directions from Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena, has launched a campaign to identify and deport the illegal immigrants.

In a press conference, Kejriwal said, "Arrest Hardeep Puri because he has all the data on where he has made the Rohingya immigrants to settle down in Delhi... He (Puri) has told about this in a tweet (post on X). "Why are they

working so hard and creating drama? Hardeep Puri and Amit Shah have all the data of Rohingyas settled in Delhi," Kejriwal charged when asked about the police drive.

Hitting back, Puri, the Union petroleum and natural gas minister, charged in a post on X that Kejriwal's repeated "support" to the Rohingya infiltrators is like playing with the national security. He said the whole country knows Rohingyas could be voters of which party and took a dig at Kejriwal saying "inki to fitrat aisi hai ki aisa koi sagaa nahin, jisko Kejriwal ne thagaa nahin (Kejriwal's nature is such that there is no one close to him who he has not cheated)".

The Union minister claimed that no Rohingya infiltrator was ever given any EWS (economically weaker section) flat so far, and asserted that repeating a lie does not turn into truth although it proves one to be a "liar". "Clarification of the tweet, based on which he is spreading lie, was issued the same day by me and the home

BPSC EXAM ROW

JNUSU demands Bihar CM's resignation

PNS NEW DELHI

The JNUSU on Monday held a demonstration outside the JD(U) office here to demand Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's resignation and cancellation of the BPSC exam.

The protest coincided with

Kumar's reported visit to the University Students' Union (JNUSU) said in a statement. Kumar is also national president of the Janata Dal (United)

or JD(U). JNUSU president Dhananjay said, "We are demanding the immediate resignation of Bihar's chief minister due to the unacceptable



repression of students." Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) hopefuls have been protesting for days, seeking cancellation of the 70th Integrated Combined

Competitive Examination due to allegations of a question paper leak in all centres. They have argued that re-examination in just one centre would be

Candidates suspect massive corruption in Bihar PSC exam: PK

Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor on Monday claimed to have learnt that "thousands of crores of rupees have changed hands" for posts to be filled up by the Bihar PSC exam, cancellation of which is being demanded by many candidates. The former close aide of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar

also expressed dismay over refusal of his ex-mentor to "utter a single word" on the stir which has been going on for nearly two weeks.

"The candidates are protesting in biting cold, braving baton charge by police and water cannons. The CM is away in Delhi, and having a good time. He did not utter a single word when reporters in national capital

approached him with queries on the stir," Kishor told reporters here.

Recalling the previous day's demonstration which was addressed by him, Kishor said till about 4 PM, he kept telling the candidates to look forward to a statement from the chief minister who might take a stand that could break the stalemate. "But he kept mum," Kishor claimed.

Life hit in Punjab due to farmers' 9-hour bandh

RAIL, BUS SERVICES AFFECTED

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Normal life was hit across Punjab on Monday due to a nine-hour 'bandh' called by farmers protesting against the Centre for their various demands including a legal guarantee of a minimum support price for their crops.

were mostly suspended, buses and other vehicles remained off the road, leaving passengers stranded; and shops and establishments downed shutters as the 7 am-4 pm bandh passed off peacefully. Petrol pumps were also shut, a senior farmer leader said. Farmer leaders who gave the bandh call more than a week ago declared it "successful" and thanked the "three crore Punjabis for extending their full support".

Amid a harsh winter chill and dense fog at some places, farmers staged 'dharnas' on several roads and highways including in Patiala, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Bathinda, and Pathankot, crippling the traffic. The sit-in at the Dhareri Jattan Toll Plaza affected vehicular movement on the Patiala-Chandigarh National Highway. At Amritsar's Golden Gate. scores of farmers staged a 'dharna' near the city's entry



point. Police there assisted some stranded foreign tourists by arranging auto rickshaws for them to reach the Golden Temple. At some places, commuters were seen arguing with the protesting farmers blocking the roads.

The call for the statewide shutdown was given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Nonpolitical) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha over the Centre not acting on the farmers' demand for a legal guarantee for the MSP. The bandh was also in support of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal (70) who has been on a fast-unto-death at Khanauri border protest site over the non-fulfilment of the demands. His health has deteriorated during the fast which has completed 35 days.

After the bandh, Dallewal thanked the people of Punjab for supporting and making the Bandh a "success" In a video message, he said

the Centre should pay attention to their demands. Farmer leader Sarwan Singh

Pandher told reporters in Amritsar that emergency and other essential services were allowed to operate. He said those going to airport or for a job interview or a wedding were allowed to go. "Punjabiyat has won. On

behalf of both the forums (spearheading protests at Shambhu and Khanauri), I want to thank three crore Punjabis for extending their full support to the bandh, Pandher said after the bandh hours.

How American presidents have planned their own funerals

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Jimmy Carter's memorial journey will end at his house in the tiny town of Plains, Georgia, where he grew up on a peanut farm. That is where his wife, Rosalynn, was laid to rest last year in a burial plot that they chose years ago.

But before Carter reaches his humble final destination, there will be an interstate choreography of grief, ceremony and logistics that is characteristic of state funerals. Ever since the nation's founding, America has bid farewell to former presidents with an intricate series of events weaving together longstanding traditions and personal touches.

Funerals often are planned by the presidents themselves,



who usually have years after leaving the White House to ponder how they want to be memorialised. "They are very much involved in the planning process, and the decisions that

they make tell us a lot about who they are, how they see the presidency, and how they want to be remembered by the American people," said Matthew Costello, senior histo-

rian for the White House Historical Association, who cowrote a book called "Mourning the Presidents: Loss and Legacy in American Culture. Carter had more time to

"They are very much involved in the planning process, and the decisions that they make tell us a lot about who they are, how they see the presidency, and how they want to be remembered by the American people," said Matthew Costello, senior historian for the White House Historical Association, who co-wrote a book called "Mourning the Presidents: Loss and Legacy in American Culture."

plan than most. He lived for 43 years after his presidency ended, the longest post-presidency in US history, before dying Sunday at 100.

Many details of his funeral remain under wraps, at the discretion of the family and military units that are responsible for carrying out the plans. Most présidents lie in state in the US Capitol, and there is usually a service at Washington National Cathedral.

President Joe Biden let slip last year that Carter had asked him to give a eulogy. ("Excuse me, I shouldn't say that," Biden admitted.) Biden said Sunday his team is working with Carter's family and others "to see to it that he is remembered

appropriately, here in the United States and around the world." Carter's son Chip is his main point of contact, though Biden said he has spoken with all the Carter children.

He described a process underway "that will take a little time" but will result in a "major service in Washington, D.C." for Carter, which Biden scheduled for January 9. Sometimes former presidents help with even the smallest details. Jeffrey Engel, director of the Centre for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, recalled meeting with George H.W. Bush shortly after the former president revised the seating chart for his funeral

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Country shamed

The victim blaming and procedural lapses in the Anna University rape case underscores the urgent need for reform

he recent sexual assault case involving a 19-year-old student at Anna University has once again brought shame upon the nation, highlighting the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and the systemic failures in addressing it. The horrifying incident, compounded by the insensitivity of law enforcement, has triggered widespread outrage and calls for accountability. On December 23, Gnanasekaran allegedly raped the student on the university campus after threatening to release videos of her. The accused confined the survivor for over an hour and recorded the assault. While the Chennai Police Commissioner, A Arun, claimed swift action by apprehending the accused within 24 hours, the Madras High Court highlighted glaring lapses in the police's handling of the case. Particularly damning was the revelation that the First Information Report (FIR) published on the police website disclosed the victim's details, leading to further victim shaming and mental agony. The High Court's rebuke of the police was



scathing. A Bench of Justices SM Subramaniam and V Lakshminarayan criticised the language used in the FIR, terming it misogynistic and reflective of victimblaming attitudes. Such lapses, the Court noted, breach the victim's fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees dignity.

To address these lapses, the Court ordered the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) comprising senior IPS officers to probe the case. It also directed the Tamil Nadu government to provide interim compensation of Rs 25 lakh to the victim and ensure her protection. The Court has rightly underscored the necessity of sensitising police personnel to handle such

cases with empathy and professionalism. This case is not an isolated incident but a grim reminder of the larger problem of sexual violence that plagues India. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and dignity, women continue to face systemic discrimination and violence. The societal tendency to blame victims, coupled with institutional apathy, exacerbates their trauma. The High Court's poignant questions — "Why can't a woman walk freely, dress as she wishes, or speak to a man without being judged?" — resonate deeply in a society still grappling with entrenched patriarchy. The Court rightly emphasised that the onus is on the State and society to protect women without perpetuating stigma or blame. The incident also exposed lapses in campus security at Anna University. The university, which allows unrestricted access to outsiders, failed to prevent the accused from entering the premises. The police's approach also came under scrutiny for prematurely ruling out the involvement of additional suspects. The Court directed the State to examine whether rules were violated during these proceedings. This tragic case underscores the urgent need for systemic reforms. Law enforcement must be trained to handle cases of sexual violence with sensitivity. The media, too, must exercise restraint in reporting such cases to avoid amplifying the victim's trauma.



but grim realities linger

India's forest cover grows,

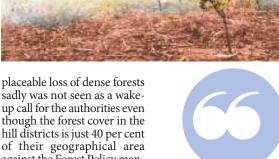


KOTA SRIRAJ

While India's State of Forests Report highlights an increase in forest cover, it also raises concerns about troubling trends such as increase inforest fires and allegations of inflated data

ndia's State of Forests Report (ISFR) 2023, a biennial report published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change is finally out after a delay of almost one year. The report is being hailed as a harbinger of good news as it announced an increase in India's forest and tree cover by 1,289 Sq.km. since 2021 reaching 25.17 per cent of the total geographical area in 2023, which puts India's forest cover at 7,15,342.61 sq.km. But the report also highlights some grim aspects of India's state of forests.In the recent past, the incidence of forest fires has disturbingly gone up, especially in the hill states. These fires have destroyed many hectares of dense forests thereby ruining fragile ecosystems and irreplaceable Himalayan biodiversity.

The ISF report echoes the same and observes a sharp spike in forest fires especially in the mountain states of Himachal, Uttarakhand, and Jammu and Kashmir. The data collected using the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) presented in the report, showed that Himachal Pradesh witnessed an increase of forest fires by a stunning 1,339 per cent, while Jammu & Kashmir saw a rise in forest fire by a staggering 2,822 while Uttarakhand was relatively better off with 293 per cent rise in forest fire incidents. What the government was doing as the pristine forests turned to ashes, is burning question.On the other hand, the report also highlighted the rapidly dwindling forest cover. Between 2003 and 2023, more than 24,000 sq km of dense forests — half the size of Punjab - have disappeared. More concerning is the fact that the loss has occurred in ecologically fragile zones such as the Western Ghats and The Nilgiris over the past decade. The Western Ghats recognised as UNESCO World ful contribution towards the Heritage Biodiversity Hotspot suffered an overall loss of 58.22 sq km in forest cover. On the other hand, the Nilgiris reported the steepest decline of 123 sq km. The report also showed a decrease of



up call for the authorities even though the forest cover in the hill districts is just 40 per cent of their geographical area against the Forest Policy mandated 66.6 per cent. This is very alarming as the increased number of landslides and floods can be traced to the loss of forest cover in the hills. < The maintenance of the soil health, ecological stability, and ability to counter landslides and floods depend on adequate forest cover in the hills.The biennial ISF report has since its inception in 1991 served as a reference point for the nation to assess its forest wealth and understand the problems plaguing India's afforestation efforts. But this year's report has been criticised by experts who have pointed out discrepancies and have labelled the data as "inflated." Several experts for instance have criticised the inclusion of bamboo plantations, coconut groves, and orchards among others as part of the forest cover, as these are agroforestryrelated and make no meaningenvironment

The experts opine that the inclusion of agroforest plantations such as rubber, eucalyptus, acacia and mango, coconut, areca nut and shade trees in tea and coffee plantations has led to the inflation in



FOREST LANDS DIVERTED FOR DAMS, ROADS, RAILWAYS AND OTHER SUCH PERMANENT CONSTRUCTIONS OVER TIME ARE LOST FOREVER BUT ARE NOT DELETED FROM RECORDS,

THUS INFLATING THE FIGURES. INDIA LOST 30,808 SQ KM OF OPEN AND SCRUB 14,073 SQ KM OF

MODERATELY DENSE

FORESTS

But the reality is that these categories of trees are grown for commercial purposes and are harvested in time therefore not providing any ecological value for biodiversity, wildlife conservation or acting as effective carbon sinks. Moreover, the fact that the report does not establish a correlation between forest areas or areas designated as forests in government records and forest cover also adds to the problem.

the tree canopy to 1,289 sq.km.

Additionally, the experts also observed that the report failed to comply with the Supreme Court order in the Lafarge case which called for digitisation of forest maps, geo-referencing of Recorded Forest Areas (RFA), and documentation of diverted forest lands. The absence of these elements weakens the report's credibility.

Forest lands diverted for dams, roads, railways and other such permanent constructions over time are lost forever but are not deleted from records, thus inflating the figures. India lost 30,808 sq km of open and scrub forests alongside 14,073 sq km of moderately dense forests and 1,816 sq km of dense forests to 'non-forest'

By the looks of it, the ISF report 2023 seems to be in a hurry to increase forest cover in India. At least on paper. This could be to do with India's target of increasing its forest and

tree cover which can absorb an additional amount of 2.5 billion to 3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent by

The government could have done well to ensure the presentation of accurate data that was based on actual tree census and not plantations, groves, and orchards. The govern-ment should have also removed those forest lands from its database that have been permanently diverted for non-forest purposes.

The ISF report has immense significance for India as it is widely used as a primary information source by the central and state governments. Additionally, forestry professionals of State Forest Departments rely on the report for the effective discharge of their responsibilities. The inputs and data provided by this report regarding forest resources of India help in the evaluation and formulation of forest-related policies, programmes, and legislation. Given the crucial role played by the ISF report, the government must revisit the recent report and ensure that the questions and doubts raised by experts are effectively addressed. The onus is on the government to keep the trust intact by releasing reports based on robust and accurate data.

(The author is a policy ana*lyst. The views are personal)*

The teachers who shaped my life: Lessons beyond the classroom



For me, the journey of learning began in classrooms with inspiring teachers and extended into workplaces with exceptional bosses

Te meet several peo-ple in our lives. While we learn something from each person, many teach us invaluable lessons that help us navigate the rough and tumble of the daily grind. These are the teachers who shape our lives. The earliest I remember are two schoolteachers from my classes 5 to 7. Miss Kumar taught us English; Miss Singh was the Arithmetic teacher.

It is no wonder that I developed a liking for the unlikeliest combination of English and Maths. Another was my mathematics teacher from classes 10 to 11.

I was a favourite student, probably because I could discuss with him complex problems on the move while cycling to and from school. My love for communication and thinking on my feet were firmly entrenched in my psyche by him. In later years, I could not have navigated my professional journey but for the few outstanding bosses, I worked with. i joined my first job in a leading government manufacturing company. I stayed there for a year, only for the

training. It seemed like an extension of college except that we were now paid a salary and were expected to lead a structured office life. I opted to spend the last few months of the training in the computer department. I surprised myself. This was one of the two subjects in college in which I had secured a poor 'D' grade.

developed a computerbased inventory management system for the plant, the first in the organization. I worked diligently, probably also committing a few mistakes, confident of the support of my Bengali boss.I joined the railway services. It game. I was the head of a government to join the pri-

maintenance shed with vate sector. It was a new jun-1000+ staff working under me. My boss went to the shed with me for the first week. The next week, he threw me, not in the swim- the table in stage-managed ming pool, but in the ocean. whispers loud enough to be It was training by fire.

Yet, he was always there to guide and support me whenever I needed his help. The innumerable management lessons I learned in my first year were to hold me in good stead during my remaining professional journey of almost three decades. After 20 years of service with the railways, I decided to opt for retirement and join a government company. My boss was a soft-spoken Sikh gen-

He also shared a common trait with my first railway boss. It was a complete freedom to operate.

He taught me everything that he knew about a new subject. His only demands were integrity and honesty. I had no problems with that. He would fight fiercely for me with his seniors if the situation demanded. I never regretted my decision to was an entirely different ball leave the railways. I quit the

gle for me. The boardroom politics, criticism of a subordinate by those sitting at the head of heard by the intended victim, and smirks by colleagues at the snub by a senior, were only a few of the goings-on I had not witnessed in the government

I had no hesitation in mentioning to a packed audience when asked about the reasons for the success of the government sector, 'Good bosses, who value others and mentor each individual like a teacher."I hope that someone else remembers me as fondly.

These words by an unknown author resonate with me, "I wasn't born to just teach, I was born to inspire others, to change people, and to never give up; even when faced with challenges that seem impossible."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

RELIEF FOR MIDDLE-CLASS

Madam —As the new year approaches, salaried employees are likely to face significant tax deductions from their salaries for the financial year 2024-2025. While taxes are deducted throughout the year, the months leading up to March 2025 will see an increased burden, further aggravating the financial challenges of India's middle class. Reduced take-home pay diminishes purchasing power, leading to decreased spending by the salaried class, which, in turn, impacts the economy.

Considering these challenges, the government is reportedly exploring measures to boost consumer spending. One such measure under consideration for the financial year 2025-2026 budget is making personal income up to Rs 15 lakh per annum taxfree. Speculations suggest that the government is actively working in this direction, and the decision on tax cuts in the upcoming budget appears almost certain. Taxation is currently governed by two systems: the old tax regime (OTR) and the new tax regime (NTR). A reduction in tax liability would particularly benefit salaried employees, increasing their disposable income. This would lead to higher consumer spending, ultimately helping the economy recover from its slowdown. For the financial stability and development of middle-class families, the central government's decision to make personal income up to Rs 15 lakh per annum tax-free in the 2025-2026 budget is crucial. This move would play a vital role in ensuring better financial planning and stability for the mid-

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Ponda

PROFIT OVER HUMANITY

Madam — The article on caring for the stars and being careless to earth (December 30) presents worth considering arguments. The basic problem lies in the economic order in vogue in most parts of the world. The essence of the order is commodifying everything and chasing like searching for fuel sticks in a desert lot. profit in every activity. In the process, small players are being gulped by the big

Koneru wins World Rapid Chess Champion



The recent chess title victory by Koneru Humpy as World Rapid Chess Champion is another feather in India's Chess success. We all know that the year 2024 has been a marvellous year for Índia, particularly as we successfully managed to lift so many titles in the sport of Chess. The grit and brilliance of

fish to monopolise the field and then search for opportunities elsewhere with the State's help to emerge as an imperial force is the basic activity found all over. Leaving millions of people to starve to enrich the minuscule super-rich is the prioritised programme of the order in

Instead of political force deciding the economic course it is the economic force that decides the political course. The policies of the governments are designed to favour this ultra-rich section. If policies are not changed to its favour, the giants are capable of changing the government itself. Poverty, climate-related hostilities and human destruction due to induced and perverted conflicts between nations, faiths, races and the greedy groups are simply the fallouts of the empirical power money has gained over the human being instead of helping its inventors. Caring the stars and other planets while being cruel

Course change is imminent. **A G Rajmohan** | *Anantapur*

Indian Chess Champions has marvelled the entire world, be that the moment of India becoming the FIDE Chess Olympiad 2024 winner in Budapest, D Gukesh becoming the World Chess champion at the age of 18 in Singapore, and now Ms Koneru Humpy clinching her second FIDE World Rapid Crown in New York. This year in 2024 particularly, India spent a considerably wonderful time at the podium top stairs, enjoying

many titles and trophies. The chess prowess of Indians need no introduction today, thanks to our chess masters and grandmasters. Especially the young chess players deserve the epitome of appreciation for their wonderful game spirit, patience and sincere grit behind every move of check and mates.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

INDIA'S LIBERALISATION ARCHITECT Madam — From being an economist of great repute to RBI Governor, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Finance Minister and then becoming Prime Minister of India, not many can walk in his shoes. When the economy was stuttering and license raj was the order of the day and there was a suffocating environment for industrialists, Dr. Manmohan Singh became the architect of liberalisation in 1991 along with late PV Narsimha Rao, who allowed our country to take a great leap forward. The Victor Hugo moment of our 1991 budget was doctored by him, which led to India emerging as an economic powerhouse. He may have been called an

accidental Prime Minister but during those 10 years at the helm he did his job with aplomb under the given circumstances of compulsions of coalition pol-

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

FIRST COLUMN OVERCOMING THE GRIP OF FEARFUL THOUGHTS

Fearful thoughts often take hold of our minds, leading to obsession with worst-case scenarios



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

e routinely become obsessed with fearful thoughts. The word obsession is defined as a persistent disturbing preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling. We don't stop there; we think of the worst. What is the probability of that happening? But that does not prevent us from this common flaw; we do it willingly. There are several reasons for succumbing to this. We have many attachments. We are desperate for something like a good result, and a few like we shouldn't get sick. Unfortunately, these are decided by the Divine Authority based on our past 'Karmas' (deeds). We have no say in it, and they manifest at their designated times. Fortunately, they are very rarely the worst we think of. If so, life would be hellish, which it is not. This earth's planet is a place of misery (The Bhagavad Geeta 8.15) alright, but is not a concentration camp by any standard. But our imagination has no bounds.

The next big offender is a refusal to be prepared to tolerate. We want zero tolerance. Is it possible? Everything is changing like the weather. Bad 'Karmaphalas' (results of bad deeds) will manifest for sure because this is no Vaikuntha; we have most certainly a past with many bad karmas. How else are we here, not even in Heaven? We feel that we are intelligent, but hardly anyone escapes making this mistake. Yes, we are supposed to get fearful, because that protects us from acting foolishly, but excessive fear is due to faulty assessment. Due diligence is required.

The fourth offender is greed. Our desires are open-ended. Is it wise? The evidence shows that downfalls occur due to being too greedy.



But to become greedy and then fear the consequences makes zero sense. Over-stress also causes fearful thoughts, especially about health. It is better to avoid to lessen this possibility. We want to control and are unable to. We act stupidly and then fear the worst. The same problem exists in acting big, which no one can ever become; we are intrinsically small and will remain eternally so.

Acting as the sole doer also evolves fearful thoughts. Giving control of our minds to fearful thoughts is making ourselves our enemies. Lord Krishna has warned about it (4.6). Similarly, intelligence is supposed to curb this tendency but, again, we find some justification in harming ourselves. This is also a sad commentary on our knowledge, about which we are so proud. A soul has severe limitations, as we realize; he must remain in the shelter of God. This is the only worthwhile solution. I am sorry to be so stern, but the proliferation of mental diseases points to it only.

God controls the Creation (9.10) and He, therefore, has to guide and help to deal with it. By ourselves, we are quite helpless really. How it works? It is quite simple, but a very long drawn exercise, because this problem involves our 'svabhava' (nature). This is what I do. The moment a fearful thought crosses my mind, I pray sincerely for guidance and help, because I need to know a way out. I need exact guidance for my actions.

God signals to me what I should do; He uses many ways to communicate. He helps where I fall short. Blissfully, my painful habit of fearing excessively is coming under some control. Thank God

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

Assessing efficacy and challenges of compensatory afforestation

With ecosystem at stake, the nation's approach to monetising and restoring nature demands careful evaluation and sustainable strategies write BKP SINHA and ARVIND KUMAR JHA

ompensatory Afforestation (CA) relates to the mitigation of environmental damage caused by the diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes and is a mandatory requirement for obtaining clearances under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980; now Van (Sanrakshanevam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam (VSSA) 1980 and Rules. The Government of India guidelines state that normally CA must be carried out on a suitable non-forest land equal to the forest area proposed for diversion and for minimizing the adverse impact on the micro-ecology, such land should be located as near as possible to the diverted area. If suitable non-forest land is unavailable, CA may be carried out on degraded forest land equal to twice the area of the diverted forest land. The unavailability of non-forest land in a district is certified by the District Collector and in the exceptional case of its unavailability in the whole state/union territory (ÚT), the chief secretary has to certify accordingly and CA land may be identified preferably in a neighbouring state/ UT.As regards CA, the Government of India guidelines of 2017 and 2019 emphasised compensation for loss of land by land and that of trees by trees. They indicate that at least 1000 plants are

to be planted in one hectare and in case 1000 plants are not possible to be accommodated, the balance may be planted in some other government forest identified by the state government. The states having more than 75% forest cover, however, are exempted from the task of procuring non-forest land for CA. Their CA can be taken up in states with deficient for-est land/cover. As regards size, lands smaller than 5 hectares can also be accepted for CA if it is contiguous to a wildlife conservation area like National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries.Area equivalence criterion often leads to an understanding that any forest can be equated with tree plantations of any kind but the concept of Net Present Value (NPV) is additionally used to calculate the worth of diverted forests by attaching a monetary value to a whole range of goods and services provided by them. This amount is recovered from the pro-

ject proponent. The World Bank's 2002 strategy elaborates the NPV to include goods and services like wood and non-wood items, ecosystem services, support to wildlife, climate regulation, soil & water conservation and flood prevention, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, health support systems and non-material benefits which may be spiritual, inspirational, recreational, aesthetic, educational etc. Its value thus extends far beyond economics and considering the interest of different stakeholders, the values of different components may also vary, such as the cultural significance of a tree species ver-

sus its commercial value as timber. The January 2022 guidelines of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) have clubbed the forests of India into six Ecoclasses to realize NPV instead of diverted forest land. Out of them, class I includes Tropical Wet Evergreen Forests, Tropical Semi Evergreen Forests, and Tropical Moist Deciduous Forests, while class II contains Littoral and Swamp



HOLISTIC **DEVELOPMENT OF** GREAT NICOBAR ISLAND PROJECT IS WORTH A LOOK. THE RS 72,000 CRORE INVESTMENT WILL DIVERT 130.75 SQ. KM. OF FOREST LAND

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT THAT INCLUDES A TRANS-SHIPMENT PORT, AN AIRPORT, A POWER PLANT. A DEFENCE BASE, AN INDUSTRIAL PARK AND A

TOWNSHIP

Interestingly, the per hectare value of NPV for both these classes has been kept the same, an equality that appears surprising.It is crucial to arrive at a monetized figure for a unit of Nature/biodiversity and ensure that investing in it will off-set the loss caused by diversion. Simultaneous sustainable development of biodiversity is of course a formidable challenge. Accordingly, any oversimplification of biodiversity assessment can lead to inaccuracies and undermine genuine conservation efforts.

The limitations faced in offsetting losses just through CA are amply covered by CAG reports. Unfortunately, the resource position at the world level also, despite the wrath of climate change being faced globally, shows an annual funding gap of about USD 700 billion in nature conservation. Against the above background, ne proposed CA and NPV to mitigate the diversion of forest land in he "Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island" (GNI) project is worth a look. The Rs72,000 crore investment will divert 130.75 sq. km. of forest land for infrastructure development that includes a transshipment port, an airport, a power plant, a defence base, an industri-

al park, and a township.
The project involves the felling of an estimated one million trees with habitat destruction that would also impact the life, livelihood, and forest rights of the Shompen; a particularly vulnerable hunter-andgatherer tribal group. The MoEFCC claims to have incorporated into the project some exemplary mitigation measures, including compensatory afforestation, into the project in compliance with the provisions of the VSSA 1980 while securing India's strategic national and defence interests. Out of the total CA area of 26,000 hectares, locating 24,354 hectares in Haryana is justified by highlight-

ing that planting native species in arid landscapes and near urban areas is of greater ecological value. Talks are said to be on with the Madhya Pradesh government for situating the balanced CA area. The CA in Aravali's arid/semi-arid region, approximately 2,400 kilometres away, to compensate for the loss of pristine rainforests of Great Nicobar is a significant departure from the guideline regarding the positioning of CA land. Reportedly, the CA with ?3000 crore's investment is expected to be mostly a revival plan to improve the soil texture and fertility and to make stone boundary walls since the proposed area already has root stock requiring just protection and sup-plemental planting wherever required.

Indicative of the natural limits imposed by edaphic, geographical, and climatic factors, the Forest Survey of India (FSI) 2021 report on forest status shows that the carbon stock per hectare in A&N forests is fourth highest in the country; next only to Himachal, Sikkim, and J&K while Harvana has the second lowest; next only to

This fact does raise questions regarding the possibility and efficacy of compensating adequately Nicobar's loss of carbon stock and biomass by investing CA money in Haryana. Considering the aspect of NPV, it is worth noting that Nicobar Island forests are more like that of Malaysia and Indonesia while the Andaman Islands' flora is more akin to the species found in Myanmar, Thailand, and Northeast India. FSI's rapid biodiversity assessment in A&N islands in 2018-19 found that shrubs and herbs together were more than double the number of trees. Many species found there do not occur in mainland India. The understory and emergent layers with profuse regeneration, herbs, and

shrubs indicate a vibrant ecosystem wherein approximately half of the mammals, a third of the birds, a quarter of the reptiles, and over a tenth of flowering plants are endemic. A crucible for the habi-tat rights of the Shompen tribe notwithstanding, it is home to the endangered Nicobar Megapode and Leatherback Turtle, and has over twenty thousand coral reefs in its vicinity. In 1989. The UNESCO declared a significant portion of the island as a biosphere reserve. Despite such uniqueness, distinctive parameters, and ecological significance; its NPV per hectare is exactly equal to the forests in Ecoclasses I and II. GIN is just one project.

An in-depth analysis of forest land diversion cases can provide, in addition to actionable issues related to limitations and risks in offsetting just through the prevalent CA and NPV model, important insights into ways to minimize harm to Nature, redeemability of loss to forest ecosystems, correct determination of NPV, efficient investments in Nature recovery and restoration initiatives, handling of habitat rights of the primitive tribes and pre-agricultural communities, and regulations needed to ensure accountability.

Nature's monetization and biodiversity markets are fast emerging as potential funding sources for conservation. Their effectiveness demands an honest valuation of diverted forests and a strict implementation of conservation strategies. The outcomes depend on those having the power to decide. Only time will tell, but the decisions made today will echo through the annals of history shaping the destiny of our country and of humanity itself.

(The writers are former PCCFs of U.P. and Maharashtra; views are personal)

Indian agriculture and climate change: Challenges and strategies

India is forging a path toward climate-resilient agriculture, leveraging innovative strategies, integrated farming practices and government-led initiatives

he agriculture and allied sectors play a central role in the sustainable growth and development of India's economy. These sectors not only ensure food and nutritional security for the country's 1.4 billion people but also contribute significantly to production, employment, and demand generation through various backward and forward linkages. While agriculture constitutes about 16% of India's GDP, it supports nearly 49% of the workforce (Economic Survey, 2018). However, with over 50% of India's cultivated land dependent on rainfed irrigation, the sector is highly vulnerable to climate variability.

The ongoing challenges to sustain the natural resource by fewer rainy days with high-



PRAVESH SHARMA

amplify the adverse impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect the poor. Challenges Posed by Climate Change on Agriculture

1. Rainfall Variability:The increasing intra-seasonal variability of rainfall has emerged as a major concern. Rainfall patterns are becoming increasingly skewed, characterized er intensity. This results in sig-

erbates the length of dry spells. Deviations in the hydrological cycle are contributing to extreme events, such as floods caused by intense rainfall or droughts triggered by pro-longed dry spells, impacting different parts of the country. 2. Temperature Rise: Rising temperatures pose a greater threat to tropical countries like India, which already operate near the higher end of the temperature spectrum. Elevated temperatures influence various climatic factors, adversely impacting crop production. For instance, extreme heat reduces fruit setting in citrus crops and increases transpiration losses in vegetables. 3. Livestock and Poultry **Impact:** Climate variability

also affects animal production

nificant soil erosion and exacand reproduction. Increased temperatures and higher temperature-humidity index levels lead to reduced feed intake, lower milk yields, and decreased meat and egg quality. Poultry, in particular, suffers from heat stress, resulting in thinner eggshells and increased egg breakage.

4. Pests and Diseases: Climate change influences the population, survival, and geographic distribution of pests and diseases. Rising temperatures and humidity levels create favorable conditions for pest proliferation, making control measures more challenging and unpredictable.

Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies

Adaptation to climate change



measures to minimize damage or leverage emerging opportunities. Given that most Indian farmers are smallholders with limited coping capacity, building resilience is key.

Resource Water Management:Enhancing rainwater productivity through scientific rainwater harvesting, recycling, and precision water use is essential. Improved irrigation techniques and water involves anticipating adverse impacts and taking proactive impact of erratic rainfall. budgeting can mitigate the

2. Integrated Farming Systems: Combining crop cultivation with livestock, fisheries, and plantations offers diverse income streams and reduces climate vulnerability. Contingency planning for alternate crops and activities based on agro-climatic condi-tions further strengthens

Technology and Innovation: Developing stress-tolerant crop varieties, conserving agro-biodiversity, and promoting resource-efficient technologies are critical. Pest forecasting models, weather-based advisories, and agricultural risk management systems should be expanded to aid farmers in decision-mak-

4. Community Involvement and Education: Engaging

local communities in production system management and raising awareness about climate-resilient practices is vital. Farmers, consumers, and markets must be educated to embrace sustainable agriculture practices that align with cultural and social contexts. Government Initiatives to Address Climate Change

The Government of India has taken several steps to combat climate change. National Action Plan on

Climate Change (NAPCC): Guided by the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, the NAPCC includes the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), focusing on resource conservation, soil health, integrated farming, and water-use

National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA): This initiative provides scientific and technical guidance for sustainable agricultural development.Key Program Interventions: Policies like the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, National Food Security Mission, and Soil Health Card Scheme aim to enhance soil health, water efficiency, and

farm productivity. District Agricultural Contingency Plans: These plans provide integrated solutions for crop, livestock, and fishery challenges arising from weather anomalies, supporting farmers during extreme con-

(The writer is a retired IAS officer; the views expressed are personal)

HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | DECEMBER 31, 2024

IN BRIEF



Gold rises Rs 150 to Rs 79,350 per 10 gms

old prices rose Rs 150 to Rs 79,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Traders said the potential for upside appears to be limited for gold in the short term, as the market participants are primarily focused on Trump's tariff measures and economic policy, which could determine the direction of the metal next year. The precious metal settled at Rs 79,200 per 10 grams in the previous trading session on Friday. However, silver traded flat at Rs 91,700 per kg on Monday. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 150 to Rs 78,950 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 78,800 per 10 grams on Friday. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for February delivery slipped Rs 41 or 0.05 per cent to Rs 76,503 per 10 grams. "Gold trading within the range of Rs 76,400–76,750 in MCX With global markets entering the holiday period for New Year celebrations, trading volumes were thin, and market activity was subdued.



Air Kerala to start operations by June 2025

pcoming airline Air Kerala on Monday said it is planning to start operations by June next year with the first flight from the Kannur International Airport. Without disclosing the maiden destination, the upcoming airline, which has already put in place all key positions, including of the CEO and CFO, said it has inked a pact with private airport operator Kannur International Airport Ltd (KIAL) to start flight services on regional routes. As part of the agreement between the two companies, Air Kerala initially will have a substantial number of departures from Kannur, to nearby domestic destinations within a flying range of one-anda-half hour. Infrastructure is already available at Kannur Airport and as an entrant to the aviation industry, the airport management has offered Air Kerala all support in setting up base at Kannur, Air Kerala Chairman Afi Ahmed said.



Rs 17,581 cr invested under PLI scheme for specialty steel'

ompanies have invested Rs 17,581 crore under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for specialty steel till October 2024, the government said on Monday. To encourage domestic production of 'specialty steel' and lower imports by drawing in capital investments, the government introduced the PLI scheme for specialty steel 'As of October 2024, companies have already invested Rs 17,581 crore and generated over 8,660 in employment," the steel ministry said in a statement. Participating companies have committed to an investment of Rs 27,106 crore, direct employment of 14,760 and estimated production of 7.90 million tonnes of 'specialty steel' identified in the scheme. The ministry earlier said investments in the steel sector have a long gestation period and depend on factors such as procurement of various equipment, many of which are from

Prospects of economy expected to improve: RBI

Facing criticism from the government over the central bank prioritising inflation over growth, the new RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Monday said that prospects of the Indian economy are expected to improve on the back of high consumer and business confidence in 2025.

"As we strive to preserve financial stability to support a higher growth path for the Indian economy, our focus remains steadfast on maintaining stability of financial institutions and, more broadly, systemic stability," Malhotra said in the foreword to the

Financial Stability Report. He further said that despite the global uncertainties Indian economy is expected to pick up pace in the second half of the current financial year.

"Notwithstanding the uncertainties shrouding the global macro-financial ethos as it unfolds, prospects for the Indian economy are expected to improve after the slowdown in the pace of economic activity in the first half of 2024-25.

'Consumer and business confidence for the year ahead remain high and the investment scenario is brighter as corporations step into 2025 with robust balance sheets and high profitability," said Malhotra who took over as 26th Governor earlier this



Flagging the issue of growth moderation in the first half, the Finance Ministry in its highlights. November Monthly Economic Review had raised concerns that the possibility that struc-

tributed to the slowdown in H1 should not be ruled out. India recorded a slowdown in GDP growth to a sevenquarter low of 5.4 per cent for the second quarter ended September 2024. For the first half, the GDP growth stood at

6 per cent. Slowdown in growth and moderation in inflation are building case for RBI to slash policy rate in its upcoming Monetary Policy Committee

tural factors may also have con-

meeting. Malhotra further said that financial sector regulators in India too are intensifying reforms and sharpening their surveillance against the backdrop of the soundness of the financial system bolstered by

robust earnings, low levels of impaired assets and strong capital buffers, as this report

Stress test results reveal that capital levels of the banking system as well as of the Nonbanking Financial Companies (NBFCs) sector will remain well above the regulatory minimum even under adverse stress scenarios, he said.

"We continue to secure and anchor public trust and confidence to support India's aspirational goals. We remain committed to developing a modern financial system that is customer-centric, technologically leveraged and financially inclusive," he said.

Referring to the global economy, he said, it exhibits resilience in the face of formidable headwinds from political and economic policy uncertainty, persisting conflicts and an environment of fragmenting international trade and tariffs.

Adani to exit Adani Wilmar, raise over \$2 bn

PNS NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group on Monday announced its exit from FMCG joint venture Adani Wilmar by selling its entire stake to the Singaporean partner and in the open market for an estimated over USD 2 billion.

In a statement, Adani Enterprises Ltd said it will sell a 31.06 per cent stake to Wilmar International. Another 13 per cent will be sold in the open market to meet minimum public shareholding require-

It, however, did not give the price at which it was selling the stake.

"With this, AEL will fully exit Adani Wilmar Ltd," it said. "Adani's nominee direc-

tors will step down from the board of Adani Wilmar The transaction is like-

ly to conclude before March 31, 2025.



PRE-BUDGET MEET

India Inc seeks cut in personal income tax rates

Representatives from industry bodies sought reduction in personal income tax rates to ensure higher disposable income in the hands of the middle class, reduction in excise duty on fuel, and measures to provide impetus to employment-intensive sectors in their customary pre-Budget meeting with the Finance

Minister on Monday.
Industry bodies also raised the issue of dumping of excess stock by China globally, including in India, and challenges posed to food security and inflation due to the 'climate emergency", during the fifth pre-

Budget consultation meeting. The 2025-26 Union Budget will be presented on

February 1. Apart from the finance minister, the meeting was attended by finance secretary, secretary (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management), Secretaries of the Department of Economic Affairs and the Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, among

Speaking to the media after the meeting, CII President Sanjiv Puri said while the Indian economy is doing very well, globally there are a lot of challenges.

"We are seeing dumping of a lot of products (by China) into various parts of the world, including India. We also have the issue of climate emergency, which, besides other things, also impacts food and nutrition, (food) security and inflation. In this context we have made sev eral suggestions and ideas".

He said the CII has sought measures to provide impetus to



areas that have large employment potential like garments, footwear, tourism, furniture, among others, apart from making suggestions for MSMEs and integrating India into global value chains.

"From a perspective of boosting consumption, we have suggested that there be some relief provided to income tax up to a Rs 20 lakh on the marginal income tax rate so that it boosts consumption, there is more disposable income and in turn also leads to buoyancy in revenues.

Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 85.52 against US dollar

PNS MUMBAI

The rupee dropped 4 paise to 85.52 (provisional) against the US dollar in early trade on Monday, as dollar demand from importers, foreign fund outflows and a muted trend in domestic equities dented investor sentiments.

Forex traders said the rupee witnessed heavy volatility on Friday as well on Monday amid significant dollar demand linked to the expiry December cur-

rency futures and maturing positions in the sure on the local currency,"

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a weak note and witnessed an intra-day low of 85.59 and a high of 85.43 against the American currency. The local unit settled for the day at 85.52 (provisional), registering a fall of 4 paise over its previ-

On Friday, the rupee registered the steepest fall in almost

two years to hit its lifetime intra-day low of 85.80 before a likely central bank intervention helped recover some of its losses and settled 21 paise lower at a record low of \$5.48 against the US dollar.

'We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on strength in the US dollar and month-end dollar demand f r o m

importers ... and oil marketing com-(OMCs). Elevated crude prices and FII outflows may also put pres-

Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

Choudhary added, "Any intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may support rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from Chicago PMI and pending home sales data from the US. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 85.30

Airlines to mandatorily share int'l passenger data with Customs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Airlines will have to mandatorily share details of foreign travellers with the Indian Customs authorities from April 1, 2025, and non-compliance can attract penalties.

All air transport service providers operating flights to/from India will have to register with the National Customs Targeting Centre-Passenger (NCTC-Pax) by January 10, 2025, in order to comply with the requirement, according to a communication issued by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

Details ranging from mobile travel itinerary need to be shared with the authorities 24 hours before the departure of an international flight.

On August 8, 2022, the CBIC notified the 'Passenger Name Record Information Regulations, 2022' under which airlines were required to share passenger name record (PNR) details of foreign travellers with the Customs department.

SELLING IN BLUE-CHIPS, FII OUTFLOWS

Sensex drops by 451 pts, Nifty ends below 23,650

Benchmark Sensex declined by nearly 451 points on Monday due to selling in heavyweight stocks HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Reliance Industries, weak global trends and unabated foreign fund outflows.

In a volatile trading session, the 30-share BSE barometer dropped by 450.94 points or 0.57 per cent to settle at 78,248.13. As many as 23 of its constituents closed lower while seven closed with gains.

The barometer opened the mid session to hit a high of 79,092.70.

The index failed to hold onto gains in the second half due to selling in bluechips and tanked 621.94 points or 0.79 per cent to touch a low of 78,077.13.

The NSE Nifty declined 168.50 points or 0.71 per cent to settle at 23,644.90 as 38 of its components fell and 11



closed higher.

Among Sensex shares, Tata Motors fell the most by 2.24 per cent. Titan, Tata Steel. State Bank of India, Mahindra Bank, Maruti, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and Infosys were among the laggards.

Zomato, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers.

"The market began the week on a volatile note, ending with a loss of over half a per cent. After a flat opening, the Nifty gained ground in the first half but faced selling pressure in

heavyweight stocks across sectors, reversing its trajectory," Aiit Mishra - SVP. Research. Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge midcap index went up by 0.13 "Prevailing subdued senti-

ment on account of FIIs selling and a strengthening dollar continued to drag the market. While IT & pharma gained as investors continued to bet on defensive stocks to prevent short-term volatility," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Reliance seeks premium for oil

Reliance Industries Ltd is seeking a premium of at least USD 3.5 per barrel over an international benchmark for crude oil it produces for eastern offshore KG-D6 block, according to the tender the

firm put out on Monday. Reliance and its partner BP of the UK sought bids from domestic refiners for sale of 17,600 barrels (2,800 kilolitres) of crude oil every month from April 2025 to February 2026.

The crude oil has been priced at daily average price of Nigerian Bonny Light grade of



Bidders have to quote a premium over this price, the tender document said.

Bonny Light last traded for USD 73.5 per barrel. On top of this, USD 1.5 per barrel is added as a composite premi-

barrel quality premium. ential", it said, adding that interested buyers are required to a "biddable premium, up to one decimal place and greater than USD 2 per barrel".

The sale period can be extended by three months to one year on the same terms crude oil plus USD 1.5 per um "reflecting quality differ- and conditions, including

Oil, which is turned into fuels like petrol and diesel

pricing formula.

when processed at refineries, will be delivered by the sellers at Gadimoga in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. Reliance holds 66.67 per

cent interest in the predominantly gas-rich KG-DWN-98/3 block (KG-D6) in the Bay of Bengal. BP Exploration (Alpha) Ltd holds the remaining 33.33 per cent. The two produce about 30

million standard cubic metres per day of gas from the block. A small quantity of crude oil is also produced, for which they have now sought bids.

India's housing market in de-growth phase

New home sales in India declined for the first time since the pandemic, as a sharp rise in housing prices and elevated borrowing costs ruined buyers' appetite in 2024 and the real estate industry is now eyeing the upcoming Budget for favourable economic conditions -- a key to reviving demand conditions.

The de-growth in the Indian housing market came after three straight years of stellar growth, following the COVID-era downturn, and was attributed in part to a high base in the previous year, a fall in supply of new homes and

price appreciation.
Anuj Puri, Chairman of Anarock, one of the leading housing brokerage firms in the country, termed the year 2024 as a "mixed bag" for the Indian residential market and noted that, while demand for the affordable housing segment was weak, sales and launches of luxury homes remained

strong. India's residential real estate market, estimated to be valued at over USD 300 billion, faced a marginal 4 per cent drop in sales volumes during 2024, according to data from consultant Anarock.

Sebi to auction 23 properties of 9 companies

PNS NEW DELHI

Sebi on Monday said it has scheduled an auction of 23 properties belonging to nine firms, such as Tower Infotech and Vibgyor Group of Companies in February, aimed to recoup funds illicitly collected from investors.

Additionally, Industrial Corporation, Waris Group, Pincon Group, Kolkata Weir Industries Ltd (KWIL), Annex Infrastructure India, I-core Group and MPS Group were the other firms whose properties will also be auc-

The process for the sale of the companies' assets has been initiated by the markets watchdog following the orders of Calcutta High Court.

The properties include plots, apartments and buildings located in West Bengal. It will be auctioned at a reserve price of Rs 55 crore, according to a notice issued by the Securities and Exchange Board of India

Justice Sailendra Prasad Talukdar has been appointed as the one-man committee for liquidating the assets of the



firm and repaying the investors. The move is part of Sebi's effort to recover investors' money.

assist it in the sale of the properties. Adroit Technical Services

Of the 23 properties, seven each belong to Tower Infotech

and Vibgyor Group, two each related to the Waris Group and GBC Industrial Corporation and the rest belong to MPS Group, I-Core Group, Annex Infrastructure India, KWIL and Pincon Group.

Sebi on behalf of the committee is inviting bids for the sale of the properties from the bidders. The regulator said the auction will be auctioned online on February 6, 2025, from 11 am to 1 pm.

The markets watchdog has asked the bidders to make their own independent enquiries regarding the

encumbrances, litigations, title of the properties put on auction and claims, before submitting their bid.

These firms had mopped up money from investors without complying with regulatory norms. Vibgyor Allied Infrastructure had issued optionally fully convertible debentures in 2009 and raised

Rs 61.76 crore Tower Infotech had raised nearly Rs 46 crore through the issuance of non-convertible debentures and redeemable preference shares between 2005 and 2010

Dt: 28.12.2024
Online Tenders are invited for the NIT No. 01.2024-25 to 09/2024-25, Dt: 28.12.2024 from the eligible registered contractors for 9 works in Mahabubabad District sanctioned unde FDR and MPLADS with an estimate cost of **Rs. 75.10 Lakhs.** Description of items ECV EMD, availability of tender documents, important dates, tender conditions, eligibility of tender and all other details are available from 03.01.2025 Onwards on https://tender Sdi- District Panchayath Raj Enginee PIU, Mahabubaba

SOUTHER POWER DISTRIBUTION NO., 13/24-25
Bids are invited under e-precentment under T&D Imp Works (1st Extension) of \$p. No. 44/24-25 of CE/MP Zone: Power execution of 38 in Wheep Receipt from B-TT Bowrampet SS to 38/11 fr/ Alexp Sub-Station & \$p. No. 44/24-25 of CE/MP Zone: Exection, testing and commissioning of 1 No. 12.5 M/A. Additional PTR along with switchgear at 33/11 K// Rehigh Mindepson SS (Lest Distor upload of bid Dt. 06.81.2025 at 17:004ms & Head Copies Submission Dt. 87.91.2025 by 12.90 km) & (Short-Tender) of \$p. No. 47/24-25 of CE/MP Zone: Power evacuation of 33 kV New Sucream and 33 kV Gagillaper feeder from B-HT Bowrampet SS (Bid start Dt. 31.12.2024 at 17:004ms, Lest Of for upload of bid Dt. 06.81.2025 at 17:004ms & Heart Copies Submission Dt. 87.91.2025 by 12.90 km). Natic: Any further information in this regard can be obtained on website. 97.91.2025 by 12.90 hrs), Note: Any further information in this regard can be obtained on websit https://tgsoutherspower.org/generaltenders. Sdf- Superintending Engineer Master Plan Zon R.O. No.: 8654-PPICLWGWTHGE24-25, Dt. 38-12-282N TGSPDCL, Mint Compound, NY

Follow us on

@TheDailyPioneer

facebook.com/ dailypioneer

'Not just song; Dhun Badal Ke Toh Dekho redefines inclusivity in art without labels'

The ever-inspiring Sushant Divigikar is back with yet another groundbreaking collaboration, this time with BIG FM for Dhun Badal Ke Toh Dekho. In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, Sushant delves into the collab, breaking stereotypes, reflecting their lifelong mission to champion art without labels, highlighting radio's transformative reach and more

TEJAL SINHA tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

n a world that often seeks to define individuals by labels, Sushant Divgikar, also known as the dynamic Rani Ko-HE-Nur, emerges as a trailblazer, breaking barriers with grace and unwavering authenticity. Hosting *Dhun Badal*Ke Toh Dekho on BIG FM, Sushant blends music, storytelling and inclusivity into an empowering anthem for self-expression and embracing diver-

sity.

Celebrating the power of art without labels, it encourages listeners to embrace their true selves and step beyond societal judgments. The anthem at the show's heart serves as an empowering call to action, inspiring people to rediscover their self-worth and pursue their passions unapologetically. Through its collaboration with BIG FM, *Dhun Badal Ke Toh Dekho* isn't just a musical journey—it's a movement that amplifies inclusivity, unity and the transformative power of music in today's world.

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, he reflects

on their journey with BIG FM and expressed a heart-felt connection to the radio medium, tracing its influence back to childhood. "BIG FM has been a part of my life since childhood," they shared, recalling how the radio served as a gateway to music and storytelling. "Growing up, I always listened to the radio—it connected me to music and stories in ways I couldn't have imagined."

Sushant described hearing their own songs on the radio later in life as a deeply fulfilling moment, marking what they described as a "full circle" experience. For an artist whose work often amplifies marginalised voices, collaborating with a platform that reaches the farthest corners of the coun-

um that reaches places many other platforms can't. For someone who's often been described as a 'voice for the voiceless,' this collaboration was a natural fit," Sushant remarked. At the heart of this partnership is the show's anthem, a powerful musical statement that aligns perfectly with Divgikar's values. Emphasising its significance, Sushant explained that the anthem is more than just a song; it represents inclusivity and the recognition of art without labels. "The anthem doesn't just play on a massive platform—it's symbolic. It's a step toward inclusivity, giving art the recognition it deserves without labels," they noted.

Sushant also lauded BIG FM's vision, commend-

ing the platform for taking bold steps to embrace and amplify diverse voices. "Kudos to BIG FM for believing in this vision and for taking a bold step in the right direction," Sushant said, highlighting the show's mission to break barriers and inspire others to celebrate their true selves. Discussing the significance of this partnership, Sushant emphasised how BIG FM's values align seamlessly with their artistic philosophy. "My journey has always been about breaking barriers," Rani Ko-HE-Nur shared, highlighting how the collaboration resonates with their belief in appreciating art

for its essence, rather than judging the



ship reflects a broader movement toward celebrating diversity and fostering acceptance. "BIG FM didn't just didn't just choose me for try was a natural fit. "Radio is a mediwho I am, but for the art I

bring. That's true inclusivity," Sushant remarked, adding that this collaboration sets an important precedent for other brands to follow.

The impact of this inclusive approach has been profound, with listeners responding emotionally to the show's anthem. Sushant shared moving accounts of messages and voice notes they've received from people who felt seen and inspired by the song. "People have told me how emotional this anthem made them feel—how they had tears in their eyes because they'd stopped believing in themselves. But seeing me in this space gave them hope, reigniting that fire to believe they are on the right path," Sushant revealed, for whom, the anthem is more than just a musical creation; it is a powerful symbol of transformation and resilience. They noted that the feedback from listeners reaffirmed why they've worked so tirelessly to represent and inspire. "This isn't just a song; it's a movement," Sushant said, underlining the anthem's ability to touch lives and spark meaningful change.
Sushant sees this as a beacon of hope for other plat-

forms and brands, encouraging them to base oppor-tunities on talent rather than stereotypes. For Divgikar, radio has always been more than a medium—it's a bridge connecting voices and stories across diverse landscapes. They regard it as a uniquely democratic platform, accessible to all without the barriers of technology or cost. "Radio doesn't demand fancy gadgets or expensive subscriptions; it's accessible, relatable, and deeply authentic," Sushant said, highlighting the simplicity and intimacy that make radio special.

Reflecting on the essence of radio, Sushant described it as a medium where real voices tell real stories. Whether it's an RJ bringing life to a morning show with their energy, a caller sharing their personal journey, or a guest pouring their heart out on-air, these moments create an unmatched sense of intimacy." For Sushant, being part of this legacy through their anthem feels like a profound honor, one that aligns perfectly with their belief in inclusivity. Sushant is particularly moved by how radio champions diversity in a way that few platforms can. They applauded its commitment to promoting independent artists, regional music, and underrepresented voices, saying, "Radio celebrates diversity like no other platform. It gives everyone a chance to be heard and celebrated."

Music, for Sushant, is a unifying force that tranends all boundaries. They have : its ability to break through the constraints of gender, nationality, and background, touching hearts in profound ways. "Music is pure art, and art has no barriers. It has the intensity to change worlds and shift conversations. I've seen it firsthand—music has saved lives, sparked joy, and inspired people to wake up and face another day.

Speaking about the anthem for *Dhun Badal Ke Toh* Dekho, Sushant described it as a symbol of breaking boundaries and redefining narratives. "This anthem, for me, is more than just a song—it stands for everything I've championed in my 18 years as an artist: to see the art, not just the artist," Sushant explained, underlining its significance in their journey.

Throughout the career, Sushant has faced societal judgments and preconceived notions about identity. Yet, they have remained steadfast in their mission to let art speak louder than labels. "People often box us in, questioning, 'Is this a man? A woman? Why does she sound like that? What is she wearing?' But I've always said—I am so much more than my gender, my orientation, or my name," they said with conviction. As an artist, Sushant finds profound fulfillment in continuing the legacy of the goddess Saraswati through their work.

Concluding on an inspiring note, Sushant shared their philosophy on music and life. "Music doesn't see who you are—it sees your soul," they said, emphasising the universal language of music. Encouraging others to find joy in the world around them, Sushant added, "If you see beauty, even if it's just a little bit in everything, life will become simpler and more enjoyable. So, keep enjoying, keep loving, and keep listening to my music.

The year 2024 proved to be a game-changer for lowbudget films in the entertainment industry, as content-driven cinema stole the spotlight. From gripping thrillers to heartwarming dramas and innovative comedies, filmmakers focused on relatable narratives and fresh perspectives, resonating deeply with viewers. With creative direction, powerful scripts and dedicated performances, these films showcased how innovative filmmaking can transcend financial limitations.

CONTENT OVER CASH

LOW-BUDGET FILMS LEAD 2024'S BOX OFFICE-HI

ARTICLE 370

Article 370, a thought-provoking drama, defied expectations and became a blockbuster hit despite its low budget. The film tackled the sensitive and complex subject of the abrogation of Article 370 with a gripping narrative that resonated deeply with audiences. The movie's impactful dialogues and socially relevant theme sparked important conversations, earning both critical acclaim and massive box office success. Article

370 proved that meaningful storytelling, coupled with strong execution, can create cinematic magic,



Stree 2, the much-anticipated sequel to the 2018 horror-comedy Stree, proved that content is king in Bollywood. Despite operating on a relatively low budget, the film struck a perfect balance of humor, suspense and socially relevant storytelling, just like its predecessor. With its quirky characters, engaging plot twists, and a clever mix of scares and laughs, Stree 2 resonated with audiences across the country. Its unexpected box office success reaffirmed that well-crafted stories and strong performances can triumph over big budgets, turning it into a blockbuster hit and a shining

example of creative filmmaking.

BHOOL BHULAIYAA 3

Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3, the latest installment in the popular horror-comedy franchise, proved that a strong storyline and stellar performances can overshadow a modest budget. With its clever blend of eerie thrills, laugh-out-loud moments and unexpected twists, the film captivated audiences across the nation. Despite its low budget, the film relied on innovative direction, sharp writing, and a catchy soundtrack to deliver a top-notch cinematic experience. Its massive box office success cemented its place as a blockbuster, showcasing that great storytelling always wins over extravagant production costs





Shaitaan, a gritty and intense thriller, emerged as a sleeper hit despite its low budget, proving once again that compelling storytelling and raw performances can trump financial constraints. With its dark narrative, gripping pace and realistic portrayal of human emotions, the film struck a chord with audiences. The ensemble cast delivered powerful performances, bringing depth to the characters and drawing viewers into their tumultuous world.

Shaitaan not only earned critical acclaim but also turned into a box-office blockbuster, reaffirming that originality and authenticity can create cinematic magic.

CREW

Crew, a surprise hit in the cinematic landscape demonstrated how creativity and vision can turn a low-budget film into a blockbuster phenomenon. With its tightly woven narrative, engaging characters,

and a fresh perspective, the movie quickly gained traction among audiences. The ensemble cast delivered outstanding performances, adding depth and relatability to the story, while the crisp direction and innovative production techniques maximised every resource. Despite its modest budget, Crew broke box

office records and became a shining example of how strong storytelling and teamwork can create magic on screen

Kill, an action-packed thriller. became a blockbuster hit and a testament to the power of gripping storytelling, even on a low budget With its intense action sequences, tightly woven plot and relentless pace. the film captivated audiences from start to finish. The raw and gritty performances of the cast,

particularly the lead, added authenticity and emotional depth to the high-stakes narrative. Kill not only dominated the box office but also garnered critical acclaim, proving that passion and creativity can transform a modest production into a cinematic phenomenon

MUNJYA

Munjya, a low-budget horror-comedy, took audiences by storm with its unique blend of humour and spine-chilling moments. The film's quirky narrative, rooted in folklore and small-town charm, struck a perfect balance between laughter and suspense. Despite its modest budget, Munjya captivated viewers with its witty dialogues, relatable characters and innovative storytelling. Its massive box office success proved that content-driven cinema has the power to outperform big-budget productions, making Munjya a true blockbuster and a fan favourite.

BREATHING PLASTICS

Health risks of inhaling airborne microplastics

microplastics, particularly in some regions in India, has become alarming. Microplastics are tiny fragments of plastic particles that are smaller than 5 millimeters. The latest studies suggest these microplastics are present in the air that people inhale, causing health implications. Such pollution levels have been noted in Patna, where some researchers identified the remnants of these particles in rainwa-

WHAT ARE AIRBORNE MICROPLASTICS?

Airborne microplastics are plastic particles that are smaller than 5 millimeters and can be carried by air. It is an emerging pollutant originating from disposable tableware, packaging materials, textiles and

n recent years, the human exposure to other consumer goods. These microplastics are abundant in urban and natural environments, including water bodies and glaciers, as they can travel long distances. The potential toxicity of such particles cannot be underestimated.

HARMFUL EFFECTS

Airborne microplastics can enter the human body through inhalation or ingestion. Once these particles penetrate the lung tissue and the gastrointestinal tract, they can cause various health complications. These particles can carry harmful chemical additives that disrupt cellular functions and promote tumorigenesis. Studies have linked exposure to microplastics with respiratory issues such as Asthma, COPD, Interstitial lung diseases, lung cancer and also risk of colon cancer.



Children and individuals with preexisting health conditions are the most vulnerable population to get impacted. For instance, those suffering from Bronchial asthma may experience frequent exacerbations due to the inhalation of contaminated air.

TACKLING THE ISSUES

Addressing airborne microplastics issues requires a multifaceted approach. Public awareness campaigns are essential to educate communities about the risks associated with microplastic exposure, encouraging proactive measures to reduce pollu-

Governments must enforce regulations on plastic production and waste management to minimise environmental contamination. Additionally, enhancing air

quality monitoring systems can help to keep a track of microplastic levels. Apart from this, individuals can use air purifiers at homes with a filter that can trap and remove most microplastics.

Airborne microplastics are an alarming threat to public health in India and beyond. As we continue to grapple with the consequences of plastic pollution, it is important that we take collective action to mitigate its impact on our health and environment.

Implementing effective policies and fostering research initiatives can work towards countering the dangers posed by airborne microplastics.

(The author, Dr. Santoshkumar P Hammigi, is a pulmonologist, at Apollo Clinic, Marathahalli.)

what's brewing?





Mahila Dakshata Samiti

Educational Institutions hosted a

motivational seminar titled "Get

Inspired for Success" at its

Gangaram campus in Chandanagar,

Hyderabad. The seminar

commenced with the arrival of Dr

Jiwani, Senior Interventional

Cardiologist at KIMS Hospital,

along with Poonam Yarlagadda, V.

S. Ganesh and Satish Kumar

The 10th International Dance, Music and Award Festival 2024, organised by Sree Surabhi Academy of Performing Arts, was held at CGO Towers in Hyderabad. he event showcased talented young Kuchipudi artistes, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of Telangana and promoting the classical dance form.











Allways Events and SV Productions have announced a grand New Year's Eve celebration at Novotel on December 31. The highlights of the celebration includes he presence of actress Sree Leela, live music by Niraval Band, dance performances and



Patlolla Indra Reddy, the grandson of former minister Patlolla Sabitha Indra Reddy, has made a name for himself in the world of chess. He emerged as the champion in the under-11 boys category at the Krishna Gopal Kapoor Memorial International Rating Chess Tournament held in Kanpur.





Anita Advani launched her memoir, "The Endearingly Wicked Ways of Rajesh Khanna," at the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad, paying tribute to the Bollywood legend on his birth anniversary. The event was attended by Raunaq Yar Khan, the 9th Nizam of the Asaf Jahi Dynasty, as the chief guest.



Vasanta Seshabhattar, Founder of Aetheria Essentials, was honoured for her outstanding contributions to promoting eco-friendly products and sustainability. Through her innovative approach, incorporating biodegradable materials

and sustainable gifting options, Vasanta is inspiring a shift towards conscious consumption.







Sphoorthy Engineering College in Hyderabad hosted its Alumni Meet 2024, which commenced with a lamp-lighting ceremony. The event eatured Bharatanatyam performances and alumni members sharing their experiences and offering valuable advice to final-year students.

ARCHIE









CALVIN AND HOBBES







GARFIELD





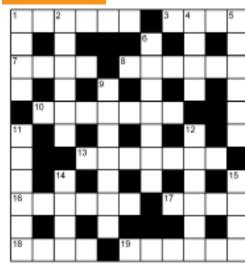


REALITY CHECK





CROSSWORD



IRMA IS MY BEST GIRL-FRIEND-BUT LIKE ALL FRIENDS-WE STILL FIGHT SOME-TIMES

GINGER MEGGS







SUDOKU

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

1	Yesterday's solution										
	7	6	3	8	4	2	9	1	5		
ı	8	4	2	5	9	1	7	6	3		
1	5	9	1	7	3	6	4	2	8		
	2	3	8	9	7	5	6	4	1		
1	9	1	5	6	8	4	3	7	2		
	6	7	4	2	1	3	8	5	9		
ı	1	5	7	3	6	8	2	9	4		
	3	2	6	4	5	9	1	8	7		
	4	8	9	1	2	7	5	3	6		
1	Rules										
ı	 Each row and column can 										

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

ACROSS

One of the continents

Opposite of false

10 Went red in the face

13 A game with bat and

7 A short letter

8 Repairing

ball

16 A king's son

17 Come to an halt

18 Sprinkle this on food 19 A bird that can be trained

to race

DOWN

- A female relation
- 2 A baby's toy 4 Water from the sky



5 Four times twenty

11 Wine is made from

14 Young woman

these

12 Middle

15 Twirl

6 You need this to be

allowed to drive a car

9 The world's largest bird









tollywood

Hyderabad | Tuesday December 31, 2024

PUSHPA ANTE FLOWER ANKUNTIVA? BRAND IDDI!

Allu Arjun and director Sukumar delivered the sequel Pushpa 2: The Rule three years after the first installment Pushpa: The Rise. Produced by Mythr Movie Makers, the film features Rashmika Mandanna as the female lead. Although the film officially released on December 5. premieres began on the night of December 4. The governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh granted permission to increase the ticket price for this film, a firsttime occurrence. Following Allu Arjun's visit to Nandhyal, the Mega family maintained their distance, and Mega Fans largely avoided watching *Pushpa 2* in the Telugu states. However, the Hindi version of the film became a massive hit, catapulting it to the highest-grossing Indian film and establishing Allu Arjun as the new superstar of Indian cinema. As one of the high-budget films in Telugu cinema, Pushpa 2 achieved a remarkable feat by crossing the Rs 1.000 crore mark

TOLLYWOOD'S 2024 ATW()) WHAT NOT!

This year was a mixed response for Tollywood with only few films being successful, but some of the top actors like Prabhas, Jr NTR and Allu Arjun widened their market with huge success. Some of the small films also did better and here is the round up of the year

SURESH KAVIRAYANI sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

early 250 Telugu films were released in 2024 and as in previous years, only about 8 percent of them achieved success. This year belonged to Allu Arjun, whose film Pushpa 2: The Rule, a sequel to his earlier hit Pushpa: The Rise, became a sensational hit in the Hindi belt.

Although the film failed to break even in the Telugu states due to various reasons, it emerged as a huge hit in Hindi, catapulting Allu Arjun to superstardom in India. Despite the film's blockbuster status, the actor was unable to celebrate its success due to controversy and ongoing legal issues. The Telugu film industry is one of the largest in India, with approximately Rs 2,500 crore invested in films this year. Pushpa 2 had the highest budget, followed by Kalki 2898AD and Devara: Part 1. Some smaller films, such as Aay, Committee Kurrollu, Mathu Vadalara 2 and KA, achieved

significant success at the box office. Siddhu Jonnalagadda, popularly known as DJ Tillu, emerged as a new star in Telugu cinema after the massive success of his film Tillu Square. The film joined the prestigious Rs 100 crore club, a rare feat for an upcoming actor like Siddhu. He is now one of the most sought-after stars in Telugu cinema.

On the other hand, the film *Hanuman* was initially released in a limited number of theaters but later expanded to more screens, ultimately emerging as a huge hit. Teja Sajja, a relatively small star who played the lead role in the film, became a household name following the success of Hanuman. Directed by Prashanth Varma, the film not only performed well in Telugu but also in other languages, includina Hindi

Mahesh Babu's film Guntur Kaaram, released at the beginning of the year, received mixed reviews. However, Mahesh Babu's performance and the film's songs helped it recover its investment. According to the producer, the film generated good profits, performing well in the Telugu states.

PRABHAS GOES SCI-FI WITH KALKI 2898AD

Kalki worked with Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan played the lead in this science fiction film Kalki 2898AD directed by Nag Ashwin and produced by Ashwini Dutt. Deepika Padukone, Kamal Haasan and Disha Patani



are the other big stars in this film. The story is set in the year 2898, 6000 years after the Kurukshetra war. According to the director, some people are trying to save the unborn child Kalki, and the film's story is inspired by the Hindu puranas. This is the first part of the film, and the second part has not yet started shooting. Despite receiving mixed reviews, the film was a hit at the box office not only in Telugu but also in other languages

Prabhas played the role of Bhairava and also appeared as Karna in the end. Vijay Deverakonda made a brief appearance as Ariun, and top

director Rajamouli also appeared in one scene. With an estimated budget of Rs 600 crore, this film is the highest-ever budget film made in Indian cinema. It collected more than Rs 1,000 crore gross worldwide and an estimated net of Rs 700 crore.

HITS

JR NTR BREAKS THE RAJAMOULI 'CURSE' WITH DEVARA

There is a sentiment in Telugu cinema that after a film with Rajamouli, the actor's next film will be a big flop. This jinx has affected several actors, including Jr NTR, Nithiin, Prabhas, Ravi Teja and Ram Charan. However, Jr NTR has broken this curse with his film Devara. Jr NTR teamed up with director Koratala Siva for Devara, which stars Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan as the villain. The film also features Srikanth, Prakash Raj, Murali Sharma, Abhimanyu Singh and Ajay in important roles. Janhvi Kapoor made her Telugu debut as the female lead. Although the movie did not impress critics, the audience made it a huge hit. With this success, Jr NTR has broken the Rajamouli curse. While Allu Arjun emerges as a big star in Hindi, Jr NTR solidifies his position as a leading star in Telugu. The film's budget was around Rs 300 crore, and it collected an estimated amount of Rs 400 crore.



UNSTOPPABLE SIDDHU GADU

within just a few

days of its

release

Siddhu Jonnalagadda became popular with his variety of scripts, and one of his big hits was DJ Tillu. He came to be known as Tillu gadu with that film and the sequel Tillu Square was released in March this year. The film got massive openings like a big star, and within a few days. Siddhu joined the Rs 100 crore club. Siddhu surprised everyone with his performance and the songs were also very popular. Anupama Parameswaran played the female lead and her role was completely different from her earlier films. Siddhu Jonnalagadda has emerged as a star with this film, and its impact will likely be seen in his upcoming films. He is undoubtedly the star of 2024 with his stupendous success and entertainment. The film's budget was around Rs 35 crore and it collected nearly Rs 135 crore, making it a surprise and sensational hit in Telugu cinema. Mallik Ram directed the film. while Suryadevera Naga Vamsi

produced it.



THE MIGHTY HANUMAN: **A SUPERHERO EMERGES**

Director Prashanth Varma's *HanuMan* is the first superhero Telugu film. Teja Sajja, Amritha Aiyer, Varalakshi Sarath Kumar and Samuthirakhani play the main leads. Although the film initially received limited theatrical releases, it generated overwhelmingly positive word-of-mouth. The film's appeal transcended age groups, with both kids and family audiences flocking to watch it. As a result, this small film emerged as one of the biggest hits of the year. Teja Sajja's performance earned him recognition not only in the Telugu states but also among Hindi audiences. Niranjan Reddy produced the film, which had a budget of around Rs 40 crores and collected nearly Rs 350 crores worldwide.



DULQUER SALMAAN'S LUCKY STREAK CONTINUES.....

on doing more Telugu films. After the success of Mahanati and Sita Ramam, the actor is getting good projects in Telugu. Venky Atluri directed him in *Lucky* Bhaskar, a period story set against the backdrop of the banking system and stock market scam. Dulquer Salmaan delivered a neat performance in the film and received praise for his acting. Meenakshi Chaudharv played the female lead, while Suryadevara Naga Vamsi produced the film. The movie was released in all southern languages and declared a hit. Dulquer Salmaan is now working on more Telugu projects.



Devara: Part 1 HanuMan Tillu Square Lucky Bhaskar Saripodhaa Sanivaaram KA Committee Kurrollu Mathu Vadalara 2

Kalki 2898AD

Saindhav Eagle Operation Valentine Bhimaa Double iSmart Mr Bachchan Maname Krishnamma Zebra Viswam

Harom Hara

Maa Nanna Hero

GUNTUR KAARAM MISSES THE SPICE

Mahesh Babu collaborated with Trivikram for the third time on "Guntur Kaaram." released in January to coincide with the Sankranthi festival. Sreeleela and Meenakshi Chaudhary played the female leads, alongside a talented ensemble cast including Ramya Krishna, Prakash Raj, and Jagapathi Babu. However, the film's production was marred by controversies, including a halt in shooting due to creative differences between Mahesh Babu and the action choreographers. Pooja Hegde was initially cast but left the project due to delays. Cinematographer PS Vinod also departed midway through filming. Despite receiving negative reviews, producer S Radhakrishna claimed to have generated profits through Hindi dubbing rights and OTT, satellite channels. S Thaman composed the film's music.



SONG OF THE YEAR: KURCHI MADATHAPETTI

"Guntur Kaaram" became a massive hit. topping charts for several months. Mahesh Babu, Sreeleela, and Poorna danced to the song in the film. Ramajogaiah Sastry penned the lyrics, while Sahithi Chaganti and Sri Krishna provided the vocals. Thaman's music and Mahesh Babu's unforgettable. After the film's release,

The song "Kurchi Madathapetti" from

energetic dance performance made the song "Kurchi Madathapetti" was played extensively and featured in numerous reels.

RAVI TEJA'S DOUBLE DISASTERS

Senior actor Ravi Teja faced a tough year with two of his films, Eagle and Mr. Bachchan, bombing at the box office. Both films were produced by People Media Factory. Eagle was directed by Karthik Ghattamaneni, while Mr. Bachchan was directed by Harish Shankar and was a remake of the Hindi film Raid starring Ajay Devgn. Despite high expectations, Mr. Bachchan failed to impress audiences. However, Ravi Teja remains optimistic, with several projects in the pipeline and is confident of making a comeback in the new year.



GOPICHAND'S HUNT FOR SUCCESS

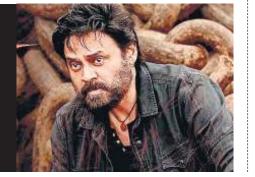
Gopichand's wait for a break continues, with his two films, Bhimaa and Viswam, failing to impress audiences. The actor's last major hit was Loukyam in 2014 and he has been searching for a breakthrough ever since. This year, he tried his luck with two different films: Bhimaa, directed by Kannada director A Harsha and Viswam, directed by Srinu Vaitla, who made a comeback as a director with this film. Unfortunately, neither film brought Gopichand the success he was hoping for.

OPERATION FAILURE FOR VARUN TEJ

Varun Tej, the tall and handsome actor from the Mega family, was looking for a good break this year. He tried a Pan-Indian film, *Operation Valentine*, released in multiple languages, but it was a complete failure. The same subject was already explored in the Hindi film Fighter, starring Hritik Roshan and Deepika Padukone, leaving no takers for Varun Tei's film. His other film, Matka, a period drama inspired by Ratan Khatri, the original Matka King, also failed to impress audiences due to its lack of emotion and entertainment. Varun Tej must wait longer for a breakthrough.

S*aindhav:* a sankranthi POINTMENT FOR VENKATESH

Venkatesh's film Saindhav was released during the Sankranthi festival but failed to impress audiences. Typically, Venkatesh's films are considered safe bets, but Saindhav turned out to be a huge disaster. Despite being released during the festive season, the film was rejected outright by audiences. Directed by Sailesh Kolanu of Hit fame, the action film starred Shraddha Srinath as



VIJAY DEVERAKONDA'S CONTINUED STRUGGLE

Vijay Deverakonda's rise to fame was meteoric after the success of Arjun Reddy and Geetha Govindam. However, he has faced a series of flops since 2020, including World Famous Lover, Liger and Khushi. This year, he starred in The Family Star, directed by Parasuram and produced by Dil Raju. Despite high expectations, the film failed to deliver and became a mediocre outing. Mrunal Thakur played the female lead. Interestingly, the film performed well in Tamil, but Vijay Deverakonda's struggle to find success in Telugu continues.

OTHER BOX-OFFICE DISAPPOINTMENTS

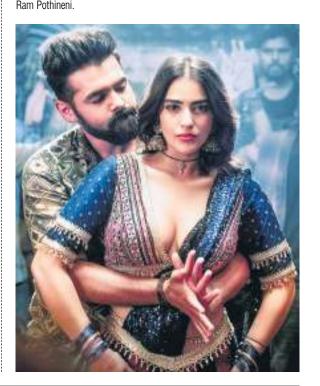
Sudheer Babu's two films, Harom Hara and Maa Nanna Superhero, tanked at the box office. Vishwak Sen's three films, Gaami, Gangs of Godavari and Mechanic Rocky, also failed, except for Gaami, which received average reviews. Raj Tarun's three films, Bhale Unnade, Tiragabadara Saami and Purushothamudu, all bombed. Allari Naresh's two films, Aa Okkati Adakku and Bachchala Malli, failed to impress audiences. Anand Deverakonda's Gam Gam Ganesha, Sree Vishnu's *Om Bheem Bush* and *SWAG* and Satya Dev's Krishnamma and Zebra all failed miserably

MIXED RESPONSE FOR DUBBED FILMS

Vijay Sethupathi's Maharaja received positive reviews and was declared a hit in Telugu. Amaran, starring Sai Pallavi and Siva Karthikeyan, was also a big hit. Rajinikanth's Vettaiyan, directed by TJ Gnanavel and costarring Fahad Faasil and Rana Daggubati, performed well at the box office. Dhanush's Raayan, which he also directed, received positive talk and emerged as a winner. However, Suriya's Kanguva, directed by Siva, was a major disappointment despite high expectations and aggressive promotions. Bollywood actor Bobby Deol played the villain in this film. Vijay's GOAT, directed by Venkat Prabhu, also disappointed despite its big star cast. Director Shankar and Kamal Haasan's combination Indian 2 tanked at the box office.

DOUBLE ISMART: A DISAPPOINTING SEQUEL

Director Puri Jagannath's Double iSmart was expected to be a comeback film after the success of Liger. However, the movie fell short of expectations and became a huge failure at the box office. Ram Pothineni starred as the lead actor, alongside Kavya Thapar as the female lead and Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt as the villain. Unfortunately, Puri Jagannath seemed to have lost his touch on filmmaking and Ram Pothineni's wait for a break continues. Interestingly, Double iSmart is a sequel to the hit film iSmart Shankar, which was also directed by Puri Jagannath and starred



Australia beat India by 184 runs in fourth Test

PTI MELBOURNE

ndia slumped to a demoralising 184-run loss to Australia in the Lourth Test here on Monday with contemporary greats Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli failing to come good yet again, signalling that their walk towards the exit door is not too far.

Chasing a near improbable target of 340, both Rohit (9 off 40 balls) and Kohli (5) failed to battle their technical frailties and mental cobwebs as India lost seven wickets for 34 runs in just 20.4 overs in the final session to be all out for 155 in 79.1 overs.

Australian captain Pat Cummins (3/28 in 18 overs) was superb as usual and Scott Boland was also magnificent (3/39 in 16 overs) in his every spell.

Nathan Lyon (2/37 in 20.1 overs) took advantage of variable bounce while Mitchell Starc (1/25 in 16 overs) got the prized scalp of Kohli. This was after an 88-run fourthwicket stand between Yashasvi Iasiwal and Rishabh Pant.

"Pretty disappointing. We wanted

to fight but we could not do it," a dejected Rohit said in the postmatch presentation.

"We tried everything but they fought hard. We did not grab our chances," he conceded. Australia now lead the series 2-1

and unless India draw level in Sydney, a third successive World Test Championship final could become a distant dream. Even to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, India would need to post a

Save Jaiswal (84, 208 balls), whose controversial caught-behind in which the third umpire overruled technology to adjudge him out, none of the other batters performed well enough to save the

"They batted well in the middle session. We knew that we had to get one breakthrough and anything can happen and that proved to be the case.

"We had plenty of runs to play with, we had plenty of fielders with the helmet around," a beaming Cummins, who was also adjudged player of the match for his haul of



six wickets, said in the presentation

The art of saving Test matches has slowly become extinct but India would have depended on their two

senior-most players, who are also fighting to save their legacy and reputation built over nearly two decades.

In case of Rishabh Pant, it was one

bad shot too many after a full session in which he concentrated. He got a rank long hop from Travis Head but after a 103-ball vigil, it all

Even Jaiswal's guts and grit couldn't prevent a once highly-rated, but currently a trifle over-rated, Indian batting line-up from implosion with over-the-hill seniors and young superstars unable to handle the pressure.

The defeat could have severe repercussions as there seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel for skipper Rohit.

As for Kohli, despite all his white-ball exploits, the problems outside the off-stump will stick out like a sore thumb. For Rohit, his ultra-defensive

approach in the opening slot, is causing India to stare down the barrel with alarming regularity.
Rohit did all the hard work during the first hour before opposition skipper Cummins got his bunny for the 10th time in Test matches. Kohli could never control his urge of playing the cover drive again and was caught at first slip after Mitchell Starc pushed one across with the angle.

Rahul was out without troubling the scorers after getting a second good ball in the game.

Rohit's decision to bat up the order backfired and it also tinkered with Rahul's mindset despite him being perfectly fine opening the innings. The captaincy was pedestrian as he let the game drift on occasions and there were lot of phases that led to India's defeat but none more telling than the final wicket partnership between Scott Boland and Nathan Lyon where the target went out of reach on Sunday.

Save Jasprit Bumrah, who once again toiled manfully for 50 overs and took nine wickets, and find-ofthe-series Nitish Reddy, who scored a gritty hundred, there are no positives to be taken from this

The batting, save for the second innings in the opening Perth Test, has been absolutely below par and India won't be doing themselves any favours if they have walking wickets at the top of the order.

The team is going through a tough transition and it is now time that their feisty head coach Gautam Gambhir shows some spark along with chairman of selectors Ajit



Seniors like Rohit, Kohli haven't really contributed: Gavaskar

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

The legendary Sunil Gavaskar on Monday lashed out at senior players such as Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for letting the team down and blamed the Indian toporder for losing the Boxing Day Test against Australia here. Set a target of 340 on the final day of the fourth Test, the Indian batters, with the exception of Yashasvi Jaiswal (84), faltered yet again to lose the match by 184 runs and trail 1-2 in the five-match series.

expected have not come. It is the top-order which has to contribute, if the top-order is not contributing, why blame the lower-order.

"The seniors have not really made the contribution that they should have, all that they had to do was bat out today and live to fight another day in Sydney," Gavaskar told India Today. "It's just that the toporder didn't contribute and that is the reason India found itself in this position."

While Gavaskar praised Jaiswal for his gritty knock, the batting great once again was not impressed by Rishabh Pant's shot selection, which opened the floodgates for Australia. Joining hands at 33 for 3, Jaiswal and Pant looked to have settled down, taking India to 121 in the post-lunch session, before a rash shot from Pant set the team back. "Yes, absolutely around tea time when Rishabh

Pant and Yashasvi Jaiswal had batted through the post-lunch session, it certainly looked India could achieve a draw because it was a matter of batting for another hour really without losing a wicket, and Australia would have then given up," Gavaskar said.

The whole idea was try and take into the mandatory overs and if around the mandatory overs India had just lost maybe four wickets then Australia, after a couple off overs, would have asked to shake hands but that didn't happen."

"It all depends on the selectors.
The contributions that were Travis Head after a 103-ball vigil, during which he shared 84 runs for the fourth wicket with Jaiswal, he hit it straight to Mitchell Marsh at in the deep in search of a six.

"...The issue is you know there is this shot called sixer in cricket and which is like a drug. Once you hit a couple of sixes, then you think that's a real a high because once you hit the ball cleanly of the middle of the bat and it goes into the stands, there is no better feeling for a batter. Sixer is a different feeling and it's a drug, it gets into your system," Gavaskar said. "The difference between a boundary and a six is just two runs but the risk percentage is 100 per cent. Boundary is hit along the ground no risk at all, a six is attempted with the ball up in the air and if you don't time it, if it hits the toe of your bat, it can go up and you can be out caught."

New Zealand beats Sri Lanka by 45 runs in second T20

AP ■ MOUNT MAUNGANUI

Sri Lanka again fell short in a Stough run chase as New Zealand won the second Twenty20 international by 45 runs Monday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The tourists were edged by eight runs chasing 172-8 in the first match two days ago and again faltered late while chasing New Zealand's 186-5 on Monday. Sri Lanka was all out for 141 in 19.1 overs.

"It's really important to finish the game, no matter how it started," Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka said.

"The way you finish is the most important thing. In the first game we were almost there to win and again we're disappointed."

Once again, Jacob Duffy was New Zealand's key bowler, dismissing opener Pathum Nissanka for 37 and returning



to remove Kusal Perera for 48 when both batters looked well placed to steer Sri Lanka to

Nissanka made 96 in the first match in a 120-run opening partnership with Kusal Mendis before Duffy turned that match in New Zealand's favor when he took three wickets in four balls, including Mendis, to stifle the Sri Lanka chase. He took 4-15 Monday to once

again stand out as the difference between the teams. After dismissing Nissanka, Duffy produced a superb vorker to remove Perera in the 16th over when Sri Lanka was 127-4 and still in with a good chance. He then removed Wanindu Hasaranga (1) and Maheesh Theekshana (0) in the space of three balls in the 18th over as the Sri Lanka tail again failed to fire.

with consecutive balls in the 19th over before Zak Foulkes finished off the Sri Lanka innings with five balls remaining.
New Zealand depended on a

Matt Henry took two wickets

century partnership between Daryl Mitchell and Michael Bracewell to post a competitive total in the first match. It produced a more balanced batting effort Monday to reach a testing total on a tricky pitch which sometimes skidded, sometimes held up and provided a batting challenge. skidded, A strong wind across the Bay Oval also made hitting to one side of the ground difficult and gave an edge to the bowlers.

Tim Robinson made 41 from

34 balls at the top of the New Zealand innings, hitting three fours and two sixes to impart early momentum while Rachin Ravindra failed again and was out for 1.

Mentally disturbing, we fell short in finding ways to win: Rohit Sharma

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

ndian skipper Rohit Sharma on Monday said the 184-run drubbing at the hands of Australia in the fourth Test here is "mentally disturbing", conceding that his team failed to fight in the match.

India will now head to Sydney for the fifth and final Test trailing 1-2 in the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The series finale begins on January

"It is mentally disturbing when you can't do what you have come to do," Rohit, whose own poor form has been under the scanner, told reporters after the

game.
"It is pretty disappointing. There are ways to win games and we fell short in finding ways to win the game here. We wanted to fight till the end and unfortunately we couldn't do it," he said in the post-match presentation ceremony.

Australia were struggling at 90 for six in their second innings with the overall lead yet to touch 200 on Sunday but managed to make it a 340-run target for the visitors. Rohit admitted his team could not exploit the favourable situation.

"We had Australia 90 for 6. We know things can get tough, but we want to play tough cricket from hard situations. But we were not good enough. I went back to my room and thought about what else we could have done as a team," Rohit said. "But we threw everything we had, they fought hard, especially that last-wicket partnership, which probably cost us the game there," he added.

Rohit said the team wanted to have a go at the target despite its daunting nature. "We knew 340 wasn't going to

be easy. We tried to set a platform and keep wickets in hand for the last two sessions, but they bowled perfectly as well. We wanted to go for the target, but we didn't set the platform from our side," he noted. The Mumbaikar lauded Nitish Kumar Reddy for making a fine hundred during the first innings, and hoped the youngster will climb the ladder.

"He's coming here for the first time, these conditions can get really tough, but he showed great character, solid technique as well.

"He's got everything to be successful at this level, I hope he goes from strength to strength, and he's got all the backing from the team as well," he said.

The 37-year-old also patted pacer Jasprit Bumrah for leading the Indian bowling attack almost singlehandedly. Absolutely brilliant, We've been watching him for so many years now, coming here and getting the job done. He's not a statistical person.

"He just wants to play for the country and do well for the team, but unfortunately he's not got a lot of support from the other side," he added.

Jaiswal's caught-behind dismissal sparks controversy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Tndia opener Yashasvi Jaiswal's contentious dismissal sparked a controversy on the final day of the fourth Test against Australia here on Monday, as third umpire Saikat Sharfuddoula ruled him out despite no edge being registered on the Snicko. Jaiswal, who was batting on 84, miscued a hook off pacer Pat Cummins'

short-pitched, down the leg delivery, and the batter was initially given not out by on-field umpire Joel Wilson after Australia appealed for a caught-behind dismissal. However, upon review, third umpire

Saikat adjudged that there was a deflection off Jaiswal's gloves/bat based on the visual evidence. Saikat overruled the Snicko, which

showed no spike, leading to chants of "cheater, cheater" around the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Jaiswal was ousted after playing a solid

84 off 208 deliveries. At one stage, he seemed to steer India to a draw before the visitors lost wickets in clusters in their chase of 340,

eventually going down by 184 runs.



The left-hander argued with the onfield umpires over the decision before walking back.

"In my view the decision was out. The third umpire did make the correct decision in the end," Former ICC Elite Panel umpire Simon Taufel told Channel 7.

"With the technology protocols, we do have a hierarchy of redundancy and when the umpire sees a clear deflection off the bat there is no need to go any further and use any other form of

technology to prove the case. "The clear deflection is o

evidence. In this particular case what we have seen from the third umpire, is they've used a secondary form of technology, which for whatever reason hasn't shown the same conclusive evidence of audio to back up the clear deflection. "In the end the third umpire did the

right thing and went back to the clear deflection and overturned the umpire field. So, in my view correct decision made," he added. This incident follows a similar

controversy in the opening Test in Perth, where opener KL Rahul's dismissal sparked a debate.

After on-field umpire Richard
Kettleborough had ruled in Rahul's

favour following Australia's appeal, the home team used DRS to challenge the decision.

Third umpire Richard Illingworth had overturned the call despite not having the benefit of a split-screen view which would have given him a clearer picture of whether the Mitchell Starc delivery actually grazed the bat or the snicko responded to a hit on the pads.

India's peerless fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah nominated for ICC Cricketer of the Year award

PTI ■ DUBAI

Operating at a level rarely seen in the game before, India's peerless fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah was on Monday nominated for the ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year award and also featured in the list for the best player in the Test format.

Bumrah, who has left the Australian batters scrambling for survival with his incredible display of fast bowling in the ongoing five-match series Down Under, has been nominated for the top award, named after legendary West Indies allrounder Sir Garfield Sobers, alongside England's prolific duo of Joe Root and Harry Brook, with swashbuckling Australian batter Travis Head completing the list.

Besides Bumrah, who has throughout 2024, Root, Brook and Sri Lanka's Kamindu Mendis featured in the list for the ICC Test Cricketer of the However, it was on India's defending their ICC World

Year award.

Bumrah has been the best bowler in Test cricket in 2024 with 71 wickets from 13 matches at an average of 14.92 and a strike rate of 30.16, the best figures for any bowler. The right-arm pacer has also been the top bowler in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with 30 wickets in a mere four

"Having returned to the Test arena following his recovery from a recurring back injury in 2023, Bumrah dominated the bowling charts in 2024. Featuring across 13 Tests in the calendar year, Bumrah delivered his best-ever annual 71 wickets finishing the year with more Test wickets than any of his counterparts," the ICC said on

its website. "Be it the pace-conducive conditions in South Africa been at the top of his game and Australia, or tougher conditions for quicks at home, Bumrah was equally

tour of Australia that the pace spearhead produced magnum opus," it added. The ICC rated Bumrah's match-defining spells at Perth, to guide India to a 295run win, among his most memorable performances along with his dominating

show in T20 World Cup.
"Bumrah nabbed 15 wickets from eight outings including a couple in the final against South Africa — as India went unbeaten at the 2024 T20 World Cup," the

ICC said. Head was nominated after finishing as the leading run-scorer of the T20 World Cup and being at the forefront of Australian batting in Tests.

"Typifying an aggressive brand of batting, the southpaw brandished runs at a brisk rate in the shortest format, and finished among the leading run-getters at ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024. In the Test arena, Head was



Test Championship title," the ICC said.

England mainstay Root has been the most dominant batter in the year, amassing 1,556 runs from 17 Tests at 55.57. The 34-year-old crossed the 1,000-run mark in a calendar year for the fifth time in his career while scoring six tons and five

The game's global governing body said, "Across 17 Tests, Joe Root compiled his second-best annual run-tally in Tests — second only to his 1,708 runs from 2021. It was also the fifth instance of Root scoring over 1,000 Test runs

"With six Test hundreds to go

in a calendar vear."

Root was a consistent performer for England both home and away. His impressive run with the bat saw Root amass joint-fifth highest tons in Tests (36) alongside Rahul Dravid," it added.

The ICC recalled Root's career-best 262 against

Pakistan at Multan, also his sixth double century in Tests, and termed it one of his best efforts.

Root's compatriot Brook is also in the list of four shortlisted players after scoring 1,100 runs from 12 Tests at 55.00 with four centuries and three fifties.

Brook is fourth in the list of highest run-scorers in 2024 behind table-topper Root, India's Yashasvi Jaiswal (1,478 runs at 54.74) and England's Ben Duckett (1,149 runs at

37.06). "A flagbearer of England's quickfire brand of batting, Harry Brook emerged as a breakthrough performer in the longest format," the ICC

said. "A noticeable trait in his performances was the fact that most of his runs (723) came away from home while playing the same number of games as he did in England

(6)," it added. Brook's "blistering" 317 off 322 deliveries was one of his

top performances in the year. Sri Lanka's Mendis, who hit 1,049 runs from nine Tests at 74.92, is also in the list after enjoying a terrific year, during which he became the jointthird quickest to score 1000 Test runs, equalling Sir Don Bradman's 13-innings mark to reach the milestone.

"Mendis averaged more than any of the batters who played more than two Tests in the calendar year — a staggering 74.92 from nine matches," the apex body said. His performances with the

bat helped Sri Lanka push their claim for their first-ever appearance in the ICC World Test Championship Final with wins over New Zealand, England and Bangladesh," it added.

Mendis' against centuries Zealand at home, which helped him finish as the fifth highest run-scorer this year, were called his most "memorable performance" by