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QUOTE OF THE DAY

From Chandrababu, Kiran Kumar Reddy, and Rosaiah to KCR, everyone said they'll adopt Palamuru. Why should they adopt, can't the son of the soil do development? Will we get this chance again? After Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, it took 70 years to get this chance (of becoming CM). Should we lose this chance or develop our region? If we lose this chance, we may never get it again.

- Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister, TG

P4

DON'T MISS...

MP Chinni bats for 'Greater V'wada'

The NTR District Review Committee (DRC) meeting was held on Saturday at the Farmers' Training Centre (FTC) on the Irrigation Department premises in Vijayawada. Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni), NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha, and various MLCs and MLAs attended the session. Collector Lakshmisha reviewed the performance of multiple departments. The Minister urged officials and public representatives to work collectively...

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Lucky escape for 30 nursing students

Thirty nursing students had a miraculous escape when their college bus caught fire at Gudavalli village in Cherukupalli mandal of the district on Saturday. According to the police, the first-year nursing students of a private nursing college were on their way to write their examination when flames suddenly erupted in the bus. Acting swiftly, the alert driver stopped the vehicle and evacuated all the students before the fire spread. Within minutes, the flames engulfed the bus, reducing it to ashes. Fortunately, all the students escaped unhurt and were later sent to the college...

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'Manipur not like Mizoram'

A day after the Manipur government urged Mizoram CM Lalduhoma to demonstrate "better statesmanship" by being a "good neighbour" rather than fueling hatred through "unwarranted comments", Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Saturday said Manipur is not like Mizoram, "which was once just a district in Assam". Speaking at a function for construction of infrastructure to relocate the Assam Rifles from the premises of the historic Langthabal Old Palace, Singh said, "Manipur is..."

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Entrepreneurs get fintech, AI awards

High achievers facilitating cross-border partnerships between India and Europe were among leading entrepreneurs who received awards at the annual Indo-European Business Forum (IEBF) meet at the House of Lords complex in London. The 2024 IEBF Global Business Meet on Friday, themed as the 'Viksit Bharat Investment Summit', was aimed at spotlighting the many business and investment opportunities offered by India's goal of moving towards a developed economy by 2047. "To me, the thing that ties the UK and India together most closely is that we are two countries chasing the future," said Kanishka Narayan, the Welsh Indian Labour MP who recently returned from a visit to India as part of a parliamentary delegation...

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Fengal makes landfall along TN-Puducherry

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Cyclone Fengal, which had been intensifying over the Bay of Bengal, began making landfall on Saturday evening along the Tamil Nadu-Puducherry coast, the Meteorological Office reported. It is currently crossing the coast at a speed of 7 kmph, with landfall underway, according to the latest update.

In a red alert issued on Saturday, the Met Office stated that the cyclonic storm, which had been moving west-southwestwards at 7 kmph over the past six hours, was centred at 5:30 PM over the south-west Bay of Bengal, approximately 40 km off the North Tamil Nadu coast. It was located 50 km south-southeast of Mahabalipuram, 60 km east-northeast of Puducherry, and 90 km south of Chennai.

The latest observations indicate that the forward sector of the cyclone's spiral bands has entered land. The cyclone is expected to continue moving west-southwestwards, crossing the North Tamil Nadu-Puducherry coast between Karaikal and Mahabalipuram, near Puducherry. The storm is likely to bring winds of 70-80 kmph, with gusts reaching up to 90 kmph, in the next 3 to 4 hours.

The Meteorological Centre has forecast heavy to very heavy rain-



Cyclone Fengal's influence has led to heavy rains in Tirupati, Chittoor, Nellore, and Kadapa districts. Officials have warned of flash floods and urged people to remain alert. Wind speeds of 70-90 kmph were reported in Tirupati, Nellore, and Prakasam districts, according to District Disaster Management Authority MD Kurmanath. Fishermen in Nellore and Prakasam districts have been advised not to venture into the sea.

fall, with extremely heavy rain expected in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 24 hours. Continued on Page 2

4 die as car crashes into lorry



PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

A ghastly road accident near Polipalli village near Bhogapuram of Vizianagaram district, claimed the lives of four people on Saturday morning. The accident happened when a car, travelling from

Srikakulam to Visakhapatnam, suffered a tyre burst. The burst caused the car to lose control, jump over the road divider, and crash into an oncoming lorry.

Eyewitnesses said the car was speeding when the tyre burst. Despite the driver's efforts to regain

control, the car veered to the opposite side of the highway, overturned, and collided with the lorry. The crash was so intense that all four people in the car died on the spot.

Emergency services and police arrived quickly, but they could not save the victims. The identities of the deceased have not been confirmed yet, but their families have been notified. The lorry driver, who was injured, was taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

The police have started an investigation to find out the exact cause of the accident, including any mechanical failures or negligence. Authorities have urged drivers to ensure regular vehicle maintenance, especially tyres, to prevent such accidents.

The victims were on their way to Visakhapatnam for a family event, leaving their loved ones and the local community in deep shock. This tragic incident highlights the dangers of road travel and the need for better vehicle safety.

Dy CM's remarks over rice smuggling incoherent: YSRCP

PNS ■ GUNTUR/KAKINADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders have criticised Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan for his remarks over rice smuggling at Kakinada Port, describing them as incoherent and indicative of internal discord within the coalition government. They highlighted his complaint about lack of cooperation from officials, suggesting it reflects poorly on his administrative control.

Addressing the media in separate press conferences, former ministers

Ambati Rambabu and Kurasala Kannababu said Pawan Kalyan's dramatic comments at the port indicate either ignorance of the government's functioning or a deliberate attempt to deflect issues.

Kakinada anchor port, a key hub for rice exports, has witnessed the seizure of Public Distribution System (PDS) rice by the district collector. The leaders criticised Pawan Kalyan's claims, pointing out that the Civil Supplies Minister had earlier seized PDS rice that was released after a bank guarantee. Continued on Page 2

IMPACT OF FENGAL IN AP REVIEWED

Be vigilant: CM to officials

CALLS FOR REAL-TIME MONITORING THROUGH RTG TOOLS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu conducted a review meeting on Saturday with the Disaster Management Department, District Collectors, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), and Real-Time Governance (RTG) officials to assess preparedness for Cyclone Fengal. He emphasised the need for government machinery to remain vigilant and responsive at all levels.

The Chief Minister called for real-time monitoring of the cyclone's developments using RTG tools and directed officials to take immediate steps based on evolving situations. He stressed proactive measures to mitigate risks, including timely alerts to keep the public informed. He also suggested forming WhatsApp groups for better coordination across administrative levels.

Anticipating potential flash floods, the CM instructed district authorities to keep disaster response teams on standby and ensure swift action during emergencies.

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- Proactive measures, including timely public alerts, issued to mitigate risks effectively.
- Disaster response teams instructed to remain on standby to address emergencies swiftly.
- District Collectors asked to prepare detailed relief and rehabilitation plans.
- CM highlights need for clear updates to assist paddy farmers in protecting their crops.
- Ensuring public safety and coordinated efforts across departments State govt's priority.



AP POWER UTILITIES ON HIGH ALERT

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With Cyclone Fengal approaching Puducherry and Tamil Nadu, heavy rains, strong gales, and flash floods are anticipated in Andhra Pradesh, particularly in Nellore, Tirupati, Chittoor, Prakasam, and Kadapa districts. In light of the situation, Special Chief Secretary for Energy and CMD APTRANSCO, K Vijayanand, has directed AP power utilities

to remain on high alert and prepare for quick service restoration in case of disruptions.

During a teleconference on Saturday, Vijayanand instructed DISCOM CMDs to establish control rooms in rain-prone districts and appoint nodal officers to coordinate field activities. He emphasised the need for 24x7 staff availability, including linemen, and advised against availing holidays during this critical period. Continued on Page 2



CM N Chandrababu Naidu has tea with family members of a pension beneficiary at Nemakallu village in Bommanahal mandal of Anantapur district on Saturday

Naidu outlines his vision for wealth creation

Takes part in pension disbursal

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu visited Nemakallu village in Bommanahal mandal of Anantapur district on Saturday to personally hand over welfare pensions and engage with local communities. During his visit, the Chief Minister distributed a widow pension of Rs 4,000 to Palthuru Rudramma under the NTR Bharosa scheme. He also presented a disabled pension of Rs 15,000 to Boya Bhagyanamma, another beneficiary of the same scheme. These initiatives are part of the government's ongoing commitment to support underprivileged communities.

Accompanied by Government Whip Kalva Srinivasulu, District Collector Vinod Kumar, SP Jagadish, and other public representatives, CM Naidu interacted with the villagers at Indiramma Colony, capturing a moment with them in

a group photo. Later, he visited the renowned Sri Anjaneyaswamy Temple, where he had darshan and received blessings from the temple priests.

At a public meeting, CM Naidu outlined his government's vision for wealth creation and equitable distribution, emphasizing the importance of fostering development for the underprivileged.

He revealed several key initiatives aimed at transforming the state and improving citizens' quality of life.

The CM highlighted the agricultural potential of the Rayalaseema region, announcing plans to develop it as a major horticulture hub to increase agricultural productivity and boost farmers' incomes. He also discussed the integration of mobile technology with public services to enhance efficiency and transparency in governance.

Continued on Page 2

Land allotted for replica of Tirumala temple in Kumbh

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

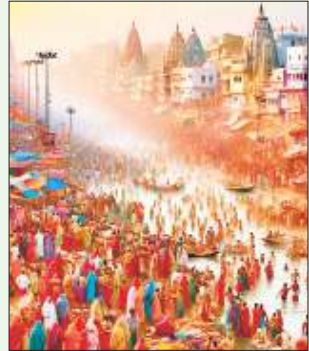
The Kumbh Mela authorities have allotted 2.5 acres of land to Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams to set up a replica of the Sri Venkateswara Swamy temple at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh.

TTD Joint Executive Officer for Health and Education, Gowthami, met Kumbh Mela Authority Officer Vijay Kiran Anand in Prayagraj and inspected the allotted land.

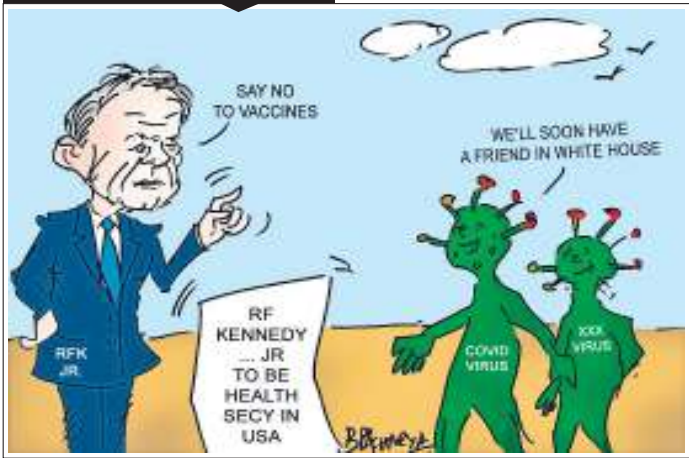
During the inspection, Gowthami and TTD officials made several suggestions regarding the arrangements for the mega-religious event, particularly to accommodate the expected influx of North Indian devotees, said a press release from TTD on Saturday.

As part of its initiative to promote Hindu Sanatana Dharma nationwide, TTD has sought a suitable space to establish a model temple for devotees from across the country.

The Kumbh Mela, one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, is scheduled to be held in Prayagraj from 13 January 2025, to 26 February 2025



OBTUSE ANGLE



Vizag Police turn to AI for smarter, safer roads

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The port city is set to embrace cutting-edge Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology in its traffic management system to reduce violations and prevent accidents. This ambitious move by the city police aims to enhance road safety and create a culture of responsible driving.

"We aim to make Vizag a no-overspeeding city. Soon, speed limits will be advertised on the

roads. Those who ignore the speed limits will be caught by AI-integrated CCTV cameras placed all over the city," stated Police Commissioner Shankhabrata Bagchi in a conversation with the Pioneer.

The initiative will see the installation of advanced Automatic Number Plate Recognition Systems (ANPRS) integrated with AI-powered cameras across the city. These systems will identify vehicles violating speed limits and



automatically issue e-challans to offenders. By making enforcement automated and precise, the police

hope to significantly lower fatal road accidents in the city.

Beyond overspeeding, the AI system will address various infractions, including overloading, illegal parking, and helmet-less driving. Penalties for these violations may include fines and temporary suspension of driving licenses, depending on the severity of the offence.

In line with the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims on November 17,

Commissioner Bagchi announced the creation of a Road Traffic Accident Victim Assistance Cell. This unit will help families of accident victims secure compensation swiftly, providing crucial support during challenging times.

The commissioner highlighted the positive impact of stricter enforcement since September, stating, "The number of fatal accidents has dropped from 32 to 16, and fatalities have reduced from 32 to 19."

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‘Psycho Ram’ vs ‘Chitti Naidu’: TDP still key to TG politics

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) may have been marginalized in Telangana's politics in terms of its representation in the state legislature and local bodies. But the party continues to provide ammunition for political barbs traded by the ruling Congress party and the opposition Bharat Rashtira Samithi.

TG Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's recent jab at BRS working president KT Rama Rao, dubbing him as 'Psycho Ram', sparked a buzz among Congress supporters. The nickname, which immediately gained traction, was a throwback to TDP's recent election campaign during which AP's ex-CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was labelled 'Psycho Jagan'. The parallel is hard to miss, given the import of the psychological term. Interestingly, KTR did not hold back his punches. He taunted Revanth as 'Chitti Naidu', reminding him of his tutelage under AP Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his political baptism in TDP yet again. Looks like Telangana's political arena can never be bereft of the influence of 'Andhra' masala, even if the party in question is largely confined to AP.

KTR's take on media mirrors Rahul's style

Bharat Rashtira Samithi working president KT Rama Rao, known for his sharp wit during public spats, seems to have taken a leaf out of All India Congress Committee leader Rahul Gandhi's play-book when it comes to handling the media. Rahul has no qualms about accusing media outlets of being aligned with the Bharatiya Janata Party so much so that he critiqued it as "media versus the people". KTR appears to be walking a similar path. For, KTR does enjoy significant media coverage, be it his statements or public utterances, though his party is no longer in power. Yet, for buttressing the "us versus them" narrative, the media has been cast as the villain. The irony here is hard to miss. If the media were truly taking sides, would they also publish stories that hurt the government or question its actions? "If you are not with me, you are against me", seems to be their specious logic. This explains why they blame a media house, but do not hesitate to cite articles published by it to drive home their PoV whenever the situation permits. True-blue journalism goes beyond certificates of appreciation from netas.

BRS barred from CM Revanth Reddy's family celebration

Whetting curiosity about Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's ability to draw a line between political rivals and fraternal colleagues, the leaders of Bharat Rashtira Samithi were conspicuous by their absence

at a recent family function of the CM— wedding of his brother's daughter— though invitations were dispatched to a wide array of guests, including media personnel. A BRS legislator confirmed there was no invitation, fuelling speculations about the depth of underlying political animosity. Adding to the intrigue, CM Revanth Reddy was spotted at the recent wedding of BRS MLA Malla Reddy's granddaughter. Does it mean the CM has more apnapan with the MLA? Incidentally, the CM attended the nuptials of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's daughter. Doesn't it mean BJP chalega? If so, why he does not want to touch BRS with a barge pole?

Scribes share gloom in fraternal WhatsApp groups

The recent verdict of the Supreme Court quashing the 'arbitrary, capricious and irrational' allotment of prime lands at 'throwaway prices' in Greater

known for their violent struggles and vociferous protests. 'Peaceful opposition' would be a contradiction in terms for most, if not all, of them. However, the Communists in Telangana seem to have softened their approach. The other day they went to Lagacharla, spoke to the some of the victims, and submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy with an 'appeal' that the government should not take their land forcefully. In other words, the word 'demand' was bahut door ki baath. Even while talking to the media later, they scrupulously avoided the word 'demand'; sticking instead to their 'appeal' to the government to provide land to the oustees and to bring a law in this regard. While Bharat Rashtira Samithi party leaders have criticised the Chief Minister for 'using' Communists shamelessly in the Lagacharla incident, the decision of the state government to subsequently withdraw the Lagacharla land acquisition notification issued in August suggests that the Communists' 'request' worked.

Coalition dharma and lawmakers' drama

A coalition may rule a state, but lawmakers within the grouping have their own interests to secure and therefore would never flinch from a showdown when the situation arises. Revealing small cracks in the NDA coalition government in Andhra Pradesh, the transport of fly ash from the Rayalaseema Thermal Power Plant (RTPP) has become a flashpoint now. Telugu Desam Party leader JC Prabhakar Reddy and Bharatiya Janata Party MLA P Adinarayana Reddy are virtually fighting it out in the open, claiming exclusive rights over the lucrative activity. Their showdown has resulted in blockades and use of strong-arm tactics, apart from stalling operations at RTPP for nearly a week now. Heavy deployment of police in the border areas of Kadapa and Anantapur districts has helped keep matters under control as of now. JC Prabhakar Reddy's trucks en route to Tadipatri were barred from loading fly ash by Adinarayana Reddy's supporters, who insist they will have a say in activities under the Jammalamadugu constituency. JC's faction has accused the BJP of resorting to tactics of intimidation. Although Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has spoken to both the warring leaders, tensions persist.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate, K Venkateshwarlu and Pradeep Kumar)

REPORTERS' DIARY

Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits to housing societies formed by different MPs, MLAs, SC and HC judges. All India Services bureaucrats, defence personnel and journalists has shattered the dreams of scribes in particular, because they are relatively the least privileged among all the categories bracketed. No wonder the affected journalists have started flooding fraternal WhatsApp groups with their gloom over the judgment. One can understand their anguish. For, more than 1,100 journalists had paid Rs.2 lakh 17 years back to the housing society in the hope of getting a house site without having to necessarily compromise on their professional integrity. What is galling for most of the journalists is that their salaries are pretty low with hardly any perks. In contrast, legislators, bureaucrats and judges get fat salaries from the government, live in government quarters, and travel in government vehicles. Many journalists don't own vehicles; they leg it out or take RTC buses even for official work. Of course, as the SC observed, journalists can't be treated as a separate class for preferential treatment. What if a state government confers special benefits for select journalists? In Telangana, for instance, there is an infamous G-18 group (subsequently expanded to G-27), whose members reportedly got villas/three- or double bedroom flats on the sly under a previous dispensation. In a way, they are better off now, considering the verdict has not 'landed' them in trouble.

Have Telangana Communists changed their lingo?

In general, Communist parties are

‘Youth are the nation’s future’

The former President attends 14th Convocation of KL Deemed University

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, emphasised the importance of physical fitness for youth, stating that they are the nation's future. Speaking at the 14th convocation of KL Deemed University in Vaddeswaram on Saturday, he stressed that holistic education ('Vidya') should instil humility ('Vinayam'), which in turn provides the eligibility ('Patrata') to achieve success. He urged students to embrace yoga, pranayama, and exercise to stay strong and healthy.

Kovind, the chief guest, expressed happiness in addressing the convocation, while Andhra Pradesh Governor Syed Abdul Nazeer, the guest of honour, conferred degrees to graduates. Kovind highlighted the need for skills alongside degrees in the 21st century, urging



youth to embrace continuous learning.

Drawing from his own experience, he recalled walking 6 km daily for his education in a rural area.

KL University President Koneru Satyanarayana noted that the institution instils social responsibility in students through rural service

programmes. He highlighted graduates securing jobs with salaries up to Rs 57 lakhs.

Vice-Chancellor Dr G Parthasarathy Varma announced that 4,706 students, including 166 Ph.D. scholars, would receive degrees. He lauded the completion of over 170 national and international projects

and mentioned Rs 100 crore funding from the UGC for the university.

The event, presided over by Registrar Dr K Subba Rao, saw participation from KLEF Secretary Koneru Siva Kanchanalatha, Vice President Koneru Raja Harin, board members, deans, directors, and department heads.

Kakani slams CM over power tariffs

PNS ■ NELLORE

Former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy has criticised the coalition government for renegeing on its election promise by increasing power tariffs and preparing for another hike.

Addressing the media on Saturday, he blamed Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for the ongoing power sector crisis and accused him of imposing an additional burden of Rs 9,400 crore on the public.

Kakani stated that during 2014-19, Chandrababu purchased power at an average cost of Rs 5.10 per unit, which contributed to the financial strain on the sector. In contrast, he claimed that agreements made by former CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy would save the



State approximately Rs 1.10 lakh crore.

He further alleged that Chandrababu's earlier tenure burdened the public with Rs 90,000 crore, leaving DISCOMs in debt to the tune of Rs 86,215 crore by 2019. He accused the

"friendly media" of ignoring issues such as the failure to implement the Super Six initiative, hikes in power charges, and increased prices of essential commodities and liquor.

Kakani also pointed to a lack of coordination within the coalition, particularly in Rayalaseema, citing public disputes between leaders like Adinarayana Reddy and JC Prabhakar Reddy. He claimed these differences indicate poor governance and alleged that disputes over sharing benefits were causing rifts between ministers and MLAs in several districts.

He also expressed concern over the resurgence of issues such as the call money sex racket, attributing it to a lack of welfare schemes for the public.

‘CM will be from BJP, 2 deputy CMs from allies’

Ajit Pawar on Maha govt formation

PNS ■ PUNE

The next chief minister of Maharashtra will be from the BJP and there will be two deputy chief ministers from other Mahayuti constituents, NCP chief Ajit Pawar said here on Saturday.

The Mahayuti, which comprises the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde, and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) headed by Ajit Pawar, registered a resounding victory in the Maharashtra assembly elections. By winning 132 seats, the BJP emerged as the single largest party, while Shiv Sena and NCP won 57 and 41 seats respectively.

However, government formation has been delayed and suspense over the next CM continues.

Peethala urges public to ensure success of ‘Pathasala Panduga’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Minister and Telugu Desam Party leader Peethala Sujata has called for active community participation to ensure the success of the upcoming 'Pathasala Panduga' (School Festival), scheduled to take place across Andhra Pradesh on December 7. Addressing a press conference at the TDP central office in Mangalagiri on Saturday, Sujata highlighted the event's significance in strengthening ties between parents, teachers, students, alumni, and donors.

Organised under the leadership of Minister for Education, IT and Electronics Nara Lokesh, the 'Pathasala Panduga' aims to foster collaboration and enhance the educational environment. Sujata noted that the initiative seeks to reduce student anxieties, encourage interest in education, and create a positive



atmosphere in schools.

"This event is a major step towards educational development and must be free from political influence," Sujata stated. She lauded the efforts of the Education Minister, citing initiatives such as the upcoming mega DSC recruitment drive, which will provide teaching jobs to 16,347 individuals.

She also mentioned the government's commitment to restoring key directives for schools in tribal areas and ensuring timely payment of salaries to teachers and staff on

the 1st of every month, easing financial pressures. Reflecting on the previous Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy-led regime, Sujata criticised the sharp decline in the state's educational standards, which dropped from third to nineteenth place nationally.

Calling for collective efforts, Sujata urged parents, former students, and donors to actively participate in the festival, which she described as a pioneering event being organised statewide for the first time. Emphasising the festival's theme—"Educate, Empower, Engage"—she encouraged stakeholders to contribute advice and ideas for the betterment of students' futures.

In conclusion, Sujata expressed her hope that the 'Pathasala Panduga' would mark a new chapter in advancing educational standards and fostering a supportive learning environment.

Man throws liquid on Kejriwal during rally, detained

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a security scare, a man splashed some liquid on Arvind Kejriwal during his 'padayatra' in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar on Saturday, with AAP claiming that it was spirit and the "attacker" wanted to set the party supreme afire.

While police said water was thrown at Kejriwal during the public event that was organised without their permission, the BJP strongly refuted Chief Minister Atishi's accusation that the accused was a worker of the saffron party. AAP lashed out at the BJP-led Centre for the incident and said this is the third "attack" on Kejriwal in the

AAP POINTS FINGER AT BJP



last 35 days. According to the police, the accused, identified as Ashok Jha, a serving bus marshal at Delhi Transport Corporation's Khanpur Depot, has been detained.

"Further examination of the person is in progress to find out the reasons behind this act," a statement from the Delhi Police

stated. Sources claimed that Jha (41), during interrogation, said that he was frustrated as he was not getting his salary for the past six months. Jha claimed that during the formation of AAP, he gave a donation to the party, but was upset with its "fake promises", the sources said.

The AAP national convener was holding the padayatra in the Savitri Nagar area that falls under the Greater Kailash assembly segment.

Police said that around 5.50 pm Kejriwal was shaking hands with some followers standing behind a cordon when Jha

attempted to throw water on him. He was immediately caught as the police staff were nearby, they said.

Kejriwal and the security personnel accompanying him were later seen wiping their faces. Proper police deployment, both in plain clothes along with rope party for crowd control and in uniform, was made, the statement said.

At a press conference, Delhi minister Saurabh Bhardwaj alleged that the man held for attacking Kejriwal had a match-box in his hand. He claimed the liquid that fell on Kejriwal and him was spirit as they could smell it and an attempt was made to "burn him (Kejriwal) alive".

Fengal makes...

Continued from Page 1

The rainfall will continue in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on December 1 and 2, with lighter rainfall expected in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh. Winds in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema are expected to reach speeds of 40-50 kmph, gusting up to 60 kmph, or 50-60 kmph, gusting to 70 kmph, over the next 48 hours.

In the last 24 hours, significant rainfall occurred at various locations in Coastal Andhra Pradesh, while lighter rainfall was recorded at a few places in Rayalaseema.

Meanwhile, Cyclone Fengal's influence has led to heavy rains in Tirupati, Chittoor, Nellore, and Kadapa districts. Officials have warned of flash floods and urged people to remain alert. Wind speeds of 70-90 kmph were reported in Tirupati, Nellore, and Prakasam districts, according to District Disaster Management Authority MD Kurmanath. Fishermen in Nellore and Prakasam districts have been advised not to venture into the sea. Additionally, heavy rainfall has caused difficulties for devotees at the famous Tirumala shrine.

AP power...

Continued from Page 1

Resources such as generators, JCBs, cranes, power saws, and pole drilling machines must be kept ready. Special teams equipped with power saws and gas cutters will be stationed in each division for tree clearing and other emergency tasks.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Energy Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar are monitoring the situation closely, underscoring the government's commitment to public safety and uninterrupted power supply during the cyclone. Senior officials, including MD APGENCO KVN Chakradhar Babu, APTRANSCO JMD (HRD) Kirithi Chekuri, and DISCOM CMDs Pattansetti Ravi, I Prudhvi Tej, and K Santosha Rao, participated in the teleconference to review preparedness measures.

The State remains vigilant, ensuring prompt action to minimise disruption and safeguard public welfare as Cyclone Fengal advances.

Dy CM's remarks...

Continued from Page 1

They questioned how the same load could be seized again.

They alleged that corruption at the port has been a long-standing issue, with vested interests exploiting the system. Visits by leaders like Pawan Kalyan and Civil Supplies Minister Nadendla Manohar, they claimed, only escalate commission demands, hurting genuine exporters.

Ambati Rambabu further accused coalition leaders of prioritising personal gains over governance. Referring to disputes over revenue-generating sectors like liquor, sand, and local taxation, he noted instances of open confrontations within the coalition, including recent conflicts over fly ash in Rayalaseema.

Kurasala Kannababu also criticised the coalition's economic policies, contrasting YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's power purchase at Rs 2.49 per unit with the higher rates under Chandrababu Naidu's regime. He expressed concern over the recent hike in power charges, which he said was a fresh burden on the public.

Naidu outlines his...

Continued from Page 1

In a bid to eliminate illegal activities, CM Naidu assured that strict actions were being taken against the land, sand, and ganja mafias, to protect state resources and ensure law and order.

Under the PM Surya Ghar scheme, the government will distribute free solar panels to SC and ST households, reducing electricity costs while promoting renewable energy. Special funds have been allocated for the development of Rayadurg municipality, with a focus on infrastructure and civic amenities.

Vizag Police turn to AI for smarter...

Continued from Page 1

These numbers reflect the potential of enhanced traffic regulation to save lives. The AI initiative aims to streamline policing efforts, making traffic management more efficient while setting an example for smart city development. The Visakhapatnam police hope this project will not only deter violations but also transform Vizag into a safer and more disciplined city for commuters. This leap into AI-driven traffic solutions positions Visakhapatnam as a pioneer in integrating technology for urban safety and sustainability.

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Govt urged to broaden EAGLE scope to tackle drugs and illicit liquor

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leaders of the Jana Chaitanya Vedika, including State president Vallam Reddy Lakshmana Reddy and former minister Dokka Manikya Varaprasad, have called for the expansion of the Elite Anti-Narcotics Group for Law Enforcement (EAGLE) initiative. They urged the Andhra Pradesh government to enhance the scope of EAGLE to address the pressing issues of drugs, cannabis, and illicit liquor comprehensively. During a meeting held in Guntur on Saturday, attended by Avagahana organisation secretary Konda Shivaram Reddy, Humanity secretary K Satish, Nestham founder Jaleel Ahmed, co-founder T. Dhanunjaya Reddy, and COVID Fighters president Alla Bakshu, the participants emphasised the need for stronger measures to combat



these issues. Former minister Dokka Manikya Varaprasad highlighted the devastating impact of illicit liquor production in tribal areas, stating that many men succumb to

addiction, leaving families in distress. He urged the government to crack down on illicit liquor production and provide alternative livelihoods for affected communities.

Lakshmana Reddy expressed concern over the production of adulterated liquor containing harmful chemicals such as Diazepam and Chloral Hydrate. He criticised the government's

excise policies for allowing illegal belt shops to flourish in villages and called for immediate corrective action.

The leaders noted that despite licensed liquor shops paying an annual fee of Rs 85 lakh, many are forced to operate illegal belt shops due to excise policy shortcomings. They also highlighted issues such as overpricing beyond the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) and corrupt practices involving local legislators and police.

They stressed the importance of ensuring that EAGLE, which operates with a dedicated 450-member police force under IG-level supervision, remains free from political interference. They reiterated the need to promote the 24/7 toll-free helpline for reporting drug-related activities, ensuring stringent action against offenders to safeguard public health and welfare.



VMC Commissioner inspects 'NTR Bharosa Pension' disbursal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra conducted a surprise inspection of the NTR Bharosa Pension disbursement process in the city on Saturday. As part of his routine visits to various areas, he distributed pensions to beneficiaries at Krishna Lanka.

During the inspection, Commissioner Dhyanaachandra interacted with the beneficiaries to understand their

concerns, if any. The beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the pensions being disbursed a day in advance, as December 1 falls on a Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Commissioner stated that by 3 p.m., over 62,292 pensions, out of a total of 67,371, had been distributed across the three VMC circles, achieving a 93% disbursement rate. He assured that the remaining pensions would be distributed by the end of the day. Earlier, Commissioner

Dhyanaachandra also inspected the service road adjacent to the National Highway in Krishna Lanka. He interacted with traders and businesspersons, urging them to obtain trade licences. He warned that strict action would be taken against those operating businesses without valid licences.

VMC Urban Community Development Project Director Narayana, Zonal Commissioner Prabhu Das, and other officials accompanied the Commissioner during the inspection.



APSRTC CE receives SKOCH Award for unified ticketing system

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) has been honoured with the prestigious SKOCH Award for successfully implementing the Unified Ticketing System (UTS) across its buses statewide. This system has enhanced passenger convenience and operational efficiency, significantly boosting digital transactions and improving the travel experience.

On behalf of APSRTC Managing Director Ch. Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, Chief

Engineer (IT) Y. Srinivasa Rao received the award at a ceremony held in New Delhi on Saturday. The award was presented by Union Education Department Secretary Sanjay Kumar and SKOCH Group Chairman Sameer.

The APSRTC has introduced cashless transactions through a dedicated mobile app, issued digital tickets, and installed a tracking system on all buses. These initiatives have been instrumental in modernising the corporation's services, making it a deserving recipient of the SKOCH Award.

83-yr-old cancer patient gets new lease of life

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An 83-year-old woman with advanced cervical cancer received life-saving treatment at the American Oncology Institute (AOI), Kanuru. The patient, Alladi Rattamma, underwent radical radiotherapy,

chemotherapy, and brachytherapy, ensuring a positive outcome despite severe symptoms.

AOI CEO Harish Trivedi lauded the team for their patient-centric approach, while Radiation Oncologist Dr C Sai Snehit highlighted the importance of early diagnosis

and comprehensive care. Mahendra Reddy, RCOO, praised AOI Kanuru's state-of-the-art facilities and expertise in managing complex cases, reinforcing the institute's commitment to providing world-class cancer care in Andhra Pradesh.



Visakhapatnam to host 9th Navy Marathon on Dec 15

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The 9th edition of the Navy Marathon is gearing up to be a spectacular event, with preparations in full swing.

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad chaired a review meeting on Saturday to ensure a seamless and successful marathon on December 15. Highlighting the importance of the event, the Collector emphasised its role in promoting physical and mental well-being, as well as fostering unity among participants.

"With over 13,000 people expected to participate, coordination among all departments is crucial," he stated.

He urged the youth to actively participate in the marathon, known for its vibrant atmosphere and inclusive nature. The Collector directed officials to ensure all necessary arrangements are

in place, including a stage for prize distribution and cultural performances at the Vishwapiya Function Hall, where the event will commence and conclude.

Prioritising safety and convenience, the Collector stressed the importance of strong police security, effective traffic control measures, and the availability of ambulances and fire engines at the venue. He also suggested utilizing the AU English Medium School, Convention Hall, and APIIC grounds for vehicle parking.

Captain TRS. Kumar provided details about the marathon, stating, "The marathon will commence at 4:00 AM and conclude by 11:30 AM. The 42 km route will start at Vishwapiya Function Hall on RK Beach, extend to INS Kalinga, and return to the starting point after a U-turn at Kalinga. Both half-marathon

and full-marathon categories are included, with prizes awarded to the winners." Officials have been tasked with ensuring all logistical arrangements, including hydration points, first aid stations, and clear signage along the route, to enhance participant safety and comfort.

Expressing confidence in the success of the marathon, the Collector concluded, "With the collective efforts of all departments, we are confident in making this event a grand success and showcasing Visakhapatnam's spirit and organizational excellence." The review meeting was attended by GVMC Commissioner P Sampath Kumar, VMRDA Commissioner KS Viswanathan, Captain Vinod, Commander Y Kishore, Lieutenant Commander Ujar, and representatives from other departments.

SCR holds demo on linen washing at mechanised laundry

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Division of South Central Railway organised a demonstration on linen and blanket washing at the Mechanised BOOT Laundry, Vijayawada, on Saturday. Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM) Srinivasa Rao Konda, along with the Mechanical Team, briefed the media on the intricate processes involved in maintaining hygiene standards for passengers.

ADRM Konda highlighted that the Vijayawada and Kakinada laundries process over 6.5 lakh bed sheets and 10,000 woollen blankets monthly. Catering to 10 originating trains, the Vijayawada laundry has achieved minimal passenger complaints. The demonstration showcased the multi-stage cleaning of soiled bed sheets, towels, and blankets.



I & PR Minister Kolusu, his wife distribute pensions

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Information & Public Relations and Housing, Kolusu Parthasarathy, along with his wife, distributed NTR Bharosa pensions and blankets to around 350 elderly beneficiaries in Velpucherla village, Musunuru Mandal, on Saturday, using personal funds.

Highlighting the government's commitment to welfare, Parthasarathy noted that Rs 2,712 crore is disbursed monthly to 65 lakh pensioners under the NTR Bharosa scheme. He compared this to the previous government's slower pension hikes, emphasising that the coalition government raised pensions from Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 within ten days of taking office. The minister revealed that

Musunuru Mandal receives Rs 3.3 crore monthly in pensions, with Rs 32.17 lakh allocated to 759 beneficiaries in Velpucherla alone. He praised the government's efficiency in delivering pensions even on Sundays and reiterated its focus on fulfilling promises despite financial constraints. Parthasarathy assured residents of the timely completion of the Chintalapudi Project within five years to resolve water issues and pledged housing for all homeless individuals. Addressing land disputes in Musunuru Mandal, he announced plans for a special review meeting with the RDO and a dedicated platform for resolution. Local officials, ZPTC members, and TDP coalition leaders attended the event.

Officials gear up for 'Bhavani Deeksha' relinquishment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indra keeladri is gearing up for the Bhavani Deeksha relinquishment ceremonies scheduled to take place from December 21 to 25. The temple authorities are making extensive arrangements to ensure a smooth experience for devotees.

On Saturday, Durga Temple Executive Officer (EO) KS



Rama Rao and Vijayawada West Zone ACP Durga Rao inspected the preparations at Kanaka Durga Nagar. They reviewed facilities at key areas

such as Homagunda, Annadanam, Prasadam Counter, queue lines, and other arrangements on the temple premises.

The officials directed the staff to ensure all necessary facilities are provided to Bhavani devotees without any shortcomings. Durga Temple Executive Engineer (EE) T Vyakuntswara Rao, members of the Vedic Committee, and other officials were present during the inspection.

Govt imposing Rs 9,412 cr burden on power consumers: Malladi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader and former Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu criticised the imposition of Rs 9,412 crore as fuel adjustment charges on electricity consumers in Andhra Pradesh. In a statement on Saturday, Vishnu expressed dismay over the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC) ignoring objections raised against these charges.

Vishnu lambasted the ruling coalition for burdening consumers with increased electricity charges twice within six months of assuming power. He noted that the government had already imposed Rs 6,073 crore on the public earlier, forcing many to struggle with escalating costs. He pointed out that from this month, an additional Rs 1.27 per unit



would be charged, along with the existing Rs 0.92, resulting in a cumulative increase of Rs 2.19 per unit starting January. The former legislator accused Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu of reneging on promises made during his tenure in opposition, where he assured no hikes in electricity charges and even pledged reductions. Vishnu questioned the credibility of Naidu's state-

ments from 2019, 2020, 2022, and 2023, highlighting the impact of these hikes on nearly 50 lakh poor families and 2 crore electricity consumers.

Focusing on Vijayawada Central, Vishnu revealed that approximately Rs 150 crore would burden 146,427 consumers, including domestic, commercial, and industrial users. He lamented the decline in the electricity sector, which had earned awards for efficiency under the previous YSRC government, and accused Naidu of leading it into disarray.

Vishnu urged the government to reconsider its stance and shift the fuel adjustment burden onto the state and distribution companies instead of the public. He warned of large-scale protests if the government fails to address the issue and provide relief to the people.

Experts urge caution as viral fever cases rise in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A new wave of viral fevers has gripped Visakhapatnam, causing widespread concern among residents and healthcare professionals. Unlike typical seasonal fevers that resolve within a few days, this current outbreak is characterized by prolonged illness, often lasting two to three weeks or longer. Patients are reporting severe joint and body pains, persistent high fever, and fatigue. Medical experts attribute this unusual trend to several factors, including increased mutations in viral strains, rising antibiotic resistance, and the prevalence of dengue-like symptoms.

"This is an alarming situation," says Dr. K. Rambabu, Director of VIMS. "The rapid mutation of viruses is leading to



atypical symptoms, necessitating careful evaluation and tailored treatment plans. Patients must complete their prescribed medication courses to prevent complications and reduce the risk of antibiotic resistance."

Doctors emphasise the importance of adhering to medical advice and avoiding self-medication. "Improper medication use is a major contributor to antibiotic resistance," warns Dr I Krishnamurthy, a medical

specialist. "Discontinuing treatment midway can strengthen the virus, making it harder to eliminate. Patients must complete the full course to ensure complete recovery."

The surge in fever cases has overwhelmed medical facilities across the city. Government hospitals like KGH and VIMS, as well as urban health centres and private clinics, are witnessing a significant influx of patients. According to doctors, at least 50 new fever cases are being reported daily at major hospitals.

To combat the rising health crisis, experts recommend a multi-pronged approach. This includes practising good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing, avoiding exposure to cold air and contaminated water, maintaining a balanced

Medical experts attribute this unusual trend to several factors, including increased mutations in viral strains, rising antibiotic resistance, and the prevalence of dengue-like symptoms

diet to bolster immunity, and staying up-to-date with vaccinations against seasonal flu and other relevant diseases.

"It's crucial to complete the full course of prescribed medication to prevent the virus from mutating and becoming more resistant," Dr. Krishnamurthy added. "By following these guidelines and seeking timely medical attention, we can mitigate the impact of this viral outbreak." As the situation evolves, the public must remain vigilant, seek timely medical attention, and adhere to expert advice.

Navy Armament Depot project under reconsideration: MP

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar announced that the proposed Navy Armament Depot project in Buttayagudem and Jeelumilli mandals, estimated at Rs 2,000 crore, is under reconsideration.

Highlighting the project's potential to generate thousands of jobs and spur regional development, the MP expressed initial support for the initiative. However, he stated that the establishment process is being reevaluated to honour the sentiments of local communities and opinions from various stakeholders.



"The project promises significant benefits, but the concerns of residents will be given utmost priority," Mahesh Kumar assured, emphasising that the final decision will balance development goals with public interest.

3 killed in car-van collision

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Three persons were killed and another critically injured when the car they were travelling in collided with a van at Kankipadu on Saturday.

CI Murali Krishna stated that the car, which was en route to Machilipatnam, collided with a fish-laden van. The deceased have been identified as Chinta Ravi, Cheeli Prabhu, and



Cheeli Bhanu. The injured person has been admitted to the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Vijaya wada for treatment.

Tiger on prowl attacks farmer in Asifabad district

It may be recalled that the animal mauled a 21-year-old woman on Friday

PNS ■ KUMRAM BHEEM ASIFABAD

A series of tiger attacks in Kumram Bheem Asifabad district over the weekend has left the people shaken. On Friday, 21-year-old Morle Lakshmi from Gannaram village, Kagaznagar, tragically lost her life when a tiger mauled her while she was plucking cotton along with a group of labourers near Easgaon village. Despite being rushed to a hospital in Kagaznagar, she was declared dead on arrival.

On Saturday, Rauthu Suresh, a farmer from Dubbaguda village under Sirpur (T) mandal, was attacked by the same tiger while working on his farm. The tiger bit him on his neck, but Suresh managed to escape by shouting for help. He was quickly taken to the hospital in

Kagaznagar, where his condition was reported to be stable.

These attacks have caused widespread fear among residents in about 15 villages across Kagaznagar mandal. The presence of the tiger in the area has left people living in constant fear. In response, forest officials have intensified efforts to locate and capture the tiger. Drone surveillance tracked the animal near Areguda village on Saturday. To ensure public safety, authorities have enforced prohibitory orders in the affected villages and implemented a standard operating procedure aimed at preventing further incidents.

Restrictions have been imposed in several villages of Kagaznagar mandal. Prohibitory orders under Section 144 have been imposed in these areas.



Check crimes against women, girls: WG Collector to officials

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector Nagarani highlighted the need for a community-wide effort to tackle sexual assaults, particularly in schools and public spaces. "Children often don't know how to handle such situations. Teachers and community members must remain vigilant, enabling early identification of offenders and ensuring strict legal action," she said.

The Collector also stressed

tively benefit from them.

Collector Nagarani highlighted the need for a community-wide effort to tackle sexual assaults, particularly in schools and public spaces. "Children often don't know how to handle such situations. Teachers and community members must remain vigilant, enabling early identification of offenders and ensuring strict legal action," she said.

The Collector also stressed

that while women's rights and protections must be upheld, they should not misuse laws to avoid responsibilities. "Women must strive to work harder, as the goal of equality demands equal contribution," she remarked.

She reiterated the district administration's commitment to spreading awareness about legal safeguards through consistent messaging. She urged women to take advantage of free legal services and reminded

them that arrests should not occur at night without the presence of family members.

The seminar featured speeches from officials, including DMHO Dr D. Maheswara Rao, DEO E Satyanarayana, and District Labour Officer A Lakshmi. Other attendees included DWMA PD KCH Appa Rao, Prohibition and Excise Officer RS Kumare swaran, and District Fire prevention Officer B Srinivasa Rao.

Machilipatnam to witness massive industrial growth: Kollu Ravindra

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Minister for Excise and Mines Kollu Ravindra has reaffirmed that industrial development in Machilipatnam will take place on a large scale shortly.

The Minister, accompanied by MP V Balashowry and APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao, laid the foundation stone for a community hall funded by Petronet, New Delhi, under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative at Jewellers Park near Machilipatnam. The community hall is being built at a cost of Rs 1.98 crore.

Speaking at the event, Minister Ravindra stated that the Jewellery



Park in the area would be developed, with former MP Chiranjeevi set to inaugurate it soon. "Steps are being taken to acquire 25 acres of land to expand the Jewellery Park with the support of the Central Government. I encourage traders

to start their businesses here," he said, adding that Machilipatnam would be developed into a model for industrial growth.

APSRTC Chairman Narayana Rao highlighted that over 500 gold-covering units are located in and around Machilipatnam,

with Chilaka lapudi earning a reputation for its gold-covered jewellery. He praised the industry for providing thousands of jobs.

Narayana Rao also announced the construction of two Kalyana Mandapams at Pedakallepalli and Ghantasala, for Rs 1 crore each. These will be named after the famous cine lyricist late Veturi Sundara Rama Murthy and cine playback singer late Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao, respectively. MP V Balashowry also addressed the gathering. Industries GM Venkata Rao, APEWIDC EE Rayanna, and gold covering industry owners were among those present.

30 nursing students escape unhurt as college bus catches fire



PNS ■ BAPATLA

Thirty nursing students had a miraculous escape when their college bus caught fire at Gudavalli village in Cherukupalli mandal of the district on Saturday.

According to the police, the first-year nursing students of a private nursing college were on their way to write their examination when flames suddenly erupted in the bus. Acting swiftly, the alert driver stopped the vehicle and evacuated all the students before the fire spread.

Within minutes, the flames

engulfed the bus, reducing it to ashes. Fortunately, all the students escaped unhurt and were later sent to the college in another vehicle.

A short circuit is suspected to have caused the fire. However, parents of the students blamed the mishap on negligence by Road Transport Officials (RTO). They alleged that the RTO failed to conduct a thorough inspection of the bus's condition and fitness before issuing its permit.

The incident has raised concerns about vehicle safety standards, especially for buses carrying students.

Deals with non-grave cases expeditiously: SP

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

Superintendent of Police VN Manikantha Chandolu has directed the police officials of the district to take steps to resolve the grave and non-grave crimes at the earliest and keep a strict vigil on cyber criminals.

The SP held a crime review meeting with the DSPs, CIs and Sis on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the SP told the police officials to take stringent steps to check the illegal transport, consumption, and sale of ganja and illicit liquor. Awareness should be created among people on the ill effects of drugs and illicit liquor. The women police personnel should conduct awareness seminars for women to sensitise them about crimes, the SP told them.

The SP inquired with the officials about the progress of the investigation of grave, and non-grave cases, murders, dacoity, robbery, stealing of vehicles, missing cases and



cybercrime cases. He thoroughly examined the records of the crimes and the cases.

He told them to take all required measures to ensure that the perpetrators would be punished in the courts. The SP directed them to use the advanced technology to collect clues and arrest the criminals. He also warned the people not to open the links sent by unknown persons. He asked the people to beware of loans offered through the apps.

SP Manikantha instructed the police officials to adopt friendly policing in the district and respond in a friendly manner to those who come to the police stations to lodge complaints.

ALLEGED DEFAMATORY REPORTS

Jagan sends legal notices to 2 vernacular dailies

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, former CM of AP and President of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), has issued legal notices to Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi for publishing false and defamatory reports regarding the agreement between the Andhra Pradesh government and the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI).

In the legal notices, YS Jagan has demanded an unconditional apology, to be prominently published on the front page of both newspapers. The notices contend that the publications have misrepresented judicial

proceedings in the United States involving multinational corporations, including Gautam Adani, falsely implicating YS Jagan in bribery and corruption. These baseless allegations have caused significant harm to his personal and political reputation. The notices further clarify that the SECI agreement was completely transparent and aimed at benefiting the people of Andhra Pradesh. SECI, a Government of India entity, offered power at a competitive tariff of Rs 2.49 per unit, along with substantial cost benefits, including the waiver of interstate transmission charges.

The agreement, approved after rigorous regulatory scrutiny by the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC) and the Ministry of Power, is expected to save the state Rs 4,420 crore annually and over Rs 1 lakh crore in 25 years. YS Jagan's legal team has also accused Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi of publishing politically motivated stories driven by their alleged ties to the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and its leader, N. Chandrababu Naidu. The notices assert that the newspapers are acting as media arms of the TDP, spreading malicious and unverified reports to undermine the achievements of

YS Jagan's government.

The legal notices highlight that these defamatory stories are part of an attempt to divert attention from YS Jagan's governance, which prioritises transparency and fiscal responsibility. Supporting documents and evidence are included to refute the claims made by the newspapers.

YS Jagan has demanded that both Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi publish public apologies on their front pages and digital platforms. He has warned that if defamatory content continues to be published, legal proceedings will follow to hold the publications accountable.

AP disbursing highest number of pensions: Dola

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjaneeya Swamy has asserted that Andhra Pradesh is the only state in the country disbursing the highest number of social security pensions.

Participating in a pensions disbursement programme at Nennurupadu village in Kondapi mandal on Saturday, the Minister personally handed over pensions to some beneficiaries at their homes.

Addressing the gathering, he highlighted that the pension amount had been increased to Rs 4,000 with a single signature by Chief Minister



Chandrababu Naidu. "Pensions are disbursed even on holidays, with provisions to collect three months' arrears if missed earlier," he said.

The Minister noted that 2,86,034 social security pen-

sioners in the district receive Rs 122.22 crore monthly. On Saturday, Rs 2.80 crore was disbursed to 6,266 pensioners in Kondapi mandal, while Rs 10.20 lakh reached 241 pensioners in Nudurupadu village

under the NTR Bharosa scheme.

He assured the public that house sites would be sanctioned to all eligible poor, and new pensions would be sanctioned from January. Additionally, he cited the government's implementation of free gas cylinders and healthcare under the NTR Arogya Sri scheme.

Criticising the previous YSRCP regime, he claimed it had ruined all sectors. He dismissed rumours about pension cancellations as false.

Social Welfare DD Lakshma Naik, SC Corporation ED Arjun Naik, and other officials accompanied the Minister.

Reject divisive politics: TG CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a first, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy reacted on the land acquisition at Lagacherla.

He said that for sake of development farmers may have to face some loss. "Will Industries come to Kodangal ever if there is opposition. Don't fall in BRS trap and goto jail. Take more compensation if not Rs10lakh take Rs20lakh. We will come and give it at your home. Our intention is to give a job to every house and a generation will change if job comes in family". He called that For Nagarjuna Sagar, Srisailem, Jurala.

Kalwakurthy Palamuru projects also people lose lands. People gave up lands for development, he said.

Raking the Palamuru Self

Respect, CM said, "From Chandrababu, Kiran Kumar Reddy, Rosaiah to KCR, everyone said they'll adopt Palamuru. Why should they adopt, can't son of soil do development? Will we get this chance again? After Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, it took 70years to get this chance (of becoming CM). Should we lose this chance or develop our region. If we lose this chance, we may never get it again. You may say what did you do when you got chance"

The Chief Minister touched on industrial development, promising to establish an industrial hub in Kodangal to provide 25,000 jobs to local youth. He condemned the opposition's attempts to disrupt such initiatives and urged the people to reject divisive politics.



Urban Habitat Centre coming up at Rushikonda

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam is set to reach new heights in urban development with the launch of the Urban Habitat Centre by the Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA). Planned under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, this ambitious project aims to transform the burgeoning Rushikonda area into a hub of business, culture, and lifestyle.

Spread across 8.82 acres near Madhurawada Law College on Rushikonda Road, the Urban Habitat Centre involves an estimated investment of Rs 470 crore. Envisioned as a first-of-its-kind facility in Visakhapatnam, it is designed to align the city's infrastructure with metropolitan standards. Speaking about the initiative, a senior VMRDA official stated, "The



Urban Habitat Centre is a step towards aligning Visakhapatnam with the infrastructural standards of metropolitan cities like Delhi. It will meet professional and lifestyle needs while positioning the

city as a key player in urban development and IT growth."

The 42,637 sq. m project will feature spaces for trade fairs, cultural events, art exhibitions, and corporate offices. Highlights include a grand

1,000-seat auditorium, a multipurpose event hall with a capacity of 2,700 people, and versatile conference spaces. Leisure and hospitality amenities include a 60-room hotel, an indoor amphithe-

VMRDA's Rs 470-cr PPP project to transform the city with a state-of-the-art hub for business, culture, and lifestyle

atre, a 400-seat cafeteria, fine dining for 600 guests, and a sports complex. "This is not just a project—it's a vision to create a dynamic urban environment where work and lifestyle merge seamlessly," the official added.

The centre also integrates residential, retail, and medical facilities, including a 3,716 sq. m supermarket, a medical centre, and an event lawn for outdoor gatherings. Its strategic location near IT parks, the upcoming Adani Data Center,

and premium residential zones like Panorama Hills add to its appeal. A senior urban planner highlighted the development's significance: "The city's expansion towards Rushikonda opens up unparalleled opportunities for projects like the Urban Habitat Centre. It will serve as a vital nexus for business, entertainment, and culture."

With feasibility studies and market assessments underway, VMRDA is confident in the project's transformative potential. "Visakhapatnam is poised for unprecedented growth, and the Urban Habitat Center is a testament to our commitment to sustainable and inclusive urban development," the official concluded. Once completed, the Urban Habitat Center is expected to become a landmark for the city, attracting businesses, tourists, and residents while driving economic and cultural growth.

ACROSS THE STATES



5 killed as bus plunges into gorge

Five people were killed and 15 others injured as a bus plunged into a 150-ft-deep gorge near the West Bengal-Sikkim border on Saturday afternoon, police said. The accident happened between Andheri and Atal Setu, about 1 km from the Rangpo border, around 3 pm. The bus, heading to Gangtok from Siliguri, veered off the NH-10 and crashed-landed on the bank of the Teesta river, they said. The identities of the deceased and the injured were being ascertained, police said, adding that there was a woman among those dead. The injured persons were taken to a health centre in Rangpo for treatment, they said. Police said that the number of deaths is likely to go up as many injured passengers were very critical. Among the passengers on the bus when the accident happened were some tourists, they said.



UP govt to invite all CMs for Maha Kumbh 2025

The Uttar Pradesh government would send ministers to invite governors and chief ministers across the nation to Prayagraj for Maha Kumbh 2025 in January. This was decided at a meeting of ministers convened by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his Lok Bhavan office in Lucknow. "It has been decided that UP ministers would visit all the states and invite governors and chief ministers to Kumbh. The itinerary of ministers is being prepared," a senior UP minister told PTI after the meeting. When asked if opposition leaders would also be approached, he said, "Why not? We will seek an audience with all CMs, including those from opposition states and invite them." On November 22, the UP cabinet headed by Adityanath approved a proposal to hold roadshows and events in India and abroad to promote the Maha Kumbh that UP government officials said would draw devotees in record numbers from across the globe. The roadshows would be led by ministers who would also use the occasion to meet governors and CMs of the states they visit on the occasion, a minister said.



Many countries stopped using EVMs: Medha Patkar

Amid a debate on the EVM credibility re-started by some Opposition parties after the debacle in Maharashtra Assembly polls, rights activist Medha Patkar on Saturday said many countries have stopped using them. Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge recently suggested that ballot papers be reintroduced in the election mechanism. "I am not an expert on EVMs but it is true that many countries have stopped using them. Experiments show that certain systems can be changed with a mere electric connection," Patkar told reporters in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar city. She was conferred the honorary D.Litt by the Mahatma Gandhi Mission University. Patkar said the code of conduct for polls cannot be implemented impartially if the Election Commission has links with any political party. The activist said the monthly financial assistance of Rs 1,500 being given to women who come from poor families under the Maharashtra government's 'Mazi Ladki Bahin' scheme won't resolve their problems.

India and Italy are strong maritime nations: Sonowal

Invites Italy to collaborate with heritage museum

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union Shipping, Ports and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday asked Italian museums to collaborate with India for the upcoming National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) in Gujarat's Lothal.

Speaking during a seminar on blue economy and space held on the sidelines of 93-year-old Italian ship Amerigo Vespucci's call on Mumbai port, Sonowal said India is building the largest museum devoted to maritime heritage at Lothal, a site of the Indus Valley civilisation.

The Union Cabinet had recently given the nod for the NMHC, which is estimated to cost over Rs 3,500 crore, as per some reports.

Sonowal said as early as 4,000 BC, Indian ships went to neighbouring countries with produce such as spices, textiles, and arts and crafts.

Indian ships had a reputa-



tion of being sturdy and were manned by expert seamen, he said. The Union minister said that Italian travellers including the 13th century Venetian merchant Marco Polo have documented Indian ships to be highly sophisticated, much larger, durable and versatile than other vessels.

The dockyard at Lothal is over 5,000 years old and given its importance, India is building the NMHC there, Sonowal said. "I would invite globally

renowned Italian museums to collaborate in our endeavour," he said. The minister called India and Italy as strategic partners, and also affirmed his commitment to take forward the agenda set out by prime ministers of both the countries recently.

India and Italy are ancient civilisations with a rich cultural heritage, the minister said, adding that Italian cities were important trading posts on the ancient spice route.

The country's scientific and economic heritage spans millennia and as far back as the Rigveda period, that is between 3,300 to 1,900 BC, "Indian civilisation laid the foundation for advancement in diverse scientific domain", he said.

Without elaborating, he also told reporters that India and Italy held "informal" talks on Saturday. He said on the upcoming India-Middle East-Europe-Economic Corridor, Italy has made some wish and added that India will take the necessary steps on this aspect and even called it as the country's responsibility.

Both India and Italy are strong maritime nations having advanced space programmes, Sonowal said, stressing that ecology and economic aspirations have to go hand in hand.

"From the enormity of the ocean to the infinite vastness of space, the potential and benefit of India-Italy partnership is immense," he said.

‘Manipur not like Mizoram’

We joined India with defined boundaries: CM

PNS ■ IMPHAL

A day after the Manipur government urged Mizoram CM Lalduhoma to demonstrate "better statesmanship" by being a "good neighbour" rather than fueling hatred through "unwarranted comments", Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Saturday said Manipur is not like Mizoram, "which was once just a district in Assam".

Speaking at a function for construction of infrastructure to relocate the Assam Rifles from the premises of the historic Langthabal Old Palace, Singh said, "Manipur is not like Mizoram. We have a written history of 2,000 years. Manipur merged with the Union of India as a single entity in 1949. Our boundaries were not newly created but we joined with the Union with intact boundaries."

The Manipur CM's reaction came in the backdrop of a recent interview given by Lalduhoma to a national daily



in which he said Singh was a liability for the state, its people and the BJP, and even President's Rule is preferable compared to his administration.

"Assam Rifles is here to serve the nation. They are not our enemies. We all are Indian citizens. The gap can be bridged through interactions between commanders, CSOs, and intellectuals. Our common enemy is located in foreign territories, not within. The paramilitary force can deal with insurgents or unlawful activities as they see fit, but not everyone is an insurgent," the

CM said.

"People ask, 'What is the Chief Minister doing?' Can the CM go and engage in firing? The CM makes policy plans—how to identify illegal immigrants, how to cancel the Free Movement Regime, and how to implement the NRC. We will never rest until we have clearly safeguarded the entire land of Manipur and its indigenous people," Singh asserted.

The CM asserted that the conflict since May 3 last year is not due to corruption by the government but because of measures taken to protect the original inhabitants of the land and address the distorted histories of the state. "Naturally, those who once thrived on the drug trade will be upset with the government and against me," he added.

Singh also thanked Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Assam Rifles authorities for agreeing to relocate their camp from Langthabal Old Palace.

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Hospitals and houses were inundated in Chennai and its neighbourhoods on Saturday following Cyclone Fengal induced heavy downpour, as civic authorities said clearing works were on in a 'war-footing'.

Barriades and umbrellas were swept away by gusty winds and road users scurried for cover as rains poured, with cyclone Fengal inching closer to the shoreline on Saturday, leaving many areas in and around Chennai under water.

Curiously, a lot of people, especially young men and women, frolicked at beaches, and strangely, visitors could be spotted at the Mamallapuram world heritage site too, despite the government warning people against going near beaches, in view of the high tides. Wind speed was pretty high in coastline areas such as Marakkanam in Villupuram district.

Rainwater entered the premises of two state-run hospitals at Chromepet, a gener-

BJP does not follow rules, democratic norms: Priyanka

PNS ■ KOZHIKODE (KERALA)

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, on a two-day visit to Kerala after her maiden electoral win from the Wayanad hill constituency, on Saturday said the BJP did not play by any rules or follow democratic norms in its political attacks.

Comparing the BJP's behaviour with the landslides that hit Wayanad in July, Priyanka contended that just like the natural disaster, the saffron party's conduct knows no rules, offers no explanations and follows no democratic norms that are normally adhered to in political fights.

"The political challenges we face (from the BJP) today are like landslides. There are no rules. There are no explanations."

"The behaviour of the ruling party (at the Centre), the BJP, knows no democratic norms, not even those we normally adhere to in a political fight," she said while speaking at a joint public meeting, with her brother and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, at Mulkam here.

She further said that institutions were being destroyed,



leading to the wavering of the people's basic faith in the electoral process and "the institutions that held our country together".

Later, at a reception given to her in Karulai in Nilambur assembly constituency in Malappuram district, Priyanka reiterated -- "we are fighting against the BJP that has no rules, no respect for democracy and the Constitution".

"They have a negative and destructive agenda," she added.

She claimed that the Parliament had not functioned for a week as the BJP was afraid to discuss certain issues on which the Congress-led opposition wanted to hold discussions in the Lok Sabha.

"We have a big battle before us in the Parliament and across India. We are fighting to safeguard our Constitution," she said.

Cyclone Fengal induced rains cause heavy inundation in TN



al hospital and a facility for thoracic medicine, both of which are located side by side and frequented by people.

Pondy govt issues heavy rain alert

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

Puducherry experienced heavy rains on Saturday, prompting the union territory administration to send SMS alerts to around 12 lakh residents cautioning them to remain vigilant as cyclonic storm Fengal is expected to make landfall near here later in the day. Chief Minister N

Rangasamy visited the rain-affected areas today to review the steps taken by the Disaster Management department, especially in accommodating those evacuated from low-lying areas into relief centres.

The chief minister instructed officials to closely monitor the situation and ensure the safety of the residents.

‘Can’t afford this kind of spectacle in mother of democracy’

PNS ■ ITANAGAR

Criticising the disruption of proceedings in the Rajya Sabha, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said that this "kind of spectacle" could not be afforded in the "mother of democracy".

Dhankhar, the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, made the statement while addressing a special session of the Arunachal Pradesh assembly.

"I express my deep pain, entering into the fourth quarter of the adoption of the Indian Constitution, we could not work for a single moment in Rajya Sabha, my head is in shame. We cannot afford this kind of spectacle in a country



that is the mother of democracy, the largest democracy. How can we go against the spirit of the Constitution? How can we afford to walk out of our obligations?" he said. "I'm happy to know your assembly is otherwise.

It's a shining example, a beacon of hope," he added.

Dhankhar said political parties have to understand that ultimately the interest of all converges in the prosperity of a nation. "We cannot, under any situa-

tion, keep any interest above our national interest," he said.

Like the previous three sittings of the ongoing Winter Session, the Rajya Sabha could not take up scheduled business on Friday and the proceedings were adjourned within minutes of the assembly amid protests by opposition MPs, demanding discussions on corruption allegations against the Adani Group, violence in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal, and the situation in Manipur. The vice president said the country's growth rate makes him proud "because no country comes close to India".

"It's fine that India is the fifth largest global economy. It's an accomplishment.

TMC protests against Waqf Amendment Bill

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata, Nov 30 (PTI) The TMC Minority Cell held a rally in Kolkata on Sunday to protest the Waqf Amendment Bill, which its leaders alleged was aimed at seizing properties of Muslims.

Addressing the rally, TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee claimed that the BJP-led government at the Centre does not respect the Constitution as it was moving forward on the matter without any discussion with the states. Banerjee, who is a member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Waqf Amendment Bill, alleged that the federal structure of the country was under threat because of this "authoritarian" attitude of the BJP.

"The Preamble of the Constitution is the eye of the



nation. The BJP government is not following the ideals of the Preamble," he said. Among the other speakers at the rally, held in Rani Rashmoni Road, were state Urban Development Minister Firhad Hakim and Murarai MLA Mosarrat Hossain. Hossain claimed that the Waqf Amendment Bill was part of a conspiracy to seize the properties of Muslims, and polarising the society for narrow political gains. "Today's meeting testifies that the BJP will not succeed in its game-plan," he said.

Women should come forward, take benefits of schemes:FM

PNS ■ MADHUBANI (BIHAR)

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday urged women to come forward and take benefits of central schemes to make them more capable and empowered.

She was speaking at a credit outreach programme held in Madhubani, where loans to the tune of Rs 1,121 crore were provided to 50,294 beneficiaries by various banks.

"Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji says there should be a 'Lakshmi Didi' in every village of the country... and for this, banks have launched several schemes for providing financial assistance to women.



"Women are being given financial assistance and training through every Self Help Group (SHG) in Bihar. I urge women to become a part of the schemes launched by the central government... so that they can become more capable and empowered," Sitharaman said.

She also said women would play an important role in achieving the goal of a developed India by 2047.

"Our PM believes that India's development should be led by women. The focus of the NDA government is clear... The poor, women, youths and farmers are the top four priorities of the government. The PM gives the example of Bihar and says that other states should also follow the same path of development and growth," the finance minister said.

Sitharaman also distributed copies of the Constitution in Maithili and Sanskrit languages to people during the programme.

Delhi’s air quality remains ‘very poor’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality remained in the "very poor" category for the seventh consecutive day on Saturday with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 346, officials said. The city's air quality is likely to remain in the "very poor" category for the next three days due to unfavourable weather conditions, they added.

Delhi's 24-hour average AQI was recorded at 346 at 4 pm on Saturday, marking a slight rise from 331 recorded on Friday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Out of the 38 monitoring stations across the national capital, only



Likely to persist for 3 more days

Shadipur recorded AQI in the "severe" category, while 34 stations recorded "very poor" AQI, according to the Sameer app that provides hourly

updates of national AQI published by the CPCB. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200

"moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe". According to the Air Quality Early Warning

System for Delhi, the AQI is likely to be in the "very poor" category for the next three days. PM2.5 was the primary pollutant in Delhi, with levels recorded at 153 µg/m³ at 3 pm on Saturday. These fine particles pose significant health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream. Vehicular emissions, as reported by the Centre's Decision Support System (DSS) for Air Quality Management, are typically updated daily at noon.

However, on Saturday, the data available on the website until 4 pm reflected only Friday's estimated contribution, which accounted for 21.6 per cent of Delhi's pollution.



(left to Right) - Chef Matteo Nasi and Chef Alessandro Liberatore

perfection, with the prawns' sweetness melding beautifully with the risotto's rich texture. Every plate seemed to have the same meticulous attention to detail, leaving no palate unfulfilled.

Throughout the evening, the service was impeccable, attentive without being intrusive. The vegetarian focus of the menu was a refreshing change, with every dish crafted with the same thought and care as any meat or seafood counterpart. It felt as though the vegetables were the stars of the show, celebrated for their natural flavours and textures rather than treated as just substitutes.

Dessert was another highlight: a *Chocolate Cocoa Short Crust Pastry* filled with raspberry cream and chocolate ganache. The sharp tartness of the raspberry paired beautifully with the velvety richness of the chocolate, creating a harmony that felt like the perfect conclusion to an already outstanding meal. Yet, it was the final offerings under *Until We Meet Again* that left me in wonder.

The Selection of Tea and Coffee was perfect to wind down, but the real treasures were the petit fours. These weren't just bite-sized treats; they were flavour bombs that delighted and surprised. My personal favourites, *Cabosse*, *Noisette*, *Mango & Coconut Petit* each carried a distinct personality, but together, they created a symphony of textures and flavours that blew my mind. The Signature *Lemon, Chocolate & Coffee Petit Four* were as indulgent as they were unique, leaving a sweetness that felt like a parting gift.

Zanotta's charm lies not only in its food but in how every aspect of the experience is curated to perfection. Chef Liberatore's collaboration was a reminder of why Michelin stars matter, not for their prestige, but for the heart and soul they demand from a chef. Whether you're a vegetarian, a seafood enthusiast or simply someone looking to experience an unforgettable meal, *Zanotta* delivers on every front. It's not just a meal; it's a memory, a moment and a masterpiece rolled into one. For me, it was proof that fine dining isn't just about eating, it's about truly living.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

MICHELIN MAGIC ON A PLATE

Imagine indulging in a meal where every bite feels like a discovery where flavours, textures and creativity come together in perfect plate. That's exactly what you can expect at *Zanotta*, where Michelin-starred Chef Alessandro Liberatore's culinary genius takes fine dining to a whole new level, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

For anyone who considers themselves a foodie, there's an unmistakable thrill in the promise of a Michelin-starred experience. It's not just about eating; it's about savouring stories told through food, each dish a chapter of creativity, tradition, and mastery. As a vegetarian, I've often found myself navigating the labyrinth of fine dining, where plant-based options can sometimes feel like an afterthought. But my recent visit to *Zanotta* at *The Leela Ambience*, for a unique collaboration with Villa Cora's two-Michelin-Key Chef Alessandro Liberatore, turned all my expectations on their head.

Picture this: a sparkling Gurugram skyline, soft live music and the kind of atmosphere that makes you lean in just a little closer to hear the clink of glasses and the hum of conversation. That's the setting at *Zanotta*, perched elegantly on the sixth floor. *The Leela Ambience Gurugram Hotel & Residences* proudly presented this iconic pop-up featuring VillaCor, the prestigious two-Michelin-Key hotel from Florence. The stage was perfectly set for a menu promising innovation, comfort, and the finest ingredients, all tied together with a ribbon of Italian finesse. It began with what could only be described as edible art: a

Deconstructed Bruschetta, forget the standard fare of toasted bread and diced tomatoes; this was a vivid celebration of marinated cherry tomatoes, bursting with flavour and delicately balanced with a drizzle of herbaceous olive oil. It was light, refreshing and a reminder that sometimes, the simplest ingredients hold the most potential. The next dish, *Millefeuille Aubergine*, was a revelation. A delicate layering of eggplant, tomato coulis, buffalo mozzarella and basil pesto transformed the humble aubergine into something extraordinary. Each bite was an orchestra of smoky, creamy and tangy notes that remained long after the plate

was cleared. It felt like comfort food, but with the refinement you expect from an Italian maestro. Then came the *Potatoes Gnocchi*, a dish that, quite frankly, stole the show. The *gnocchi* were soft, pillowy, and bathed in a luxurious cacio e pepe sauce. But what set it apart was the addition of sour vegetable brunoise, which

provided a sharp, tangy contrast to the creamy richness. It was bold yet understated, the kind of dish that makes you pause and appreciate the skill behind it. And then, the pièce de résistance: *Tomato Tarte Tatin*. If there's a dish that can truly redefine your perception of vegetarian food, this was it. Caramelised tomatoes, their

natural sweetness amplified, rested atop a perfectly flaky pastry. The balance between the sweet and savoury flavours was brilliantly done, showcasing Chef Liberatore's ability to surprise and delight. For non-vegetarians, the feedback I heard was just as glowing. The *Red Prawn Risotto* was singled out as a showstopper, cooked to



Immersing the Italian cuisine in his own taste and style, Michelin-starred Chef Mattia Bianchi made his India debut with the Italian restaurant *Sorrento* at *Shangri-la, New Delhi*. The feast was filled with the signature collection of dishes by Chef Bianchi himself and was made available for the people for five days.

Being known for their artistic composition, Chef Bianchi's food was a culinary delight. Bringing a slice of authentic Italian cooking, his pop-up dinner was a symphony of flavours, textures, and impeccable artistry, designed to tantalise the most refined palates. The menu was a love letter to Italian cuisine, featuring dishes that showcased Chef Bianchi's innovative



techniques and passion for fresh, locally sourced ingredients. The meal started with Chef Mattia's *Degustation Menu* with the *Caprese Cloud* for the vegetarian and *Mediterranean Fantasy* for non-vegetarian. *Caprese Cloud* served with *Fratelli Noi* had delicate foam of Buffalo Mozzarella paired with a medley of roasted cherry tomatoes, garnished with basil leaves with a mouth-watering taste. *Mediterranean Fantasy* on the other hand was a luxurious blend of shabu shrimps and salmon eggs atop silky potato foam, dusted with tomato powder and infused with Mediterranean aromas for a sensory delight served with *Fratelli Noi*.

Then came the *Risotto* with the dish *Herbs Whisper's* *Risotto* as the signature dish served with *Fratelli J'Noon White*. It was a Creamy risotto in a wild herbs infusion, topped with crunchy smoked umami almonds powdered with tangy sumac. *Pastas* entered the third round of the menu with *Fusilli Rock n Roll* which had vibrant fusilli infused with beetroot extract,



CHEF MATTIA'S ITALIAN TREATS

Chef Bianchi's Culinary Debut in India was a delight to the tastebuds at *Sorrento* in *Shangri-la, New Delhi*, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**



crowned with tangy goat cheese crumble and aromatic rocket pesto, perfectly paired with the rich notes of *Fratelli Sette* wine. *Fusilli Citrus* was served with *Fratelli Sette* wine with lime scented fusilli cooked in beetroot extract and garnished with raw marinated scallops. The main course showcased a togetherness of flavours, led by the *Sunlit Chicken Rhapsody* with Chicken supreme with butternut squash and *Medley Feast*, a culinary masterpiece perfectly paired with *Fratelli J'Noon Red* wine. The addition with the same wine glasses was *Bitter Bliss* with roasted baby gem, caper fruits, pine nuts and beurre blanc sauce, making the plate look like a painted canvas.

The end was saved for the best: the dessert with three types of symphonies, namely *Autumn*, *Summer*, and *Winter*. The *autumn* was the *Tiramisu Delight*, with traditional Tiramisu with mascarpone cream and marsala-kissed sponge cake veiled in the coffee crumble. The *Winter* Symphony featured *Midnight Silk* with dark chocolate cloud, gilded almonds, and frozen hazelnut cream. The *Summer* symphony had *Summer Ode* with exotic fruits soup-bathed yogurt pearls on vanilla sable. The overall experience of the dessert was a unique one blended with music. There were cards explaining how the desserts explain the personalities of the people. The experience at *Sorrento* was more than just a meal; it was an unforgettable journey through the heart of Italian gastronomy, curated by Chef Mattia Bianchi's masterful touch. Each dish was a testament to his ability to merge tradition with innovation, creating a dining spectacle that celebrated the art of food. The guests were left in awe, their taste buds delighted and their senses elevated. Chef Bianchi's debut in India with his pop-up at *Shangri-la, New Delhi*, left an indelible mark on every diner who had the privilege to partake in this symphony of flavours.



World Food Carnival

By TEAM **AGENDA**

Worldmark Aerocity in New Delhi recently hosted the *World Food Carnival*, a feast for the senses that brought together food lovers from across the city. With over 30 stalls offering a wide range of cuisines, Mexican, Italian, Indian, Middle Eastern, and more there was something for everyone. Renowned restaurants like Kampai, Cafe Delhi Heights, and Monsoon showcased their signature dishes, elevating the food experience to new heights. The carnival opened with a lively performance by "The Artictern," setting an upbeat tone for the day. Cultural performances like the Dragon Dance and a saxophonist added a magical touch to the atmosphere. Guests enjoyed live face painting and an instant GIF creator, which kept everyone entertained and added a fun element to the event. The Kids' Zone was a family-friendly highlight,

offering activities to keep children busy while parents could indulge in the food offerings.

On the second day, the excitement continued with live bands "The Gus Band" and "The Cherish," whose performances had the crowd swaying to their beats. An African Dance performance added a vibrant touch, and the food stalls kept everyone's taste buds satisfied. The carnival also featured plenty of activities for children, from magic shows to face painting. What stood out was the way the event brought people together. It wasn't just about the food; it was about creating an experience that celebrated culture, community and fun. The carnival's vibrant atmosphere, combined with delicious food and entertainment, made it a memorable event. For anyone who loves good food and a lively atmosphere, the World Food Carnival at Worldmark Aerocity was an experience not to be missed.



COORG: WHERE COFFEE CULTURE MEETS ASPIRATIONAL AVOCADOS



Coorg's lush landscapes are evolving, with century-old coffee plantations now sharing space with thriving rows of avocado trees, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

As I pack my bags in Delhi the AQI is reading staggering 430, the smog has dawned on the city and there is heaviness in the air, eyes burning, breathing is an effort to be undertaken. The touchdown in Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru is smooth the temperature is almost at par with Delhi but air is breathable. The five hours journey to Coorg is tiring but relaxing scenery changes from rocky to green to lush green, on the way you get to see the Gabbar Singh's den, the place where Sholay film was shot some 40 years back. On the way we have elephant family waiting for us by the roadside and snake crosses the road as drives pushes the brakes. Yes, all of us have right to live, even snakes!

It is night already and the day is done without much fuss as we retire in 140-year-old property a British bungalow now a tata property -Taneerhulla in ama coffee trail. The morning view from the window is fascinating, Delhi smog has given way to Coorg fog, and AQI has dropped to 43! I take a deep breath, as if to store this purity and carry it back home.

Coorg, or Kodagu as it is known in Kannad is nestled in the heart of the Western Ghats, has a fascinating history shaped by its strategic location, natural resources, and the allure of its spices. This region has been a magnet for traders, rulers, and explorers, each drawn by its bounty and beauty.

The history of Coorg dates back to ancient times, with its mention in early Indian texts like the Sangam literature. The region was originally home to indigenous tribes like the Kodavas, who developed a rich culture centered around nature and agriculture. Kodavas are known for their martial traditions, unique customs, and close-knit community life, which continue to define Coorg's identity today. Over centuries, Coorg saw the rise and fall of several South Indian dynasties, including the Cholas, Gangas, Hoysalas, and Kadambas. These rulers left their imprint through temples and forts, which stand as silent witnesses to the region's historical significance.

By the 15th and 16th centuries, the fame of the Western Ghats and their riches spread beyond India's borders. The spice trade was the primary lure, as Coorg, along with other parts of the Western Ghats, became a significant source of black pepper, cardamom, and other exotic spices. The Portuguese were among the first Europeans to set sail for India, with Vasco da Gama's arrival in 1498 marking a new era of trade and conquest. Soon, Dutch, French, and British traders followed, vying for control of spice routes. Coorg, though a landlocked region, became an integral part of these trade networks due to its fertile hills and spice plantations.

In the early 19th century, the British annexed Coorg after defeating the local ruler, Chikka Veerarajendra, in 1834. Recognising Coorg's agricultural potential, the British transformed its economy by introducing coffee cultivation alongside spices. This was the beginning of coffee plantation on



commercial scale in Coorg and has stayed that way since. Coffee thrived in the region's climate, and Coorg became one of India's premier coffee-producing areas. The planters were of course the British who lived near their plantations. Their Bungalows dot the place and the one we stayed was of course belonged to a British. The British also admired Coorg's natural beauty. Coorg is often referred to as the "Scotland of India" for its rolling hills, misty valleys, and temperate weather. Under British influence, the Kodavas were granted special privileges, including exemption from the Arms Act, which allowed them to retain their traditional firearms—a legacy still continues. The Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are among the most biodiverse regions on the planet. Stretching over 1,600 kilometers from Gujarat to Kerala, these ancient mountains are home to an astonishing

variety of flora and fauna. In Coorg, the Western Ghats reveal their most enchanting side. Dense forests, gurgling streams, and cascading waterfalls dominate the landscape, making it a paradise for nature enthusiasts. The forests host an incredible range of plant species, from ancient trees to medicinal herbs. They are especially known for sandalwood, teak, and bamboo. The Western Ghats are a haven for wildlife, including tigers, elephants, gaur, and numerous endemic species like the Lion-tailed Macaque and Malabar Civet. The Ghats are also critical for the region's agriculture, providing a fertile environment for growing coffee, spices, and now avocados. Coorg's history is a blend of ancient traditions and modern influences. Its spice heritage continues to thrive alongside its renowned coffee plantations. Now, with the introduction of avocado



cultivation by Westfalia Fruit, Coorg is stepping into a new chapter of agricultural innovation. Tourists visiting Coorg can trace its history through ancient temples, forts, and colonial-era bungalows, all while enjoying its natural beauty and rich culinary traditions. The intertwining of the Western Ghats' biodiversity with the cultural tapestry of Coorg makes it one of India's most enchanting destinations. Coorg's identity is deeply intertwined with its coffee plantations, which have been the backbone of its economy for decades. Introduced by Baba Budan in the 17th century, coffee found an ideal home in Coorg's rich soil and temperate climate. Today, the district is one of India's leading coffee-producing regions, renowned for its Arabica and Robusta beans. The plantations, often set against misty hillsides, not only produce world-class coffee but also create picturesque

landscapes that attract tourists. Coffee estate tours allow visitors to learn about the journey of coffee beans from farm to cup, making them an integral part of the Coorg experience. Located in southwestern Karnataka, Coorg is a verdant hill station known for its cool climate, scenic views, and pristine environment. It is part of the UNESCO-listed Western Ghats, one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. The region's dense forests, cascading waterfalls and diverse wildlife make it a haven for eco-tourism and outdoor activities such as trekking, birdwatching, and nature photography. Some must-visit spots include the Abbey Falls, Raja's Seat, Dubare Elephant Camp, and the Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary. The Kaveri River, originating from Talakaveri in Coorg, adds to the district's charm, serving as a lifeline for the southern states of India. While coffee remains Coorg's hallmark,

the region is now witnessing a burgeoning avocado revolution, led by Westfalia Fruit, a global leader in avocado production. Recognising Coorg's favourable climate for cultivation, Westfalia has established a state-of-the-art avocado nursery in collaboration with Sam Agri and Dvori-Or Nursery. The initiative focuses on growing high-quality Hass and other commercial avocado varieties.

The saying, "Where tea and coffee grow, avocados can grow better," perfectly describes Coorg's potential. Its tropical climate, high elevation, and fertile soil make it an excellent location for avocado farming. Westfalia's meticulous approach to planting, nurturing, and harvesting ensures that the avocados meet global quality standards.

Westfalia has already contributed to planting over 500 acres of avocado farms across India, with a target to exceed 1,000 acres by 2026. The Coorg nursery plays a critical role in supplying premium rootstock and planting material, ensuring sustainable practices and high yields. For coffee farmers, avocados offer a promising diversification crop, creating additional income streams and contributing to rural development. Westfalia, in partnership with the World Avocado Organisation (WAO), is driving efforts to educate Indian consumers about the health benefits and culinary versatility of avocados. Campaigns like "Avocado Ki Paatshaala," led by celebrity chef Sanjeev Kapoor, have been instrumental in popularising the fruit. We get hands on lessons on avocado grafting and cloning the techniques Westfalia is introducing in Coorg for avocado plantation sooner than later Coorg avocados would be available across the country. Avocados is one of the healthy diet options which can served in several avatars from avocado-on-toast to guacamole and even avocado shake and ice cream. This is going to benefit the local farmers as well as they can four to five times the amount they make on coffee.

Coorg's transformation from a coffee giant to a hub for avocados signifies its adaptability and progressive approach to agriculture. Visitors to Coorg can now enjoy not only a cup of freshly brewed coffee but also a taste of locally grown avocados, blending wellness with indulgence.

Whether you're exploring its lush landscapes, learning about coffee cultivation, or witnessing the avocado revolution, Coorg offers a unique journey through nature and innovation. This jewel of Karnataka remains a must-visit destination for travellers and a shining example of India's agricultural potential. As the time to leave draws near, I find myself reflecting on the air of Delhi and take one last, deep breath of Coorg's pure, refreshing atmosphere. The aroma of spices beckons us to the local market, where we gather handfuls of fragrant treasures and, naturally, Coorg's signature Arabica and Robusta coffee. With our bags filled with spices, coffee, and the newfound delight of avocados, we bid farewell to this enchanting land and set out on the highway to Bengaluru. As we journey home, our hearts are brimming with memories that promise to call us back. Coorg is a place one longs to return to-sooner rather than later.

IN BRIEF



Pearl Academy, Tech Mahindra to set up innovation hub

Pearl Academy, a unit of the Creative Arts Education Society (CAES), on Saturday said it has collaborated with Tech Mahindra to set up the 'Makers Lab', which will serve as an innovation hub focused on Generative AI (GenAI), metaverse, and gaming. The lab will be set up in Bengaluru. The collaboration aims to empower students, faculty, and industry professionals to develop solutions in artificial intelligence (AI), metaverse, and immersive gaming experiences, Pearl Academy said in a statement. "By blending our design innovation with Tech Mahindra's technological prowess, we are shaping a future where creativity and technology seamlessly integrate to redefine industries. 'The Makers Lab will provide our students with invaluable hands-on experience in emerging technologies, empowering them to reshape the creative landscape,' Pearl Academy President Aditi Srivastava said.



Reliance dominates Wizikey media visibility rankings

Reliance Industries - India's largest corporate by revenues, profits, market value and social impact - topped the 2024 Wizikey News Score ranking as India's most visible corporate in the media, the AI-powered media intelligence firm said. Reliance's visibility across media is significantly higher than even the leading FMCG or banking and finance companies in India. Reliance scored 97.43 out of 100 on the News Score for 2024. It was 96.46 in 2023, 92.56 in 2022, and 84.9 in 2021, showing consistent growth year after year while being number one throughout. The Wizikey's News Score is determined by the volume of news, headline presence, reach of publications, and readership. Reliance has continued to top the Wizikey News Score annual rankings since its inception for each of the last five years. Reliance ranking was above the rest of the field with an unassailable News Score of 97.43, followed by State Bank of India (89.13), HDFC Bank (86.24), One97 Communications (84.63), ICICI Bank (84.33), and Zomato (82.94) in the Wizikey rankings.



Goa-INDC launches online platform OPEN

Goa Industrial Development Corporation on Saturday launched India's first Digital Public Good for Industry Governance framework, Open Platform for Enterprise Network (OPEN), to transform industry governance by simplifying, digitising and standardising government-to-business transactions. The formal launch of this platform marks a significant milestone in Goa's journey toward enhancing the ease of doing business and fostering a vibrant industrial ecosystem. Goa Industrial Development Corporation (Goa-IDC) Chairman Alexio Reginaldo Lourenco said while addressing a press conference in Panaji. As part of the highly-anticipated launch of its new Open Platform for Enterprise Network (OPEN) portal, Goa-IDC also announced the availability of 20 Industrial plots at Verna Industrial Estate and nine commercial plots for auction, offering unparalleled opportunities for the establishment of industrial and commercial enterprises.

'India's growth propelled by advancement in science, tech'

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Union minister Jitendra Singh on Saturday asserted that the country's growth over the last decade was propelled by advancement in science and technology, and innovation.

He said that empowering youth and fostering innovations are key to achieving development goals for the nation.

Delivering the presidential address at the inaugural session of the 10th India International Science Festival (IISF) here, the Union Minister of State for Science and Technology said, "India's remarkable growth story is deeply rooted in its advancements in science and technology, and innovation."

"Over the past decade, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, we have seen a profound transformation across sectors -- from the rise of startups to revolutionary



"Over the past decade, under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, we have seen a profound transformation across sectors -- from the rise of startups to revolutionary breakthroughs in biotechnology, space technology and quantum science,"

breakthroughs in biotechnology, space technology and quantum science," he added.

The northeastern region, once on the periphery of development, has become a shining example of growth, embodying both economic progress and scientific innovation, he claimed.

"As we approach India@2047, empowering youth and fostering innovation are key. Initiatives like the National Research Foundation and the bioeconomy revolution

are driving India toward self-reliance and global leadership, with young innovators leading the way," the Union minister added. The four-day festival aims to popularise science and technology across diverse communities and is expected to attract over 8,000 delegates, researchers and leading scientific organisations, along with 10,000 students, fostering collaboration and innovation across disciplines.

At the programme, Singh also launched the India

Science, Technology & Innovation (ISTI) portal, a centralised platform which will serve as a comprehensive repository for content related to science, technology and innovation within India's ecosystem.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, speaking on the occasion, emphasised the importance of integration of technology, resources and capital in present times to accelerate a nation's growth and prosperity.

"Technology is the most transformative force... and by harnessing it, a nation can overcome resource limitation and reduce dependency on capital," he maintained.

It will also help in achieving social equity, poverty alleviation and improving the standard of living, impacting all sectors from agriculture to industry, power, communication and transportation, he added.

'Will resolve all issues faced by tea industry'

Interacts with stakeholders in Guwahati

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Saturday interacted with representatives of the tea industry, and assured them that the Centre will take necessary steps to resolve the issues faced by the sector. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Industry Minister Bimal Bora were also present on the occasion along with stakeholders, including buyers, producers and small tea growers from various states.

Goyal said he has taken cognisance of the challenges faced by the industry, and he will hold further consultations to resolve the issues. Sarma said the state government is cognisant of the macro challenges confronting Assam's tea industry and its solutions require a collaborative

approach.

"I am extremely grateful to Hon'ble Union Minister Shri @PiyushGoyal ji for patiently hearing the stakeholders of the tea industry and taking a positive approach to resolve their issues. Thank you Piyush Goyal ji for your valuable time," the chief minister wrote on X.



North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) chairman Ajay Dhandharia, in his presentation, highlighted various challenges being faced by the Assam tea industry, which include routing of 100 per cent dust grades through public auctions, maximum residue limit, efficiency of public auctions, early closure of production by December 30, low per capita consumption of tea, stagnancy in export from India and climate change, among others.

NCLAT allows IL&FS to sell subsidiary IPRWL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT has given a go-ahead to debt-ridden IL&FS group for the sale of its subsidiary IL&FS Paradip Refinery Water Ltd (IPRWL) to a successful bidder.

According to reports, this may enable IL&FS to repay a debt of around Rs 1,000 crore. IPRWL was set up to meet water requirement of the 15 MTPA Paradip Refinery Project developed by IOC in Odisha.

IL&FS, which is paring its debt through asset resolution, has not received consent from IOCL for sale of its stake in IPRWL.

It had approached the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), which is supervising the process, to direct IOCL to either acquire 100 per cent shareholding in IPRWL at a fair valuation or grant its consent as per the terms of the BOOT agreement and the RFP so as to enable IL&FS to sell it.

However, IOCL through its counsel submitted that the BOOT (Build, Own, Operate,

and Transfer) agreement with IL&FS was till 2039 and it cannot be disinvested before the said period.

Rejecting this, NCLAT said: "IOCL having not given consent for 100 per cent of the acquisition of the shareholding, we are of the view that IL&FS has to be permitted to proceed to give it to the successful bidder as per the process contemplated under the resolution framework."

However, NCLAT in its order also made it clear that the successful entity should be one who is eligible as per the terms of the BOOT agreement and has relevant technical know-how to carry on the project. "We thus accept the prayer of the appellant to proceed for giving it to the successful bidder as per the terms of the BOOT agreement and the RFP as per the process contemplated under the resolution framework to its eligible entity," said NCLAT in its order dated November 22.

IL&FS group has paid Rs 38,082 crore to its creditors as of September 30, 2024, according to the latest status report affidavit filed by the debt-ridden firm before NCLAT.

No bribes paid to secure contracts: Adani Group CFO

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maintaining that no bribes were given to government officials to secure contracts, Adani Group's chief financial officer Jageshinder Singh on Friday said that he would definitely come to know if any large amount was paid.

"We know for sure, 100 per cent, that nothing of this sort happened. Because if you are paying that much amount of cash to someone, I would certainly know," the CFO told reporters here on the sidelines of a Trust Group event.

He said the allegations made in the US against Group chairman Gautam Adani and others including his nephew Sagar Adani is a case of "unique use of prosecutorial authority" and also made it clear that it is not an attack on the group.

The individuals named in the allegations will respond and contest the charges at the proper forum, he added.

The fundamental stance of the group is that when it comes to announced investment and growth plans, capital is tied up, hinting that it will



He said the allegations made in the US against Group chairman Gautam Adani and others including his nephew Sagar Adani is a case of "unique use of prosecutorial authority" and also made it clear that it is not an attack on the group

continue with all the projects.

He said no bank has contacted the group seeking a review following the allegations made in the US earlier this month, and added that everybody is willing to give the group whatever it needs to build the infrastructure.

"...fundamentally, our banking partners, they understand we don't need their money. Precisely because we don't need it, its available to us," he said.

The group withdrew an ongoing bond sale pending the clearance of the allegations,

and added that it will go ahead with a planned private bond placement. There were no issues pending otherwise, and the next is anyways supposed to be coming after the FY25 results are out, he said.

At present, the Group has sufficient ability to repay 30 months of debt obligations, he said, adding that at no point does it go below 12 months.

Roughly about USD 3 billion of debt is coming up for repayment over the next 12 months, he said, exuding confidence that most of the banks will refinance it.

'Invest K'taka 2025' gets global spotlight

PNS ■ BENGALURU

K'taka Minister for Large and Medium Industries M B Patil on Saturday engaged with top global companies in the United Kingdom during a roadshow held to highlight Karnataka's investment potential across the aerospace and defense, automotive, and education sectors, officials said. As part of the 'Invest Karnataka 2025' roadshow, Patil, who is currently in London, invited leading organisations, emphasising Karnataka's robust infrastructure, business-friendly environment, and forward-thinking initiatives such as the Knowledge, Wellbeing, and Innovation (KWIN) City project. During a meeting with the Rolls Royce Group, the Minister showcased Karnataka's thriving aerospace and defence ecosystem, focusing on composite manufacturing.

No impact on India biz with Bajaj Auto: KTM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Austrian bike maker KTM on Saturday said the judicial restructuring of its holding firm Pierer Mobility AG has no impact on business related to products co-developed with Bajaj Auto for Indian domestic market and select export markets.

However, it is impacting business of Pierer Mobility AG/KTM AG that is run out of Austria, including exports from Austria, India and China to its key markets in the US and Europe.

On November 26, given the immediate liquidity constraints, the Executive Board of KTM AG has decided to file an application for the initiation of judicial restructuring proceedings with self-administration over the assets



Mobility AG/KTM AG that is run out of Austria," the company said.

These developments are impacting the export volumes from Austria, India and China to its key markets in the US and Europe, it said.

"...the KTM business that is run out of India (domestic, select export markets) for which products are co-developed by KTM & Bajaj and manufactured and sold by Bajaj Auto continues to operate in the normal course during this period," the company added.

Bajaj Auto through its wholly-owned subsidiary in Netherlands Bajaj Auto International Holdings BV (BAIHBV) holds a 49.9 per cent stake in its associate -- Pierer Bajaj AG (PBAG) in Austria.

It is to be noted that the aforesaid matter has a bearing on the business of Pierer

for his efforts to "support millions of Indian students and professionals navigating the complexities of international financial systems".

Shreeram Iyer collected the Global Firm of the Year award as Chairman and CEO of Prisma.ai for "revolutionising the field of AI-driven visual recognition, providing cutting-edge solutions for image and video analysis".

Narnolia, one of India's leading firms in fund management, investment advisory, and investment banking, was

awarded the Top Fund Manager of the Decade, while Manish Tiwari was named British Indian of the Year for his promotional efforts within the India-UK corridor through his firm Here and Now 365. "This year's event comes against the backdrop of Prime Ministers Keir Starmer and Narendra Modi announcing the relaunch of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks, which IEBF has been engaging with and is hopeful that a deal will be signed by next year," said IEBF Founder Vijay Goel.



from now until 2047, the government's primary mission here (in the UK) is economic growth... so the interest we have is a deeply shared interest. The symmetry of what we

are trying to do is pretty complete," he said.

Among those honoured at the event, Ashesh Jani, Co-founder and CEO of Ribbon Plc, named Fintech of the Year

India's vision is to become world's most efficient trade hub: Revenue secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Revenue Secretary Sanjay Malhotra said on Friday that India's vision is to become the world's most efficient and trusted trade hub by expanding the participation of authorised economic operators (AEOs), integrated free zones, and innovative policies.

"We aim to set new benchmarks in trade facilitation and global connectivity," Malhotra said while delivering the valedictory address at the Global AEO Conference here.

He further said technology and trust are two pillars of the revenue department and underscored

the importance of expansion of Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) programme to include more regional and bilateral partners. India has been adopting technology both in direct and indirect tax administration, he said, adding that most of the services are online including appeals, refunds and payments.

"We actually generate billions and billions of bills of entry and shipping bills every year. To be able to do this without the help of technology is not possible," he said, adding, India aims to make all its ports automated.

Similarly, he said, "It is now our endeavour to be able to make all services at all ports and at all times, online and electronic." Of 20 major ports, 17 are fully automated, he said.

Expanding the AEO programme in the last few years, has been part of the trust-based strategy.

About 6,000 entities have been recognised under this AEO programme and 37 per cent of bills of entries are through these entities.

He assured India's support in developing a robust AEO programme in countries with less capabilities and emphasised that AEO helps in re-organising and re-engineering tax system that relies on trust-based strategies.

AEO is a programme under the aegis of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) SAFE Framework of Standards to secure and facilitate Global Trade.

AEO is a voluntary compliance programme which enables Indian Customs to enhance and streamline cargo security through close cooperation with the principal stakeholders of the international supply chain viz. importers, exporters, logistics providers, custodians or terminal operators, custom brokers and warehouse operators.

Indian AEO programme started in 2011 and was strengthened in 2016. It is implemented by Directorate of International Customs of CBIC.

By this agreement, AEO status of the MRA partner's AEO programme is recognised by each other and trade facilitation is extended reciprocally.

India has also signed Joint Action Plans (JAP) to conclude an MRA with Uganda, East African Community, South African Community, Singapore, New Zealand, the UK, Belarus and BRICS.



PNS ■ LONDON

High achievers facilitating cross-border partnerships between India and Europe were among leading entrepreneurs who received awards at the annual Indo-European Business Forum (IEBF) meet at the House of Lords complex in London.

The 2024 IEBF Global Business Meet on Friday, themed as the 'Viksit Bharat Investment Summit', was aimed at spotlighting the many business and investment

opportunities offered by India's goal of moving towards a developed economy by 2047.

"To me, the thing that ties the UK and India together most closely is that we are two countries chasing the future," said Kanishka Narayan, the Welsh Indian Labour MP who recently returned from a visit to India as part of a parliamentary delegation for bilateral exchanges.

"As we talk about the Viksit Bharat vision of a developed India to 10x (10 times) its GDP over the course of the period



A VOICE THAT HEALS



KAILASH KHER'S journey from humble beginnings to Padma Shri is truly inspiring. Through his music, he has touched millions, sharing the struggles and moments that shaped his path and the deep connection he holds with his fans, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

“जो टूट कर बना, जिसे मौत ने जाना,
वो क्या टूटे, वो और क्या मारे”
(What was broken and revived,
what death tried to take away,
how could it be broken again?)

These words, spoken with quiet strength, hold the raw truth of Kailash Kher's life. A life that, much like the music he creates, has been a journey of hardship, healing and everything in between. He has faced loss, endured difficult times and seen some of the darkest days. Yet, his songs are always filled with hope. This is what makes him not just a singer, but a storyteller of the human experience, a poet of strength. His music isn't just sound; it's a conversation with the soul. A conversation that comes from the heart of Kailash Kher, a man whose very being is felt in every note he sings.

When he speaks about his journey, you can almost hear the weight of each experience in his voice, as if every word he shares is filled with emotion, shaped by years of struggle and success. In December 2016, a moment that would forever change his life arrived, though it took another few months for the reality to sink in. By April 2017, it was confirmed, he was to receive the Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian awards. The news was a whirlwind of emotions, not just for him, but for his family. “I first told my sister,” he recalls with a soft smile. “It was a moment of joy because, in Delhi, we had suffered a lot. We left our homes, lived like orphans and went through many different experiences. We saw the world changing, relationships changing and people's attitudes changing, all of these shifts happened at a young age.”

His journey from hardship to honour is one of resilience. He talks about his childhood in Delhi, a city that seemed to change before his very eyes, as people, relationships and even attitudes shifted. Yet, despite the hardships, Delhi, in all its complexity, gave him the opportunity to realise his dreams. The recognition came not just for his music but for the spirit with which he has approached life. From a young age, music was more than just a

passion, it was his way of being. “As a child of 4 or 5, I was already curious about music, but I didn't sing the popular songs of the time,” he shares. Instead, he gravitated toward unique sounds that defied the norm. “I didn't sing filmi songs, ghazals, bhajans or qawwalis. I didn't sing what was already there. People were curious, what does this child sing and how?” It was this originality that later led to the birth of Kailasa, a name that would become synonymous with spiritual and soul-stirring music.

As his career grew, his live performances became a way for him to connect deeply with his audience. “In Kota, Rajasthan, a girl came to one of my shows with a blade, saying she would harm herself if she didn't get to meet me. She was a devotee and my music was more than entertainment to her, it was her lifeline,” he remembers. “When I found out, I asked her to drop the blade, and she did. It was one of those moments that reminded me of the emotional power music holds. It's not just about melodies; it's about healing.” Every song he writes, sings and composes holds a piece of his soul. “When I sing, it's a reflection of my own emotions. But once it's out there, it becomes part of someone else's story too,” he explains. His music resonates with listeners in a way that breaks through language and culture, offering a universal connection.

Despite his success in Bollywood, he differentiates the impact of film music from his non-film compositions. “Film audiences are looking for light entertainment but non-film music carries deeper emotions,” he says. “Non-film music touches the soul, while film music is more fleeting. Each platform has its unique audience and I enjoy the challenge of catering to different frequencies.” But no career comes without its challenges and his own journey wasn't without rejection. He remembers the time when his song “Allah Ke Bande” was initially dismissed. “At the time, I didn't understand the film industry very well. They told me it was a film song but it didn't have the usual budget. I had doubts. But when the song became a hit, the same people who rejected it came asking for collaboration. That song did become a turning point in my career and it was



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a lesson that sometimes the smallest beginnings lead to the biggest breakthroughs.” Reflecting on his career, he is humble about his influence. “People often ask me which of my songs defines me. It's difficult to choose. Life is so full of shifting emotions. Each song represents a different phase. Take ‘Piya Ghar Aavenge,’ for example, it's about the anticipation of a reunion. Or ‘Teri Deewani,’ which is about the intensity of love. And then there's ‘Saiyyan,’ a song about surrendering to something greater than yourself. Each one reflects a part of my journey but none can define it entirely.” As for the impact of his music, he says that whether he is performing in India or abroad, the connection is the same. “Wherever I go, people connect with my music because it speaks to their hearts. Whether in the US or India, our Indian audience understands the joy of life. But in Delhi,” he adds with a mischievous grin, “there's a certain energy here, a special ‘dhamaal’ that is unmatched.” He may not have imagined this journey when he first started singing as a child, but today, his music has touched the hearts of millions. It is the story of a boy who didn't follow the conventional path, a boy who sang from his heart and whose voice continues to resonate with the world. The Padma Shri award is just one chapter in his extraordinary journey, a journey that continues to inspire and uplift. Kher's journey is a beautiful reminder of the power of music to connect us to something deeper within ourselves.

Kailash Kher doesn't just make music; he shares pieces of his own story, inviting us all to reflect on our own. Every track, Kher insists, is a piece of his soul. “They're not just songs,” he says. “They're my prayers, my truths. And once they're out in the world, they take on lives of their own.” Much like the lyrics of Piya Ghar Aavenge, “आज मेरे पिया घर आवेंगे, हे-री, सखी, मंगल गाओ री, धरती-अंबर सजाओ री, उतरेगी आज मेरे प्यो की सवासे”, they speak of waiting, of anticipation, of the quiet joy that comes from knowing something beautiful is about to happen. Waiting isn't always celebrated, but his music shows us that there is beauty in the moments in between. The stillness and hope that accompany the wait remind us that sometimes the most profound moments in life aren't the arrivals, but the journeys we take while waiting. In his own way, Kailash Kher teaches us that there is an art to waiting. It's in those moments of anticipation when we hold our breath and trust that what we're waiting for will be worth it. Just like the joy in the song, the waiting itself is part of the magic, making the reunion all the more meaningful when it finally arrives.

Photos: Pankaj Kumar

FROM THE MAN HIMSELF

What one piece of advice to your younger self, the Kailash Kher just starting out, what would it be and why?

I would say, “You have never slept for 12 years, nor eaten properly. How did you survive without eating and sleeping? Eat a little, sleep a little and embrace life fully. Be human.” I lived like this, living many lives within one birth.

Is there any collaboration or project you have been wanting to do but haven't had the chance yet?

I have no desires or plans. I am a man with no plan and I cherish that state of being. My only “want” is that I have no wants and my only “desire” is to have no desires. I believe life flows best when you're not tied down by endless aspirations. Instead, I would advise others to focus on taking care of themselves first physically, mentally and spiritually, before chasing desires.

What message will you give to the younger generation who are coming into music?

I don't give advice often because I believe when you give something valuable, it should be respected. Because when you give something that holds value, it is respected. If you give it for free, it is not. If someone truly wants it, they will take it. If they don't want it, they won't. That's why I believe one should stay true to themselves, neither giving nor taking. If someone insists and asks me for advice, my advice would be this: “Never give advice to anyone. Neither give nor take. Just stay within yourself, and truly be true to yourself.”

Who do you think would be the right person to portray your entire journey, from childhood to the present, in a film?

I don't look at it from that perspective and that's why I never have. Most people aren't fully honest in their work. In creativity, too, many people repeat the same things in the name of “new.” They claim to be creating something very unique, but it's already been done. Everyone's life and story are unique and to capture that uniqueness, you need a creator who's equally different. It's possible that someone who's never done it before, or even if they have, can bring something fresh to it because they understand the nuances of art and craft. If they can get it right, then it will have that newness and originality.

CHAT-O-CINO

WHEN KUBBRA FILMED INTIMATE SCENES WITH ‘RIPPED’ AND ‘BROKEN’ HAND

Beneath the spotlight, where talent meets tenacity, **Kubbra Sait** shines bright as a beacon of creativity and passion. In an exclusive and intimate conversation with **The Pioneer**, the actress delves into the making of her latest release, *Khwaabon Ka Jhamela* and shares her insightful perspectives on love, self-discovery and the ever-evolving landscape of the entertainment industry

TEJAL SINHA
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With a presence that is as unforgettable as it is mesmerising, there's this one talented star, who has emerged as one of India's most captivating and versatile talents. With a sparkle in her eye and a fire in her soul, it's none other than Kubbra Sait, who has been lighting up screens with her irrepressible charm and undeniable talent. From playing a small-screen role in *Ready* to her critically acclaimed performances in films like *Sultan* and *Gully Boy*, Sait has consistently proven herself to be a force to be reckoned with in the entertainment industry. With her infectious enthusiasm, captivating charm and dedication to her craft, she continues to win hearts and inspire audiences across the country.

Well, now as the actress is on cloud nine with her latest release *Khwaabon Ka Jhamela*, **The Pioneer** had the opportunity to catch up with her, who is thrilled about the release of the project, now streaming on Jio.

"It feels fantastic, like a relief," exclaims Kubbra as she begins to chat with us. "Everyone around you is constantly speaking about how bad the situation is in the industry and everyone's highlighting the situations where so many projects have been filmed and are waiting for a platform or a release. And I'm just happy that a sweet, lovely, positive story that is filled with hopefulness is now there on Jio for everyone to watch."

The thing about working in films or as an actor, the *Sacred Games* fame acknowledges is that the gratification for the work is not instant. "You really wait for a long time till all the verticals of your film come together and then finally, there is a release." For obvious reasons, *Khwaabon Ka Jhamela* stands out as a very special project since it's her first release of the year and after quite a while.

In this project, she plays a character called Shehnaaz and sharing her perspective on what drew her to the character, she gushes, "There are only three characters in the film. It's my character (Shehnaaz) that gets Zubin (played by Prateik Babbar) to go out there and find himself. I feel what we don't recognise is that the person who pushes us to do something that we've never done before is also changing because they're actually asking for what they want for the very first time. I think that is what drew me to my character in *Khwaabon Ka Jhamela* because yes, there's this taboo around marriage. There's a taboo that you can't tell your family, or your friends that sex is bad in a relationship. Then I get to play that character, who says no because my



character is unhappy in this relationship."

Well, this is what leads Prateik's character to go on a self-discovery journey. *The Trial* star's enthusiasm for her latest project is evident and she's grateful to have had the opportunity to play a character that challenges societal norms.

"As an actor, we all give so much emphasis on feeling that there is a magical way or a process to reach a character." She emphasised the importance of a well-written script, saying, "I think the first tool that one has is the script. And my character is so clear in the script. It's made so beautifully and it's written so incredibly that I had zero doubts."

With a solid foundation in the script, Sait found the preparation process to be relatively easy. "Now, the preparation process becomes easy because then you're like, oh, this is all written. Now how do I lead with my emotions?" She credited her incredible co-stars, including Prateik, with making the filming process enjoyable, even during challenging scenes like the sex scenes. "He brought everyone laughing and rolling on the floor," recalled Kubbra with a blast of laugh.

One of the most memorable moments from Kubbra's shoot was also one of the most challenging - filming a sex scene with a broken hand. In fact, "The whole film, I shot for 7 days or 10 days and this was literally 5 days after I was diagnosed that my entire arm is ripped out." Ouchh! Despite the physical discomfort, the *Deva* actress' dedication to her craft shone through and she even managed to find humour in the situation.

In terms of her character's place in the larger narrative, *The Verdict-State vs Nanavati* fame described the film as a romantic comedy that explores themes of coming-of-age and self-discovery. "It's a romcom that meets coming to lie coming to age." She praised the film's ability to update the rom-com genre, making it relatable to modern audiences.

"Danish Aslam says this very beautifully. Romcom as a genre constantly needs to be updated like the iOS on your phone because romance is changing."

She further delved into the intricacies of romance and the transformative power of self-discovery—"What romance used to be for me by growing up is not the romance today for children. So I guess this story tells you about how important it is to even explore you being single and the kind of superpower that it draws from you discovering who you are as a person and not just depend on your partner by calling them soulmates. One has to be comfortable in their skin and love themselves in order to love other people." The *Shehar Lakhot* actress encouraged viewers to watch the film to see her character's arc.

Regarding her project choices, she describes herself as 'not a choosy actor'. However, "I am definitely looking at projects that allow me to pick the environments I want to work in. It allows me to pick the stories that I want to tell and the stories and characters I want to be. I want to share my this life with their journey."

Looking back at her journey and growth as an actor, the *Jawaani Jaaneman* star recalls, "When I came here to be an actor, I didn't really know what acting is because I didn't have exposure to schools and to learning and to educational answers." And so, she credited her colleagues and directors with teaching her about acting.

"So whatever I know and learn, it's all on the set. What I know is through learning and growing with my colleagues and my directors. I've been very fortunate to meet incredible people who believe that I can bring something to the table and then we can elevate that together because telling a story is not a one-man business. It takes a whole army to do that."

With a promising pipeline of projects on the horizon, Kubbra Sait is gearing up for an exciting new chapter in her career. Her slate is filled with an exciting array of upcoming shows and films, including a recently wrapped series alongside the talented Kajol. Additionally, Kubbra announced her upcoming film, *Deva*, slated for release next year.

With a tantalising tease, she hinted that there's much more to come, saying "All I can say is just watch out... there's a lot more we need to talk about in the coming months and years."

TRENDING

VIR DAS



PERSON

The 2024 International Emmy Awards combined humour, talent and cultural diversity, with comedian and actor Vir Das taking center stage as the first Indian to host the prestigious event.

PRIYANKA GANDHI WON WAYANAD LOK SABHA SEAT



VIDEO

Following her MP brother Rahul Gandhi's footsteps, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra took oath as Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha on Thursday while carrying a copy of the Indian Constitution.

MOVIE

WICKED

Wicked was number 1 in North America, with sales from Friday through Sunday of roughly \$95 million from 3,888 theaters, for a total since opening in previews earlier in the week of \$114 million. That sum made *Wicked* the third-highest opener for the year, behind \$211 million for *Deadpool & Wolverine* and \$154 million for *Inside Out 2*.



NAANAA HYRAANAA



SONG

The makers of Ram Charan and Kiara Advani's next have released the new song from the album and it is a melodious romantic track named *Naanaa Hyraanaa*. Picturised on beautiful and exotic locations, the song features Ram and Kiara's characters romancing each other.

CHINA DISCOVERS MASSIVE GOLD RESERVE IN HUNAN



PICTURE

China has discovered a huge gold reserve in Hunan province. The estimated value of this vast reserve is believed to be hundreds of billions of rupees and is expected to support the faltering Chinese economy.

Reviving 1980s icons and crafting devil for big screen!

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For comic book creator Josh Blaylock, the past isn't just a place to revisit; it's a treasure trove waiting to be reimagined. Known for bringing iconic 1980s franchises like *G.I. Joe* back into the cultural spotlight, he has a keen understanding of the power of nostalgia. "Originally, the huge resurgence of the 1980s was simply due to the fact that it had not been done yet," he explains. "My company was the first (in comics) to bring back such a brand from the 1980s and everyone was now an adult, in their 20s and they wanted to see it come back the way they remembered it—in their head, not in reality—and a little more edgy."

The appeal wasn't just in the characters or stories but in the era itself. "It was the first time that a generation had grown up with this huge amalgamation of cartoons, comics, toys, lunch boxes, pajamas, McDonald's Happy Meals and so much other collectible merchandise," says Josh. "The older generation did not understand how powerful this nostalgia would be."

Today, the allure of 1980s culture endures, driven by an older fan base and younger audiences alike. While Generation X continues to embrace the era that defined their childhoods, he believes younger fans are drawn to its pre-internet charm. "I can't help but think there is a romanticisation about it in part because it is as close as we will ever get to modern society before the internet changed everything."

Beyond reviving past favourites, his original creation, *Mercy Sparx*, is poised to leap from the comic pages to the big screen with MGM. The character—a devil-girl working for Heaven to hunt rogue angels—comes with her own set of challenges in adaptation. "One of the core elements of the *Mercy Sparx* story is that she herself does not evolve," he notes. "Whenever she is given the chance to move forward, she sabotages her own success."

Still, he insists that certain aspects of the character

Josh Blaylock is a master of reviving the past while forging bold new paths. As a renowned comic book creator, he's brought iconic 1980s franchises like *G.I. Joe* back into the spotlight and his original creation, *Mercy Sparx*, is set to leap from the comic pages to the big screen. With a passion that spans historical thrillers, political satire and sci-fi adventures, Blaylock's work continues to captivate audiences and inspire new generations of creators

must remain intact. "It's important that they keep the main 'hook' of the story—a devil that works for Heaven. She must also be a counterculture, genuinely reluctant character who is forced into the job against her will and has a snarky attitude about the whole thing." Maintaining her punk-rock roots and subcultural aesthetic poses another challenge. "There are very specific nuances, like her style and the comic books' influences from certain music subculture aesthetics—punk, goth, metal, etc.—that are hard to keep in sync with film elements, but I do my best to exert influence where I can."

With one foot in the past and another in bold new worlds, his creative journey proves that great stories—whether nostalgic or original—never truly go out of style.

For him, the comic book medium is more than just a vehicle for entertainment—it's a powerful tool for education, reflection, and cultural dialogue. From addressing historical tragedies to exploring the future of technology, his diverse body of work showcases the versatility of comics to tackle complex topics with nuance and impact.

In his graphic novel *Operation Nemesis*, he delves into the Armenian Genocide through the lens of Soghomon Tehlirian, the man who assassinated Talaat Pasha, the architect of the genocide. "I was approached by two Armenian cousins who wanted this story told from an outsider's perspective," he



shares. The project, marking the 100th anniversary of the genocide, proved both an emotional and rewarding endeavor.

To accurately portray the events, he immersed himself in research, including a treasure trove of early 20th-century New York Times articles chronicling the genocide and its aftermath. "The critical moment was when I found the actual court hearing from the German court system," he says. This document, alongside interviews with historians and accounts from Tehlirian's family, revealed a narrative of tragedy, espionage, and justice. "It all combines to make an incredible tale of tragedy, triumphs, espionage, and drama," he reflects.

With Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the Freshman Force, he tackled the polarised world of modern politics through a mix of satire and tribute. "The key is to embrace different styles and perspectives from several creators," he explains. The result was a time capsule of the political zeitgeist, designed to entertain and educate while capturing the essence of a transformative moment in U.S. history. "Should

someone read it twenty, or even fifty years later, it would represent a true snapshot of that era," he adds.

His fascination with Bitcoin led to the creation of *The Bitcoin Comic Handbook*, a project that simplifies complex concepts of cryptocurrency through visual storytelling. "Comics allow you to communicate visuals and words in a way that no other medium does," he says. Part comic, part illustrated prose, the book demystifies Bitcoin beyond its financial implications, earning accolades from the tech community.

For him, comics remain his go-to medium for exploring passions, whether historical, political, or technological. "It's in my DNA," he says. "When I get passionate about something, I need an outlet and 'Comics are something all their own,' he says. And under Blaylock's deft hand, they continue to expand their boundaries, proving that no topic is too heavy—or too complex—for this unique art form. He is celebrated for his work across diverse genres, balancing crafting immersive fictional worlds and

dissecting real-world complexities. As a veteran in the comic industry, he continues to innovate while championing the evolution of the medium.

"In reality, it's about digging into the information and deciding what's most important to share," he explains. The process forces him to deeply evaluate his own beliefs, making it an introspective exercise.

Conversely, creating fictional worlds means defining their rules and letting characters flourish within them. "People love to create lore, but the hard part is crafting living, breathing characters that connect emotionally with readers," he says. A relatable character serves as a guide, making even the most fantastical stories accessible.

Reflecting on the role of comics in today's world, Blaylock wishes the medium had greater cultural influence, especially beyond superhero narratives. "Comics are the source of so much entertainment, but many don't realise how much of what they consume started in comics," he says. Beyond entertainment, comics have proven effective educational tools, even adopted by the military to explain complex concepts.

As a pioneer in self-publishing with Devil's Due Comics, Blaylock offers practical advice for aspiring creators. His forthcoming guide, *Breaking Into Comics: No More Rules*, emphasises the importance of simply starting. "No one is waiting to give you permission to call yourself a comic book

creator," he asserts. While early attempts may fail, they offer invaluable lessons that fuel growth.

He highlights the enduring power of direct audience connections, particularly in an age of AI-assisted art. Having witnessed the industry's transformation, Blaylock acknowledges significant progress in diversity. "When I started, comic cons were over 90% male, and most characters were white," he recalls. The rise of manga in the early 2000s marked a turning point, bringing in younger, more diverse readers and creators.

Today, conventions often attract a female-majority audience and indie comics continue to expand storytelling horizons. "The melting pot is growing," he says. Blaylock is optimistic about the medium's future, fuelled by a new generation of readers and creators inspired by manga and innovative storytelling.

From delving into historical narratives to imagining alternate ancient worlds, his work highlights the limitless potential of comics. As the medium evolves, he remains a passionate advocate for its ability to entertain, educate and connect with audiences on a deeply human level.

For him, the path to becoming a comic creator seemed inevitable. "I was born wanting to draw and write stories," he shares, recalling how even as a toddler, he was constantly sketching. Early encounters with influential comics cemented his passion, beginning with his discovery of *G.I. Joe*. "The first issue I found in a store blew my mind; it felt so grown-up and became the first series I collected monthly."

Key moments followed rapidly: the debut of the 1989 *Batman* movie introduced him to *The Dark Knight Returns* and *The Killing Joke*. "I had no business reading those at 12, but fortunately, my mom didn't know," he jokes. The realisation that the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles started as an edgy, indie comic further expanded his perspective, leading him to the black-and-white indie scene. With the formation of Image Comics, he was "all in on comics all day, every day."

His enthusiasm hasn't waned. "I'm still constantly influenced and excited by new comics and art—it never stops."

GETTING INTO THE SKIN OF CHARACTERS WITH ELAN

Reginaa Cassandra shot into limelight with a rare mix of curiosity, spunk and bubbling energy that catapulted her from a chance child model to a much sought-after star who can light up any set. Known for her nuanced performances across Tamil, Telugu and Hindi cinema, she has carved a niche for herself as one of the most versatile actresses in India. Apart from delivering captivating performances in films like *Evaru* and *Nenjam Marappathillai*, Reginaa Cassandra, a psychology graduate with a deep fascination for human behaviour, has always blended intellect and artistry to breathe life into her characters with elan.

Balancing a complex family history, shifting religious identities and the ever-demanding spotlight; she has emerged as a woman of substance and purpose. Whether sharing the screen with legends like Chiranjeevi or turning down fleeting fame to stay true to her principles, she has consistently made choices that resonate with authenticity. After her debut in *Siva Manasulo Sruthi* (2013), she went on to receive multiple accolades, including the Best Female Debut at the South Indian International Movie Awards. Her filmography reflects a blend of conventional and unconventional roles, from her breakthrough in *Jyo Achyutananda* to critically acclaimed performances in films like *Awe* and *Evaru*, where she was praised for her studied portrayals. Her Hindi debut in *Ek Ladki Ko Dekha Toh Aisa Laga*, where she played a lesbian character, was also well-received. Reginaa has made a strong mark in the digital space too with her role in the web series *Rocket Boys* and *Jaanbaaz Hindustan Ke*. Over the years, she has appeared in a variety of genres, earning recognition for her performances, such as her dual roles in *Nene Naa* and her performance as a paranormal investigator in *Conjuring Kannappan*. She has also made notable appearances in *Acharya* and *Saakini Daakini*.

In a conversation with **The Pioneer's Shikha Duggal**, she shares shades of her off-screen persona as a compassionate soul, having grown up rescuing stray animals. She is still dreaming of making a difference in this interconnected world. Apart from contributing to various charitable causes, she has positively impacted many lives as the ambassador for People For Cattle and by her support for organic farming. In 2023, she co-founded Democratic Sangha to empower rural women.



GROWING UP AS CURIOUS KID

(By design) I was a typical single kid. I was the only child to my parents since they wanted to have just me. I was one of the friendliest kids as a child. Any Tom, Dick, or Harry could become a friend of mine. You can see me standing at the back of the photos in which all boys are seen playing cricket. We used to live in apartments. My mother was quite imaginative. She keeps asserting that having a girl child is the greatest thing that ever happened to her.

FACED ADVERSITY HEAD-ON DURING CHILDHOOD

I had no inhibitions as I grew up. You have to be able to show compassion and all that. I can still clearly recall how my mother instilled the value of compassion in me during my childhood. We began providing shelter to stray animals, including cows, crows, sparrows, kittens and puppies. At my mother's place, we currently have five fresh kittens that had been rescued. I was a pretty impetuous child, too! While we were rebellious as children, we never went too far or did anything to offend anyone. It's true that my mother used to discipline me without hesitation.

FROM MUSLIM TO CHRISTIAN

I'm a hilarious mix. My mother and father are Muslims. My mum was a Christian; she had to convert. I initially had a name that was Muslim; being called by that name made the first six years of my early education somewhat fascinating. My parents divorced when I was a year old. At the very least, my mother wanted me to practice any religion because, to her, it was significant. Any faith that was acceptable to me -Muslim? Alright; Christian? Alright. After receiving the message, I was baptised. It's fascinating that I grew up so quickly. Actually, we millennials are responsible for the majority of our parents' emotions.

CHANGE AFTER MOTHER'S REMARRIAGE

My mother chose to remarry when I was 10. I realised as a child that it was excellent for her. Living alone in this world is quite challenging, particularly for a single mother of a girl child. I used to wonder whether this is the right world and how difficult it must be to live in it when I saw the circumstances of that time. She continued to place me in Chennai's top schools! She also insisted that I attend a coeducational school so that I could learn about equality. An all-girls school won't help because she really wanted me to deal with the world, which is full of guys too.

STEP-DAD SHOWED NO INTEREST IN MAKING HER HIS OWN

After that, my stepfather, a Gujarati, came into my life. He had no interest in adopting me. His desire was to "only" wed my mother. All of this demonstrated to me the importance of love and on top of that, being a single child makes you want even more of it.

HELPING NATURE

To this day, when people question me about my career, I don't hesitate to say that I've always wanted to be a pharmacist. But my mother had told me 'no' since it would be a lengthy path. However, I still believe that I was brought up to help others in need without putting my own physical or emotional well-being at jeopardy. I am a very friendly actor. I would love to work with the Blue Cross next.

UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY

I do not consider myself to be a fully practicing Christian. Although I didn't attend mass, I have enjoyed visiting churches. I've been there every Sunday for the past 28 years of my life. I now consider Sunday mass to be a tradition! But as I get older, I want to fully comprehend the rituals, why I perform them and everything else. I no longer wanted to have blind faith. Thus, my mother was the ideal person to mentor me. She studies the *Bible* and is a devout Christian. The majority of our conversations then result in amusing disputes about these subjects. She keeps saying 'in Christianity, we do this and that'. But, I will not attend church merely to prove to the public that I am a Christian. We can pray in silence too.

FASCINATION FOR PSYCHOLOGY

I completed my bachelor's degree in psychology at Women's Christian College in Chennai. I chose to study psychology because I was constantly wondering why individuals are the way they are. Human psychology piqued my curiosity. I was interested in finding out more about personality disorders. What distinguishes sociopaths from psychopaths! When I graduated from college in 2011, there was no such thing as psychological awareness. Since a counsellor is now an essential component of any company we work for, I am shocked by how much the world has changed. Even books on psychology are being read! I can now better analyse a handful of the parts I've portrayed for you guys on screen, thanks to this insight. Because members of my peer group have also become clinical psychologists and other professionals, I have access to counsellors.

ACCIDENTAL BEGINNINGS IN CINEMA

When I did my first ad, I was in fourth grade. At a gathering, my mother's friend saw something in me. They contacted my mother right away with coordinators and together we were able to get my pictures clicked. I had a complete portfolio made! I looked amazing! I was a tomboy and because I was so into this at the time, I was there for every ad that came out. At that age, I was just having fun and didn't know how to pose. I had started off really carefree. My debut in films occurred when I had a chance to meet the film's director, while she was casting actors for *Kanda Naai Mudhal*. I had previously collaborated with her on a documentary. I was so thrilled to be starring in a movie that was helmed by someone I knew back then. Because I did not consider acting in a conscious manner, I was more self-assured in the early going. Everything was an experience when I was younger. It's a job now and I am no longer carefree.

SPECIAL SONGS ON HER TERMS

I don't want whatever I do to come across as a publicity stunt. After becoming an actress, I took a long time to come to terms with the fact that controversies will likely occur on a daily basis. Until I receive a bountiful offer, I still won't do any special songs—certainly not in Telugu, but perhaps in another language. I still stick to my statement. After *Saana Kashtam*, I refused a lot of special songs! I just need to give credit for one amazing song and that was with Chiranjeevi garu. What could be greater than this? In my opinion, he is the biggest star in the south! Next, I can change my mind if it involves Mahesh Babu (giggles). I've always worked with the Mega family; so, we're extremely close.

NENJAM MARAPPATHILLAI WAS MEANT TO BE HER LAST FILM!

Under Selvaraghavan's direction, I recall acting in *Nenjam Marappathillai*. I wasn't in the finest of mental state when I did the film! I had made the decision that it would be my final movie. But that didn't work out and I was dealing with a lot of personal problems. Destiny had bigger plans for me. I felt a lot more confident after doing the film.



EVARU CAST & CREW BECAME 'HER PEOPLE'

The *Evaru* movie is one of my favourite shooting moments. On that set, the closeness with the creative team was unthinkable! We were more than just actors on that set; we used to have a lot of conversations and private talks. I was really ill throughout the movie and they all made sure I was given the greatest care possible. It was out of sheer humanity, not because I was the actress. They all transcended the idea that we are merely here to work! I formed some lifelong, extremely close relationships during that movie. They became my people.

NO COMPROMISE ON VALUES!

I was informed that I would need to reside in Mumbai and go to meetings when I had first expressed interest in working in the north. In the south, we don't do that. Although you network, you don't actually meet people. In the south, there is no such thing as a casting agent; managers and PROs are all that exist! The marketplaces in the south have now been penetrated by talent management firms. When it comes to Hindi, it's much more competitive. I don't think I'm the type of person who would sell oneself for a job. I am unable to go lobby for anything. However, I then realised that I wouldn't receive it if I didn't do this. I came to terms with the fact that many people felt I wasn't as aggressive as my colleagues. It simply seemed so rushed. Now that I have a team that advocates for me, I come down to just try out and I am thrilled with them.

BREAK FROM RELATIONSHIPS

Having a strong sense of independence, I would not listen to anyone. He needs to look after me and be safe. I am a serial dater who has had a lot of relationships throughout my life, but I am currently taking a sabbatical. I am so direct that I have had parents of ex-boyfriends question me about things I say. I can't lie, though. For me, love would include two things. Although I am not sure how to define love, if I were to give it any criteria, it would be having an unconditional understanding of one another and being open to each other's development. A date would be ideal anywhere outside. It only needs to be something my partner and I would like doing together; it doesn't need to be romantic. Because I tend to be too protective of the people I love, some of my friends refer to me as the group's mother. However, they would also characterise me as aloof because I dislike becoming attached to anything or anyone. No one in my life, romantic or platonic, can be in a codependent relationship with me.

BRINGING VIDAAMUYARCHI TO LIFE WITH AJITH

Perseverance is what *Vidaamuyarchi* signifies. It's coming along pretty damn nicely. We filmed 90% of the movie in Azerbaijan and it looks fantastic. I am extremely excited for it since it's an exciting role. I'm thrilled that the producers trusted me enough to give me such a significant part in such a huge movie. I must admit that before working on the movie, I had never met Ajith sir. After we finished filming, everyone got to meet him. No one I have seen has the charm and charisma that he does. He took great care to ensure that the movie was released in a proper manner.

HOSTING GIG AT GACHIBOWLI STADIUM

Another favourite memory is co-hosting with Shirish and Navdeep. We worked on rehearsals and I had the opportunity to collaborate with the Telugu-speaking scripting team because the event was being held at Hyderabad's Gachibowli Stadium and I was hosting the Telugu portion of it. I also wore a really nice dress. I believe Gabrielle McGu. I'm not entirely sure who designed it, but it resembled a net dress and the Telugu journalists gave me a lot of flak for it. I wanted to step up my fashion game since they always treated me like this sweet girl. For example, you wouldn't have been curious about what I was wearing underneath the dress if you had glanced at it. That was how scandalous it was!

LOVE FOR DANCING

I enjoy dancing a lot. Dancing has, in my opinion, been a really significant way for me to express myself. I have danced all my life. Actually, dancing was the only method I knew to release my energy when I was younger and I was unaware that I was doing it. But as you get older, you realise what you did and why you did it. I would just turn to dance.

