

'IMEE corridor will be source of regional peace, stability'
 5

INDIA SHOULD
 FOCUS ON LOCAL CURRENCY TRADING: GTRI
 8

Peelings song IS OUT
 PZ

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
 I thought the BRS's defeat would change the language used in politics. Revanth is continuing the ungentlemanly language introduced by KCR. Revanth should change his language style as he is occupying a responsible post. I am ready for an open debate on implemented promises if Revanth promises that he will not use KCR's language
 — G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister
 P4

DON'T MISS...

Transgender's murder case solved

The police cracked the brutal murder of a leader of transgender people by arresting 12 persons. SP Krishnakanth told the media here on Sunday that on December 26, Hashini, who was a leader to a large number of transgender people, was brutally murdered at an underpass bridge at Tapathopu near here. The murder of transgender leader created a sensation in the region. The police took the murder very seriously and formed special teams to nab the killers. The special teams arrested 12 persons in connection with the murder of transgender...

Every couple should have at least 3 kids

Expressing concern over declining population growth, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR), the average number of children a woman gives birth to in her lifetime, should be at least 3, well above the present one of 2.1. Speaking at the 'Kathale Kul (clan) Sammelan' in Nagpur, Bhagwat also highlighted the vital role of families, and warned that according to population science, if a society's total fertility rate dips below 2.1, it could face extinction. "A declining population..."

Commercial LPG up Rs 16.5 per cylinder

Jet fuel, or ATF, price on Sunday was hiked by 1.45 per cent and rates of commercial LPG used in hotels and restaurants increased by Rs 16.5 per 19-kg cylinder in the monthly revision done in line with international oil price trends. The aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was increased by Rs 1,318.12 per kilolitre, or 1.45 per cent, to Rs 91,856.84 per kl in the national capital - home to one of the busiest airports in the country, according to state-owned fuel retailers. This is the second straight monthly...

Sindhu, Lakshya clinch singles titles

Top seeded Indians P V Sindhu and Lakshya Sen showcased their class and dominance to clinch the women's and men's singles titles, respectively, at the Syed Modi International badminton tournament here on Sunday. Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medalist, ended her long title drought by outplaying China's world number 119 Wu Luo Yu 21-14, 21-16 to lift the trophy for the third time, having previously triumphed in 2017 and 2022. In the men's singles final, Lakshya, a 2021 World Championships...

How smartphones are reshaping childhood

Parents across the country are grappling with an escalating issue—excessive phone use among children. "My son refuses to eat unless he's given a phone," shared a concerned mother, echoing the struggles faced by many families. Experts are raising alarms over the long-term impact of this growing dependency, urging immediate action.

SCHMES & POLICIES
Govt to hold opinion poll

CM announces the initiative to gather feedback through IVRS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA
 Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has announced that the State government will conduct a public opinion poll to gather feedback on the various schemes, programmes, and decisions being implemented. The aim is to improve service delivery based on the opinions of the public. To this end, the government will use the Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) to gather insights on the effectiveness and execution of the schemes.

In a statement released on Sunday, the CM explained that as part of this initiative, computer-based phone calls will be made to beneficiaries, seeking their feedback on the benefits, implementation, and quality of services under the respective schemes. Beneficiaries will receive IVRS calls asking for their ratings and opinions, which will help the government make any necessary adjustments to improve services. Feedback is already being collected from beneficiaries of programs like doorstep pension delivery and the free gas cylinder distribution under the Deepam scheme. The focus of the questions is on whether pensions are delivered on time and if there are any issues with receiving free gas cylinders.



- Feedback already collected on doorstep pensions and free gas cylinders under the Deepam scheme.
- Focus on citizen services provided by revenue, municipal, and electricity depts
- Dissatisfaction to be analysed to improve services.
- The initiative aims to enhance accountability and improve service delivery.
- CM urges citizens to participate in better governance.

In addition to welfare schemes, the government will also gather public opinion on newly introduced policies, such as the free sand policy and the revised liquor sales policy. Feedback will also be collected on essential citizen services provided by departments like revenue, municipal, and electricity. If any dissatisfaction is expressed, the reasons will be analysed, and corrective measures will be taken to improve services.



Greyhounds personnel searching for bodies of outlawed Maoists after a fierce encounter in Mulugu district on Sunday

7 members of outlawed Maoists gunned down in Telangana

PNS ■ MULUGU

In a major operation in the early hours of Sunday at Chalpaka under the Eturnagaram forest area in Mulugu district, seven members of the outlawed Communist Party of India - Maoists were gunned down in an exchange of fire during their 'encounter' with the police. The Telangana Greyhounds and Anti-Maoist Squad jointly carried out the operation. A key Maoist leader was among those found dead. Among those killed was Kursam Mangu alias Bhadru, a Telangana state committee member and the Yellandu-Narsampeta area committee secretary of the banned Maoist party, along with a woman member of the cadre, according to officials. The exchange of fire took place during a combing operation in the Chalpaka forest area under Eturnagaram mandal.

PDS rice exports go on unabated: Manohar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Civil Supplies Minister Nadendra Manohar has expressed grave concern over the unabated illegal export of Public Distribution System (PDS) rice from Kakinada Port, demanding accountability from former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy on the issue. Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Manohar alleged that Rs 48,537 crore worth of PDS rice was illegally exported from Kakinada Port over the past three years.

He criticised the previous regime for enabling a massive smuggling network spanning from Srikakulam to Chittoor, accusing it of plundering public funds and tarnishing Kakinada Port's reputation. The Minister further alleged that Aurobindo company gained a 41.12% share in the port through coercion, facilitating unrestrained PDS rice exports.

Highlighting the gravity of the issue, Manohar revealed that 1.31 crore metric tonnes of PDS rice were smuggled from the port, aided by vans procured for door-to-door rice delivery under the previous government. "The PDS rice mafia has created a 'green channel' to transport rice illegally across the state," he remarked, adding that the security of the port and the nation was jeopardised. Manohar called upon the YSRCP to explain the involvement of Aurobindo Realty and its alleged role in the smuggling network. He reiterated that the TDP government, under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, is committed to dismantling the network and ensuring justice.

MLC P Hariprasad, MLA Arava Sridhar, AP TIDCO Chairman V Ajay Kumar, and AP Infrastructure Development Corporation Chairman Chillapalli Srinivasa Rao were also present at the press meet.

TDP-led NDA govt in AP dissolves Waqf Board

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has dissolved the AP State Waqf Board to promote good governance, safeguard Waqf properties, and ensure the board operates efficiently, officials said. The state government revoked a government order (GO) issued on October 21, 2023, which had elected three members and nominated seven others to the 11-member Waqf Board. "In the interest of maintaining good governance, protecting Waqf properties, and ensuring the smooth functioning of the Waqf Board, the government hereby withdraws GO MS

No. 47 (which constituted the board) with immediate effect," said K Harshavardhan, secretary to the government, in a Government Order, issued on Saturday. According to the GO, the Chief Executive Officer of the AP State Waqf Board informed the government that the board had been "non-functional for an extended period", and there were writ petitions "questioning the legality of the order constituting the board. The southern state also considered the observations made by the High Court in the writ petitions while arriving at this decision, the GO added.

Ex-Dy CM Amzath Basha faults govt's decision

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP leader and former deputy chief minister Amzath Basha has criticised the coalition government for withdrawing the Government Order (GO) related to the establishment of the Waqf Board. Addressing the media on Sunday, Basha said that Waqf Board members were appointed in 2023 following prescribed guidelines, covering all categories. However, when the process to elect a Chairman began, the TDP moved the court and filed three petitions, stalling the process. "The matter is still sub



the forcible acquisition of Waqf lands. He dismissed claims that the Board was dissolved due to non-functionality, asserting that it could not operate while the case was in court. Basha further accused the coalition of acting vindictively, unlike the YSRCP government, which did not dissolve the Board in 2023, despite members resigning voluntarily. He announced plans to seek legal recourse against the government's decision. The YSRCP leader also criticised the Centre's proposed Waqf Board (Amendment) Bill, stating that it is opposed by minorities across the country.

Fengal weakens; heavy rain likely in AP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

After crossing the coast, cyclonic storm Fengal weakened into a depression after previously weakening from a Deep Depression. The system is expected to weaken further in the coming hours. According to the Met Office on Sunday, the deep depression (remnant of cyclonic storm Fengal) weakened into a depression over north coastal Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. The system moved slowly west-northwestwards in the past six hours and weakened into a Depression, which lay centred at 5:30 PM today over the same region, about 20 km north-northeast of Villupuram, 30 km west-northwest of Puducherry, 40 km north-northwest of Cuddalore, and 120 km south-southwest of Chennai.

TDP's 'Praja Vedika' to address public grievances

P2

PM's concern over likely threats from digital frauds

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday expressed concern over the potential threats generated on account of digital frauds, cybercrime, and AI technology, particularly the potential of deepfake to disrupt social and familial relations. Addressing the concluding session of the 59th All India Conference of Director Generals/Inspector Generals of Police, the prime minister also called for the use of technology to reduce the workload of the police constabulary and suggested



that the police station be made the focal point for resource allocation. Deliberations were held on emerging security concerns along the border with Bangladesh and Myanmar, trends in urban policing and strategies for countering malicious narratives, according to an official statement.

In-depth discussions were held on existing and emerging challenges to national security, including counter-terrorism, leftwing extremism, cybercrime, economic security, immigration, coastal security and narco-trafficking.

AP Cabinet to meet tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Cabinet meeting has been rescheduled to December 3 at 11.00 am. It will take place at the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat in Velagapudi, Amaravati. Chief Secretary to the Government, Neerabh Kumar Prasad, issued an urgent note announcing the change.



THE SILENT CRISIS
 "By age 10, phone dependency often escalates into addiction. In severe cases, children may even resort to extreme measures to maintain access to phones."

"Parents must set an example by managing their phone usage," advised Dr Priya. Introducing alternative activities—such as outdoor play, sports, music, or creative hobbies—can redirect children's attention away from screens. Simple measures like establishing phone-free zones during meals and family time can strengthen family bonds and promote healthier habits. "Encouraging outdoor activities and fostering hobbies not only reduce screen dependency but also improve overall well-being," emphasised Dr Rao. While technology remains integral to modern life, maintaining a balance is crucial. Dr Rao concluded, "Addressing phone dependency starts with responsible parenting. By adopting proactive measures, we can ensure our children grow up healthier and better equipped to face future challenges."

TTD bans political, hate speeches at Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), custodian of Lord Venkateswara Swamy temple, has banned political and hate speeches at Tirumala.



The decision comes in response to recent incidents where individuals including political leaders made political or inflammatory statements before the media near the temple premises after Darshan, disrupting the spiritual peace, it said in a social media post on Saturday. Urging all visitors to respect the decision, the TTD warned of legal action against violators. The board emphasises its commitment to preserving Tirumala's divine and serene environment. LV Subrahmanyam, former Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh, who also worked as Executive Officer of TTD said that the rule has been in place for a long time and there were instances where violators were pulled up.

Monday Mirchi

SELF GOAL BY GOVERNMENT STAFF IN CROP LOAN WAIVER

One ringing appeal of the Revanth Reddy government in Telangana is that all its programmes must be tom-tommed to reach all sections of people so that no one would get a chance to blame the authorities for renegeing on the ruling Congress's pre-poll framework of Six guarantees. Reflecting the gaping gaps between pious pronouncements and ground reality, even with regard to the crucial crop loan waiver the Revanth government appears to have been caught on the wrong foot. For, while Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has gone ahead and announced the 'completion' of crop loan waiver of up to Rs. 2 lakh, there is disturbing disquiet among a sizeable section of the employees in his immediate circle as they apparently have not got the waiver. If the system has not been fair to those within the earshot of the Chief Minister, one can imagine the plight of remote segments of the intended beneficiaries. Aside from staff assisting the Chief Minister, many outsourced employees engaged by Ministers too have been left out. Top officials are reportedly uneasy about the potential fallout of this widespread discontent at close quarters. Although top officials are on a fire-fighting mode, trying to plug further leaks from departments; the unforeseen consequences of the exclusion of lower-rung employees could put the departments concerned, including the Chief Minister's Office, in the spotlight for the wrong reasons. A little bird told us that the Chief Minister ought to have addressed these gaps, on priority within his close quarters, before claiming success of the crop loan waiver.

MINISTER MIFFED AT AD HOCISM IN ENDOWMENTS DEPT

With the Endowments Department seeing three occupants in the Commissioner's chair in little over a year, the ad-hocism in workflow amid the unintended game of musical chairs has exposed the pitfalls of having at the helm only a person with full additional charge, instead of a full-timer with a definite tenure. The buzz among insiders is that the Minister is miffed at this revolving door policy as she prefers steady hands so as to feel her grip over the department. But here's the juicy bit: a little birdie chirps that the Minister and her aides are bidding their time for a change at the very top — at the Chief Secretary level. The grapevine has it they are not too happy with how appointments are being shuffled around like a deck of cards. Is a shake-up from the top on the cards? Only time will tell!

IS IAS ASSOCIATION'S BARK WORSE THAN ITS BITE?

The Telangana IAS Officers Association has just stirred the chattering classes by its recent statements condemning the attack on Vikarabad Collector Prateek Jain as well as KT Rama Rao's remarks about Rajanna Sircilla Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha. The related resolutions were notably signed by its general secretary Jayesh Ranjan, with the association president Shashank Goel remaining backstage. Whispers within the bureau-

cratic corridors suggest a significant deviation from the norm because such resolutions are typically passed after formal discussions in a meeting. This time, however, the statements were reportedly issued under pressure, obviating the scope for any such consultation. Those in the know say the association's bark is worse than its bite. Whatever it may be, the association has at last found its voice, raising hopes among officers that the momentum will continue, resulting in more proactive and well-coordinated efforts for addressing pressing issues facingibus.

METRO'S HASTY MEDIA BRIEFING SPARKS SPECULATIONS

Are the Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited and L&T Metro Rail on the same page with regard to the achievements of Hyderabad Metro? Well, some have their own doubts as Hyderabad Metro's seven-year milestone celebrations saw moments that got on the nerves of HMRL's MD for reasons that outsiders cannot fathom. The flurry of media activity involving NVS Reddy briefing raised more questions than it answered. NVS Reddy, seemingly caught off guard by L&T Metro Rail's scheduled press meet, rustled up his own briefing before them. This left newshounds buzzing about the last-minute gyan from the top. While L&T's session appeared planned, NVS's responses came across as rushed, with scribes struggling to find celebratory elements. The usual polish of NVS was missing and, going by his tone, he appeared more defensive than commemorative. Adding to the drama, NVS's visible annoyance at phone interruptions during the session didn't go unnoticed. Pausing each time a journalist's phone rang, his irritation heightened the palpable tension in the room. The back-to-back events sparked speculations about the coordination—or lack thereof—between Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited and L&T Metro Rail. For now, the media is left wondering if this is just a case of poor planning or something reflective of a deeper malaise impinging on the dynamics between the two entities.

DID LOCAL POLITICS INFLUENCE SP TO SKIP DY CM'S VISIT TO PORT?

Local politics outweigh coalition dynamics. The conspicuous absence of Kakinada Superintendent of Police Vikrant Patil during AP Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's recent visit to Kakinada Port has drawn flak, with the Dy CM himself highlighting the matter. A little bird told us that there was no prior information about Pawan's visit. Besides, local political dynamics played a key role, considering that several leaders, including those from Telugu Desam Party and Jana Sena Party, were reportedly unhappy with the Dy CM's visit. For, over 10,000 individuals depend on port-related activities for their livelihood. Tensions have been building up within TDP and JSP circles in Kakinada and surrounding areas ever since the NDA formed the government. The SP perhaps wanted to ward off trouble stemming from unresolved local issues with heavy damage potential.

--Yours truly

Centre using diplomatic channels for safety of Hindus in Bangla: Himanta Biswa Sarma

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday that the central government is using its diplomatic channels to ensure safety of Hindus in Bangladesh as they have been facing atrocities in the neighbouring country. He also said that it is the responsibility of the Bangladesh government to provide security to Hindus, who are the neighbouring country's largest religious minority.

"The events happening in Bangladesh are sad. The government of India has already reacted. It is the responsibility of the government of Bangladesh to ensure safety of the religious minority Hindus there," Sarma told reporters on the sidelines of a programme in Cachar district. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been using various diplomatic channels to ensure that the Bangladesh government provides security to the Hindus," he added.

HM highlights CREDAI's role in promoting property ownership



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha has highlighted the significant role played by CREDAI in helping middle and lower-middle-class families achieve homeownership. Speaking at the 10th CREDAI Property Expo valedictory ceremony, Minister Anitha assured the public of the government's full support for CREDAI's efforts. She cited initiatives such as the single-window system, which expedites plan approvals, and measures to combat illegal mining and implement a free sand policy, all of which have greatly benefited the construction sector.

The Minister also addressed concerns about land encroachment, reassuring the public that a dedicated cell, supported by the police, has been set up to resolve such issues efficiently. Pendurthi MLA Panchakarla Ramesh Babu echoed the Minister's praise, commending CREDAI's contributions to the nation's growth. He acknowledged the state government's proactive policies in restoring normalcy

and fostering a positive environment for real estate development. CREDAI Visakhapatnam Chairman KSRK Raju (Sai), President V. Dharmender, and Honorary Secretary V. Sreenu expressed their satisfaction with the overwhelming response from the public. They highlighted the growing confidence in Vizag's real estate market, driven by the city's emerging role as an industrial and tourism hub. The success of the expo, they added, was a testament to the rising demand for real estate in the city and its contribution to the local economy.

National Joint Secretary B Raja Srinivas and Convenor of the Property Expo also spoke, emphasizing the positive impact the event had in building trust between developers and buyers.

Fengal weakens...

Continued from Page 1

The Depression is expected to continue moving west-northwestwards and gradually weaken into a well-marked low pressure area over north interior Tamil Nadu in the next 12 hours. Meanwhile, heavy rain is forecast for coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema in the next 24 hours. The IMD report indicates squally winds with speeds of 40-50 km/h, gusting to 60 km/h, in these regions during the same period. Light to moderate rain is expected in many areas or at a few places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next seven days.

In the last 24 hours, very heavy rainfall was recorded in Tirupati, Chittoor, and YSR Districts of Rayalaseema. Heavy rain is likely in Kakinada, Konaseema, Nellore, Chittoor, Tirupati, and Annamayya districts in the next 24 hours. The IMD has issued a warning for flash floods in Tirupati, Chittoor, and Kadapa districts. The famous hill shrine of Tirumala received heavy rainfall on Sunday due to the influence of Cyclone Fengal.

The Papavinasanam, Akashaganga, Gogarbhram, Kumaradhara, and Pasupu Dhara reservoirs are full, thanks to the heavy rains.

The Araniyar project lifted one of its crest gates to release floodwater downstream, and officials said additional gates would be opened tonight. All reservoirs in Chittoor and Tirupati districts are full.

While heavy rainfall continues in these areas, no untoward incidents have been reported. Authorities are alerting people living in low-lying areas like Mallemadugu.

GMC sets up Fengal helpline

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With tropical storm 'Fengal' forming in the Bay of Bengal and heavy rainfall warnings issued, the Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC) has initiated measures to minimise the impact on residents. GMC Commissioner Puli Srinivasulu announced on Sunday that a helpline has been established to assist the public, reachable at 0863-2345103.

The Commissioner urged department heads to prioritise public safety and directed GMC officials to remain vigilant, particularly in low-lying areas prone to waterlogging. Engineering teams were instructed to ensure pumps are ready to address potential flooding, while the Roads and Highways Department has been tasked with keeping equipment and manpower on



To maintain essential services, the Commissioner said steps have been taken to ensure an uninterrupted power supply. Generators will be available to avoid disruptions in drinking water supply during outages, and personnel have been pre-assigned specific duties.

standby to clear fallen trees swiftly.

To maintain essential services, the Commissioner said steps have been taken to ensure an uninterrupted power supply. Generators will be available to avoid disruptions in drinking water supply during outages, and personnel have been

pre-assigned specific duties. Residents facing difficulties due to the storm have been encouraged to contact the GMC helpline for assistance. Srinivasulu assured that the administration is fully prepared to safeguard the well-being of Guntur's citizens during this challenging period.

AP Chambers business expo concludes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP Chambers Business Expo 2024 concluded on a grand note on Sunday, showcasing a wide array of industries, including Infrastructure, Food Processing, Real Estate, Automobiles, Tourism, Hospitality, and Handicrafts. The event saw participation from 150 exhibitors and companies from across the country.

On the final day, AP Chambers hosted a session on Real Estate and Construction, chaired by AVR Chowdhary, Founder and Chairman of GNC Global Consortium. The panel featured key speakers, including YV Ramana Rao, President of CREDAI AP, and Y Venkatesh, CEO of KMV Spaces, among others.



A session on Renewable Energy followed, chaired by B Phani Chandra, CEO of Eshaan Energy. Panelists included D Venkateswarlu, State Head of Business Development at Tata

Power Solar; Prashanth Nimmana, CEO of Sinduri Projects; P Koti Rao, MD of Tirumala Hydel Power; and Koduru Srinivas, Consultant-Technical at NREDCAP. The Valedictory Event had PM Prasad, Chairman and MD of Coal India Ltd., as the Chief

Guest. He commended the AP Chambers team for the event's success and emphasised the need for companies to adapt to evolving business models. Dhulipala Narendra Kumar also visited the Expo, praising AP Chambers for organising such a large-scale event. He presented awards to the best exhibitors and distributed certificates to college students who volunteered at the Expo. AP Chambers President Potluri Bhakara Rao and General Secretary B Raja Sekhar extended their gratitude to sponsors, exhibitors, and the organising committee for their contributions to making the event a success.

People asked to wear masks right to ward off tiger attack

PNS ■ KUMARAM BHEEM ASIFABAD

In Kumaram Bheem Asifabad district, a big tiger is still on the prowl. Not only has it killed a woman, but also attacked a farmer. With this, the Forest officials are on an alert and are warning the people to protect themselves from the tiger. They are trying to raise awareness in the villages and at the same time distributing masks to the people. The masks are to be worn on the back of the head to deter the tiger from attacking.

Govt to hold...

Continued from Page 1

The IVRS system has previously yielded positive results, with the party using it during the general elections to finalise candidates. Similarly, during the Vijayawada floods, the government used IVRS calls to assess the effectiveness of relief measures. Building on these successes, the Chief Minister has decided to expand the use of IVRS to monitor and improve government schemes and services.

Chandrababu Naidu appealed to citizens to cooperate in this initiative, stressing that their participation is essential for ensuring good governance and the delivery of quality services.

TDP's 'Praja Vedika' to address public grievances

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Andhra Pradesh president and MLA, Palla Srinivasa Rao, announced that the 'Praja Vedika' programme will be held at the party's state headquarters, NTR Bhavan, in Mangalagiri. As per the directives of TDP chief and Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, the programme will run from 2 to 14 December, during which ministers, legislators, and party leaders will receive and address public grievances.

Highlighting the initiative's success, Srinivasa Rao said the programme has garnered significant demand as it effectively resolves issues through government intervention. He also released the schedule of participants, detailing the leaders attending each day.

On 2 December, TDP Guntur East MLA Nazeer Ahmad, APTDC Chairman Nukasani Balaji, and AP Khadi and Village Industries Board Chairman KK Chowdhary will participate. On subsequent days, prominent leaders like Yarlagadda Venkat Rao, Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha, Municipal Administration Minister Ponguru Narayana, Energy Minister Gottipati Ravikumar, and others will attend.

The programme will conclude on December 14, with Palla Srinivasa Rao, Social Welfare Minister Dr D Sri Bala Veeranjanya Swami, and AP Kuruba Welfare Chairman Manvi Devendrapa addressing grievances. Srinivasa Rao reiterated the TDP's commitment to resolving public issues promptly through this initiative.

PM's concern over likely...

Continued from Page 1

Modi noted that wide-ranging discussions were held on national and international dimensions of security challenges and expressed satisfaction on the counter strategies that emerged during the conference, the statement said.

As a countermeasure to the potential threats generated by digital frauds, cybercrime, and AI technology, the prime minister called on the police leadership to convert the challenge into an opportunity by harnessing India's double AI power of artificial intelligence and Aspirational India.

Appreciating the steps taken in urban policing, Modi suggested that each initiative be collated and implemented entirely in 100 cities.

He expanded the mantra of SMART policing and called on the police to become strategic, meticulous, adaptable, reliable and transparent. The SMART policing idea was introduced by the prime minister at the 2014 conference in Guwahati. It envisaged systemic changes to transform the Indian police to be Strict and

Sensitive, Modern and Mobile, Alert and Accountable, Reliable and Responsive, Techno-savvy and Trained (SMART).

Further, a review of the implementation of the newly-enacted major criminal laws, initiatives and best practices in policing, and the security situation in the neighbourhood was undertaken. Discussing the success of hackathons in solving some key problems, the prime minister suggested deliberating on holding a national police hackathon.

He also highlighted the need for expanding the focus on port security and preparing a future plan of action for the purpose. He urged the police to modernise and realign itself with the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Modi also offered insight and laid a roadmap for the future.

About 250 officers in the rank of director general and inspector general of police physically attended the three-day conference while more than 750 others participated virtually. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, among others, attend-

ed the meeting. Since 2014, the prime minister has taken a keen interest in the conference. Free flowing thematic discussions over breakfast, lunch and dinner are held at the conference.

This provides an opportunity for senior police officers to share their views and recommendations on key policing and internal security issues affecting the country to the prime minister. Till 2013, the annual meet was held in New Delhi. In 2014, after the Modi government assumed power, it was decided to hold the event, organised by the home ministry and the Intelligence Bureau, outside the national capital.

Accordingly, the conference was organised in Guwahati in 2014; Dhordo, Rann of Kutch, in 2015; National Police Academy, Hyderabad, in 2016; BSF Academy, Tekanpur, in 2017; Kevadiya in 2018; IISER, Pune, in 2019; Police Headquarters, Lucknow, in 2021; the National Agricultural Science Complex, Pusa, Delhi, in 2023, and Jaipur in January 2024. Continuing with this tradition, the conference was organised in Bhubaneswar this time.

New thinking needed for India's economy: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi expressed concern on Sunday over India's GDP growth rate declining to its lowest in two years and said the country's economy cannot progress as long as a handful of billionaires accrue its benefits.

He said a new thinking is required for India's economy and a new deal for businesses should be an important part of it.

"When everyone gets an equal opportunity to move forward, only then will the wheel of our economy move forward," he said in a post in Hindi on X.

The leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha said India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate has fallen to 5.4 per cent, its lowest in two years.

"The thing is clear -- the Indian economy cannot progress as long as a handful of billionaires are accruing its benefits and the farmers, labourers, middle class and the poor are struggling with various economic problems," he asserted.

Sharing some facts, Gandhi said it is a worrying situation as retail inflation has risen to a 14-month high of 6.21 per cent.

The price of potatoes and onions has increased by almost 50 per cent this year compared to October last year, he noted.

Gandhi said the rupee has reached its lowest level of Rs 84.5 and the unemployment rate has broken a 45-year record.

"In the last five years, the income of labourers, employees and small businessmen has either stagnated or reduced significantly."

"Demand has also declined due to reduced income. The share of cars priced below Rs 10 lakh in sales has dropped to less than 50 per cent from 80 per cent in 2018-19," Gandhi said.

"The share of affordable homes in total sales has dropped to around 22 per cent from 38 per cent last year. The demand for FMCG products is already declining." The share of corporate tax has decreased by 7 per cent in the last 10 years, while income tax has increased by 11 per cent," he also noted.

TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Pratipada: Dec 01 11:51 AM to Dec 02 12:43 PM

Dwitiya: Dec 02 12:43 PM to Dec 03 01:09 PM

Nakshatram: Jyeshtha: Dec 01 02:23 PM to Dec 02 03:45 PM

Moola: Dec 02 03:45 PM to Dec 03 04:41 PM

Rahukalam: 7:57 AM to 9:20 AM

Yamaganadam: 10:42 AM to 12:05 PM

Variyam: 03:02 PM to 04:41 PM

Gulika: 1:28 PM to 2:51 PM

Amritakalam: None

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:43 AM to 12:27 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms

Temp: 30°

Humidity: 81%

Sunrise: 6:21 AM

Sunset: 5:33 PM

Updated: December 1, 2024 5:00 PM

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GOAL TO ERADICATE HIV IN AP BY 2030: DR SIRI

■ Out of estimated 3.25 lakh HIV victims in State, only 2.75 lakh have been identified

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr A Siri, Project Director, Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (APSACS), has said that the goal is to completely eliminate HIV in the State by 2030. She called upon the AP SACS officers and staff to work towards that goal with dedication. She was the chief guest at an HIV/AIDS awareness programme organised at Tummalapalli Kala Kshetram in Vijayawada on the occasion of World AIDS Day. Speaking

on the occasion, she said that out of about 3.25 lakh HIV victims in the State, only 2.75 lakh have been identified. She urged the rest to get tested immediately and start treatment. Acknowledging the State's challenges in identifying and treating all affected individuals, she expressed satisfaction with the 96 per cent viral load suppression rate among those receiving treatment. Dr Siri highlighted a gap, with only 81 per cent of identified individuals undergoing

treatment. Approximately 54,000 people remain untreated. Among the affected population, about 20,000 are youth, with most new cases reported in this age group. She stressed the need to increase awareness on HIV/AIDS, particularly among the youth, stating that early treatment can enable a long and healthy life. Dr Siri reassured that there is no need to fear HIV infection as effective treatments are available. She encouraged everyone at risk to get tested at Integrated

Counselling and Testing Centres (ICTCs), assuring confidentiality. She also informed that Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) centres are available Statewide, ensuring no one has to travel more than 50 km to access treatment. To reduce the burden on patients, three-month medication supplies are provided at once. Earlier in the day, a rally was organised from the Vijayawada railway station to Tummalapalli Kalakshetram under APSACS' aegis. Various

cultural programmes were later performed to enhance public awareness. This year's World AIDS Day was observed under the theme "Take the Right Path", emphasising everyone's right to know about and maintain their health. APSACS APD Dr Saraswati Devi, Zonal Director Dr T Manjula, Dr Kameshwar Prasad, Dr Bhagyalakshmi, DD Dr Chakravarthi, PEPFAR State Coordinator Dr Rajendra Prasad, and Dr Samaram attended the programme.

Durga temple facilities to be upgraded for next 100 yrs

■ Review meet discusses leveraging PRASAD scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With the footfall of devotees increasing day by day at the renowned Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam, the Andhra Pradesh government is committed to enhancing the temple's infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of devotees for the next 100 years. Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath emphasised the matter during a review meeting on the temple's development and master plan on Sunday.

The review meeting, held at the Mahamandapam on Indrakeeladri Hill, was chaired by Minister for Endowments Anam Ramanarayana Reddy. Temple Executive Officer Ramarao welcomed the dignitaries as per temple protocol before they had darshan of Kanaka Durga.

Temple officials presented a comprehensive overview of the master plan through a PowerPoint presentation. Discussions focused on leveraging the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) scheme of the Central government to fund the temple's development. The review addressed various aspects of the temple's master plan, including infrastructure upgrades and better facilities for devotees.

Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy advised Endowment and Tourism officials to coordinate and swift-



ly submit a report to the Central government, detailing proposals for the PRASAD scheme. He highlighted that the report should include all necessary proposals to ensure the needs of devotees are met comprehensively. MP Kesineni Sivanath gave several suggestions regarding the temple's development and stressed the need for coordination between temple and Tourism officials to expedite proposals under the PRASAD scheme and secure central funding.

He said that development efforts should focus on creating long-term solutions rather than temporary fixes. Suggesting inspiration from Tirumala's facilities, he called for the construction of waiting halls and cottages for devotees at the temple. Addressing the media,

MP Sivanath reiterated the commitment to secure Central funds for the temple's development. He announced that weekly review meetings would be held to monitor progress. A Detailed Project Report (DPR) will also be prepared and presented to Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for his guidance and approval. He assured his personal efforts to facilitate the funding process with the Central government while preserving the temple's sanctity and reputation.

Endowments Commissioner S Satyanarayana, Endowments Chief Engineer GVR Shekar, temple engineers KVS Koteswara Rao and T Vaikuntha Rao, Tourism Department engineers, Technical Committee member Panduranga Rao, and other officials were present.



DARSHAN TOKENS FOR LOCALS TO BE ISSUED TODAY

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

As resolved by the TTD Trust Board, the darshan for locals will be provided on every first Tuesday of the month, starting from December 3.

The darshan tokens will be issued at Mahati Auditorium in Tirupati and Community Hall of Balaji Nagar in Tirumala from 5 am on Monday.

TTD has formulated certain guidelines which are mandatory for the local devout darshan. As many as 2,500 tokens will be issued at Mahati Auditorium, Tirupati, and 500 tokens at

Community Hall, Balaji Nagar, Tirumala on Monday between 3 AM and 5 AM on first-cum-first-serve basis free of cost. The local residents have to bring their original Aadhar card for getting the darshan token. Pilgrims with tokens shall enter the foot path (Divya Darshan) entrance (VQC) for Srivari darshan along with their original Aadhar card.

Pilgrims will be provided a small laddu free of cost on par with SSD token pilgrims.

Those who complete darshan under this category will be eligible for the next darshan only after 90 days.

Action plan to protect springs in Simhachalam Hills

■ The once-abundant springs have dwindled from 14 to a few

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to safeguard the precious natural springs of Simhachalam, the district administration has unveiled a comprehensive action plan. The initiative aims to restore the ecological balance of the hill ranges and empower local communities.

Located at an altitude of 800 feet above mean sea level, the Simhachalam hills are known for their rich network of springs and rivulets. The nearby settlements—Simhachalam Dhara, Seethammadhara, and Madhavadhara—derive their names from these springs, with "dhara" signifying their presence. However, the once-abundant springs have dwindled from 14 to a few, including perennial ones like Gangadhara, Naagadhara and Saagidhara, and seasonal



A team of temple officials and DHAN Foundation checking the quality and flow of spring at Simhachalam in Visakhapatnam

springs such as Aakasadhara and Pichhukadhara.

Geologically, the hills are composed of charnockite, a metamorphic rock that aids the formation of springs. Notably,

the Simhachalam temple meets its water needs entirely through these springs, eliminating reliance on municipal supply or borewells. A workshop spearheaded by the Development of

Humane Action (DHAN) Foundation, Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA), and the Sri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Devasthanam emphasised the urgent need to conserve this unique spring-shed ecosystem.

"The springs of Simhachalam are a rare ecological and cultural treasure in urban India. Their preservation is crucial, not only for environmental balance, but also for protecting the region's heritage," said V. Venkatesan, CEO of the water programme at DHAN Foundation. He called for a blend of traditional knowledge and modern conservation techniques to address these challenges. Meanwhile, VMRDA Commissioner K.S. Viswanathan formalised a partnership with DHAN Foundation through a memorandum of understanding to advance long-term conserva-

tion efforts. The DHAN Foundation has already identified 34 springs and mapped 18 in collaboration with local tribal communities. V. Trinadha Rao, Executive Officer of Simhachalam Devasthanam, stressed the springs' role in temple rituals and ecology. "Preserving these springs is vital for maintaining the temple's heritage and ecological balance. Collaboration is essential to integrate traditional and modern approaches for sustainable outcomes," he opined.

The action plan includes structural and vegetative interventions, initiatives to raise awareness, and field evaluations to monitor spring health. "This project exemplifies the Andhra Pradesh government's commitment to conserving natural resources through collective action," said Viswanathan.



A team of temple officials and DHAN Foundation checking the quality and flow of spring at Simhachalam in Visakhapatnam

Narla Venkateswara Rao is an inspiration: Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Renowned writer and journalist Narla Venkateswara Rao is an inspiration for social reforms, said Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad, national president, Vishva Hindi Parishad, and founder of Lok Nayak Foundation during his birth anniversary event.

The commemoration event, organised by Lok Nayak Foundation, took place on Sunday at the Tummalapalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada. A bronze statue of Narla was garlanded in his honour. Speaking on the occasion, Yarlagadda Lakshmi Prasad said

that Narla was not just a journalist but also a prolific writer who contributed thousands of pieces of literary work.

Lakshmi Prasad shared that during his tenure as a Rajya Sabha member, he allocated ₹10 lakh from his funds to construct a Press Club in Visakhapatnam, which was named "Narla Venkateswara Rao Bhavan" and inaugurated by then Union Minister Venkaiah Naidu. In 2010, he personally funded the creation of a bronze statue of Narla. Announcing plans to honour exceptional journalism, Lakshmi Prasad said that three journalists from urban, semi-urban, and rural areas

would be awarded ₹50,000 each annually in Narla's name.

GRK-Polavaram Cultural Committee member Golla Narayana Rao commended Narla's efforts in awakening public consciousness and providing clear guidance on preserving traditions and culture. He urged the current generation of journalists to draw inspiration from Narla's work.

Retired Prof Gumma Sambasiva Rao, Shikara School founder Bandla Madhava Rao, Andhra Arts Academy assistant secretary Kollu Murali Krishna Prasad, Sunkara Nagabushanam, Kolluru Venkat and others were present.



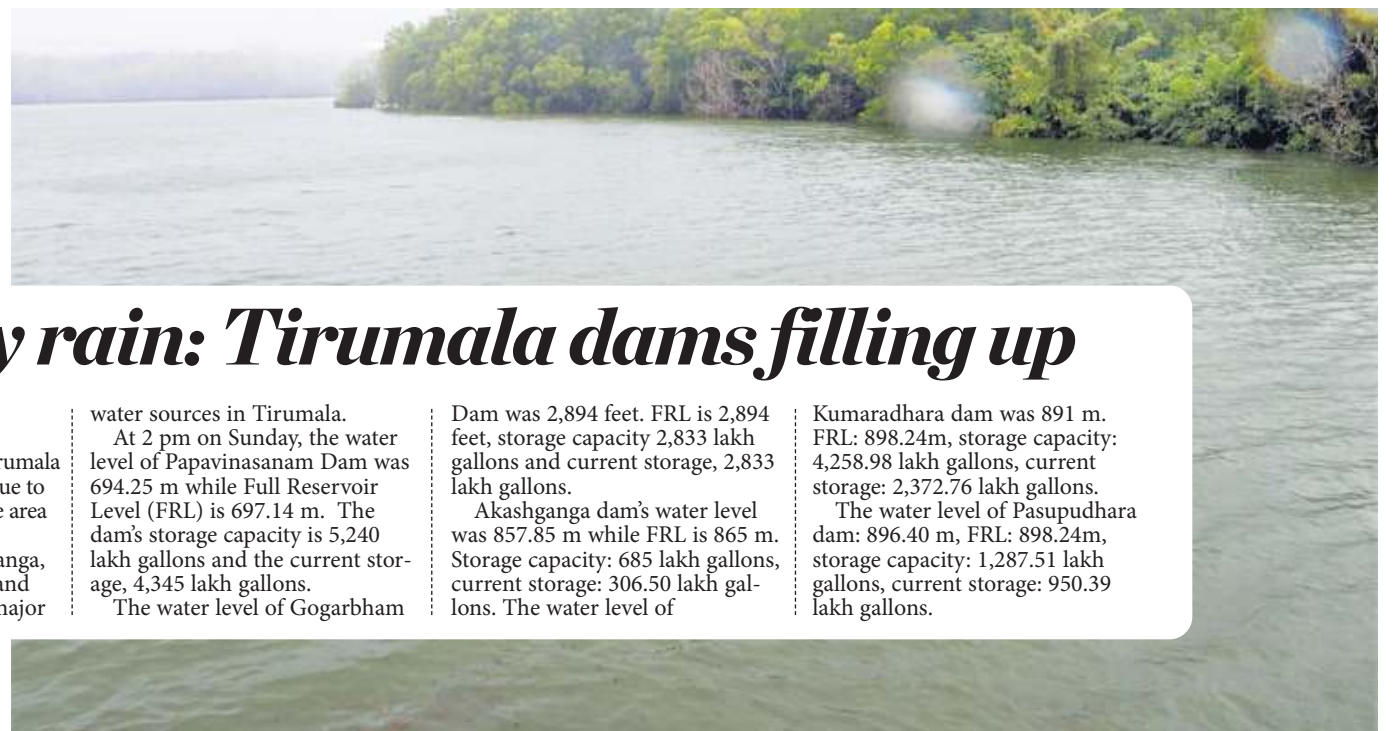
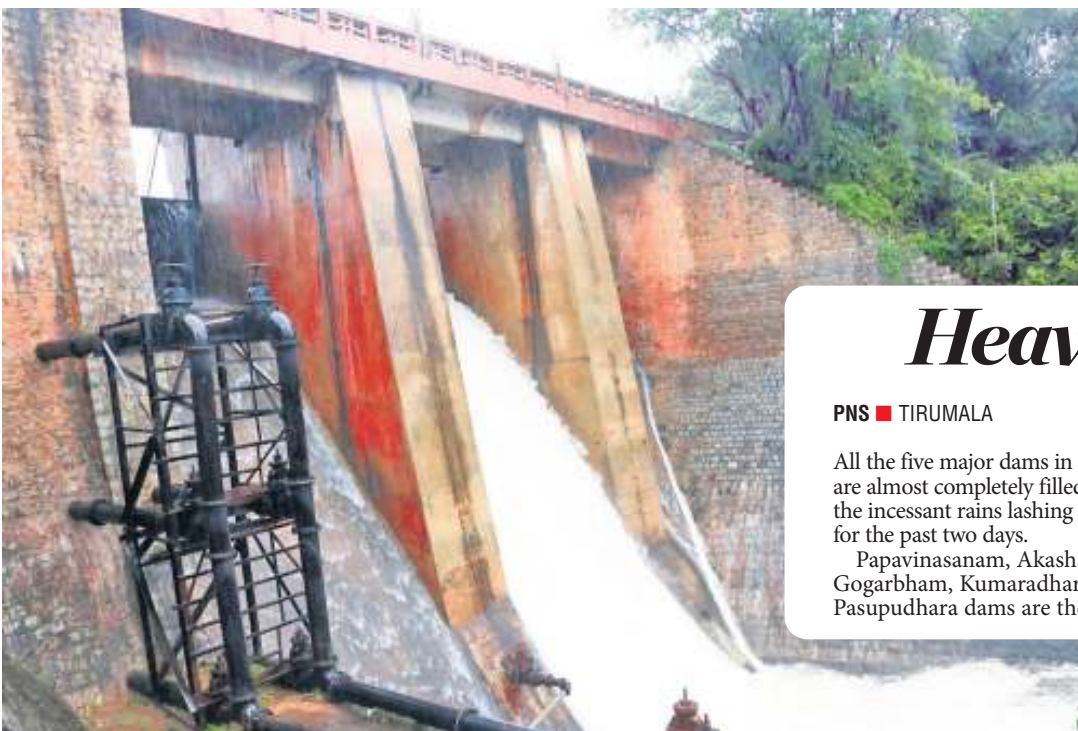
Fourth phase Atharvaveda recitation commences

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The Chaturveda recitation organised by TTD for the wellbeing of humanity, which commenced during the Covid pandemic, has entered the phase of the recitation Atharvaveda. It began at Tirumala Srivari Temple on Sunday.

The programme will continue till December 31, under the guidance of KY Gauri Shankar Sharma and G Srinadhana.

Every day, the Vedic scholars will recite the Veda between 9 am and 10 am at Ranganayakula Mandapam of Srivari Temple that will be telecast live on SVBC.



Heavy rain: Tirumala dams filling up

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

All the five major dams in Tirumala are almost completely filled due to the incessant rains lashing the area for the past two days.

Papavinasanam, Akashganga, Gogarbham, Kumaradhara and Pasupudhara dams are the major

water sources in Tirumala.

At 2 pm on Sunday, the water level of Papavinasanam Dam was 694.25 m while Full Reservoir Level (FRL) is 697.14 m. The dam's storage capacity is 5,240 lakh gallons and the current storage, 4,345 lakh gallons.

The water level of Gogarbham

Dam was 2,894 feet. FRL is 2,894 feet, storage capacity 2,833 lakh gallons and current storage, 2,833 lakh gallons.

Akashganga dam's water level was 857.85 m while FRL is 865 m. Storage capacity: 685 lakh gallons, current storage: 306.50 lakh gallons. The water level of

Kumaradhara dam was 891 m. FRL: 898.24m, storage capacity: 4,258.98 lakh gallons, current storage: 2,372.76 lakh gallons.

The water level of Pasupudhara dam: 896.40 m, FRL: 898.24m, storage capacity: 1,287.51 lakh gallons, current storage: 950.39 lakh gallons.



TRANSGENDER MURDER CASE SOLVED; 12 HELD

PNS ■ NELLORE

The police resolved the brutal murder of a leader of transgender people by arresting 12 persons. SP Krishnakanth told the media here on Sunday that on December 26, Hashini, who was a leader to a large number of transgender people, was brutally murdered at underpass bridge at Tapathopu near here. The murder of transgender

leader created a sensation in the region. The police took the murder very seriously and formed special teams to nab the killers. The special teams arrested 12 persons in connection with the murder of transgender Hashini. Struggle over supremacy and the leadership issue were said to be the reasons for her brutal murder. The investigation revealed that 15 persons were involved in the

murder case and so far they have arrested 12 of them. Search is on to arrest the remaining three killers, the SP said. The SP explained that serious differences erupted between the deceased Hashini and another transgender Alekhya on various issues including gaining supremacy over groups of transgender people. The SP said that transgenders Alekhya,

Sulochana and Sheela planned the murder and executed along with the other accused. All the accused belonged to the Nellore district. The SP said the police unravelled the case using advanced technology and appreciated the Kodavaluri and Vidavaluru police for resolving the sensational case within a week. The police produced the arrested accused before the media.

Didn't ask police to file case: Yalamanda victim's father

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The father of the victim of the Yalamanda incident, Ramana, has clarified that he did not file a case against anyone and had only approached Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy for help. He told the media that they did not ask the police to file a case, and asked how they could do it to a person who came to help them. He said that he was not educated. "I put my signature as and when the police asked me to do so as I only wanted the guilty to be punished. Chevireddy had always been helpful and came there on our request. We cannot ask the police to file a case against such a person," he said. Bhumana Karunakar Reddy, who accompanied him along with Narayanaswamy, said false cases are being filed to gag the voice of the Opposition targeting YSRC cadre terrorising them. They are filing cases against those who went to help the family in distress, he said. Serious cases, such as POCOS and SC ST Atrocities, are being filed against YSRC leaders and cadre. We are not in a position to influence the victim's family as we are not in power, he added. Former Deputy Chief Minister Narayanaswamy said that the victim's family had approached him and explained their plight as he stands for weaker sections. "I brought them to Karunakar Reddy," he said.



Efforts to upgrade Vizag Regional Eye Hospital gain steam

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Efforts to upgrade the Regional Eye Hospital in Visakhapatnam to a Regional Institute of Ophthalmology (RIO) are gaining momentum after years of delay. The proposal, first initiated by former Superintendent Dr. Narasimha Rao during the TDP government, was stalled when the YSRC came to power in 2019. If approved, the upgrade would bring advanced facilities and specialized departments, transforming the hospital into a top centre for eye care in Andhra Pradesh. This would enable the hospital to treat more patients and perform complex eye surgeries using the latest technology. In united Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad's Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital was granted RIO status. After the state's bifurcation, Visakhapatnam was consid-

ered for a similar upgrade. However, the proposal lost traction due to retirement of key officials and lack of follow-up. A former administrator of the hospital expressed disappointment, saying, "The upgrade would have given recognition to our hospital, but the proposal was neglected." The central government has been upgrading eye hospitals across the country under the National Program for Control of Blindness (NPCB), with funding of Rs 10-20 crore for each RIO. At one point, both Visakhapatnam and Kurnool were contenders for this status. Local officials in Visakhapatnam had taken an early lead, but no final decision has been made. A senior health official explained that the upgrade would introduce specialized departments for retina, cornea, glaucoma, squint, and oculoplastic surgeries.

Additional infrastructure like advanced labs, anaesthesia units, and increased staff would also be added. The hospital's bed capacity would increase three to four times, enabling it to serve more patients. Superintendent Dr. V Meenakshi said, "We have reminded senior officials about this proposal. Andhra Pradesh still lacks an RIO, and we are determined to bring this status to Visakhapatnam." Local leaders have also called for immediate action. "This project could greatly benefit the region," said a public representative. "Our MPs and MLAs must push for it actively." With the current coalition government in power, hopes are high that the long-pending proposal will finally materialize, making Visakhapatnam a hub for advanced eye care in the state.

R & B Minister asks officials to resolve public grievances swiftly

PNS ■ KURNOOL

Minister for Roads & Buildings BC Janardhan Reddy has directed officials to address public grievances promptly. The Minister received petitions from residents regarding various issues during a programme held at the TDP office in Banaganapalle on Sunday. A large crowd gathered to submit their grievances, which the Minister reviewed attentively. In some cases, he directly resolved issues by contacting the concerned officials on the spot.

Addressing the gathering, Janardhan Reddy assured the people that all grievances would be resolved at the earliest. He noted that a significant number of petitions pertained to land disputes and promised to prioritise their resolution. The Minister's proactive approach and commitment to addressing public concerns were widely appreciated by those present.



SP conducts surprise traffic inspections

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Superintendent of Police Satish Kumar conducted surprise inspections across Guntur city to address traffic congestion and advised officials on measures to streamline vehicular movement.

The SP visited several critical points, including the Sanjeeviah Nagar and Nehru Nagar railway gates, where ongoing repair works at the three bridges underpass on Donka Road have caused significant traffic snarls. He directed the contractor to expedite the repairs to alleviate the traffic burden on these busy roads.

During the inspection, the SP assessed the congestion near Sanjeeviah Nagar-Nehru Nagar railway gates and suggested specific steps to ensure smoother traffic flow. He also inspected the Poolakotla Bazaar area under Lalapat



police station limits, observing traffic obstructions and offering recommendations for proper vehicle parking arrangements.

At the newly installed traffic signal system at MTB Centre, the SP reviewed its functionality and instructed the traffic maintenance staff to ensure the uninterrupted operation of the signals.

SP Satish Kumar emphasised the importance of proactive measures to resolve traffic issues and urged officials to take immediate action to prevent disorderly parking, which often impedes traffic.

DSPs Sitaramaiah, Ramesh, Ajeez, and Jagaram, along with CI Ashok Babu, accompanied the SP during the inspections.

Disciplinary action ordered against Tahsildar

■ Negligence in processing flood relief applications alleged

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha has directed departmental action against Vijayawada North Tahsildar M Suryarao for alleged negligence in processing flood relief applications related to the Budameru flood-affected people. Preliminary findings indicated lapses in handling the applications. Approximately 500 individuals from Vijayawada North mandal, affected by the Budameru floods, had submitted applications through the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS), claiming they had not received government financial aid. However, instead of conducting a thorough inquiry, Tahsildar Suryarao reportedly endorsed all applicants as prima facie eligible and communicated the same to them.

IndiGo flight from Mumbai to Tirupati

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

In tune with the vision of the Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and Union Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu to improve air connectivity, IndiGo reinstated the direct flight from Tirupati to Mumbai on Sunday. The A320 flight 6E532 in the BOM-TIR sector departs at 5.30 am to arrive there by 7.15 am. Similarly, 6E533 in the TIR-BOM route departs at 7.45 am to reach its destination by 9.25 am.

According to Tirupati Airport Director M Srinivasa Rao, the flight was delayed by around three hours due to the severe cyclonic effect in the region and departed with full occupancy of 186 passengers.

Ruling party MLAs questioning governance in State: Malladi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former MLA and YSRCP Central Constituency Coordinator Malladi Vishnu has sharply criticised the coalition government for its poor governance, particularly in addressing issues raised by TDP MLAs during the review meeting of Krishna and NTR districts. He highlighted growing public dissatisfaction, noting that even ruling party MLAs have started questioning the government's actions just six months after taking charge.

Vishnu condemned the government for its failure to provide relief to flood victims in Vijayawada, despite the city being inundated three months ago. He claimed that ordinary citizens, auto drivers, and small traders affected by the floods have not received any justice, despite repeated appeals from YSRCP. According to Vishnu,



these concerns were dismissed by the coalition government as mere political criticism.

At the District Review Committee (DRC) meeting, Vishnu pointed out that even TDP representatives acknowledged the administration's shortcomings. He mentioned that while addressing flood victims in Budameru, a TDP MLA admitted that compensation had not yet been disbursed. Other TDP representatives raised concerns over drinking water issues and the

absence of procurement centers for cotton farmers.

Vishnu also criticised the government's decision to impose an additional 1% SGST on the public instead of focusing on more urgent concerns. He further accused the coalition government of corruption, citing TDP MLA Gadde Rammoan's remarks about bribe-paying syndicates in farmers' markets. Vishnu saw this as a clear admission of the corruption under the current administration.

While dissatisfaction among coalition MLAs is growing, Vishnu said that the district in-charge minister, Satya Kumar, continues to deny these issues, dismissing them as baseless. Vishnu has called for immediate action from the government to address the plight of flood victims and farmers, warning that failure to do so could result in severe public backlash.

TTD Addl EO launches kiosk

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD Additional EO Ch Venkaiah Chaudary inaugurated the kiosk set up at Matrusri Tarigonda Vengamamba Anna Prasadam Complex (MTVAC) in Tirumala to donate for the SV

Anna Prasadam Trust run by TTD. The machine was donated by South Indian Bank.

Through these machines devotees can easily donate their required amount to SV Anna Prasadam Trust by scanning the QR code on the kiosk

and payment through UPI. TTD CVSO Sridhar, Deputy EO Rajendra, South Indian Bank General Manager TM Mohan, AGM V Madhu, Chief Manager Venkat Rao, Tirupati Branch Head Ashok Vardhan were present at the programme.



Beware of deceptions in the name of stock market investments: SP

PNS ■ BAPATLA

Superintendent of Police Tushar Dudi has issued a warning to the public, urging them to be cautious of frauds being committed in the name of stock market investments.

In a statement on Sunday, the SP explained that some fraudsters are deceiving people by offering fake investment opportunities in the stock market. He cautioned the public against clicking on links sent by unknown individuals promising lucrative returns from stock market investments.

The SP highlighted the growing concern of cyber-criminals who are exploiting individuals by convincing them to invest in fake offers, only to siphon off their money. He said that these criminals target victims through fake



websites, leading them to believe in fake profits, and emptying their bank accounts in the process.

"One person in Bapatla district received a link on WhatsApp claiming to offer stock market investment opportunities. Believing that online trading and IPO investments would yield high profits, the victim opened a trading account using his Aadhaar and PAN card details. He was instructed to deposit a sum of money, which he did. The fraudsters showed him fake

profits in the account, which led the victim to invest a larger amount. Later, the victim was shown a profit of around Rs 40 lakh," the SP explained.

However, when the victim attempted to withdraw the money, he was unable to do so. The fraudsters then told him he needed to deposit more money to be allowed to withdraw his funds. Realising that he had been deceived, the victim filed a complaint with the police.

The SP urged people to remain vigilant and not fall for such scams. He advised the public not to trust links sent by strangers via WhatsApp or Telegram and to refrain from investing money based on unsolicited advice. Those who have been victims of such frauds can report the incidents by calling 1930 or visiting <https://cybercrime.gov.in>.

KISHAN ACCEPTS CM'S DEBATE CHALLENGE, BUT SETS RIDER

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Accepting Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's challenge that KTR or Harish Rao from the BRS or Eatala Rajender from the BJP or anyone else who has doubts about the Congress government implementing its election promises can come for an open debate, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy said that he is ready for a debate with the Chief Minister.

However, he made it clear that he would participate in the debate only if the Chief Minister gave up his rough language. "I have not engaged in political criticism. But the CM used words like 'Ekkista' and 'Thokkista' like KCR. I am ready for an open debate if Revanth promises that he will not use KCR's ungentlemanly language," Kishan said.

Addressing the media after releasing the BJP's charge sheet against the Congress government, Kishan said that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and current Chief Minister Revanth Reddy have changed the language of Telangana politics.

He said that he thought that the language of politicians would change after the defeat of the BRS. However, Revanth is continuing the ungentlemanly language introduced by KCR. Revanth should change his language as he is occupying a responsible post, Kishan said. Declaring that the Congress has been running its government like the BRS he asked the Congress admin how it can celebrate its first anniversary by spending crores without implementing its assurances as it had assured that it would implement all its assurances within 100 days.

ACROSS THE STATES



ISKCON holds prayer for safety of Hindus in Bangla

The ISKCON here joined its other centres in different parts of the world on Sunday in holding prayer meetings and 'kirtan' for the safety and security of Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh, an official said. Stating that atrocities on the religious minorities are "not stopping" in Bangladesh even after 100 days of such incidents, International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) spokesperson Radharam Das said that disciples and followers held prayer meetings in 150 countries across the world. "We held prayers and 'kirtan' for the safety and security of Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh," he said. ISKCON followers held prayers and 'kirtan' at its Albert Road centre in Kolkata to highlight the plight of Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh, where they are suffering atrocities, Das said. He said that the religious minorities in Bangladesh are seeking help and support from world bodies such as the United Nations.



Odisha targets zero new HIV infection : Minister

The Odisha government has been taking all measures to create awareness about AIDS and has set a goal to ensure no new cases of HIV infection by 2030, a minister said on Sunday. Odisha has recorded around 50,000 active AIDS cases so far, Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling said, while speaking on the occasion of World AIDS Day. "The state is witnessing a steady decline in the number of AIDS patients. The government aims at achieving zero new infection by 2030," he said. Noting that AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) cases were detected in all the 30 districts of the state, the minister said Ganjam accounts for the highest number of infections at 19,155 while Sonepur reports the lowest at 146. Stating that the health department has intensified efforts to ensure that "no new HIV cases emerge by 2030", the minister said the government is implementing preventive measures and raising awareness to achieve the goal.



Delhi's AQI drops to below 300

Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) dropped below 300 for the first time on Sunday after a month as dry northwesterly winds and ample sunlight aided in the dispersion of pollutants. The air quality in the national capital has oscillated between "very poor" (AQI between 301-400) and "severe" (over 400) categories for the past 32 days. Delhi's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded at 285 at 4 PM on Sunday, an improvement to the "poor" category. The city's air quality was last recorded in the "poor" category on October 29, with an AQI of 268, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). On Saturday, the AQI was 346 in the "very poor" category. The air quality slipped from "poor" to the "very poor" category on October 30 and stayed there for 15 consecutive days before deteriorating further into the "severe" category. On Sunday, out of 38 monitoring stations in the capital, 11 recorded air quality in the "very poor" category, while the remaining 27 recorded it in the "poor" category, according to the Sameer app. The CPCB classifies AQI between 0 and 50 as "good", between 51 and 100 as "satisfactory", between 101 and 200 as "moderate", between 201 and 300 as "poor", between 301 and 400 as "very poor", and over 400 as "severe".

'Will support BJP's decision on Maha CM'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra's outgoing Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said the BJP will decide on the new CM and assured his full support while ruling out differences among Mahayuti allies over the government formation.



Amid speculations that Shinde's son Shrikant Shinde might get the deputy CM's post and Shiv Sena is keen on the Home portfolio, Shinde said the Mahayuti allies- BJP, NCP, and Shiv Sena- will decide the government formation through consensus. Notably, more than a week after the Mahayuti clinched a massive victory in

Maharashtra polls with the BJP emerging as the single largest party with 132 seats, the new government is yet to be sworn in. The BJP is moving cautiously as aspirations of its allies, especially Shiv Sena, are high after the massive poll victory. Interestingly, the BJP leg-

'IMEE corridor will be source of regional peace, stability'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) will enhance strategic supply chains and boost security in economic and energy sectors, and it will be a source of regional peace and stability, French foreign trade minister Sophie Primas has said. In an interview, Primas said France looks at the proposed corridor as a key to regional integration, stability, and an opportunity to hasten the decarbonisation of trade routes.

Billed as a pathbreaking initiative, the IMEEC envisages vast road, railroad and shipping networks among India, Saudi Arabia, the United States and Europe with an aim to ensure integration among Asia, Middle East and West. "This project is vital for national interests, enhancing strategic supply chains and boosting security in economic, energy, and health sectors across India, Europe, and the Middle East," Primas said at the end of her three-day visit to India.

The IMEEC was firmed up on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in September last year in Delhi. An agreement was signed by India, Saudi Arabia,



"This project is vital for national interests, enhancing strategic supply chains and boosting security in economic, energy, and health sectors across India, Europe, and the Middle East," Primas said at the end of her three-day visit to India

the European Union, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the US and some other G20

partners for the corridor. Following the announcement at the G20 summit, France promptly appointed Gerard Mestrallet as a dedicated sherpa for the IMEEC project. The French sherpa accompanied Primas during her visit to India from November 27 to 29. "France also sees this corridor as a key to regional integration, stability, and an opportunity to hasten the decarbonisation of trade routes, providing substantial business prospects for French companies in logistics, energy, and digital sectors," the French trade minister said. "France is keen to lead in this initiative, positioning Marseille

as the strategic European gateway for the corridor," she said. Outlining France's vision for the mega project, Primas said the corridor will also act as a source for regional peace and stability. There has been a delay in rolling out the initiative on the ground in view of precarious security situation in West Asia. The IMEEC also envisages an electricity cable network, a hydrogen pipeline, high-speed data cable network to facilitate overall economic growth in the partner countries. The project is also seen as an initiative by like-minded nations to gain strategic influence in the face of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which has faced increasing criticism over lack of transparency and disregard for sovereignty of the nations. The BRI is a mega connectivity project that connects China with Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Russia, and Europe. India has been holding talks with various key stakeholders including France and the US on implementation of the IMEEC. In an address at a business conclave in September, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the IMEEC would become a "cornerstone of global connectivity".

Italy can be India's landing base for Europe: Minister Urso

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Italian minister Adolfo Urso has said his country can be India's "landing base" to access the European market. Similarly, India can act as the landing base for Italy, the European country's minister for business and "Made in Italy" told PTI here on Saturday. Speaking on the sidelines of 93-year-old Italian ship Amerigo Vespucci's call on Mumbai port and the Villaggio Italia exposition arranged to coincide with that, Urso also said "new geopolitical events" make it necessary to consolidate the lines of communication between the two countries. "India can be for Europe the landing base in Asia in the great



south-eastern Asian basin, and Italy can be for India the landing base in Europe, for the most significant and richest world market," he said in an interview to PTI. This line of communication passes through the Arabian peninsula which has a very important place in the

economic realm, he added. While this is a preferred line of commercial communication between the two continents of Asia and Europe, the same route can also double up as a significantly important line of connectivity in terms of data and information, Urso said.

"It is certainly the preferred main line of commercial communication between our continents, but it can also be the line of connectivity as regards the transport of data and therefore of information, on one side above the seas, maritime trade; on the other side under the seas, the connection lines that transport information and data," he said. He also stressed the need to take India-Italy ties beyond commerce, and pitched for greater cooperation in other areas such as scientific advancement, technology and industrial production. The Vespucci's call at Mumbai, the financial capital of India, is an attempt to get both the countries closer beyond commerce, the minister said.



WAYANAD REHABILITATION

Will write to Kerala CM, 'pressure' Centre: Priyanka

PNS ■ WAYANAD

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday said she will write to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and put as much as pressure on the Centre to provide the rehabilitation of Wayanad landslide victims. "I will be writing to the Chief Minister of Kerala and trying to put as much as pressure possible on the Centre as well to provide the rehabilitation that they deserved," she said while addressing a meeting at Kalpetta here. "But I would like to urge both the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister to provide this rehabilitation, regardless of politics," she added.

"I will be writing to the Chief Minister of Kerala and trying to put as much as pressure possible on the Centre as well to provide the rehabilitation that they deserved," she said while addressing a meeting at Kalpetta here

Due to what happened in the landslide and the amount of publicity across India many people still believe that it is unsafe to come here but they don't realise the nature's fury concentrated in a very small geographical area and the rest is beautiful place and is absolutely safe to visit, she pointed out. "We must make a special effort now to invite more tourists to show them that it is safe, it is beautiful and this is the best place to come," she urged. Priyanka said, the UDF, the INDIA alliance and the Congress are engaged in a big battle to save the institutions of democracy from the destructiveness of the BJP and its policies.

The Congress general secretary said she would ask them to recognise that what happened there was beyond any kind of politics. "What happened here was a deep and devastating human tragedy," she stated. Priyanka, who was on a two-day visit to the hill constituency after being elected, highlighted the issues of the massive landslide that hit here on July 30 along with launching a scathing attack against the BJP-led Centre.

Manipur situation will impact Assam: Himanta



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday that the situation in neighbouring Manipur will have an impact on the state. Additional police forces have been deployed in Barak Valley which shares a border with violence-hit Manipur to ensure no spill-over effects. Talking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme in Cachar district, Sarma said, "I think the situation in Manipur will definitely have some impact on Assam. That is why we have deployed additional police forces in Barak Valley to see that nothing spills over to Assam." The Barak Valley of Cachar district shares a border with Jiribam of Manipur. The ethnically diverse

Jiribam, which was largely untouched by the clashes in Imphal Valley and the adjoining hills, witnessed violence after the mutilated body of a farmer was found in a field in June this year. More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May last year. The violence escalated in Manipur after three women and three children belonging to the Meitei community had gone missing from a relief camp in Jiribam district, following a gunfight between security forces and suspected Kuki-Zo militants that resulted in the deaths of 10 insurgents on November 11. Bodies of those six were later found.

'Every second in Parl must be utilised for people's welfare'

PNS ■ KANPUR

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said Parliament is meant for the cause of public welfare and stressed that every second of its working should be utilised for the welfare of the people. The remarks of the vice president, who is also the chairman of the Rajya Sabha, came after protests over various issues like the controversy involving the Adani Group and violence in Sambhal and Manipur rocked both houses of Parliament the past week, disrupting routine work. "We have entered the fourth quarter of the century of adoption of the Indian Constitution. Therefore, we must resolve that every second in the temple of democracy is utilised for the welfare of the people at large," Dhankhar said here.

Every couple should have at least 3 kids, says RSS chief

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Expressing concern over declining population growth, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR), the average number of children a woman gives birth to in her lifetime, should be at least 3, well above the present one of 2.1. Speaking at the 'Kathale Kul (clan) Sammelan' in Nagpur, Bhagwat also highlighted the vital role of families, and warned that according to population science, if a society's total fertility rate dips below



2.1, it could face extinction. "A declining population is a serious concern. Demographic studies suggest that when a society's total fertility rate falls below 2.1, it risks facing extinction. This decline does not necessarily

require external threats; a society can gradually fade away on its own," Bhagwat said. "Many languages and cultures have already disappeared due to this issue. Thus, it is essential to maintain a fertility rate above 2.1," Bhagwat said, and emphasized that "kutumb" (family) is an integral part of society and every family serves as a vital building bloc. "Our country's population policy, formulated either in 1998 or 2002, clearly says that the total fertility rate should not be below 2.1. Now when we say 2.1, it is not feasible to have children in fraction.

World's first tilted LED dome planetarium to open in Mysuru

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The world's first-ever tilted dome LED planetarium is taking shape in Mysuru. Once it opens in September 2025, it will offer visitors an immersive experience of the night sky. The Rs 91-crore project is being constructed by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIAP) and the University of Mysore at its Chamundi Hills campus. "Unlike a conventional projector-based full-dome system widely used in planetaria, the LED dome system produces images using LED elements that emit light on an immense colour spectrum," IIAP Director Annapurni Subramanian told PTI on the sidelines of the India International Science Festival (IISF) here. Subramanian said the planetarium will comprise a 15-metre diameter dome tilted at an angle of 15 degrees which will allow users to view the



night sky right in front of them instead of sitting in reclining chairs and craning their necks. Characterised by its higher luminance and wider colour gamut, the LED dome system can reproduce highly realistic beautiful starry skies

and astronomy visuals, she said, adding that the 8K LED lights are controlled by SkyExplorer astronomical software of French firm RSA Cosmos. "The construction and the work of building the planetarium on site is progress-

ing rapidly and we hope to inaugurate the planetarium by September next year," Subramanian said. RSA Cosmos was awarded the contract to build the LED dome planetarium by the IIAP and the installation will be car-

The Rs 91-crore project is being constructed by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIAP) and the University of Mysore at its Chamundi Hills campus

ried out by Orbit Animate Pvt. Ltd., the Indian subsidiary of the French firm. The Cosmology Education and Research Training Centre (COSMOS) of the IIAP along with the planetarium will be a high-tech hub for education and training that can upskill students and teachers, and conduct outreach and awareness programmes for society, Subramanian said. This project is financially supported by MPLADS (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) funds of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Atomic Energy and Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, Government of India.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Trump's tariff threat

Trump risks alienating key partners, intensifying global economic tensions and accelerating efforts to bypass the dollar

Trump presidency is yet to begin but the president-elect has already spoken his mind on the US policy and it is not good news for the developing countries. US President-elect Donald Trump has issued a stern warning to the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and their expanding coalition—which seek to challenge the dominance of the US dollar. Trump's announcement of a potential 100 per cent tariff on these nations underscores the rising tensions across the globe as the BRICS bloc explores alternatives to the dollar. This move highlights the friction between the US and developing economies and could reshape global trade dynamics. It was widely expected that Trump would do everything possible to bail out the US out of debt and would not hesitate to take harsh measures against countries who are harming the US interests regardless of their friendship with the US. For decades, the US dollar has been the cornerstone of global commerce, widely used in trade and serving as the reserve currency for most nations. However, the BRICS coalition and other developing economies have expressed growing frustration over the disproportionate control that the US wields over the global financial system. Nations within the BRICS bloc are already discussing plans for a new global currency or expanded use of their local currencies to reduce reliance on the dollar. There is no doubt that Trump's threat of 100 per cent tariffs on BRICS nations reflects a protectionist stance and his determination to defend US economic interests. But that is Trump for you, he doesn't mind taking tough decision even if the whole world is against him. Be it environment or trade or military expeditions



Trump is capable of taking decisions which might be frowned upon the world over. He has categorically said that any attempt to undermine the dollar's dominance would result in severe consequences, including exclusion from the US market. The big problem for developing nations is they depend upon the US market in a big way for their incomes and exporting revenue. Trump's approach reveals his readiness to employ punitive measures against both allies and rivals in the global south, regardless of their historical ties with the US. The implications of such tariffs would be profound, potentially disrupting trade flows, exacerbating economic tensions and alienating key developing nations. A 100 per cent tariff would significantly raise the cost of exporting goods to the US, impacting industries that rely on American consumers. For economies like Brazil and South Africa, which are heavily reliant on exports, this could lead to economic slowdown. But ironically Trump's threats may be counter-productive as many countries may further incentivise their search for alternatives to the dollar. Besides, Trump's hardline stance may push developing countries closer together, fostering stronger ties within the BRICS bloc and beyond. Indeed raising tariff wall in today's world is not a good idea but then Trump has mind of his own.

PICTALK



Devotees attend 'Ganga Aarti' at Har Ki Pauri, in Haridwar

Unveiling transnational drug syndicate

The Coast Guard's drug seizure near Andaman islands underscores the ongoing challenge of tackling transnational syndicates engaged in illicit trafficking near the Indian coast



BHOPINDER SINGH

Heading to their motto of Vayam Rakshamah (We Protect), the Indian Coast Guard personnel executed a befitting operation in the Andaman and Nicobar waters to mark one of the largest drug busts in Indian maritime history. The haul of nearly 6000 kgs of the banned Methamphetamine near Barren Islands (150 km away from Port Blair) is estimated at around 36,000 crores in the international market. The picture-perfect operation was triggered by the presence of a suspicious trawler (Soe Wai Yan Htoo) in the Indian waters by a Coast Guard Dornier reconnaissance plane which then swooped down and asked the trawler to lower its speed, whilst informing the base. Soon enough, fast patrolling vessels of the Coast Guard were tasked to the place, and they towed the six Myanmar crew trawler to Port Blair, for further investigations. Ongoing interrogations reveal the presence of an unyielding, trained and secretive crew with the presence of a satellite phone that has all the hallmarks of a major and international drug syndicate. But for now, it marks the ever-vigil capabilities of the Indian Coast Guard in ensuring the integrity of our maritime borders and policing against transnational crime. While the geographical location of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands naturally lends itself towards fructifying India's strategic "Look East" opportunity (as also dominates the sensitive and narrow Malacca Straits that facilitates 40% of global trade) – it is also in the crosshairs of Myanmar, the largest producer of illegal methamphetamine, which is then exported to markets in the US, Europe to Eastern countries. The restive Shan State of Myanmar (bordering China with an ethnic Han-Chinese populace and multiple insurgent groups widely believed to be supported by China) is also home to the infamous Cantonese Chinese drugs syndicate, Sam Gor (popularly known as "The Company"). This notorious set-up is involved in global drug trafficking and is said to be in control of over 40 per



cent of Asian-Pacific trade in substances like methamphetamine, heroin, ketamine, fentanyl etc. This lucrative trade is believed to generate earnings up to a staggering \$8 billion, annually. Currently, it is believed to be headed by a Chinese gangster called Tse Chi Lop, who is also widely known by the moniker "El Chapo of Asia". Even though Tse Chi Lop is currently in custody and facing trials in Australia – his organisation Sam Gor and its affiliated operations are continuing, unabated. Ironically, he could have created such a vast drug infrastructure and empire in a region contiguous to the Chinese mainland, where the Chinese have many beholden armed militias, but he never got targeted or arrested by the Chinese authorities. Also strange is the fact that he never attempted to ship his produce towards the Chinese mainland, raising serious doubts if he were to have enjoyed some sort of official patronage from the Chinese authorities. Unsurprisingly, Tse Chi Lop's rise has not been marked by the usual stories of violence and gore of drug lords but by the unusual route of steady industrialisation and establishing well-maintained networks of key international



THIS LUCRATIVE TRADE IS BELIEVED TO GENERATE EARNINGS UP TO A STAGGERING \$8 BILLION, ANNUALLY. CURRENTLY, IT IS BELIEVED TO BE HEADED BY A CHINESE GANGSTER CALLED TSE CHI LOP, WHO IS ALSO WIDELY KNOWN BY THE MONIKER "EL CHAPO OF ASIA"

partnerships, which are impossible without some sort of sovereign backing. And the Chinese are the masters of asymmetric subterfuge in that they patronise proxies and bad elements, as long as they do the bidding of the Chinese government, and do not direct their illicit trade towards the Chinese mainland. While it is too early to confirm the exact hand behind the recent cache in the Andaman and Nicobar waters, the quantity/value of drugs involved, the location of the trawler arrest, and the nationality of the trawler crew, all point to origins that seem disconcertingly familiar. That the restive Myanmar mainland (with areas like Shan State that are 'no-go' zones to even the Myanmar military) is closer to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands than the Indian mainland, makes the threat real and perennial. It is a testy region given too much Chinese intrigues and ambitions – in fact, the Myanmar-owned Coco Coco Islands (barely 50 km from the northernmost tip of the Andaman Islands range) were believed to have had Chinese militaristic assets, but the same was never proved. The Chinese have planned substantial investments in Myanmar via its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which includes projects like the

China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) or even the development of the deep-sea port of Kyaukpyu, in Myanmar's Rakhine State. The Chinese have a vested interest in keeping their footprints in the region and it is not beyond them to oscillate from making pure investments in the Myanmar Government to patronising rebel militias or even drug lords, towards its objectives in the region. India must safeguard its interests and strategic imperatives that beset its distant outpost in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Sadly, it is not the first and it wouldn't be the last such operation. Situational status suggests that this specific haul was destined for Thailand, which typically sees a surge around the onsetting festive season, but this too is in the realm of conjecture, as yet. And the real concern is not if this consignment was the handiwork of the Chinese Sam Gor gang (or of the El Mencho-run Jalisco New Generation Cartel), but of the murky linkages with the Chinese authorities, which is always a possibility. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ENSURE MINORITY SAFETY

Madam — The fresh row of violence against the Hindu minorities once again began in Bangladesh, leading to an escalation of disturbance between Indo-Bangladesh relations. In an immediate response, the government of India has slammed the interim government run by Muhammad Yunus for not taking any action against Bangladeshi miscreants. The arrest and denial of bail by the Chittagong court to the Hindu monk and ISKCON priest Chinmoy Krishan Das has raised deep concerns about the safety and security of the Hindus in Bangladesh. The noted incidences of violence, arson, vandalism and desecration of the Hindu religious sites have stressed the whole matter. It is particularly disturbing to note that Hindus are not at all safe in Bangladesh, and the majority population there is not only opposing the minority but also nurturing anti-India feelings as a whole. So far, the anti-India sentiments are taking a sharp steep in many other countries in the last few days. First Canada took a stir against India by attacking Hindu temples and now Bangladesh is the new member in this chain. The democratic spirit had been killing down, and it is regrettable that Hindus are being targeted with brutality and animosity in both Canada as well as Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh must immediately step in to halt such violence against the Hindu minority. Every religion must be respected and equally treated with the values of the democratic spirit. Bangladesh must not forget that it was these Hindus only who fought hard for their liberation and freedom; any attack on the Hindu population residing in Bangladesh will be considered as an attack on their liberators.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

INDIA'S GDP GROWTH DIPS

Madam — India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth slumped to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per cent in July-September, coming in much lower than the consensus estimates of 6.5 per cent. A "slug-

Suspense over Maharashtra CM



The delayed swearing-in of the Chief Minister in Maharashtra despite the thumping majority of Mahayuti is a cause of concern and raises very fundamental issues relating to government formation post-election. The highly ambitious leaders of political parties, though in the minority in the alliance, voted to power, stake claims on the Chief Minister post against demo-

cratic norms or turn to browbeating. The leader of the largest alliance partner ought to be sworn in as CM, but compromise is the new normal in the constitution of the ministries. Though this is not new, it is yet an unhealthy practice detrimental to the alliance in a larger perspective. Bihar CM Nitish Kumar having taken over as CM seven times on the same pattern in diagonally opposite RJD and BJP alliances is the stark example of how democracy runs at the root level. People give decisive mandates for governance, yet bypassing it is against the will of the people. If so, what is the sanctity of Abraham Lincoln's democratic principle 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people'?

Vinod Johri | Delhi

slightly lower than 9.5 per cent in Q1FY25. C K Ramani | Chennai

RESTRICTING HARMFUL ONLINE CONTENT

Madam — Australia has passed a law restricting children's use of internet media. The Government of India is also moving in this direction, which is a welcome step. However, solely creating laws related to social media is not enough to fully protect children from its adverse effects. Laws are necessary, but they alone are not sufficient. To keep children safe, the collective role of parents, teachers, and society is crucial. Children need to be educated about digital literacy, encouraged to practice responsible online behaviour, manage their screen time effectively, and focus on positive content. Additionally, social media companies must ensure their platforms are safe for children. A comprehensive approach is the only effective solution to this problem.

R K Jain | Barwani

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

From pages to people: Why writers need marketing to succeed

Writing a book is only half the battle. The other half — equally critical but often overlooked — is ensuring that it reaches its intended audience

As an author of seven books with a decent number of followers who swear by my work, I am still a largely unknown author. That's an anomaly, considering the long decades I have spent polishing my craft and bringing out the most distilled form of writing I am capable of. Beyond a loyal circle of readers who follow my work, much of the world remains unaware of what I have to offer. What did I lack? Not literary vivacity, but an appetite to market my writing in a way that would earn it a top spot among contemporaries. Just as we have conceived a negative perception of wealth and shunned any open display or accumulation of it as vulgar, we have slapped self-publicity also with some uncharitable notions. It's often said that writers are inherently shy, reclusive beings who prefer the company of their thoughts and words over the glare of public attention. Most of us dream of creating something so profound that the world discovers it and celebrates it without our having to lift a finger to promote it. We yearn for our books to find



their way into readers' hands through serendipity rather than strategy. While this dream is undeniably romantic, the reality is far from it. In a world brimming with voices clamouring for attention, invisibility is not an option. It took me time to understand that sharing my work is not an act of self-indulgence; it is an act of respect toward my craft. It is not hubris to present our work to the world; it is our responsibility. To my fellow writers and artists, I offer this perspective: showcasing our work is not something we do solely for ourselves. It's a way of expressing gratitude for the skills we've been granted. It is an acknowledgement of the universe's generosity and an effort to give back by letting our words reach those who might find meaning and inspiration in them. Let's face it: the literary world

is saturated. Thousands of books are published every single day, each jostling for space in an overcrowded marketplace. Amid this din, how can anyone possibly stumble upon a book unless it's brought to their notice? By showcasing our work, we're not seeking undue attention; we're simply ensuring that our creation has a chance to be seen and appreciated. Once upon a time, good writing was the golden ticket for a writer. Today, social media has taken on that role with unparalleled reach and immediacy. While humility is an admirable trait, excessive shyness can hinder the reach of our work. Imagine a painter hiding their masterpiece in an attic or a singer performing only in an empty room. Writing, like any art, is meant for sharing. When we shy away from showcasing our creations, we deny our craft the audience it deserves. We owe it to ourselves and our readers to overcome this reluctance and step forward. By sharing our work, we're saying, "Thank you for this talent. Here is what I've made of it." It's not about vanity; it's about paying homage to the

creative force within us. Writing can often feel like a solitary pursuit, but it doesn't have to be. Social media offers us a unique opportunity to find our tribe — fellow writers, readers, and supporters who understand and appreciate our journey. These connections not only amplify our reach but also provide encouragement, feedback, and camaraderie that enrich our creative process. There's a lingering misconception that marketing diminishes the purity of art. But let's reframe this: promoting our work is not about shouting louder than everyone else; it's about ensuring that our voice is heard. It's about creating a bridge between us and our readers, a pathway for our stories to travel and touch lives. It's an act of service — to our art and to those it might inspire. So let us set aside our hesitations and embrace the stage that the digital age has offered us. In doing so, we ensure that our words, our art, and our essence leave a lasting impact on the world. (The author is a columnist and writing coach based in Dubai; views are personal)



ASHA IYER KUMAR





FIRST COLUMN

LEARNING MUST GO ON

Learning opens the doors of possibilities, if it is stopped we are closing that door and impeding our own growth



SHAINY SHARMA

Learning is an essential and lifelong process. It is a cornerstone of human growth and evolution. However, beyond the mechanics of acquiring knowledge lies the nuanced art of learning - an approach that emphasises curiosity, creativity, adaptability and a passion for discovery.

Curiosity - the word says by itself is the fuel for lifelong learning. At its core, the art of learning involves more than the accumulation of facts and skills. It is a dynamic process that integrates intellectual, emotional and experiential dimensions. Learning becomes artful when it is purposeful, joyful and deeply connected to an individual's values and aspirations.

Unlike a rigid, standardised approach, the art of learning recognises that everyone has unique strengths, interests and ways of understanding the world. It encourages learners to embrace their individuality, explore diverse perspectives and find meaning in the learning process for knowledge doesn't only come from formal education or reading books rather it comes from life, conversations, experiences and unexpected encounters.

Individuals should stay open to new perspectives, whether from different cultures, professions or age groups. A growth mindset, as popularised by Carol Dweck, is the belief that intelligence and abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work which contrasts with a fixed mindset that assumes that the abilities are static.

With a growth mindset, setbacks are often seen as learning opportunities rather than failures while challenges are embraced as part



of the learning process. No matter how much one knows, there's always room to grow. Staying humble, and being open to feedback, criticism and constructive input from others can help an individual improve and refine their understanding. Another important factor that enhances the art of learning is the art of passion. Learners who pursue subjects that resonate with their interests, enter a state of flow, where effort feels effortless, and the process becomes intrinsically rewarding.

Passion sustains motivation and fosters deeper engagement, leading to mastery. Surrounding oneself with like-minded individuals who prioritise learning, engaging in discussions, attending workshops or collaborating on projects challenges an individual to learn and grow.

There is no denying that the most brilliant minds ask questions that others may take for granted. One must cultivate a habit of asking 'Why' and 'How' and not just about abstract ideas but in everyday situations too for these questions push the boundaries of one's thinking and can lead to deeper insights. It is always when one embraces learning as a lifelong practice, that can one open oneself to a world of possibilities, ideas and opportunities for personal as well as professional transformation.

Understanding learning as art transforms it from a mundane task into a profound journey of self-exploration and mastery for developing a passion for learning that will never cease to grow.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Freebies: A winning strategy or economic pitfall?



UTTAM GUPTA

The growing trend of offering freebies in elections raises significant concerns about financial sustainability, governance and its impact on voters' mindset

A major factor contributing to the success of the respective political party in the just concluded elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand was freebies - an acronym for "something given free of charge" - particularly those targeted at women. In Maharashtra, the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance launched the Ladki Bahin cash benefit scheme that offered Rs 1,500 a month to every woman with a family income of less than Rs 2,50,000 annually, in the age bracket of 21 to 65 years.

The amount was subsequently increased to Rs 2,500 per month. In Jharkhand, under Mukhyamantri Maiyan Samman Yojna (MMSY) Hemant Soren's JMM-Congress-RJD government had initially promised to give Rs 1000 per month to all women in the age group 18-25 years. The amount was later increased to Rs 2500 per month.

The domineering role of freebies in winning elections is visible in almost every State Assembly election held since 2020 when former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal came up with this brand of politics followed by Punjab in 2022 where the Aam Aadmi Party or AAP promised depositing Rs 1000 per month in the account of every woman aged 18 or above. In Karnataka elections held in early 2023, Congress had promised five guarantees including the much trumpeted Gruha Lakshmi under which every woman head of a house gets Rs 2000 a month. In elections held later in 2023, in Madhya Pradesh, BJP promised Rs 1,250 per month under Ladli Behna Yojana; the amount to be gradually hiked to Rs 3,000 per month. In Chhattisgarh, it promised Rs 12,000 per year to married women under the 'Mahtari Vandan Scheme'.

In Odisha, under the Subhadra Yojana, the BJP gives eligible women Rs 10,000 per year, in two instalments of Rs 5,000 each. In future elections, expect all parties to offer such freebies. Already, in the budget for 2024-25, Delhi finance minister Atishi announced the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana (MMSY) under which, the AAP government will give Rs 1000 per month to all the women above the age of 18 in the national capital. Now, Arvind Kejriwal has announced six Revids (another name for freebies) including free power, free water, free education, free healthcare and pilgrimage for the elderly. Freebies win elections but these lead to a host of negative outcomes. The most damaging is the abetment to corruption.

The Union Government's standards of financial propriety lay down inter alia that "no authority shall exercise its powers of sanctioning expenditure to pass an order which will be directly or indirectly, to its advantage; and the expenditure from public moneys should not be incurred for the benefit of a particular person or a section of the people unless a claim for the amount could be enforced in a court of law or the expenditure is in pursuance of a recognised policy or custom". The reckless spending of the taxpayer's money on freebies is neither a recognised policy nor is sanctioned in a court of law. It is blatant financial irregularity that amounts to bribing voters using public money solely for gaining advantage in electoral politics. Such a corrupt practice is much worse than the one that involves



IN ODISHA, UNDER THE SUBHADRA YOJANA, THE BJP GIVES ELIGIBLE WOMEN RS 10,000 PER YEAR, IN TWO INSTALMENTS OF RS 5,000 EACH. IN FUTURE ELECTIONS, EXPECT ALL PARTIES TO OFFER SUCH FREEBIES

an individual candidate distributing cash using his own money to garner votes. Second, unlike 'normal' budget expenses which are planned and backed by well-orchestrated efforts to garner revenue, additional financial liabilities imposed by the freebies promised in the election manifesto affect the budgetary position of the State in a totally 'uncontrolled' and 'unplanned' manner. There being no corresponding revenue generation against this liability (this being unplanned), this will be at the cost of slashing other essential expenditures including development.

Alternatively, this will result in additional borrowings and the resultant increase in debt to an unsustainable level. In Punjab, the freebies promised by AAP led to an additional expenditure of about Rs 20,000 crore per annum. Unable to foot the bill from its budget, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had to approach the Central government to help it raise around Rs 50,000 crore. In Delhi, giving Rs 1000 per month or Rs 12,000 annually to each woman above 18 years for a total of 6.7 million women would cost the exchequer Rs 8000 crore per annum.

Already, the State government faces a fiscal deficit or FD - excess of total expenditure over total revenue - of Rs 18,000 crore during 2024-25 which is 80 per cent higher than the FD for 2023-24 at Rs 10,000 crore. This is despite a steep reduction of over 30 per cent in capital expenditure. The situation has come to

such a pass that CM Atishi has recently forwarded a request to the Centre seeking a loan of Rs 10,000 crore from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). In Karnataka, the five guarantees have punched a hole of over Rs 60,000 crore a year in the State budget leading to a doubling of its FD to over Rs 122,500 crore. The precariousness of the situation can be seen from a comment by the Deputy CM 'The government has no money to give to the MLAs for carrying out development work; courtesy the poll guarantees'.

In MP, at the current rate of Rs 1250 per month to 12.5 million beneficiaries, the Ladli Behna Yojana costs the state exchequer about Rs 18,750 crore per annum. This will go up to Rs 45,000 crore per annum as the quantum of assistance eventually goes up to Rs 3,000 per month. In Maharashtra, the Ladki Bahin Scheme will dent the State exchequer by Rs 46,000 crore annually.

Other states Jharkhand, Odisha etc are also feeling the pricks of promised freebies. Third, unlike a normal welfare scheme which has a sunset date, the freebies offered by winning parties have none. So, these will continue to be given 'eternally' - no matter which party rules - making perpetual holes in State budgets. Fourth, the money for freebies comes from taxpayers' pockets ('future' tax payers in case, the government borrows). When they know that taxes are used to give doles to all and sundry, it

may even trigger non-compliance amongst them.

Finally, assured of financial help to meet most of their basic needs 'perpetually', the freebies cult is changing the mindset of people in a way that makes them complacent towards work. This undermines the very foundation of economic growth.

Left to themselves, political parties will never shun freebies. Can the Supreme Court (SC) force them?

In an order in S Subramaniam Balaji vs the Government of Tamil Nadu & Ors in July 2013, the SC had observed that the distribution of freebies of any kind influences all people. "It shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree." Yet, it held "The promises in the election manifesto cannot be construed as 'corrupt practice' under the Representation of People Act (RPA), or any other prevailing law and, hence, distribution of freebies can't be stopped when the ruling party uses public funds for this purpose through the passage of Appropriation Acts in the state Assembly".

The SC hasn't changed its stance even as on January 25, 2022, hearing a PIL on 'freebies', it observed "This is no doubt a serious issue, budget for freebies is going above the regular Budget. This disturbs the level playing field". These exhortations won't help. It should direct the government to enact a law on curbing freebies.

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

Political stability: A catalyst for India's renewable energy ambitions

India is poised to play a pivotal role in the global transition to sustainable energy but it must have political will to sustain the momentum

Domestic political stability or lack of it can have a considerable impact on the development of renewable energy projects and investment in the sector. A stable government is always considered as a growth enabler whereas an unstable political landscape can derail the growth engine. With political stability, India now India forges ahead towards ambitious renewable energy ambitions. Recently, the issues surrounding climate financing and global emissions were once again at the forefront of the 29th Conference of Parties (COP29) in Baku. The Indian government was in a strong position to challenge developed nations on climate change, carbon emissions, and green energy investment



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because of political stability and notable advancements in renewable energy generation. For any nation, socio-economic development depends on political stability which plays a role of catalyst. Especially for developing countries like India, where renewable energy projects demand huge investments, a stable government is much

needed. Political stability provides the long-term vision and policy continuity needed for large-scale renewable projects with long gestation periods. Political stability provides consistent policy and regulatory frameworks that favour and incentivize both domestic and international stakeholders to invest without fear of abrupt policy changes.

With a decadal political stability and policy push, India has made significant progress and achieved a milestone of 200 gigawatts (GW) in non-fossil fuel capacity. However, it still faces gaps to meet the ambitious targets it has set for 2030: 319 GW in solar power and 110 GW in wind energy. As of October 2024, India's installed solar capacity stands at only 90.76 GW, and wind

capacity at 47.36 GW, highlighting a gap of over 200 GW that must be addressed within the next six years. Meeting these targets requires political stability to ensure consistent policies, reliable financing, and sustained foreign investments to fuel India's renewable ambitions.

Since the Modi government took office in 2014, India introduced ambitious targets and policies aimed at expanding renewable energy capacity. Key initiatives include the National Solar Mission, which set the stage for India's solar capacity expansion, and the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM), promoting solar energy adoption in rural areas. The Production Linked Incentive



(PLI) Scheme incentivized domestic manufacturing of solar panels and batteries, reducing reliance on imports and creating jobs.

Additionally, the government's commitment to phasing down coal and setting a target of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030 reflects a strategic shift towards a sustainable energy mix, reinforcing investor confidence and

cementing India's role in the global renewable energy transition. Investors' confidence is the key. A stable government can attract foreign investments by creating a transparent, reliable business environment with minimal bureaucratic red tape. In contrast, political instability or uncertainty can lead to a fluctuating exchange rate, deter foreign direct investment (FDI), and increase pro-

ject costs. India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and renewable energy targets could be delayed if there are abrupt shifts in political agendas. Delays or changes in policy can lead to project uncertainty, forcing investors to reassess risks and potentially redirect funds to more stable markets. Indian states' thrust on renewable energy needs to be in sync with the Centre's policies and priorities. States with stable governments and favourable renewable policies attract more investments, while politically volatile states face challenges in attracting projects due to higher risks. Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra are leading

states in the Renewable Energy sector and these states made significant progress with policy consistency.

With political stability at national and state levels, India is expected to close the gap in its renewable energy targets soon and contribute meaningfully to global climate goals. Against the backdrop of the COP29 meeting and with political stability, further policy reforms and a robust regulatory framework would push both domestic and foreign investments in the sector. Hopefully, the country is all set to achieve its renewable energy ambitions and contribute to the global effort against climate change.

(The writer is director SgurrEnergy India; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Petrol, diesel sales rebound on festival demand

India's petrol and diesel consumption soared in November as the festive season reversed a fall in demand witnessed in previous months, preliminary data of state-owned firms showed on Friday. While petrol sales had shown a year-on-year increase, diesel has been a laggard since monsoon and November was the first month that saw positive growth in consumption. Petrol sales of three state-owned firms, which control 90 per cent of the fuel market, soared 8.3 per cent to 3.1 million tonnes in November compared to 2.86 million tonnes of consumption in the same month last year. Diesel demand was up 5.9 per cent to 7.2 million tonnes. Petrol and diesel sales have been tepid during the monsoon months as rains reduced vehicular movement and demand for the agriculture sector. Petrol demand however soared once rains eased but diesel consumption lagged year-on-year. Month-on-month petrol sales were up 4.7 per cent when compared to 2.96 million tonnes of consumption in October. Diesel demand was almost 11 per cent more than 6.5 million tonnes of consumption in October.



GST collection rises to Rs 1.82 lakh crore

Gross GST collections grew 8.5 per cent to over Rs 1.82 lakh crore in November on higher revenues from domestic transactions. The Central GST collection stood at Rs 34,141 crore, State GST at Rs 43,047 crore, Integrated GST at Rs 91,828 crore and cess at Rs 13,253 crore, according to government data released on Sunday. The total gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue grew 8.5 per cent to over Rs 1.82 lakh crore in November as compared to Rs 1.68 lakh crore in the same month a year ago, it said. In October, GST collections of Rs 1.87 lakh crore were the second-best GST mop-up with 9 per cent annual growth. The highest-ever collection was in April 2024 at over Rs 2.10 lakh crore. During the month under review, GST from domestic transactions grew 9.4 per cent to Rs 1.40 lakh crore, while revenues from tax on imports rose about 6 per cent to Rs 42,591 crore. Refunds worth Rs 19,259 crore were issued during the month, registering 8.9 per cent decline over the year-ago period.



Tata Motors overall sales up marginally at 74,753 units

Tata Motors Ltd on Sunday reported a marginal increase in overall sales at 74,753 units in November as compared to 74,172 units in the same month last year. Total domestic sales were up 1 per cent at 73,246 units last month as against 72,647 units in November 2023, Tata Motors said in a statement. Total passenger vehicle (PV) sales, including EVs, were at 47,117 units as compared to 46,143 units in the year-ago month, up 2 per cent, it added. Similarly, domestic PV sales, including EVs were up 2 per cent at 47,063 units as against 46,068 units in November 2023. Total commercial vehicles sales last month were down 1 per cent at 27,636 units as against 28,029 units in the same period last year.

RBI may continue status quo on interest rate: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The RBI is likely to keep the benchmark interest rate unchanged for one more time in its bilateral monetary policy review later in the week as inflation has breached its upper tolerance limit and may also moderate the growth forecast given the disappointing second quarter GDP numbers, experts say.

Reserve Bank Governor-headed six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled to meet on December 4 to 6, 2024. The decision of the rate-setting panel will be announced on December 6 by Governor Shaktikanta Das.

It was widely anticipated that the RBI would start reducing the benchmark interest rates soon but the central bank will have little option this time around as the latest print of retail inflation is above 6 per cent.

The Reserve Bank has kept the repo or short-term lending rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent since February 2023 and experts think some easing



could only be possible in February.

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda said given the rather uncertain global environment and the possible impact on inflation and the fact that currently inflation has been averaging close to 5.9 per cent in the last two months, a status quo on repo rate will be the logical outcome from the policy.

"There would be a change in RBI projections for both inflation and GDP as inflation has been higher so far than the RBI forecast for Q3 and GDP growth has come much below expectations in Q2. It would hence be of interest to see what the projections this time are," Sabnavis said.

India's economic growth slowed to near two-year low of 5.4 per cent in the September quarter of this fiscal due to poor performance of manufacturing and mining sectors, but the country continued to remain the fastest-growing large economy, as per

government data released on Friday.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and Head - Research & Outreach, ICRA, said that with the CPI inflation having breached the 6 per cent upper limit of the medium-term range of 2-6 per cent in October 2024, ICRA anticipate a status quo from the MPC in its December 2024 meeting, in spite of the GDP growth print for Q2 FY2025 sharply undershooting the committee's expectations.

"At the same time, we anticipate that the MPC will moderate its growth forecast for FY2025 next week. A February 2025 rate cut may be forthcoming if the next two inflation prints recede," Nayar added.

The government has tasked the RBI to ensure that consumer price index (CPI) based retail inflation stays at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on the either side.

The central bank last hiked the repo rate to 6.5 per cent in February 2023 and since then it has held the rate at the same level.

India should focus on local currency trading: GTRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The warning of US President-elect Donald Trump to BRICS countries to impose 100 per cent customs duties if the BRICS group would replace the US dollar is unrealistic, and India should focus on developing a workable local currency trading system, think tank GTRI said on Sunday.

BRICS, formed in 2009, is the only major international group of which the US is not a part. Its other members are South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the UAE. Over the past few years a few of its member countries, in particular Russia and China, are seeking an alternative to the US dollar or creating their own BRICS currency. India has so far not been part of the move.

On Saturday, Trump warned BRICS nations against such a move. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that tar-

iffs of this scale would harm the US consumers only as it would push prices on imports, disrupt global trade, and risk retaliation from key trading partners.

"Trump's threat to impose 100 per cent tariffs on countries adopting a BRICS currency is unrealistic and more symbolic than practical.

For India, the prudent approach is to focus on making local currency trading workable by establishing a transparent and open currency exchange," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

He said that India's best interests lie neither in the domination of the US dollar nor in fully adopting a BRICS currency at this stage.

"By enhancing its own financial infrastructure, India can better navigate the shifting dynamics of global trade," he said, adding threatening sovereign nations undermines diplomatic relations and disregards the multipolar nature of today's world.



Hinduja Tech completes acquisition of TECOSIM Group

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Hinduja Tech Ltd has completed the acquisition of Germany based engineering services provider TECOSIM Group GmbH, marking a significant milestone in its vision to become top 10 global mobility engineering companies.

Hinduja Tech Ltd, a subsidiary of heavy commercial vehicle maker Ashok Leyland, is a mobility focused global engineering, research and development technology company. The strategic move highlights Hinduja Tech Ltd's ongoing commitment to enhancing its global automotive engineering market leadership. The acquisition would provide operational efficiencies, increased competitiveness, and a stronger global market presence, Hinduja Tech Ltd said in a company statement.

Commercial LPG up Rs 16.5 per cylinder

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jet fuel, or ATF, price on Sunday was hiked by 1.45 per cent and rates of commercial LPG used in hotels and restaurants increased by Rs 16.5 per 19-kg cylinder in the monthly revision done in line with international oil price trends.

The aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price was increased by Rs 1,318.12 per kilolitre, or 1.45 per cent, to Rs 91,856.84 per kl in the national capital-

home to one of the busiest airports in the country, according to state-owned fuel retailers. This is the second straight monthly increase in jet fuel prices. Rates were increased by Rs 2,941.5 per kl (3.3 per cent) on November 1. That hike came after two rounds of reduction which had taken the rates to their lowest level this year. ATF price on October 1 was cut by 6.3 per cent (Rs 5,883 per kl) and by Rs 4,495.5 per kl, or 4.58 per cent on

September 1. The ATF price in Mumbai was increased to Rs 85,861.02 per kl on Sunday from Rs 84,642.91 previously.

Oil firms also increased the price of commercial LPG by Rs 16.5 to Rs 1818.50 per 19-kg cylinder.

This is the fifth straight monthly hike in commercial LPG price. Rates were hiked by Rs 62 per 19-kg cylinder at the last revision on November 1.

In five price increases, commercial LPG rates have hiked by Rs 172.5 per 19-kg cylinder. Rates are now at their highest level in one year.

The increases negated the four monthly reductions prior to the current cycle that started in August. In the four rounds, prices had been cut by Rs 148 per 19-kg cylinder.

Commercial LPG now costs Rs 1771 per 19-kg cylinder in Mumbai, Rs 1,927 in Kolkata and Rs 1,980 in Chennai.

Auditing of companies has improved in the last 3-4 yrs: NFRA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Auditing of companies has improved in the last three to four years, NFRA chief Ajay Bhushan Prasad Pandey has said and highlighted the need for board as well as audit committee members to engage with auditors which will help in raising red flags and prevent possible corporate failures.

The National Financial Reporting Authority, constituted in October 2018 under the companies law, has passed more than 80 orders, including in Cafe Coffee Day, DHFL and a few other large cases, for lapses that led to corporate failures.

At the helm of the watchdog for more than two years, Pandey told PTI in an interview that many of the auditors were doing and are doing a good job.

"Overall, auditing of companies has improved over the last 3-4 years," the NFRA Chairperson said.

However, he noted that



there is a certain section among the auditors and among the board members who were not that sensitive and alert due to which there have been many corporate failures. "People should be aware that these are the pitfalls and they have responsibilities".

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Regulations) as well as various provisions under the Companies Act, 2013 have cast some responsibilities on auditors and companies board

members. Also, auditing standards require auditors to have a two-way communication with the members of the TCWG (Those Charged With Governance).

It is necessary for the board members and audit committee to engage with the auditors and then take a call.

In many of the cases that the NFRA has dealt with, Pandey said it was noticed that audit committees did not engage with auditors and did not ask the right questions to the auditors.

FDI inflows jump 45 pc to \$29.79 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign direct investment in India rose by 45 per cent year-on-year to USD 29.79 billion in April-September this fiscal on healthy inflows in services, computer, telecom and pharma sectors, according to government data.

FDI inflows were at USD 20.5 billion in April-September 2023-24.

In the July-September quarter, the inflows grew by about 43 per cent year-on-year to USD 13.6 billion against USD 9.52 billion in the same quarter last fiscal.

The foreign direct investment in India was up 47.8 per cent to USD 16.17 billion in the April-June quarter.

Total FDI, which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital, grew by 28 per cent to USD 42.1 billion during the first half of this fiscal from USD 33.12 billion in April-September 2023-24, the



Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) data showed.

During the April-September period this financial year, FDI equity inflows rose from major countries, including Mauritius (USD 5.34 billion against USD 2.95 billion), Singapore (USD 7.53 billion against USD 5.22 billion), the US (USD 2.57 billion against USD 2 billion), the Netherlands (USD 3.58 billion against USD 1.92 billion), the UAE (USD 3.47 bil-

lion against USD 1.1 billion), Cayman Islands (USD 235 million against USD 145 million) and Cyprus (USD 808 million against USD 35 million).

However, inflows declined from Japan and the UK. Sectorally, inflows rose in services, computer software and hardware, trading, telecommunication, automobile, pharma and chemicals.

FDI in services has increased to USD 5.69 billion during the first half of the current financial year as against USD 3.85 billion in the same period last year.

As per the data, FDI inflows in non-conventional energy stood at USD 2 billion.

The data also showed that Maharashtra received the highest inflow of USD 13.55 billion during April-September 2024-25. It was followed by Karnataka (USD 3.54 billion), Telangana (USD 1.54 billion) and Gujarat (about USD 4 billion).

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already source high-quality products from India.

Fast-fashion leaders like Primark, Asos, and Boohoo also turn to India for innovative solutions that align with their commitment to quality and sustainability.

"These are the values that will take centre stage at Bharat Tex 2025, as we highlight India's advancements in eco-friendly materials, closed-loop manufacturing, and waste management principles that strongly resonate with the UK's commitment to a sustainable future," he said.

To attract British participation, the council has organized the Bharat Tex Roadshow in London from November 27 to 29.

Sekhri also said that at Bharat Tex 2025, UK brands such as Marks & Spencer, Primark, Next, Charles Tyrwhitt, Burberry, Dunhill, Clarks, and JW Anderson

Interest rate key factor for markets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trading sentiment in the equity market this week will be guided by global trends, foreign fund movement, macroeconomic data announcements and RBI's interest rate decision, analysts said. The monthly auto sales data announcement would also be tracked by investors this week. "Looking ahead, markets are likely to react to the disappointing GDP growth of 5.4 pc on Monday. The upcoming RBI policy will be crucial, with both the interest rate decision and commentary being key focus areas. "On the global front, geopolitical tensions, particularly the Russia-Ukraine situation, remains a concern. Important macroeconomic data will also influence market sentiment."

Foreign investors pulled out Rs 21,612 crore (USD 2.56 billion) from the Indian equity market in November, mainly due to the rising US bond yields, strengthening dollar and expectation of a slowdown in the domestic economy.

While the sell-off continues, the quantum of net outflow significantly reduced compared to October, when FPIs recorded a massive withdrawal of Rs 94,017 crore (USD 11.2 billion).

With the latest pull out, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have experienced total net outflow of Rs 15,019 crore in 2024 so far.

Looking ahead, the flow of foreign investments into Indian equity markets will hinge on several key factors. These include the policies implemented under Donald Trump's presidency, the prevailing inflation and interest rate environment, and the evolving geopolitical landscape, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, said.

Additionally, the third-quarter earnings performance of Indian companies and the country's progress on the economic growth front will play a crucial role in shaping investor sentiment and influencing foreign inflows, he added.

According to the data, FPIs recorded a net outflow of Rs 21,612 crore in November. This came following a net withdrawal of Rs 94,017 crore in October, which was the worst monthly outflow.

However, in September, foreign investors made a nine-month high investment of Rs 57,724 crore.

Market analysts attributed the latest outflow to the rising US bond yields, strengthening dollar and expectation of a slowdown in the domestic economy.

Overall, November experienced net outflow but FPIs staged a notable reversal at the beginning of the week ended November 29, due to decisive victory of the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance in the Maharashtra Assembly elections.

The resulting political stability appears to have strengthened investor confidence, Srivastava said.

Huge import opportunities for UK apparel firms in India: AEPC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) on Sunday said huge import opportunities are there for British apparel firms in India and they should participate in large numbers in the upcoming mega textile show here next year.

Bharat Tex 2025 will be held here from February 14-17, 2025, at Bharat Mandapam and from February 12-15 next year at the India Expo Centre and Mart in Greater Noida.

Companies will showcase the entire textile value chain, with a special focus on key sectors such as Handicrafts, Apparel Machinery, Chemicals, and Dyes.

AEPC Chairman Sudhir Sekhri said that the UK is a global fashion hub and the sixth largest importer of apparel, with a total import value of USD 20.27 billion in 2023.

"India, with its robust textile and apparel sector, has long been a trusted partner for the UK.

In the past year (2023) alone, India's exports to the UK reached USD 1.2 billion,

securing a 6.14 per cent share of the UK's textile and apparel market," he said.

Exports of ready-made garments to the UK during April-October 2024-25 rose by 9.4 per cent, Sekhri added.

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what's brewing?

It's a wrap! Saif Ali Khan and Nikita Dutta starrer *Jewel Thief* completes filming



After winning hearts with an impeccable performance in the Oscar-nominated *Gharat Ganapati*, Nikita Dutta will be seen in the much-anticipated film *Jewel Thief*. The heist thriller that also features Saif Ali Khan and Jaideep Ahlawat has officially wrapped up and actress Nikita Dutta is all smiles as she shares a glimpse from the last day on set. The film from Siddharth Anand's Marflix Production promises to be a thrilling cinematic ride, and fans are eagerly waiting to see the pairing of Nikita Dutta and Saif Ali Khan. Taking to her social media, Nikita posted a picture with the cast and crew and captioned, "Film wraps are always emotional. But this one is hitting differently. See you on the screens. @MarflixP"

Besides this, Nikita Dutta has shared a picture with Mamta Anand from the sets and captioned, "JUST PYAAAAAAR" *Jewel Thief*, directed by Robbie Grewal, is said to be a gripping heist thriller, with Saif Ali Khan and Nikita Dutta leading the charge, which will be released on Netflix.

AZAAD SET TO STORM CINEMAS ON JANUARY 17, 2025

Abhishek Kapoor's highly anticipated big-screen adventure is set to take over cinemas this New Year. The recently released teaser has received an overwhelming response from audiences and now the makers have further elevated the excitement by announcing the release date of *Azaad*, scheduled to hit theatres on January 17, 2025. This big-screen adventure marks the debut of Aaman Devgan and Rasha Thadani, alongside Ajay Devgn in a powerful role and the talented Diana Penty. Produced by Ronnie Screwala and Pragna Kapoor, this cinematic journey promises an intense tale of love and loyalty.

Liger letdown: Ananya Panday jokingly bans Chunky Panday from giving her film advice

Ananya Panday and Chunky Panday have only starred in one movie together, and it seems like Ananya is not interested in working with her father again. During a recent conversation, Ananya and Chunky discussed their differences regarding Ananya's film selections, with Ananya admitting that she holds Chunky responsible for her involvement in *Liger*. She jokingly remarked that she will never collaborate with him in the future.

The chat between Ananya and Chunky was uploaded on

We Are Yuva's YouTube platform. Chunky stated that he and Ananya have had the "most arguments about the type of films she should do."

Chunky explained, "Because I am from the 80s and 90s, where we made all of those huge big commercial movies. We have had the biggest arguments at home on this, but you said somewhere recently that it was *Gehraiyaan* that made you decide what kind of movies you want to do." He followed it up by joking, "I will fight with you right now."

Ananya said that when she

was growing up, she thought like her father when it came to choosing films. "The kind of movies I watched also, were those massy commercial films and I still love those, I would still love to be like a part of those, but that was all I could see, like I only wanted to do that. I didn't know that there was anything else," she said, and Chunky interrupted, "That's in your DNA, darling." They also discussed failure and mentioned the disastrous *Liger*, which was released to poor reception and received harsh reviews. Ananya

expressed feeling "sad and upset" following the failure of *Liger*, to which Chunky added, "And you blamed me for making you watch it." Ananya acknowledged his mistake by agreeing he was "at fault."

She added, "We are not doing a film together again." Chunky then mockingly expressed, "I want to read my scripts and choose them." Sometimes you have to just do a film," and Ananya just said, "No, you are not allowed to give me advice after *Liger*."

Hollywood actress Hailee Steinfeld, known for her roles in films like *Ender's Game* and the Marvel series *Hawkeye*, has taken a significant step in her personal life. The talented actress has gotten engaged to her boyfriend, Josh Allen, a quarterback for the Buffalo Bills in the National Football League (NFL). The news of their engagement has sent shockwaves of excitement among fans, who have been eagerly following the couple's relationship. Although the couple has kept their romance relatively private, sources close to them have confirmed the engagement.

Hailee Steinfeld, 27, has established herself as a versatile actress in Hollywood, showcasing her range in various film genres. Her portrayal of Kate Bishop in *Hawkeye*, alongside Jeremy Renner, earned her critical acclaim and a massive fan following. Josh Allen, 27, has been making waves in the NFL as the quarterback for the Buffalo Bills. With his impressive skills on the field and his charming personality off it, Allen has become a fan favourite.

As the news of their engagement spreads, fans are eagerly awaiting more details about the couple's upcoming wedding plans. With their combined talents, charisma, and dedication to their respective crafts, Hailee Steinfeld and Josh Allen are undoubtedly two of Hollywood's most exciting and promising couples.



ARCHIE



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



FUN

CALVIN AND HOBBS



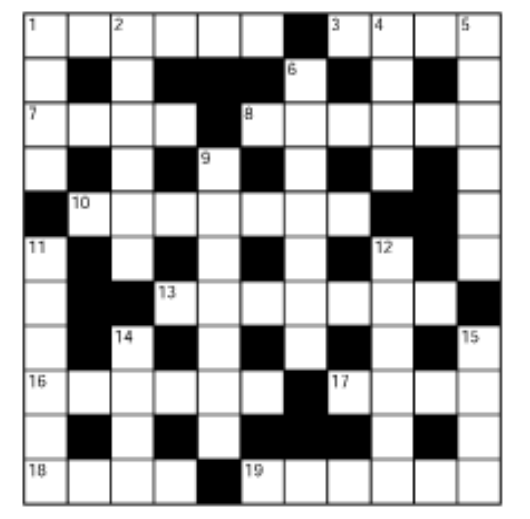
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Pepper might make you do this
- Use needles and wool to make something
- Quick
- Spread this on bread
- Rich
- Injured
- Repaired
- Utters
- A weight to stop a boat drifting

DOWN

- Not in danger
- Less difficult
- A short letter
- Wearing
- Shoving
- Permitted
- Postage stickers
- Look carefully for
- Jealousy
- Expensive



DIVYENNDU JOINS RC16

Bollywood's powerhouse performer Divyenndu, fondly remembered as "Munna Bhaiya" from *Mirzapur*, has joined the cast of *RC16*.

Known for his memorable roles in films like *Pyaar Ka Punchnama*, *Toilet: Ek Prem Katha* and *Madgaon Express*, Divyenndu's inclusion is set to elevate the film's appeal across audiences. He will begin filming in the second schedule, following the completion of the first schedule in Mysore. Expressing his enthusiasm, director Buchi Babu shared on social media, "My most favourite role revealing today. Our Bhayya... Your Bhayya... MUNNA BHAYYA! Welcome onboard dear @divyenndu brother. Let's rock it."

Oscar-winning music maestro AR Rahman has been roped in to compose for the film, marking his first collaboration with Ram Charan.

PEELINGS SONG IS OUT

The wait is finally over! The highly anticipated mass blockbuster song, #Peelings, from the upcoming movie *Pushpa 2: The Rule* has been released. This energetic track is composed by the rockstar DSP and is sure to get you grooving and energise your playlist.

Exuding sheer energy, Pushparaj and Srivalli set the screen ablaze with their blazing chemistry and vibrant performance. The song has been released in six languages - Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Bengali - to cater to a wide audience.

Pushpa 2: The Rule is all set for a grand worldwide release on December 5. The movie stars Icon Star Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna, Fahadh Faasil and others. Directed by Sukumar and produced by Mythri Movie Makers, this movie is expected to be a blockbuster hit. The movie's team, including Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna, Fahadh Faasil, Sukumar and others, have come together to promote the song and the movie. Fans are eagerly waiting for the movie's release and are expecting it to be a treat for them.

PUSHPA 2's SREELEELA IS A TRAINED CLASSICAL DANCER

Sreeleela, the rising star of Indian cinema, has set the screen ablaze with her spectacular performance in the song *Kissik* from *Pushpa 2: The Rule*. Sharing the screen with the National Award-winning Allu Arjun, Sreeleela has taken the dance number to unprecedented heights, making it one of the most buzzed-about tracks of the year. What many don't know about this young sensation is her deep connection with classical dance. A trained classical dancer, Sreeleela has even completed her *Arangetram*, showcasing her dedication to the art form.

This rigorous training has not only honed her discipline but also shaped her as a performer capable of blending tradition with modernity.

Interestingly, *Kissik* was a coveted number in the industry, with many top actresses vying for it, but it was Sreeleela who owned it with her electrifying moves. Speaking about the song, Sreeleela revealed in a recent press interaction that *Kissik* isn't just an item number—it has a strong narrative purpose that will unfold in the movie. From her previous hit, *Kurchi Madathapetti* with Mahesh Babu in *Guntur Kaaram*, to her latest triumph, Sreeleela continues to prove her versatility.



'Ghantasala's music transcends generations,' says Venkaiah Naidu

The legacy of the immortal singer Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao comes alive in the upcoming biographical film *Ghantasala the Great*. Featuring Krishna Chaitanya in the titular role and his wife Mridula as Ghantasala's spouse Savitri, the movie is a tribute to one of Telugu cinema's most revered figures. Directed by CH Rama Rao and produced by CH Srimati Phani under the Vriddhi Cinemas banner, the film is set to release on February 14.

The release date poster was released at a special event at

Prasad Labs, Hyderabad, graced by former Vice President Venkaiah Naidu. Personalities, including R Narayanamurthy, music director Madhavpeddi Suresh, producer Ashok Kumar and actress Jayavani, were also present to celebrate the occasion. Speaking at the event, Venkaiah Naidu emphasised the cultural importance of the film, calling it a responsibility for the Telugu audience to honor the legacy of Ghantasala by watching it.

"Ghantasala's music transcends generations. His life as a freedom fighter, public per-

former and an extraordinary music director is an inspiration," he said. He commended the team for their dedication to presenting Ghantasala's comprehensive life story, highlighting his contributions as a singer of the *Bhagavad Gita* and a beacon of humility and talent.

The movie also stars Suman, Subbaraya Sharma, Master Dixitulu and Master Atulith in pivotal roles. Edited by Kranti (KR) and featuring cinematography by Venu Muralidhar V, the film's music has been composed by Vasu Rao Saluri.

Sobhita Dhulipala wears mother and grandmother's jewellery for 'Raata' ceremony

As Sobhita Dhulipala and Naga Chaitanya prepare for their grand wedding, the pre-wedding festivities are in full swing. Not long ago,

Sobhita performed the Raata ceremony, a significant ritual in Telugu traditions, wearing heirloom jewellery passed down from her mother and grandmoth-

er. A close source revealed, "She adorned jewellery pieces from her mother and grandmother, making the moment even more special and emotional for her." The Raata ceremony involves planting a sacred bamboo stick adorned with mango, jamun and Jammi leaves. Rituals include worshipping the stick with sacred elements such as pancha loha (five metals), navaratan (nine gems), and navadhaanya (nine grains), along with prayers to the pancha bhuta (five elements) and directional deities.

This ritual purifies and blesses the bride ahead of her wedding. Following this, Sobhita participated in the *Mangalasaanam*, the Telugu equivalent of the Haldi ceremony, where turmeric paste is applied to the bride as part of the pre-wedding cleansing process. Sobhita, radiant in her traditional attire, exuded elegance during the ceremonies. The couple, affectionately called #SoChay by fans, looked picture-perfect, leaving everyone eagerly awaiting their union.



Malavika Mohanan spills beans on *The Raja Saab!*

Malavika Mohanan, known for her stunning on-screen performances and undeniable charm off-screen, stole the show at the Hyderabad Fashion Times Week.

Walking the ramp with grace and confidence, she left the audience spellbound. In a post-show interaction, Malavika shared exciting updates about her much-anticipated Telugu debut alongside Prabhas in the horror rom-com *The Raja Saab*.

"The shooting is almost complete and it's coming out really well! I'm thrilled for everyone to see it. Working with Prabhas, one of my favourite heroes, has been a dream," she revealed with excitement. Apart from *The Raja Saab*, Malavika is also gearing up for *Sardar 2*, further cementing her place as one of the most versatile actors in Indian cinema. With these highly anticipated projects in the pipeline, Malavika is all set to deliver yet another series of memorable performances.

Varun Tej joins forces with Merlapaka Gandhi for an entertainer!

Tollywood star Varun Tej is all set to collaborate with director Merlapaka Gandhi for an upcoming entertainer, promising a blend of engaging storytelling and mass appeal.

This exciting project is being jointly produced by the renowned production houses UV Creations and First Frame Entertainment, known for delivering blockbuster hits.

The film is currently in the pre-production phase, with preparations in full swing. The team is gearing up to commence filming in March 2025, creating a buzz among fans eagerly waiting to see Varun Tej in a fresh and dynamic avatar under Gandhi's directorial vision.



Dhruva Sarja unveils intense first look of *Kora*



Kannada cinema's action Prince Dhruva Sarja, widely loved by audiences across the South, has taken on the role of presenter for the upcoming action-packed film *Kora*. Featuring Tsunami Kitty, Charishma and P. Murthy in lead roles, the movie is written and directed by Oratashree. The project is a joint venture between Sri Lakshmi Jyothi Creations and Rathnamma Movies, produced by Dr. AB Nandini, AN Balaji and P. Murthy. The latest first-look poster showcases Tsunami Kitty in a rugged and intense avatar, with visible injuries and a determined gaze. This striking visual promises an action entertainer that is set to break new ground in the genre. The film also boasts an impressive ensemble cast, including M.K. Mata, Muniraju and Ninasam Ashwath in pivotal roles. Behind the scenes, the technical team includes Selvam Mathappan as the cinematographer, B.R. Hemanth Kumar as the music director and K. Girish Kumar as the editor. *Kora* Chinnayya is choreographing the high-octane stunts, ensuring a visual treat for action lovers. With its promising visuals and powerful team, *Kora* is gearing up to be an unmissable spectacle for fans of intense action dramas.